

Session 8

Meaningful Participation



What is refugee participation?

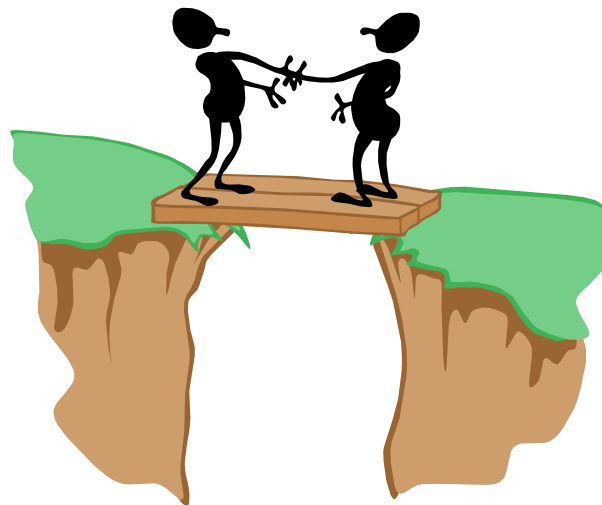
When refugees — regardless of location, legal recognition, gender, identity and demographics — are prepared for and participating in fora and processes where strategies are being developed and/or decisions are being made (including at local, national, regional, and global levels, and especially when they facilitate interactions with host states, donors, or other influential bodies), in a manner that is ethical, sustained, safe, and supported financially.

The Global Refugee Network https://www.asylumaccess.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Meaningful-Refugee-Participation-Guidelines_Web.pdf (page 7)



Social Inclusion

Social inclusion refers to the **active and meaningful participation of refugees** in the social, economic, cultural, and political aspects of the host society. It takes a **human rights approach**, treating refugees with respect, fostering a sense of belonging and empowering them to contribute positively to society at a local, national and international level, through their inclusion and advocacy (Kenny and Connors 2017: 30)



Spaces where people might want to participate in decision making and activities.

- Family
- Local community
- Ethnic group
- Refugee groups and organisations
- In decision making with NGOs, UNHCR and other key agencies
- In Government agencies
- In Health services
- Education
- In employment
- Other important places we might have missed.



What can we do to make this happen?

Make sure that everyone has the chance to have their voice heard.

That it is real, not tokenistic

That people know this is their right.

