

INSTITUTE OF THE MARIST BROTHERS  
SECRETARIAT OF EDUCATION AND EVANGELIZATION

# STAND UP SPEAK UP & ACT

A GUIDE  
FOR THE PARTICIPATION  
OF CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE  
IN THE MARIST MISSION



Institute of the Marist Brothers  
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# INDEX

<b>Presentation</b>	5	}
<b>Introduction</b>	9	
<b>1. The importance of the participation of children &amp; young people in the Marist mission</b>	13	
1.1. The participation of children and young people in the Marist mission	15	
1.2. Milestones of the participation of children and young people in Marist General Government	17	
<b>2. The participation of children &amp; young people in international Human Rights Law</b>	23	
2.1. The context of the right to participation	25	
2.2. Participation in education	29	
2.3. The characteristics of participatory processes	31	
2.4. Children and young people in need of priority attention	32	
<b>3. The Adult-centred approach and the Rights-based approach for the participation of children &amp; young people</b>	35	
3.1. The adult-centric or protectionist approach	38	
3.2. The rights-based approach and participation	40	



<b>4. Elements for promoting the participation of children &amp; young people in Marist works</b>	45
4.1. The basic principles of participation	47
4.2. Dimensions of participation	54
4.3. Spaces for participation	56
4.4. Guiding axes for listening to children and young people	57
4.5. Levels of participation	61
<b>5. Methodological guidelines</b>	69
5.1. Methodological proposals	70
5.2. A Toolbox of ideas	87
5.3. Monitoring and evaluation of participatory practices	90
<b>Final thoughts</b>	97
<b>References</b>	99

# PRESENTATION

## Dear Marist of Champagnat.

5

It is with great joy and enthusiasm that we place in your hands this **Guide for the Participation of Children & Young People in the Marist Mission**. Thanks to a consultation process in which approximately 10,000 Marist children and young people and 400 hundred educators from the five continents took part, we present you with this *reference document* that seeks to inspire and strengthen our practice of child and youth participation in the different places of Marist mission.

The text is directly related to our recent General Chapters as well as the past two Marist International Mission Assemblies. Just as the XXI General Chapter (2009) invited us *"to become experts and advocates for the rights of children and young people in a courageous and prophetic way in public forums"*, the XXII General Chapter (2017) called for *"opening the eyes of our hearts and listening to the cry of children and young people, especially those who are voiceless and homeless"*, to experience a new beginning by committing ourselves to *"promoting, protecting and defending the rights of children and young people, and empowering them as agents of transformation"*.



We also recall the spirit of the first Marist International Mission Assembly in Mendes (2007) which exhorted us to *"expand opportunities for Marist children and young people to participate in decision-making, strengthen their leadership"* and encourage them to act. Similarly, the second Assembly in Nairobi (2014) declared that *"our dream is that Marists of Champagnat will be recognised as PROPHETS for promoting the rights of children and young people and are a public voice for the defence of these rights in the political and social forums in which they are reflected upon, and decisions are taken"*.

This document, whose creation was spearheaded by the Institute's Secretariat of Education and Evangelisation and endorsed by the Marist International Mission Commission, seeks to give a strong impetus to our collective commitment to guarantee, promote, protect, and defend the rights of children and young people<sup>1</sup>, placing their right to express *"their views freely in all matters affecting them, and to have those views given due weight"* (Art. 12, Convention on the Rights of the Child) at the heart of our educational and pastoral practice and, therefore, among our most urgent apostolic priorities.

It is possible that for some of us the ideas contained in this guide have been considered for several years within the ministries of the Province/District. We want those of us who have experience in the development of listening and participation processes for children and young people in their environment to be able to recognise themselves in this document and, at the same time, feel energised and stimulated towards a continuous improvement of their efforts. For others, it may be that this is the first contact with an important and complementary aspect of the educational and evangelising service that they generously provide. For those who are just starting this journey, we want to offer an information and training tool which will assist you in taking up this important task of educating and empowering those entrusted to our care.

The richness of our global family is expressed in the diversity of ways in

<sup>1</sup> Although it may seem repetitive, we have chosen to use the extended expression "children and young people" or "children, adolescents and young people" to refer to all the recipients of our mission.



which we carry out our mission in line with the historical, social, and cultural realities of the places where we are. We believe that for all of us this guide will be a source of hope and enthusiasm, recognising the blessing we have received from God in educating ourselves together with children and young people and developing better ways of accompanying them as individuals with rights.

In addition, this publication is the first way of informing those children, young people, and educators who were involved in the consultation process of the results, indicating how their opinions were taken into consideration. In a short time and with the help of them, a more user-friendly version of the guide that will allow its wide dissemination and implementation. It is now up to all of us to initiate and strengthen activities and processes of listening and participation of Marist children and young people as they are empowered to become agents of transformation.

We would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to the children and young people, educators and managers who participated in this process, as well as to Francisco Javier Conde and Zayra Magaña, our consultants, who were responsible for preparing the basic study document and for processing the contributions which helped to move the proposal forward. Their contributions were a fundamental part of this text in our hands. God bless we all.

We bid farewell, trusting in Mary's maternal protection for the fruits of this new effort. May she continue to be the one who does everything for us.

**Br. Carlos Alberto Rojas Carvajal,**

Director of the Secretariat of Education and Evangelization

**Br. Mark Omede,**

Assistant Director of the Secretariat of Education and Evangelization

Rome, 8 December 2022





# INTRODUCTION

In 2017, the Marist Institute celebrated two hundred years of life. The same year, the delegates of the XXII General Chapter committed the Institute to a strategic vision which included the need “to develop initiatives for the empowerment of children and young people in all the mission realities”.

The empowerment of children and young people<sup>1</sup> is only possible through the exercise of the right to participation, a guiding principle of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, approved by the United Nations General Assembly in 1989. The Convention has a profound impact on the Marist Institute and today, the opportunities for the participation of children and young people at different levels of leadership have multiplied.

To promote this agenda within the context of the 30th anniversary of the Convention, the Secretariat for Education and Evangelization of the

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<sup>1</sup> Adolescence and youth have specific characteristics that distinguish and differentiate them, but others are shared and overlap. For this reason, and to facilitate the reading of this text, both concepts’ “adolescents” and “young people” will be used interchangeably. On the other hand, the acronym CYP refers to the broad description of children and young people.



Marist Brothers' Institute launched the project "Stand Up, Speak Up and Act" at the end of 2019. Among the objectives of this project is the creation of a guide for the participation of children and young people from the perspective of the Marist charism, offering possibilities and guidelines for youth participation in schools, community, social centres, homes, apostolates, and all Marist spaces that work with children and young people.

In October 2019, liaisons for this project from each Administrative Unit of the Institute received a draft version of this guide as a proposal for their consideration keeping in mind their perspectives, experiences, voices, and reflections.

The consultation process began during the first half of 2020. The COVID19 pandemic took its toll on humanity as a whole and affected educational services in all countries. Generally, face-to-face activities were suspended, and online means were adopted

**"I'm thankful because the teachers at our school are like that; they're open to know from our sides and understand us."**

Young person  
East Asia Province

(using radio, television, and internet technologies and platforms). This situation hindered the development of the scheduled consultations; hence, the consultation process was extended to the beginning of 2021.

In the first months of 2021, consultation reports were received from the Provinces of Santa Maria de los Andes, East Asia, West Africa, Brazil Centro Norte, Brazil Centro Sur, Brazil Sur-Amazônia, Compostela, Mediterránea, México Central, México Occidental, Norandina and the District of the Pacific. While the report formats varied in format and depth, it was possible to detect the participation of almost 10,000 children and young people ranging in age from 6 to 24 years old. A little more than 400 education agents were involved.

Children and young people spoke about the availability of information on all matters that affect them, the possibility of expressing their opinion by various means, the listening to this opinion by the adults, and the



impact that this opinion has on decision-making in the various Marist ministries.

These themes were explored through questions adapted to the participants' age and level of development using various tools such as surveys, interviews, drawings, socio-dramas, focus groups, writing activities, awareness-raising with music, videos, film excerpts, poetry reading, interactive resources, storytelling, film forums, online entertainment platforms and presentation dynamics through social networks. Running throughout the guide, some of the voices of children and young people that were considered illustrative on the issues addressed in this work are included. These "voices of children and young people" show the opinions expressed during the consultation.

For Marist educators, through focus groups, interviews, and surveys, discussions were held on the same thematic possibilities, but specifically linked to the content of the first version of the guide, identifying those aspects that should be adjusted, strengthened, or added to the document.

In February 2021, videoconferences were held with liaisons for the Project in each Province/Administrative Unit to clarify and strengthen the strategies to be used for the implementation of the project, to identify challenges and proposals, and to suggest follow-up mechanisms for this endeavour. External consultants reviewed the contributions received and a final version of the guide written.

With the endorsement of the Marist international mission commission, we now happily make available to the educators, with the certainty that its implementation will contribute to the empowerment of children and young people in the exercise of their human rights which is the heart of our educational and evangelizing mission as the Marists of Champanat.







# 1

THE IMPORTANCE  
OF THE  
PARTICIPATION OF  
CHILDREN & YOUNG  
PEOPLE FOR THE  
MARIST COMMUNITY





## 1.1. THE PARTICIPATION OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE MARIST MISSION

**T**hanks to the impetus given to it by the Convention on the Rights of the Child<sup>1</sup>, the importance of the participation of children and young people on the international level has gained momentum in the last 30 years and has had a profound impact on the Marist Institute by helping to create an environment which encourages the participation of children and young people in various aspects of the Marist mission.

The foundational history of the Marist Brothers shows valuable elements of what would later be developed as the right of children and young people to freely express their opinion in all matters that affect them. Listening is an important phase of participatory processes, and we can certainly affirm that listening to children and young people has

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<sup>1</sup> Under the Convention on the Rights of the Child, a child means every human being below the age of eighteen years unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier



been at the heart of the Institute charism since its foundation, and in a particular way, listening to those who lived amid poverty, spiritual ignorance, and exclusion.

Seeing and being sensitive to the poverty, pain and suffering found at the bedside of the young Montagne boy, Marcellin was impelled to found a community of Marists who were passionate about being a sign of God's love among children and young people, dedicated to their education based on Christian values, a community ready to move, to see, to listen and to be sensitive to the marginalized and excluded children and young people, those whom others do not reach.

**“To be participants and to be heard is a grateful feeling because we are given chances to speak up and to give feedback as Marist Students.”**

Young person  
East Asia Province

16 This “listening” which we find at the beginning of Marcellin's ministry is closely linked to Article 12 of the Convention of the Rights of the Child which holds as sacred the human right of children, adolescents, and young people to express their opinions freely in all matters that affect them.

In addition, this theme is in line with the Magisterium of the Catholic Church, which considers participation “a duty which we must all fulfil consciously, responsibly and with a view to the common good” (Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, No. 189)<sup>2</sup> and with the

<sup>2</sup> The characteristic implication of subsidiarity is participation, which is expressed essentially in a series of activities by means of which the citizen, either as an individual or in association with others, whether directly or through representation, contributes to the cultural, economic, political and social life of the civil community to which he belongs. Participation is a duty to be fulfilled consciously by all, with responsibility and with a view to the common good. This cannot be confined or restricted to only a certain area of social life, given its importance for growth — above all human growth — in areas such as the world of work and economic activity, especially in their internal dynamics; in the sectors of information and culture; and, more than anything else, in the fields of social and political life even at the highest levels. The cooperation of all peoples and the building of an international community in a framework of solidarity depends on this latter area. In this perspective it becomes absolutely necessary to encourage participation above all of the most disadvantaged, as well as the occasional rotation of political leaders in order to forestall the establishment of hidden privileges. Moreover, strong moral pressure is needed, so that the administration of public life will be the result of the shared responsibility

proposal of the Global Compact on Education launched by Pope Francis in its invitation to listen to the voice of children, adolescents and young people in order to build together a future of justice and peace, a life worthy of every person.

## 1.2. MILESTONES ON CHILDREN AND YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN THE MARIST INSTITUTE

Among the milestones dealing with the participation of children and young people in the Marist Institute in the last 30 years, the following stand out:

- 1998: The document *"In the Footsteps of Marcellin Champagnat: A Vision for Marist Education Today"* points out the need to listen, question, investigate, pray, and look at the world through the eyes of young people.
- 2005: During the Marist Vocation Year, the then General Council carried out an exercise among the young people of Europe to understand from their perspective what it means to follow Jesus in contemporary society.
- 2006: In Kenya, a meeting of young people from the African continent with the General Council was held in which the young people highlighted the problems of drugs, poverty, violence, and corruption that they face in their countries.
- 2007: In the Philippines, a meeting of Asian youth was held with the General Council where they discussed the challenge of living their Christian commitment in the face of situations such as accelerated technological development, work dynamics that radically transform relationships within families, the burdens of professional commitment, addictions and gangsterism.

