



United Nations

Department of
Economic and
Social Affairs



United Nations

Department of Economic and Social Affairs

publicadministration.un.org/en/CEPA

#UNCEPA

Urgently transforming institutions for a greener, more inclusive and more resilient world at a time of multiple crises

22nd Session of the Committee of Experts on Public Administration (CEPA)

27-31 March 2023 - United Nations, New York



**SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT
GOALS**

ITEM 6 OF THE AGENDA

Application of the principles of effective governance for sustainable development for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals

«Promoting the Governance Principle of Participation in support of the Sustainable Development Goals»

Prepared by Dr Najat Zarrouk, Rolf Alter, Jura Nemec et Sherifa Sherif
Members of the Committee of Experts on Public Administration – UN-DESA
27-31 March 2023

Content

- 1) Background.
- 2) Public Participation : Existence of diverse definitions and typologies.
- 3) Reasons to promote Participation.
- 4) Necessity/urgency to create an enabling environment for Public Participation.
- 5) Main issues and obstacles facing Public Participation.
- 6) Design and implementation of Participation.
- 7) Mapping the existant Best Practices, source of Inspiration.
- 8) Conclusions & Recommendations.

1) Background

- ❖ The Principle of Participation is a fundamental Principle among the 11 Principles of Effective Governance for Sustainable Development adopted by ECOSOC in 2018.
- ❖ Participation is at the heart of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and included in several Goals and Targets (SDG 6.b; SDG 10.2; SDG 11.3; SDG 16.7...).
- ❖ Since its 1st Session (2002), Participation has always been at the heart of CEPA's Agenda and deliberations.
- ❖ The collaboration of CEPA with the Praia Group for the deliberations and discussions of statistics on Governance.
- ❖ The current global context marked by crises with multiple facets and dimensions.

The Principle of Participation

«To have an effective State, all significant political groups **should be actively involved** in matters that directly affect them and have a chance to influence policy”

2) Participation du Public: Existence of diverse Definitions and Typologies

Existence of different definitions that lead to confusion between public participation, access to information, social responsibility, citizen engagement...

Existence of diverse Typologies

A seminal example

Sherry Arnstein

« A Ladder of Citizen Participation » (1969)

From “non-participation”, through manipulation and therapy to “tokenism”, through informing, consultation and placation to “citizen control”, through partnership, delegation and citizen control

International Association for Public Participation

Identification of 5 general modes of public participation, namely,

Inform, Consult, Involve, Collaborate and Empower, indicating an increasing level of shared decision authority.

3) Reasons to promote Participation

- ❖ Participation is a **Human Right**, essential to building peaceful and resilient societies.
- ❖ Participation has a central place in international law.
- ❖ It is based on diverse International, Regional and National legal Instruments, particularly those relating to the Environment.
- ❖ It is the **Keystone of the entire Sustainable Development Dynamic** for "The World We Want".



Article 21 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948

“Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives. Everyone has the right of equal access to public service in his country”.

Agenda 21 for Sustainable Development

which stated that “one of the fundamental prerequisites for the achievement of sustainable development is broad public participation in decision-making”.

The World We Want
requires
an Active Mobilization
Of all Actors & Stakeholders
Leaving No One Behind

Public Participation contributes to
the promotion and anchoring of
Effective Governance
(Effectiveness, Accountability, Inclusiveness)

A key lever to Empower all Actors
& Stakeholders
at the sub-national level
to increase Trust in Public
Institutions, to improve Public
Service Delivery, to promote the
Well-being of populations, citizens
and communities

**Other
Considerations
underlying the
Need to
Promote Public
Participation**

Public Participation contributes to
Sustainable State Building
(Pillar of Democracy, Building Peaceful
and Stable States, and
Promoting Sustainable and Resilient
Development)

4) Necessity/Urgency to create an enabling environment for Public Participation

- ❖ Dealing with the world of multiple crises which is threatening order, peace, security, stability, democracy, well-being and sustainable development.
- ❖ It becomes urgent to create a favorable, encouraging and attractive environment for Public Participation to restore Hope, rebuild Trust in Leaders and Public Institutions.
- ❖ Nevertheless, **there is no ideal formula, or miracle recipe or a unique approach** valid everywhere and at any time.

