

Stepping Up

Aim

to explore how young people participate in different ways and the barriers to some young people's participation

Age

11 years and older

Time

30 minutes

Materials

large room or open space, role card for each participant, set of statements

What to do

Line everyone up in a straight line across the room. Give each participant a role card. Ask them to imagine they are on the bottom rung of a ladder stretching from one end of the room to the other. The object of the game is to try to get across the room on the ladder. From the statement list, choose one and read it out. Each person considers whether they think it applies to their character. If yes, then they should take a step forward. If no, then don't move. Keep going until all the statements are mentioned. It may be necessary to add a few extra statements of your own. Ask individual participants to read out their role card. Ask participants how they feel

about where they have ended up. Why did you make particular choices? How did it feel when you passed others by/others passed you by? If more than one person has the same card, explore where they ended up and the reasons they made different decisions.

Now explain that there are many different levels of participation. It can be thought of as a ladder with non-participation at one end and full participation at the other. Some people may be happy with the level of participation they have, no matter how low. Others may be unhappy with their opportunity to participate.

Statements

- I have the opportunity to share my ideas and opinions
- I am listened to by my parents and teachers
- I have the time to participate in activities which interest me
- Adults take my views seriously
- I have the opportunity to work together with my friends on things that are important to us
- I can make a difference to the lives of young people in my area and in other countries
- Politicians take my views on board
- My views are always presented in an accurate way
- I have the right to vote
- I have all the information that I need to influence decisions that affect me
- I get the support that I need to participate in actions that interest me
- I have somewhere to meet my friends and other young people

Take Action!

Every young person in Ireland has the right to be represented at their County or City Comhairle na nÓg and nationally at Dáil na nÓg. Local decision makers listen to young people representing their views at Comhairlí na nÓg. Some delegates are then elected to represent the views of young people in their area at the national forum which is Dáil na nÓg. This will be held in February 2006. If you would like to get involved in your local Comhairle na nÓg, you can find local contact details at www.dailnanog.ie/getinvolved or you can contact the National Children's Office on 01- 242 0000.



Role Cards

Jack

I am 17 and am a member of a youth committee in my youth club which makes decisions about the group's activities. I was asked by my youth leader to join a youth council organised by local politicians. I went along to four meetings. We worked really hard but when we sent in our reports to the government, we never got a response.

Marianne

I came from Chad and have been living in Ireland for three years. I go to school and I participate on the school council. A journalist invited me to talk about my home country and to give my opinions on living in Ireland. But he spoke very fast and in a very adult way. When I saw the final article he had changed some of the things I said. I was very upset.

Peter

I am a student and a member of the Travelling community. I have recently turned 18 and would like to vote in the next election. However there are no politicians in my area to represent the interests of Travellers. In fact one of my local TDs has said in public that he doesn't want Travellers housed in his area.

Caroline

I am 14 years old and live with my brother in Nairobi in Kenya. We live alone because both my parents have died from AIDS. Work is hard to find and sometimes we go hungry. However I got involved in a local girls' football team. At first some people were against young women playing football, but our team has won many championships. Being part of this team has helped me become a better sportswoman but also to become a young leader in my community. I teach other girls in the community about the opportunities open to them and about the dangers of HIV/AIDS.

Thuy Ahn

I am 17 years old and come from Vietnam. Every six months the water supply in my town dried up. This means that my friends and I had to walk thirty kilometres daily to collect water for our families. As a result, we weren't able to attend school. Me and my friends organised a campaign to build a proper water tank and pipes to bring the water to the town. We got the money and now the town gets its water and we get to go to school.

Source: United Nations Environment Programme 2004

Tim

At school we learned about how the world's climate is changing because of the way that we waste energy and other resources. This has caused more tornados, droughts and flooding and has particularly affected poor people in developing countries. A group of us got together and decided to do something about it. We've asked our school to use energy saving light bulbs and we always recycle our paper. We tried to get local businesses to do the same but so far they haven't.

Jackie

I am 17 and live in a rural part of Sligo. I am due to sit my Leaving Cert next year and plan to go to college in Galway. I would love to get involved in a youth club that meets every Tuesday night in a town 10 miles from my home. However I am a wheelchair user and cannot get on to the bus that goes to that town.

Carina

I am 16 and come from Guatemala. A number of my friends are HIV positive but cannot tell their families because they're afraid of being rejected. I am a member of a youth theatre group. We put on performances which educate people about HIV and AIDS.

Kevin

I wear the white wristband that signifies the Make Poverty History campaign. I also have the yellow and blue ones. They're really popular at the moment. When I bought the wrist band the person told me what the issues were but they've gone out of my head, something to do with Bob Geldof or Bono I think.

Mark

Our youth leader took us to an event organised for One World Week. There was a politician there and we had our photo taken with him. It was fun but some of the speeches were really boring.