STRENGTHENING PARTICIPATION BY YOUNG MIGRANTS *

Chapter 15
The many challenges faced by young migrants with regard to realisation of their rights (e.g. to legal protection, health, education, decent work, social protection and to participation) give them a strong stake in policies, programmes and practices that address migration and migrants, as well as in the affairs of the communities where they live.

Embracing young people affected by migration as vital stakeholders in migration policy-making and practice as well as in community governance not only allows them to fulfill their right to participation, but also contributes to achieving more effective, youth-sensitive policies. Young migrants can play a leadership role in raising awareness and changing attitudes and practices about migration and migrants in their communities. Encouraging and supporting young migrants to share their experiences and challenges and to participate in local organizations can make a dynamic contribution to building respectful, inclusive and peaceful societies. Another emerging trend is an increased focus on the role and support of local community representatives in promoting integration and social cohesion through thoughtful urban planning and the effective provision of basic services, including health and education, to newcomers.

Young migrants can – and do – contribute to public policy debate on matters affecting them as well as concerning the communities in which they live. Young migrants’ use of social media and other communication/information technologies to mobilise and make their views known has played a vital role in national migration policy debates, as manifested recently in several countries.¹

This chapter highlights the imperatives and challenges of supporting young migrants’ participation in the life and decision-making of the communities where they live and in the policies that affect them. It grounds discussion in the rights undergirding youth and adolescent participation, namely those enumerated in the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

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It discusses concepts and definitions of participation, including community, social and political participation, that contextualize migrant youth participation. The chapter provides essential background on the importance of adolescent and youth participation in general.

With this context, it elaborates on specific conditions and challenges impeding migrant youth participation. It highlights principles and guidelines to facilitate strengthening participation by migrant youth. The chapter emphasizes the integral relationship between participation and integration and provides examples of young migrants’ participation in policy-making processes, including initiatives related to migration and development.

The discussion below addresses issues of participation that, in most cases, are relevant to both adolescent\(^2\) and young migrants as defined in this report.\(^3\) The international legal framework enshrines adolescents’ right to participation in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). The CRC addresses the rights of all human beings under the age of 18, viewing them as social actors in their own right, capable of forming and expressing opinions, having freedom of thought, conscience and opinion, and being entitled to freedom of association and peaceful assembly and to participate actively in decision-making processes that affect them.\(^4\)

The rights and freedoms pertaining to participation in the CRC are universal and inter-related rights to freedom of expression, freedom of information, freedom of thought, conscience and religion, freedom of association, and freedom of peaceful assembly (Box 15.1).

For young migrants 18 or older, very similar rights and freedoms are laid out in the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, the International Covenant on Political and Civil Rights (ICPCR), and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR).
WHAT IS PARTICIPATION?

Participation has been defined as: “the active, informed and voluntary involvement of people in decision-making and the life of their communities (both locally and globally).” This broad, general definition provides a useful anchor for discussion of migrant youth participation.

In broad terms, participation is an essential pillar of viable democratic governance and social cohesion. The importance of participation in policy-making by affected groups is acknowledged in national and international contexts. For example, in addressing health, a critical concern for young migrants, a WHO commission observed that,

«A crucial direction for policy to promote health equity concerns the participation of civil society and the empowerment of affected communities to become active protagonists in shaping their own health. Broad social
participation in shaping policies to advance health equity is justified on ethical and human rights grounds, but also pragmatically. Also, from a strategic point of view, having public ownership [...] is vital to the agenda’s long-term sustainability.

While the term participation is often used in reference to political participation and its association with voting rights and participation in political office, the term has far wider application of particular importance for migrant youth. The reference in the definition cited above to participatory involvement in decision-making and community life at multiple levels, from local to global, is especially relevant for migrant youth.

While classic «political participation» in the electoral arena is widely understood as a right of citizenship, at least for national affairs, participation in community life and decision-making by citizens and migrants/immigrants alike often involves activity associated with political participation, such as advocacy for public policy, participation in community governance processes, and lobbying decision and policy-makers. Certainly this is the case in situations of representative governance, where dialogue, exchange and policy advocacy by constituents with legislators, decision-makers and administrators are expected across levels of government, local to national, and where views of migrant and immigrant communities may be actively sought.