Some Ingredients....

Political will
Changing mindsets
Continuous daily efforts at all levels of Governance
Capitalization of reforms

Which supposes and requires:

- ❖ Integration, Coherence, Coordination at the Global, Horizontal and Vertical level.
- ❖ Consultation, Dialogue, Concertation, Search for consensus.
- ❖ Coherent, rational and concerted decision-making processes.

Equal participation of all Actors and Stakeholders in a spirit of mutual trust and respect, taking into account the national context specific to each State

Which supposes and requires:

- ❖ The preparation/organization of free, fair and transparent elections.
- ❖ The fight against dominant interest groups.
- ❖ Taking appropriate measures to leave no one behind.
- ❖ Provide equal support and accompaniment to all Stakeholders regardless of their conditions.

Recognizing, valuing and supporting the dynamic role of Civil Society through all its different components

Which supposes and requires:

- ❖ Involving Civil Society in decision-making processes.
- ❖ Having a proactive Civil Society, having the right to make proposals (Examples from Switzerland, the Netherlands, Scandinavian Countries, Morocco).
- ❖ Considering the participatory initiatives taken by Civil Society.

Plan the Means of Implementation

Which supposes and requires:

- ❖ Allocation of appropriate financial resources.
- ❖ Existence of professional and competent Human Resources and Civil Servants.
- ❖ Implementation of measures for learning, training, capacity building, peer learning, learning by doing.
- ❖ Taking into account the best practices and lessons learned from experiences.

Investing in Civic Education

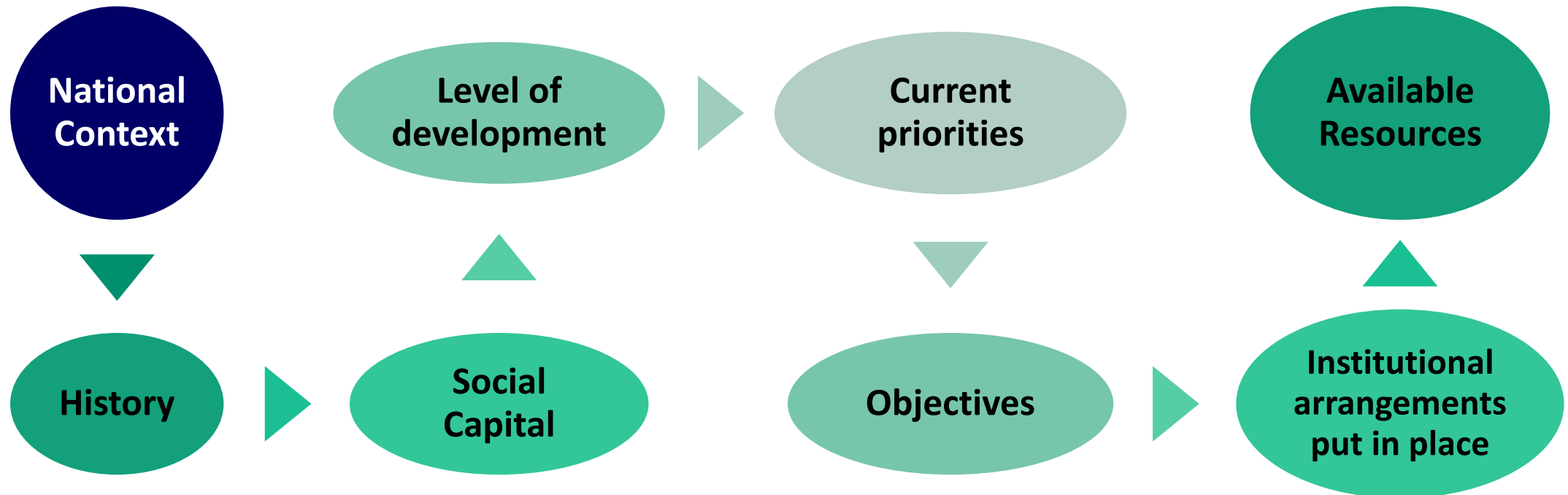
Citizens are not just taxpayers, voters, and consumers of public services!

