

# The Graph of participation

**A tool to assess if and to what extent  
Meaningful Youth Participation is  
integrated in your activity, program  
and/or organization**

# “The 5 core elements of MYP can be considered as the building blocks of MYP.”

The Graph of Participation (GoP) is a tool to help both young people and adults assess the extent to which Meaningful Youth Participation (MYP) is integrated into their activity, program and/or organization.

The tool is based on the Climbing Wall of Participation Model by Nigel Thomas. The original model has been adjusted to create a tool that fits CHOICE’s and her partners’ experiences and that links to the different forms of Meaningful Youth Participation that are explained in the Flower of Participation.

## MYP: Core elements and preconditions

The Graph of Participation assesses the presence of the core elements of MYP in an activity, program and/or organization and whether the preconditions of MYP are met. But what exactly are these core elements and preconditions?

The five core elements of MYP can be seen as the building blocks of MYP. The more there are, and the stronger they are, the more MYP is able to flourish. The different core elements are Voice, Freedom of choice, Responsibility, Decision-making power and Information.

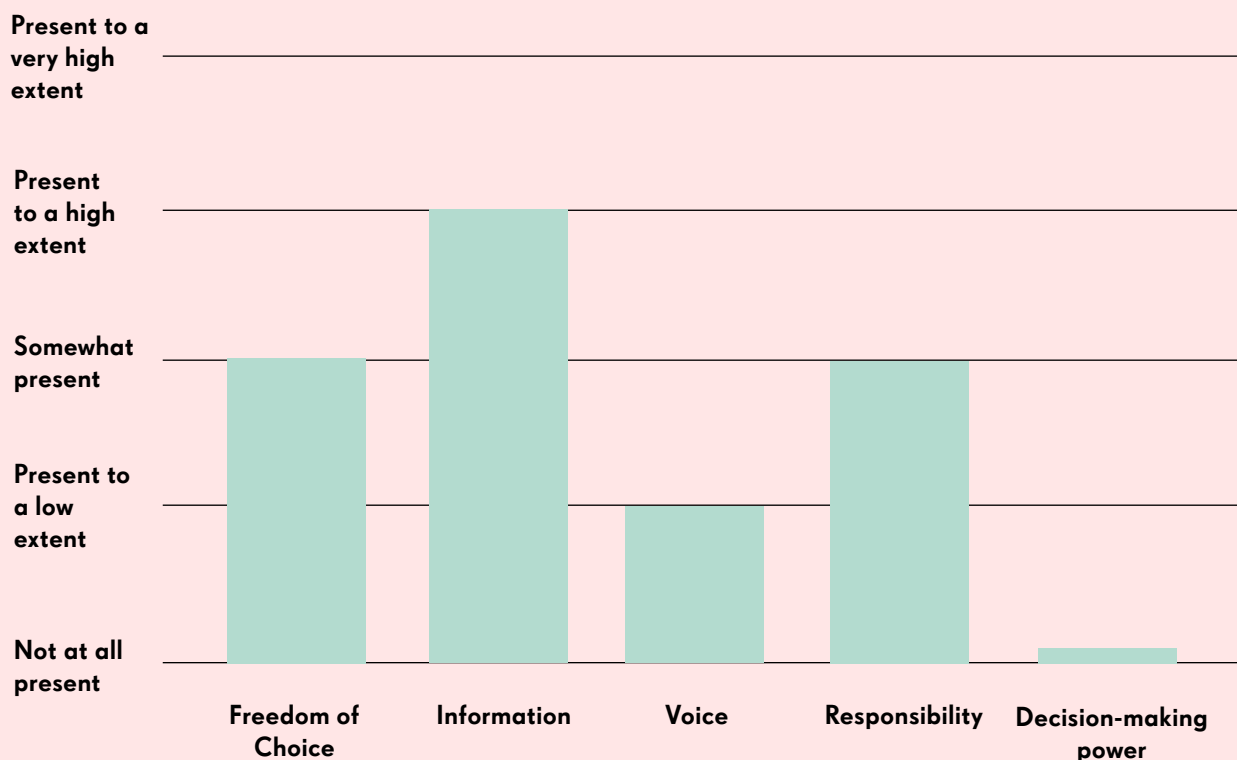
The preconditions of MYP are things that must be present to allow MYP. The preconditions for MYP are Capacity Strengthening and an Enabling Environment. The enabling environment consists of commitment from adults, flexibility (with regards to time), a safe space, financial means, policies and youth-friendliness.