In many societies, participation more broadly comprises engagement in associative groups or organizations -- whether workplace unions, social and sports clubs, hobby or interest groups, faith-based organizations, or community groups. The latter take multiple forms, such as charity or community services helping the poor, children, aged people, addressing illnesses, etc.; or they may be community-issue associations addressing, for example, policy and action on housing, water, sanitation, schooling, and other issues, whether at local or national levels. The arena of associative groups can be considered synonymous with civil society.

The challenges of and guidance for migrant youth participation, whether in policy advocacy and/or civil society activity are discussed below, necessarily in the context of youth participation more broadly.
YOUTH PARTICIPATION

The international community has long recognised that young people constitute a vital human resource for development and social change, economic growth and technological innovation. In 1997 the UN Economic and Social Council envisioned participation as a strategy for making young people’s concerns and experiences an “integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres,” to help ensure that they benefit equally from policy initiatives that affect them.

Participation in decision-making is a key priority of the UN Agenda on Youth. In 1995, on the tenth anniversary of International Youth Year, the UN adopted the World Programme of Action for Youth (WPAY), the priorities of which are critical to the discussion on youth migration and development (Box 15.2). WPAY’s focus on globalisation, for instance, underscores the inter-relationship between globalisation and ease of movement of people and capital, reduced transportation costs, and advanced communication technologies that, among other benefits, allow young people to learn of opportunities outside their country of origin.6

When referring to youth participation, the term calls for “work with and by young people, not merely work for them, as beneficiaries, partners and leaders.” 7 Working with young people is crucial, but so is the level of trust, responsibility, and acknowledgement implied. The level of responsibility attributed to them should therefore make their input be considered sufficiently valuable as to be incorporated directly into decision-making policies.
MIGRANT PARTICIPATION AND INTEGRATION

A landmark EU Commission Communication on Integration in 2007 explicitly recognized participation as one of the key elements facilitating integration of migrants in host societies. The Communication highlighted that: “The participation of immigrants in the democratic process and in the formulation of integration policies and measures, especially at the local level, supports their integration.” The Communication identified a number of areas for migrant participation – all of which apply for young migrants. These include:

- Increase civic, cultural and political participation and foster dialogue to promote active citizenship, including consultation and advisory fora at all levels.

Box 15.2. Full and effective participation of young people in the life of society and in decision-making

Social progress is based on a society’s capacity to incorporate the contribution and responsibility of youth in building and designing its future. In addition to their intellectual contribution and ability to mobilise support, young people bring unique perspectives that need to be taken into account.

The World Programme on Youth proposes the following actions to promote effective youth participation that fully apply to migrant youth participation:

- Develop and strengthen opportunities for youth to learn their rights and responsibilities
- Promote participation of young people in decision-making processes related to social, political, developmental and environmental issues, and remove obstacles that affect their full contribution to society
- Encourage youth associations and activities through financial, educational and technical support
- Foster local, national, regional and international cooperation and exchanges between youth organisations
- Strengthen the involvement of young people in international forums, for example by considering the inclusion of youth representatives in their national delegations to the United Nations General Assembly.
- More importantly, efforts should be made to foster exchanges between the youth and a vast majority of relevant institutions, in order to fully and efficiently incorporate young people, including migrant youth, into global discussions.

• Foster dialogue and shared experiences between migrant groups and across generations.

• Increase migrant participation in the democratic process, and promote balanced gender representation through awareness raising, information campaigns, capacity building, and addressing barriers to the exercise of voting rights.

• Facilitate participation in mainstream organisations, for instance by supporting volunteer and internship programmes and encouraging organisations to be open to migrant participation.

• Enable participation specifically in developing the country's response to migration.

• Build migrants' associations as sources of advice to newcomers and include their representatives in introduction programmes as trainers and role models.

• Develop the concept of *Civic Citizenship* for non-citizens which clarifies rights and duties.

• Develop programmes to prepare migrants for acquiring citizenship.

• Promote research and dialogue on identity and citizenship questions.

As illustrated by the areas of participation identified in the EC Communication on integration, discussion of participation often does not distinguish between what are referred to, respectively, as social participation and political participation.

**YOUNG MIGRANTS’ PARTICIPATION**

Opportunities to participate in processes, organizations and decisions that concern them can provide young migrants with vital life-skills and contribute to their self-esteem, social inclusion, sense of responsibility and understanding of decision-making processes, along with imparting other skills useful to their future development. Participation can help to overcome young migrants' feelings of alienation, making them feel valued and accepted in a destination society.