Which supposes and requires:

- ❖ Civic education, a key Lever for public participation.
- ❖ Having populations, citizens and communities aware of their roles, responsibilities, rights, duties and obligations.
- ❖ Organize information, awareness and empowerment activities.
- ❖ The role of schools, training and education institutions.
- ❖ The good practice of UN-DESA (DPIDG) Curricula on Governance for the SDGs, reinforced by Modules, Toolkits, flexible to be taught face-to-face or virtually, at national and local level.

5) Main issues and obstacles facing Public Participation

Public Participation can be implemented in different ways, depending on:

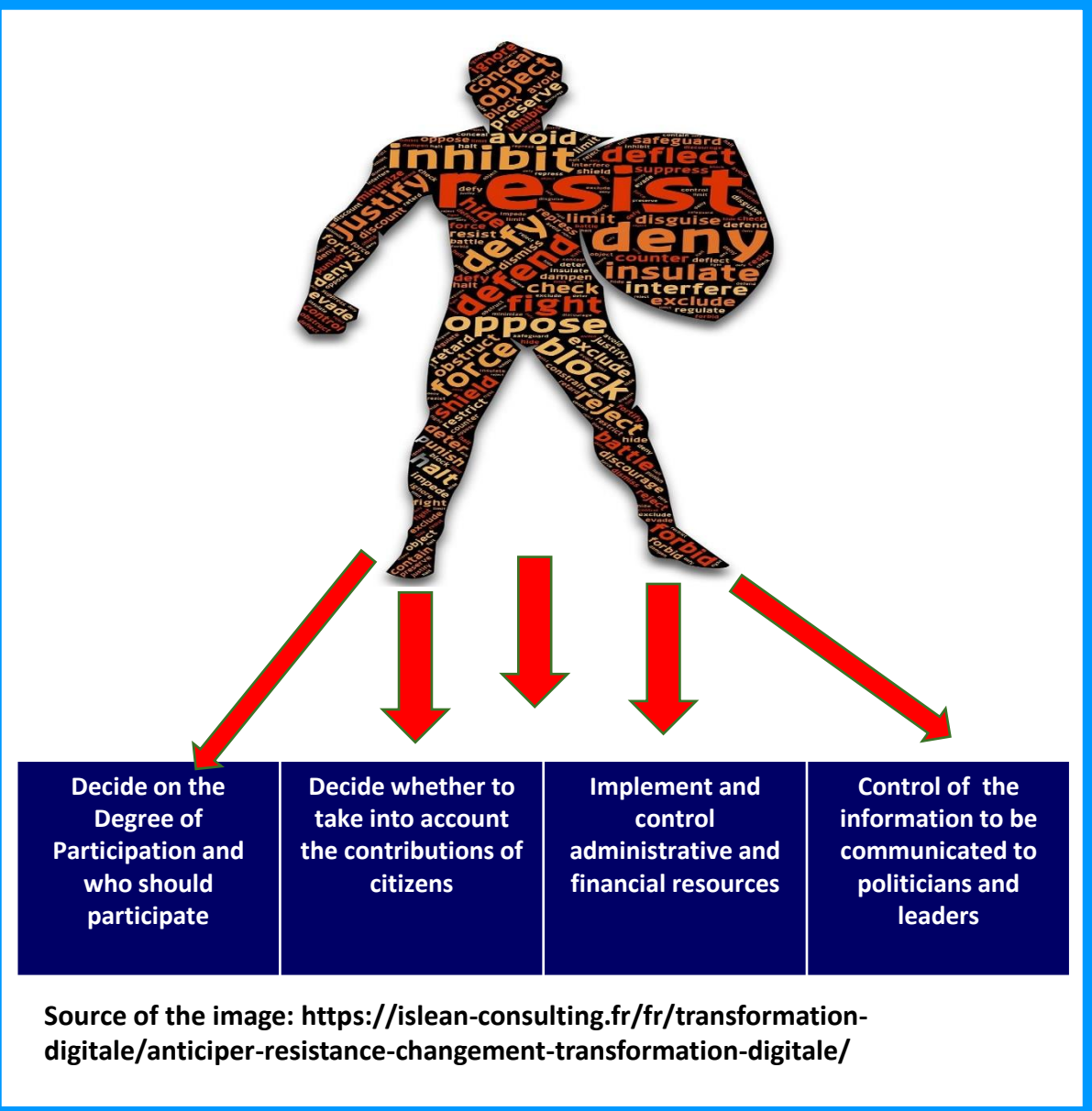


Public Participation must be based on a **holistic Conceptual Framework including at least:**

- ❖ The issue(s) to be addressed and the definition of the Responsible and concerned jurisdiction/ Institution(s).
- ❖ Defining the causes and quantify them, supported by statistics, documents, references.
- ❖ Identify relevant Stakeholders who need to be engaged, including Special Interest Groups, vulnerable groups...
- ❖ Taking into account the multiple gaps between urban and rural areas.
- ❖ Clearly define the objectives of the Participation.
- ❖ Deciding on the form of the participatory process: date, venue, transport, language to be used, methods of participation, information and documentation, provide facilitators for participation, etc...

Nevertheless, Public Participation faces a multitude of obstacles, including:

- ❖ Existence of different forms of resistance to change and to participation in political and public life from leaders, politicians, political parties, civil servants, etc.
- ❖ Public participation seen as a risk to lose or reduce power and authority.
- ❖ Presentation of various arguments to deny or block Public Participation: lack of citizen interest, citizens "don't understand what it's all about", "It's a waste of time and resources !".
- ❖ Such behaviors have been exacerbated during the Covid-19 Pandemic and the states of health emergency.
- ❖ Without awareness, training, preparation, civil servants can prove to be a serious obstacle to effective Public Participation.



Depending on the specific context of each country, the state of democracy, structural and economic challenges may arise in terms of Public Participation, in particular:

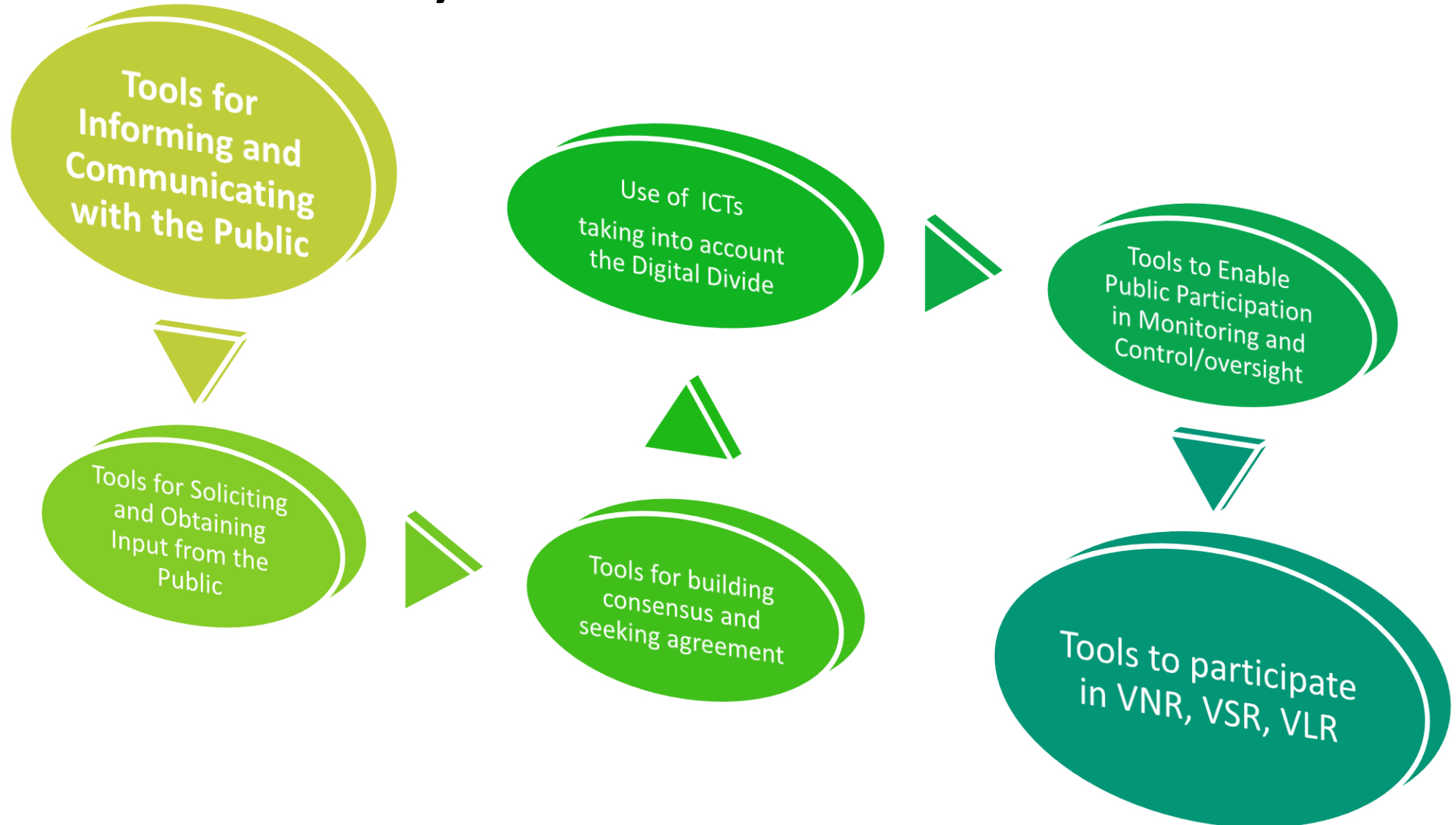
- ❖ Lack of standards to define Public Participation and expected outcomes.
- ❖ Weak coordination between government agencies leading to duplication and competition.
- ❖ Absence or insufficient inclusion of vulnerable and marginalized groups, including the rural population, stakeholders not being identified or being early poorly targeted.
- ❖ Lack of clear and consistent communication about engagement processes.
- ❖ Insufficient funds or poor unfair allocation of existing resources.
- ❖ Logistical issues: bad planning, accessibility to the venue, availability of transport, languages used.
- ❖ Ineffective monitoring, evaluation, feedback and learning mechanisms.
- ❖ Minimalist attitude of civil servants, who limit themselves to ensuring compliance with the law and regulations, without effectively promoting and strengthening participation.
- ❖ Lack of continuity in participation measures and capitalization of efforts and reforms.
- ❖ Mistrust existing between public institutions and citizens.
- ❖ Decline in political participation and development of extremist or populist movements, in particular among Youth.
- ❖ Citizens feel that their opinions and priorities are not taken seriously into account, hence their non-participation.