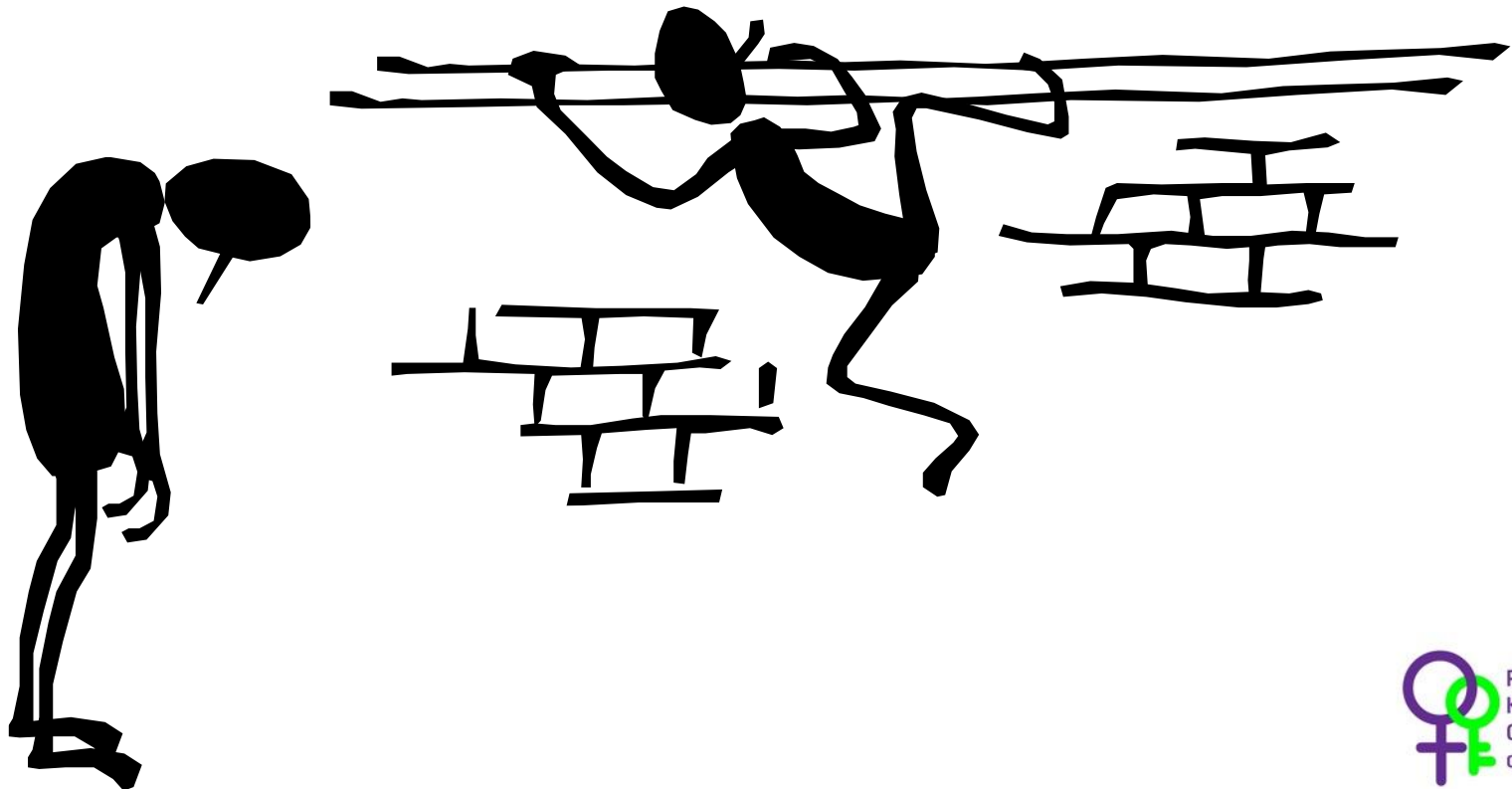
That it's not just for educated refugees.

That they know that what they have shared is important and will be included in your planning.

Look at barriers to participation.



We have examined many of the barriers to Participation that must be addressed.



A Checklist of local politics

Key things which need to be addressed when developing participatory approaches with refugee communities where you work:

Is the host government supportive or hostile?

Local politics – is the host community supportive or hostile?

Are authorities supportive or hostile?

What is the level of commitment to participation by the most powerful stakeholders?

Do the values, attitudes, capacity and resources of the local staff support participatory approaches?

If not, what, if anything can be done to address this?



Continued:

What role does ideology and culture, of refugees, hosts and service providers play in particular in sensitive issues such as human rights, including gender equality, and SGBV?

Are international agencies willing to co-operate together and work with local NGOs and refugee led groups as equal partners or does funding competition get in the way?

What is the level of trust between refugee communities, UN agencies and other service providers?

Is there fear that refugee-led groups are 'too political' and/or failure to accept that they can be both political advocates and rights-based service providers?

What political constraints are faced by local academic partners?

Are Donors willing to provide flexible funding?

Others?



Sites of decision making

Places where groups might want to participate in decision making:

- In your family
- In your local area
- In your Ethnic community
- In refugee led groups and organisation
- When meeting with Government departments
- When meeting with UN agencies



At a personal level.

This checklist is designed to assist in determining what level of meaningful participation is happening or could be viable for individual refugees. You may have already used it when examining gender equality. It can be adapted for mixed groups, men only or any diverse groups you are working with by changing the wording in the top left hand corner **

** Places where <i>women and girls , or men and boys, or people with a disability</i> would like to participate in decision making	**Barriers to this happening, Why can't <i>women and girls , or men and boys, or people with a disability</i> participate fully?	What would meaningful participation look like?	What can be done to make this happen?