Successful efforts can also promote social cohesion, by undermining negative public perceptions of, and attitudes toward, migrant youth.

Young migrants are fully capable of meaningful participation in the policy arena, if they have access to information and resources, and freedom to express their views.
Further documentation on young immigrants’ participation, including irregular migrants, is needed. Decision-making processes related to migration and other policies affecting migrants will only be robust when the voices of all migrants have been heard.

The opportunity for migrants who are non-citizens to exercise formal political participation roles such as voting in elections and holding political office is increasing in a number of places worldwide. Where this is the case, informing and reaching out to young migrants is essential to engaging their participation.

Nonetheless, this opportunity for democratic participation is not available in many places; in any case, non-citizens cannot vote in national elections. Migrants in undocumented situations are also excluded.

Membership, activity and advocacy in civil society organisations is a main and widely exercised means for youth, including migrant youth, to participate in their community and society. Civil society groups of all kinds, particularly youth groups, community organisations, trade unions, and groups concerned with migration provide spaces to meet peers, define shared interests, organise activities, and engage in collective action and advocacy. Youth organisations are common in many countries, and in others civil society and local community groups incorporate and encourage youth participation. Migrant youth often participate in sports clubs, ethnic community groups, faith-based organisations or youth-specific groups in many countries. Youth are often a mainstay of migrant and diaspora organisations.

Well-documented examples of participation by young people affected by migration in decision-making processes related to migration remain scarce; a gap that should be addressed by research and documentation to expand the evidence base for sound policy-making. One notable example is the experience of young immigrants who strongly advocate for passage of the 'Dream Act' in the United States. This and other examples of migrant youth participation in community and policy-related activities are cited in boxes 15.4, 15.5, 15.6, 15.7 and 15.8 in this chapter.
CHALLENGES TO YOUNG MIGRANTS’ PARTICIPATION

Young migrants become particularly vulnerable when they lose the rich array of interpersonal relationships with peers and family in their country of origin. This happens at a crucial moment of their lives, when these relationships would ordinarily help to shape their personal and social development as they begin the transition to adulthood.

Instead, young migrants may encounter xenophobia and discrimination in destination countries and suffer disadvantages due to lack of fluency in the local language. Undocumented adolescents and youth face special challenges in the area of participation, due to their fear that calling attention to themselves puts them at risk for detention and/or deportation. Adolescent girls often face participation constraints in the form of culturally-defined gender roles and expectations that keep them from speaking up at, or even attending, a meeting or youth club.

Barriers that inhibit young migrants’ participation include:

- *Restrictions in law* that preclude or restrict the participation of migrants or non-citizens in associations, unions or political activity in destination countries.

- Political discourse and/or policy measures that explicitly *discourage migrant participation* in local community and national policy affairs, including those that affect them directly.

- *Lack of respect for the opinions of young people* and negative perceptions that envision migrant youth as a problem, rather than a resource.

- *Unequal opportunities and resources* for young people to participate in development policy (opportunities are often available only to well-off, well-educated nationals).

- *Discrimination* based on gender, race, ethnicity, class, religion, sexual orientation, disability and other factors, which interacts with discrimination based on nationality and migration status and prevents young migrants from participating or having a say in activities and programs.

- *Lack of preparation and experience*: Some young migrants have never been exposed to participatory environments (in homes, schools, communities or societies) and lack access to appropriate information to help them make informed choices and encourage their involvement. Young migrants from
countries with non-democratic political systems might at first feel uncomfortable about participating in political processes and civil society organizations.

- **Access to institutions**: Young migrants generally lack direct access to institutional structures within governments and in mainstream civil society sectors.

- **Financial barriers**: Very limited resources are made available for supporting organisations working on youth migration and youth participation issues. Funding for training teachers working with young migrants and for language classes is often very scarce.

- **Lack of trust**: Some adults believe that migrant adolescents and youth lack the competency and experience to participate effectively in community affairs or in policy processes. In some countries, social and cultural norms make very difficult for youth to question or even discuss important issues with adults. Participation can in this case become a vehicle for youth to gain acceptance not only as citizens, but also as adults.