Please refer to The Flower of Participation (FoP) for more background information on the core elements of and preconditions for MYP. The FoP can also be used in combination with the GoP to assess which form of MYP is in place, based on how the presence of the core elements is scored.

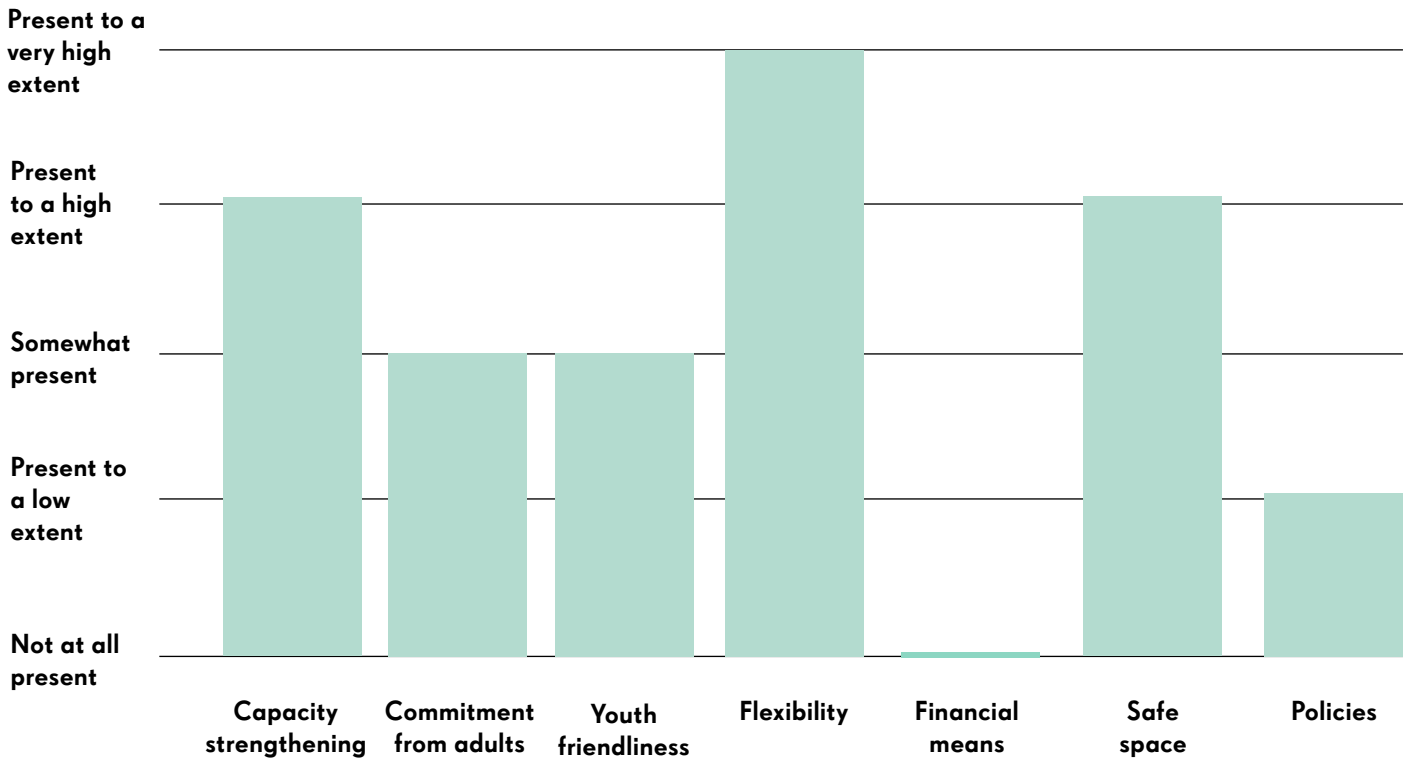
## How to use the Graph of Participation?

