

# TIP SHEET FOR ADULTS ON ADOLESCENT AND YOUTH\* PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC SPEAKING AND INTERVIEWS

\*Note: Tips below refer to adolescents but are intended to cover both adolescent and youth participation.



**Introduction:** This tip sheet provides suggestions for adults to support safe and meaningful participation of adolescents and youth in public speaking or interviews, focusing on what staff should do before, during and after the event. A complementary tip sheet for adolescents participating in public speaking or interviews is available.

These tip sheets are part of a series designed in collaboration with adolescents and youth<sup>1</sup> to support their meaningful participation in specific activities. The tip sheets build upon UNICEF's 'Engaged and Heard!' guidelines for adolescent participation and

civic engagement to ensure adolescents have space (opportunity and information) to freely voice their opinions to relevant adults (audience) who seriously consider and act upon their views (influence) [Lundy's model].

Suggestions are guided by nine basic requirements developed by the Committee on the Rights of the Child (2009) to ensure ethical and effective participation of adolescents that is: i) transparent and informative, ii) voluntary, iii) respectful, iv) relevant, v) adolescent-friendly, vi) inclusive, vii) supported by training, viii) safe and sensitive to risk, and iv) accountable.

## BEFORE public speaking or interviews

- ✓ **Identify safe ways to engage adolescents as partners from the start!** Engage adolescents to help choose topics of importance, seek out public speaking and interview opportunities, and determine who to invite as audience members.
- ✓ **Assign a liaison** to connect with adolescent participants and provide regular communication and coordination.
- ✓ **Ensure inclusive, equitable selection processes** that enable voluntary participation of adolescents who are most affected by the issue(s) being addressed through the interview or public speaking opportunity.
  - Support representation and participation of adolescents of different genders, ages, abilities, ethnicities and backgrounds, with proactive efforts to include adolescents from marginalized groups.
  - Encourage adolescents to nominate and elect representatives from their networks, if appropriate.
- ✓ **Adequately budget** for adolescent participation and representation, including but not limited to costs of preparatory and follow-up meetings, information-sharing, translation costs, in-person transport or chaperone-related costs, accommodation, and support costs (e.g., for additional needs of adolescents, such as those with disabilities and/or children, and costs of mobile airtime and internet data for adolescents). Ensure provisions for expenses/funds to be paid upfront to adolescents.
- ✓ **Develop and share information in a transparent manner with adolescents** about the background of the public speaking or interview opportunity, its purpose and timing, the intended role of adolescent representatives and intended audience, potential benefits for adolescents, ground rules set by the organization or media outlet,<sup>1</sup> and how relevant costs will be covered (e.g., adolescents' transport, food, refreshment, phone and internet access costs, and compensation).
- ✓ **Share information** in accessible formats and local languages that participating adolescents and their parents/guardians can understand.
- ✓ **Avoid having English language as a criterion** for nomination of adolescent representatives, as this is a barrier to inclusive participation. Encourage everyone to use clear and easy-to-understand language, and support translation and interpretation (including sign language) if required.
- ✓ **Ensure public speaking venues or online platforms are inclusive of adolescents with disabilities.**
- ✓ **Provide space and time for adolescent representatives to prepare**, so they can identify, develop and practise what they want to say without undue influence from adults. Wherever possible, support pre-meetings among adolescents so they can better represent their peers.
- ✓ **Offer training and/or tips to adolescents** on effective public speaking (*see tip sheet for adolescents*).
- ✓ **Prepare adults** (organizers, interviewers) to ensure ethical and respectful interviews with adolescents using open questions, attitudes and body language that demonstrate readiness to listen to adolescents and to take their views seriously.
- ✓ **Ensure realistic expectations of adolescents.** Adolescents need to be prepared that shorter, edited versions of their interview (or of recorded versions of their public speech) may be extracted and disseminated instead of the full interview/speech. Wherever possible respect adolescents' suggestions about which parts of the interview/speech to maintain if shorter edited versions

are produced. Be honest about what is within your control and what is not.

- ✓ **Ensure participation is safe and sensitive to risk.** In collaboration with adolescents, assess and minimize risks and ensure child safeguarding policies and procedures are systematically applied. This includes:
  - Ensuring voluntary participation, with informed assent from adolescents and informed consent from parents/guardians, and ensuring individuals are aware that they can opt out if they change their mind.

- Ensuring realistic expectations of adolescents.
- Allocating a child safeguarding focal point and preparing adult chaperones to consider adolescents' physical and emotional needs.
- Ensuring adolescents know their rights and know who to report to if they feel uncomfortable, unsafe or unwell. Provide them with a short list of key contact numbers in case of emergency.

- ✓ **Help participants feel more comfortable.** Wherever possible, help adolescent public speakers visit and get familiar with the venue or online platform (*see tip sheet on online engagement*).

## DURING the public speaking or interview

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- ✓ **Ensure sufficient logistic and administrative support.** Ensure adolescents know who their liaison is for any queries. If there is any travel, make sure adolescents travel and reach home safely.
- ✓ **Encourage adolescent representatives to keep focused and calm** (*see adolescent tip sheet*).
- ✓ **Ensure voluntary and safe participation.** Remind adolescents that they have the right to withdraw if they do not feel comfortable and that, during interviews, they can choose which questions to answer. Ensure adolescents know who to tell if they feel uncomfortable, unsafe or unwell.
- ✓ **Ensure respect for the diversity of adolescents' experiences and perspectives** that may differ based on gender, race, ethnicity, disability, age, sexual identity or other factors.

- ✓ **Create opportunities for influential adults to respond** to adolescents' speeches.
- ✓ **Leverage the media** to amplify adolescents' perspectives and messages. Support voluntary and safe participation of adolescents in press conferences, interviews, and use of social media and messaging apps (e.g., blogs, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, or U-Report) to mobilize additional supporters. Develop hashtags for social media and encourage their consistent use.
- ✓ **Prioritize safeguarding and decision-making** that are informed by the views and best interests of adolescents (*see previous considerations to ensure participation is safe and sensitive to risk*).

## AFTER the public speaking or interviews to enhance accountable participation

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- ✓ **Ensure opportunity to validate.** Wherever possible, provide adolescents with a recording of their interview/public speech. Provide them with the opportunity to edit out anything they said that they do not want to be included (if possible).
- ✓ **Share updates with adolescents** about how and where the interview/speech was shared and what influence it had.

- ✓ **Encourage feedback.** Encourage adolescent representatives to share feedback with their peers and allies.
- ✓ **Reflect and learn with adolescents** about their participation in the public speaking or interview opportunity and its impact. What was successful? What was unsuccessful or challenging? What could be done differently next time? Why?

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1. For example, any opportunities for adolescents to validate what is and is not included in the interview/publication and/or if the content they share cannot be edited or changed.