

RESOURCE SHEET: HELPING PARTICIPATION HAPPEN

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DEFINITIONS OF PARTICIPATION.

Participation: 1. The action or fact of partaking, having or forming part of. 2. The fact or condition of sharing in common with others or with each other. Partnership, fellowship; profit sharing.

Shorter Oxford Dictionary

Participation: Having a REAL say.

(O'Brien and Johnson, 1997)

Three elements central to the concept of participation are influence, interaction and information sharing.

(Chell, 1985)

Participation involves asking the question: 'Whose research is this?'

(Reason, 1994)

PUTTING PARTICIPATION INTO PRACTICE

- **IDENTIFY** your stakeholders, eg. elders and other local leaders, the people your project is for (usually families and other community members), government and non-government organisations, local businesses.
- **SEEK** participation: advertise widely so everyone has a chance to be involved, including those who have different points of view; invite people directly
- **DISCUSS** with participants the best ways they can have a real say, eg. full involvement or collaboration in project activities, being on ongoing reference groups or committees, occasional involvement when time permits, or one-off activities or consultations.
- **FIND OUT** from them what you need to do to support participation, eg. provide childcare, transport, payment for non-waged people, refreshments, fun activities, ensure they gain specific skills, locate meetings in friendly spaces
- **MAKE SURE** participation is meaningful and rewarding, eg. that participants are affirmed and valued as experts in their own lives, are partners (of equal status to workers and others), have ways of seeing what happens to their input, and have ways of being accountable back to the community they are representing.
- **EMPOWER** participants: encourage them to take the initiative

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