



Youth participation

GPG's *Guide to Parliament* series explores the key processes and functions of parliaments around the world. The series highlights the main elements and considerations relevant to the design and delivery of effective parliamentary strengthening projects.

This guide looks at parliaments' role in engaging with young citizens. Parliaments make laws, represent the electorate and hold their governments to account. The work they do is for all people, and young people are first and foremost - people. The emphasis of this paper is not so much to convince elected representatives *why* they should engage with young people, but rather how they can engage specifically with their young citizens to increase youth democratic participation.

1. Youth participation

Although there is no singular definition for youth participation, it commonly refers to young people having an active role and a voice on issues; and not just issues that affect them, but those affecting their communities and the wider world. Young people's experiences and outlook might be determined by their age, but any parliamentarian interested in including all the people they represent, will recognise that all voices are vital - these people just happen to be young.

Young people are able to bring a perspective that is unique to them. Not including young people results in a skewed view of any issue that is before Parliament, especially if it impacts them the most, such as education or youth

employment. Take education, for instance: young people can give a live perspective of their educational experience. So, whilst they may not understand the legislation in detail, they can most certainly give insights into how effective the implementation of education laws are because they are impacted by it each day. Their viewpoints can improve the quality of policy making and legislation.

Meaningful vs Tokenistic

One of the most important questions at the beginning of any participation should be - why? Not "why?" in relation to whether an activity should be done at all, rather asking "why?" in order to understand the purpose of the engagement. The answer to this question will determine if the proposed participation is likely to be meaningful or tokenistic.

Tokenistic participation is when people are invited to engage for show, where there is no real consideration of how the engagement can be part of the decision making process or part of creating change. Tokenistic engagement often results in nothing more than a photo opportunity and a publicity stunt.

Meaningful participation is where there is real intention to use the engagement as a tool to influence a debate or decision, participants are aware of how their participation will be used and are provided feedback on next steps. They are also supported to participate through an **enabling environment**.

It is important to note that a tokenistic opportunity could last for 1 hour and a

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meaningful one 15 minutes. The difference between the two is essentially the outcome - i.e. what happens after the engagement. Meaningful participation builds trust because it allows young people to have an active voice; they experience a real example of engaging in democracy. Tokenistic engagement actually breeds distrust.

2. Creating an enabling environment

The concept of an enabling environment is based on the idea that the right environment can ensure that people are able to meaningfully participate in decisions that impact their lives and the issues they care about. An enabling environment for young people to engage includes (but is not limited to) decision makers, laws, governance structures, and dedicated resources coming together to recognize the value and voice of young people.

Enabling environments are a tool that can be used to build trust and confidence in both young people and parliamentarians. Parliamentarians have an important role here, as they create the space and facilitate opportunities.

What makes an enabling environment?

From experience, there are four components of an enabling environment: Awareness, Political Will, Strategy and Resources.

Awareness

Although these components are not listed in order of importance, awareness is the first thing needed in an enabling environment. Parliamentarians need to be aware that:

- A youth population exists: Although they may not be eligible to vote, young people are amongst the constituents which elected representatives have a duty to represent. Therefore, they too are stakeholders in any decision that needs to be made.
- Young people have a voice: Although they may have never been given the space, each citizen - including young people - has ideas, perspectives, insights and experiences which inform the issues they care about. A simple question of 'What matters to you?' is a first step in acknowledging youth participation with parliament.
- There are other stakeholders in youth participation: Schools, parents and youth work practitioners. They have first-hand

experience of working with and relating to young people so any engagement should make considerations for these groups too.

Political will

Political will is a crucial aspect of creating and sustaining an enabling environment. Unless decision makers and elected representatives have an appetite to work with young people, the idea of youth participation is redundant. There needs to be a recognition that young people have voices and ideas of value to society, particularly on issues that they care about. There also needs to be recognition that youth engagement is not just a "nice to have". The aim is not consultation for its own sake. The aim is to feed lived experience and valuable viewpoints into policy discussions and ultimately improve the quality of legislation and oversight.

