

Putting **Children** at the Centre

A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION



Save the Children

Save the Children is the world's leading independent children's rights organisation, with members in 29 countries and operational programmes in more than 120. We fight for children's rights and deliver lasting improvements to children's lives worldwide.

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Save the Children

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Cover photo: Members of Save the Children's Global Children's Panel. Clockwise from top left: Dominic, 16, from South Africa; Hafsat, 16, from Nigeria; Smrity, 18, from Bangladesh; Maria Alejandra, 17, from Colombia. Photo: Teri Pengilley

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How to use this resource

This resource has been designed to be as easy as possible to navigate. There are several ways to move through the pages:

- Click on any title on the Contents page to go to the relevant page. Return to the Contents page by clicking on the  (Last View) button in the Acrobat control bar.
- Click on a thumbnail page image in the left-hand window to go to the page.
- Scroll through the pages using the arrows in the Acrobat control bar.
- References in the text to other pages or to web resources are linked to the appropriate location, with links highlighted in **red type**. Click on the highlighted text to go to the referenced page or web link. Return from a referenced page to where you were in the main text by clicking on the  (Last View) button in the Acrobat control bar.



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Introduction

These guides are intended as practical guidance for Save the Children staff working at Head Office and within country programmes who want to support children's meaningful involvement in the governance, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of their work. The guides have been written in consultation with staff who have expertise in facilitating children's participation and those with specialist technical knowledge in the specific areas of work they cover. However, children's participation is an evolving field with a myriad of valued approaches and definitions. You should therefore view these guides as providing a structure and support as you develop your own best practice and pilot new ways of involving children and young people in your own local context.

Part 1 provides an introduction to children's participation in practice.

Part 2 comprises a set of separate guides focusing on specific themes: governance, advocacy, fundraising, recruitment, media and communications, and emergencies.

It is important to read Part One before reading any of the thematic guides from Part Two.

At the end of each part you will find a **Links and Resources** section with a list of useful publications and websites.



Dominic, 16, from South Africa, is a member of Save the Children's Global Children's Panel.

PART I

AN INTRODUCTION TO CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION

Polite, 13, from South Africa, is a member of Save the Children's Global Children's Panel.

PART I

AN INTRODUCTION TO CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION

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What is children's participation and why is it important?

“State parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with age and maturity of the child.”

Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

“Participation means that it is my right to be involved in making decisions, planning and reviewing an action that might affect me. Having a voice, having a choice.”

Welsh Assembly Government



Medina, 14, from Ghulja, China, at a meeting of Save the Children's Global Children's Panel in London, UK.

ANNA KARI

What is children's participation?

Participation is about children having the opportunity to express their views, influence decision-making and achieve change.

In accordance with Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), Save the Children UK believes children of all ages and abilities, including the most marginalised, should have a say in any matter concerning them. It should be informed and voluntary.

We believe participation is a way of working and an essential principle that should be applied to all arenas – from homes to government, from local to international levels.

As an organisation, we promote participation as a way of working across country programmes and at Head Office.

What is children's participation and why is it important?

Adults' views of children

According to the UNCRC, children of all ages have the right to participate in any matter concerning them and to have their opinions taken into account. Children are citizens from the moment of their birth, yet they are often treated as though they are less important than adults and their opinions matter less. Adults naturally have more power than children. The way they choose to exercise or share this power can enable or prevent children from fulfilling their potential as active citizens. Children and adults need support in learning how to address these issues so that they can respect and collaborate with each other.

Children's 'evolving capacities'

Article 5 of the UNCRC introduces the concept of children's 'evolving capacities'. Children are not a homogenous group and their age cannot be the only factor we consider when we determine the involvement they should have in matters affecting them. Each child's level of competency will also depend upon a variety of other factors – for example, the environment or culture they were brought up in, their access to education, level of maturity, and their physical and mental wellbeing.

As adults, we need to find a balance between enabling children to develop and become active agents in their own lives and communities and ensuring their protection. We need to be sensitive to each child's capacity and adapt the way we work with that child accordingly. We are committed to working with all children, including the most marginalised; therefore, we should always take an approach that suits the understanding and capacity of each child.



Children in Vietnam learning through games about the importance of team work in an emergency.

What is children's participation and why is it important?

Why is children's participation important?

Children's participation should be a process rather than an event or a one-off activity. When it's done properly, children develop new skills, increase their confidence and knowledge and see that their views are valued and respected. Adults learn, both as individuals and in organisations, that working in collaboration with children brings a fresh perspective to their work as well as greater credibility and, potentially, better outcomes.

Benefits to children

- Children develop strong communication skills.
- They gain a sense of achievement and an increased belief in their own ability to make a difference.
- Children who are used to expressing themselves may be more vocal about abuse or exploitation.
- They gain political and social knowledge and awareness of their rights and responsibilities.
- Child participation leads to the fulfilment of other rights.
- Children learn how to be active and responsible citizens.
- Working together helps develop positive relationships between children and adults; it promotes a positive image of children within their communities, among professionals and among their peers.
- Having a meaningful role to play within a project creates opportunities for personal development among children who are often excluded.
- Involving children in our work provides a means of protecting them from harm and preventing them from being invisible when discussing plans, shaping policies and designing services or making decisions that affect their lives.
- Children are given authority to hold duty bearers to account, to ensure adults think and behave in a way that respects children and childhood.

“I have learnt to listen better, not to be shy and to speak out loud, that it is important to listen.”

Young person¹

Benefits to adults

- Adults find out directly from children about the issues that affect them, rather than guessing what they think.
- Adults are motivated by being more directly accountable to children and by the need for children's rights to be met.
- Adults feel more motivated about the value of their work.
- Children offer creative ideas and suggestions and a fresh perspective.
- Working with children is fun, energising and multi-dimensional.

¹ *Building a Culture of Participation*, National Youth Agency

What is children's participation and why is it important?

Benefits to Save the Children

- If children are consulted or involved in service planning and provision, the services we provide for them will be targeted and relevant.
- Interventions aimed at improving children's lives are more targeted, relevant and effective when they are informed directly by those they are intended to benefit.
- Involving and listening to young people helps increase their access, use and positive experience of our programmes.
- We gain a clearer picture of the issues affecting children and are able to plan our work accordingly.
- The organisation is motivated by a fresh input of ideas and creative solutions.
- We are not only seen by others to encourage participation – we are doing it and learning constantly from it.
- Our advocacy work is better informed when we involve our primary stakeholders.
- When children are involved in recruitment, staff are effective and sensitive to children's needs.
- Children's participation can lead to more accountable and improved structures, policies and decision-making.
- Children's participation calls upon adults in positions of power and influence to take action that impacts positively upon children's lives, which is at the heart of what we are trying to achieve.

Save the Children's commitment to children's participation

By involving children in our work, we are paving the way for greater accountability to them. When children participate meaningfully in Save the Children's work, honesty, transparency and communication between children and adults can be improved and a relationship based upon respect begins to flourish, where children's views are valued, heeded and acted upon.

Save the Children has made a significant commitment to children's participation in its ten-year strategic plan '*Change for Children*':

(By 2017) "Children are central. We match reality to rhetoric about involving children meaningfully in our work. Children are consistently involved in our programme on the ground, are central to our campaigning and are engaged in our strategy development and fundraising."

By involving children in the work of Save the Children, we aim to:

- increase our accountability to children, our primary stakeholders
- enable children's voices to be heard within their communities and beyond on issues that affect them
- enable children's views to influence the design, implementation and monitoring of our programmes
- ensure that children are able to comment on and influence the decisions that shape the organisation's strategic directions and advance its purpose.

What is children's participation and why is it important?

How can children participate in the work of Save the Children?

Children already participate at the family, school and community levels. As citizens, they will naturally involve themselves in matters concerning them. Children and young people also spontaneously lead projects, and set up groups and associations, sometimes with the support of adults and sometimes without.

Children and young people can and do participate in various aspects of Save the Children's work. Here are a few examples:



What is children's participation and why is it important?

Promoting children's participation in wider society

The principle of a child's right to participation is enshrined in the UNCRC. But in order for children's participation to be meaningful, other conditions also need to be in place:

- Article 13: Right to freedom of expression
- Article 14: Freedom of thought, conscience and religion
- Article 15: Freedom of association
- Article 17: Access to appropriate information

If young people are to be able to express their opinions about issues that affect them (Article 12), they need information (Article 17) and they need to be able to gather with others to discuss issues (Article 15). Without freedom of expression and freedom of thought (Articles 13 and 14), children cannot have a voice.

Save the Children has a key role to play in creating an environment where children's participation can thrive. Each cultural context will require a different approach in order for children to be able to take a full part in civic life. It is important that we promote our good practice beyond the organisation so that it can have a lasting impact for as many children as possible.

Here are some ways in which we can promote the acceptance and celebration of children's participation in wider society:

- Work with the media to highlight examples of children's participation and promote the involvement of children as reporters, spokespeople, writers and journalists. The more often the public see examples of children participating on the radio, TV or Internet, the more accustomed they will become.
- Work with governments to lobby for greater opportunities for children to participate in decision-making and in wider civic life.
- Work with our partners to build their capacity to facilitate children's participation.
- Strengthen existing child-led networks and groups.



Donna, 16, and Lisa, 15, are members of the Fermanagh Shadow Youth Council in Northern Ireland, which is funded by Save the Children.

Degrees of involvement

There are many different approaches you can take to involve children in your work. The time and energy children invest in a particular activity and what they get out of their involvement will vary according to the approach you take, as well as other factors such as the resources available. For example, a one-off consultation event is time-limited and children's involvement will be relatively passive. A long-term project where children design activities and collaborate with adults over a series of months requires more time, energy and investment on their part. They are also more likely to gain new skills and bring about positive change. However, the level of involvement the children experience also depends on how well you facilitate the process.

This section explores in detail how you can measure the degree of involvement children currently have in your work. There are also examples of how children can be involved to varying degrees in Save the Children's work.

Why measure the degree to which children are currently involved in my work?

It is always useful to assess the level at which children are involved and engaged in your work:

- It enables you to be honest with children about how much involvement and influence they can hope to have.
- It enables you to reflect upon your own practice, and to address some of the reasons why children may only have a low level of engagement.
- It may make you challenge yourself and other adults to work with children in a new and more collaborative way.
- It will help you to be aware of and avoid non-participatory approaches to working with children. Participatory work with children risks being 'tokenistic' or even 'manipulative' if it is not managed effectively.

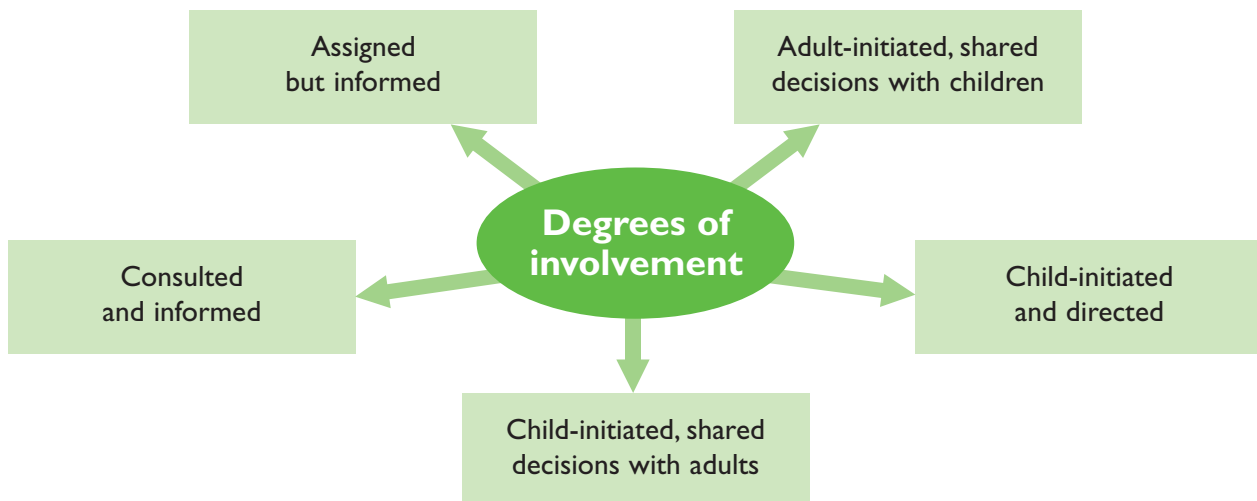
Models of child participation

Experts and practitioners in the field of child participation have created models to help adults and children analyse the level at which children are involved. Most of the models have attracted some criticism over their definitions of the various levels and you may find some more helpful than others. We include here two models that many people find user-friendly and relevant.

Degrees of involvement

Treseder's 'Degrees of Involvement' model²

Treseder's model uses five degrees of participation that should be viewed as "different, but equal, forms of good practice". There is no hierarchy of involvement; the type of involvement depends on the wishes of children, the context, children's developmental stages, the nature of the organisation, etc.



Assigned but informed

Adults decide on the project and children volunteer for it. The children understand the project, they know who decided to involve them and why. Adults respect children's views.

Adult-initiated, shared decisions with children

Adults have the initial idea but children are involved in every step of the planning and implementation. Children's views are considered, and they are involved in making decisions.

Consulted and informed

The project is designed and run by adults but children are consulted. They have a full understanding of the processes and their opinions are taken seriously.

Child-initiated and directed

Children have the initial idea and decide on how the project is to be carried out. Adults are available but don't take charge.

Child-initiated, shared decisions with adults

Children have ideas, set up projects and come to adults for advice, discussion and support. The adults don't direct but offer their expertise for young people to consider.

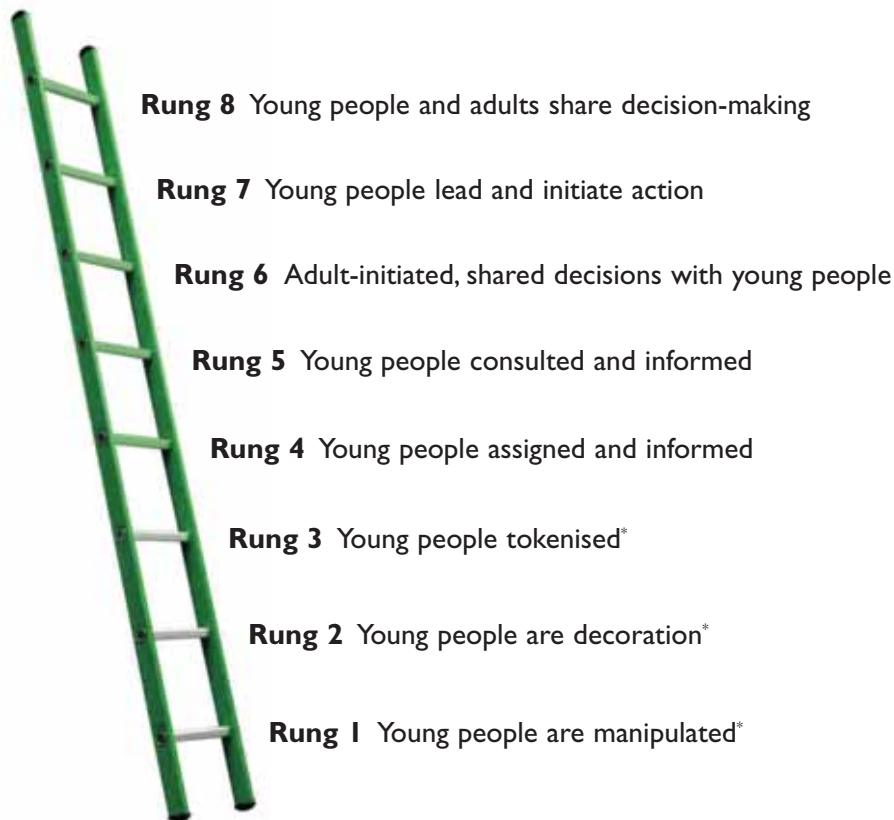
² P Treseder, *Empowering children & young people: promoting involvement in decision-making*. Save the Children, 1997.

