



Inspire, Engage, and Initiate Change through Participation

INSPIRE, ENGAGE, AND INITIATE CHANGE THROUGH PARTICIPATION

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1. FOREWORD



The professional development activity “Inspire, engage and initiate change through participation“ was two-phases activities and was funded with the support of the European Commission, organized in the frame of the Erasmus+ programme.

The main activities of the project were two professional development activities: a 7-day training course in Turku, Finland, from August 1 to 9, 2024, and a study visit in Kobuleti, Georgia between 1.-9.10.2024. Both activities gathered 28 youth workers, youth leaders, decision-makers, peer educators/multipliers from Armenia, Finland, Georgia and Turkey. Both activities focused on enhancing participants' understanding of youth participation principles, building their project management skills, fostering cross-sectoral collaboration and as well as equipping participants with the skills, knowledge, and attitudes needed to implement innovative, inclusive youth engagement strategies and to foster active citizenship in their respective communities.

This handbook presents what they have learned during this mobility and how they contributed to the project. Please feel free to print these activities and to use them to run your own activities. It reflects the views only of the authors; the European Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

2. 1ST PHASE: TURKU



The project brought together 28 youth workers and decision-makers from Finland, Georgia, Armenia, and Turkey to focus on strengthening youth participation and civic engagement. The main objectives of Phase 1 were to enhance the competencies of youth workers in involving young people in democratic processes, explore best practices in youth participation, and implement the "Have Your Say" manual developed by the Council of Europe.

Additionally, the project aimed to share innovative non-formal education methods, empower local youth, and encourage cross-sectoral cooperation between youth organizations and municipalities. Key activities included interactive workshops on youth participation, expert-led discussions on democratic youth involvement and social inclusion, and practical exercises based on the European Charter on Youth Participation. Daily reflection and evaluation sessions were held to track progress and outcomes.

By the end of Phase 1, the project expected to strengthen the capacity of youth workers to foster active citizenship among young people, enhance cooperation between civil society organizations and public institutions, and develop new methods for engaging marginalized youth. It also aimed to increase motivation among young people to initiate community-based projects and improve understanding of how public authorities can support youth participation initiatives.

REPORT FROM TURKU

During our visit to Turku, Finland, we had the chance to meet with an organization that supports newcomers, including migrants and refugees, in finding housing and integrating into the community.

This organization plays a crucial role in helping individuals navigate their new lives in Finland by providing services that ease access to housing and facilitate community connections.

Additionally, we discussed best practices in youth participation, focusing on how to effectively engage young people in decision-making and community development. A key takeaway was the importance of creating platforms where youth can voice their concerns and take an active role in shaping their communities.

Several project ideas emerged, including initiatives aimed at empowering youth through skills development, fostering intercultural understanding, and creating inclusive spaces for collaboration. These ideas are valuable for inspiring our own youth engagement efforts

On the second day, we reviewed The European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life, a document developed by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities (part of the EU Council). The charter outlines key principles for youth work, emphasizing that young people have the right and opportunity to actively participate in decisions that affect their lives. It highlights the importance of supporting youth to engage with both the challenges and opportunities of community life, ensuring their voices are heard and that they have an influence on the issues that matter to them.

The charter details various forms of participation, including in areas such as sports, leisure, work, employment, housing, transport, and education. It also affirms several rights for young people:

- The right to be involved, regardless of any challenges they may face
- Access to spaces where they can meet and connect with others
- Opportunities to engage and participate in community life
- Support to help them effectively take part in decisions and community development

These principles align with our own goals of fostering youth participation and can serve as a foundation for future initiatives in our community

3. INTERPHASE ACTIVITIES

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Project: What? Where? When?

- Flash Mob
- Competition
- Awareness for Blood Donation
- Recycling, Environmental Awareness

FLASHMOB



Agenda



General information



Issues and needs



Aim and objectives



Impact and evaluation



Methodology and implementation



GENERAL INFORMATION

→ NAME OF THE PROJECT:
“What ? Where? When?”

→ TYPE OF THE PROJECT:
flashmob

→ PARTNER ORGANISATION :
YSU student council

→ PARTICIPANTS:
Diana Hovhanyan
Karen Baghdasaryan
Narine Poghosyan
Gor Papoyan
Meri Gishyan



ISSUES AND NEEDS

There are several issues related to the preservation and promotion of traditional Armenian dances, particularly a lack of awareness and participation among youth and communities.