Strategy

Creating and maintaining an enabling environment is predicated on having a strategy in place that sets out a plan of how it will work. It takes some thought. To make engagement meaningful, decision makers must have a plan of how they will engage effectively with young people and where the opportunities are which will allow young people to meaningfully participate. Unless there are opportunities for engagement, what is the real measure that young people have been enabled to influence decisions?



Resources

Dedicated resources are needed to create an enabling environment. Money/a budget and people are the most vital resources. A budgetary allocation means that there has been consideration that the engagement costs something, and needs money to work. An enabling environment requires administrative and logistical support as standard and this costs. Dedicated people (parliamentary officials/administrators and youth work practitioners - youth workers,

teachers etc) are an important resource in bridging the gap. They can help young people participate in decision making as they know how to work effectively with them. They can also provide the administrative, logistical and information support needed too.

Meaningful outcome

A key test of whether an engagement has been meaningful is the outcome. Awareness, political will, strategy and resources can create an enabling environment, but we will only know if an engagement opportunity has really enabled young people by the outcome of the engagement. The 'So what?' question is one that should be asked consistently when young people are participating, for example:

- So what if they get to come to Parliament?
- So what if they were able to attend a debate?
- So what if they spoke with their MP?
- So what if they were able to attend an event?
- So what if they were invited to speak?

What is the point of any engagement opportunity for young people, if it does not result in some sort of follow-up? If it does not result in them knowing the result of their engagement via **feedback**, and knowing what happens next via **communication**? People need to feel that they have been listened to, even if their view does not ultimately hold sway. It is always good practice to evaluate the engagement from both sides: inviting the young people to share their thoughts through **evaluation**.

3. Everyone in the room

Young people are not all the same!

To reiterate: young people are not a homogenous group. Within this demographic (grouped by youth age) there are people from different backgrounds, socio-economic status, employment status and education levels etc. Their experience in these groups determines the lens of their communities and the world at large. All viewpoints are valid. A range of viewpoints is valuable. The challenge is not so much that there are differences but that young people are often referred to as one group, even though we can identify differences. All young people should have the opportunities to participate so that they can be 'in the room'.

The different lenses that young people have are important when participating in Parliament, and a **lack of awareness or recognition will most definitely disenfranchise a group unintentionally**, and result in youth participation that is not truly representative. Take language as an example: if opportunities are shared in English only, it will automatically exclude certain groups of young people. Not because they do not have anything valuable to add, but because they cannot engage with the language. Or take socio-economic status: if an engagement opportunity comes at a cost for application or transport, anyone who does not have disposable income will be excluded. In both these examples the danger is that decision makers believe they have engaged young people and they go away with a false confidence in this when, in fact, the engagement has been limited to a section of young people. If some people cannot be 'in the room', or are excluded for some reason, it should be acknowledged that the outcome only represents the views of those who were present.

With all the differences and nuances, there is probably **no single engagement opportunity or method to reach them all**. It must also be noted that some groups are actually harder to reach than others. With this reality, the aim of the 'room' should always be to **make it representative** - doing the best to ensure there is representation across the different groups. Essentially, Parliamentarians should seek to have a diversity of lenses for every engagement opportunity (unless there is an issue that only impacts a specific group).

Parliamentarians, as part of their role, can carry out a mapping exercise to help them understand who the young people in their constituencies are, where they are and how they currently engage with services (see below).

Accessibility

Not all opportunities are accessible to all young people, and not all young people can be reached in the same way. There must be considerations of the demographics of young people within any community and what **reasonable adjustments** may need to be made in order to allow them all to have an opportunity to engage. Is the language used accessible? Is information written in formal, official language or in plain English? How are engagement opportunities

communicated? Are they shared through schools? Social media? Community groups? Are they targeted to reach those who are likely to have most valuable experience? Considerations of accessibility are the vital keys to unlock true representative participation.

