Annex To Indicator Guidance

Indicator: Increased Youth Participation in Decision-Making Processes (see here)

Indicator wording: Evidence of increased youth participation in decision-making processes at the [local / regional / national] level

If your project needs to assess the degree of change - rather than document evidence - consider reformulating the proposed indicator to *Extent of youth participation in decision-making processes at the [local/regional/national] level*. To assess the extent of participation, **establish clear criteria and standards for different levels of youth participation, informed by baseline findings**.

Projects may **use a rubric-based rating** (e.g. on a 1–5 scale or qualitative levels) to show progression over time (*see the guidance in documents below*). **Users should always formulate their own project-specific rubrics at the inception** in line with baseline findings. Ideally, formulation should take place during a joint workshop with project partners. When designing rubrics, ensure that they align with the pre-defined core dimensions of participation, such as:

- Representation: Youth presence in decision-making bodies.
- Engagement: Frequency and quality of youth participation in discussions or decision-making.
- Institutionalisation: Existence of formal mechanisms ensuring ongoing youth participation.

An illustrative example of a rubric scale and the description of each level:

- *None (=1)*
  - Representation – No youth involvement in decision-making bodies or processes.
  - Engagement – Youth are not invited to meetings or consultations.
  - Institutionalisation – No mechanisms or policies exist for youth involvement.

- *Emerging (=2)*
  - Representation – Youth are occasionally invited, often as observers or token representatives.
  - Engagement – Participation is irregular or limited to attending meetings without meaningful contribution.
  - Institutionalisation – Temporary or project-based activities enable youth participation but lack continuity or official mandate.

- *Moderate (=3)*
  - Representation – Youth are regularly represented in meetings or committees, though diversity - gender or socio-economic background - may be limited.
  - Engagement – Youth actively contribute ideas or feedback in some decision-making spaces, though engagement quality varies.
  - Institutionalisation – Partial formalization - informal youth groups, advisory roles - but not yet embedded in governance structures.

- *Significant (=4)*
  - Representation – Youth are consistently represented in multiple decision-making bodies or processes, with improved diversity by including representation for gender and socio-economic background.
  - Engagement – Youth actively contribute ideas, proposals, and feedback across various platforms, and their engagement is frequent and constructive.
  - Institutionalisation – Clear procedures or guidelines exist for including youth in decision-making, though implementation may still depend partly on external facilitation or motivated individuals.

- *Institutionalised (=5)*
  - Representation – Youth representation is guaranteed through formal roles and mandated seats in decision-making bodies, with strong diversity and inclusiveness.
  - Engagement – Youth consistently engage in a meaningful, well-structured manner, exercising leadership or facilitating community input.
  - Institutionalisation – Youth participation is fully embedded in governance systems (e.g. regulations or official procedures) and continues independently of external project support.

If your project also seeks to understand influence, this may be included as an **optional dimension** within the assessment (e.g. *Influence: evidence that youth perspectives are reflected in outcomes or official documents*), **but it should be analysed separately from participation**. An **example rubric for the *Influence* dimension** can be:

- *None (=1) – No evidence that youth perspectives are heard or documented.*

- *Emerging (=2) – Youth voices are occasionally acknowledged but have little or no impact on outcomes.*

- *Moderate (=3) – Some youth recommendations or proposals are reflected in decisions, plans, or minutes.*

- *Significant (=4) – Youth contributions noticeably shape decisions, action plans, or policies, and their input is referenced in official documents or meeting records.*

- *Institutionalised (=5) – Youth perspectives regularly influence decisions, policies, or budgets, with systematic mechanisms for integrating their proposals and tracking follow-up.*

Assign a level or score (e.g. none, emerging, moderate, significant, institutionalised) to each assessed location or decision-making process to assess the extent of participation. Compare the performance of each location or process and their shifts on the scale throughout your intervention to assess how youth participation has evolved. If desired, aggregate results to show how many locations or decision-making processes fall into each level of progress. Using numerical scores (e.g. 1–5) can make data aggregation and year-to-year comparison easier.

If you want to promote community participation and **increase community ownership**, design rubric levels, conduct scoring, and validate progress together with youth representatives, local leaders, and project staff in a participatory manner.

Outcome Harvesting or **Most Significant Change** methodologies (*see resources below*) can help explain shifts between rubric levels, collect concrete examples, and provide deeper understanding of *how and why* youth participation has evolved.

If using rubrics is too resource-intensive or if sufficient data cannot be collected to reliably justify scores (e.g. due to project scale or partner coordination constraints), you may **use Outcome Harvesting or Most Significant Change independently** without rubric scoring, while still maintaining a results-based and evidence-driven approach.

Consider engaging an external expert or evaluator to substantiate/validate your results during the project's evaluation.

Indicators that assess extent are **methodologically more complex and may be challenging** to inform, particularly where project partners have limited ownership of the data collection process or where coordination costs are high. To mitigate these challenges, projects should support partners through training and practical tools, involve them in the formulation of rubrics and scoring, and provide clear guidance on how to report on the indicator (e.g. through a dedicated section in the narrative report template). Where outcome-focused data is not systematically collected during implementation, external evaluators may be engaged to harvest and substantiate outcomes as part of the project evaluation.

Links:

https://outcomeharvesting.net/

https://www.betterevaluation.org/methods-approaches/approaches/most-significant-change

https://www.intrac.org/app/uploads/2017/01/Most-significant-change.pdf

https://www.betterevaluation.org/methods-approaches/methods/rubrics