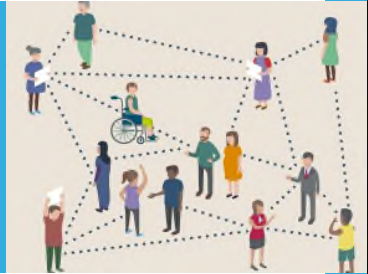


Introduction to citizen participation

Good Governance and Peacebuilding



The Hague Academy for
local governance

Learning objectives



At the end of the module participants will be able to:

- ▶ Explain citizen participation concepts
- ▶ Discuss the benefits and limitations of citizen participation
- ▶ Design strategies to improve participation in their own context

Speaker's note:

Explain the learning objectives of this session.

Time: *to be added by trainer according to planning*

Background information:

Citizen participation: definition

- ▶ Citizen participation can be broadly defined as ***the processes by which public concerns, needs, and values are incorporated into decision making.***
- ▶ Citizen participation happens in many places (e.g., civil society, electoral, legislative, and administrative arenas) and can take many forms (e.g., ***methods may range from information exchanges to democratic decision making.***)” Nabatchi, 2012

Speaker's note:

Time: *to be added by trainer according to planning*

Background information:

“...implies the involvement of citizens in a wide range of policymaking activities, including the determination of levels of service, budget priorities, and the acceptability of physical construction projects in order to orient government programs toward community needs, build public support, and encourage a sense of cohesiveness within neighborhoods. UN World Public Sector Report 2008

**Who has been involved in citizen participation processes?
What were your experiences?**



Speaker's note:

- Ask participants in plenary if they have been involved in citizen participation processes (20 min)
- If yes, as participant or as organiser? What were their experiences? Was it effective? Why yes or no?

Time: 20 minutes

Background information:

Benefits of citizen participation

- ▶ Improved **equality** of access to public policy making and services
- ▶ Better **quality** of government services and policies
- ▶ Improved **legitimacy and trust**
- ▶ **Active citizens**



Speaker's note:

- Ask the participants to share the benefits of citizen participation
- Write their suggestion on a flipchart
- Link their suggestions to the four arguments on the slide

Time: 20 minutes

Background information:

Citizen participation leads to **improved equality** of access to public policy making and services. When governments organise inclusive participation processes, more people can let their voices be heard which should lead to services and policies that better benefit all people.

Citizen participation leads to **better quality** of government decision making. By organising participatory processes, civil servants and politicians become better aware of the needs of the people. This makes them better able to address the actual problems and avoid resistance when implementing policies. Citizens can also have valuable skills or knowledge which will contribute to the quality of the final policy or action.

Participatory governance **increases the legitimacy** of governments and the **trust of citizens** in government. Genuine participation processes prove that the government is working for the citizens and the public good, and that the needs of citizens are central to government policies and decisions. This contributes to more ownership and decreases resistance towards the government.

When governments support participation, they promote **active citizenship**. When people can have influence, they will take a more active role in working towards the public good. This in turn can lead to increased social cohesion and resilience of local communities.

Dave Meslin: The antidote to apathy



Speaker's note:

- Show this video
- Ask if the participants recognise the process described in the video. Do they agree with the argument made? Do they have similar examples?

Time: 10 minutes

Background information:

The video shows how sometimes the failure of participation is a failure of the design and management of the processes, not the principle of participation itself.

Different forms of citizen participation



Public



Social



Individual

Speaker's note:

Explain concepts and ask the participants to provide examples of each concept.

Time: 10 minutes

Background information:

Public participation: the engagement of individuals with the various structures and institutions of democracy. Other authors refer to this as political, civic, or vertical participation and/or participatory governance. Examples of public participation include: voting in local or national elections; being a councillor; and taking part in government (or associated) consultations.

Social participation: collective activities that individuals may be involved in as part of their everyday lives. This might include: being a member of a community group, a tenants' association or a trade union; supporting the local hospice by volunteering; and running a study group on behalf of a faith organisation. Others have variously called this kind of social engagement 'associational life', collective action, or civil, horizontal or community participation.