There is no perfect way to ensure 'everyone is in the room'. Questions to help achieve representative participation include:

- *Who are the groups we want to reach?*
- *What opportunities do they have to participate?*
- *Do all groups have equal opportunity and access?*
- *Who does not have access and what can we do to change this?*
- *Who is always in the room?*
- *Who is not in the room?*
- *Who (which groups) is hardly ever in the room or has never been in the room?*
- *What can we do to bring more people in the room?*
- *Should we go to where the people are, or should they come to us? (Where there has been little or no engagement, Parliamentarians may consider going out to where young people are in their constituencies before inviting them in to engage in Parliament.*

4. Collaboration

The impetus for engagement between parliaments and young people of their country comes from both sides - from parliaments/parliamentarians and from young people themselves. The challenge is finding effective ways of collaborating and bridging the gap.

For parliaments and political institutions, the motivation to engage with young people is rooted in an acknowledgement that young people are the voters of the future. Individual MPs can of course have connections with young people and schools within their constituencies and will be keen to make a favourable personal impression of themselves and their political party.

MPs: building awareness

Where connections with young people do not exist, Parliamentarians can increase their awareness of young people by building a profile of their constituency, this can be done through:

Stakeholder mapping - To find out where young people are, Parliamentarians and their staff can carry out a mapping exercise. The aim of this would be to know the schools in the constituency, civil society organisations that work in the constituency, youth networks and whoever else has links with young people in the constituency.

Information gathering - To have an understanding of the issues that young people care about, Parliamentarians could consider going to where young people are already active, or they could engage through services that work with young people. Questions to help include: **What currently exists to help Parliamentarians know what is going on in their constituency? And, what are the concerns of the young people they are representing?**

Committees and debates

Parliamentary committees invite the public to share their views on subject inquiries they are conducting, often through evidence submissions. To engage young people specifically, special efforts will need to be made to make it accessible in a targeted way, as they are unlikely to be following official channels of communication. Targeting, with the view of accessibility, could take the form of **committee visits to youth groups or round tables or workshops** to understand young people's experiences, or get their views on specific policy issues.

Committees can also conduct their own **surveys and polls**. For example, the Petitions Committee in the UK Parliament conducted polling with young people aged 7-18 on the use of plastics in supermarkets, and the results were referenced in the subsequent debate. **Focus groups** are also useful, as are more deliberative methods of consultation such as **citizen assemblies** - these can be a space to address issues of concern for young people.

Committees have also used **social media** to crowdsource topics for inquiries and to ask for suggestions of questions to put to government ministers. Hashtags have also been used to encourage young people to conduct online "parallel debates", timed to feed into actual debates in parliament.

In whichever way the views of young people are sought, it is vital to **act on the input received and close the feedback loop**. If the views garnered are not subsequently referred to, or do not feed into the policy discussion in some way, the initiative can backfire. If views were sought and then ignored, the young people involved will rightly feel a sense of grievance, the reputation of parliament could suffer and it would breed distrust.

Civil society led initiatives

The push for collaboration is not driven only from Parliament's standpoint. Increasingly, young people themselves are campaigning to participate in the political dialogue through youth groups and other civil society organisations. Young people do not necessarily want, or need, to care about parliamentary processes, but they do want politicians to listen to their concerns and their views on issues they care about. In many countries there are active youth councils and civil society youth groups. The British Youth Council, for example, runs many programmes, including an annual ballot to determine the topics which young people feel are most important to them - the "Make Your Mark" ballot. Over 1 million young people took part in both 2018 and 2019.

Youth councils and other youth organisations work alongside young people to:

- identify the issues they most care about
- provide skills training in campaigning and advocacy
- create networks
- identify opportunities to get their voices heard in decision making
- be inclusive and seek out the views of different groups and communities
- participate in decision-making
- improve young people's lives

Many parliaments have outreach services, tasked with forging links with civil society groups and networks. The best sort of collaboration is where the means of youth political participation are co-created around real issues, where young people's voices are heard by decision-makers and have influence, and where the views of young people lead to actual change.