- 2007: In Brazil, the I Marist International Mission Assembly “One Heart, One Mission”, held in Mendes, called for expanded opportunities for Marist children and youth to participate in decision-making and to strengthen their leadership and agency.
- 2008: In Australia, a meeting of the Marist General Council with young people from the Region of Oceania was held in Sydney during World Youth Day.
- 2008: In Argentina, a meeting was held with young people from Brazil and Cono Sur, where they reflected on the reality of young people and their Christian commitment in the context of their countries.
- 2008: In Guatemala at the Arco Norte Youth Meeting, the young participants discussed situations of poverty, marginalization, various actions of solidarity, the realities of families in the region, multiculturalism, violence, and youth pastoral movements.
- 2009: In Belem, Brazil at the Inter-American Meeting “Corazón Solidario Marista”, a process of listening to the children and young people of the Americas was organized, with about 6,500 participants who expressed their opinion about their family, school, community and ecclesial realities, the exercise of their rights and the obstacles in exercising them.
- 2009: In Rome, Italy, the XXI General Chapter called on the Marist community to become expert advocates on the rights of children and young people in a courageous and prophetic way.
- 2011: In the “Advent of Solidarity” initiative, testimonies were collected from Marist children throughout the world to pray on themes such as non-discrimination, disability, migration, and participation.
- 2011: In Madrid, Spain, the International Gathering of Marist Youth “Belivin” was held in conjunction with the World Youth Day to share experiences and processes of youth participation in their local contexts.
- 2013: In Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, “Change 2013” was held as part of World Youth Day under the theme: Make a Difference.
- 2013: The Marist International Solidarity Foundation in collaboration with the Global Movement for Children, held consultations with chil-



dren on the Millennium Development Goals (2000 -2015) and to prepare the Sustainable Development Goals (2015 -2030). More than a thousand children from the Americas prioritized the following goals:

- 1° End poverty,
- 2° Provide quality education,
- 3° End hunger,
- 4° Promote healthy life, and
- 5° End violence and live in peace.

- 2014: In Nairobi, Kenya, during the II Marist International Mission Assembly, a commitment was made to promote the rights of children and young people and to create new structures for participation, co-responsibility, and decision-making.
- 2015: In Lyon, France, at the International Gathering of Marist Youth marking the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the promise of Fourvière, Marist Youth from the Marist Family (Marist Brothers, Marist Father, Marist Sisters, and Marist Missionary Sisters) participated in the “Dare to Dream” event which provided a space for meeting, listening, dialogue and commitment of the young Marists from around the world.
- 2016: As part of the work of the Marist Institute in the alliance for the elimination of all forms of violence against children by 2030, more than 800 students from different countries of the Americas participated in a consultation to share their opinions in relation to the violence that affects them, as well as the actions necessary to put an end to it.
- 2017: In Colombia during the preparatory phase of the XXII General Chapter, young people from different Provinces expressed their views on the main challenges of the world and the response expected from the Marist Institute. In the final document, they strongly expressed their exhortation to the Institute to “flee from paternalistic approaches and empower those who have no voice”.
- 2017 and 2018: In New York, USA, young Marists travelled to the UN headquarters to participate in the high-level Political Forum reviewing the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development Goals.



- 2018: In Geneva, Switzerland, at the United Nations Day of General Discussion, the role of children as human rights defenders was discussed. To this end, consultations were held in which 1,700 Marist children and young people from 13 countries participated under the theme "Empowering the Voiceless".
- 2018: As a result of a collaboration agreement between the Inter-American Children's Institute (IIN) and the Marist International Solidarity Foundation (FMSI), the research, "Childhood and Violence: The Challenge of Guaranteeing Rights in the Daily Contexts of Children" was published. As part of the research, children and adolescents from Brazil, Mexico, Guatemala and Chile were interviewed about their daily lives, identifying situations of risk and factors of protection from the violence they suffer in the environments in which they develop.
- 2019: In Guatemala City, Guatemala, young Marists from the four branches of the Marist Family and from the five continents, participated in the "Weaving Life" gathering to reflect on and strengthen their commitment to the call to be Mary's presence in the Church and in the world today.







JASMIN KAYE

REDAM





# 2

## THE PARTICIPATION OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS LAW





## 2.1. THE CONTENT OF THE RIGHT TO PARTICIPATION

**T**he Convention on the Rights of the Child radically transformed the social understanding of children and adolescents, who were seen as minors, incapable, dependent and objects in need of protection. The Convention recognized them as rights-holders and primary social actors who can play a significant role as agents of transformation with the capability to engage in decision-making processes, in accordance with their evolving capacities and gradually increasing autonomy.

**“At school, in Physical Education, I gave my opinion on what the dance called “Birds” could be like to perform with my classmates. When I give my opinion, my teacher shows interest and takes my opinion into consideration.”**

Young person  
East Asia Province

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This important international treaty established four fundamental rights and guiding principles for international human rights law for children: (a) best interests;<sup>1</sup> (b) the right to life, survival, and development; (c) non-discrimination; and (d) child participation.

Article 12 of the Convention established the obligation of States to ensure that children and young people can form their own views and exercise their right to express their opinions freely in all matters affecting them, and that these views are duly considered. To this end, they should be heard directly or through a representative, considering the particularities of their age and maturity.

**“I do know about rights because at school they have told me about them through drama or drawings. They have always asked us about our rights, for example, to study and have fun, to go to school and be happy.”**

Primary school student  
Norandina Province

In order to exercise the right to participation, the Convention, in Articles 13-17, establishes other fundamental rights such as the right to freedom of expression; the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; the right to freedom of association and of peaceful assembly; the right to freedom from arbitrary or unlawful interference with one's privacy, family, home or correspondence and freedom from attacks on one's honour and reputation; and finally, the right to information.

The Committee on the Rights of the Child, a United Nations body made up of independent experts, monitors the implementation of the Convention by all States that have ratified it and publishes General Comments interpreting the content of the Convention and addressing specific issues. In 2009, the Committee published its General Comment Number 12, in which it interprets the content of the right of children and adolescents to be heard and to have their opinion taken into consider-

<sup>1</sup> For more information: [https://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/docs/gc/crc\\_c\\_gc\\_14\\_eng.pdf](https://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/docs/gc/crc_c_gc_14_eng.pdf)

ation as one of the fundamental values of the Convention.

This comment noted that in most societies around the world, a wide range of situations, cultural practices and deep-rooted attitudes are identified that, together with political and economic barriers, prevent children and young people from expressing their views in all situations that affect them and from having those views considered in decision-making.

In its interpretation of Article 12, the Committee identified the following elements as the most relevant content of the right of children and young people:

- They have the right to be heard individually and as a group.
- They must be able to express their opinion freely in all matters that affect them.
- These opinions should be considered, based on their age and maturity.

It should be recognized that children have the capacity to form their own opinions from a very early age, which is why non-verbal forms of expressing their opinions, such as play, drawing, body language, among others, should be respected. Reasonable adjustments should be made to ensure their full participation.

- The right to participate is an option, not an obligation.
- Listening and participation procedures need to be accessible and appropriate.

**“The other day I was talking about this with a friend, we are heard but not listened to.**

**We come here, we give our opinion, we say how we feel, but we don’t know if they are looking to empathize or not.”**

Daniel, university student from Province of México Occidental

**“Writing poet or story can also be a way of expressing yourself or opinion because by writing you can express yourself without other people judging you.”**

Young person  
East Asia Province



- Preference should be given to listening directly to children and young people, but their participation can also be exercised through an appropriate representative or body, which does not have a conflict of interest with them. The obligation of the representative is to communicate their views accurately.

The Committee noted that certain measures are necessary to realize the right of children, and young people to be heard:

- Preparation:** They should know their right to be heard, as well as the modalities such as times, places, participants, and alternatives for participation.
- Audience:** The scope of the participatory exercise should be conducive and inspire trust and meet the needs of the children and young people considering their age and maturity.
- Assessment of skills:** the ability to form one's own reasonable and independent judgement must be assessed on a case-by-case basis.
- Feedback on the results:** they should know how their opinions were taken into consideration.

28

While the Committee proposed strategies to States to guarantee the right to participation, some of them can be implemented in various settings, such as schools, cultural centres and support centres for children and young people. These include:

- Establish, in all institutions where possible, a body that oversees the rights of children and young people, and where they can directly file complaints about situations that hinder or violate their rights or impede their participation.
- Provide training on the right to participation to all staff working directly with children and young people.
- Ensure the establishment of permanent mechanisms (councils, assemblies, etc.) for them to express their opinions and ensure that these opinions have an impact on institutional decisions.
- Implement communication

**“We also count and give back to the community.”**

Adolescent 13-15 years old,  
Central Mexico Province



campaigns that combat adults' negative attitudes and prejudices about child and youth participation.

## 2.2. PARTICIPATION IN EDUCATION

The Committee referred to a set of areas and situations in the daily life of children and adolescents in which the right to participation must be observed with special care. Of all these, we make special reference to the educational sphere, due to the educational and evangelizing nature of our Marist works (schools, social works, missions, and others).

Already in its first General Comment issued in 2001, the Committee had pointed out that education should be provided in a way that respects the inherent dignity of children and young people, allows them to express their views freely and to participate in all aspects of educational institutions, through the creation of school communities, student councils, peer counselling, intervention in disciplinary processes, among other aspects. In this sense, General Comment 12 reiterates that:

**“Teachers and coordinators should be attentive to all the students because there are some boys and girls who bully them, and they don’t say anything, and they must be very attentive so that they know the situation they are living.”**

Primary school student,  
Norandina Province

29

Participation and taking their views into consideration helps to eliminate authoritarianism, discrimination, disrespect, and violence.

- Participatory learning should be promoted in all educational programmes. Students should have a voice in the planning of educational content.



- Human rights and in particular the rights of children and young people must be practiced in educational communities.
- Participation through councils and assemblies should be permanent. The creation of independent student organizations is encouraged.

**“There should be assemblies with the group leaders, who would be in charge of gathering the voices of the students.”**

Adolescent 13-15 years old,  
Province of Central Mexico

Participation should include consultation on educational policies: curricula, teaching methods, school structures, disciplinary issues, budgets, security systems, etc.

- In particular, the opinion of students should be considered in all those matters of the educational communities that affect their best interests (such as transition between school levels, choice of groups, disciplinary matters, and school performance, among others).
- The assessment and determination of a child’s or young person’s best interests necessarily require the listening and participation of children and young people.
- The opportunity to participate and make decisions in all relevant aspects of their lives (education, health, sexuality, family, judicial and administrative procedures, etc.) is a very important factor that promotes resilience and healthy development of children and young people. The web is a new and valuable space to intensify and broaden their participation and the development of their active citizenship.
- In addition, the Committee encourages the participation of children

**“In order to ensure the “free” expression of views, we must be enabled to participate without pressure, and in environments in which we feel safe and respected.”**

Young person  
East Asia Province





and young people in other areas that could be relevant in the Marist works such as play as well as recreational, sporting, cultural and artistic activities; in the processes of prevention and care for victims of violence; in immigration and asylum procedures; in social emergency situations; in the modalities of foster care for children without parental care; among others.

## 2.3. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF PARTICIPATION

In the Committee's opinion, for child and youth participation to be effective and genuine, it should be seen as a permanent process and not as an isolated action. For this reason, participatory processes should have the following characteristics:

- a) Transparent and informative.** Children and young people should be informed of their right to express their opinion and to have it duly considered. They also need to know the objectives, modalities, and scope of their participation.
- b) Volunteers.** The right to express their opinion is optional. They can decide to participate directly or through a representative in a participatory process and they can even choose to abstain from participating.
- c) Respectful.** The opinions of children and young people should be taken into consideration with respect for their socio-economic, environmental, and cultural contexts.
- d) Relevant.** The issues ad-

**"The meaning of being able to participate and be heard is when you have the right to give your own suggestions and opinion about a certain task or problem. Also, the people are willing to listen to your problems, and they take action to give the accurate and immediate solution for the problem."**

Young person  
East Asia Province



dressed by the participatory processes should be meaningful and relevant to their daily lives.

- e) Adaptable.** The environments and working methods must be adapted to the development of the children and young people.
- f) Inclusive.** The processes should provide equal opportunities, support, and reasonable accommodations so that those who are often discriminated against or who live with disabilities can express their views.
- g) Training.** Those who take on roles as facilitators of participatory processes should receive the necessary preparation and knowledge to carry out their work.
- h) Safety.** Children and young people should be prevented from suffering negative consequences or retaliation for their participation.
- i) Responsible parties.** The participatory process needs to be evaluated and followed up, reporting on how their participation influenced decision-making.