- **Lack of time**: For disadvantaged young people who study and work, day-to-day activities have priority over participatory and consultation processes; this is especially true in the case of young migrants, who often have more immediate concerns than participation, such as language acquisition, housing, income and integration.
Box 15.3. Adolescents in a new country

A study of the situation of Iraqi adolescents living in Jordan offers perspectives on the multiple barriers to participation in a new country that apply to many young migrants and refugees in many places around the world.

Isolation and loss of social networks:
- "Now we don't visit anyone, and no-one visits us. It is not like in Iraq." (Girl, 11- 14 age group)
- "Outside of the house I have no friends. (Girl, 18)
- "I come back from school and I do my homework but I don't have friends. I stay at home and sleep and watch TV." (Boy, 14)
- "We want to be closer to Jordanians [youth] and ask them questions and be friends. We are living here and sooner or later we have to understand each other." (Boy, 17)

Discrimination:
- "The people treat each other in a different way. At school and in the street, people tell me I am a stranger here." (Girl, 12)
- "The main problem is that people talk badly about us. The kids become gangs and they are against us...Sometimes Jordanians ask us 'Why are you here? This is not your country'. They put pressure on us and don't accept us." (Boy, 16)
- "Taxi drivers do not use the meter for us. When he [taxi driver] hears us speaking Iraqi and if I ask him to start the meter, he says 'get out of the car', or he charges more." (Girl, 15)

Education:
- "The difficulty I have here is at school. They always put Iraqis at the back of the line for books and there is never enough. They tell me to go and buy the books, but I can't afford it." (Girl, 14)
- "We all have the same problem. The class does not fit our age group. The teachers make fun of us.” (Boy aged between 11-17)
- "I don't like my school because they keep telling us we are...crowding their schools."(Girl, 16)

Poverty:
- "We go to Mecca Mall. We just look. We can’t afford to buy anything." (Girl, 14)
- "There are no men in the household. My brothers are very young. We have a lot of trouble now. Now we have no money.”(Girl, 15)

Employment:
- "My family are goldsmiths. The government won’t allow my father or me to work here.” (Boy, 16)
- “All I want is my father to have a job. I don’t want him to have no money. (Boy, 15)

These adolescents – like countless others trying to cope in a destination country – have legitimate needs, concerns and grievances, but nowhere to express them. If appropriate forums were available, they could propose ways to overcome the forms of exclusion they experience and to enhance their participation and contributions. Given the chance to speak out on migration policy, these Iraqi adolescents might, for example, suggest changes aimed at achieving equal treatment in schools, access to employment, inclusion in social protection/poverty-reduction programmes, and steps to overcome negative attitudes toward migrants. It is important to support places and spaces where young migrants can find their voice, recognise the importance of their unique perspectives, and articulate proposals for meeting needs and resolving problems.

More generally, policies, programmes and services for youth and adolescent migrants will be neither appropriate nor effective unless those most concerned are involved in needs assessments, design and delivery. Dialogue with and among civil society organisations, including youth migrant associations, national government, and local administrations is a crucial means of incorporating participation of youth and adolescent migrants in processes of design, definition, implementation, and monitoring of policies and programs. Ultimately, partnership between civil society organisations, government officials and international organisations will be key to finding integrated and systemic solutions for youth’s needs, and to guarantee sustainability in policies, programs and services to youth migrants.

The challenge is to convince local and national decision-makers of the potential and benefits – both to migrant youth and larger societies – of involving adolescents and youth in migration policy dialogue, planning, execution and monitoring, as well as in the legislative and executive components of governance. Currently, youth participation in policy processes is the exception rather than the rule, especially for migrant youth. Few governments or other institutions have developed national strategic frameworks or action plans to promote meaningful youth participation; fewer still encourage involvement by young migrants either in public policy discussion or in civil society. Greater commitment and political will on the part of decision-makers at all levels is required to achieve meaningful adolescent and youth participation in migration and development policy planning.
The challenge of migrant youth participation is not only an issue confronting government institutions. A frequently perceived exclusion to migrant youth participation is the inaccessibility of host community organizations to migrants. Unions, social groups, religious congregations, sports clubs and other civil society groups and organizations are often reported to be unwelcoming, even hostile to migrant or ‘foreigner’ participation. Civil society organisations, trade unions and local community groups need to ensure that migrant youth and adolescents are welcomed, encouraged to participate in activities, and recruited for membership.