Degrees of involvement

Hart's 'Ladder of Participation'

Hart's 'Ladder of Participation' was adapted from other models by Roger Hart in 1992. Hart's Ladder displays different sequential levels of non-participation and participation ranging from 'manipulation' at the bottom to 'child-initiated, shared decision-making with adults' at the top. The bottom three rungs are actually 'non-participation' and should be avoided, as Hart himself explains.

Roger Hart's Ladder of Young People's Participation



Adapted from Hart, R. (1992). *Children's Participation from Tokenism to Citizenship*, Florence: UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre.

Levels of non-participation (to be avoided):

Rung 1: Manipulation

Adults have complete control and often don't work in the best interests of the child. Children have no say on anything and no power to make their own decisions.

A hypothetical example: The Media Team asks a young person to travel from Brazil to the UK Head Office to speak about a campaign to the media. The young person knows very little about the campaign. When interviewed by the media, the young person says what he has read in a script he has been given. The young person wonders why he is talking about the campaign when he knows nothing about its purpose or how it will help children – but the young person keeps quiet.

Degrees of involvement

Rung 2: Decoration

Children are used to look good or bolster a campaign or programme.

A hypothetical example: The Philanthropy and Partnerships Department want to prove to a corporate sponsor how 'young person-friendly' Save the Children is in order to attract funding. They organise a Major Donor event and invite two young people along who are asked to wear Save the Children T-shirts. The young people are not given a clear role and spend the evening sitting at a table looking bored.

Rung 3: Tokenism

Tokenism is when children's involvement in an activity is not made meaningful for them. They may appear to be given a voice, but they have little say on the topic or on the way their views are communicated.

A hypothetical example: The Communications Team has spent months developing a new area of the Save the Children website specifically for children and young people. The team has consulted widely among other adults in the field to ensure that the tone and content are appropriate. At the last minute, they realise they haven't consulted children so they organise a testing/consultation session with a group of five children from the UK. The children give their views, but the web team decide it would take too much work to make their ideas a reality and, anyway, it's already too far down the line to change things. They thank the children but fail to feed back to them, and the children feel disheartened when they see their views have not been taken on board.

Do you recognise any of these levels of non-participation?

What can you do to avoid them?

Levels of involvement

Drawing on these different models, children's involvement in Save the Children's work can be broadly categorised into three levels:

Level 1) Children are informed and/or consulted

Children are well informed about what we're doing and why. We might also consult them about our ideas to check that we're working in the right way. Children's involvement is valuable but remains quite passive.

Level 2) Children collaborate and/or share decision-making with adults

Children collaborate with adults and share decision-making with them. This can be an adult-initiated or a child-initiated approach, but adults and children respect one another and are equal stakeholders in the work.

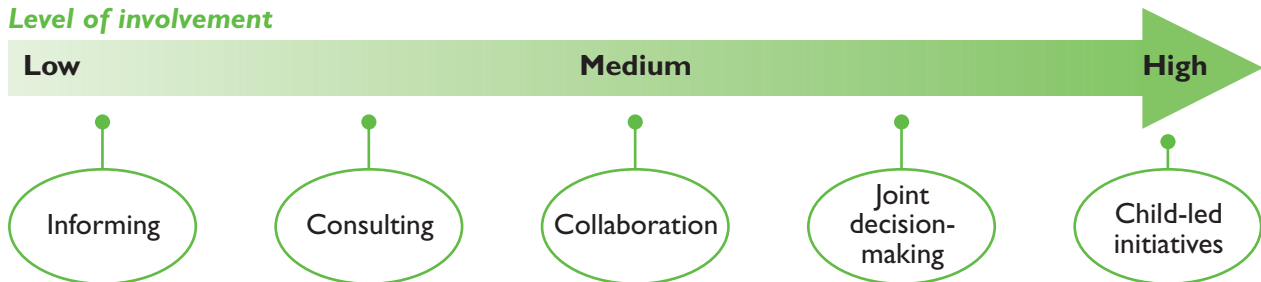
Degrees of involvement

Level 3) Children lead initiatives

Children take the lead and initiate their own projects. They may seek support or guidance from adults, but this is optional.

It isn't always possible to categorise a participatory activity with children on any one of these three levels. In fact, a project or activity may operate at any one of these levels at different times. However, there are certain characteristics of participatory work with children that will help you work out their level of involvement:

Level of involvement



Low-level involvement

- Children are passive
- Adults take the lead
- Adults design and set the parameters of the activity
- Children are invited to take part in something designed by adults
- Children are informed and consulted
- Time-limited or one-off activity
- Adults have most of the power
- Adults are prepared to listen to and take on board children's views

Medium–high-level involvement

- Children are active protagonists
- Children collaborate with adults
- Adults and children share decision-making
- Adults and children respect one another as equal stakeholders
- Children are involved in designing activities
- Children facilitate or run activities
- Children's participation leads to change
- Children gain new skills
- Sometimes (not always) a longer-term activity
- Children take a lead and ask for support from adults where necessary

You shouldn't feel that your work is not valuable unless children are highly engaged and involved. Sometimes this isn't appropriate or possible. Children may not wish to join in with an activity, or you may not have the time or capacity to work in this way. However, we do know that when children are given the opportunity to take a lead, to collaborate with adults and make joint decisions with them, they gain the most in terms of increased confidence, skills, knowledge and sense of achievement. Adults can also gain a great deal from working in this way.

Degrees of involvement

Meaningful participation

Examples of low-level involvement	Examples of medium–high-level involvement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultations • Focus group discussions • Reviewing materials • Testing out new resources • Attending campaigning, lobbying and advocacy events • Attending workshops or training • Hearing Save the Children UK's plans and commenting on them 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Researching, designing and executing public campaigning work • Media spokespeople • Co-planning work with adults • Research to help understand young people's needs • Developing materials for a youth audience • Planning and organising events and conferences • Fundraising development work • Lobbying and advocacy work • Recruiting staff • Advising staff to make Save the Children UK more accessible and child-focused • Training adults – eg, staff inductions and young people • Reviewing and evaluating Save the Children UK's progress • Peer education • Governance – eg, Global Children's Panel

Regardless of the degree to which children are involved in any activity, it is always important that their involvement is as meaningful as possible.

Participation is made meaningful when...

- Children and their ideas are treated with respect
- The aims and outcomes of their involvement are explained to children
- Children volunteer to participate – or decide not to!
- The process and experience builds confidence and self-esteem and is empowering
- Child-friendly methods are used – make it fun, interesting and engaging and in line with children's evolving capacities to take part
- An opportunity is provided that suits the development needs of the child, and is in line with what children chose
- Time is factored into project-planning – it takes time to do participation well! It shouldn't be a one-off event.

Degrees of involvement

Some other points to consider...

- Think about when adults should take a leading role or a supportive role, or when they should allow children to take the lead.
- Involve children at all stages of the project, from the initial planning to the final debriefing and evaluation.
- Make sure that you work in ways that encourage children who are marginalised or excluded to actively engage and be represented.
- Seek advice or work in partnership with specialist staff if you are unsure about how to support children who have differing needs (eg, disability, alternative communication).
- Make time to support children and young people and ensure they are well informed and trained where necessary – they want to feel informed and confident too.
- Build up children's self-esteem and confidence through team-building activities and celebratory events.
- Make sure that you promote the best interests of the child and uphold all of their rights.
- Feed back the outcomes of children's involvement.
- Expect children and young people to be passionate and serious about issues – don't underestimate them.
- Be open to learn from children.
- Always ask, is there another way...?



Navy, 14, (centre) was elected to be the children's representative in the slum where she lives in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. She gathers groups of children to raise awareness of healthcare, the dangers of drugs and the risk of abuse. She became interested in children's rights after attending a Save the Children workshop.

Child Participation Practice Standards

In 2005, the International Save the Children Alliance developed a set of Child Participation Practice Standards.³ These describe an expected level of performance and state what children and others can expect of Save the Children's practice. They apply to all Save the Children's child participation work and represent minimum expectations of how staff will behave and operate. These standards have been developed through years of experience supporting children's participation at both local and global levels and are based on feedback and consultations with Save the Children staff, partner organisations and children in various countries and community settings.

The Practice Standards are a useful tool for planning, monitoring and evaluating your work. The full document includes guidance on how you can meet each of the standards and can be downloaded here: http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/en/54_3169.htm

The Practice Standards

Standard 1

An ethical approach: transparency, honesty and accountability

Standard 2

Children's participation is relevant and voluntary

Standard 3

A child-friendly, enabling environment

Standard 4

Equality of opportunity

Standard 5

Staff are effective and confident

Standard 6

Participation promotes the safety and protection of children

Standard 7

Ensuring follow-up and evaluation

³ International Save the Children Alliance, 2005, Practice Standards in Child Participation

Safe children's participation

It is imperative that all our work with children and young people promotes their health, safety and wellbeing.

Please refer to Save the Children UK's Child Safeguarding Policy and associated procedures on the Intranet, as they are constantly kept up-to-date:

- Save the Children's Child Safeguarding Policy and Procedures
- Save the Children's Code of Conduct
- Save the Children's Safe Child Participation Procedure
- Save the Children's Child Safeguarding – Reporting Suspected Abuse Policy
- Save the Children's Declaration of Acceptance
- Save the Children's Child Safeguarding Reporting Form
- Save the Children's Parental and Media Consent Forms
- Save the Children Child Safeguarding Awareness and Prevention Measures

What is child safeguarding?

The term 'safeguarding' describes the preventative and precautionary approach to planning and procedures that need to be in place to protect children and young people from any potential harm or damage. It is about more than child protection, although child protection is one important aspect of safeguarding. Read our guide, [Child protection and safeguarding – what is the difference?](#)

Responsibilities for ensuring safe child participation

If you are coordinating an activity or programme of work involving children and/or young people under the age of 18, it is your responsibility to ensure that the steps set out below have been taken to ensure their safety and wellbeing.

Child Safeguarding Coordinator

The organiser of any event or activity must appoint one individual as the Child Safeguarding Coordinator (CS Coordinator) who will work with a few other key staff or volunteers as a Child Safeguarding Team for the duration of the activity. This individual has overall responsibility for ensuring the safety and wellbeing of the children involved in the activity during the activity. That person must be familiar with:

- Save the Children's Child Safeguarding Policy
- Save the Children's Child Safeguarding – Reporting Suspected Abuse Policy
- Relevant local procedures.

Safe children's participation

The Child Safeguarding Coordinator should not be the organiser of the activity. Ideally, they should have experience of this role and experience of working directly with children and young people. If they don't, they should complete training in Child Safeguarding and ensure they have all the appropriate information in order to fulfil their responsibilities.

The Child Safeguarding Coordinator must take responsibility for the following:

(Please see the section below for more detailed information about each of these areas of responsibility.)

1. Ensuring that all staff and volunteers involved in the activity have signed a **declaration of acceptance** and have read Save the Children's Child Safeguarding Policy and Procedures and Code of Conduct. Ideally, all staff and volunteers should undertake Child Safeguarding training.
2. Conducting a thorough **risk assessment** of the activity or programme of work, sharing it with the Child Safeguarding Team and getting it approved by an appropriate staff member (see guidance below).
3. Creating a **procedure for emergencies or incidents** and sharing it
4. Conducting a **Health and Safety briefing** for all children and adults involved in the activity/programme of work.
5. (In the UK) liaising with UK HR in order to obtain **Criminal Records Bureau (CRB)/police checks** for staff and volunteers.
6. Keeping an **overview of the safety and wellbeing** of children at all times.
7. Obtaining parental/guardian **consent** and consent from the children.
8. Obtaining and confidentially storing **medical information** about the children.
9. Working with other staff to **respond appropriately to any concerns** that children may raise.

1. Declaration of acceptance

All Save the Children staff and volunteers involved in the activity must sign a 'declaration of acceptance' to show that they have read and fully understand Save the Children's Child Safeguarding Policies and Procedures. This is available on the Intranet.

All staff working with children and young people should read and understand Save the Children's Code of Conduct.

2. Risk assessment

The organiser must complete a risk assessment for all types of child participation activities. This risk assessment must:

- cover every aspect of children's participation in the activity from collection from their homes to their arrival back at home; and
- include contact details of adults involved in the activity, and of the CS Coordinator.

Safe children's participation

The risk assessment must be approved by the following individual:

- if the activity is taking place in one country and involves only children from that country – the Country Director;
- if the activity is taking place in one region and involves only children from that region – the Regional Director;
- in any other circumstances (for example, if the activity is taking place over several regions or in the UK involving children from countries outside the UK) – by a member of the activity organiser's Senior Management Team.

If there are outstanding actions on the risk assessment, the organiser's line manager must monitor these to ensure that they are completed prior to the activity.

3. Procedure for emergencies or incidents

For any activity or programme of work, the CS Coordinator should draw up a document detailing the course of action to be taken in the event of an emergency or incident. For example, it should detail what staff should do to ensure children's safety in the event of a fire or a medical emergency. This should complement the risk assessment and should be shared with all staff and volunteers. Copies should be made available to them.

4. Health and Safety briefing

At the start of any activity or programme of work involving children, the CS Coordinator should organise a Health and Safety briefing for all children and adults. This briefing should be accessible in tone and should cover the following points:

- potential risks and advice on how to avoid them
- what to do in the case of an emergency – eg, fire
- who children can go to for support or if they want to report a concern
- advice on keeping safe
- an opportunity for the children and adults to ask questions.

It is important to consider how to deliver this briefing in such a way that the children are put at ease rather than scared by the possible dangers. They need to be aware of the risks and be reassured that you are considering their safety and wellbeing.

The CS Coordinator should ideally have a mobile telephone that staff, volunteers and children can call at any time in the event of an emergency. You should give out this number as part of the Health and Safety briefing. You should also give contact cards to all children, staff and volunteers, giving details about accommodation and the emergency contact number.

It's good practice to work with children and young people to set their own ground rules about inappropriate and unsafe behaviour.

Safe children's participation

5. CRB checks

The activity organiser must ensure that all Save the Children staff and volunteers who will have direct and possibly unsupervised contact with children or access to children's data have been recruited in line with Save the Children's guidance on recruitment and selection in the Awareness and Prevention Measures. If the staff member is from the UK, they must have had a CRB check. For more information on this, please consult the UK HR department.