**“Young people and children are shy because society has not allowed us spaces for participation in which we develop our own criteria.”**

Former pupil, Norandina Province

The last section of the guide includes a rubric that seeks, based on questions, to be a point of reference for educators when implementing participatory processes.

## 2.4. CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN NEED OF PRIORITY ATTENTION

Under the approach of equality and non- discrimination, priority attention should be given to those who suffer from marginalization and exclusion, for example:

- Girls and young women, who because of gender stereotypes and imposed patriarchal values, have severe limitations on the exercise of their rights.



- Children in early childhood (0-6 years of age) who can make choices and communicate their feelings, ideas and wishes in a variety of ways, and are often ignored, should have their opinions and feelings respected.
- Children and young people with disabilities who should be provided educational spaces that are conducive to maximum inclusion and with the communication modalities and supports necessary to express their views alongside those without disabilities.
- The opinions of children and adolescents involved in the justice system are crucial in the processes of prevention, social reintegration, and restitution of their rights.
- The participation of poor and indigenous children and young people require ensuring the right to culturally appropriate interpretation and the right to representation whenever necessary.
- Those living in poverty or on the streets, as they are often affected by violence,
- Those living without parental care in shelters, group homes, and foster care.
- Those in contexts of migration, asylum seekers and refugees.
- Trans and gender-diverse children and youth.
- Adolescents and young people with problematic drug use.

**“In this drawing I am helping the truck drivers when sometimes they drop their money and I help them to pick it up. I also go to sell food with my mum at my aunt’s stall in the market.”**

Rodrigo,  
a boy who attends social work  
in the Province of México  
Occidental

The evangelical commitment of Marist educators is expressed in a particular love for these marginalized and excluded children and young people whose rights are violated. Together with them, the Marists of Champagnat find ways to recreate the Marist charism and keep their mission alive.







# 3

AN ADULT-CENTERED  
APPROACH AND  
RIGHTS-BASED  
APPROACH



In exercising their right to participation, children and young people require the support of adults to achieve co-responsibility gradually and progressively in their community and school life. Openness to the potential of children and young people makes it possible to recognize and value diversity, to break down stereotypes, and to exercise tolerance and autonomy. The adult-centered approach (which prioritizes the adult gaze) is no longer the approach to be taken in our Marist projects; rather the rights-based approach represents the approach to be developed in our Marist communities, schools, social works, missions, and projects with young graduates.

**“Do the teachers ask you what you think? Yes and no, because if you ask something wrong, they tell you why you’re going off topic; they scold us. It seems to me they only accept what they want you to say, and what they don’t, they refuse to let you speak.”**

NN, 10 to 12 years old,  
Province of Central Mexico

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## 3.1. THE ADULT-CENTERED OR PROTECTIONIST APPROACH

Etymologically, the word “childhood” comes from the Latin “in-fale” which means “the one who does not speak”, the one who has nothing to say or who is not worth listening to. This concept of childhood, prevalent even today, undermines the capacities of children and adolescents by considering them “not full citizens”.

What lies behind these perceptions, which adults often have without even realizing it, are called “social representations”. These social representations of children have been built throughout history and are translated into practices that limit their full recognition as active protagonists within a family, a school, or within society itself. Adults often underestimate the knowledge, skills and creativity of children and young people, and it may seem normal for them to make decisions for them, even when these decisions affect the child or young person directly.

Because of this “underestimation”, two attitudes of adults towards children/young people can be deduced. The first has to do with conceiving them as ‘objects’ who have little or nothing to contribute. Let us imagine a situation in which an adult writes a letter to a recently elected school authority without considering the opinion, comments, or ideas of the child/young person because the adult does not believe them to be capable or because the adult wants to “free them from possible consequences”. What, then, is the adult’s perception of them?

**“Adults sometimes don’t take our opinion into account because they think that we don’t have good criteria; however, adults should be more open and value our opinion because we children express what we feel with coherence regardless of our age.”**

Adolescent 13 to 15 years old,  
Province of Santa María  
de los Andes





Another similar attitude is to consider them as 'vessels' to be filled. This approach is intended to prepare them for adult life or for adapting in society. It also assumes that children and young people must learn to think like adults. An example of this practice is when an adult dictates the guidelines under which young people should be included in an activity or adhere to its terms and conditions. This can be seen when a student is included in a school committee made up only of adults, where only adults speak, and where the opinions of the young people are rarely heard.

In our society, there is a "relationship of power" of adults over children and young people that can range from not listening to their opinions, to implementing strict discipline or committing both psychological and physical abuse against them. Among the evidence that points to the harm that adults sometimes do to children and young people, we can highlight separating them from their families and institutionalizing them -that is, placing them in spaces where they 'could be safer'- providing guardianship and custody to other people without considering their opinion or emotional state. These are examples of how often the decisions we make in the best interests of children and young people end up doing them more harm than good.

An example is when children and adolescents are invisible in institutional programmes which have a direct impact on them, or in the design and implementation of public policies which exclude them.

Some concrete examples of this includes the lack of focus on the rights of children and young people in public policies, the failure to allocate sufficient resources to public initiatives involving children and young people, and proportionally lower government budgeting toward services for this population.

**"There are many people who consider themselves wiser and who invalidate the young person's opinion because they think that they have not lived long enough to know, that they have no experience and cannot take a position."**

Teenage student - Brazil



Some of the arguments most used by adults for not incorporating a participatory perspective refer to the fact that children and young people lack the necessary competencies to participate, that participation and empowerment of children and young people will detract

from respect towards parents and other adults; that they should first have responsibilities and then rights, or that by giving them the right to participate, they will take away from living their childhood or enjoying their youth. By taking these arguments as valid, the opportunity is lost to achieve, from an early age, the development of democratic values as part of a progressive formation that gives children and young people the tools to exercise their citizenship.

**“Many people think that just because we are children, we don’t have the maturity to have an opinion. We all have the right to participate.”**

Anna, 12 years old - Brazil

40

## 3.2. THE RIGHTS-BASED APPROACH AND PARTICIPATION

It is foolish to believe that 16-, 18- or 20-year-olds will suddenly become responsible and committed citizens if they had no prior exposure to the development of democratic skills and values. For these to be effectively developed, a gradual and progressive approach is required from early childhood. This is achieved through the involvement of children, adolescents, and young people in all areas of public and private life: at home, at school and in the broader spaces of socialization.

In contrast to the adult-centered

**“When your opinions are taken into account you feel good about yourself, because you know you are valued and that you did something important.”**

Student,  
Province of Santa María de los Andes



approach, the rights-based approach places child and young people as active collaborators and as subjects or agents who can make important contributions within their own educational processes.

The rights-based approach assumes that respect for the creativity and capacities of children and young people is fundamental for programs and projects that involve them to be successful and meaningful for them. Within this perspective, it is recognized that both young people and adults have skills, strengths, and experiences with which they can contribute. A hallmark of this approach is the conviction that adults are nurtured by the contributions of children and young people, and vice versa.

Therefore, when we speak of developing guidelines for the participation of children and young people in Marist communities, schools, social works, missions, projects with young graduates, etc., we maintain that this participation based on human rights should be at the centre of any planning and programming effort in our Marist works. For this, it is necessary to strengthen the capacities of educators, parents, and other pastoral agents, as well as all those who are part of the formation process or who have a role in promoting, accompanying, and enriching new experiences of child and youth participation in Marist works.

**“I would change how the time of a school day is dictated by programs. Why can’t we learn while we live. We don’t use our education in silos in the real world, why in schools then?”**

Young person  
East Asia Province

There is a wealth of evidence on the advantages of encouraging child and youth participation (Lansdown 2001; UNICEF, Save the Children 2003; UNFPA 2008). Some of the arguments in favour of child and youth participation include:

- Those children/young people who participate in their own educa-



tion or development generate higher aspirations, gain confidence, self-esteem and change attitudes, thus positioning themselves as agents of change.

- Substantive participation provides them with elements to contribute to their family or community, improve their social competencies, conflict resolution skills and autonomy. These social skills will enable them to become more socially responsible and aware, more flexible, and empathetic to the diversity of opinions, to develop communication skills, as well as pro-social behaviors. They are provided with opportunities to develop their leadership skills, their self-confidence, and their resilience to avoid risky behaviours.
- Better decision making on the part of adults.

When working with children, the approach is to have the best information available. Many educational institutions are concerned with increasing learning achievement, results, and educational quality. However, less attention is given to how

they can contribute to reducing problems in living environments and educational communities. By developing a more participative structures in educational communities, there is a greater likelihood of a harmonious relationship between all members of the community, as well as a better teaching and learning environment. It is important to highlight that the greatest and most fundamental right that must be upheld in a school is the right of every student to learn.

**“It is important when the teacher gives opportunities for participation and let’s go a bit of the reins so that an evolution can be noticed in the schools.”**

Marist alumnus,  
Province of Norandina

- Greater understanding of and commitment to a democratic community is important. When educational institutions speak of developing democratic exercises, they are often understood as carrying out elections to choose representatives. This is an error in participation since democracy is not limited to voting. Instead, educational



communities should develop participatory processes that permeate the entire institutional environment so that children, adolescents, and young people may understand that this is what democracy is all about, and not only the election of a government.

**“What does it mean for you to participate and to be heard? To be heard or to speak for other people that can’t say a word or express their feelings about the things that have been going on”.**

Young person,  
East Asia Province

Children understand that their freedom is limited by the rights and freedom of others, and that their actions can affect them. The right to learn and allowing others the right to learn are fundamental democratic principles in the school context and need to be emphasized. Children and young people will experience respect for their own points of view and will discover the importance of respecting other people’s, thus understanding the value of democracy. By learning to question, express their opinions, engage in dialogue, and listen, they will acquire the skills and competencies to develop critical thinking and judgement as an essential part of participation in a democratic society.

43

- Participation allows for greater protection. The Convention does not seek to give them the same rights as adults, but rather to give them the opportunity to express their views in their own way. Adults can protect those entrusted to their care if they are aware of the situations they are going through and if they provide them with appropriate ways to express themselves.
- Freedom of expression is a fundamental right of all people, and children and young people are no exception when it comes to making decisions directly related to what affects their lives. When it comes to issues such as where to live after parental divorce, school rules, legislation regulating child labour, or the portrayal of children and young people in the media, children and young people need to be involved and taken seriously.



Sunday  
الأحد

The months of the year - أشهر السنة

January	July	كانون الثاني	تموز
February	August	أب	أب
March	September	أيلول	آذار
April	October	تشرين	ربيعان
May	November	تف	أيار
June	December	كانون	حزيران





# 4

WAYS  
OF PROMOTING  
THE PARTICIPATION  
OF CHILDREN  
AND YOUNG PEOPLE  
IN MARIST WORKS







**T**he promotion of child and youth participation in the different Marist social and educational works requires theoretical and methodological resources to guide the practice of educators, accompaniers, counsellors, facilitators, tutors, volunteers, pastoral workers, and any Marist agent involved with children and young people.

In this section we propose a set of principles, possibilities, criteria, and recommendations to encourage and guide the practice the participation of children and young people in the diversity of contexts in which Marist works are situated.

## 4.1. THE BASIC PRINCIPLES OF PARTICIPATION

All educational practices that are part of our performance as educators, facilitators, or guides, must be accompanied by a series of principles that guide our actions. These principles function as a road map



that guides us and helps us to improve our work as educators. It is worth mentioning here that parents/legal guardians are the first educators and their role in the basic principles of participation is paramount.

The principles listed below are some of those that will guide the work of Marist schools and social works in their child and youth participation initiatives. However, as many as necessary can be added to the list to adapt to the realities of the diverse contexts where our Marist mission exists.

**“In my classroom we don’t have a space as such to express our feelings. Sometimes the head teacher asks us, “how do you feel?” or “how have we been doing?”, and sometimes we do talk. It’s not a set thing. I’m talking about issues that we’ve seen in school. We haven’t talked about something that came up; we talk about the subjects.”**

Aranza. Teenage student  
Province of México Occidental

### **A. Progressive autonomy**

Progressive autonomy indicates that the direction and guidance of adults towards children and adolescents is directly related to the evolution of their faculties. This implies recognizing that children and young people are gradually acquiring greater cognitive, physical, social, and emotional capacities. As this happens, the role of adults must become more egalitarian and horizontal, so that children and young people can assume more and more responsibilities and exercise their rights and freedoms in a more autonomous manner.