An important participation issue meriting further exploration is the tension in so-called diaspora organizing between focussing on issues in the home country and giving adequate attention to concerns of treatment and policy in the country and locality where migrants reside.

GUIDELINES FOR YOUNG MIGRANTS’ PARTICIPATION

Over the past 10-to-15 years, guidelines for young peoples’ participation relevant for migrant youth in a variety of contexts have been developed. A comprehensive contribution by UNICEF in 2010 outlines the steps required to ensure safe and meaningful participation by those under 18 in a variety of contexts. A handbook prepared by the UK’s development arm includes numerous examples of participation by young people in the policy arena. These guidelines are especially pertinent to encouraging migrant youth and adolescent participation. In brief, key principles are:

- Involvement/participation must be voluntary and representative of all young people.
- Goals, purpose and methods must be transparent, clearly explained to participants, and responsive and relevant to those participating,
- Young participants must be offered a safe, respectful, and inclusive environment in which to express their views, using proven participatory methodologies.
- Participation should be on-going, not a once-only, token effort.
- Selection/recruitment criteria should be very transparent and ensure a fair representation or cross-section of all young people including migrants, independent of academic or other qualifications.
These principles apply to encouraging participation by all young migrants – especially the need for a safe environment that unconditionally ensures, for example, that participation will not expose an adolescent girl to negative repercussions of any kind or an undocumented young person to apprehension by police or migration authorities.

The breadth and representation sought by selection or recruitment criteria depends on whether an organization, activity or other participatory initiative is migrant-specific. However, migrant- and/or migrant youth-specific initiatives will benefit by explicitly seeking and ensuring broad participation across migrant/immigrant communities. Other participation or organizing efforts also need to explicitly seek inclusion of the migrant and/or migrant youth in their area and/or issue of concern. Without specific, targeted outreach and inclusion measures, migrant youth participation cannot be expected to happen spontaneously.

Some migrant community and diaspora groups specifically focus outreach and activities on young migrants, acknowledging that incorporating them is crucial to reaching a large part of their constituencies. In Europe, several networks addressing migration issues actively encourage migrant youth participation. The European Minority Youth Network,\(^\text{12}\) established following Council of Europe-convened youth consultations in 1997, today involves immigrant and immigrant-origin youth groups in numerous countries across the region.

Awareness of the importance of gathering young people’s opinions and involving them in advocacy work has increased, as reflected in the creation of forums for youth activism in several countries around the world – from Brazil to Nigeria, from the U.S. to Israel.\(^\text{13}\) Yet most strategies focus on domestic political processes from which non-citizens are likely to be excluded.

A notable exception is the European Youth Forum, which takes a more global approach, striving: “...to influence national and international youth policies by advocating for policies that would protect youth’s political and social rights. It fights for higher youth employment levels in Europe, for comprehensive social protection for youth, and against social exclusion among young people.”\(^\text{14}\) Involving young people throughout Europe, the Youth Forum also works to: “develop intercultural links through discussions on common strategies with regional youth organizations from Asia to Latin America.”\(^\text{15}\) A forum such as this could serve as an excellent vehicle for involving
migrant adolescents and youth in discussions about rights, employment, social protection and social exclusion in the European context. It can also serve as an example for organizing local, national, and regional forums elsewhere around the world.

Research is needed in most places to determine whether existing organisations seek in any way to reach out to young migrants. If not, efforts should be made to encourage their full inclusion in all initiatives addressed at young people so that their needs can be addressed. It is crucial to foster inclusive social networks through school projects and other type of collective activities, not only between migrants and locals, but also between migrants from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

**PARTICIPATION IN MIGRATION POLICY**

Young people’s contributions to dialogues and activities shaping and implementing migration-related and integration policies often include sharing intimate knowledge of the day-to-day reality and challenges of living as a migrant, and offering suggestions for improvement. Migrant youth and adolescents can also deliver constructive feedback on the effectiveness of existing migration policies and programmes -- Are they working? Should they be revised, eliminated, scaled up?

To participate effectively, they need information to help them formulate useful ideas and contribute to policy dialogue, programme execution, or monitoring and evaluation. The end result can be a win-win for all concerned: young migrants feel valued and have a better understanding of policy processes in their country of destination, while policy-makers and administrators are better informed about the issues requiring their attention.