The Graph of Participation consists of two parts. The first part is a questionnaire that measures the extent to which the five core elements of MYP are present, whereas the second part measures the extent to which the seven preconditions for MYP are present. The questionnaires can be found at the end of this document. After filling the questionnaires, two graphs will be drawn: one for the core elements and one for the preconditions. Examples of both graphs are presented below.

## GRAPH OF PARTICIPATION: EXAMPLE OF GRAPH OF CORE ELEMENTS



**GRAPH OF PARTICIPATION:  
EXAMPLE OF GRAPH OF PRECONDITIONS**



The GoP can be used in four different ways, which we will explain below – either as part of a training, or as a separate exercise. Assessing and discussing youth participation with young people and adults can be sensitive. Consider your context to decide which approach is most suitable. However, keep in mind that it is always (except potentially when you work with a youth-led organization), a good idea to involve both young people and adults in the process.

All options come with a set of discussion questions. It is important that both adults and young people have a platform to express their opinions, views and possible concerns. You may need a moderator to facilitate the discussion when there are major differences.

**TIPS**

Are you a young person, assessing your participation in an adult organization? You can have the most impact when you share your perspective with an adult! Do you feel scared to confront an adult on your own? Find other young persons and go to the adult together! Or, ask the adult to sit down and fill the questionnaire together. Try always to be honest about how you feel.

Are you an adult, who wants to improve MYP in your organization? Ask a young person to fill in the questionnaire as well and compare the results or fill the questionnaire together – check out the different options!



## Young people use the GoP individually or in a group of young people

As a young person, you can assess your participation individually or as part of a group with other young people. You fill in the questionnaires and then draw two bar graphs, which visualizes your answers. By doing this, you analyse your own participation, which will help you identify points for improvement that you can possibly discuss with adults in your organization. Some guiding questions that you can use as follow-up are provided below.

### Discussion questions – reflection with adults/ other young people in your organization:

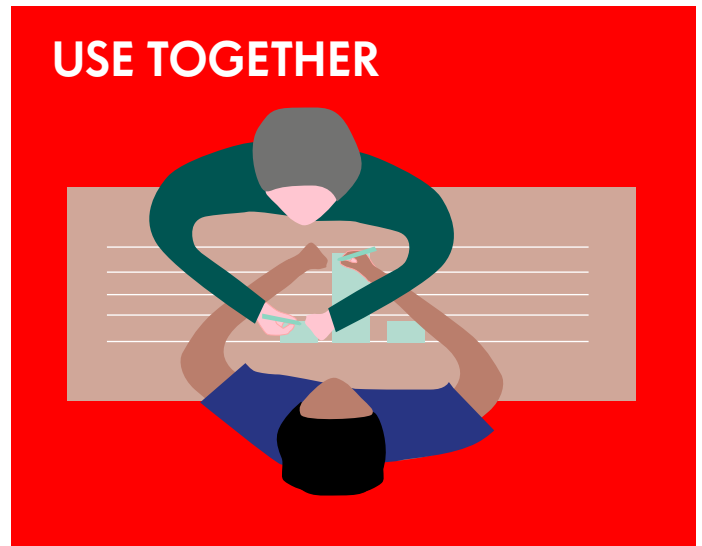
1. Do you recognize the results of the GoP? What do you agree with, and what do you disagree with? Why?
2. Based on the results, what do we want to change in the organization or program?
3. How can you achieve this goal? What can the young people do? What can the adults do? Who will be the main responsible person?
4. Can we come to an agreement? How are we going to evaluate progress?

## Adults use the GoP individually or in a group of adults

Like young people, as an adult you can assess youth participation in your organization or program, either individually or as part of a group of adults. You fill in the questionnaires and then draw the two bar graphs, which visualize youth participation in your organization or program. By doing this, you analyse youth participation in your organization or program, and are able to identify points for improvement. It would be good to discuss your findings with young people in your organization – after all, they're the people you are talking about! Some guiding questions for this discussion are provided below.

### Discussion questions – reflection with young people in your organization

1. Do you recognize the results of the GoP? What do you agree with, and what do you disagree with? Why?
2. Based on the results, what do we want to change in the organization or program?
3. How can you achieve this goal? What can the young people do? What can the adults do? Who will be the main responsible person?
4. Can we come to an agreement? How are we going to evaluate progress?