The Convention states that progressive autonomy is “the exercise of the rights of children and adolescents in accordance with their evolving capacities” (Article 14). Mothers, fathers or other caregivers are responsible for providing “appropriate guidance and direction to enable them to exercise the rights recognized in the Convention” with increasing autonomy.



This does not diminish the responsibility of other guardians, institutions, or the State to guarantee the protection and best interests of children and adolescents. On the contrary, progressive autonomy is about ensuring the necessary balance between the need to direct them and the autonomy they can acquire as they grow.

Examples of how progressive autonomy of children and young people is put into practice:

Explore together with them solutions according to their age, capacities, and degree of maturity.

- Ask them “How do you think I can help you?”.
- Do things for a child and let them try them on their own next time (e.g., tie their shoelaces).

## B. Gender perspective

The construction of gender roles accompanies the development of girls and boys as part of their socialization process.

These gender roles are social and cultural constructs, acquired over time, that dictate what each society expects from the behaviour of men and women, that is, they are roles linked to biological sex of the person. Have you ever heard how cute pink dresses look on girls or that boys look good playing with cars or soccer balls? Just that idea is a gender role.

When working with children and young people, it is important to understand the social and cultural contexts in which they live (family, school, health services, neighbourhood, etc.) to analyse the gender roles they were brought up with and to reduce, or better still, eliminate them. This will allow us to avoid the reproduction of gender inequalities.

**“All of our problems in the community are not just being heard but they are willing to take action in order to provide solution to our problem.”**

Young person  
East Asia Province

If we do not question the gender roles in our society, these ideas become more complex and become more limiting, excluding, or even becoming discriminatory--to the point of establishing, for example, that women should not study but stay at home to take care of their children or that men are the only ones responsible for the family's sustenance. By questioning these roles, we will be able to eliminate gender barriers.

50 What is a gender barrier? These are limitations or obstacles faced mainly by girls and people of sexual diversity. The root of these barriers is neither real nor natural but is built based on gender. For example, the phrase "My grandfather says that it is the woman who keeps the home together and that is why she should not work, that the problems that children have today are because their mothers work" carries with it a gender barrier. It is not in the "essence" or "nature" of women to "keep the home together" but the gender roles in which we have been socialized make it seem as if it is true.

In view of this, it is important that child and youth participation helps to eliminate gender barriers while building more open and democratic school and community spaces. Including a gender perspective from early stages of development is crucial for reaching adulthood with greater equity.

**"One issue that is never touched on is the issue of the patriarchal pact and how over-protective it is, not by all men, but enough of them to be noticed. At least in my classroom it has happened that sexist comments are said by teachers, professors, or students, it has happened... and nobody says anything, and if you say something... you don't look bad, but people make a face like 'why are you saying it?' Just let it go and that's it, and I feel like no, it's something that shouldn't be let go."**

María José, university student.  
Province of México Occidental

Examples of how to put the gender perspective into practice:

- Do not divide recreational and sports activities between girls and boys, e.g., at recess time girls and boys can play soccer.
- Protecting girls and adolescents from child marriage.
- Providing education in the sciences for girls and adolescents.

Promoting sexual and reproductive health, as well as the prevention of teenage pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases.

- Having protocols for responding to gender violence with the population we serve.

### C. Equality and non-discrimination

Article 2 of the Convention states that all rights must be guaranteed to children and adolescents, regardless of their race, colour, sex, language, religion, political, national, ethnic, or social origin, economic status, physical handicap, birth, or any other condition. This brings us back to the right to equality and non-discrimination.

This set of principles has several meanings. The first is that equality does not refer to treating everyone identically; everyone should be treated according to his or her needs and context. Second, adults, institutions and states should refrain from any action that is discriminatory towards children or youth. For example, a discriminatory action could be to give preferential treatment to students of higher socio-economic status or of one religion over another. Schools and charities should refrain from such actions.

Third, the principle of equality and non-discrimination requires taking special measures to reduce or eliminate the conditions that lead to discrimination. Children and adolescents are not vulnerable in and of themselves,

**"We propose that everyone should be equally given a chance to express their opinions and those opinions should be acknowledged and studied by those who are in charge."**

Young person  
East Asia Province

but there are conditions of vulnerability that affect them. Some of conditions include poverty, their migratory status, their gender identity, and their disability. In view of these situations, child and youth participation requires that special conditions be provided to those living in vulnerable situations so that they may also participate.

**“That every child around the world, from those who have everything to those who have nothing, that they can all have their say no matter how much they have and where they are from”.**

Isabela,  
Province of México Occidental

Some examples of how the principle of equality and non-discrimination is put into practice:

- Raise awareness and educate the entire school and social work community about the negative effects that discriminatory attitudes and practices have on individuals.
- Use materials such as documentaries, films, stories, short essays, lectures, etc. to discuss discrimination, racism, xenophobia, misogyny, homophobia, lesbophobia, and other discriminatory practices.
- Ensure the necessary equipment and resources so that children and youth with disabilities can express their views freely and their opinions are given due consideration.
- Establish “zero tolerance” policies for discriminatory practices among the educational community.

52

#### **D. Educational equity**

As Marists, one of our goals must surely be educational equity in our schools and social works. Here it is necessary to identify the differences between equality and equity. An egalitarian education alludes to providing the same resources for all, even though we know that each child is different. The notion of equity renounces the idea that we all deserve the same, and instead proposes to provide more support to those who have less to compensate for their social and economic deficiencies. The con-



cept of equality does not necessarily imply justice; equity does.

There are some factors that may explain the educational gaps that exist between some children and others. Studies suggest that the socio-economic background of families, the practices of teachers, and the characteristics of schools explain a large part of the differences in academic achievement among children.

As schools and social works, we have the responsibility to reduce these gaps as much as possible. We can allocate a range of resources (financial, educational, infrastructural) to ensure that every child, especially those who lag the furthest behind academically, can learn.

It is also important to offer opportunities for access to knowledge that are based on high expectations of their potential, not because they are less able to achieve. Collaborative work within the school and social work can also help to reduce the gap between students who learn more easily than others.

All the above is closely related to the right to participation, since everyone's needs are met and compensated for, the greater the possibilities of developing practices which promote child and youth participation. In other words, how do we want them and their families to participate if they do not have the necessary elements for learning covered?

Some examples of how the principle of educational equity could be put into practice:

- Generate collaborative strategies to help reduce the gaps between high and low performing students.
- Generate actions, at school or at the social work level, aimed at recognizing the effort made by each student, not only the most outstanding ones.
- Provide spaces for reflection and discussion among

**"We like recess; it is the perfect time to share with classmates and others. School is the best place we have, in this time of pandemic I would like to be in my school, play soccer and basketball, be in the playground and have fun."**

Primary School Student,  
Norandina Province



teachers to devise creative ways of meeting the specific needs of children and adolescents.

- Support parents in accessing external institutions that address the specific needs of children and youth (e.g., school support, medical and psychological care, sports, social work, social programs, etc.).

**“We should have spaces to express our opinions about what affects us in the community considering that we are part of the community.”**

Young person  
from East Asia Province

To the extent that we incorporate the principles developed so far into our practices, we will be in a better position to promote and strengthen child and youth participation in our schools and social works. Ultimately, what these principles seek is to build societies that are more just, democratic, and open to dialogue, with individuals who are aware and capable of action. As Marist projects we have a great opportunity to advance towards this horizon.

54

## 4.2. DIMENSIONS OF PARTICIPATION

Child and youth participation can be understood within different dimensions, in this guide we propose four: the pedagogical, social, political, and evangelizing dimension.

1. The pedagogical dimension highlights the formative nature of participation as it provides for the development of skills and competencies, values, ways of thinking, behaviour, and patterns of social relationships. In this way, the exercise of child and youth participation connects with the cognitive, emotional, social, and cultural aspects of those entrusted to our care.
2. The social dimension in the human experience has to do with interaction, dialogue, and exchange with other people and social groups.





Learning to live together, to negotiate, to be tolerant, to listen to others, to understand, to construct and respect rules, as well as to work in groups, are some of the aspects which the social dimension contemplates.

3. The political dimension is one which highlights the need for children and young people to play a leading role in the development of citizenship from an early age. This is not possible unless the adult world recognizes that children and young people are agents in the exercise of their political rights linked to participation, informed opinion and decision-making in areas related to their education, health, recreation, food, religion and, of course, their sexuality, and not only restricted to voting or the election of representatives in their immediate living environment, such as the classroom. It is necessary to emphasize that in this dimension, it has been difficult to make progress because the struggle for the rights of children and young people has been waged by adults who are aware of the issue, and not so much by children and young people themselves. In this sense, children and young people have not been the protagonists (as in the case of the struggle of women, for example), but rather the recipients.
4. The evangelizing dimension of the Marist mission is consistent with the focus on the rights of children and young people, since it is oriented towards the proclamation of the Good News of the Kingdom of God among children, adolescents, and young people, to whom Marist educators seek to reveal the loving face of God and the importance of human dignity.

55

Together with children and young people, Marist educators seek to build a sense of life from the model of Jesus and his building of God's kingdom, through educational processes in which each person becomes aware of their own identity and dignity, recognizing themselves as protagonists of a complex web of personal and collective existence, being

**“Sometimes we feel that what we have to say is not always taken into account in decision making within the institution.”**

Marist Alumni, Norandina Province



agents of transformation of reality, integrating faith, culture, and life (Institute of the Marist Brothers, 2011).

Only through participation is it possible for Marist children, adolescents, and young people to become protagonists in their communities and agents of transformation based on the values of the Kingdom: the construction of a more human, more dignified, and just life for all people and, in a particular way, for those whose dignity has been violated.

### 4.3. SPACES FOR PARTICIPATION

The great diversity of the Marist world has a common denominator: the educational and evangelizing work among children and young people, whose participation should be a guiding principle in all the programs, services and actions that are implemented. Consistent with the dimensions already pointed out, the action of Marist educators can be deployed in the following areas:

- a) The specific Marist sphere: in the schools, social works, and in the homes, and the open spaces of participation that is present in the provinces, districts, regions, and global level, through forums, assemblies, and congresses.
- b) The ecclesial sphere: Marist educators accompany children and young people in evangelizing ecclesial spaces such as catechetical groups, youth groups, youth days, whether at the local or international level. In these spaces we should also aim at the highest levels of participation and representation of children and young people.
- c) The social sphere: Marist

**"Sometimes teachers choose the same person and sometimes you notice the preference on the part of some."**

Adolescent 13 to 15 years old,  
Province of Central Mexico

action permeates the social sphere where children and young people develop, such as in their families and in local and national communities. In all of them there are matters that directly affect children and young people and, in accordance with the

**“I don’t like the school sweatshirt because when it’s cold they only let me wear it and it doesn’t cover me well”.**

Pre-adolescent, 10–12-year-old,  
Province of Central Mexico

human rights approach, they have the right to participate in all these matters according to their age and maturity. Our Marist educational actions must promote the widest possible participation of children and young people at the local, national, and international levels.

- d) This impulse of participation in public policies brings Marist educators closer to social organizations and human rights organizations whose interaction will only strengthen them.

## 4.4. GUIDING AXES FOR LISTENING TO CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

One of the best ways of approaching children and young people is through an open dialogue in which adults place themselves in the position of the listener, by directly asking children and young people about their interests, knowledge, experiences and wishes. This means allowing them to express themselves in their own languages and ways, generating mechanisms in which their opinions and expressions are placed in the context of their stages of development, socio-cultural background, and everything which constitutes their forms of expression.

A mistake educator often makes is to choose the most articulate girls and boys from the classroom, youth group or community centre so that they sound impressive, and our event goes well. In this example, even if we have the best intentions, we are not exercising the right to participation because we are ignoring the fact that the children and young peo-



ple are participating in the process of choosing who will represent them.

This will imply a constant openness on the part of the adults to what free expression can generate. To this end, it is important that those of us who accompany the processes of participation have the tools, methodologies, and sensitivity for the development of appropriate participatory experiences which tend towards higher and more authentic levels of child and youth engagement.

One thing which is very true is that there is no single model or set of instructions for child and youth participation. Each methodology needs to be developed in accordance with what is appropriate to its purpose or to the developmental stage of the children and young people in front of you.

However, there are a set of principles, practical lessons, and recommendations which educational agents should bear in mind.

