

## ***Engaging youth in active citizenship***

The introduction part starts with the icebreaker "Who Am I?"

In order to help the participants to build self-esteem, an opportunity to know each other better and also to present their views for a concrete chosen topic.

First, write these three questions in a newsprint:

-Who Am I?

-What am I doing for my community?

-What means active citizenship to me?

1. Give all participants 3 small pieces of paper and envelope

2. Have everyone find a partner, preferably someone they don't know well

3. Each person in the pair then has 45 seconds to answer the first question (facilitator should let group know when 45 seconds is up each time)

4. After time is up, have each person write down their first impressions of their partner on one of the pieces of paper and give the paper to their partner. That person then puts the paper into his/her envelope without reading it.

5. Each person when finds a new partner and repeats the process with the second question and the second piece of paper, then finds new partner and proceeds with third question.

6. At the end of the activity, have participants go back to their seats and read what other people have written about them.

### Defining active citizenship

We all may to understand the term 'active citizenship'. But, what does it mean and why is it so important?

Active Citizenship means that people get involved in their local communities and democracy at all levels, from small towns to cities to nationwide activity. Active citizenship can be as small as a campaign to clean up the street or neighborhood or as big as educating young people about democratic values, skills and competences and participation. Active citizenship is one of the most important steps toward healthy societies especially in new democracies.

Active Citizenship is a mixture of knowledge, attitude, skills and actions. These aim to contribute to building and maintaining a democratic society. It is significant to be mentioned that active citizenship supports democratic cooperation and is based on the acceptance of universal human rights and the rule of law, values diversity that include the whole community. Education towards gaining this knowledge and competences is of a great importance, which means that schools play a significant role.

Active Citizenship allows for:

- Participation in the community
- Empowering people to influence the decisions which affect their lives
- Knowledge and understanding of the political, social and economic context of their participation so they can make informed decisions
- Able to challenge existing structures

## Levels of active citizenship

Active Citizenship encourages people as citizens to become involved in:

- Civil participation and
- Civil engagement.

Civic participation allows people to get involved with each other so they can pursue their own aims, goals, interests. Some examples of civic participation are resident's associations, sports clubs, faith groups, etc.

Civic engagement follows more formal routes of public participation of citizens in the process of governance. Some examples of civic engagement are panels, citizens' juries, citizen governors, non-executive board members, advisory groups, etc.

However, this is not a wide perspective because it does not reflect the full spectrum of work that people do such as volunteering for the benefit of others in their communities.

Most people think about what motivates other people to get involved in active citizenship. This is important because it can help us to define what each form of citizenship offers to one individual, the knowledge that they acquire for the local people and communities and for the activities they are involved in.

Citizens can be motivated by many different reasons. Here are some:

- Citizens motivated by the sense of personal responsibility,
- Citizens motivated by participating in activities in their communities,
- Citizens motivated by justice and fairness.

## Youth participation

Youth participation is the active engagement of young people throughout their own communities. It is often used as a shorthand for youth participation in any many forms, including decision-making, sports, schools and any activity where young people are not historically engaged.

Citizens that are motivated to participate in the activities in the community really like to become involved in local activities and groups, because they seek to learn about participatory structures and community rights. They get involved to help in shaping the services to better meet local need, they participate in public consultation exercises and they involve in long-term strategic plan for the area that they live in.

Citizens that are motivated by justice and fairness are focused on developing high level of awareness of collective rights and of collective political and social responsibilities. These citizens participate within groups engaging in issues of social justice and equality. They challenge the unequal relations of power and they promote social solidarity. This can be done in the local area or in a world-wide context.

## Hart's Ladder of Participation

In **youth participation models**, youth and adults form partnerships that enable youth to contribute their ideas, skills, and energy to the shared decision-making process.<sup>1</sup> For adults, the key is to determine the type of coordination and interactions that foster youth to make changes, direct activity, and take responsibility for outcomes.<sup>2</sup>

Youth participation falls into three general models for organizing engagement efforts: **youth-led**, **youth-adult partnership**, and **adult-led**. These models work as a continuum and may be combined to best fit the objectives of youth programs.

**Hart's Ladder of Participation** provides a visual framework for health centers to think about the current state of youth participation and brainstorm the ideal balance between youth and adults in decision-making. While the balance of youth-adult participation may shift over time, each increase in level of participation generates a higher degree of development for youth.