## Young people and adults use the GoP separately and compare their graphs

Young people and adults both fill in the questionnaires individually and both draw a bar graph. Afterwards, there is room for discussion – to compare the graphs, discuss differences in opinions, identify gaps and work together towards an action plan for the future. To facilitate this, a list of discussion questions can be used (see below). This approach is the preferable option with potentially the most impact, since it highlights the different perspectives that young people have.

### Discussion questions for young people and adults, when comparing the graphs:

1. For which core elements/preconditions do you have an equal score?
2. For which core elements/preconditions do you have a different score?
3. If there is a difference in scores, why? Can you explain why the young people gave this score? And the adults?
4. Based on the questionnaires and the possible differences identified between young people and adults, what would you want to change in our organization?
5. How can you achieve this goal? What can the young people do? What can the adults do?
6. Can we come to an agreement? How are we going to evaluate progress?

## Young people and adults sit down together to use the GoP

Young people and adults sit down together to assess young people’s participation by filling in the questionnaires; afterwards, they will draw the two bar graphs based on the results.

This method is preferable to the first two, since it integrates both young people’s and adults’ perspectives on MYP and, importantly, sparks discussion. Afterwards, young people and adults can discuss the scores based on the guiding questions for discussion:

### Discussion questions for young people and adults, after using GoP together:

1. Was it hard to reach an agreement regarding the questions? If so, which questions in particular caused discussion, and why?
2. Based on the questionnaire, what would you want to change in your organization?
3. How can you achieve this goal? What can the young people do? What can the adults do?
4. Can we come to an agreement? How are we going to evaluate progress?

### WANT TO KNOW MORE?

Check the CHOICE website for more resources on MYP, including the CHOICE MYP position paper and the Flower of Participation: [www.choiceforyouth.org](http://www.choiceforyouth.org)

# COMPARE

GRAPH OF PARTICIPATION:  
EXAMPLE OF GRAPH OF CORE ELEMENTS

Present to a  
very high  
extent

Present to a  
high  
extent

Somewhat  
present

Present to  
a low  
extent

Not at all  
present

Freedom of  
Expression

Participation

Responsibility

Decision-making  
power

GRAPH OF PARTICIPATION:  
EXAMPLE OF GRAPH OF CORE ELEMENTS

Present to a  
very high  
extent

Present to a  
high  
extent

Somewhat  
present

Present to  
a low  
extent

Not at all  
present

Freedom  
Choice

Participation

Responsibility

Decision-making  
power

**'By comparing the graphs young people and adults can work towards a better mutual understanding of each others perspectives.'**

# The Graph of Participation

## Core elements of Meaningful Youth Participation

### STEP 1: Please answer the following questions.

NAME OF ORGANIZATION:

.....

YOUNG PERSON OR ADULT, OR MIX?:

.....

## 1. Freedom of choice

The core element Freedom of choice is about the extent to which young people can decide to participate in a program, activity or organization or not.

**Q** To what extent do young people experience freedom of choice in deciding if they want to participate in your program, activity or organization?

- a. Not at all
- b. To a low extent
- c. Somewhat
- d. To a high extent
- e. To a very high extent

## 2. Information

The core element Information equals the extent to which young people get comprehensive information about the goals, different elements and timeline of the program, activity or organization, and their role within it. It also links to information about young people's rights within the program, activity or organizations and the different possibilities that they have.

**Q** To what extent do young people get information about the program, activity or organization that they participate in and how their role contributes to the program/activity/organization?

- a. Not at all
- b. To a low extent
- c. Somewhat
- d. To a high extent
- e. To a very high extent

## 3. Voice

The core element Voice represents the extent to which a young person can voice his or her views and opinions, and the extent to which other people listen to these views and opinions and integrate them into the program, activity or organization.

**Q** To what extent can young people express their views and opinions, and do adults take these views and opinions into account in the program, activity or organization that they participate in?

- a. Not at all
- b. To a low extent
- c. Somewhat
- d. To a high extent
- e. To a very high extent

## 4. Responsibility

The core element Responsibility represents the extent to which young people have the opportunity to act independently within a program, activity or organization that they participate in.