1. **Be prepared to listen to their priorities. The reason why they are** sometimes not listened to is because of the belief, deeply rooted in our societies, that the view of adults is more relevant and appropriate. It is necessary to confront that assumption because children and young people have their own views and priorities and often express them differently from adults.
2. **Be clear about the objectives to be achieved.** It is important to ask yourself about the level of participation you intend to achieve, for example, if you want to obtain information from children and young people. The strategy will be different if you want to work on empowerment than say the understanding of child rights. Esto última implicará promover una comprensión más profunda y nítida con respecto a cuáles son sus derechos y cómo los pueden hacer valer.
3. **Be clear about the limits of the proposed activities.** Children, especially young people, can quickly become disillusioned if clear rules are not established within the framework of a participation exercise. In this sense, it is important that those who take part in initiatives and projects are informed from the outset about the scope and limitations of the activities. For example, it is useless to take



their opinions and decisions into account if there are no economic resources to implement their ideas. Therefore, it is necessary to clarify whether an activity will only involve consultation or whether it will involve greater participation or empowerment.

- 4. Do the necessary research.** When planning an activity or a longer process of participation, it is advisable to have a good amount of empirical evidence to develop a more appropriate approach to children and young people. It will be helpful to identify what other similar experiences have been developed and what lessons can be learned from them. When planning activities, it is useful to create groups of young people to advise adults to ask questions and be able to fine-tune work methodologies.

**“When I give my opinion, my teacher always listens to me.”**

Student,  
Province of  
Santa María de los Andes

- 5. Be willing to consult them on methods of engaging them.** Passive adult activity formats such as long meetings or lectures are not attractive to children, adolescents, and young people. They express themselves in less conventional ways, for example, through drawings, stories, plays, photographs, games, dynamics or through digital resources they find on the Internet. In this sense, it will be very important for adults to be open to non-verbal communication alternatives that can help us to illustrate what their lives are like and how they perceive their problems, as well as their strategies to solve them.
- 6. Be clear that children and young people are not a homogeneous group.** Just as adults, children and young people express a wide range of different opinions, determined by variables such as social context, cultural capital, social class, schooling, political context, and religion, among others.
- 7. Guarantee sufficient time and resources for participation.** In initiatives and processes which provide for participation, it is necessary to guarantee time for the adequate involvement of children and young people in assessments, in the design of projects and in the

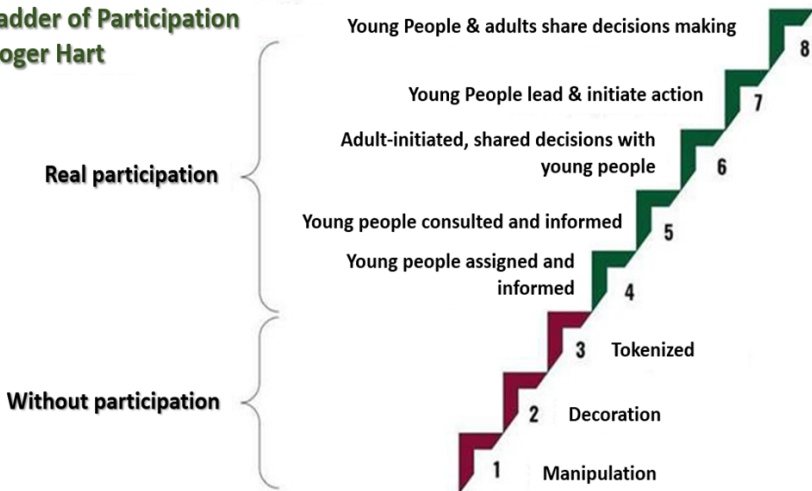


definition of methodologies. Financial resources are equally necessary since the development of activities will often require an allocated budget which will vary according to the nature of the initiative, its duration and scope, as well as the number of participants.

**Do not underestimate them and be prepared by the challenges that the process may bring.** In child and youth participation, the visions provided by children and young people may vary from those proposed by adults. It is important to be open to suggestions and to be prepared to negotiate and adjust projects. In participation, it is mistakenly thought it is not allowed to contradict them; in reality, treating them with too much caution is a kind of tutelary discrimination and is as bad as ignoring them. They have the right to participate, yes, but with respect for their stage of development and forms of expression, articulated or not, lucid, or not. What should be put before them is their capacity to make informed and analytical contributions that respond to their closest experience. However, we don't always have to agree with them.

60

**Ladder of Participation  
Roger Hart**



## 4.5. LEVELS OF PARTICIPATION

We need to reflect daily on what kind of participation we are proposing and implementing. One way of thinking about this is to constantly ask ourselves the following questions:

*What role are we giving to children and young people's opinions? How do we adapt the participatory exercise according to the objectives to be achieved? To what extent am I using them to generate the impact I want to achieve?*

Roger Hart is a scholar of child participation who identified various levels of participation ranging from the manipulation and decorative use of children and adolescents to the higher levels where children and young people form a kind of symbiosis with the adult world in a horizontal scheme.

**“When I give my opinion, my teacher always listens to me.”**

Student, Province of Santa María de los Andes

61

In developing participation in Marist works, it will be important to move away from the first three levels of participation and towards those that represent real and effective participatory scenarios (the higher levels). Below is an adaptation of Roger Hart's *Ladder of Participation* and a brief explanation of each level.

### Level 1: Manipulation

Children and adolescents are used to carry out actions that they do not understand and that respond totally to adult interests. For example, at a school event before the local authorities, the civics and ethics teacher has prepared a speech focused on the problems that need to be solved in the neighbourhood; he gives it to one of his students to read so that the authorities can consider the young people's concerns. The teacher has not provided his student with any information about it, so the student does not understand its content or the scope of its message.



## Level 2: Decoration

They are incorporated as an accessory to “decorate” or “lead” certain activity which responds to adult interests, but they have no option to contribute.

Roger Hart explains that he places this level above manipulation because here the adults do not try to deceive by presenting the activity as an initiative of the children. For example, the parish they will receive the visit of the bishop, and the catechists ask the children who are preparing for their first communion to line up and to greet the bishop and give them posters already prepared with messages of welcome.

## Level 3: Symbolic participation

Those who have more communication skills are used for certain acts, but do not have a real impact on the theme nor in the construction of their own opinions. Moreover, the space for participation is not open to others with less communication skills. For example, in the preparatory school a debate competition is held every year with themes set by the teachers' committee, where the students with greater facility with words, after arduous hours of training and speeches prepared by adults, make brilliant presentations.

**“The spaces for giving opinions are created by teachers because they organize everything. We are small and they guide us.”**

Secondary school student,  
Norandina Province

## Level 4. Assigned but informed

In this level, children and young people receive information and understand the project, but they get involved at the pace and to the extent that the adults decide. For example, the teachers in charge of the Summer Course at “Paz Mundial” Primary School decide to organize an environmental care campaign, provide information to participating girls and





boys, involve them in reforestation activities, recycling of materials and inform them of the results achieved.

### **Level 5. Consulted and informed**

Although adults design and direct a project, they consult and inform children and young people so that they understand the process and take their proposals into consideration. For example, in one diocese with a presence among indigenous peoples, the adults decide to reformulate their youth ministry, as they have detected that indigenous youth are increasingly apathetic and absent from the local church. The pastoral agents prepare a consultation to understand how young people perceive their participation in the church, what problems they identify and proposals for change. They use surveys, interviews, and focus groups with young people from various indigenous communities and, based on this participatory diagnosis, they propose a process of pastoral transformation that will be implemented with the opinions expressed by the young participants.

**“I think that the best thing would be to combine the life experiences of adults with the innovations of young to create better participation.”**

Adolescent - Brazil

63

### **Level 6. Initiated by adults, decisions shared with children and young people**

Adults initiate the process but make decisions together with the children and young people on equal terms, providing them with the necessary information so that they can construct their own opinions. For example, in Montaigne High School, the educational authorities have decided to redesign the large outdoor play areas under a participatory scheme; they provide information to the students about the available budget and the time frame for the restructuring of the areas. They have



organized teams of students, each accompanied by a teacher; each team has made its own design; the teams presented their proposals in plenary and adjusted them into a single agreed proposal. The authorities began the remodelling work, the student teams monitored that the remodelling was carried out as agreed, and after three months of work, the school handed over to the students remodelled soccer, basketball, and volleyball courts with a photographic memory of the process.

### **Level 7. Initiated and directed by children and adolescents**

The initiative for the project comes from the children themselves, who carry the process forward, and adults only participate if the children ask for their support. For example, a group of teenage friends in a poor neighbourhood decide to form a football team and participate in the local league. For their training sessions, they decide to practice in an old football pitch which was abandoned in the community park. They carry out work to renovate the pitch, and with a modest economic resource which they obtained with their families, they paint the lines of the pitch, install nets in the goals and manage to leave the pitch in good condition for their weekly training sessions.

**“We should always participate and encourage others to do the same. We can always improve and so can the school, but today it has many valuable spaces for participation.”**

Isabela, 12 - Brazil

### **Level 8. Initiated by children or young people and shared with adults**

Participation is not about children and young people doing everything ‘on their own’. Genuine participation is when they devise, lead, and manage the initiative. However, they choose to collaborate with adults because they believe that participation should involve all possible views. For example, Montaigne University is in a marginalized urban area and



has a youth social action group that carries out an annual campaign to address various problems that arise in the neighbourhood.

During the COVID19 health contingency lockdown, they realized that there might be teenage girls, confined to their homes, could be victims of violence or suffer from depression. They organized a call centre where those who had any difficulties could call and asked their teachers for support to arrange with the health authorities for six psychology professionals to provide a telephone service to those who requested help. In two months, they were able to provide psychological support to 30 adolescents and young people who were victims of violence or who needed support to overcome stressful situations. They presented their report to the school and health authorities who were very satisfied with the results achieved and decided to grant the support of 4 more psychologists to expand the service.

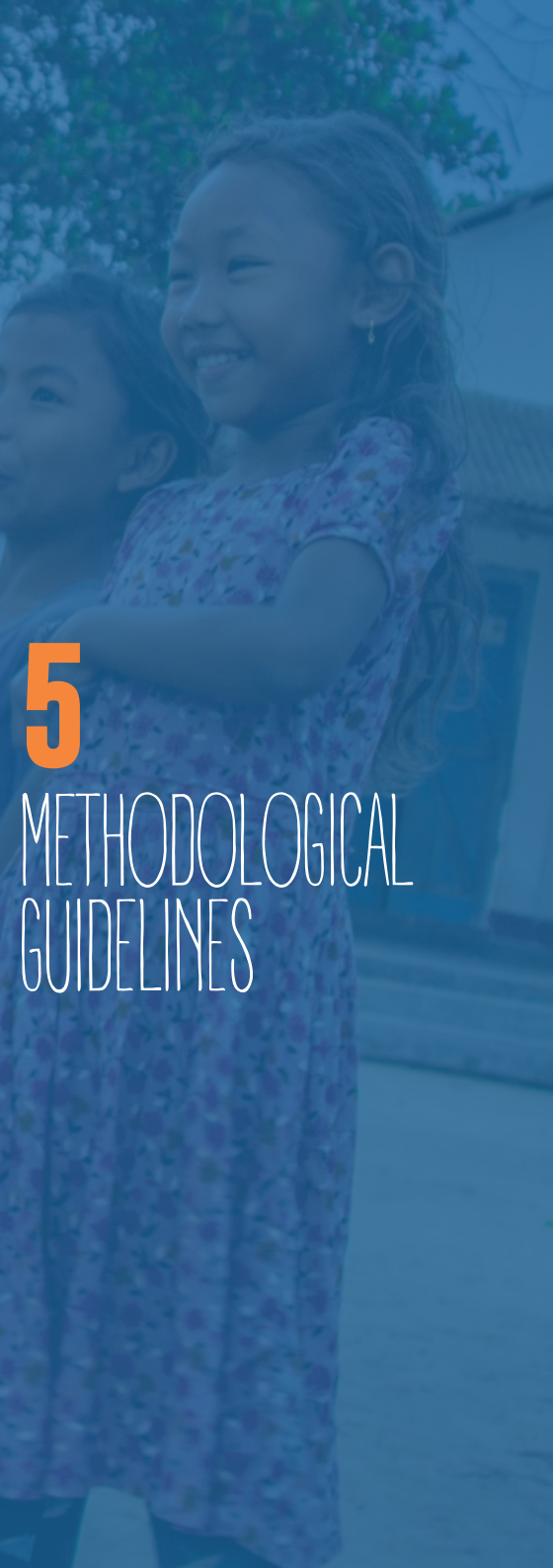






# 5

## METHODOLOGICAL GUIDELINES





**P**articipation facilitators are people whose main task is to enhance the participation of children and young people. They accompany them, provide them with technical and methodological tools, encourage collaborative attitudes, and are capable of developing content through games and playful activities. They are experts in actively listening to each participant.

The agents who systematize participation are the people who document the experiences of child and youth participation for ongoing analysis and follow-up. They draw up records of the activities in which they report the place, date, objectives, themes, profiles of the participants, description of the activities carried out and the agreements reached, evaluation of the participants, as well as evidence of the activity (photographs, videos, audios).