To facilitate their ability to participate meaningfully in migration policy discussions, young migrants and other youth affected by migration (such as those left behind by migrating parents or young returnees) require the right tools and opportunities, in particular:

- Background on current migration policy in the country where they are living.
- Information about the status of current reform proposals (if any) and about public opinion.
• Understanding of the process by which policy is formulated and decided, to gauge how they can be heard by a wider audience, including policymakers.

Teaching young people about national and local political processes is normally a function of schools. However, a large percentage of migrant adolescents and youth do not attend (or complete) secondary school. Thus specific strategies must be devised to prepare migrant youth for involvement in their communities and in the policy process, such as through community organisations, non-formal education institutions, NGOs / CSOs, or targeted local government initiatives.

When seeking to create opportunities for migrant adolescents to become involved in a migration policy event or forum, it is critical to consider:

• How to ensure equal participation of boys and girls and young migrants living with disabilities, to ensure that all types of concerns are addressed?
• How to structure the event to ensure that adolescents have a genuine, proactive and significant role?
• How to ensure that policy options are open-ended (rather than limited to a fixed set of choices)?
• How best to focus on the elements of the policy discussion most relevant to young people?16
• How to ensure that young migrants interact with local youth, not only to foster mutual understanding and deepen social networks, but also to increase the legitimacy of the solutions found amongst nationals?

Another factor to be considered is the process by which the outcome of the policy event is communicated to policy-makers and other stakeholders. Age must also be taken into account; different expectations and strategies must be employed for different age ranges. When participants are under 18 years of age, specific guidelines must be followed in order to fulfil CRC principles.17 Once these determinations and adjustments for age have been made, the key principles of meaningful youth participation outlined above and the action lines summarized in Box 15.2 should be incorporated into the process.
TYPES OF PARTICIPATION

Three types of participation with adolescents and/or youth can be identified: consultative, collaborative, and youth-led.18

1. **Consultative** youth participation is initiated, led and managed by qualified, experienced professionals, usually as an effort to better understand the situation young people face and ensure wider dissemination of their inputs. As a rule, young participants do not exercise control of the agenda or the outcome. In the case of migrant youth, consultative participation could, for example, be initiated by a local government with the aim of determining the need for social protection measures, employment, or health and education services. The methodology might involve surveys or engaging migrant youth to reach out to others in their community. Migrant or left-behind young people could also be invited to participate in local, regional or national forums on youth and migration.

2. **Collaborative** youth participation gives young people the opportunity to actively engage in the decision-making process at all or some stages. It can be characterised as:

   - Adult-initiated, but in partnership with youth, empowering youth to influence or challenge both allowing for increasing levels of self-directed action by youth over a period of time.
Youth-led participation occurs when young people have significant control over the policy space; for example, to initiate proposals and activities, as well as to organise themselves. Characteristics include:

- Issues of concern have been identified and defined by youth themselves
- Adults serve as facilitators, rather than leaders
- Young people fully control and lead the process.

Box 15.4. Examples of collaborative participation

To promote youth employment and address migration issues facing youth, the National Youth Commission of the Philippines convened government agencies and youth leaders and representatives to develop the ‘National Action Plan (NAP) on Youth Employment and Migration’ for the Philippines. Over 100 youth leaders and representatives, government officials, workers and employers groups, academics, and civil society organisations came together in a ‘youth employment forum’ that served as a platform for dialogue on the results of the NAP and for sharing good practices.


The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies’ (IFRC) ‘Youth as Agents of Behavioural Change’ (YABC) programme promotes appreciation for and tolerance of diversity and seeks to empower young people to take leadership roles. IFRC supports the programme in partnership with youth. For example, YABC youth in North Africa organised a football match involving mixed teams of young migrants and youth from local communities, to encourage team-based cooperation rather than dividing teams between migrants and ‘locals’. Through the intercultural dialogue that followed, participants spoke openly about their respective stereotypes and prejudices.

*Source:* IFRC submission to Thematic Report.
Youth-led participation tends to be the more democratic and empowering type; approaches initiated, led and/or managed by older adults inevitably limit, consciously or not, the self-empowerment, autonomy and full participation of youth, especially in the crucial learning-by-doing experiences of organising, analysing, acting and advocating.