Additionally, there may be a gap in collaboration between organizations that aim to promote Armenian cultural heritage.

To address these challenges, there is a need to engage more people and foster a deeper connection to Armenian culture through dance.

This can be achieved through technical support for sound systems, videography, and social media promotion.

Moreover, participants would benefit from having access to a simple and clear method for learning the dance, making it more accessible and appealing.



AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of this initiative is to promote and preserve Armenian cultural heritage by organizing a large-scale Armenian National Dance flash mob.

The objectives are to gather at least 100 participants to perform a synchronized Armenian dance, preserving traditional dance forms while also strengthening cultural ties within the community.





METHODOLOGY AND IMPLEMENTATION

The focus of this initiative is to teach participants a simplified version of a traditional Armenian dance, ensuring that it is accessible to people of all ages and abilities. The flash mob will take place in the city center, providing a central and visible location for the event.

Responsibilities are as follows: Dance instructors will be in charge of choreography and teaching the dance, while a communications team will manage promotion, coordination, and social media efforts to ensure widespread awareness and engagement.



IMPACT & EVALUATION

The event aims to increase awareness and pride in Armenian culture, allowing participants to experience a sense of community, accomplishment, and a deeper connection to their cultural heritage.

It will also provide greater visibility for Armenian traditional dance, fostering cultural pride among the public and promoting unity within the community.

To assess the impact of the event, surveys or feedback forms will be distributed to participants after the event to gather insights into their experiences.



COMPETITION



Agenda



General Information



Issues and Needs



Aim and Objectives



Impact and Evaluation



Methodology and Implementation



GENERAL INFORMATION



NAME OF THE PROJECT:
“What ? Where? When?”



TYPE OF THE PROJECT:
Competition



PARTNER ORGANISATION :
YSU student council



PARTICIPANTS:
Diana Hovhanyan
Karen Baghdasaryan
Narine Poghosyan
Gor Papoyan
Meri Gishyan



ISSUES AND NEEDS

There may be a lack of engaging educational activities that encourage critical thinking and teamwork among participants. This gap highlights the need for intellectual stimulation and the development of collaboration skills within the program.

A potential problem is that participants or organizations might not have sufficient access to knowledge-sharing platforms or environments where they can engage in meaningful discussions and problem-solving.

To address this, there is a need to create a space where participants can enhance their knowledge, teamwork, and decision-making skills, fostering an environment of growth and collaboration.



AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of this initiative is to foster critical thinking, teamwork, and broad-based knowledge through the structured "What? Where? When?" format. By doing so, it will help both organizations and participants develop essential life skills that are vital for personal and professional growth.

To achieve this, the project has several key objectives. First, a series of intellectual competitions will be organized, where participants will work in teams to tackle complex questions across a range of topics. This will encourage participants to think critically and collaborate effectively. Second, the goal is to involve 10 teams, each consisting of 5 participants, by the end of the first quarter of the project. To support their success, each team will be provided with the necessary training and resources.

Finally, the project will emphasize the development of problem-solving, decision-making, and collaboration skills, all of which are crucial for navigating real-world challenges.



METHODOLOGY AND IMPLEMENTATION

The program will follow the "What? Where? When?" quiz format, in which participants answer challenging questions covering a wide range of topics such as history, science, and general knowledge. Each round will include a time-limited discussion within teams, during which they will collaborate to reach a consensus on the answer.

This activity is an intellectual competition designed to encourage problem-solving and teamwork. It fosters critical thinking and collaboration as participants work together to address complex questions.

A project manager will oversee the organization and scheduling of the event, ensuring smooth operations. Moderators and quiz masters will be responsible for conducting the sessions, while each team will elect a captain to lead discussions and guide decision-making.



IMPACT AND EVALUATION

Participants in this program will develop improved critical thinking, decision-making, and teamwork skills, making them better equipped to handle real-life scenarios that require quick and collaborative problem-solving.

In addition, the community may experience an increased appreciation for intellectual activities and critical discourse. This could lead to greater community engagement in similar events in the future, fostering a culture of learning and thoughtful discussion.