**“I am giving my opinion.  
I’m speaking on Zoom  
and the others are my  
classmates.”**

Ana Gabriela,  
primary school student,  
Province of Mexico Occidental



## 5.1. METHODOLOGICAL PROPOSALS

Although there is a diversity of methodologies to promote the participation of children and young people, we refer to some that can be useful for the exercises that could be undertaken or consolidated in Marist works, such as the classroom, youth ministry groups, and school leader groups. With some adjustments, many of these tools can be implemented on Internet platforms to substitute for face-to-face work given the circumstances imposed by the new normal generated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

### 5.1.1. THE “CHILD TO CHILD” METHODOLOGY

This methodology was one of the pioneering methodologies in promoting child participation, taking up the postulates of popular education and the children’s rights approach. Developed in the 1990s in rural communities in Nicaragua, its intuitions are still valid, as they sought to boost child and youth participation in favour of the communities by using an Action-Research methodology. Through this methodology, participants carry out actions to intervene in a favourable way in their community.

The original steps of the methodology were **“recognize, study, act and evaluate”** (Darce Solís and Sandoval Urbina, 2000), and in various contexts in which it has been applied, some additional steps such as “dream” and “plan”, have been incorporated which is why it is considered a flexible methodology.

These steps are used to accompany and support the initiatives which children, adolescents and young people wish to promote in their communities to improve their living conditions. They can become agents of change and transformation.

**“Being able to participate and be heard is very important since it makes the youth like me feel that we are also part of the community.”**

Young person  
East Asia Province



The actions that are developed are guided by the problem that is chosen as a priority and the proposals for its solution, respecting the forms of organization of children and adolescents, and framing all actions in the rights of children and youth.

Below are some aspects to consider in each of the steps or stages of the methodology.

### **a) Recognize**

At this stage, the child or youth group is integrated. The context of life in which we want to intervene and the problems that violate their rights are recognized. Very dynamic and integrative activities are suggested to generate group cohesion, motivate the participants, and maintain their interest.

### **b) Study/plan**

Children prioritize a problem that is important to them and identify the right(s) that are violated because of this problem.

Causes and effects, related factors, and possible solutions are identified. An intervention goal is set with a well-defined objective in terms of a viable solution consistent with the rights of children and youth. Strategies are defined to achieve the objective or solution proposed by the group. The group is supported so that their ideas are channelled into concrete actions organized in a plan of action in which tasks, materials, times, and people in charge are defined.

Playful and creative activities are suggested to motivate the transformation of reality, as well as decision making.

### **c) Act**

The action plan designed in the previous stage is executed. If the execution of any task is not feasible, alternatives should be sought to achieve



the objective, avoiding the group to fall into frustration.

Group work and participation should be encouraged according to the abilities of each member of the group. It is suggested that the activities to be developed should be as attractive as possible for the whole group. Some specific activities are suggested at the end of this guide.

#### **d) Evaluate**

The achievement of the objective, the learning achieved in the project and the aspects to be strengthened are analysed. The evaluation stage is important because it will allow us to know if we reached the expected results and what we can modify for the next intervention. Once a project, activity or intervention is completed, it is suggested that children and young people present the results of their intervention/activity to their community and families.

The development of these projects requires the formation of groups of children and young people, who usually go through three stages:

1. Emergence and strengthening: they are motivated to organize and form the group;
2. Consolidation: the participants develop skills to develop projects, organize community actions and disseminate their knowledge; and
3. Independence: the teams can develop their own action plans autonomously, achieving the ultimate goal of the methodology, an action among peers.

### **5.1.2. DIDACTIC SEQUENCES**

Even if it is not a school, Marist works, social centres, hostels and missions are mainly educational and evangelizing spaces. In this sense, the didactic sequences are relevant for any Marist space that is framed in a planning. They transcend the space of the classroom because they constitute a way of organizing those activities in which it is intended to develop a climate of learning.



The didactic sequence contains aspects such as the thematic unit, contents to be dealt with, duration and number of sessions, purpose and objectives of an activity, the problem, case, or project on which the participatory exercise will be developed, the opening, development and closing activities of a session, and the general guidelines for the evaluation of the process.

The core of the didactic sequence is found in the opening, development and closing activities. Opening activities allow learning to begin with a collective discussion of a problem in small groups based on the information already possessed by the children and adolescents. The aim of this opening activity is to encourage children to take ownership of the space, as well as to place their own perspective on a topic. The games and integration techniques stimulate their interest and appropriation of both the space and the collective work.

The purpose of development activities is for children and young people to interact with new information on a topic and to anchor it in their closest contextual reference so that they can give meaning to their participation. This may be through the presentation of a topic, an informed discussion, a reading, a video, a documentary, or by posing questions referring to the participation exercise. During the development of the exercise, it is advisable to use techniques that encourage individual or collective analysis and reflection, allowing for dialogue and consensus of ideas.

73

Finally, closing activities allow for the integration of the activities carried out and help children internalize the process developed, the products achieved, and the results attained. They enable the counsellor to analyse the goals achieved, as well as the deficiencies and difficulties encountered along the way.

In this way, the didactic sequence is oriented so that each situation or experience of participation is a process based on interactive, participatory, and practical didactics to encourage both personal reflection and collective construction. This places them as builders of knowledge and actors of change in their own reality.

The following is a proposed format for a didactic sequence.



DIDACTIC SEQUENCE	
NAME OF THE MARIST WORK	NAME OF FACILITATOR, TEACHER, GUARDIAN
GENERAL TOPIC	SPECIFIC TOPICS
AIMS, PURPOSES OR OBJECTIVES	CONTENT TO WORK ON
NUMBER OF SESSIONS	DURATION OF EACH SESSION

TYPE OF KNOWLEDGE TO BE DEVELOPED		
KNOWLEDGE	SKILLS	ATTITUDES AND VALUES
DIDACTIC SEQUENCE		
OPENING	DEVELOPMENT	CLOSING
EXPECTED LEARNING:		
EVIDENCE FOR ASSESSMENT (PREFERABLY A PORTFOLIO OF EVIDENCE)		
RESOURCES (BIBLIOGRAPHY, NEWSPAPERS, DIGITAL, INTERACTIVE, ETC.)		

Source: *Participating Is Also a Child's Thing. Didactic Guide for Teachers*. UNICEF, Save the Children.



### 5.1.3. DIALOGUE CIRCLES

As the name implies, dialogue circles seek to build capacities for dialogue between children and young people or between children and adults, for example, between teachers and students. There are different types of dialogue circles, and each has its own specific objective. In this section we will refer to two of them:

#### **a) Peace Circles**

Peace circles seek to build capacity to manage conflict appropriately. Ultimately, they would give institutions the tools to build sustainable peace in the classroom, school, or Marist social work.

This proposal is based on the world view of the indigenous people of various countries, who believed that when a community is in conflict, one part of it is in conflict too. For example, in a classroom there was an incident of discrimination against one of its members. Peace circles will help us to talk about what happened from a restorative approach, to make the offender understand the harm he has caused to other members of the community and finally to reintegrate those who have suffered aggression or have executed it. The purpose will be on the one hand to repair the damage caused, but also to improve interpersonal relationships in the group so that they do not happen again.

75

#### **b) Community-building Circles**

This type of dialogue circle aims to help a new or newly formed group develop a climate of recognition, respect and companionship that lays the foundation for building a sense of belonging.

Much research has shown that when children and adolescents develop a sense of belonging to the group, they are unlikely to harm the group or community, so levels of conflict tend to be low.

The topics of this type of circle are usually light and varied, unlike when there has been an aggression, and it must be talked about (peace cir-



cle). This type of circle can deal with topics of interest, places they have known, holidays, favourite music, or food, etc.

Some examples of questions are:

- If you were given the choice of a place to live, which one would you choose and why?
- What would you like to study and why?
- What would you like this group you are now a part of to be like? What would be a compromise you would propose for the group?

Both peace circles and community-building circles can follow a set of basic steps or be adapted to the needs of each group. The following are some of them:

1. The adult can carry out the facilitation of the circle, and as the children develop moderation skills, the roles can be swapped.
2. Establish an object that "gives the voice", it can be a ball or a doll. This object will be important because it will give voice. Everyone can ask for it.
3. Whoever facilitates the circle will explain what the activity will consist of. He/she will also explain the rules of coexistence: respect for opinions, honesty, confidentiality (what is talked about in the circle stays in the circle), and so on.
4. Once the circle question is posed one person answers and passes the object to the person who asked for the floor.
5. The facilitator can ask questions to elaborate on the answers, ask for examples, contrast opinions, ask for a different opinion, seek common ground between answers, clarify positions, encourage participation, ask for respect if someone makes fun of another, remind the group of the rules of the game as much as necessary, and so on.
6. After a considerable time, and when all those who requested the floor have been given the opportunity to speak, (remember that participation is voluntary), the conversation can be ended.

In the peace circles, some follow-up actions or agreements can be established at the group level to repair the damage and prevent the situation from happening again. It should be established who will oversee



monitoring compliance with the established agreements.

At the end of the dialogue circles, you can ask children and young people how they felt, what they liked best, what they didn't like, and what they would do differently.

#### 5.1.4. PHILOSOPHIZING WITH CHILDREN

Philosophy for Children (P4C) is an educational project that was born in the United States at the end of the 1960s. Its creator, Mathew Lipman, conceived it as a methodological proposal to help children and adolescents think for themselves. The methodology is based on the use of the novels created by Mathew Lipman, and the class exercises are based on the guides that accompany each novel. P4C is based on the creation of spaces for discussion and debate that are based on solidarity and collective construction; these are called communities of inquiry.

In these communities, led by a facilitator trained as a P4C teacher, creative thinking is stimulated, and complex thinking is developed. The P4C (philosophy for children) proposal requires specific preparation of teachers so that they acquire the necessary skills to develop critical and creative thinking based on philosophical tools.

Some of the skills that are achieved are the development of analogical, conditional, or hypothetical reasoning, the ability to give reasons for our opinions, the ability to avoid generalizations, to anticipate consequences, propose solutions to problems, identify logical relationships, generate criteria before making value judgments, and build philosophical answers.

**“Well, on controversial issues, like abortion, all the teachers have their points of view and on some occasions, it has been contrary. They try to explain their point of view and there is always a space for conversation and for everyone to express themselves in a pretty good way.”**

Ivana, teenage student,  
Province of México Occidental

In addition to the use of novels, the methodology lends itself to the use of different techniques and allows the discussion of any topic or even dilemmas such as death, identity, gender, veganism, climate change, and so on. Its value in terms of participation lies in the fact that it generates a dialogue based on questions and answers that encourages active listening, 'asking for the floor', formulating arguments, and creative thinking.

His proposal is illustrated with an example of reading and philosophical exercises:

Excerpt from the novel **"Lisa"** (Chapter 1, episode 1)

*After lunch, Lisa went outside. She had not yet reached the sidewalk when Mr. Jimenez came walking his dog, controlling it with a leash. Mr. Jimenez was new to the neighbourhood; in fact, Lisa didn't even know him. When he and his dog arrived in front of Lisa's house, the dog saw a squirrel near a tree and ran after it. Mr. Jimenez pulled on the leash and the dog fell with his paws spread wide. Then he got up again, growling and struggling to run after the squirrel, which disappeared behind the tree. Mr. Jimenez began to walk, but the dog remained still.*

*The more he pulled and tugged at the leash, the more the dog resisted. The man called to his dog, yelled at him, but the dog didn't move. Finally, he picked up a small stick from a nearby bush and began to hit him. The dog crouched motionless, taking the blows. Lisa looked at the two of them with horror. She couldn't even scream. Suddenly, she jumped up and tried to grab the stick. "Stop doing that!" She told him angrily.*

### **Exercise: Empathy towards others**

**Discussion Plan 1:** How do you think people feel in the following situations?

- Do you think the dog in our story feels when his owner scolds him? What do you think he feels?
- Do you think Mr. Jimenez has the right to treat his pet like this?





Other related questions:

- Yesterday you got scolded for something you didn't do. You were very upset. Today you saw Jaime get scolded for something he didn't do. How do you think he feels?
- All your classmates are excited to go to your birthday party. Carlos, who you didn't invite, overhears them at recess. How do you think he feels?
- When your bike was stolen you felt very angry and sad. While walking home from school you meet Mayra, who is your best friend, and you find out that her bike was stolen. How do you think Mayra feels?

**Discussion Plan 2:** Should we respect animals? Why?

- Supposing you have an animal at home, would we have the right to starve it, even if we have plenty of food to give it? Why do you think that?
- Do people have the right to eat animals? Why do you think that?
- If adults and children have duties towards animals, does that mean that animals have rights?