Individual participation, sometimes referred to as 'everyday politics', covers the choices and actions that individuals make as part of their daily life and that are statements of the kind of society they want to live in. This would include, for example: choosing fair-trade goods; boycotting specific products; using 'green energy'; donating money to charities; and signing petitions.

It is, however, important to stress the fluidity of these broad categories of participation and their dynamic interactions and overlaps. For example, campaigning and protesting against nuclear weapons might involve an individual taking part in: demonstrations and protest camps; signing petitions and writing letters to government departments; attendance at local planning meetings; the use of 'green energy'; displaying posters in windows, and many more.

Source: 'Understanding participation: A literature review' (2009)

<http://pathwaysthroughparticipation.org.uk/2010/01/13/understanding-participation-a-literature-review/>

Different dimensions of citizen participation

- ▶ Unstructured – Structured
- ▶ Informal – Formal
- ▶ Individual – Collective
- ▶ One-off – Ongoing
- ▶ Unpaid – Paid
- ▶ Reactive – Proactive
- ▶ Self-interested – Altruistic
- ▶ Resisting social change – Driving change

Speaker's note:

Explain the different dimensions of citizen participation.

Time: *to be added by trainer according to planning*

Background information:

Participation covers a breadth of activities and that these dimensions can help you understand. Each dimension forms a spectrum.

Unstructured – Structured: some participation processes follow clearly structured steps, others are shaped organically as the process takes place.

Informal – Formal: some participation processes are formalized through laws or regulations (e.g. the legal obligation to organize one public hearing a year) other forms are more informal (e.g. a meeting with a municipal representative to advocate for certain issues)

Individual – Collective : citizens can participate as an individual (e.g. write a letter to their municipal representative) or as a group

One-off – Ongoing : citizens can participate as a one-off action (e.g. participate in a public hearing) or take part in an ongoing participation process (e.g. member of an

advisory committee)

Unpaid – Paid: citizens or interest groups can receive compensation for their time as part of a participation process, or it can be done on a voluntary basis

Reactive – Proactive: citizens can participate to advocate for change (i.e. set the public policy agenda) or citizens can participate in response to actions from the government (i.e. in reaction to public policy decisions)

Self-interested – Altruistic: citizens can advocate for their direct self-interests (e.g. I do not want a loud bar in my street) or advocate for broader social interests (e.g. against climate change)

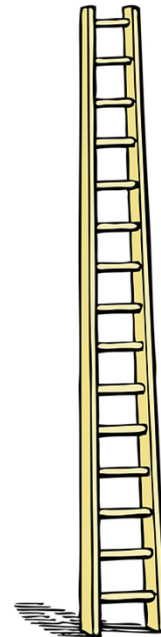
Resisting social change – Driving change: citizens can advocate for or against social change (e.g. protests in favour of Black Lives Matters or counter protests)

Participation ladder

Different levels of involvement:

- ▶ Delegation
- ▶ Co-decision
- ▶ Co-production
- ▶ Recommendation
- ▶ Consulting
- ▶ Informing

Source: Arnstein, Sherry R (1969)



Speaker's note:

Explain each step of the participation ladder. For each step ask someone to provide an example from their context that matches the step on the ladder.

Time: 15 minutes

Background information:

Participation ladder

The original also has more steps including manipulation and placation, but this is not useful for good practice. Also be careful it seems like top is better and bottom worse, but different types are appropriate in different circumstances

The participation ladder describes the different levels of influence that citizens may have on policies.

The lowest step on the ladder relates to **informing**, which is one-way communication from the government to the citizens, telling them about plans, laws, services. No participation. An example would be: sending a letter to inform citizens about upcoming road works

The second step is **consulting**: asking people for their opinions on policy plans or services and taking this feedback into account. An example would be inviting citizens to a public hearing to hear their opinions on the development of a new park.