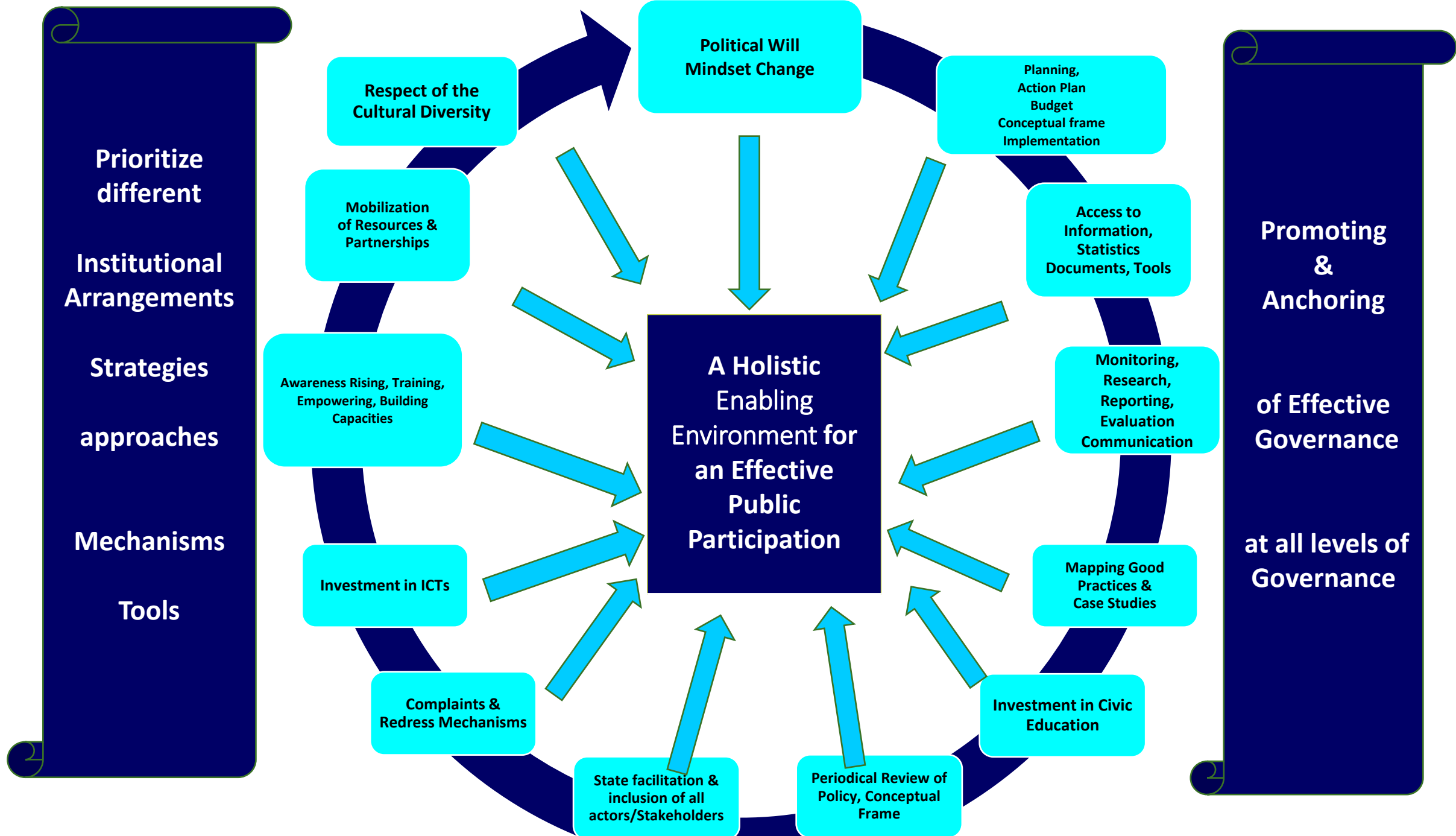
6) Design and implementation of Participation.