6. Keeping an overview of safety of children at all times

All members of staff and volunteers must act to ensure the safety of the children involved in the activity at all times. If the CS Coordinator has concerns that this rule is not being followed, he or she should raise these with the staff or volunteers. If these concerns are not addressed, he or she should raise them with the relevant Country or Regional Director or member of London Office senior management team.

7. Responding to a concern

If a child comes to you to disclose any concern, you must make an initial written record using Save the Children's Child Safeguarding Reporting Form (available on the Intranet).

If a member of staff is concerned about the possibility of child abuse, he or she should discuss this with their line manager *on the same working day*. The only exception is if the line manager is suspected of abuse – see below. If the line manager is unavailable, then another manager should be notified of concerns within the same timeframe. This might be a more senior manager or Departmental Director or the Director of Global Child Safeguarding.

8. Consent

Parental/guardian consent: If a child will be physically present at an activity, her or his parents/guardians must complete a parental consent form. You should also give parents/guardians a verbal or written briefing about the activity so that they can make an informed decision about whether or not they wish their child to take part.

Children's consent: You must give children the opportunity to consent to taking part in the activity or programme. This consent may be verbal or in writing. Make sure that you give children as much information as you can about what they will be doing.

Planning for children's participation

In order for children's involvement in your work to be meaningful, it is important to plan effectively. Children and young people need to be clear about what they will be doing and what they will get out of the process. It is important to make sure that their involvement is adequately resourced and that staff are able to see the project through to completion.

Some tough questions

Before you begin working with children and young people, ask yourself the following questions:

1. What are we aiming to achieve?
2. Where have we got to so far?
3. What will children and young people get out of it?
4. Are we prepared to resource it properly?
5. Why have we not done it before?
6. Are we prepared to involve children and young people from the start?
7. Are we being honest with the children and young people?
8. What are our expectations?
9. Are we prepared to give up some power?
10. Are we prepared to take some criticism?
11. Do we recognise this as a long-term commitment?
12. Are we prepared to build in changes long term and not just have a one-off event?⁴

Managing expectations

From the beginning of any work involving children and young people, it is crucial that they have a clear understanding of what they can expect from you and from their project and what you expect from them in return. Children's ideas about what they hope the project will achieve may be very different from your own. You therefore need to build in time during the planning process to explain clearly and honestly the scope and boundaries of the project, how you see it working and what you expect it to achieve. Take time to give children all the information they need and the opportunity to ask questions and raise concerns. Allow them to voice

⁴ National Youth Agency, *Involving Children and Young People: An introduction*, 2007

Planning for children's participation

their own views on the project and to discuss their expectations. You may need to negotiate with them and come to a compromise, but it's important that everyone's views are taken on board, considered properly and built into the project plan where it's possible to do so.

It's useful to draw up a volunteer agreement stating clearly what you and the children expect from each other and from the project.

Getting the support of others

It's important to have as much support and 'buy-in' as possible from staff at all levels. People who have never worked with children before may need to be persuaded of the value of involving them in their work. You may need the support of key people who hold the purse strings and will be able to decide if your work will be funded or not. If children are hoping to influence decision-makers, it's important that these people are already open and prepared to work with children and to respect their views.

Some challenges and how to deal with them

Here are some of the challenges you may face, both in your workplace and the local environment in which you are working, together with suggestions of ways of dealing with them:

- Adults and the organisation are not aware of what participation means.
- Adults don't want to share decision-making power with children.
- Adults lack the skills, attitude and knowledge to work in a participatory way with children.
- Local culture is not supportive of children's participation.
- Adults are fearful of the unknown.
- Adults view children as beneficiaries, not as equal stakeholders.
- Children may not be interested in participating, or adults think they might not be.
- Projects/programmes are time- and resource-limited.
- Adults believe children don't care about issues, local or global.
- Adults don't want to burden children with complex and daunting issues.

Here are some suggestions:

- Encourage staff to attend training on child participation, or run a short tailor-made session for them. Involve young people as trainers if you can.
- Invite staff to events where they can see young people participating in our work.
- Circulate the list of the benefits of children's participation given on [pages 6–7](#) of this Guide.
- Make time to listen to people's concerns or doubts about child participation and encourage them to think of solutions or fresh perspectives.
- Remind them of Save the Children's organisational commitment to the right of every child to have a say in any matter concerning them.
- Record, monitor and evaluate children's involvement in your work so that you can demonstrate the benefits it has had.

Achieving change

What do you and the children hope the project will achieve? Good participation is a process that leads to positive change. You'll need to agree with the children what you want that change to be. Children will want to see that their involvement in the project has had a positive outcome and they'll want to know what impact they have made. For example, if they've been involved in governance, they'll want to know how Senior Management have taken their views on board. If they've been involved in advocacy to bring about a change in the law in their own country, they'll want to see evidence of that change. It's important, therefore, to plan how you will feed back to children the outcome of their work.

Children can gain skills, knowledge and confidence from their involvement in a project that will last them a lifetime. At the project planning stage, consider what skills and knowledge children will need to be able to participate effectively, and offer them training and support as an integral part of the project.

Involving children from the beginning

It's tempting to design a project, and then involve children at the implementation stage. Or you may consult children about a plan you've already designed. However, if you want the project to be truly collaborative, you should involve the children right from the start. If children are involved in the planning stage, they will have more interest in it, and are more likely to remain committed and motivated. They will also be more equipped to monitor the progress of the work and to hold adults to account for doing what they said they would. Finally, by involving children from the beginning, the project aims are more likely to reflect their real needs.

Mapping your current practice

The Alliance Practice Standards on Child Participation can be used as a planning tool. You may wish to assess your current practice against each of the standards. Once you have established how well you are meeting each of the standards, you can identify any gaps in your current practice and develop an action plan. Involve children in this process wherever possible, as they will be able to give you honest feedback.

You may also wish to map at what level you are currently involving children in your work by using the two models by Treseder and Hart ([pages 11–12](#)), and then exploring the implications, capacity and opportunities for involving children at different levels.

Self-assessment tools

Save the Children Wales have developed their own participation practice standards⁵ in partnership with young people, together with a self-assessment tool that can be adapted for use within your own country context.

The National Youth Agency in the UK has also developed a framework and self-assessment tool for child participation called 'Hear by Right'. It is available to download for free at <http://www.nya.org.uk/hear-by-right>

Working in a non-discriminatory way

It's important to ensure that your work will be accessible for all children. For example, will the project require that all the child participants can read and write? Or will the timing or location of the project mean that some children won't be able to take part?

During the planning stage of the project, consider ways in which you can make it easier for more marginalised children to take part. When advertising the project, you may want to target particular groups of children to make sure that they know they have the opportunity to take part.



These young people from Brazil are being trained by staff at one of our projects to monitor and influence how their local government's funds are allocated and spent.

⁵ Save the Children Wales, *Wales Participation Standards Self-Assessment Pack*, 2007

Children's participation in practice

Staff who work with children and young people build up their practice and confidence over a period of time, often with the support and encouragement of their more experienced colleagues, and children and young people. It takes time to become effective at working with children and young people and it can be a hugely enjoyable and creative journey. It's advisable to be honest if you lack confidence, and to seek support and training where necessary. However, the only real way to learn is to try within a supportive environment.

This section will give you some useful information about the kind of things you need to think about when you're planning, facilitating and evaluating participatory sessions or activities with children and young people:

- advance preparation
- qualities of a good facilitator
- tailoring your approach to the evolving capacities of children and young people
- how children and young people learn
- creating a child-friendly environment
- planning a session or activity with children and young people
- ensuring non-discriminatory practice
- ensuring the health and safety of children and young people
- trouble-shooting and dealing with difficult situations
- involving children and young people in facilitation.

Advance preparation

When planning an activity with children and young people, it is always important to give yourself plenty of time to prepare. Of course things may not go exactly as you plan, and you need to be flexible. But if you are well prepared, your session is likely to go more smoothly and both you and the young people are more likely to enjoy it. Here are some factors you should consider in advance:

- Have you explained the aims of the session clearly to the children and young people and the workers who will be coming with them? Have the children had the opportunity to consider if they want to be involved? Have you given children the chance to help plan the session?
- Are you aware of the ages, abilities and any additional needs of the children and young people you will be working with? Have you tailored your session accordingly?

- How much time do you have for the session, and can this be flexible? If you run over time, will the children be able to stay longer?
- Have you agreed clear roles and responsibilities with the other adults involved?
- How will the children and young people travel to the venue? Do they have enough time, and will the costs be covered in advance? Have you given clear directions?
- Are you providing refreshments? Are they suitable for everyone's dietary needs?
- Have you completed a risk assessment of the activity and has it been approved?
- Have you obtained parental consent and media consent? (See [pages 67–68](#) for more information.)
- Is the venue suitable and accessible? Have you checked the booking is still in place?

Qualities of a good facilitator

Good facilitation is about helping children and young people to explore, learn and change. It takes time and practice to become a good facilitator and the process of learning and improving goes on forever. Here are some things to consider:

- Make sure you are well prepared both mentally and physically on the day of the activity. For example, if you are tired, feeling down or agitated or haven't eaten properly, this will come across in your session.
- Be yourself – you are much more likely to build rapport and gain children's and young people's respect if you are honest with them.
- Be open and approachable and keep the session fun.
- Be aware of professional boundaries.
- A good facilitator should be non-judgmental, showing respect for each young person's opinion and not favouring any young person over another. Good facilitation is about intervening to make suggestions and offer insights to help the group be focused and constructive in their discussions.
- As a facilitator, you shouldn't have the ultimate decision-making power. You need to support the young people to make decisions themselves; you can also contribute as an equal in the decision-making process.
- Encourage young people to reflect on their discussion and experiences and learn from each other.
- Reward and praise young people as much as possible, even if you don't personally agree with their opinion.
- Encourage the group to listen to one another.
- Be flexible if the session doesn't go to plan. You need to be able to think on your feet and respond to the immediate needs and feelings of the group.

Tailoring your approach to the 'evolving capacities' of children and young people

When working with children, you'll need to take into account their 'evolving capacities' to participate. There are many factors that affect children's ability to take part in an activity. Their age is just one of them. You will need to be aware of the age range, background and abilities of the girls and boys who will be working with you, and tailor your approach and activities to their capacity, supporting them where necessary. Your aim is to create an environment where each young person feels comfortable and is able to join in easily and on an equal footing with the others in the group.

For example, if you know in advance that some people in the group have low levels of literacy, you could adapt your session plan to use fewer text-based activities or flip-chart notes. You could use music or drama to encourage all the young people to express their views in a non text-based way. Similarly, if you know that your group has a wide range of ages and abilities, you could run two simultaneous activities that use different approaches and ask young people to choose which one they want to take part in. You may want to ask some of the young people who have previous experience of the topic you're working to support those who are newer to it.

If you haven't already met the group of young people you'll be working with, it's worth trying to speak to someone who works regularly with them so that you can get an idea of what's likely to work and what to avoid. It's also worth having several options up your sleeve so that you can adapt your session as you go along, if necessary.

How children and young people learn

When you talk to children and young people and give them verbal information, did you know that only about a third of them will be able to absorb it fully? This is because only a third of people take in information primarily through their ears. Unless we have a sensory impairment, we all use all our senses to absorb information. But each of us tends to have a preference for taking in information through only one or two of these three: visual, auditory and kinaesthetic (touch). So try to vary the ways in which you give information.

Children and young people learn:

- through a wide variety of everyday experiences inside and outside schools
- by knowing what they aim to achieve and why
- by researching, rather than being told everything they need to know
- by discussing and co-operating with their peers in tackling tasks
- by contact with adults
- by evaluating outcomes and planning further work

- by having opportunities to take responsibility for planning and organising aspects of work
- through experimentation, reflection and taking the work further
- through practice and repetition
- by 'doing'
- by making choices
- by explaining what they are doing to others
- by exploring and investigating
- by building on previous knowledge and experience
- by achieving success.⁶

Creating a child-friendly environment

A child-friendly environment is one where children feel safe and comfortable and are encouraged to express themselves freely. The friendlier the environment, the more readily children will feel able to contribute and the more they will gain from their involvement.

Here are some suggestions for creating a child-friendly environment:

- If you can, choose a venue that the young people know or where they will feel comfortable.
- Encourage children and young people to arrange the room as they would like it.
- Make sure that you have completed a risk assessment and that the physical space where you are meeting is safe and welcoming.
- Work with adults (including the children's own parents/guardians) to ensure they understand the value of what the children will be doing and know what they can do to help support them.
- Use non-technical language when you talk to the children. If you do have to use any jargon or technical terms, make sure that you explain them clearly.
- If any of the children are not speaking or hearing their native language, provide access to written information and professional interpreters so that all children can take part fully in discussions.
- Provide support and skills training where necessary to enable all children to join in fully, both as individuals and as a group.
- Make sure that any official procedures are designed or, if necessary, modified to facilitate (rather than intimidate) children and make less experienced boys and girls feel welcome.
- Discuss with the children the ways in which they would prefer to work with you.
- Try to ensure through your methods of working that boys and girls of all ages and abilities feel confident and able to contribute and that they know that their experiences and views are valued.

⁶From: Teaching and Learning Styles – Staff Development Pack – Oldham TVEI 1996' from Save the Children (2002), *Participation – Spice it up!*

Planning a session or activity with children and young people

When planning a session with children and young people it's important to know the following information:

- When will the meeting be held?
- How much time will you/the young people have?
- How much money do you have to spend?
- What venue will you use? How much space will it have?
- How many breaks will you have? Will you need to stop for lunch?
- Do you know the young people? Or will you have to find out more about them in order to tailor the session to their interests and abilities?
- What follow-up will happen once the session is over?

Once you have all this information, you can concentrate on preparing the session itself:

1. **Aims** – what do you want to achieve from the session?
2. **Content** – what will you cover in the session – eg, getting to know each other, sharing knowledge about rights, designing a poster?
3. **Method** – how will you approach the session? What kind of activities will you use – eg, drama, music, story-telling, discussion groups?

It's likely that your whole session will be made up of a series of activities. If that is the case, you could devise a session plan like the one on [page 31](#) to include information about all the activities, breaks, who will be facilitating each part of the session and what resources you need.

You will need to be flexible and be prepared to change the timings you have set, or abandon whole activities if you feel they won't fit with the flow of the day. This means you'll need to think on your feet and be sensitive to the needs of the young people you are working with.



JOHN SANDERS

Hafsat, 16, at a meeting of Save the Children's Global Children's Panel in London.

Sample session plan

Here's an example of a session plan, which you may wish to use as a template for designing your own session:

Time	Activity	Facilitator	Resources
10.00–10.30	Welcome and refreshments	Jo	Refreshments
10.30–11.00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introductions/warm up game • Health and Safety briefing • Ground rules 	Dennis	Ball, flipchart and pens
11.00–12.00	Learning about the campaign <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharing knowledge/presentations from each young person 	Jo	DVD, Blu-Tack, laptop, projector
12.00–1.00	Lunch		
1.00–2.30	Designing a poster campaign	Dennis	Art materials
2.30–3.00	Break		Refreshments
3.00–3.30	Sharing poster ideas	Jo	
3.30–4.00	Action planning and follow-up <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will the posters be produced? • Where will the posters be displayed? 	Dennis	
4.00–4.15	Evaluation and farewells	Jo	

Ensuring non-discriminatory practice

Children's participation work challenges and does not reinforce existing patterns of discrimination and exclusion. It encourages the involvement of those groups of children who typically suffer discrimination and who are often excluded from activities. Children, like adults, are not a homogeneous group and participation provides for equality of opportunity for all, regardless of the child's age, race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status (or those of his or her parents/guardians).