To evaluate the success of the program, progress will be measured by the number of participants who complete the project, as well as their feedback through surveys. Performance in the competitions will also be assessed, with specific indicators including participant satisfaction, teamwork efficiency, and overall knowledge improvement, as reflected in their competition scores.

IMPORTANCE AND AWARENESS OF BLOOD DONATION

Agenda



General information



Issues and needs



Aim and objectives



Impact and evaluation



Methodology and Implementation





GENERAL INFORMATION

→ NAME OF THE PROJECT:

Youth for Life Turkey:

Raising Awareness on Blood Donation

→ TYPE OF THE PROJECT:

Raising awareness

→ PARTNER ORGANISATION :

Sof Dağı Youth Center

Turkish Red Crescent

Local Health Associations

Universities and High Schools in the
selected areas (around Gaziantep)

Community Health centers

→ PARTICIPANTS:

Project manager

Environmental expert/ advisor

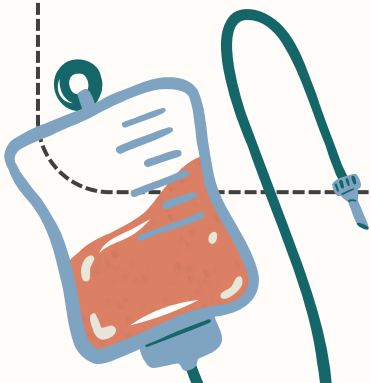
Logistic coordinator



ISSUES AND NEEDS

Thalassemia continues to be a significant issue, especially in regions where patients require frequent blood transfusions. However, there remains a low level of awareness about this disorder and the vital role that blood donations play in supporting these patients, particularly among young people.

To address these challenges, there is a need to raise awareness about thalassemia and its impact on individuals and communities. Increasing participation in blood donation campaigns is crucial, as is educating youth about their important role in saving lives and making a tangible difference by donating blood. By fostering a greater understanding of the disease and its needs, young people can be empowered to get involved and contribute to this life-saving cause.





AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The goal of this initiative is to encourage 30 young people from two universities or high schools over the course of three days through an educational workshop. The aim is to collect blood from at least 10 participants during the donation drive.

To ensure the project is both cost-effective and impactful, the plan is to work closely with Kızılay and local associations, leveraging their resources and networks to minimize costs while maximizing outreach. The focus will be on urban areas and universities, where youth are more accessible and likely to engage with the cause.

The entire project will be completed over two days, making it a focused and efficient effort to raise awareness and encourage blood donations among the younger generation.



METHODOLOGY AND IMPLEMENTATION

This initiative aims to raise awareness about thalassemia and encourage blood donations through a three-day program combining education and direct action. The program will take place at one university and one high school in Gaziantep, targeting young people and fostering their involvement in both learning and action.

Day 1 & 2 will feature educational workshops led by local health specialists, providing participants with a comprehensive understanding of thalassemia, its impact on patients, and the crucial role of blood donations in supporting those affected.

In addition, peer-led activities will allow participants to hear firsthand experiences from individuals who have personal or family connections to thalassemia or have donated blood themselves. These stories, coupled with interactive discussions, will help foster a deeper emotional connection to the cause.

Day 3 will be dedicated to the blood donation drive, organized in partnership with local Kızılay organizations. This day will offer participants the chance to take immediate, tangible action by donating blood, contributing directly to the lives of those in need.

The project will be overseen by a Project Coordinator, who will ensure the smooth execution of all activities. Health specialists will lead the educational workshops, while a Youth Health Ambassador will facilitate the peer-led activities, encouraging engagement and connection. Volunteers will assist with logistics, supporting the smooth flow of events and ensuring participants have a positive experience.

By combining education with direct action, the initiative aims to not only inform but also empower young people to take an active role in saving lives, making a meaningful impact in their community.





IMPACT AND EVALUATION

This initiative aims to significantly impact the youth by educating them about thalassemia and the importance of regular blood donation. Through the program, participants will gain a better understanding of the illness and its effects on individuals, while also recognizing the critical role blood donations play in supporting patients.

By the end of the initiative, youth will feel empowered to directly contribute to the cause, particularly through donating blood.

The success of the project will be evaluated using multiple methods.

