



Photo by Sam Phelps/CRS

Youth Engagement

THE MEANINGFUL INCLUSION OF YOUNG PEOPLE

CRS' Commitment

As part of its 2020-2030 strategy, Vision 2030, CRS has committed to focusing on young people as one of five agency-wide goals. This goal recognizes the size of the current youth population, the depth of the challenges that young people face, and the tremendous power they hold as problem-solvers, citizens and leaders. It is also an acknowledgment that young people are key stakeholders in the diverse program areas where CRS works—from agriculture to peacebuilding to emergency response. This commitment aligns with CRS' principles of subsidiarity, which calls for partnering with young people and engaging them in decision-making processes. CRS believes that the meaningful engagement of young people should be a key aspect of any youth project as it contributes to positive outcomes. CRS youth projects, which draw on a positive youth development approach, primarily target young people between the ages of 15 to 29 who are

out of school, unemployed or working in informal jobs. For CRS, youth engagement refers to the meaningful inclusion of young people in all aspects of projects that target them.

CRS' Approach

To ensure meaningful youth engagement across its projects, CRS is committed to engaging young people in positive participation, which means moving beyond seeing them as mere project participants and partnering with them by tapping into their insights, contributions, experiences and capacities. To develop projects and programs that meaningfully engage young people, CRS has developed a youth engagement framework. The framework highlights the three engagement levels of positive participation, namely **consultative**, **collaborative**, and **youth-led**, as well as the principles that underpin our approach and practices that guide our work. At the **consultative** level, young people are asked for their insights,

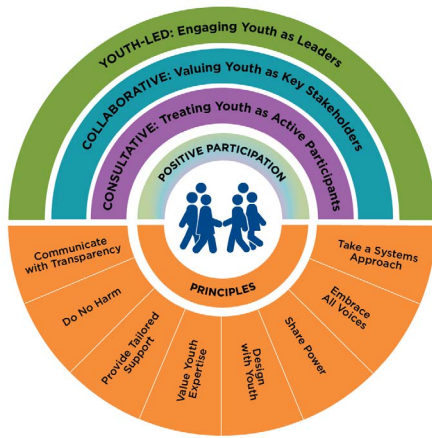


Fig 1. CRS Youth Engagement Framework

knowledge and recommendations and engaged as active participants. When young people are engaged as experts and key stakeholders at the **collaborative** level, they can influence the decision-making process and outcomes of the projects that impact them. Lastly, at the **youth-led** level, young people are supported to facilitate the decision-making process, lead and manage project initiatives and activities. CRS commits to making youth engagement an institutional priority, applying our framework to assure increasing levels of meaningful engagement in all projects that impact young people.

Youth engagement refers to how young people meaningfully participate in the design, implementation, and evaluation of youth projects.

CRS' Principles and Practices for Meaningful Engagement

PRINCIPLES	PRACTICES
1. Communicate with Transparency	Clarify roles, parameters, and decision-making authority with youth—and be transparent about limitations.
2. Do No Harm	Establish safeguards and carefully avoid tokenism or manipulative participation.
3. Provide Tailored Support	Commit necessary resources to remove barriers to participation and ensure that young people are given space, voice, audience, and influence when engaged.
4. Value Youth Expertise	Open channels to assure youth insights guide programmatic approaches and decision-making. Compensate young people when they make substantive contributions.
5. Design with Youth	Engage early and often to assure that programming addresses youth needs, ideas, and perspectives.
6. Share Power	Strive for true partnership and support young people to take on increasing levels of responsibility.
7. Embrace All Voices	Seek authentic youth representation that reflects the real target population, segment approaches to meet diverse needs, and make extra efforts to include those who are hardest to reach.
8. Take a Systems Approach	Advocate with donors and build the capacity of partners and stakeholders, making the case for youth engagement and assuring meaningful participation is built into projects.

Photo Courtesy of Toloinaina M. Razafimanjony for CRS



PROJECT HIGHLIGHT

CRS Madagascar Youth Engagement in Monitoring and Evaluation

CRS Madagascar has been including young people in monitoring and evaluation activities since 2018, when it initiated a partnership with a youth-led NGO to establish a network of village youth groups. These groups, which continue today, have been part of several project cycles and take part in an annual census of participants to document youth-led community initiatives. Using a peer-to-peer research methodology, which

results in more equitable approaches to data collection by reducing power imbalances, data is collected by local youth group leaders, then shared with district-level youth ambassadors and analyzed at a national level by the youth-led NGO. The design of the system itself, including indicators, processes, analysis and reporting, is a collaborative effort that increases young people's skills, agency and ownership of the data. On a quarterly basis, the district youth ambassadors engage in project discussions with CRS and partner staff to discuss the collected data, assess project outcomes, strategize about future activities and report back to their communities.



For more information on this program and CRS, please scan this code