**Box 15.5. Example of youth-led participation: the Ragusa Declaration**

In July 2010 Arabic and European youth representatives participated in a migration and development conference in Ragusa, Italy. Participants were members of European, Italian and Arab Youth Leagues, and had support from the League of Arab States and the Council of Europe. With this support, the young representatives gathered in Ragusa took the lead, issuing a strong statement and a series of recommendations, many of which echo the key messages stressed in different chapters of this report.

The 'Ragusa Declaration on Youth, Migration and Development' reflects the insights and concerns expressed by these young people affected by migration, both migrants from Tunis and other parts of the Arab world and Italian youth. Together they issued more than 25 recommendations addressed at national policy-makers and the international community, the first of which stresses the need for considering young people as "partners in development."

In addition to direct involvement in policy-making and community issues, youth can also have a direct impact by influencing public perceptions of migrants and migration, generating positive but realistic perceptions, and encouraging changes in values and behaviour. They can, in effect, give migration a human face – speaking to groups small or large and explaining the factors that caused them to migrate, their hopes, the difficulties faced during the migration process, and the challenges and opportunities encountered in their country of destination. This participation can take place in gatherings of civic associations, local governments, faith-based or community groups, as well as through community, social or mainstream media. In addition to sensitising the audience of nationals, these experiences help young migrants to learn more about the concerns of the host community, contributing to a broader learning process related
to social policies, particularly migration and integration policies. This ‘public relations’ activity can and should be initiated by civil society organizations, local governments, and community groups.

However, proactive support by host community organizations, service agencies and local authorities is often crucial to engaging participation of migrant youth and adolescents. As Saket Mani, Youth Representative to the United Nations, highlights,

«The principle of youth participation is central to any service or youth policy framework that aims to enhance the lives of young people. Providing the necessary skills and experience is an important step in providing opportunities for migrant young people. Youth from migrant backgrounds bring with them a diversity of understanding about participation from a variety of cultural contexts. Many young migrants have lost a sense of belonging to a community, and consequently different mechanisms are required in order to involve them in participatory processes. Initiatives should be relevant and targeted to the individual experiences of young migrants, focusing on issues of most concern to them. This could involve: supporting a culture of understanding of the challenges faced by young migrants, including by investing in specialized teachers; allocating resources to innovative and interactive activities that allow youth to learn about different cultures in non-formal education settings; creating spaces for dialogue between policy-makers and young migrants; including migration in school curricula; and promoting positive multicultural encounters».19
Another initiative that local and/or national governments can and should take is putting in place or improving existing pre-departure programmes in countries of origin and post-arrival orientation programmes in destination countries to better inform and prepare young migrants to actively participate in destination countries. Such programmes, particularly in destination countries, provide opportunities from the start to build bridges between migrants and host community organizations.

Box 15.7. Discrimination and Violence Against Migrant Youth

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) has identified discrimination and violence as two of the key challenges faced by migrants, and focuses much of its migration work on promoting respect for diversity, non-violence and social inclusion of all migrants. To improve public perceptions of migrants, IFRC supports national Red Cross or Red Crescent Societies to bring together migrant youth and adults and non-migrants in “Positive Images” projects underway in 11 countries. In Denmark, for example, Positive Images supports New Times magazine, which includes articles about social integration and human rights and is produced jointly by youth and adult migrants and asylum-seekers. The Danish Red Cross uses New Times as a resource for raising awareness on migration issues among school-age youth, including links to a website offering news and a debate forum to which young people contribute, making innovative use of technology to increase the impact of efforts to improve public perceptions of migrants.

Source: http://newtimes.dk/nt/
When youth lead or are effectively involved in community affairs, migration policy, or development initiatives, the result can be changes in public perceptions, so that youth are seen as assets, rather than as part of the problem. This in turn leads to greater social cohesion, strengthening connections between groups of people, and enabling individual youth to fully participate, contribute to, and benefit from, the society in which they reside. It helps to level the playing field between migrants and nationals, enabling migrant youth to take on the many roles that young people play in social and economic development: as active agents in their own lives; innovators; early adopters to communications, social media and other technologies; inter-cultural ambassadors; peer-to-peer facilitators; community mobilisers; agents of behaviour change; and advocates for people at risk.