Case Study: The Young Parliamentarian Programme, Bahrain

Bahraini (male and female) youth discuss social issues, employment challenges, opportunities and other topics on social media platforms. But their voices and proposed solutions often fail to reach decision-makers as they are not passed through the proper official channels. The Young Parliamentarian Programme is a platform to promote youth dialogue, social inclusivity, and engagement in the decision-making process in Bahrain, including in Parliament.

The Young Parliamentarian Programme is run by the [Youth Pioneer Society](#), which aims to reach out to a larger number of youth, both male and female and across communities, in order to increase their awareness of democratic values and citizens' rights. The aim is to empower Bahraini youth with the required skills to contribute to their communities positively and constructively. The programme has been designed to ensure a systematic approach to achieving its objectives:

- firstly, by developing and enhancing the required skills that youth across all communities require to have a greater role in their communities and in the democratic process;
- secondly, by providing practical engagement activities with MPs.

With the support of strategic partners, the annual Young Parliamentarian Programme has been delivered to more than 250 participants.

Key achievements include:

- A proposal to establish a Student Loan Fund (adopted by the Parliament's First Deputy Chairman).
- The establishment of a Volunteer Centre to organise volunteer work and provide training opportunities.
- Representation of participants in Arab League Youth Summit
- Formation of number of new NGOs in Bahrain led by programme graduates

[Article on The Young Parliamentarian Programme](#)

Parallel political structures

There are many examples of initiatives which replicate youth versions of political structures, such as:

- Youth parliaments
- Parliamentary youth committees
- Young mayors

These are often run as collaborations between parliaments/ local councils and civil society youth groups. There are also international examples such as the Model UN Parliament.

Case Study: The Scottish Youth Parliament

The Scottish Youth Parliament (SYP) is a youth-led campaigning organisation, set up in 1999. It is independent from the Scottish Parliament and the Scottish Government but funded by the Government on a three-year funding cycle.

There are 160 Members of the Scottish Parliament (MSYPs) aged between 14 and 25 years. The electorate is young people in Scotland between 12 and 25 years. Elections are organised by local councils, with guidance from SYP staff. The SYP Board of Trustees are also young people, supported by a permanent staff. There is strong support from youth workers, local councils, and a network of youth organisations in Scotland.

Three sittings of the Scottish Youth Parliament are held each year across Scotland, including in the Scottish Parliament itself. MSYPs often give evidence to committees in the Scottish Parliament and work with government ministries to improve policy. Once a year there is a meeting between the Cabinet of the Scottish Government and Scottish Youth Parliament representatives to discuss policy priorities and review progress since last meeting. There are examples of how their campaigning has had a positive impact on policy, such as:

The SYP campaign Right Here, Right Now fought for the rights of young people living in Scotland to be upheld, respected, and taken into account by the

nation's decision-makers. It successfully won an undertaking that the UNCRC would be fully incorporated into Scots law by 2021.

The SYP is a campaigning organisation: it is primarily a way to ensure that young people's voices are heard in Scottish politics. The Scottish Parliament and the Scottish Government value the SYP for the consultative function it provides. The benefit of the SYP, therefore, is enjoyed not just by the young people themselves and what they gain from the experience, but by the Scottish Parliament and Scottish Government who can consult a ready-made pool of engaged young people to help shape positive policy outcomes. The Scottish Youth Parliament also undertakes commissions from other organisations who are seeking youth views and engagement in their projects.

The Scottish Youth Parliament is thus a good example of meaningful youth participation.



Case Study: Youth Select Committee

The [Youth Select Committee](#) (YSC) is an annual initiative coordinated by the National Youth Council of the UK (the British Youth Council) and is supported by UK Parliament.