Then follows **recommendation**: governments encourage people to come up with ideas or initiatives to help improve plans or services. They may invite citizen experts, technical experts or citizen committees. This type of advice is more interactive than consulting and involves discussion and an exchange of views. An example would be: inviting a group of stakeholders to review and provide input on the new municipal economic development strategy

Then **co-production**: government and citizens work together as partners to design (or implement) a plan or service. The outcome can be rejected by the LA-leadership but only with strong argumentation. An example would be inviting the chairperson of the youth council to be part of the committee that will design the new youth strategy

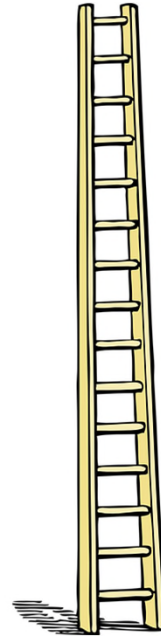
Co-decision: cooperation based on equality. Citizens have a say in decision making, for example a binding advice by citizen committees on government plans, voting for different alternatives, negotiation processes. LA accepts the outcome of the process. An Ethiopian example would be the Kebele education and training board (KETB), or Parent teacher associations (PTA)

Delegation: citizens have the freedom to organise services or develop plans themselves. The government facilitates and sets criteria but is not directly involved in the planning and implementation. E.g. grants based on a set of criteria with respect to objectives and budget. Citizens' self organisation can be part of a programme or a complete programme (e.g. citizens committee developing a LED-plan or the organisation of social or cultural event with LA-grant) .

Participatory processes often include different levels of involvement, e.g. first inform people about a local plan, then ask them for opinions or ideas, and after that involve them in the implementation (co-production).

Participation ladder

- ▶ Therapy
- ▶ Manipulation



Speaker's note:

Time: *to be added by trainer according to planning*

Background information:

Examples from Ethiopia:

Therapy: involving citizens in community education as without their contribution or say on the issue and procedure

Manipulation: where citizens are placed on advisory committees merely for the name of participation, and don't actually have a say in that committee

Source: <https://catcomm.org/ladder-participation/>

Manipulation

This level usually includes the appearance of participation, with the creation of community committees or associations. However, these groups are not given any control, and are instead used by those in power to "demonstrate" the use of citizen participation. Often, these meetings end up being more about those in power persuading the participants to think like them, instead of the community members helping the power holders better understand the community. This level of

participation has been common historically in Rio's favelas, particularly during the military regime through the 1980s.

Therapy

There is some overlap between this level and the previous one, manipulation. This level sees the powerlessness of the poor and marginalized as something that can be "cured." Thus, "participation" ends up exhibiting characteristics of group therapy sessions. With "experts" setting the tone and agenda of these community participation meetings, they often focus on adjusting the values and attitudes of community members so they become more in line with those of broader society.



ETHIOPIA'S COMMITMENT TO: CITIZEN PARTICIPATION



Speaker's note:

Time:

Background information:

Ethiopia's commitment to citizen participation (national)

The FDRE Constitution, Proclamation No. 1/1995:

- ▶ “Nationals have the right to participate in national development and, in particular, to be consulted with respect to policies and projects affecting their community.” Article 43 (2)
- ▶ “The basic aim of development activities shall be to enhance the capacity of citizens for development and to meet their basic needs.” Article 43 (4)

Speaker's note:

Discuss the national government's commitment to citizen participation.

Time: to be added by trainer according to planning

Background information:

Ethiopia's national commitment to citizen participation:

- The FDRE Constitution, Proclamation No. 1/1995, enacted general provisions about public participation. Article 43 (2) asserts that “Nationals have the right to participate in national development and, in particular, to be consulted with respect to policies and projects affecting their community.
- Moreover, Article 43 (4) postulated “The basic aim of development activities shall be to enhance the capacity of citizens for development and to meet their basic needs.”
- Article 52 (2) (c) also granted the regional states the power to formulate and execute economic, social and development policies, strategies and plans of the State.”
- Proclamation No. 1183 /2020 Federal Administrative Procedure Proclamation article 8,9, 10. About publicity of directives.

Ethiopia's commitment to citizen participation (regional)

Examples of regional state constitution:

Oromiya National Regional State Constitution, Proclamation No. 46/2001

Amhara National Regional State constitution, proclamation No.59/2001

- ▶ “The peoples of the Region have the right to protect and develop their environment, improve their living standards and sustainable development”. Article 43 (1)
- ▶ “All the people of the Region have the right to participate in Regional development, and, in particular, to be consulted in respect to policies and projects affecting their community”. Article 43 (2)

Speaker's note:

Discuss the fact that regional governments in Ethiopia also have a number of obligations to promote citizen participation.