In order to ensure that you are promoting a non-discriminatory approach in your work, bear in mind the following points:

- Children's involvement aims to include all rather than a few. This could mean reaching out to children in their local settings rather than inviting representatives to a central point.
- Participatory practice with children is flexible enough to respond to the needs, expectations and situations of different groups of children – and to re-visit these concerns regularly.
- The age range, gender and abilities of children are taken into account in the way their involvement is organised (eg, in the way information is presented).
- Those working with children are able to create an environment that is non-discriminatory and inclusive.
- No assumptions are made about what different groups of children can and cannot do.
- All children are given an equal opportunity to voice their opinions and have their contributions taken into consideration, including in processes that involve children and adults.
- If there is a limit to how many children can take part, children themselves select from among their peers those who will represent them in participatory initiatives based on the principles of democracy and inclusion.

Ensuring the health and safety of children and young people

It is crucially important that any activity you organise involving children and young people is safe and promotes their wellbeing. More detailed information can be found on [pages 18–21](#).

Trouble-shooting and dealing with difficult situations

As a facilitator working with young people, you may sometimes encounter challenging situations. Some of the potential challenges are outlined below with some guidance about the steps you could take to avoid or deal with them:

- **Build a strong foundation to avoid problems later:** The beginning of the session is crucial for the success of the whole activity. If you can build trust and teamwork in at the beginning, this will set the tone for the rest of the session. You can do this by investing time in getting to know one another and being clear about the aims of the day. Give the young people the chance to negotiate what they will get out of the day. Create a contract with the young people about how they plan to work with you and each other.
- **When the plan goes off course:** Try to think in advance of all the things that could happen so that you are as prepared as possible. Have some contingency plans up your sleeve or some alternative activities you could use. You might want to put in an extra break to give you and the young people time to relax and think about what you could do next. Remember to communicate with the other facilitators about what should happen next. Try not to panic – this is when new and interesting opportunities may arise.
- **When young people are starting to lose interest:** Think about putting in a quick energiser to lift people's spirits, or moving to another activity. You could ask the young people how they're feeling and what they would like to do next. Call a break – they could just be feeling tired or have had enough for one day. You could ask one of the young people to run a game with everyone.
- **Young people are breaking their own contract:** Ideally, you will have written up the contract on the wall for all to see. If anyone breaks it, you could refer to the list on the wall and remind them that this was a contract they created themselves. Try to do this in as light-hearted a way as you can at first. You may have agreed with the young people in advance about how they would deal with others breaking the contract (eg, doing a forfeit). Usually, if the young people set the contract for themselves in the first place, they will help you to reinforce it.
- **Some young people are dominating and others are silent:** Use an activity that ensures that every single young person has to express their opinion. For example, voting or writing down thoughts on a flipchart. You could go round the whole group asking each person to give their view. Ask the quiet ones if they have an opinion. Avoid always responding first to those who are eager to get your attention.
- **Young people are refusing to participate:** Children and young people may just not be in the mood for your session. They may be going through a difficult time at home or at school and their minds may be elsewhere. Their lack of interest in your session may well have absolutely nothing to do with your ability to facilitate or the content of your session. It is not always easy to deal with situations like this and you may need to try a variety of approaches. Refer back to the contract again, and work with your colleagues who can support you in deciding how to deal with the situation. Getting angry or confrontational with young people, especially in front of the group, is possibly the worst thing to do. You may need to act with extra sensitivity and care.

Children and young people as facilitators

Children and young people make great facilitators with the right support and preparation. Their participation as facilitators should be entirely voluntary, and they should have been properly briefed and prepared. Depending on how much experience and confidence they have, they could plan and run sessions themselves or they could simply work with you as a co-facilitator. Negotiate with each young person about what they feel comfortable doing and make sure you support them throughout the process.



Gareth, 17, from Wales, and Libby, 13, from England, at a meeting of Save the Children's Global Children's Panel. The panel is made up of 14 young people from countries around the world.

Toolkit of activities

This section gives an overview of some of the activities you can do with children and young people. You can find full activity and session plans in *Participation – Spice it Up!*, produced by Save the Children and Dynamic Ltd in 2002. It is available to buy from the Save the Children UK website and there are some copies available at Save the Children UK Head Office. At the end of this guide you will find a list of other resources, some of which are in PDF format or available online.

Energisers or ice-breakers

Energisers are short activities or games that are intended to energise or warm up the group of young people. They are a great way to lift the energy of the group at the beginning of the session or when there is a lull. They can also help bring some light relief if the activity is quite serious or challenging in content. Young people often have their own suggestions of games or energisers. Some energisers are also name-games, so are a fun way of helping young people to learn each other's names.

Team-building activities

When you are working with a group of young people for the first time, it is important to build their ability to work as a team. This will make the dynamic of the group more inclusive, collaborative and supportive and will make it easier for them to make joint decisions and work towards a common goal.

Team-building activities usually include working together to achieve a common goal that could not be achieved as individuals. For example, the whole group must get from one side of the room to the other without touching the floor and using strategically placed objects. You could split the group into two teams if you want to introduce an element of competition. You could also do activities that encourage young people to air their views and respect other people's opinions.

Gathering information and identifying issues

Information-gathering activities are a good way of finding out a group's general opinion on a specific issue or topic. These activities are usually structured in a way that encourage the young people to share their views. They may do this publicly or anonymously. They can share their views verbally or by using another approach such as drawing or drama. One example is an 'ideas avalanche'. Young people are asked to call out their ideas about a particular topic while you write their suggestions on a flipchart for everyone to see.

Promoting discussion

A discussion is a great way for young people to express their views and debate their opinions with others. Through positive and encouraging discussion, young people can consider things they may not have thought about before and reflect on their own views in light of other people's opinions. This is a great learning opportunity.

In its simplest form, of course, all you need to start a discussion is to get a group of young people together and ask for their opinion on something. However, some young people may feel inhibited to speak freely and you may need to structure the discussion. For example, you could prepare a case study or scenario that the young people debate and reflect upon in smaller groups. Or you could begin the debate by reading out a series of statements and asking the young people whether they agree or disagree.

Prioritising issues

When young people are given the opportunity to voice their views, they are likely to come up with a multitude of ideas and suggestions. It may be useful to prioritise and rank these ideas in order to identify the most important issues.

You could ask the young people to vote by a show of hands or by using sticky dots on flipcharts if you want the voting procedure to be more anonymous. They should be given the opportunity to debate all the issues first in order to make a fully informed decision. If you want to make it more fun, you could use a 'clap-o-meter' or get the young people to cheer loudly for the issue they feel is the most important.

Action planning

Once you've identified and prioritised the issues that are important to the young people, they will then want to plan what they can do about them.

Some of the more creative approaches to planning can often be the most fun. One example is to use a drawing of a hot air balloon as a visual tool for the project they are planning. The young people could write their ideas on the corresponding part of the drawing:

- **On the balloon basket** – who needs to be on board?
- **On the balloon itself** – what needs to be in place for the project to take off? (eg, a building, staff, resources)
- **On the ropes tethering the balloon** – what is holding the project back?
- **Above the balloon** – what will really make the project fly? (eg, commitment, enthusiasm)
- **Either side of the balloon** – what might blow the balloon off course?

Evaluation activities

At the end of any session or project, it is important to give young people the opportunity to evaluate the process and outcome. This will help them to recognise their own achievements and what they have learned. It will also help them to think about how they might use what they have learned in the future. It will give the project a sense of closure but it is also important that the young people feel that their views are valued and taken on board.

An evaluation helps you and your funders know how well you met the intended outcomes and aims of the project. You can use the learning from the evaluation to help change the way you work in the future. The young people's feedback can also give you some useful pointers about how you can improve your own practice as a facilitator.

There are many creative and fun ways of evaluating activities or projects with young people. 'Stones in a Pond' is a good example. Ask the young people to visualise a pond on the floor. Ask them to write 'one thing they will take from today' on a piece of paper and take turns to toss their 'stone' into the pond. They can choose whether or not they want to tell others what they wrote. After they've all tossed in their imaginary stones, you can talk about the ripples that everyone's actions can make.



Members of the Global Children's Panel meet once a year with Save the Children's Board of Trustees.

Links and resources

Here are just a few links and resources that contain more detailed guidance and activity plans to help you plan and facilitate participatory activities with children and young people.

- Save the Children/Dynamix Ltd (2002) *Participation – Spice it Up!* Available to buy from www.savethechildren.org.uk
- National Children's Bureau (2007) *Participation Works: How to use multimedia approaches to engaging children and young people in decision-making*. Available as a free download from www.participationworks.org.uk
- National Children's Bureau (2007) *Participation Works: How to use creative methods for participation*. Available as a free download from www.participationworks.org.uk
- Save the Children Norway (2008) *A Kit of Tools – For Participatory Research and Evaluation with Children, Young People and Adults*. Available as a PDF from https://www.reddbarna.no/default.asp?V_ITEM_ID=19028

Available as a PDF from Save the Children UK Intranet – Child Participation page

- Jessica Lenz and Suzanne Pike (CCF Child Protection Consultants) (2007) *Child-friendly Assessment Tools – A Toolbox of Ideas*
- International HIV/AIDS Alliance (2004) *A Parrot on Your Shoulder – a guide for people starting to work with orphans and vulnerable children*
- Participation Works (2007) *Involving Children and Young People in Facilitation*
- Clare Feinstein and Claire O'Kane, International Save the Children Alliance (2005) *The Spider Tool – A Self-Assessment and Planning Tool for Child-led Initiatives and Organisations*



PART 2

GUIDES TO CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION IN SPECIFIC AREAS OF WORK

Hafsat, 16, from Nigeria, is a member of Save the Children's Global Children's Panel.

PART 2

GUIDES TO CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION IN SPECIFIC AREAS OF WORK

Children's participation in:

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Children's participation in advocacy and campaigning

This guide outlines some of the ways in which children and young people can and do participate in advocacy and campaigning with Save the Children. It includes some points you should consider when planning for children's involvement in advocacy and how you can ensure that the experience is meaningful and can lead to real change.

Please use this guide in conjunction with Part One to ensure that you have all the information you need.

What is advocacy?

Advocacy is "acting with and on behalf of children to influence the policies and actions of others to improve the fulfilment of child rights".²

Advocacy means influencing the people who have decision-making power to bring about changes in the lives of children. This can be through direct lobbying, or by creating external pressure on the decision-makers through media or campaigning. It also means building platforms and supporting the development of civil society (especially groups including children), so they can advocate for change themselves and hold governments to account.

Advocacy is about:

- changing attitudes, behaviour and knowledge
- changing or shaping policy
- changing how people do things
- doing something bigger than just project work
- improving children's rights.

What is campaigning?

Campaigning is about people taking joint action to challenge decision-makers and those in power to bring about positive change for those who most need it. A campaign has a specific aim to change something, and all of the actions involved in it are carefully designed to reach that aim. Children and young people can and do get involved in campaigning in many different ways – eg, demonstrating, lobbying politicians, getting their voices heard in the media, and publicity stunts. They have often shown themselves to be very creative, persuasive and outspoken as activists and campaigners, both with Save the Children and independently.

*Participation is "an ongoing process of children's active involvement in decision-making (at different levels) in matters that concern them. It requires information sharing and dialogue between children and adults, which is based on mutual respect and power."*¹

¹ C O'Kane, *Children and Young People as Citizens: Partners for Social Change*, Save the Children (South and Central Asia), 2003

² Save the Children UK Intranet, Campaigns and Advocacy page

Why involve children in advocacy and campaigning?

Here are a few of the reasons:

- Children can learn valuable skills that will last them a lifetime – for example, organising and chairing meetings, working as a team, action planning, fundraising, budgeting and public speaking.
- Children can learn a great deal about the power structures that exist within society, their rights and their roles in bringing about positive change. Their involvement in politics and campaigning at an early age can inspire them to be active global citizens with a strong belief in equality and social justice.
- Children gain confidence through being involved in making a positive change, in their own lives or on behalf of others.
- When Save the Children publicly collaborates with children in its advocacy work, it proves its credibility as a rights-based organisation.
- When children are involved in devising Save the Children's advocacy plans or campaigns, the plans are more likely to reflect accurately what children want and need. This is a more cost-effective and robust approach to planning that will ensure the relevance of the outcomes.
- The voices of children and young people can have a strong impact on politicians and other decision-makers. Children and young people can be very persuasive and elicit a response in adults that might be different if an adult had said the same thing.
- Child participation in advocacy can lead to change in policies and programming for the benefit of many children.
- When people become used to seeing children advocating on their own behalf, this can help to change perceptions about what children are capable of doing and help people to see them as citizens and social actors in their own right.

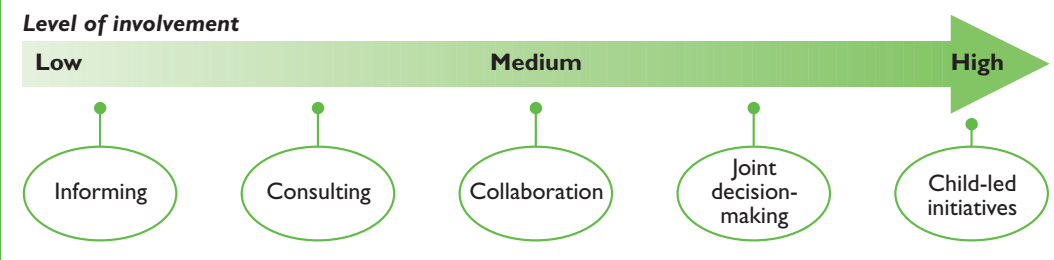
Ways of involving children and young people in advocacy and campaigning

Some of the ways children can get involved in advocacy and campaigning work both with Save the Children and independently:

- Involvement at high-level events
- Children's parliaments, groups, clubs, and committees where children meet to discuss issues that are important to them and organise themselves to campaign on these issues
- Involvement at rallies, demonstrations, etc.
- Lobbying decision-makers (in person, in writing or through other creative means)
- Stunts or creative ways of drawing attention to an issue (eg, creating a mural, or forming a human chain in the shape of an HIV Red Ribbon)
- Empowering children to know and claim their rights
- Child-led initiatives – demonstrating results through action
- Children's unions
- Media work (eg, radio shows to highlight an issue or young journalists reporting on issues of concern to them).

Children's participation in advocacy and campaigning

The following table shows how you can involve children at the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation stages of an advocacy strategy. It also illustrates that children's level of involvement varies according to the activity. At any one time, children and adults may have different levels of involvement. This may depend on a number of factors including their capacity, resources and time. It also depends heavily on how an activity is facilitated. It isn't necessarily better to operate at a higher level of involvement, but it's useful to analyse how much children are involved and engaged. This will help you to plan and evaluate your work, and to ensure that adults and children are clear about what is expected of them, and that you understand what they expect of you. Please refer to *Part One – Degrees of involvement* for more detailed information.