**Box 15.8. Promoting Inclusion and Social Cohesion**

The Scalabrini International Migration Network works with migrant youth on five continents, promoting intercultural programmes between young nationals and youth migrants to "facilitate their coexistence with local communities and to promote a culture of inclusiveness." Whether participation takes the form of peer education, preparing soup for a soup kitchen, or engaging in sports, migrant youth participation helps to demystify notions of who migrants are, overcoming stereotypes, and promoting inclusion.
KEY MESSAGES

- Migrant youth and adolescent participation in the life and decision-making of communities where they live is crucial to their engagement as community members.

- Migrant youth and adolescent participation derives from and realizes universal human rights to expression, information, conscience, association and peaceful assembly.

- Migrant youth and adolescent participation is crucial to their integration in destination countries and to maintaining social cohesion.

- Migrant youth’s and adolescents’ access to and engagement in community groups, civil society organisations, unions, youth groups, and sports and cultural organisations is essential to their participation in community life in their country of residence; all such organisations should welcome, support and promote migrant youth participation.

- Inclusive participation by migrant adolescents and youth in shaping and implementing migration – and other – policies affecting them is critical to taking account of their views, needs, challenges, experiences and recommendations.

- Young migrants’ participation yields vital insights for migration policy-making, improves effective implementation, and strengthens sustainability of interventions.

- Including migrant youth in all steps of policy processes, including implementation and monitoring, helps ensure that their needs and recommendations are not ignored.

- Governments can enhance adolescent and youth capacity, well-being, and enthusiasm for meaningful participation by ensuring that young migrants enjoy their rights to participation, health, education and other key services.
POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Encourage migrant youth participation in civil society organisations, unions and community groups; support creation and recognition of migrant, diaspora and migrant youth organisations.

- Facilitate construction of solid networks, cooperation, and joint projects between young locals and young migrants.

- Involve a wide range of government and non-governmental stakeholders, including youth organisations and networks, in planning and carrying out participation activities with young migrants.

- Include migrant adolescents and youth in policy-making processes, follow through on their suggestions and recommendations, and ensure their continued participation from beginning to end of the process.

- Promote institutional arrangements to strengthen the capacity of young people affected by migration to participate at local, national and international levels.

- Create new opportunities for meaningful participation by adolescents and youth in migration and development research, debate, planning, policy and programme execution.

- Put in place specific pre-departure programmes in countries of origin and post-arrival orientation programmes in destination countries to better inform and prepare young migrants to actively participate in destination countries.

- Enhance data collection and sharing of good practices and promising examples of participation by young migrants in organisations and in migration policy-making processes, to enhance the evidence base for sound policy and promote policy innovation.
NOTES

3 See UN General Assembly, Resolution A/40/256, 6 May 1985, para. 19. In 1985, the UN celebrated the first International Year of Youth. On its tenth anniversary, the General Assembly adopted the World Programme of Action for Youth, setting a policy framework and guidelines for national action and international support to improve the situation of youth. Since then, all UN statistical services have used as a reference the age cohort of 15-24 years to collect global statistics on youth.
4 Article 12 of the CRC states that: "States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child." As subsequently noted, Articles 13, 14 and 15 articulate other rights and freedoms essential to participation. A very useful implementation/resource guide on Article 12 was prepared by Gerison Lansdown for UNICEF and Save the Children in 2011: Every Child’s Right to Be Heard. More on youth participation on development issues is discussed in: UN, Youth Participation in Development: Summary Guidelines for Development Partners, New York, 2011 and DFID, Youth Participation in Development: A Guide for Development Partners and Policymakers, SPW/DFID/CSO Youth Working Group, London, 2010.
5 DFID (2010), op cit.
7 Ibid.
9 UNICEF (2010), Children as Advocates: Strengthening Children’s and Young People’s Participation in Advocacy Fora, Adolescent Development and Participation Unit, New York; United Nations/
12 See European Minority Youth Network website at: http://www.network.ngo.lv/website
13 World Movement for Democracy, http://www.wmd.org/resources/whats-being-done/participation-
youth/youth-policy-making
14 Ibid.
15 Ibid.
16 Bragg, op.cit.
17 For example, adolescents can provide useful testimony for policy-making committees, whilst older youth could hold a youth seat on a board involved in the legislative process. Specific guidelines for participation by those under the age of 18 are spelled out in UNICEF’s 2010 Children as Advocates publication (see endnote 10).
18 Lansdown, op cit.
19 Saket Mani, Children & Youth Participation in Migration & Development, written contribution provided for this publication, 2013.