

# CHILDREN & YOUTH PARTICIPATION POLICY



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## INTRODUCTION

LiteHaus International is proud to have a youth-led history, beginning with the organisation's founding by a 20-year-old in 2017. Our mission has always been to digitally empower young people throughout the world, removing barriers to their freedom and provide them with opportunities to realise their dreams. Youth are our primary stakeholders and we believe in this cohort's ability to contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals and a better future for our world. These guidelines stipulate our commitments to the participation of children and youth in our programs.

## STATEMENT OF POLICY

LiteHaus International seeks to ensure that children and youth from diverse backgrounds have meaningful opportunities to participate in decisions that affect their lives, both directly and indirectly. We are committed to contesting power structures that exclude children and youth from shaping their own lives and futures, including those structures that exist in our own governance processes, programs and projects. Further, we recognise the integral importance of creating informed citizens amongst the world's youth and believe that by improving access to a wide range of information and educational content, we are contributing to making that a reality.

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

LiteHaus International is committed to ensuring that any and all engagement with children and youth is done so in an ethical, safe and empowering manner. We have adopted Save the Children's Practice Standards and the Committee on the Rights of the Child General Comment, No.12 'the right of the child to be heard' as the framework for our ethical standards of engagement with children and youth. These standards require that all engagement be:

1. Transparent and informative – children and youth must be provided with full, accessible, and age-appropriate information (that is also sensitive to diversity) about their right to express their views freely; information should include how their views will be given due weight, how the participation will take place, and its scope, purpose and potential impact.
2. Voluntary – children and youth should never be coerced into expressing views against their wishes and they should be informed that they can cease their involvement at any stage.

3. Respectful – children and youth's views have to be treated with respect and they should be provided with opportunities to initiate ideas and activities. Adults should acknowledge, respect and build on good examples of child and youth participation. Adults also need an understanding of the socio-economic, environmental and cultural context of children and youth's lives.
4. Relevant – the issues on which children and youth have the right to express their views must be of real relevance to their lives and enable them to draw on their knowledge, skills and abilities. In addition, children and youth need to have opportunities to highlight and address the issues they themselves identify as relevant and important.
5. Child and youth-friendly – environments and working methods should be adapted to children and youths evolving capacities. Adequate time and resources should be available to ensure that children are adequately prepared and have the confidence and opportunity to contribute their views. You need to consider that children will need differing levels of support and forms of involvement according to their age and evolving capacities.
6. Inclusive – participation must be inclusive, avoid existing patterns of discrimination, and encourage opportunities for marginalised girls and boys and young women and men. Programs also need to ensure that they are culturally sensitive to the situation of children and youth from all communities. You need to ensure that all genders have equitable opportunity to participate in, and benefit from, programs and projects we support.
7. Safe and sensitive to risk – children should be safeguarded and protected from harm. In certain situations, encouraging marginalised girls, boys, young women, and men to express their views may put them at risk. Adults have a responsibility towards the children and youth they are working with and must take every precaution to minimise the risk to children and youth of violence, exploitation or any other negative consequence of their participation. Children must be aware of their right to be protected from harm and must know where to go for help if needed. Investment in working with families and communities is important in order to build understanding of the value and implications of participation, and to minimise the risks to which children may otherwise be exposed.

## COMMITMENTS

LiteHaus International will support the participation of children and youth participation in our activities in six key ways:

1. Creating opportunities for young people to contribute, including employment and volunteering opportunities.
2. Embedding feedback loops and actively seeking feedback from youth who benefit from our programs through monitoring and evaluation processes.
3. Identifying barriers to children's/youth's meaningful participation and responding to exclusion of children or youth due to potential vulnerabilities (e.g. gender, disability, indigeneity, etc).

4. Consulting children and youth in the design phases of programs and strategic plans.
5. Ensuring that children remain the paramount beneficiaries of programs which may benefit others (i.e. teachers, parents, members of the community) incidentally.
6. Encouraging, inspiring and enabling children to be socially-conscious and motivated to contribute to making impact in their own communities and the wider world.

## **RELATED DOCUMENTS**

- LiteHaus International – Codes of Conduct
- LiteHaus International – Standard Operating Manual
- LiteHaus International – Equal Employment Opportunity Policy
- LiteHaus International – Child Protection Policy