79

### 5.1.5. COLLABORATIVE LEARNING MODEL (CLM)

The Collaborative Learning Model (CLM) is a methodology focused on girls and boys, working in small groups or committees, and on the contribution to learning that can be made among peers. This model has the purpose of placing students with talents in other fields (not only in academics) and from there support a model of mutual help.

Within this work methodology, the participation of children and adolescents is encouraged through the support they give each other. Although this pro-

**“We don't want to just sit and listen; we want discussions where we can express our opinion. We want to do activities in a didactic way with our participation.”**

Adolescent, Brazil



posal does not intend to place the responsibility for learning on children, nor to make it clear who excels and who does not, the benefits of this method are to be found in generating an atmosphere of mutual support and the creation of an atmosphere of belonging and achievement in which everyone has a place.

In the collaborative work methodology, the action of explaining to others how to solve a problem or teaching from one's own knowledge is a didactic way of fostering safety in children and thus developing (representation) in their actions for a common good within the group.

Other possibilities that exist with this method are the recognition of diversity, the improvement of interpersonal relationships, the avoidance of focusing solely on one's own learning, as well as the feeling of celebration when the group is recognized for its individual and collective achievements.

The principles of collaborative learning are individual responsibility, positive interdependence, face-to-face interaction, teamwork, and group process. Adults should generate educational proposals that allow them to synchronize and give structure to these principles beyond developing them in an isolated activity.

A variant of this model focuses more on the group and less on a student leader. Groups are formed based on the needs of children and youth; they can be formed to structure activities ranging from a few minutes to an entire session or to a full academic cycle.

To ensure adequate, active, and equitable participation, children and young people should play roles within the groups in which they participate. These should be constantly rotated and combined so that the more advanced participants do not always have to play the leadership and supervisory roles. Some of these roles are:

- The Facilitator: Ensures that all participants understand the topic and objectives.
- The Devil's Advocate: Asks questions and seeks to offer alternatives to what others are raising.



- The Motivator: He/she takes care of the good atmosphere in the group and praises the participants for their work and collaboration in the process.
- The Observer: Monitors group behaviours and makes observations about them.
- The Secretary: Takes notes when the group meets and provides feedback to the group.
- The Timekeeper: Ensures that the group works within the established time standards.

The advantage for child and youth participation in this variant lies in the fact that the responsibility is shared by several people which makes it possible to bring into play skills and competencies to solve problems together or to carry out a task. Interpersonal skills, communication, trust in the group, collective decision-making, and conflict resolution are the characteristics that allow us to understand the leading role of children and young people in collective work.

The role of adults in either variant is that of guide in the teaching-learning process and co- investigator in the knowledge construction process. To shape this role, adults should approach groups, be observers and make suggestions when appropriate. In short, they should mentor, motivate and give appropriate feedback to their students.

81

### **5.1.6. SERVICE-LEARNING (SL): EDUCATING IN CITIZENSHIP**

The concept of citizenship, in which the State grants rights and responsibilities, is outdated because many groups, such as migrants, indigenous peoples and communities, and children and adolescents themselves, have been excluded from this understanding. Currently, there is a struggle for a concept of citizenship that recognizes an active and proactive position for all people, influencing public affairs that affect them and are of interest to them and exercising their political and social rights, thus strengthening the democratic system.

Participation is taught and learned and is an important element in the



training for active democratic citizenship which must be provided in all educational environments. The Service-Learning methodology (SL) seeks to develop in children and adolescents the value of community service and its link with the learning contents needed for active citizenship.

Tapia (2010) considers that Service Learning (SL) is a set of specific experiences or programs developed by a group of children or young people by which they intervene in social issues through a structured and intentional project, combining two fundamental elements: learning and community service.

SL projects are developed through 5 phases.

### **a) Motivation phase**

Developing activities of bonding and group knowledge through dynamics that at the same time raise awareness about the importance of child and youth participation as well as the importance of service.

### **b) Diagnostic phase**

Identifying and discussing aspects of interest in the life of the community such as needs, problems and challenges that arise in it, for example, through various techniques such as social mapping. Of all the problems identified at the community level, a specific aspect is selected that can

**“We carried out an activity called ‘serve and smile’ in which we went and collaborated with our society, and we did acts of service. For example, we put out garbage cans, we took food to some of the neediest houses, we made lunches to take to the hospitals, to the children’s homes, to the schools. We brought them to the hospitals for those who were waiting for news of about their families.”**

Karen, teenage student,  
Province of México Occidental



be addressed. In other words, an aspect of reality with a feasible response or impact is selected.

### **c) Design and planning phase**

Taking into consideration the chosen issue on how the intervention project is designed, its objectives of solidarity, service, and learning; deciding on the activities to be carried out, the people to be involved, the places where the project will be developed, the resources and time in which it will be carried out, and the responsibilities of the people involved--- each needs to be considered. In the case of those projects that are developed in the school environment, this is the moment to link the activities to be implemented with the pertinent curricular content; or in other areas such as those of the pastoral care of children and youth, at this moment they will be linked with their pastoral care programs.

### **d) Execution phase**

The project is implemented and managed; the learning contents are developed, and at the same time, the activities are carried out and the experiences of the participants are recorded with tools such as the field diary or the activity log.

### **e) Closing and evaluation**

Evaluating both the scope of the objectives and the ideas, degrees and forms of child and youth participation are recorded and noted. The information obtained from the participant observation, the field diary, the activity log and the evaluation rubric are systematized.

The realization of a closing activity with a playful character will allow the participants to re-think/re-examine the lived experiences, the acquired learning and to be ready for a new project or cycle of intervention.

The SL methodology (service learning) methodology enables children



and young people to learn active citizenship through meaningful service experiences in their community environment, addressing specific problems that are of interest to them.

**“We can have evaluations in the form of a debate. There will be much more learning.”**

Teenager - Brazil

The projects designed, implemented, and evaluated from children and young people thus become a powerful didactic tool for participation and influence in public life; that is, they become the best school of active citizenship, making possible one of the principles of popular education: women and men educated together in the transformation of our social reality.

### 5.1.7. GROUP ASSEMBLIES

84

Group assemblies are an effective means of promoting child and youth participation, as they are spaces for dialogue in which the problems, needs, interests and conflicts experienced by children and young people in various educational settings, such as schools, pastoral, sports, and cultural groups, among others, are analysed, and through which routes for solutions or collective transformation are proposed.

The French pedagogue Celestin Freinet introduced group assemblies as part of modern school techniques. He conceived them as a periodic group meeting to strengthen the role of each member of the school community, generate the ability to reach agreements, and fulfil commitments and responsibilities to the community. It promotes the democratic values of dialogue, listening, autonomy and cooperation, which are fundamental for a productive social life.

More recently, group assemblies have been echoed in restorative justice practices (such as the peace circles described above), understood as community mechanisms to recognize and repair the damage caused by problematic processes such as human rights violations and criminal acts, and to generate conditions for the peaceful resolution of conflicts.



The community thus becomes a space for reconciliation and forgiveness, generating agreement and promoting civic values that favour each one of the members, promoting the common good.

In summary, and in accordance with the purposes of this guide, the group assembly will be understood as a safe space for dialogue between children and young people, which periodically and with the accompaniment of educators, promotes participation, a sense of belonging, the peaceful resolution of conflicts and the development of collective actions for solutions.

The most important characteristics of the group assembly are:

- **Timing:** It is suggested that group assemblies be weekly or fortnightly and with a maximum duration of 50 minutes.
- **Space:** It is suggested that the place where they take place should allow for optimal participation, allowing participants to sit in a circle.
- **Minimum rules of space functionality and respect among participants:** Ask for the floor, listen to whoever is speaking, focus on the topic of discussion and not on issues related to people, propose agreements and solutions, respect the agreements made, and fulfil commitments.

85

In the specific case of assemblies with children and young people, it is suggested to encourage their development through playful dynamics that maintain interest and facilitate expression, particularly for those who have more difficulties in expressing their opinions.

To ensure the smooth running of the group assembly, it is suggested that the following roles (or other similar roles) be played by the children, adolescents, or young participants on a rotating basis:

- **Coordinator:** Moderates the assembly, gives the floor, presents the topic to be discussed, promotes the proposal of solutions, encourages group participation.

**"To participate is not to be silent. One of the things we can do is to do surveys and vote."**

A young girl, primary school student  
Province of México Occidental



- **Secretary:** Writes a report of the issues discussed and agreement reached.
- **Timekeeper:** Distributes the time of the assembly among the topics to be discussed. A maximum time should be established for each person's intervention, so that everyone can participate. The time-keeper will let everyone know when the time is up.
- **Rule monitor:** Promotes respect for agreed rules and points out when someone is not following them.

Regarding the topics to be discussed, it is suggested that children and young people participating in the assembly can raise the concerns, needs, and conflicts that are relevant to their reality. In general, it is suggested that the topics be approached from three perspectives: recognition and gratitude for the progress achieved; proposals to solve problems or satisfy needs; complaints to verbalize the conflicts or problems that arise in a respectful and effective way.

Finally, it is important to reflect on the role that educators play in the assembly, as promoters of listening, dialogue, consensus, respect for rules and the search for solutions. The educator should:

- Be a member of the assembly, giving up control without losing respect and authority.

Handle his/her opinion with caution and always encourage the search for agreements.

- Take emotional care of children and young people, particularly those who are shy and not comfortable in participating. Ensure that respect always prevails.
- Have the agreement booklets available and encourage the group to comply with them.

The series of methodologies presented in this section are only a guide for educators, accompaniers, counsellors, facilitators, tutors, volunteers, pastoral workers, and any Marist agent who works directly with children, adolescents, and young people. Undoubtedly, many of our readers already apply these methodologies or have even improved





upon them. Therefore, in no way do we believe that participation is exhausted in proposing activities and methodologies, as participation is in fact a much broader process and we know that these proposals we have included can be expanded, questioned, tested, and improved. Everything will depend on the context that each of our readers has in front of them and how useful, or not, these methodologies can be to respond to their specific needs.

**“Sometimes I wanted to be able to give my opinion during class, but I regretted it because I was afraid my classmates would laugh.”**

Student, Province of Santa Maria de los Andes

## 5.2. A TOOLBOX OF IDEAS

87

The techniques and tools for facilitating the development of child participation experiences can be as diverse as the creativity of the facilitating agents and the proposals of the children themselves. What is important is that they are adapted to their cultural contexts, that they are coherent with the objectives pursued, that they are flexible to respond to the unforeseen events which are always present in educational environments, and that they are adapted to the characteristics of the participants. Some tools which could be helpful are:

- Exploration of graffiti.
- Design of traditional playgrounds with educational content.
- Festivals of artistic and recreational activities in public spaces.
- Environmental action days in the communities.
- Presentation of socio-dramas and plays adapted to current issues.
- Exploration of stories and comics which capture aspects of their daily life, the problems they face and the proposed solutions.
- Organization of parties and carnivals with a social cause.



- Intervention in cultural spaces to disseminate the rights of children and young people.
- Development of calendars highlighting significant events for children's and young people's rights.
- Intervention from the perspective of children's and young people's rights on significant holidays for the community.
- Debate film or documentaries with children's and young people's themes.
- Design and implementation of campaigns on various topics of interest, such as animal care or play.
- Explore the use of broadcasting of radio programs.
- Explore and discuss newspapers and online newsletters.
- Surveys.
- Conversations and discussions around field diaries based on specific projects in which children and young people participate as educational agents.



With different rhythms and modalities, our Marist works are on the way to consolidating the participative processes for children and young people, and the testimonies that are found in different contexts are inspiring because they are inserted in the very heart of the Marist charism. The charism invites us to go out to meet children and young people, to listen to them, to know their needs and together with them to undertake educational and evangelizing processes.

Recognizing children and young people as individuals imbued with rights and duties and protagonists in all matters which affect them necessarily leads us to question whether family, school, community, church and other structures and practices provide effective opportunities for their participation in decision-making.

In closing, it might be helpful to re-state some recommendations that will assist our Marist works in their efforts to develop and strengthen their participative processes.