Public Participation therefore requires strategies, action plans, implementation mechanisms, tools, institutional arrangements, different modalities and forms, including:

- ❖ Adoption and implementation of multi-stakeholder and multi-level governance approaches as well as “whole of government, whole of society” approaches.
- ❖ Establishment of well-regulated, organized and managed public consultation processes.
- ❖ Concerted management.
- ❖ Natural resource co-management.
- ❖ Multi-stakeholder forums.
- ❖ Promotion of decentralized and participatory development through decentralization and the principle of subsidiarity.
- ❖ Co-creation or co-production, particularly in the provision of public services and the provision of innovative solutions.
- ❖ Participatory budgeting.
- ❖ Social responsibility initiatives.
- ❖ Environmental and Social Impact Assessment....

Need to favor a diversity of Tools:





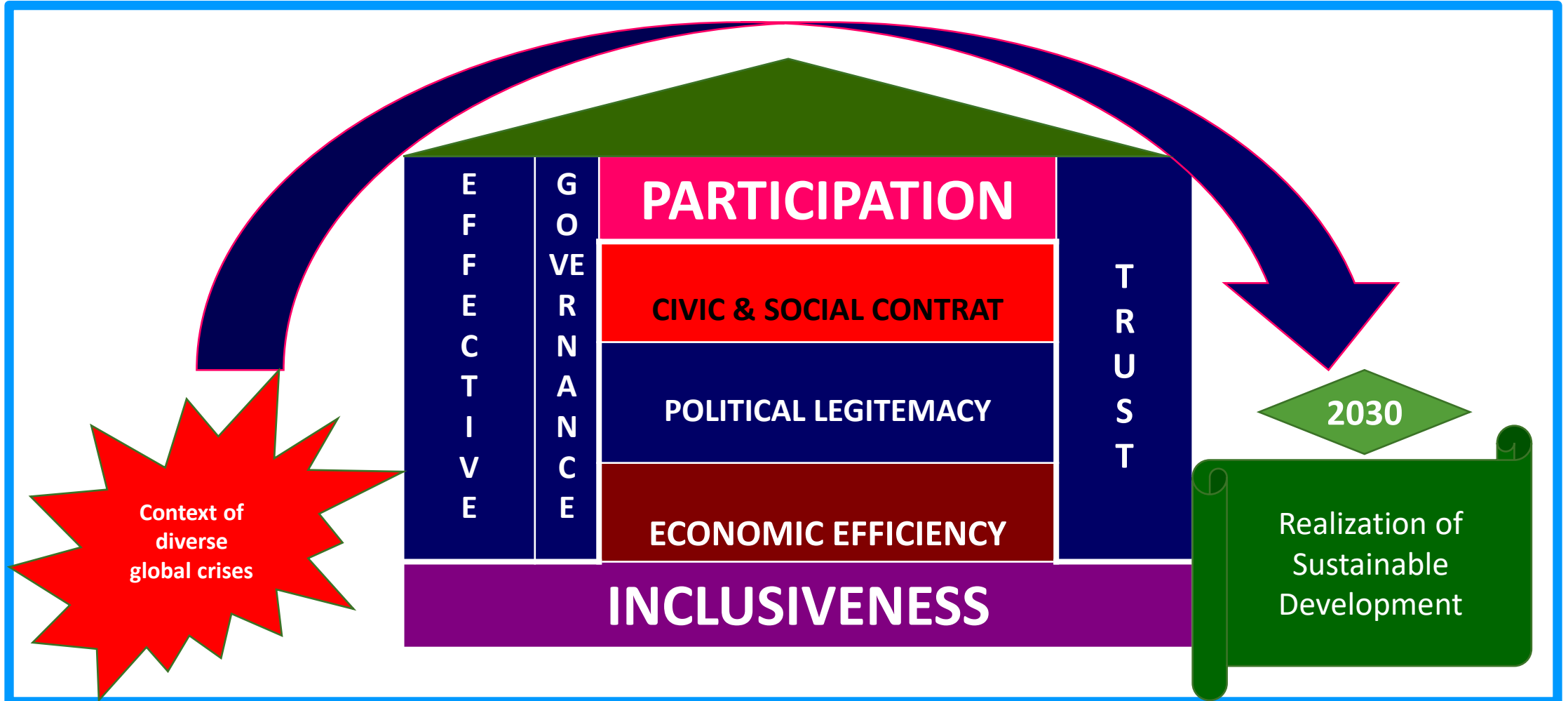
7) Mapping the existant Best Practices, Source of Inspiration