**Q** To what extent do young people enjoy responsibility in the program, activity or organization that they participate in?

- a. Not at all
- b. To a low extent
- c. Somewhat
- d. To a high extent
- e. To a very high extent

## 5. Decision-making power

The core element Decision-making power is about the extent to which a young person can make decisions about (parts of) the program or activity or within the organization.

**Q** To what extent do young people have decision-making power within the program, activity or organization that they participate in?

- a. Not at all
- b. To a low extent
- c. Somewhat
- d. To a high extent
- e. To a very high extent



# The Graph of Participation

## Preconditions of Meaningful Youth Participation

NAME OF ORGANIZATION:

.....

YOUNG PERSON OR ADULT, OR MIX?:

.....

### 1. Capacity strengthening

In order to sustain MYP, young people's capacity should be strengthened. This could be done by means of training. The kind of capacity needed for MYP can vary, but can include knowledge, skills (for example budgeting, management, planning), critical self-reflection, and many others. Strengthening capacity can be done in various ways, for example by means of training, workshops, internships or coaching. Another essential element of young people's capacity strengthening is providing mentorship for young people, so that they can grow.

**Q** To what extent do young people get supported in strengthening their capacity to be able to participate in your program, activity or organization?

- a. Not at all
- b. To a low extent
- c. Somewhat
- d. To a high extent
- e. To a very high extent

### 2. Commitment from adults

Young people should be supported by adults to be able to meaningfully participate. Adults should respect young people as equals and allow them to take meaningful positions in their programs, organizations and activities. This should be underpinned by democratic values, free from discrimination and equality. Adults need to understand what youth can bring in to the partnership

**Q** To what extent do you feel that adults are committed to implement meaningful youth participation in your program, activity or organization?

- a. Not at all
- b. To a low extent
- c. Somewhat
- d. To a high extent
- e. To a very high extent

### 3. Youth-friendliness

To be able to meaningfully participate, young people should fully understand what is discussed. Therefore, it is important to use youth-friendly language, and not jargon.

**Q** To what extent do you think the language, materials and other things that young people work with in your program, activity or organization is youth friendly?

- a. Not at all
- b. To a low extent
- c. Somewhat
- d. To a high extent
- e. To a very high extent

## 4. Flexibility

Young people may have a different daily schedule than adults, because many of them still go to school, have a job, or social activities they are committed to. In order to allow young people to meaningfully participate, this should be taken into account. It may therefore be necessary to be flexible when it comes to planning meetings outside of office hours, in order for young people to attend.

**Q** To what extent do adults take young people's time schedule into account when planning meetings and events for your program, activity or organization?

- a. Not at all
- b. To a low extent
- c. Somewhat
- d. To a high extent
- e. To a very high extent

## 5. Financial means

Since young people often still go to school, or may not earn as much money as adults, it is important to support young people with financial means in order to allow them to meaningfully participate. This can link to compensate for traveling expenses, to compensate for meals, etc. If financial means are there, young people should also be provided with a reasonable stipend or salary.

**Q** To what extent do young people get financially supported to participate meaningfully in your program, activity or organization?

- a. Not at all
- b. To a low extent
- c. Somewhat
- d. To a high extent
- e. To a very high extent

## 6. Safe space

Safe spaces are necessary for young people and adult staff to feel free to share their opinions and thoughts, also when these are more critical. A learning environment allows people to try and make mistakes – and judges them on their efforts rather than on (lack of / negative) results. Young people and adults should feel valued, respected, safe, encouraged and supported

**Q** To what extent is a safe space created and sustained for young people to participate in your program, activity or organization?