Level of involvement 					
	Kept informed about activities	Consultation	Provide inputs	Collaboration	Child-led
Planning	Children are informed about advocacy plans	Children's views are incorporated into advocacy plans	Children help to collect information	Children have significant influence on decisions at planning stage – eg, determining when, where and how advocacy activities should take place	Children have controlling influence on advocacy at planning stage
Implementation	Children are provided with information	Children are consulted and their views incorporated – eg, in advocacy materials	Children take part in implementation – eg, they produce materials, attend meetings, etc.	Children have a partnership role in advocacy, including decision-making responsibility	Children are in charge of running advocacy
Monitoring	Children are provided with information about how the advocacy is working	Children are asked for their opinions on how the advocacy is working	Children help to collect information on the progress of the advocacy	Children have influence on how monitoring is done – eg, what questions are asked, what data is collected, how it is presented, analysing findings	Children are in control of monitoring process
Evaluation	Children are given information about advocacy and its effects/ impact	Children are asked for their views on the effects and impact of the project on their lives	Children help to collect information about advocacy effectiveness	Children are involved in analysis and conclusions about effectiveness	Children are in control of evaluation

From Save the Children Advocacy Toolkit, 2007

Children's 'evolving capacities' to participate

Children's 'evolving capacities' to participate should be taken into account when working with children. Children's development cannot be defined by age only. There are many factors that define a child's capacity to participate including their cultural background, previous experiences, level of education, sibling order, etc. Once you're aware of the age range and background of girls and boys you'll be working with, tailor your approach and activities to their capacity, and support them where necessary. See *Part One – Putting child participation into practice* for some examples of the methods you can use to engage and work with children and young people.

How to involve children in advocacy and campaigning – a step-by-step guide

Now you have some of the background to how children can get involved in advocacy and campaigning, the rest of this document guides you through the process for making sure this work is as meaningful as possible for adults and children.

1. Preparing adults
2. Preparing children
3. Producing child-friendly materials
4. Developing an advocacy strategy
5. Making children's participation meaningful
6. What will the outcomes be? What constitutes success?

This section should be used in conjunction with *Part 1 – Child Participation Practice Standards*.

1. Preparing adults

When you involve children in advocacy work, it's also important to prepare the adults who'll be involved in the process. These may range from the Country Director and other decision-makers to project workers or partner staff. Some adults simply aren't used to collaborating with children in this way, listening to them or being prepared to be influenced by them.

You may find it useful to organise training on child participation for Save the Children or partner staff as a one-day workshop covering the following topics:

- the rights context and rationale for child participation
- the benefits and challenges of child participation
- levels of involvement
- the Alliance Practice Standards on Child Participation
- safe child participation
- some tools and methods for working with children.

Please refer to Part One for more detailed information about these topics.

Children's participation in advocacy and campaigning

Participants should have the opportunity to explore their own concerns and doubts in a supportive environment and to think about some solutions to the perceived barriers they face. If you are able to include young people as facilitators, this can bring a huge amount of insight and creativity to the session.

It may be more challenging to find the space and time to prepare decision-makers for children's participation. You may need to organise a series of awareness-raising activities with key decision-makers or, ideally, have a face-to-face meeting.

2. Preparing children

Children and young people need to feel well prepared and supported through their advocacy and campaigning activities. You may be supporting them in their own advocacy or campaign plan, you may have invited them to join yours, or you may be developing a joint campaign or advocacy plan. Whichever option it is, the children are likely to need training and ongoing support. You will need to tailor this support to ensure that it meets their specific needs.

1. Be aware of issues that might prevent some children from taking part – travel cost, for example. If a child has a disability will he or she still be able to join in? Where possible, strengthen and involve existing children's groups or clubs.
2. Prepare the children well. If you're recruiting children, you will know enough about them to be able to plan their induction. For one-off events, this should be at least a briefing, but it could be a day workshop where the children plan what they will be doing. It could include training in skills such as public speaking. For longer-term projects, a residential training weekend is often the best option. This gives the children a chance to meet one another in an informal setting and doesn't conflict with their schooling. If you don't have the resources for this, you could set up regional induction meetings or work with local staff to provide a personal induction for each child.



Misha, 19, and Semyah, 17, outside the UK government's Treasury office, where they met government officials to discuss child poverty in the UK.

Children's participation in advocacy and campaigning

3. Children should fully understand and be passionate about the issue they will be campaigning on. Ideally, they will choose an issue that is relevant to them and their community. If this is not possible, they need an opportunity to articulate their own opinions about an existing campaign. They need to understand the parameters of what they are able to change, to avoid feeling let-down if they are not successful straight away. They also need to understand that advocacy can be a long process.
4. If the young people will be involved on a more long-term basis, it would be beneficial to spend time with them mapping, discussing and identifying the main issues of concern for them. They can devise an advocacy strategy about something that is close to their hearts, and this will make the whole process much more relevant and meaningful to them.
5. Create a volunteer role for each young person, outlining what they will be doing, what you expect of them and what they can expect of you.
6. Involve children in designing the one-off activity or long-term project. If they plan their own involvement, they will feel more committed to it and can learn valuable skills.
7. You must adhere to all child safeguarding policies and procedures and get parental consent for all young people under the age of 18. Please refer to **Part One – Safe children's participation** for more information.
8. There's an inherent risk associated with involving children in advocacy and campaigning. The risk assessment of the event or activity must include the potential ethical risks of children's involvement. For example, if they take part in a public demonstration about HIV, will they suffer discrimination as a result? You must take care to consider whether their involvement will ultimately be in their best interests. It may sometimes be more appropriate to advocate on behalf of children to avoid putting them in harm's way.

3. Producing child-friendly materials

Children and young people need to be fully briefed about the issue(s) they'll be campaigning on, particularly if they have been invited to join a campaign. It's therefore important to prepare some child-friendly information, ideally in a mixture of formats – eg, written or film.

Some things to bear in mind:

1. Keep it simple
2. No jargon
3. Keep it brief
4. Make the pages as appealing and colourful as you can (without going over the top!)
5. Children and young people generally dislike it when adults try to speak like them – eg, using text-speak
6. Try to make it relevant to young people's lives.

You could test out the materials with some children and young people first.

Or, even better, involve children and young people in producing them with you.

4. Developing an advocacy strategy

An advocacy strategy has to answer the following questions:

1. WHAT change do we want to bring about?
 - What is going wrong? Provide strong, unambiguous evidence.
 - What must change? Be clear about what must stop, what must change or what alternative solution should be adopted.
2. WHO can make the change?
 - Who has the power to make the change happen? Be clear that they can actually make the change.
 - Who are our allies and opponents? Be clear about who you are working with and who you have to overcome.
3. HOW can you make them change?
 - How are you going to win? Produce a clear, effective plan of action.
 - How will you see whether the change has happened?

For tips on making children's involvement as interesting, relevant and engaging as possible, please refer to *Part One – Putting children's participation into practice* and *Toolkit*.

5. Making children's participation meaningful

Please refer to *Part One – Child Participation Practice Standards* for more detailed information.

It's quite possible to unwittingly involve children in a tokenistic form of advocacy. Here are some examples:

- Children aren't articulating their own views, but are speaking from a script they've been given by adults.
- Children aren't passionate about the issues they are campaigning for as they haven't been well briefed and/or the issues are not relevant to them.
- Children's views aren't taken seriously.
- Children aren't given appropriate feedback and aren't aware of the impact (if any) of their involvement.
- Children are visible but aren't given the opportunity to express their views.

Here are some things you can do to avoid and ensure children's involvement is meaningful:

- Abide by the Alliance Practice Standards on Child Participation.
- Ensure that children are well briefed and well prepared.
- Work with adults to prepare them to collaborate with children and respect their views.
- Be honest with children about how much they will be able to influence the outcome.
- Feed back to children about the outcome of their involvement.

Children's participation in advocacy and campaigning

6. What will the outcomes be? What constitutes success?

Advocacy and campaigning work can encompass a wide range of activities with different intended outcomes. Whether your goal is awareness-raising through a one-off media event or a long-term sustainable change in the law, children and young people need to know the parameters of their involvement and what they're likely to change. It's important to take time to explain this to them and feed back to them about any results of their involvement.

It may be helpful to identify some short-term goals or 'quick-wins' for your advocacy strategy as well as some more long-term goals. This will help to keep the momentum of the campaign and help the children and young people feel motivated.

When children and young people take part in advocacy work, the process can be just as important as the goal. For example, the confidence, skills, knowledge and attitudes that the children and young people develop through their involvement can be hugely beneficial to them. They may also learn valuable lessons about influencing, articulating opinions, planning, etc.



Brooke, 17, campaigner, talks to former UK Secretary of State for International Development Hilary Benn about Save the Children's campaign to save children's lives.

Case study – Liberia Education and Peace Campaign

Save the Children staff explained to 650 children in schools and children's clubs that they intended to campaign for peace in Liberia by celebrating education. The children, aged between six and 18, then helped to organise a campaign focusing on the importance of making education accessible to every Liberian child. The children began visiting the homes of children who didn't attend school and encouraged their family members and care givers to send their children to be educated.

Save the Children staff helped the children develop messages, through debates on education and peace, which were painted onto hats and sashes. Children came up with ideas for performances of songs and short dramas on the same theme. On 12th March 2008, 1,500 children, government representatives, NGOs and other community members joined hands in Zwedru, Liberia to promote education and peace. The children wore their hats and sashes and confidently called on the government for change.

Children's participation in advocacy and campaigning

Links

UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *Making Commitments Matter: A toolkit for young people to evaluate national youth policy*, DESA, New York, 2004. Available at: <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unyin/documents/toolkit.pdf>

E Williams *Children's Participation and Policy Change in South Asia*, *Childhood Poverty Research and Policy Centre (CHIP)*, Working Paper 6, CHIP, London, 2004. Available at: <http://www.childhoodpoverty.org/index.php?action=publicationdetails&id=86>

Advocacy Matters: Helping children change their world, Save the Children (internal publication), 2007. Available at: <http://www.savethechildren.net/alliance/resources/publications.html>

Empowering Young People – The Final Report of the Carnegie Young People's Initiative 2008. Available at: http://cypi.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/cypi/final_report

One Step Beyond: Advocacy handbook for children and young people, Save the Children Sweden, 2008. Available at: <http://shop.rb.se/Search/SearchResult.aspx?type=I&Searchstring=one+step+beyond>

Re-focusing the Lens: Assessing the Challenge of Youth Involvement in Public Policy, 1999. Available at: <http://iog.ca/en/publications/re-focusing-lens-assessing-challenge-of-youth-involvement-public-policy>



Young people from a Save the Children project in Brazil that trains young people to monitor their local government's spending.

Children's participation in fundraising

This guide presents some of the ways children and young people can and do participate in fundraising with Save the Children UK. It outlines some points you should consider when planning for children's involvement in fundraising and how you can ensure that the experience is meaningful.

Please use this guide in conjunction with Part One to ensure that you have all the information you need.

“We are not the sources of problems; we are the resources that are needed to solve them.”

A World Fit for Us, 2002

How does Save the Children raise money?

Save the Children staff raise income in many different ways:

- **(Head Office) Philanthropy and Partnerships department** – generating income from and developing long-term partnerships with High Value Donors, Individuals, Corporates and Trusts.
- **(Head Office) Supporter Relations and Fundraising department** – seeking to build strong, meaningful relationships with the many individuals, institutions and stakeholders who support the work and aims of Save the Children, with the aim of raising funds to directly support this work.
- **(Head Office) Government Partnerships team** – working closely with country teams to help them secure new government contracts in pursuit of our ambitious plans to grow institutional income.
- **Country programme funding applications** – country programme staff are continually applying for new funding.

Children and young people raise money for Save the Children in many different ways, both with and without the support of Save the Children staff.

Why involve children and young people in fundraising?

Here are just a few of the benefits of involving children in fundraising:

Benefits for children:

- Children can learn valuable skills that will last them a lifetime – action planning, budgeting, public speaking, etc.
- They can gain greater confidence and motivation through the experience of raising money to bring about a positive change on behalf of others.
- They can learn about their rights and about children's rights globally.
- They develop new skills and learn about individual responsibility.
- Children see themselves as active creators of services rather than passive users. This makes for a pro-active approach in all walks of life.

Benefits for Save the Children:

- It enhances Save the Children's credibility and reputation as a rights-based organisation. This may lead to increased interest from donors, and therefore more income.
- When we involve children in designing fundraising products for children, our plans are more likely to reflect what children want and need. This is a more cost-effective and robust way of planning.
- The voices of children and young people can have a powerful impact on donors.
- We can target our funds more effectively when we consult children properly about the issues affecting them and how best to tackle them.
- Children bring a fresh perspective to our work and may highlight new and innovative approaches.
- Staff can improve their skills and knowledge of working with children and become used to listening to and working with them.
- Children involved in our work are likely to be our future supporters.



Ellen addressing government officials about child poverty in the UK.

Children's participation in fundraising

How does Save the Children involve children and young people in fundraising?

The table below gives some examples of how children can be involved in fundraising. It also illustrates that children's level of involvement varies according to the activity.

At any one time, children and adults may have different levels of involvement. This may depend on a number of factors including their capacity, resources and time. Levels of involvement depend heavily on how an activity is facilitated. It isn't necessarily better to operate at a higher level of involvement, but it's useful to analyse how much children are involved and engaged. This helps us to plan and evaluate our work, and to ensure that adults and children are clear about what is expected of them – and that you understand what they expect of you. Please refer to *Part One – Degrees of involvement* for more detailed information.

Level of involvement	
Low	High
Examples of low-level involvement	Examples of medium–high-level involvement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public speaking about Save the Children's work to existing or potential donors (eg, events or dinners) • Speaking to donors when they visit our work overseas • Qualitative market research with children to test and develop fundraising ideas that could involve children • Consultations about existing products (eg, Student Enterprise Pack) • Taking part in one-off fundraising activities (eg, tennis tournament, Wessex walks, giant sleepover, Friendship Funday) • Young children participating in fundraising activities at nursery (eg, Teddy Bear Tea Party) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ambassador children making donor visits and writing blogs about their experience on our website • Work experience at Head Office or in country programmes with fundraising staff • Product development and new ideas/pitches (eg, Blue Peter pitch) • Child-led fundraising groups (eg, young people from Kent set sail in October 2009 in four challenger yachts in a week-long adventure to raise money for Save the Children and learn some new skills along the way) • Volunteering at Save the Children charity shops • Schools Emergency Network – schools are called upon to raise money as soon as a disaster strikes (280 primary and secondary schools are currently part of the network) • Children participate in high-value fundraising projects through their schools (eg, Project Link). They receive bespoke feedback from Save the Children's Schools Fundraising Team.

Children's 'evolving capacities' to participate

When working with children, you need to take into account their 'evolving capacities' to participate. Children's development cannot only be defined by age; there are many factors that affect a child's capacity to participate, including their cultural context, their level of education, and their maturity. Once you've met the young people you'll be working with, you'll need to tailor your approach and activities to their capacities, and support them where necessary. See **Part One – Putting children's participation into practice** for some examples of the methods you can use.