Time: *to be added by trainer according to planning*

Background information:

Example from regional state constitution:

- Oromiya National Regional State Constitution, Proclamation No. 46/2001
- Amhara National Regional State constitution, proclamation No.59/2001
 - **Article 43 (1)** enacted that “The peoples of the Region have the right to protect and develop their environment, improve their living standards and sustainable development”.
 - **Article 43 (2)** stipulated that “All the people of the Region have the right to participate in Regional development, and, in particular, to be consulted in respect to policies and projects affecting their community”.

Ethiopia's commitment to citizen participation (local)

Examples of regional state proclamation:

Oromia Urban Local Government Proclamation No. 65/2003

- ▶ One of the objectives of urban local government is to “promote self rule or community governance by encouraging the involvement of residents in the overall activities of the city and to facilitate conditions in which residents benefit from the development.” Article 7 (1)
- ▶ “Residents, mass organizations and the private sector shall discuss, debate and express their views on the city annual work program, budget proposals, project ideas, performance as well as financial and audit reports.” Article 32 (1)
- ▶ “The urban local government shall organize public forums at least once every three months to enable the residents, mass organization; and the private sector to discuss and debate on issues” Article 32 (2)
- ▶ “The urban local government shall devise strategy to encourage residents to serve on boards or committees established for the purpose of city business”. Article 32 (3)
- ▶ “the residents of the City shall have the right to participate in all phases of plan preparation and implementation process”. Article 50 (1)

Speaker's note:

Discuss the fact that local governments in Ethiopia also have a number of obligations to promote citizen participation.

Time: *to be added by trainer according to planning*

Background information:

Example from regional state proclamation:

- **Article 7 (1)** stipulated that one of the objectives of urban local government is to “promote self rule or community governance by encouraging the involvement of residents in the overall activities of the city and to facilitate conditions in which residents benefit from the development.”
- **Article 32 (1)** enacted “Residents, mass organizations and the private sector shall discuss, debate and express their views on the city annual work program, budget proposals, project ideas, performance as well as financial and audit reports.”
- **Article 32 (2)** put up the obligation to create methods of public participation on government: “The urban local government shall organize public forums at least once every three months to enable the residents, mass organization; and the

private sector to discuss and debate on issues”

- **Article 32 (3)** stipulate that the urban local government shall devise strategy to encourage residents to serve on boards or committees established for the purpose of city business.
- **Article 50 (1)** enacted that “the residents of the City shall have the right to participate in all phases of plan preparation and implementation process”.



IS MORE PARTICIPATION BETTER?

Speaker's note:

- Discuss in plenary the question whether more citizen participation is always better. Why or why not?

Time: 15 minutes

Background information:

Participation challenges

- ▶ Resource consuming (time, money)
- ▶ Can be hijacked by interest groups
- ▶ Can generate conflict
- ▶ Diminishes the role of representative democracy
- ▶ Danger of 'box ticking' exercise



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Speaker's note:

Explain how participation also has costs.

Time: *to be added by trainer according to planning*

Background information:

Participation challenges:

- Resource consuming (time, money). It requires a lot of facilitation (manpower) and time, as such it can delay decision making,
- Can be hijacked by interest groups: If the participation process is not well designed and managed, small but well-organized interest groups can take over the process.
- Can generate conflict: if not facilitated well, participation can increase conflict between different groups in the community
- Diminishes the role of representative democracy: participation takes power away from the democratically elected local leadership, to unelected local interest

groups.

- Danger of 'box ticking' exercise: when policy makers see it more like a barrier to overcome instead of a genuine attempt to listen to the people

For more information on the costs of participation check: **Citizen Participation in Decision Making: Is It Worth the Effort?**, Renee A Irvin; John Stansbury, *Public Administration Review*; Jan/Feb 2004; 64, 1; ABI/INFORM Global
pg. 55

Questions/reflections?



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Speaker's note:

- Summarise the content of the session
- Ask if there are any outstanding questions

Time: 5 minutes

Background information: