

10 Forget-me-nots for meaningful participation

1. From A to Z: Ensure that persons with disabilities and their representing organisations (OPDs) from various backgrounds participate from the start and throughout the project cycle. Foster their participation in all areas, not only in those with a disability-specific topic.
2. AAAQ: Ensure that participation, including venues and transportation, is accessible, available, (culturally) acceptable, and affordable for participants. Provide information and material in a timely manner and in accessible formats of appropriate quality. Be aware that what may be timely for one group of participants can be too late for others. Provide different options for input to cover diverse needs (e.g. be open for both oral and written feedback). Make sure that staff, facilitators and presenters are properly prepared to ensure an inclusive process.
3. Capacity Development: **Strengthen OPDs with capacity development where they need it most, based on their assessment, to facilitate their effective participation. This may include strengthening OPDs' organisational and administrative capacity, communication skills and supporting their understanding of the process for which you need their input and expertise.**
4. Diversity: Be sure to keep the composition of your participants as diverse and representative as possible. Invite persons with disabilities of different gender, age, socio-economic background, migration history and ensure that those most marginalised are not left behind.
5. Feedback: Ensure to provide opportunities for feedback on various occasions and through different mechanisms throughout the process. Make sure that participants feel comfortable providing critical feedback without any fear of repercussions. Critically reflect your role as an organisation, partner and/or donor and the associated power relations.
6. Monitoring: Systematically use feedback to periodically review the participation and consultation mechanisms to ensure continuous feedback.
7. Policy: Contribute to making it a statutory requirement to engage with OPDs in your area of work.
8. Resources: Plan for enough time, financial and human resources to conduct a meaningful and inclusive participation process. Be aware of possible individual requirements (including reasonable accommodations) and what they mean for your planning (including human resource and budgetary). Make sure that experts with disabilities are granted remuneration for their contribution on an equal basis with others.
9. Respect: Provide an environment that is safe and respectful of different backgrounds, abilities and perspectives. Respect the time and contributions of each participant.
10. Transparency and Accountability: Let all participants know why you are asking, what you will do and have done with their input and the timeframe. Manage their expectations regarding the limits of their influence in the process.