Day 1 Feedback will involve collecting immediate feedback from participants at the end of the educational workshops to assess their engagement and understanding of the topic.

On Day 2, metrics will be gathered by measuring the number of blood donors, providing a clear indication of the program's success in motivating direct action.

Finally, a post-project survey will be distributed to track the youths' understanding of thalassemia, their awareness of the importance of blood donation, and their willingness to participate in future campaigns. This evaluation will offer valuable insights into the long-term impact of the initiative and help refine future efforts to foster greater awareness and participation in life-saving activities.

ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS

Agenda



General information



Issues and needs



Aim and objectives



Impact and evaluation



Methodology and Implementation



GENERAL INFORMATION

→ NAME OF THE PROJECT:
“Youth empowerment and
environmental sustainability”

→ TYPE OF THE PROJECT:
Recycling, raising awareness

→ PARTNER ORGANISATION :
Department of Technical Affairs of
Gaziantep
SOF DAGI YOUTH CENTER

→ PARTICIPANTS:
Project manager
Environmental expert/ advisor
Logistic coordinator



ISSUES AND NEEDS

Even though materials like plastic are technically recyclable, they often end up in waste due to widespread indifference and a lack of awareness about proper disposal practices. Many people are simply unaware of how recycling works or underestimate the environmental impact of not properly sorting waste. To address this issue, it's essential to first provide accurate and comprehensive information about environmental conservation and recycling.

Through educational sessions, participants will learn about the importance of reducing waste, the processes involved in recycling, and the role they can play in helping to protect the environment.

Once participants have gained a solid understanding of these concepts, they will then have the opportunity to put their knowledge into practice. This will involve engaging directly with nature by taking part in activities like cleaning up the local area and collecting garbage. This hands-on experience will allow them to witness firsthand the effects of waste on the environment and understand the positive impact they can make by properly managing waste and practicing recycling.

By combining education with action, this initiative aims to foster a deeper sense of responsibility and empowerment in participants, encouraging them to take active steps toward a more sustainable future.



AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The goal of this project is to inform people about the importance of their natural surroundings and emphasize the need to keep these environments as clean as possible. Through educational sessions and hands-on activities, the project will raise awareness about the delicate balance of ecosystems and the impact human actions have on the environment. Participants will learn about the consequences of pollution, the significance of preserving natural spaces, and the role everyone plays in maintaining a clean and sustainable environment.

By directly engaging with nature, participants will have the opportunity to see firsthand the effects of waste and pollution, motivating them to take action in their own communities. The project aims to foster a sense of responsibility and encourage individuals to make conscious efforts to reduce waste, recycle, and care for the world around them.

Ultimately, the objective is to inspire a collective commitment to preserving the beauty and health of our natural surroundings for future generations.



METHODOLOGY AND IMPLEMENTATION

The project will begin by educating participants about environmental issues, providing them with essential knowledge about the importance of keeping natural surroundings clean and the benefits of recycling. Through informative sessions, participants will learn about the impact of waste on ecosystems, the recycling process, and how they can contribute to environmental conservation in their everyday lives.

Once they have been informed, participants will take part in a hands-on activity where they will go out into nature to collect garbage, focusing on identifying and separating recyclable materials. The recyclable waste they collect will then be used in creative "Do It Yourself" (DIY) projects, where they will transform these materials into useful or artistic products. This will not only help clean up the environment but also teach participants how to repurpose and recycle materials in a practical way.

At the end of the project, the products created from recycled materials will be exhibited, showcasing the participants' creativity and the potential of turning waste into something valuable. This exhibition will serve as both an inspiring visual reminder of the power of recycling and a celebration of the participants' efforts to clean and care for their surroundings. Through this process, they will gain a deeper understanding of the environmental issues at hand and be empowered to make a positive impact in their communities.



IMPACT AND EVALUATION

Throughout the project, participants will gain valuable knowledge about the environment and the importance of protecting it. They will learn about the various environmental challenges we face and discover practical ways to use recyclable materials creatively, giving them a deeper understanding of how waste can be repurposed.

By actively participating in the recycling and DIY projects, they will also become more conscious of their role in environmental protection and develop a sense of responsibility toward preserving the planet.