How to involve children in fundraising – a step-by-step guide

The Schools Fundraising Team at Head Office can be contacted for advice on how to engage children in participatory fundraising activities.

This section gives guidance in the following areas:

1. Preparing adults
2. Preparing children
3. Producing child-friendly materials
4. Making children's participation meaningful
5. What will the outcomes be? What constitutes success?
6. Under-18s and over-18s
7. Rewarding and thanking children.

1. Preparing adults

When you involve children in fundraising work, it's also important to prepare the adults who are involved in the process. Some adults simply aren't used to collaborating with children in this way, listening to them or being prepared to be influenced by them.

It is useful to organise a one-day training workshop for Save the Children or partner staff on child participation covering the following topics:

- The rights context and rationale for child participation
- The benefits and challenges of child participation
- Levels of involvement
- The Alliance Practice Standards on Child Participation
- Safe child participation
- Some tools and methods for working with children.

Please refer to Part One for more detailed information about these topics.

Participants should have the opportunity to explore their own concerns and doubts in a supportive environment, and think about some solutions to the perceived barriers they face. If you're able to include young people as facilitators, this can bring a huge amount of insight and creativity to a session such as this.

Children's participation in fundraising

2. Preparing children

Children and young people need to feel well prepared and supported through their fundraising activities. They are likely to need training and ongoing support. You will need to tailor the support to ensure that it meets the children's specific needs.

1. Be aware of issues that might prevent some children from taking part – travel costs, for example. If a child has a physical disability, will he or she still be able to join in? Where possible, strengthen and involve existing children's groups or clubs.
2. Prepare the children well. If you're recruiting children, you'll know enough about them to be able to plan their induction. For one-off events, this should be at least a briefing, but it could be a day workshop where the children plan what they will be doing. It could include training in skills such as public speaking.
3. For longer-term projects, a residential training weekend is often the best option if you have the resources and capacity to facilitate it. This enables the children to meet one another in an informal setting and doesn't conflict with their schooling. If you don't have the capacity or resources for this, you may choose to set up regional induction meetings, or to work with local staff to provide a personal induction for each child.
4. Children should fully understand what they are fundraising for. It may not always be possible to specify a project, but they should understand the purpose of Save the Children's work.
5. Create a volunteer role for each young person, outlining what they will be doing, what you expect of them and what they can expect of you.
6. Involve children in designing the one-off activity or long-term project so that they have ownership of it.
7. You must adhere to all child safeguarding policies and procedures and get parental consent for all children and young people under the age of 18. Please refer to *Part One – Safe children's participation* for more information.

3. Producing child-friendly materials

Children and young people need to be fully briefed about Save the Children's work and what they will be fundraising for, particularly if they have been invited to fundraise by adults. It's important, therefore, to prepare some child-friendly information, ideally in a mixture of formats – eg, written or film.

Some of the things to bear in mind when producing such materials:

1. Keep it simple
2. No jargon
3. Keep it brief
4. Make the pages as appealing and colourful as you can (without going over the top!)
5. Children and young people generally dislike it when adults try to speak like them – eg, using text-speak.
6. Try to make the materials relevant to young people's lives.

You could test out the materials with some children and young people first.

Or, even better, involve children and young people in producing them with you.

Children's participation in fundraising

You may want to make it as easy as possible for children to fundraise by providing them with some template forms – eg, certificates, donation form, template sponsorship form, sample press release, poster and materials order form, sample request letter, sample thank you letter.

4. Making child participation meaningful

Please refer to *Part One – Child Participation Practice Standards* and *Degrees of involvement* for more detailed information.

It is quite possible to unwittingly involve children in non-participatory ways:

- If children are invited to speak to donors about Save the Children's work but are given a script to read, rather than the space and time to understand the issues and to prepare what they want to say.
- Sometimes children's involvement can be purely tokenistic – for example, if we were to consult children about a fundraising product but we didn't actually respect their views or take them on board, or if we fail to feed back to them about the outcome of their involvement.

Here are some ways of avoiding tokenism and ensuring that children's participation is meaningful:

- Abide by the Alliance Practice Standards on Child Participation.
- Ensure that children are well briefed and well prepared for their involvement.
- Work with adults to prepare them to collaborate with children and to respect their views.
- Be honest with children about the level of involvement they will have. For example, if you consult them about a fundraising product for children, to what extent will their views be respected and taken on board?
- Feed back to children about the outcome of their involvement.



Aline, 17, and Iris Casina, 18, with a newspaper they have written about community issues.

5. What will the outcomes be? What constitutes success?

When children and young people take part in fundraising, the process can be just as important as the goal. For example, the confidence, skills, knowledge and attitudes that the children and young people develop through their involvement can be hugely beneficial to them. They may also learn valuable lessons about influencing, articulating opinions and planning.

However, the process needs to be of value to the organisation. When you are planning for the children's involvement, you must balance the need to meet fundraising targets with the need to facilitate a meaningful and safe process for the children involved.

6. Under-18s and over-18s

It's important to bear in mind the young people's evolving capacities to participate (see page 28), and to tailor your approach accordingly. Young people in the UK aged under 18 are not allowed to take part in the following fundraising activities:

- Raffles
- Street collections
- House-to-house collections
- Setting up collection tins in venues
- Events involving the sale and purchase of alcohol.

In the UK children must also sometimes obtain consent for their activities from their school or local council. For more information about these kind of restrictions, please visit the Institute of Fundraising website for their code of conduct –

http://www.institute-of-fundraising.org.uk/Codes_and_regulation/Codes/code-of-conduct

When working with children under the age of 18, you must be aware of your responsibilities to keep them safe. Please refer to *Part One – Safe children's participation* for more information about this.

7. Rewarding and thanking children

Remember to thank children for their fundraising work. You may wish to send them a certificate or thank you card and to tell them what their money is likely to be spent on. You could tell them how they can continue to stay involved in Save the Children's work.

Issues that must always be considered

1. What do children get out of it?

It's important to think about what the children can get out of their involvement in fundraising, as it needs to be valuable to children and to the organisation. How can you work with children to identify ways in which they can benefit from the experience? You may wish to offer them training so that they can gain skills they can use elsewhere.

Their fundraising can be an educational experience too. For example, if they will be fundraising for a specific country or project, take time to explain the importance of Save the Children's work for children globally and to build children's knowledge about their rights.

Children's participation in fundraising

2. How can you make it relevant and engaging?

Save the Children fundraising initiatives for children, such as Friendship Funday, have been developed to be as appealing to children as possible.

When we seek to engage children in fundraising, it's important to consider how the opportunity can be as relevant and as engaging as possible for the children involved. You may wish to work in collaboration with children when you plan the fundraising initiative.

3. Supporting children to understand how they can make money from their activity

Children may need support in understanding how to design their own fundraising activities to make as much money as possible. If they are planning to put on an event, have they considered how much they will need to spend and how much they are likely to raise? Could they take a more profitable approach? This will help them learn valuable budgeting skills.

4. How can you link campaigning with fundraising?

If children are willing and interested in fundraising for Save the Children, they're also likely to want to campaign for the organisation. You may wish to signpost them to opportunities for them to campaign at the same time as fundraise. For example, they may wish to raise money for the EVERY ONE campaign and complete a campaign action as well.

5. Which children and young people will take part?

Participation is the informed and willing involvement of children of all ages and abilities, including the most marginalised, in any matter concerning them. We have made a commitment as an organisation to work with marginalised children, even when this may take extra time and resources to achieve.

When recruiting or inviting children to take part in fundraising activities, are the methods you use going to make it harder for more disadvantaged children to join in? For example, if the activity requires a lot of writing, will this put less literate children off? What can you do to make sure that as many children as possible are able and willing to take part?

Case study: Oriel High School fundraising event

In March 2009 Ben Balla-Muir, Youth MP for Crawley and East Grinstead, and Pip Waters, aged 16, both from Oriel High School, organised their own fundraising gig for Save the Children. They organised the whole event themselves, from getting bands to perform to designing the promotional material to liaising with the school about lighting and sound.

Children's participation in fundraising

Ben says, "When Pip first came to me with the idea of co-organising a gig, I jumped at the chance of doing so. We were so proud of what we achieved, and the reaction of the audience on the night was fantastic. I had people the next day asking me when the next one would be!

"But what was most important was that everyone, from the bands, to the audience, and us as organisers, was able to enjoy the night and the music, and raise so much money for such a worthy charity. We were more than delighted with raising over £750!"

Interview with Lucy Mouldsdale – Schools and Events Administrator

How have you involved children in your fundraising work?

- The Student Enterprise Scheme is aimed at senior school-aged students. The idea is that they come up with their own event, campaign or product and set it up as a mini-business. It's now an approved activity for the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme, which means that more and more young people will be choosing to do something like this themselves.
- We get primary school-aged children involved through our Friendship Funday.
- There are tennis tournaments for children and young people.
- There's an event called Giant Sleepover where schools and youth groups (eg, Brownies, Guides, Scouts) have a sponsored sleepover, attempting to break the world record.
- Younger children are involved in the fundraising rather than being the real decision-makers. Having said that, we have found that lots of school councils will choose the charity they support.



Why do you think it's important to involve children in fundraising?

To make it relevant and fun.

What are the challenges you have faced and how have you overcome them?

Contacting students directly has been a challenge, and getting in touch with key contacts at schools – they often don't have direct lines and are teaching when you try and call. It's also difficult to mail directly to school councils.

What advice would you give to someone who was planning to involve children in their fundraising work?

- Be open to listening to their ideas and let them choose what will interest them.
- Don't be afraid to say that something won't be possible – eg, will be resource heavy. It's important to learn that resources have cost implications, etc.

Children's participation in media and communications

This guide outlines some of the ways children can and do participate in media and communications work with Save the Children. It includes some points you should consider when planning for children's involvement, and how you can ensure that the experience is meaningful and in line with best practice.

Save the Children has made a commitment to involve children in its work, but there are some inherent risks associated with this. This guide highlights some of the associated risks and challenges of children's participation in media and communications work and offers some practical guidance on dealing with these risks and challenges in a sensitive and appropriate way.

Please use this guide in conjunction with Part One to ensure that you have all the information you need.

“The child/media relationship is an entry point into the wide and multifaceted world of children and their rights – to education, freedom of expression, play, identity, health, dignity and self-respect, protection – and in every aspect of child rights, in every element of the life of a child, the relationship between children and the media plays a role.”³



Children in Indonesia who were affected by the 2005 Asian tsunami being interviewed and photographed by media workers.

³ UNICEF *Magic, Media Activities and Good Ideas by, with and for Children* – <http://www.unicef.org/magic>

What is media and communications work at Save the Children?

Save the Children communicates in diverse ways with different audiences, through film, photography, online content, publications, leaflets, posters, case studies and more. The audience for such materials includes governments, international development agencies, supporters, donors, campaigners, programme staff and children and young people. Each communication we make needs to be tailored to its audience to be as useful and relevant as possible.

Our media work aims to increase the visibility and impact of Save the Children, in turn increasing the number of supporters and fundraising. It can help the organisation in a variety of ways:

- Raises the profile of the organisation so as to encourage further support and bring in funds.
- Contributes to informing the public's understanding of different issues.
- Supports advocacy and campaign initiatives, thereby helping to push issues forward and trying to influence decision-makers.
- Helps journalists to better understand complex issues that concern us, so that their reporting is more informed and accurate.

Why involve children in media and communications work?

The media and other audiences for our work want to hear children's stories from around the world. And as children are our primary stakeholders, it is important that we feed back their views to our supporters, including the public and donors.

The opportunity to get involved with our communication and media work presents children with the opportunity to express themselves and learn valuable skills. With the right support, children can gain confidence in articulating their views and concerns in a way that grabs attention. These are the kinds of skills that enable children to hold adults to account, to claim their rights and to become active citizens at local, national and international levels.

Articles 12, 13 and 17 from the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child are all relevant to children's participation in media and communications work. Article 12 refers to a child's right to express his or her opinions and have them taken into account. Article 13 refers to a child's right to freedom of expression and to receive and disseminate information. Article 17 states that children are entitled to access information.

When children express their views through our media and communications work, we are presenting an image to the world that Save the Children takes children's views seriously. This increases our credibility as an organisation and demonstrates that we are acting out our values.

Ways of involving children in media and communications work

In the table below, you can see some examples of how children can be involved in media and communications work at Save the Children. This table illustrates that children's levels of involvement vary according to the activity.

At any one time, children and adults may be involved to different degrees. This may depend on a number of factors including their capacity, resources and time. It also depends greatly on how an activity is facilitated. It isn't necessarily better to operate at a higher level of engagement, but it's useful to analyse how much children are involved and engaged. This helps you to plan and evaluate your work, and to ensure that adults and children are clear about what is expected of them – and that you understand what they expect of you. Please refer to *Part One – Degrees of involvement* for more detailed information.

Level of involvement	
Low	High
<p>Informing</p> <p>Consulting</p>	<p>Collaboration</p> <p>Joint decision-making</p> <p>Child-led initiatives</p>
Examples of low-level involvement	Examples of medium–high-level involvement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being interviewed for a radio/news programme or case studies • Being quoted or written about • Advising about materials for a youth audience • Using Save the Children's social networking sites • Accessing our 'Youth Zone' pages • Appearing in a film or photographs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blogging • Writing for publications, the website, etc. • Media spokespeople • Film-making or taking photographs to enable children to speak out about issues of concern and their points of view • Young journalists – reporters, interviewers, writers • Youth-led initiatives • Magazines written by young people, for young people • Making TV programmes • Making radio programmes • Presenting at conferences

Children's 'evolving capacities' to participate

When working with children, you need to take into account their 'evolving capacities' to participate. Children's development cannot be defined only by age; there are many factors that affect a child's capacity to participate, including their cultural background, previous experiences, level of education, sibling order, etc. Once you are aware of the age ranges and backgrounds of the girls and boys you'll be

Children's participation in media and communications

working with, tailor your approach and activities to their capacities, and support them where necessary. See *Part One – Putting children's participation into practice* and *Toolkit* for some examples of the methods you can use to engage and work with children and young people.

How to involve children in media and communications work – a step-by-step guide

Now you have some of the background to how children can get involved in media and communications work, this section will give you guidance about how you can make sure this work is as meaningful as possible for adults and children. This section should be used in conjunction with Part One.

In this section you can read specific guidance about:

- Involving children in a **one-off opportunity** – eg, being interviewed for a radio programme:
 - Contacting children
 - Ensuring that children have adequate time to prepare for their involvement
 - Ensuring the safety and wellbeing of children
 - What support to offer children
- Involving children in a **longer-term opportunity** – eg, as media spokespeople:
 - Contacting children
 - Ensuring that children have adequate time to prepare for their involvement
 - Ensuring the safety and wellbeing of children
 - What support to offer children
- Children contributing ideas or content to existing materials.