- a. Not at all
- b. To a low extent
- c. Somewhat
- d. To a high extent
- e. To a very high extent

## 7. Policies

To integrate MYP in a program or organization, policies on involving young people should be in place. For example, an organization can commit itself to have 30% young people involved in its board

**Q** To what extent does your organization, program or activity have policies in place that ensure MYP?

- a. Not at all
- b. To a low extent
- c. Somewhat
- d. To a high extent
- e. To a very high extent

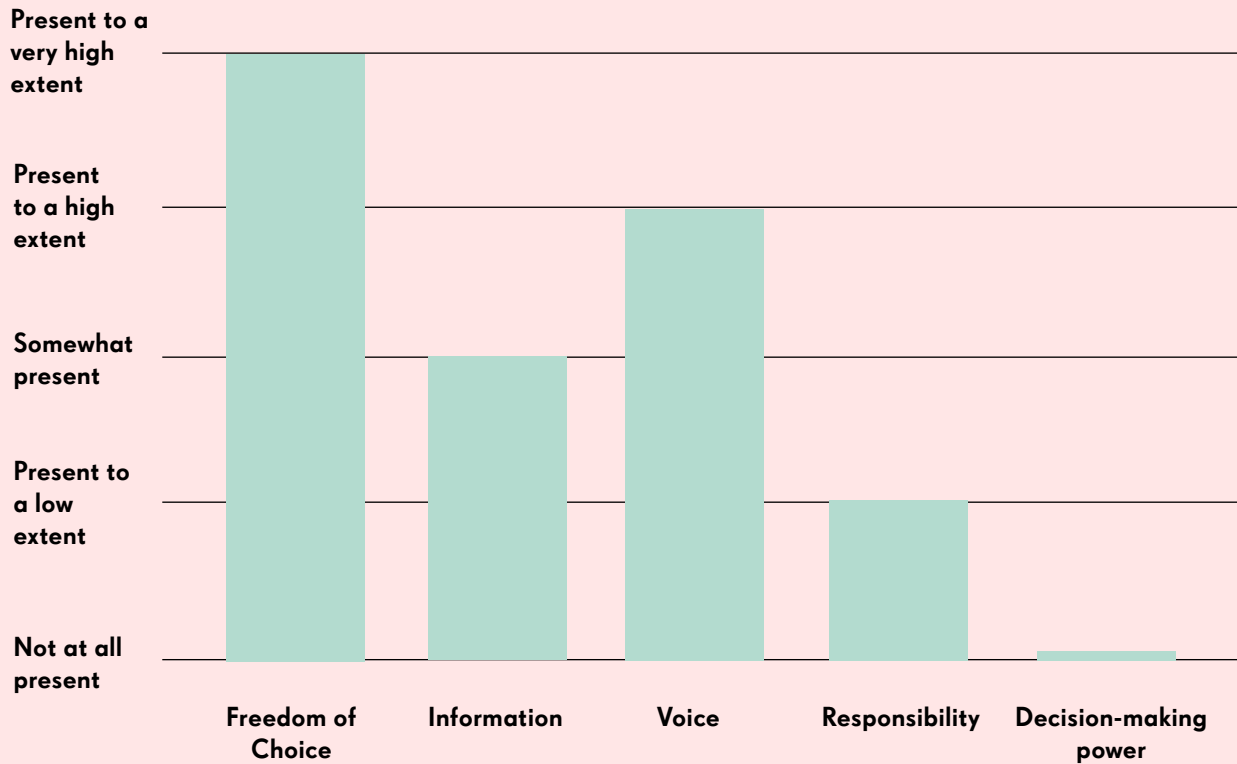
**STEP 2: Draw the scores into the graph**

There are empty tables below, both for core elements and for preconditions (so 2 empty tables). Please draw the bars of the graphs according to your answers to the questions in STEP 1. If you can't print this document you can also make a drawing of the table on paper.

**Part 1: Core elements**

For example, if you have the following scores, your graph will look like the graph that is displayed below:

