

# Insights from Young People as Change Makers in Law & Policy

*"Child participation is not only a right, but it's also a responsibility. For children to participate in law and policy, they need to have the opportunity to express their opinions, and decision-makers also have the responsibility to listen to provide feedback."*

*-Thando*

## Why does young people's participation in law and policy matter?



It helps **bridge the gap** between high-level ideals and concepts like equality and inclusion in everyday experiences.



**The more that young people are involved now, the better equipped they'll be** in the future to help make change.



**Change takes time**, but small intentional changes can make a difference!

## How young people can get involved



**Raise awareness** about issues with other young people, with governments, NGOs, and even private companies. By engaging with different stakeholders around the table, you can share your perspectives more broadly and gain new ideas.



**Challenge norms and stereotypes - be a trailblazer!** Sometimes it's intimidating and challenging to be the only "other" one in the room of decision-makers, whether you are the youngest, a woman, or a person of colour. However, the more you and other young people are present, the more your perspectives and ideas will become the norm.



**Monitor and evaluate laws and policies that are already out there.** It's important for young people to take part in processes like the Child Rights Impact Assessment (CRIA). By doing so, you can help monitor and evaluate how laws and policies positively and negatively affect the lives of children and youth.

## How to build intergenerational partnerships



**Be intentional** when planning an intergenerational space, so both adults and young people can share their expertise while learning from each other. For example, arrange the room in a circle so everyone is recognized as an expert and use accessible and youth-friendly language. It encourages more inclusive dialogue and discussion.



**Remember that knowledge is complementary.** Young people know firsthand the challenges they face regarding access to education and mental health resources, and their perspectives are often innovative and solution-oriented. Adults, on the other hand, bring experience, access to decision-making spaces, and an understanding of institutional processes. A relationship goes two ways – young people can also teach adults so many things!

***"Remember that the current policymakers were also once young people. They're also still humans and they also need advice. If we're not the ones that are holding them accountable and not telling them what youth want to see, then there's no way for them to understand or know that."***

**- Divya**

## Strategies for success



**Understand the problem and propose solutions.** Do not just look at the top of the iceberg; also look at the systematic issue and propose solutions. Think about who is affected and in what ways? Why does the problem exist?

- **Be prepared** to express your ideas and answer common questions about the issue.
- **Identify the key actors.** Knowing the right person to talk to about your issues is more strategic than speaking to just any government official.



**Remember new law is not always the answer.** Monitoring and evaluating existing policies is also important.



**Advocate for a seat at the table.** Like the famous quote, "if you don't get a seat at the table, bring a folding chair" so you can be part of the discussions and follow how your feedback is being considered.



**Be visible - the more people with you, the better!** It lets decision-makers know that it's not only you who cares about the subject that you're advocating for but that there are many people with you. **Promote your message through** posters and social media while also recognizing the limitations of these platforms.



**Be persistent!** When you keep coming up with new points and facts surrounding an issue, people will get more comfortable with the idea of change. That's where conversations open up, and progress is possible.

***"It takes willingness and courage to do this work - to be able to say, I'm a young person, and I'm not only standing for myself, but I'm standing for other millions and millions of young people. ...Remember we are not only doing this for us, but for generational sustainability."***

**- Thando**

## Words of advice for decision-makers



**Keep young people's best interests at heart** in whatever decision you make.



**Don't just consult young people; empower us in the process!** So often, young people are being invited to the table to share their opinions but are excluded from the spaces where decisions are actually made.



**Keep the conversations respectful.** Young people are equal partners, and it's important to treat us as such.

***"Children's rights affect everyone, and the most effective solutions will come from tapping into the wisdom of all generations."***

**-Alex**