Involving children in a one-off opportunity

Children may identify an opportunity independently and come to you for support, or you may identify an opportunity and invite a child to get involved. Follow these guidelines if you are inviting children to participate in a one-off opportunity you have identified:

Contacting children

1. Because of our child safeguarding policy and confidentiality, it is not advisable to share children's contact details with staff. If you are based in Head Office, you will need to approach the country programme. The contact you establish will then work with you to contact the children on your behalf and invite them to take part. You can then liaise with the country programme to ensure that the children are fully briefed and prepared for the opportunity.
2. Prepare a short child-friendly briefing detailing all the information you can. Children will need to know exactly how much time it will take, what will be required of them, how much time they will have to prepare, who will support them, etc. Bear in mind that you may have to translate this briefing, which can take time. This will give the children the chance to ask questions and to negotiate how they would like to be involved, and to state what information they need.

Children's participation in media and communications

3. Children's participation should always be relevant and voluntary. You need to be prepared for the country programme or for children to decide not to take up the opportunity.
4. When advertising the opportunity to children, be aware of the priorities and commitments they have in their lives. For example, if you are asking a child to take part in a radio interview in the middle of the day, they may have to miss school to do so. When children live far from the country programme office, they may have to take the time to travel to the office so they can receive support from staff. Also, you cannot always expect children to have access to the Internet or be able to afford to use the phone or the Internet to contact you.
5. It's always easier to invite the most vocal, confident children to take part in such opportunities because they require less support and preparation than other children. However, we should always seek to work in a non-discriminatory way and give the chance to more marginalised children to participate. They are often the children with most to gain in terms of skills and knowledge development. It's often the case that the media wants to hear and highlight the voices of the most marginalised children. If you are planning to work with marginalised children, do bear in mind they may need extra time and support. You will need to adapt the approach you take accordingly. Liaise with the country programme for advice on this.
6. Bear in mind the costs associated with the children's involvement. Ask country programmes if they are able to meet these costs, or offer to pay expenses for costs such as travel, Internet usage, etc.

Ensuring that children have adequate time and information to prepare for their involvement

1. When working with the media, you will often get a request for a child's involvement with very little warning. However, children need time to prepare adequately for their involvement. The longer you give them, the more confident they are likely to be. They will also have more opportunity to really think about their input. Wherever possible, do try to plan for children's involvement well in advance.
2. Although children need adequate time to prepare for their involvement, this need not take a huge amount of time, especially if it is a short interview. The amount of time you invest depends upon the complexity of the task and the capacity and confidence of the child.
3. You must arrange a briefing for children about the opportunity via your country programme contact. If the children are located close to you, you may wish to arrange to visit them to give a briefing in person.
4. If children will be giving their opinions on a specific theme or campaign, they need to have enough time to familiarise themselves with the topic and formulate their own opinions about it. You will need to find out how much they already know, and then provide extra information for them in a child-friendly format. It is tokenistic participation if you tell children what you want them to say, and this will come across in an interview.

Children's participation in media and communications

5. If possible, offer children the opportunity to learn new skills that are linked to the opportunity. For example, you could set up training for them on writing for the web, photography, film-making, journalism, interview techniques, etc. These skills will be useful to them for a lifetime and may end up leading to a career in one of those professions. If you are not geographically near the children, could you work with the country programme to ensure this happens?
6. Once you have asked children to get involved in an opportunity, it's important to make sure you see it through. Once the children's involvement is over, make sure to feed back to them about the outcome.

Ensuring the safety and wellbeing of children

Please refer to **Part One – Safe children's participation** for comprehensive and detailed information on this.

1. All staff and volunteers should have read Save the Children's Child Safeguarding Policy, Procedures and Code of Conduct.
2. One person should take full responsibility for ensuring the safety and wellbeing of children involved – the Child Safeguarding Coordinator.
3. Once the children have given their consent to participate, you will also need to arrange for parental/guardian consent and media consent forms to be signed.
4. Work with the country programme or colleagues in your country to prepare a risk assessment, which should ideally be written, but can be verbally agreed where this is not possible. Make sure you consider any ethical issues or adverse risks associated with the child's involvement. For example, if the child will be publicly talking about the conflict situation in their country, will this put them at risk of action from the military in that country once the interview is over? Sometimes it will be inappropriate and dangerous for a child to speak about a topic, and you will have to decide if their involvement is in their best interests.
5. In the UK, adults and volunteers who come into direct contact with children should have a valid Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check. Please consult UK Human Resources for the latest guidance on this.
6. Make children aware that they can withdraw their participation at any time, and ensure they have a dedicated person to go to for support.

What support to offer to children

1. You need to tailor your support according to the evolving capacities of the children involved. Your country programme contact should be able to advise you on this.
2. Work with your country programme contact to establish how much support the children may need, and discuss your joint approach.
3. Support the children as much as you can throughout their involvement, and ensure that they do not feel uncomfortable or intimidated in any way.

Children's participation in media and communications

4. Where possible, give children the space to decide how they wish to participate, and give them as much control as possible over the proceedings. For example, instead of telling the child what to say in an interview, give them the information they need to plan what they want to say in their own way.
5. Brief the children about how they will be able to read/view the interview afterwards, and if possible give them a copy of it to keep.
6. Thank them for their involvement and feed back to them about the outcome.

Involving children in a longer-term opportunity

You could choose to work over a period of time with a group of children who are invited to volunteer for specific roles, receive training and a proper induction, and then can be called upon whenever an opportunity arises. That way the children are already well prepared and you don't need to spend a lot of time on preparation each time an opportunity arises. By involving children over a longer period of time, they will be able to develop their skills and knowledge with your support and work collaboratively with you rather than reactively.

Children may identify an idea for a longer-term opportunity independently and come to you for support, or you may identify such an opportunity and invite children to get involved. Follow the advice on this page and on [page 66](#) if you are inviting children to participate in a longer-term opportunity that you have identified.

Contacting children

Follow the advice about contacting children in the previous section, but add the following points:

1. Children may already be participating in or leading media projects in their own countries. Bear in mind that adults and children may well have a lot to learn from each other in this process. You may wish to work with children's media projects or with children who have no or little previous experience of this kind of work.
2. For a more long-term opportunity, there is more scope to involve children in the planning, implementation and evaluation of the programme or activity. Children must take part voluntarily and it must be relevant to them. Involve children as much as possible in designing the volunteer opportunity.
3. It is highly advisable to work in collaboration with a staff member who is already known to the children and is able to see them on a regular basis. This staff member will have already had the chance to build up a trusting relationship with the children and will already have the skills to work effectively with them.
4. In the first instance, you could arrange to meet with the children and share your ideas with the children and staff member. You could arrange to do this in person, or you could produce a written briefing. Work with your staff contact if you wish to arrange a meeting, and ensure that the Child Safeguarding policy is adhered to at all times.

Ensuring that children have adequate time and information to prepare for their involvement

1. Each child's capacity to participate evolves in different ways. You need to tailor the approach you take and the information you share according to the capacity of the children involved. See *Part One – Putting children's participation into practice* and *Toolkit* for some tips.
2. Ideally, you will recruit, train and support a small group of children to take on this role for a specified amount of time. Bear in mind that the longer the children are involved, the more they are likely to develop their skills and confidence. But in order to keep their motivation high, you should remain committed to the project for the whole time specified, and frequently reward their involvement.
3. Ensure that children have a proper induction into their long-term roles. Ideally, this should take the form of an informal meeting or residential weekend outside school/office hours, where the children can spend time together; have fun and learn all about the role. They should be given the opportunity to negotiate and plan for their involvement. The Child Safeguarding policy and procedures should be adhered to at all times. Work with your country programme contact to set up this meeting.
4. Clearly define the role you will be inviting children to take on. You may wish to create a 'Volunteer Role Description' outlining what you will offer and what you expect from children in return. You should be prepared to negotiate this with children and to seek their input when you are drafting the volunteer agreement.



A 'disaster preparedness club' for children in Vietnam.

Ensuring the safety and wellbeing of children

Please follow the guidance in the previous section.

What support to offer children

1. Once the children have had their induction and are ready to begin, they will need support in creating opportunities, stories, etc. If you can, involve them in creating their own action plans and try to give them as much freedom as you can. This will be an important learning opportunity for them.
2. In order to maintain the children's motivation, you need to be in regular contact with them and give them the opportunity to feed back to you about how their roles are going. You should also give them feedback and let them know the outcome of their involvement.
3. Plan well in advance of involving children. They will need your ongoing support and adequate preparation for their involvement, so make sure to check your department's resources and capacity before inviting children to get involved. You will also need to check the country programme's capacity and resources.

Children contributing ideas or content to existing materials

Occasionally, you may wish to ask children to contribute something towards a publication, article or other material. For example, young people contributed to Save the Children's Annual Report. Please bear in mind the following steps when involving children in this way:

1. Follow advice in the previous section about 'contacting children'.
2. Once you have invited children to participate, follow advice about the preparation children will need in the section 'Ensuring that children have adequate time and information to prepare for their involvement'.
3. Clearly define the purpose and type of the communication. This includes clearly stating who the communication is being written for.
4. You must obtain parental consent from the child's parent/guardian before any involvement. You should also get consent from the child.
5. Create ways for children to feed into the content or design of the communication. For example, children could send information in response to a set of questions, or information could be collected as part of a consultation workshop.
6. Creating the communication – children can input into all aspects of the creation of the communication, from the design to the languages used.
7. Make sure the children understand what you are asking them to do – this includes the language and tone that the communication is written in.
8. Make sure you share the finished product with the participants. Ensure that you acknowledge that the children were part of the process.

Issues to consider

There are several issues to consider when involving children in media and communications work. In this section you will find guidance about the following:

- Media consent
- Interviewing children
- Use of images
- Confidentiality
- Keeping children safe.

Media consent

When children are asked to share their stories, have their photos taken, or to feature in films produced by Save the Children, it's important to get their informed consent first. Children need to be fully informed about how the image, footage or story will be used, and must be given the opportunity to consider their involvement. This is particularly important for ethical and protection reasons. For example, a child may come to harm as a result of being publicly identified in relation to a story. If a child's photo is used within a story of them talking about their experience of living with HIV, he or she may suffer discrimination from the community. This applies to other sensitive situations, such as children who are soldiers or are in conflict situations.

Children's participation in media and communications

At the time of writing (November 2009), Save the Children UK has no written policy relating to obtaining media consent from children. Other Alliance members do have their own written policies, including Save the Children US. However, Save the Children UK is planning to develop its own written policy in the near future.

At the time of writing, the advice given to staff involving children in media and communications work is the following:

- For photographers and film makers, there is an oral consent form for use overseas. This relies on Save the Children staff briefing photographers or film makers adequately about the need to obtain oral consent. Photographers and film makers must be sure to inform children thoroughly about how the images or film will be used so that the children can make fully informed decisions about their involvement.
- The Alliance Secretariat for children has produced a booklet entitled *Your Story is Important*. It explains in a child-friendly way how Save the Children may use children's photos or stories.
- For photographing or filming children in the UK, there is a consent form that requires a signature from children. If the child is under 16 years of age, a parent/guardian's signature is also required. This consent must also be informed, in the sense that the nature of how the image or film will be used is fully explained to the child. However, if children are at a rally, march or event and they are just part of the context in numbers, we are not obliged to obtain their written consent and do not.
- In emergency situations, Save the Children UK currently follows Save the Children US policy, which entails the communication officer, film maker or photographer signing a form to state they have received the child's or guardian's informed consent.

Interviewing children

Save the Children has produced a booklet entitled *Interviewing children*, which is available in hard copy and PDF formats. It details the issues that need to be considered when interviewing children.

Some of the key considerations are:

- Have you properly and adequately explained to the child what the interview will be used for, and have you obtained media consent?
- Have you considered the ethical implications for the child and considered their best interests and safety?
- Make the child feel at ease and comfortable by thinking about the suitability of the location, ensuring that a member of staff known by the child is with you during the interview, and by using an informal approach and child-friendly language. You could start by playing a game, or letting the child play with the tape recorder.

Children's participation in media and communications

- Make sure to treat the child with respect and dignity, particularly if they are choosing to tell you about something upsetting or difficult. Their involvement should be entirely voluntary and they should feel free to stop at any time. There should be a member of staff known to the child available to support him or her.

Use of images

Images can illustrate our work and the issues children face very powerfully, but we have a responsibility to use them in a responsible manner. In certain circumstances children can be put at great risk by their identification in images or interviews. For example, a child's photo was used in a story about HIV although they were not HIV positive. When the photo was seen and associated with the story, the child suffered unnecessary stigma and discrimination. If a child soldier's photo is used, they may then be put at risk of violence or even death by military commanders in their own country.

Wherever the issue or context is sensitive for the child, their identity should be protected at all costs.

Confidentiality

In sensitive cases where the child's safety could be at risk, we hide the child's identity in the images and change children's names. The child should be consulted as to what name he or she would like to be used. When we use case studies and images, we omit the child's surname. It is advisable only to refer to the child's large town, state, region or country and never to use enough detail about their location that they can be traced or contacted by the general public.

Keeping children safe

In any work that directly involves children, you need to make sure you are acting in line with Save the Children's Child Safeguarding Policy and Code of Conduct. These are available on the Save the Children Intranet. In particular, you should be aware of the following points, but refer to *Part One – Safe children's participation* for more detailed information:

- Have you completed a risk assessment of the activity?
- Have you obtained parental and media consent?
- Are you aware of the procedure for reporting abuse if a child chooses to make a disclosure to you during the activity that gives you cause for concern?
- Is the environment and equipment as safe as possible?
- Have you maintained the child's confidentiality?



Emmet, 16, presents a show on a radio station run by children in Fermanagh, Northern Ireland.

My experience of involving children in film-making: interview with Stuart Bamforth, film producer



Describe the ways you've involved children and young people in your work

I often run film-making workshops with young people. The idea is that we help equip them with the tools to tell their own stories within the medium of film/video, which can be a very powerful thing.

Why do you think it's important to involve children and young people?

The voices of young people, refugees, the poor are always marginalised. With the greater accessibility of both cameras as well as the technology to upload films to the web, many of these marginalised voices can reach significant audiences, and social change can become a reality.

What would you say are some of the challenges of involving children and young people meaningfully in your line of work?

A big issue is trust. If one is to open the doors to the involvement of young people, it shouldn't be just a tokenistic gesture. One has to trust in them, and that often means relinquishing an element of control.

What advice would you give to others hoping to involve children and young people in their communications work?

Welcome the unexpected. Young people will often surprise you with new angles and approaches. It may not be what you are accustomed to, but it might take you to a really interesting place you've never been before!

Links

UNICEF *Magic, Media Activities and Good Ideas by, with and for Children* <http://www.unicef.org/magic>

Bold Creative – The Youth Innovation Agency – <http://www.boldcreative.co.uk/>

Photo Voice – www.photovoice.org

Interviewing Children – Save the Children UK http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/en/54_2333.htm

Children's participation in recruitment

This how-to guide will give you lots of ideas for involving children and young people in the recruitment of Save the Children staff. It includes examples of how this is done in practice and tips for ensuring that the experience is as meaningful as possible for children and young people.

Please use this guide in conjunction with Part One to ensure that you have all the information you need.

Why involve children and young people in recruitment?