The Committee functions as a usual UK Parliament Select Committee in that it holds an inquiry, publishes the results of this in a report and receives a formal response from the UK Government. The major difference is how the topic of inquiry is selected and who sits on the committee. The

topic of the inquiry, is usually chosen from the priority issues identified in UK Youth's Parliament's Make Your Mark Ballot**, as this gives the Committee a mandate from other young people. The eleven committee members are aged 11-18 and include Members of UK Youth Parliament, Youth Councillors from local youth councils, elected Young Mayors, young people with a special interest in the topic and reserved seats for young people from Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales to ensure UK wide representation. Following their inquiry, the Committee, produces a report and recommendations, which the government responds to.

The Youth Select Committee was launched in 2012 and have addressed issues such as transport, mental health, racial and religious discrimination, and serious youth violence. In 2019, as a result of the Youth Select Committee's inquiry on Serious Youth Violence, they were invited to work alongside the Prime Minister of the UK to ensure young people's voices were heard on the issue.

[The Youth Select Committee](#) is a good example of meaningful youth participation within Parliament.

**Make Your Mark is an annual UK wide ballot in which any 11-18 year old can vote on their top national issue and their top devolved issue. The top ten issues that are prioritized from the updated manifesto from the Annual Conference, form the basis of the Make Your Mark ballot paper. In 2018 over 1.1 Million young people across the UK voted in MYM - that is 1 in 6 young people in the UK. Members of UKYP encourage young people in their constituencies to vote - in 2017, the highest number of ballots received by a single Member of UKP was 16,970.

5. Education and outreach services

Increasingly, parliaments are setting up education and outreach services to complement the work of individual MPs and to lead youth participation efforts on behalf of the institution of parliament. These

services seek to inform people about the role and work of parliament and connect people with the business and processes of parliament.

There are many different ways parliaments may choose to work with young people to foster knowledge of parliament and encourage participation. A key outreach principle to bear in mind, however a parliament chooses to engage with its citizens, is the value of going to where people are, physically, digitally, and conceptually. It is more effective to talk to people on their terms, in places that are convenient to them, and in language and ways that they are comfortable with. Do not always expect people to come to parliament and engage on its terms.

The formal education sector is a common starting point for Parliaments. Working with schools and young people provides an easy, structured way to get communication about parliament out to a captive audience (and linking materials to the curriculum helps teachers deliver their work). Investing in political literacy education is an investment in the nation's future and helps to convey the value of the institution of Parliament to citizens' lives.

Typical parliamentary youth engagement programmes include:

School programmes

Educational resources for school teachers - ideally curriculum linked, and not just covering citizenship and politics but establishing links across the curriculum (printed and online – learning resources, lesson plans, games, activities)

School visits to parliament – ideally with a dedicated education centre, where workshops can consolidate learning and schoolchildren can meet their MPs

Outreach sessions and assemblies in schools; online workshops, Q and A sessions with parliamentarians, virtual tours etc and resources for parliamentarians when they visit schools

Teacher training in political literacy, and establishing a teacher ambassador scheme to encourage ongoing professional networking

Case Study: UK Parliament Education Centre

A visit to Parliament to see where important national issues are debated and laws made has a powerful effect. When the UK Parliament decided to significantly improve the way it connected to the public, it established that a key audience was young people. It sought therefore to establish a dedicated Education Centre, to provide:

- A high quality, professional space dedicated for learning, appropriate for Parliament.
- A substantial increase of space and facilities for the Education Service so that they could offer sessions for up to 100,000 young people a year, a significant increase over previous numbers.
- A place that ensures where school children can have their lunch on site in the same location as the facilities they are using, attractive for school groups coming from long distances.
- Ability to offer sessions to a much broader range of learners, such as families and adult learners when not in use by schools.
- A space where art, archives and artefacts can be displayed.

The benefits included:

- A much better experience for educational visitors in a high quality, purpose designed, learning environment.
- Increased capacity to meet the ever-growing demand from schools to visit Parliament
- The meeting rooms, previously used part-time by the Education Service, could return to general committee and MP use.
- Separate security entrance.
- Separate facilities (cloakrooms, refreshments, toilet facilities).