Diagnosing: Diagnose the areas of child and youth participation under the guidelines offered in this guide, identifying areas of opportunity for deci-



sion- making at local, regional, or provincial level. Open new areas of participation and link them with other organizations and networks which promote child and youth representation in terms of human rights. (In the Spanish text is a different point)

**“What adults always say: “that’s the way the rules are.”**

Aranza, adolescent student.  
México Occidental

1. Training of Marist educators: To make as the focus the rights of children and young people in our Marist works and to strengthen the participation of children in young people in all areas of their lives, a systematic and permanent training and formation of educators and evangelizers is needed.
2. More horizontal norms of coexistence: In school, ecclesial or other institutions, there are generally underlying norms of coexistence which, if they are established under participatory mechanisms, represent an extraordinary opportunity for dialogue and permanent agreement between the educational agents /evangelizers and the children and young people entrusted to our care.
3. Participatory curricular proposals: The educational and evangelizing processes involve the development of specific learning contents, and it is suggested to favour participatory methodologies and techniques such as those proposed in this guide or others which, according to the level of development and abilities of children and young people, encourage their participation.
4. Strengthen the participation of families and educators: Adults can only teach child and youth participation if they themselves live, work, and act in a participatory manner, in which dialogue, respect, democracy and equality are privileged. Our Marist works have the challenge of continuing to widen the spaces of participation for their own educational and evangelizing agents.

**“I don’t like to give my opinion very much; the few times I give it I’m always satisfied with the behavior of my teachers.”**

Adolescent girl, 13-15 years old,  
Province of Central Mexico



## 5.3. MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF PARTICIPATORY PRACTICES

Within the processes that support child and youth participation are the efforts to monitor, evaluate progress and follow up on the activities that make up our entire institutional framework under which we develop the participation processes.

Using mechanisms to evaluate child and youth participation will enable us to identify the strengths and weaknesses of our work; it will also help us to know which practices are useful and meaningful or which represent a mere simulation of participation.

If we want our participation projects in Marist schools and works to be sustained over time, or better still, to be improved, monitoring and evaluation of the results of participation must be a fundamental part of our institutional practices.

90 Below, we include an outline of concepts that will allow us to better understand the aspects that make up a monitoring and evaluation process.

MONITORING	INDICATORS	ACTIVITIES	PRODUCTS	RESULTS	EVALUATION
SYSTEMATIC AND CONTINUOUS ASSESSMENT OF THE PROGRESS OF A JOB OVER A GIVEN PERIOD	FACTS THAT CONSTITUTE AN OBJECTIVE MEASURE TO ASSESS THE STAT OR CONDITION OF SOMETHING, E.G., NUMBER OF WORKSHOPS FOR CHILDREN OR THEIR RIGHTS.	CORE ELEMENTS OF A PROJECT THEY ARE DESIGNED TO ACHIEVE THE OBJECTIVES, E.G., CAMPAIGNS, PEER MENTORING, ETC.	ACTIVITIES THAT ARE UNDERTAKEN TO MEET CERTAIN OBJECTIVES; THEY DO NOT IN THEMSELVES CONSTITUTE RESULTS, E.G., CREATION OF A CHILDREN'S PARLIAMENT; THIS DOES NOT INDICATE ACHIEVEMENT.	CHANGES THAT WERE EXPECTED IN THE MEDIUM AND LONG TERM, E.G., IF YOUNG PEOPLE WERE ABLE TO CHALLENGE PRACTICES THAT VIOLATE THEIR RIGHTS, THERE WAS A RESULT. ASK THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS: TO WHAT EXTEND DID THINGS CHANGE? WERE THESE CHANGES POSITIVE?	ANALYSIS OF THE PROGRAM AT A SPECIFIC POINT IN TIME; ITS BASIS IS THE INFORMATION COLLECTED THROUGHOUT THE MONITORING PROCESS. COMPARES THE ACTUAL RESULTS OF THE PROJECT AGAINST THE STATED OBJECTIVES.

\* Prepared by author based on Save the Children, 2014

It is important to remember that monitoring and evaluating is not synonymous with grading or examining the performance of something; on the contrary, both monitoring and evaluating processes will allow us to determine how effective we are and how we can do even better.

In the second part of this guide, we discussed the characteristics which participatory processes should have: they should be transparent and informative, voluntary for children, respectful of their socio- economic context, relevant and adapted to their age, inclusive, formative for those who facilitate, risk safe, and accountable. It is important that the monitoring and evaluation of our practices determines how well these characteristics and/or requirements are being met.

The following rubric presents benchmark indicators that will help us identify the extent to which our activities meet the basic characteristics or requirements for a meaningful participation.

**Rubric for monitoring and evaluating Marist participatory processes**

REQUIREMENTS FOR CHILD AND YOUTH PARTICIPATION	GUIDING QUESTIONS	IT HAS NOT BEEN CONSIDERED	NOT REFLECTED IN PRACTICE	EFFORTS HAVE BEEN MADE, BUT SYSTEMATIC PROCEDURES ARE NOT YET IN PLACE	STAFF UNDERSTAND, COMPLY WITH, AND MONITOR THE REQUIREMENT
		EXPLAIN IN WHAT WAY	EXPLAIN IN WHAT WAY	EXPLAIN IN WHAT WAY	EXPLAIN IN WHAT WAY
<b>TRANSPARENT AND INFORMATIVE</b>	<p>DO CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE INFORMATION ABOUT THE PROGRAM TO MAKE AN INFORMED DECISION ABOUT WHETHER AND HOW THEY WANT TO PARTICIPATE?</p> <p>HAS THE EXTENT OF THEIR PARTICIPATION IN DECISION-MAKING BEEN EXPLAINED TO THEM?</p> <p>DO THEY UNDERSTAND EACH OTHER'S ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES?</p>				



<p><b>VOLUNTEERS</b></p>	<p>IS PARTICIPATION VOLUNTARY FROM THE BEGINNING?</p> <p>CAN CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WITHDRAW AT ANY TIME THEY WISH?</p> <p>ARE THEY NOT JUDGED OR SCOLDED FOR NOT WANTING TO PARTICIPATE?</p>				
<p><b>RESPECTFUL OF THE CONTEXT</b></p>	<p>DO STAFF UNDERSTAND AND RESPECT THE SOCIO- CULTURAL CONTEXT OF EACH CHILD AND ACT ACCORDINGLY?</p> <p>ARE CHILDREN AND YOUTH ABLE TO EXPRESS THEIR OPINIONS FREELY AND ARE THEY TREATED WITH RESPECT?</p> <p>DO STAFF ENCOURAGE EVERYONE INVOLVED TO ALWAYS RESPECT EACH OTHER?</p>				
<p><b>RELEVANT</b></p>	<p>DO THE ISSUES THAT HAVE BEEN ADDRESSED BUILD ON THE KNOWLEDGE THAT CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE ALREADY HAVE?</p> <p>DO THEY FOCUS ON THE ISSUES THAT ARE RELEVANT TO THEIR LIVES?</p> <p>ARE THEY RETURNING TO THEIR LOCAL CUSTOMS?</p>				



<p><b>SUITABLE</b></p>	<p><b>WERE THE APPROACHES AND METHODS OF PARTICIPATION ADAPTED TO THE AGES AND ABILITIES OF THE CHILDREN AND YOUTH?</b></p> <p><b>HAVE SUFFICIENT TIME AND RESOURCES BEEN ALLOCATED FOR QUALITY PARTICIPATION?</b></p> <p><b>ARE THE MEETING PLACES ACCESSIBLE TO CHILDREN AND YOUTH? (E.G., DO THEY PREVENT THEM FROM WALKING MANY HOURS TO GET TO THE MEETING POINT?)</b></p>				
<p><b>INCLUSIVE</b></p>	<p><b>DO PARTICIPATION INITIATIVES REVERSE PATTERNS OF DISCRIMINATION?</b></p> <p><b>DO THEY INVOLVE MARGINALIZED CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OR THE YOUNGEST?</b></p> <p><b>ARE PARTICIPATION PRACTICES FLEXIBLE AND RESPONSIVE TO THE NEEDS AND SITUATIONS OF DIVERSE GROUPS OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE? (FOR EXAMPLE, CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES, LGBTI+, ETC.)</b></p>				



<p><b>TRAINING OF FACILITATORS</b></p>	<p>DO STAFF SHOW SENSITIVITY TOWARDS THE RIGHT TO PARTICIPATION OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH?</p> <p>HAVE STAFF BEEN TRAINED ON AN ONGOING BASIS TO EQUIP THEM WITH TOOLS ON HOW TO CARRY OUT PARTICIPATORY PRACTICES?</p> <p>AFTER TRAINING, DO STAFF HAVE THE CAPACITY TO FACILITATE MEANINGFUL CHILD PARTICIPATION?</p> <p>DO STAFF TREAT EACH OTHER WITH HONESTY AND MUTUAL RESPECT?</p>				
<p><b>SAFE FROM RISKS</b></p>	<p>ARE CHILDREN AND YOUTH MADE AWARE OF THEIR RIGHT TO BE FREE FROM ABUSE?</p> <p>DO THEY KNOW WHERE TO GO FOR HELP IF THEY NEED IT?</p> <p>HAVE THE RISKS AND WAYS TO PROTECT THE SAFETY OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN PARTICIPATION PROCESSES BEEN IDENTIFIED?</p> <p>ARE PROTECTION PROTOCOLS IN PLACE IN THE INSTITUTION?</p> <p>E.G.: AGAINST GENDER VIOLENCE OR BULLYING.</p> <p>IS CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION ALWAYS KEPT SECURE?</p> <p>IS CARE TAKEN IN THE USE OF IMAGES OF CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS, AND ARE THEY AND THEIR GUARDIANS ASKED FOR THEIR CONSENT?</p>				





<p><b>RESPONSIBLE</b></p>	<p>ARE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE GIVEN BACK INFORMATION ABOUT THE PROCESS?</p> <p>ARE CHILDREN AND YOUTH SUPPORTED TO PARTICIPATE IN MONITORING AND EVALUATION PROCESSES?</p> <p>DO CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE RECEIVE FEEDBACK ON THE RESULTS OF THEIR PARTICIPATION AND NEXT STEPS?</p> <p>ARE THEY CONSULTED ABOUT THEIR LEVEL OF SATISFACTION WITH THE PROJECT?</p> <p>DO STAFF TAKE THE FEEDBACK GIVEN TO THEM BY CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SERIOUSLY?</p>				
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\* Prepared by author based on Save the Children, 2014

As we have stressed throughout this guide, it is important that children and young people are part of the monitoring and evaluation of participation processes, and they can do this in many ways: by drawing pictures, working in pairs or small groups, making a dialogue circle, putting up a suggestion box to receive their views, setting up evaluation commissions, and so on. Before monitoring and evaluating participation, however, it will be necessary to:

- Encourage them to evaluate their participation in Marist schools and social works.

**“The importance of you being heard is that your opinion, and that of several other people, is considered in the discussion, and at the end of this discussion, we have a more favourable consensus for everyone.”**

Lucas, 11 years old, Brazil



- Avoid choosing those who are most talented or eloquent.
- Include younger children, as well as those living with disabilities.
- Indicate that not everyone has to evaluate everything, nor does it have to be evaluated all the time.
- Share that their opinions can be complemented by those of adults.



# FINAL THOUGHTS

**T**hirty years after the approval of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Marists find themselves before an extraordinary opportunity to reaffirm their commitment to the rights of children and young people because their educational and evangelizing mission can only be carried out by safeguarding the human dignity of those to whom it is addressed.

This commitment must be translated into concrete actions in the promotion and defense of the rights of the children and young people who participate in the educational and evangelizing activities of the Marist works and, in a particular way, among those who face the greatest obstacles in exercising their human rights.

Participation is a fundamental right and a guiding principle that empowers children and young people as subjects of rights and protagonists of their communities, favours their psycho-social development, strengthens the mechanisms of protection in situations of violation of rights, is an essential component of education for democracy, and brings communities together. Marist works in all their diversity are vital and signifi-



cant spaces to promote this participation of children and young people.

Making progress in guaranteeing the right to participation implies combating the adult-centered, protectionist and tutelary vision which still dominates educational spaces and institutions and moving towards a perspective which emphasizes the value of children's knowledge and opinions, as well as their capacity to act in the face of change. It is a long road ahead, but the first step is to abandon all pretended forms of participation.

Due to their condition as developing persons, the younger generations require support from adults to exercise their right to participation, but as they reach higher levels of maturity and autonomy, adult intervention should be reduced. The right to participation empowers and transforms children and young people when they can exercise it to the full; it transforms educators and transforms educational communities by generating more horizontal and democratic structures which are open to dialogue and shared decisions and to listening and to meeting with others.

98 Although it is not always easy to open spaces for participation, the important thing is to set out on the way. Participation is taught and learned by "participating". This guide proposes some principles, dimensions, practical orientations, and methodologies to be adapted to the specific contexts of our Marist works and of those who participate in them.

We are certain that this guide will be enriched both by those who are initiating experiences of child and youth participation, as well as by the projects that have been promoting the construction of participatory educational and evangelizing communities for years. The Marist community has much to contribute to a world in which children and young people continue to position themselves as agents of change and social transformation.



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