

Policy Brief

SAMA

Safeguarding adolescent
emotional well-being in India

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Youth Voice can develop the programs, services and policies

Youth Voice means giving young people a chance to participate in decisions that affect their lives.

It can include consulting with young people and involving them in designing services, programs and policies.

Benefits of Youth Voice



Research, programs and policies with higher chance of meeting the needs of young people



Provides creative, innovative and fresh thinking



Improves value for money by targeting most acceptable and feasible solutions



Fosters positive citizenship in young people to contribute to Indian society

Key messages

- The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child state children have a **right** to give their view about things that affect them.
- Exclusion of young people can work against their **best interests**.
- Involving young people in research, program and policy development represents **excellence** in ethical and inclusive practice.
- Youth Voice adds value by **improving** the acceptability and effectiveness of research, services and policies.
- Youth Voice can be gathered in **diverse** ways to suit the aims of work. It is low cost and high return.
- Project SAMA shows ways to involve Youth Voice and its **benefits** for research, programs and policies.

“We should proactively work with youth, listen to their voices, policy and programmes should be by the youth, for the youth”

—
Professor of Epidemiology, NIMHANS,. Who has contributed to several documents mandated by and for the Gov of India.



“Teachers play a very big role in this, youth can play a very big role especially in the schools and colleges, I have worked a lot with that group, and they can be very big change makers”

— *Regional advisor for the Community Based Rehabilitation Network. Previous chairperson for boards and expert committees used in developing policy nationwide.*



Since most of the time youth voices are not heard, the impact of public policy on their lives are not discussed in decision-making forums, their concerns never reach the top of the political agenda (United Nations, 2003).

Youth participation as a form of social investment that concentrates on improving children’s present and future well-being and civic participation (1).

How Youth Voice Shaped The SAMA Project

Youth Advisory Board: our panel of adolescents who help us solve problems (like how to collect robust data), how to improve program implementation (what young people will find acceptable) and to promote their skills in advocacy.

(1) Dallago L, Cristini F, Perkins DD, Nation M, Santinello M. The Adolescents, Life Context, and School Project: Youth Voice and Civic Participation. *J Prev Interv Community*. 2009 Dec 29;38(1):41–54.

Co-production of research and school wellbeing programs: workshops with adolescents to innovate our school program. Helped us choose acceptable language, topics / issues and activities for young people.

Youth Film Crews: we trained young people to create and produce their own short films about wellbeing in school. This gave us unique insights into their lives and what they need.

Process Evaluations: we interviewed young people about the program to learn what worked and why, so we can build even stronger programs.



“Without the head and heart of the local people, policy stays on paper” – Policy Professional

“Critical Youth Theory (CYT) argues that young individuals have agency taken away by societal institutions. Adults do this because they assume developmental immaturity. But all evidence on youth participation shows significant added value” – (2)

Youth voice brings enthusiasm and innovation. Participation builds positive citizenship among young people.

A review of 45 studies showed participation in research makes children and youth more willing to create positive changes in their school (3).

(2) Shamrova DP, Cummings CE. Participatory action research (PAR) with children and youth: An integrative review of methodology and PAR outcomes for participants, organizations, and communities. *Child Youth Serv Rev.* 2017 Oct;81:400–12.

(3) Ozer EJ, Douglas L. The Impact of Participatory Research on Urban Teens: An Experimental Evaluation. *Am J Community Psychol.* 2013 Mar;51(1–2):66–75

Examples of securing Youth Voice

- Generating ideas and agendas.
- Consulting on proposed work.
- Gathering youth perspectives in their communities.
- Advisory Boards.
- Creative Teams.
- Testing Panels.
- Advocacy Campaigns
- Youth Ambassador Role

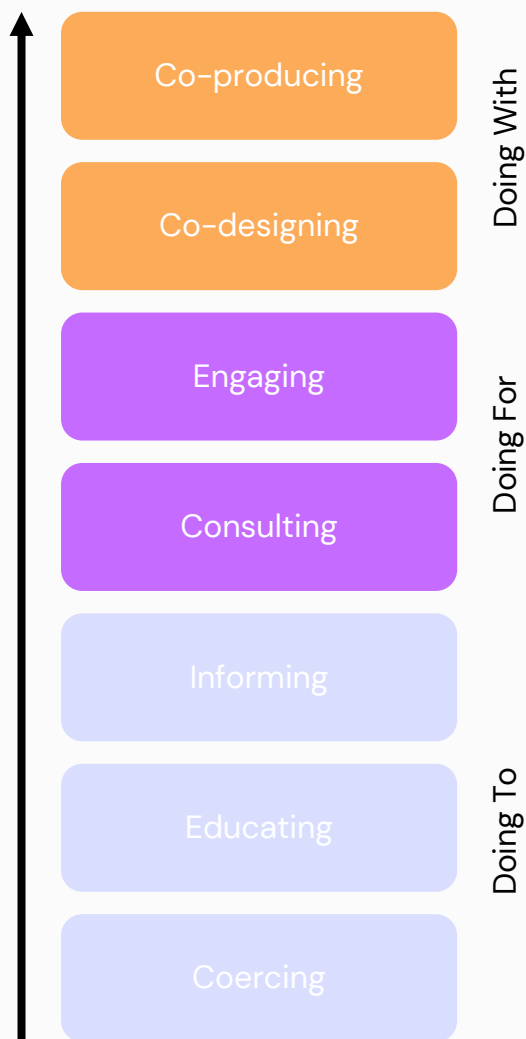


Figure 1. Illustrates that ‘Doing To’ young people is worst practice, ‘Doing For’ is better and ‘Doing With’ is optimal.

Slay and Stephens (2013): six principles of co-production.

- 1) **Taking an assets-based approach:** transforming the perception of people, so that they are seen not as passive recipients of services and burdens on the system, but as equal partners in designing and delivering services.
- 2) **Building on people’s existing capabilities:** provides opportunities to recognise and grow people’s capabilities to put these to use at an individual and community level.
- 3) **Reciprocity and mutuality:** offering people incentives to work with professionals and with each other, where there are mutual responsibilities and expectations.
- 4) **Peer support networks:** engaging peer and personal networks alongside professionals as the best way of transferring knowledge.
- 5) **Blurring distinctions:** removing the distinction between professionals and recipients
- 6) **Facilitating rather than delivering:** become catalysts and facilitators

For more information

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