Parliament's Education Centre opened in 2015 and delivered all the envisaged benefits. Visiting school groups receive a tour of the parliamentary building, an age-appropriate themed workshop, a questions and answer session with their local MP, and pre- and post-visit resources.

Parliament's Education Centre opening

Higher/further education

University programmes - including resources, visits, summer schools etc.

Parliamentary studies modules – co-creating modules on politics courses

Getting academic research into Parliament – for example through knowledge exchange, academic fellowships, and providing evidence to parliamentary committees

Community and youth groups

Youth consultations - surveys and youth forums

Workshops – not just on how parliament works, but also well suited to policy issues, and to campaigning and advocacy skills, and to techniques on how to get your voice heard

Social media campaigns – e.g. gathering views, online “parallel debates” alongside parliamentary business

Other engagement opportunities - e.g. awards, competitions, exhibitions

Case Study: UK Parliament Week

The Education and Community Outreach team at the UK Parliament (under the banner “Your UK Parliament”) runs an annual festival that aims to engage people, particularly young people, across the UK with Parliament.

UK Parliament Week is designed to create a nationwide conversation about democracy, people power, and making change happen. It explores what parliament means to people and aims to empower them to get involved.

The Parliament Week model is built around individual groups organising their own activities in their own localities, with the parliament team providing resources, activity suggestions, coordination, and publicity for events. Participating organisations sign up to become partners, thus creating strategic links.

MPs and Members of the House of Lords are also involved, and the Speakers of both Houses are active supporters. MPs encourage schools and groups in their constituencies to take part.

UK Parliament Week Awards have been introduced to celebrate examples of initiatives that have made a difference in their communities or helped promote democracy.

Parliament Week generally takes place in November and the annual sitting of the **UK Youth Parliament** (UKYP) in the House of Commons is timed to coincide and take place then. The **British Youth Council** (BYC), which organises the UK Youth Parliament, is a key partner. Parliament Week helps to promote the BYC annual “**Make Your Mark**” ballot for 11-18 year olds to vote on the policies they want to introduce or change. The Youth Select Committee Report is also published during Parliament Week. The series of activities is designed to ensure that the young people’s voices are heard and the engagement is meaningful.

<https://www.ukparliamentweek.org/en/>

- Do you want to set up a means to consult young people and understand their views? Or a means to enable participation in parliament’s work? Or is the main aim to develop political literacy and relevant skills?
- Are there any key priorities among the strategic aims, or in terms of age group, particular target groups, or policy areas?

Having established these strategic questions, an **action plan** will be needed to implement the strategy. Resources are likely to be limited; be clear about **priorities**. Some questions that may help with the process of prioritisation and start to build an action plan:

- Are there strategic partnerships you could develop with civil society youth organisations? Who are the key players in the sector?
- Where are young people currently active? What platforms/communication channels do they use?
- Where do young people get their news?
- Are there influencers that have their trust?
- Are there any “**quick wins**” that will help create impetus?
- How are you going to measure whether your engagement activities are effective?
- What are the key risks, and how are you going to manage them?

6. Developing a plan

To build on the engagement of individual MPs and to support youth collaboration and participation in political processes, it is beneficial to have an engagement plan for the institution of parliament. This, while requiring a mandate from politicians, is best developed and delivered by parliamentary officials. (For general information on parliamentary public engagement, including a checklist on elements to include when creating a public engagement strategy, see Global Partners Governance Guide of Parliaments Paper 9 – [Parliaments and Public Engagement](#)).

The following questions are designed to act as prompts when thinking about a **youth participation strategy**. Developing a strategy and an associated action plan, starts with being clear about what you are trying to achieve and **why**.

- What do you want to achieve with youth engagement? What is the strategic aim?