At the end of the project, participants will be given evaluation forms to gather feedback on their experience. These forms will allow them to share their thoughts on what they learned, how the activities impacted their awareness of environmental issues, and any suggestions they may have for future initiatives. This feedback will help assess the effectiveness of the project and ensure continuous improvement in future efforts to educate and engage communities in environmental protection.

4. 2ND PHASE STUDY VISIT TO BATUMI AND ZUKDIDI

on this study visit the participants visited different organisations to learn more about participation in different regions

Agenda: Reports



Regional Youth development of Adjara
Municipality Youth Department



Shota Rustaveli University - Youth council



Alliances of disabled women



Techno Park Zugdidi



Zugdidi Municipality



Association Atinati



Impact and Evaluation



REGIONAL YOUTH DEVELOPMENT OF ADJARA MUNICIPALITY YOUTH DEPARTMENT

The Youth Department in the municipality focuses on young people aged 14 to 29, offering a range of activities and projects tailored to this age group. An interesting aspect of their work is their initiatives aimed at helping parents better understand their teenage children. While there is a small fee for participation, the programs are free for those who cannot afford to pay. This approach presents opportunities for collaboration and inspiration, especially as we consider similar youth-focused initiatives in our own projects.

In addition, the Regional Youth Development of Adjara has established a strong network, organizing regional events like open-air festivals. A particularly surprising element is how their networking efforts are supported by international cooperation, which significantly broadens their impact and reach.



During the visit to the Municipality Youth Department, participants gained valuable insights into how local governments can directly support youth through structured programs such as leadership training, career guidance, and civic engagement. They also learned about their collaborations with educational institutions and NGOs to extend their outreach. What stood out was their innovative use of digital platforms, like Facebook, to engage young people and share essential information. Furthermore, the active participation of youth in city planning and community projects demonstrated their ability to influence local policies and development.

Inspired by these practices, Some participant´s plan to incorporate similar strategies into their own work by strengthening digital engagement efforts and exploring collaboration with local authorities. Specifically, Some aimed to develop an online community page by the end of this year, designed to encourage local youth involvement in community projects. This initiative will serve as a platform to foster engagement and collaboration, drawing on the experiences and successes observed during my visit.



SHOTA RUSTAVELI UNIVERSITY - YOUTH COUNCIL

The Youth Council at Shota Rustaveli University offers a diverse range of sports, artistic, and student clubs, while maintaining a strong international network with universities across Europe. One notable aspect is their exchange programs with around 10 European countries, which provide valuable learning experiences. Additionally, while students volunteer, they don't receive academic credits, but are awarded certifications that help enhance their future CVs. We see opportunities for cooperation with this institute through exchange periods and training programs at our own institution.

Similarly, the Youth Council at Shota Rustaveli Maritime Academy promotes student leadership through community projects, peer-learning clubs, and Erasmus exchange programs, fostering collaboration between students and faculty. What stood out to us was the high level of student involvement in decision-making processes and the breadth of international exchange programs that broaden students' educational horizons. Inspired by their approach, we plan to launch student-led initiatives and explore partnerships with educational institutions. Specifically, we aim to create a local student council that promotes leadership and engagement, drawing from the successful model we observed.





ALLIANCES OF THE DISABLED WOMEN



The Alliance of Disabled Women is dedicated to supporting women with disabilities and offers training programs to help individuals become professional assistants for those in need. However, one challenge we noticed was the lack of resources, particularly transportation services, which poses a barrier for many. We could help by sourcing suitable professional trainers to support their initiatives.

Through our visit, we also learned about the unique challenges faced by women with disabilities in Adjara and the essential role of inclusive support networks. The organization focuses on advocacy, providing resources, and improving access to education and employment. What truly stood out to us was their extensive advocacy efforts, which not only address local issues but also influence policies that give disabled women a voice in decision-making processes. Inspired by their work, we aim to advocate for marginalized groups in our community and establish peer support networks to promote inclusivity and empowerment.



TECHNO PARK ZUGDIDI

Techno Park Zugdidi is an organization that provides valuable support to youth and other groups by offering access to computers, digital services, and woodworking lessons at either no cost or a low fee. These lessons empower individuals to create their own work. What particularly impressed us was the outstanding work they're doing, especially their after-school programs for children and their emphasis on fostering youth creativity and IT skills. We saw a great opportunity for collaboration and could learn a lot by sharing their approach within our own organization.