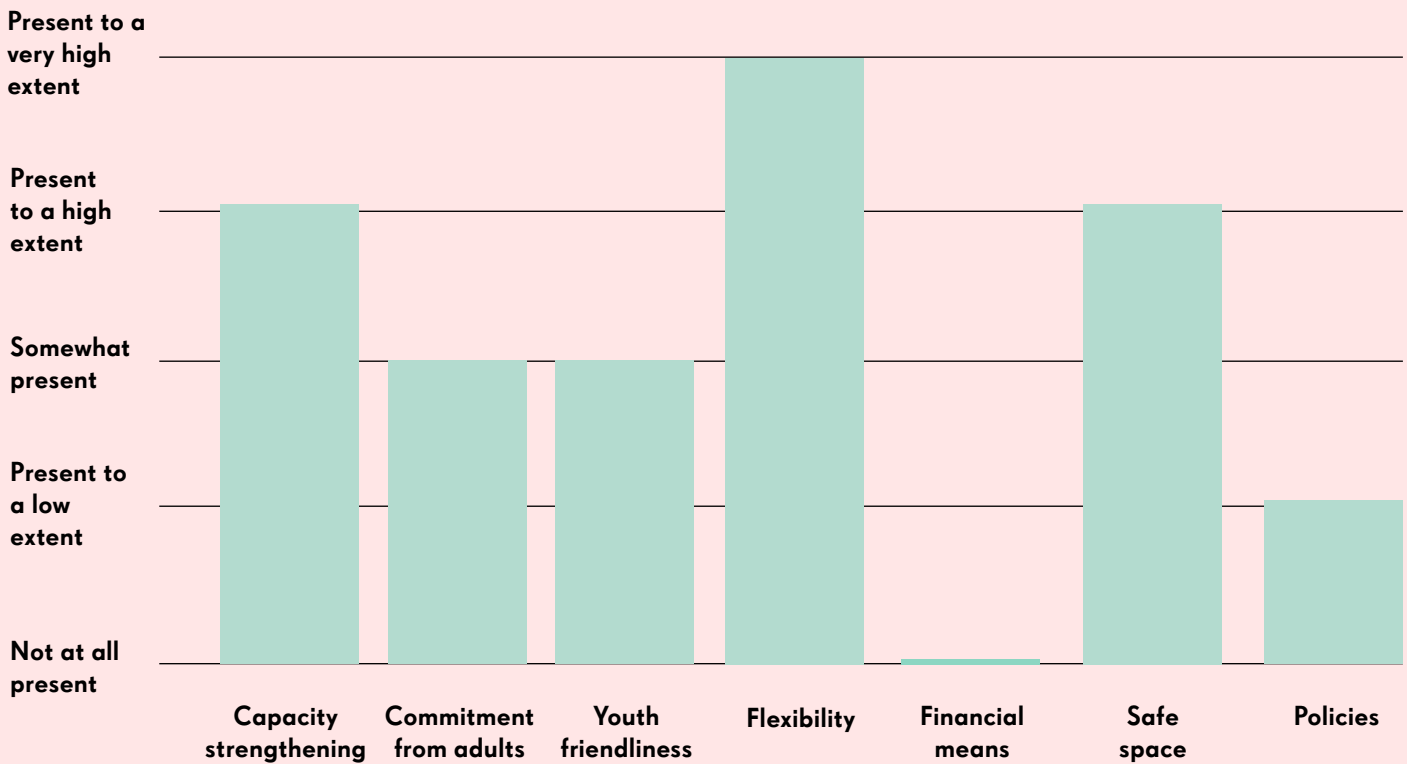
- Freedom of choice: Present to a high extent (e)
- Information: Somewhat present (c)
- Voice: Present to a high extent (d)
- Responsibility: Present to a low extent (b)
- Decision-making power: Not at all present (a)



## Part 2: Preconditions

For example, if you have the following scores, your graph will look like the graph that is displayed below:

- Capacity strengthening: Present to a high extent (b)
- Commitment from adults: Somewhat present (c)
- Youth-friendliness: Somewhat present (c)
- Flexibility: Present to a high extent (d)
- Financial means: Not at all present (a)
- Safe space: Present to a high extent (d)
- Policies: Present to a low extent (b)



**Now draw your own on the next page >**

**CORE ELEMENTS OF MEANINGFUL YOUTH PARTICIPATION**

Present to a very high extent

Present to a high extent

Somewhat present

Present to a low extent

Not at all present

Freedom of Choice

Information

Voice

Responsibility

Decision-making power

**PRECONDITIONS OF MEANINGFUL YOUTH PARTICIPATION**

Present to a very high extent

Present to a high extent

Somewhat present

Present to a low extent

Not at all present

Capacity strengthening

Commitment from adults

Youth friendliness

Flexibility

Financial means

Safe space

Policies