Parliamentary processes and procedures can be intimidating. Many young people are passionate about issues, but have no knowledge of parliament. So it is helpful to identify opportunities within the parliamentary business agenda as **entry points for participation**. Some key questions include:

- What do you already know about which issues are exercising young people?
- What are the current issues before Parliament?
- What current committee inquiries are taking place/coming up?
- Which ones have a focus on young people or may impact young people more?
- What could be the point of the engagement?
- How to get the best quality input: should young people come to Parliament, or could parliamentarians go to where the young people are?

Where there are no obvious entry points, the focus might need to be on creating new opportunities for young people to specifically engage.

Quick Win ideas to engage young people

- International Youth Day takes place on August 12 each year, this is a great focal point to engage young people. One example is for Parliamentarians to host a parallel debate with young people. This could be young people having their own debate on cross-cutting issues and then Parliamentarians debate the same issues. The young people could be hosted in Parliament, or in their schools or on social media. The main idea here is that young people and elected representatives are having the same conversation in the same time frame. Parliamentarians can also think about National and International days where they can be used as a focal point of engagement with young people.
- Parliamentarians could visit schools in their constituency to hear what issues young people care about, or get their view on issues Parliament are debating?
- Where logistics allow (based on distance), Parliamentarians could invite young people to come into Parliament to observe a debate, meet other elected representatives and maybe to share their perspectives on issues before Parliament.

Internal PR

If public participation is a novel concept for a parliament, the officials charged with developing and implementing a youth participation strategy will also have an internal PR job to do. Members of Parliament have a keen understanding of their direct relationship with their constituents. It is vital, if they want to be elected again, that they nurture that relationship. MPs are generally very good at publicising how they personally, and their parties, are working hard for the public. However it is common among parliamentarians and parliamentary officials for there to be a weak appreciation of their role representing the institution of parliament. Indeed, party politics, and politicians' partisan criticism of each other, can add to the public's negative impression of politicians and may be contributing to low levels of trust.

For this reason, among others (such as the fact that parliaments are amorphous, living

organisms, not single-minded corporations), it is vital to have high level support for a new youth engagement strategy, particularly if it might be regarded as novel or risky. Keep the high-level sponsor informed and on-side. A Steering Group can act as a sounding board and give some political cover. All parts of parliament can contribute to the youth engagement strategy, but they must be aware of the strategic aims.

Available resources

The available resources may be minimal. It can be beneficial, in any case, to start small with some pilot schemes - "proof of concept" - see what works and what doesn't. Adapt and build on success. Small successes have a ripple effect. Start working closely with one parliamentary committee and demonstrate how youth participation adds to the quality of their report. Publicise successes and show the value of the participation (especially to budget holders!). And think about evaluation in advance. How are you going to capture and demonstrate the value of the activity both to the young people involved and also to the parliament.

7. Conclusion

Investing in political education services for young people of a country is investing in the future of the country. Improved political literacy among citizens, specifically knowledge of how a country's political and parliamentary systems work, helps build good citizenship and improve the quality of the work parliament does. Knowledge of the parliament's role working for the citizens and holding the government to account also helps to build trust in the institution of parliament. To achieve meaningful youth participation, however, the engagement must move **beyond education and knowledge, through engagement, to participation.**

- **Education and knowledge:** spreading awareness of the work, role, functions and processes of the institution of Parliament, so that young people understand how the important decisions that affect the future prosperity of the nation are made.

This helps establish the **value and legitimacy** of the parliament, working on behalf of its citizens.

- **Engagement:** moving beyond knowledge, illustrating how the decisions parliament makes are relevant to their lives and concerns, with a view to increasing levels of engagement between young people and Parliament.

This helps build **trust** with citizens.

- **Participation:** developing well-informed and engaged young people who can usefully contribute to policy making and legislation with their lived experiences and unique viewpoints.

This helps improve the **quality of legislation**.

Publication design by
Joe Power

gpgovernance.net
hello@gpgovernance.net

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