During our time in Zugdidi, we also learned about the key goals of local organizations, which focus on youth engagement, community development, and improving public services.



The municipality is proactive in encouraging civic participation, ensuring that residents are actively involved in local affairs. Their innovative public outreach methods, along with the challenges they face particularly in regional planning and sustainability were eye-opening. These strategies and governance practices offer valuable lessons, and we can adapt their youth engagement techniques and governance approaches to promote greater civic participation in our own community.



ZUGDIDI MUNICIPALITY



The Zugdidi Municipality attracts around 120,000 visitors each year, and the local garden charges an entrance fee to help maintain the area, although the resources are still insufficient to cover all expenses. What surprised us was the significant amount of donations from the community to help offset these costs.

This showed a strong sense of civic responsibility and support. We could collaborate by exchanging ideas and inviting organization members to share skills and experiences, which would benefit both sides.

During our visit, we also learned about the key objectives and functions of various organizations in Zugdidi, particularly those focused on youth engagement, community development, and public services. We gained valuable insights into how the municipality fosters civic participation and encourages local involvement. What stood out to us were their innovative public outreach methods, as well as the challenges they face, particularly in regional planning and environmental sustainability. These unique approaches to local issues were particularly eye-opening.

Inspired by these strategies, we plan to adapt their youth engagement methods and public administration practices to our own community. By implementing best practices in governance, we hope to promote active youth participation and strengthen civic involvement.



ASSOCIATION ATINATI

The Association Atinati runs a popular bilingual radio channel in their region, attracting around 3,000 visitors annually. With plans to expand, they expect an additional 600 visitors next year. They also offer a range of courses, projects, and training programs, and have exchange programs with other countries. We see a great opportunity for collaboration by implementing exchange programs together.

ATINATI focuses on social, cultural, and educational development, with a strong emphasis on community empowerment. Their initiatives support youth development, social inclusion, and the strengthening of local capacities in Zugdidi. We were particularly impressed by the unique partnerships ATINATI has formed with both local and international organizations, which significantly enhance their reach and impact.

What surprised us were the challenges ATINATI addresses, such as rural development and environmental concerns, requiring creative and innovative solutions. Inspired by their approach, we plan to adopt their community engagement model in our own work, particularly in the areas of youth and education. We aim to integrate methods for fostering social inclusion into our educational events and projects, including Erasmus+ initiatives, to encourage broader participation and create more impactful outcomes.



EVALUATION ON THE STUDY VISITS



The study visit to Zugdidi provided valuable insights into youth engagement, community development, and social inclusion. We were inspired by local initiatives that promote community empowerment, civic participation, and youth involvement in decision-making. Notable practices included fostering strong local partnerships, utilizing digital platforms to engage young people, and offering low-cost services to develop youth skills. The emphasis on inclusivity, support networks, and advocacy for marginalized groups also stood out, motivating us to establish similar initiatives in our own community.

We plan to adopt strategies for student leadership, community engagement, and collaboration with local authorities, as well as integrate digital tools to enhance youth participation and involvement in local projects. Overall, the visit offered practical ideas that we are eager to incorporate into our own initiatives.

5.

CONCLUSION

The project "Inspire, Engage, and Initiate Change through Participation" achieved important results and impacts on multiple levels. The professional development activities enhanced the expertise of youth workers, trainers, and municipal representatives in fostering youth participation and democratic engagement. Participants gained a stronger understanding of youth participation, project management skills, and inclusive practices. Following the training sessions, many began integrating the tools and methodologies into their daily work, particularly in engaging young people in decision-making processes and community activities.

The project enabled participants to become more confident in applying non-formal education techniques, using the tools introduced during the activities, including the Council of Europe's "Have Your Say" manual. This helped them implement more effective and inclusive youth participation initiatives, particularly for marginalized groups and those facing fewer opportunities. The project strengthened partnerships among the participating organizations, fostering cross-sectoral collaboration and these partnerships are foundations for future projects focused on youth engagement, inclusion, and democratic practices. The project's main outputs in this toolkit include a collection of good practices in youth participation, enhanced training methodologies, and local activities led by participants in their local contexts.