Source of the image:
<https://www.marensse.com/digital/videos-pour-la-formation/>

- 1) **New Zealand**: Local Government Act (2002).
- 2) **Morocco**: The Principle of Participation recognized in the 2011 Constitution, Political Will, Capitalization of Reforms.
- 3) **Kenya**: Design of a Policy on Public Participation and adoption of an Integrated National Curriculum on Civic Education.
- 4) **Slovakia**: Co-creation project in Kojatice of social houses for minorities.
- 5) **USA**: Support from Academia provided to Local Authorities to encourage Public Participation.
- 6) **Arab Countries**: VNRs have shown the advantages and virtues of Public Participation, in particular the prevention and fight against corruption.
- 7) **France**: existence of a Citizen Council to make proposals on climate change.
- 8) **South Africa**: Recognition of the Principle of Participation in the 1996 Constitution and existence of a National Policy Framework for Public Participation. Local authorities are required to create an environment conducive to participation and to strengthen the capacities of the populations.

8) Conclusions & Recommendations



- ❖ **Participation is a Human Right** under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which states that every citizen, without discrimination, has the opportunity to take part in the conduct of public affairs.
- ❖ **This is also one of the Targets of the 2030 Agenda:** to ensure that dynamism, inclusiveness, participation and representation at all levels characterize decision-making.
- ❖ All the SDGs can only be achieved if Public Leaders and Authorities properly involve the different demographic groups, particularly at the subnational, local and community levels.

Subnational Level, Decentralization, and Local/Regional Government are the most appropriate level for the implementation of Public Participation, to associate populations/Citizens/Communities/ Territories/ Stakeholders:

- ❖ who can thus become committed and active players in the Sustainable Development dynamic;
- ❖ who are listened to, respected and their needs and priorities taken into account;
- ❖ their sense of belonging will be strengthened;
- ❖ their support and adherence to local decisions and policies, particularly concerning the SDGs, will be acquired.

Recommendations....

- 1) Member States should develop and design their own models of Public Participation and put in place the corresponding normative and institutional frameworks and provisions, in order to allow the participation of all stakeholders on equal bases.
- 2) Adoption of “**Whole-of-Government**” & “**Whole-of-Society**” Approaches that facilitate a truly multilevel and multi-stakeholder governance system, putting people at the center of sustainable development dynamic.
- 3) Urgently address issues/reluctance that block Public Participation to accelerate action and achievement of the SDGs.
- 4) Design of policies to achieve the SDGs in a participatory, inclusive and collaborative manner, and institutionalizing Participation to ensure that different members of civil society are involved and heard. This can build buy-in to the SDGs and support effective implementation and monitoring at all levels.

- 5) Establish an enabling environment for Public Participation, taking particular account of the needs of vulnerable and marginalized groups, so that no one is left behind: political will, mobilization of means of implementation, sufficient funding at national and subnational Levels.
- 6) **A crucial step requires immediate attention and action:** working to change the mindsets, attitudes and behaviors of Civil Servants reluctant to expand the use of participatory processes.
- 7) **Adopt an integrated approach and empower Civil Servants and Non-State Stakeholders** at all levels, training them and improving their skills through education and capacity-building measures, including providing them with appropriate and adapted training to make them aware of their rights, duties and obligations. A comprehensive capacity-building strategy should be developed, focusing on local communities, territorial managers and citizen empowerment.
- 8) Ensure that the Public Participation mechanisms, processes and tools used are well designed, well implemented and well monitored, including using ICTs and reliable data./.