As a rights-based organisation working for the benefit of children, it is especially pertinent for children to be involved in the recruitment of Save the Children staff and volunteers. This is particularly relevant when staff and volunteers will be working directly with children and young people.

Involving children and young people in recruitment has many benefits to the organisation, its staff, children and young people, and to the candidates themselves.

Benefits to children and young people

- Children gain respect and recognition from adults, and a feeling that their ideas are valued.
- They gain confidence, experience and skills.
- When they participate actively and take responsibility for decision-making, this can encourage them to actively participate in other areas of their lives.
- This is a great opportunity for children to learn more about Save the Children and their right to participate.
- They can feel positive about the fact they have been able to voice their needs about both the service they receive and the staff who will be working with them.
- Children and young people can gain valuable experience of the recruitment process, which will stand them in good stead for making their own job, college and/or university applications later.

“It is beneficial to be on the panel because you get the chance to see what it is like from the other side, because when you go for a job, you are always nervous.”

Simon, aged 17, The Corner, Dundee (Save the Children (2005) The Recruitment Pack)

Children's participation in recruitment

Benefits to staff

- Staff can develop their skills and think creatively about how they engage the children and young people they support.
- Staff members can build relationships with children and young people and view them as primary stakeholders rather than simply beneficiaries of a service.
- Staff can gain a real understanding of children's and young people's views and concerns – they can develop a wider understanding of children's wishes, needs, feelings and opinions.

Benefits to candidates

Young people's involvement also means that candidates will:

- have an opportunity to meet with some of the young people they will be working with or who use the services provided
- have a better understanding of your commitment to young people's participation, and that you value it and take it seriously
- have a better understanding that how they interact with children and young people is a crucial part of the job they are applying for
- have a positive sense of endorsement from the young people once they have been selected and appointed.

“I think it is actually really good, because you walked away knowing that young people had also chosen you for that job...they accept you to be part of the support they need.”

(Save the Children (2005) The Recruitment Pack)

Benefits to the organisation

- The involvement of children and young people helps to recruit and select strong candidates for relevant roles, and therefore positively impacts on the quality of services.
- Involving children and young people in recruitment provides tangible evidence and endorsement of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in practice.
- By involving children and young people in this way, the organisation is sending clear messages to partner agencies, funders and potential employees. It shows that children and young people are at the heart of what we do and have a direct influence on services.
- Candidates benefit from a process that involves young people.



Fadwa and Bemnat, both 18, at a Save the Children workshop on child poverty in the UK.

Children's participation in recruitment

- The recruitment panel can see how candidates interact with young people.
- It gives a positive and powerful message to candidates that young people's input is valued and taken seriously.
- It supports adults to develop their communication and listening skills.
- Involving children and young people in recruitment builds stronger working relationships between adults and young people.

“I think one of the main criteria of employing someone to work with children is that they have a genuine interest in children and young people...they (children and young people) have got ways of establishing that, that I can't.”

Peter, Manager, Fife Children's Rights Service⁴

“It says something about what your commitments are as an organisation and it also has an effect on who you recruit. I really strongly believe that you end with a much more focused and committed staff team as a result of people going through that process.”

Rob, Manager, Edinburgh Young Carers Project

Ways of involving children and young people in recruitment

Children and young people can be involved in recruitment either as part of a group or as individuals. They can be involved in one or more of the following ways:

1. Planning the process
2. Writing the job description
3. Writing the person specification
4. Advertising the job
5. Getting the right information to applicants
6. Short-listing
7. Interviewing
8. Taking up references
9. Making a choice
10. Feedback and communication with candidates
11. Feedback and communication between groups involved in the process
12. Induction.

The extent to which children and young people get involved will depend on a variety of factors including the amount of time you/they have, their own interest and motivation and prior experience, and the level of support they might need. Children and young people may not want to be involved at every stage of the recruitment process and you might not be able to involve them at all stages. As

⁴ The Recruitment Pack, Save the Children and the Scottish Alliance for Children's Rights, 2005

Children's participation in recruitment

long as young people's involvement is negotiated clearly with them and everyone's expectations are managed, they will still be able to play a meaningful role in the process.

The approach you take in involving young people and children must be tailored according to the evolving capacities of the children and young people you are working with. Children's development cannot be defined by age only. There are many factors that define a child's capacity to participate, including cultural background, previous experiences, level of education, sibling order, etc. Once you are aware of the age range and background of the girls and boys who will be working with you, tailor your approach and activities to their capacities, and support them in the most appropriate way.

How to involve children and young people in recruitment – a step-by-step guide

In this section you will find information and guidance about how to involve children and young people in the recruitment process under the following headings:

1. Mechanisms for children's and young people's involvement
2. Which children and young people?
3. Long-term or short-term involvement?
4. Preparing children and young people for their involvement
5. Children and young people's involvement at different stages of the recruitment process
6. Evaluation of the whole process.

1. Mechanisms for children's and young people's involvement

Young people don't have to participate in every stage of the recruitment process. You can negotiate with them in advance how much they would like to be involved and what decision-making power they will have. For example, they may prefer it if you create the job description and person specification for the role, and they are involved only in the interview itself. It is entirely dependent on how you negotiate with the young people about their involvement, but it is crucially important to manage their expectations from the outset.

Children and young people may be involved as individuals or as a group, and their involvement may take different formats. The following is a list of some of the mechanisms for children's and young people's involvement in the recruitment process:

- Young people take part in every stage of the recruitment process over a period of time. They work in partnership with the adults who are also taking part in the process.
- Young people take part in elements of the recruitment process – eg, shortlisting, devising questions and interviewing candidates.

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- A group of young people form a separate interview panel from the adult interview panel. The candidate is interviewed by the young people first and then by the adults. The adults and young people make sure to choose different questions or testing methods.
- The candidate is first interviewed by an adult interview panel, then completes a separate test/activity/scenario facilitated by the young people.
- Young people informally meet and greet the candidate before they attend the adult interview panel.
- A group of young people are trained as recruiters so that whenever a candidate is due to be interviewed, they are contacted on an individual or group basis to take part in that recruitment process.

2. Which children and young people?

It's important to consider which young people will be invited to take part in the selection and recruitment process. Bear in mind the following considerations:

- Children's and young people's participation must be informed and voluntary. That means that you need to provide as much information as you can in as accessible a format as possible about the role they could play in the recruitment process. This will enable children and young people to make an informed decision. You should give them the opportunity to negotiate their involvement with you.
- If you are in regular contact with a group of children and young people, you could ask that group to democratically elect members of their group to take part in recruitment.
- It's easier to work with the most able and bright children and young people, but those children and young people who are more marginalised or who need greater support are often those who can benefit most from the process in terms of the skills and confidence they can gain.
- As a child rights organisation, we must always be mindful to work in a non-discriminatory and inclusive way. In practice, this means ensuring that the approach we take enables all children and young people to take part if they want to, regardless of their status, background, gender, religion, etc. However, it's also important to consider which children and young people may not be taking part because of barriers to their involvement such as the level of literacy needed to participate, or the fact that they never heard about the opportunity in the first place as they don't have access to the Internet.
- Bear in mind that children and young people are not a homogeneous group and have 'evolving capacities'. Their age is one of a number of factors that will affect the degree to which they will be able to participate.
- The recruitment process can take a long time – children and young people need to be committed and motivated to participate initially for the whole process. They can of course withdraw their participation at any time, but if you give them clear information about what will be expected and how long it will take, they can make a sound assessment of their realistic availability for the role. You may consider tailoring the role to fit with young people's availability if they are willing to take part but have other commitments.

Children's participation in recruitment

- You need to be able to provide support and training to every young person who participates in the recruitment process for the entire duration. Factor this in when you are inviting children and young people to get involved. Are you able to offer this support, or would it make sense to work with an adult staff member who is already known and trusted by the young people?
- If you have a limited budget, think about the costs associated with supporting a number of young people to participate; ensure you have sufficient budget to cover this as well as any unexpected costs.

3. Long-term or short-term involvement?

Children and young people can be involved in the recruitment process on either a long-term or short-term basis. However, you should always ensure that you have given them enough time to prepare fully and to acquire the skills and knowledge they need to fulfil the role.

The recruitment process can sometimes take a long time. Children and young people need to understand this and state if they are happy to be involved throughout the entire process. If they would rather be involved on a short-term or one-off basis, that is fine. But they must still be adequately prepared and supported in their roles.

For young people who want to be involved on a more long-term basis, you will have the added benefit of enabling the young people to spend more time preparing their input and familiarising themselves with the role; they will have more ownership of the process as a whole.

4. Preparing children and young people for their involvement

As stated above, children and young people need to be adequately prepared for their roles in the recruitment process, and be supported throughout it.

The way in which you set up a training/briefing for the young people should be tailored to their interests and evolving capacity to participate. Please see *Part One – Putting children's participation into practice* and *Toolkit* for guidance on how to devise engaging activities for young people. The following points should be covered in any briefing or training for children and young people:

- Ensure that the young people have been given the chance to get to know one another and the staff, and that they feel at ease.
- Make sure young people fully understand the different stages of the selection and recruitment processes.
- Ensure that you have given young people all the information they need about their roles, and that they have had the opportunity to negotiate their involvement.
- Ensure that young people are clear about the decision-making process and how much say they will have.
- Ensure the young people are given the skills necessary to take part – eg, how to short list, and how to devise interview questions.
- Ensure that young people have had the opportunity to set their own ground rules about how they will work with you and with one another.

Children's participation in recruitment

- Address issues of confidentiality of young people and candidates.
- Ensure the young people are able to work in a non-discriminatory way throughout the selection process.

Please refer to *Part One – Safe children's participation* for guidance on how to ensure the health and safety of children and young people taking part in the recruitment process and on any associated training.

5. Children's and young people's involvement at different stages of the recruitment process

Under each of the stages of the recruitment process shown below there are some points for consideration and some ways in which young people can get involved at that stage. As explained above, young people may not want to get involved at every stage, so you may choose which section is appropriate to you and the opportunity you are offering.

Planning the process

How young people can get involved:

- Give young people training on specific skills.
- Help young people to understand the importance of their roles in the process, including their right to participate.
- More experienced young people could mentor less experienced young people.
- Young people can plan for their own involvement with you.

Points to consider:

- How can you ensure that the young people have all the information they need and that it is presented in a way that they will find interesting and engaging?
- How much power will you give the young people in designing the process? It's important to be clear about this from the outset, to avoid disappointment or misunderstandings.
- Who else might you need to involve at this stage?

Writing the job description

How young people can get involved:

- Work in partnership with young people to write the job description or amend an existing one. Young people can advise you or they can write with you.
- Work with young people to discuss the qualities they think are most important for a person applying for this post.

Points to consider:

- Do you need to ask the Human Resources department for guidance?
- How can you make this task engaging for young people, and not all text-based?

Children's participation in recruitment

Writing the person specification

How young people can get involved:

- Work in partnership with young people to write the person specification or amend an existing one. Young people can advise you or they can write with you.
- Work with young people to identify the skills, qualities and experience needed for the job. You could involve them in thinking about the worst possible person for the job and then the best possible person.
- Support young people to understand how the person specification is linked to the interview process, and begin to think about how they might assess the extent to which the candidates meet the person specification.

Points to consider:

- Do you need to ask the Human Resources department for guidance?
- How can you make this task engaging for young people, and not all text-based?
- How can you ensure that the young people's expectations of what the person should be like are realistic and non-discriminatory?

Advertising the job

How young people can get involved:

- Young people can work with you to write the advert, and to think about what would attract the right sort of people to the job.

Points to consider:

- You should check with Human Resources about the kind of information it is acceptable and not acceptable to include in a job advert.
- Bear in mind the cost of advertising a job and whether you need to stick to a specific word limit.
- Can you use this activity as an opportunity to discuss how a job advert may be unintentionally discriminatory (eg, if it specifies a specific age)?

Getting the right information to applicants

Save the Children UK uses an online application system for most job opportunities and any information about the role can be found via this online portal.

How young people can get involved:

- Young people can set questions that the applicant must answer in their application.
- Young people may want to send their own information about the role to prospective applicants.
- They could review the existing application form to ensure it is easily understood by all young people involved in the process.

Points to consider:

- You could let the candidates know about the involvement of young people in the process.
- It's important that all candidates know they cannot seek feedback from young people, but only from the named adult involved in managing the process.

Children's participation in recruitment

Shortlisting

All adults and young people involved in shortlisting must assess how applicants meet first the essential and then the desirable criteria in the person specification. All reviewers must shortlist after discussion with one another.

How young people can get involved:

- If young people are involved in creating/reviewing the job description and person specification, it's easier for them to take part in the shortlisting process.
- Young people could work with you to create a shortlisting form, which is then used by adults and young people.
- Young people could shortlist with adults, or the two groups could shortlist separately and then compare the results.

Points to consider:

- It is very important to support young people in understanding the importance of confidentiality.
- This can be a tiring and time-consuming task. How can you break it into manageable chunks and make the task as engaging as possible?

Interviewing

How young people can get involved:

- Young people can devise some or all of the questions with adults.
- They can work with adults to think of the best way to assess candidates against the criteria.
- They can form a separate interview panel, or they can sit on the panel with adults.
- Young people may facilitate a separate activity or test with the candidates.
- You can facilitate an opportunity for the young people to practise in a mock interview situation.
- Young people need to be comfortable with the way they will record the interview/activity. They can work with adults to devise the best approach, as all interview panellists need to use the same method.

Points to consider:

- If you can hold the interview in a place that the young people know, they are more likely to be at ease in the interview situation.
- Make sure that young people and adults have all the documents they need for the interview. All panellists will need to have a way of writing down comments as the interview progresses and of assessing each candidate once the interview is over.
- Aim to schedule interviews at a time that is suitable for young people (eg, once they have finished school/college).



A workshop on education in Colombia that brought together students, teachers, parents and community organisations.

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Children's participation in recruitment

Making a choice

How young people can get involved:

- Young people can make the decision in partnership with the adults involved in the recruitment process. This must be achieved through a fair and open discussion where a compromise is reached.
- Young people can advise adults on their views, but adults make the final decision.
- Each interview panellist should have the opportunity to share their thoughts about each of the candidates and share any scores they have recorded.

Points to consider:

- How much decision-making power will you give young people involved in this process? It is very important to have clarified this from the outset.

6. Evaluation of the whole process

At the end of the young people's involvement in the recruitment process, it's important to give them the opportunity to evaluate their involvement and the process as a whole. This will give them the chance to consider all that they have learned. It will also enable you to consider how you might improve the process when involving young people in this way in the future.

Interview – Mel Hall, Save the Children Wales

How have you involved children and young people in the recruitment process?

When I started in Save the Children my role was working with a group of young people in Cardiff on rights issues. Fortunately, a training provider called Dynamix had been commissioned by the Welsh Assembly Government to provide recruitment training for groups of young people, and so the young people I was working with attended this training. Appropriate training for the young people is essential before involving them meaningfully in recruitment, so it was really beneficial having 16 young people trained and ready to go.

The young people are all really eager to be part of a recruitment panel, so when organising one I usually pick names out of a hat to choose three or four young people.

Once they have been selected, I send the young people a copy of the job advert and of the personal specification of the post. I also highlight the points in the personal specification that the young people would be best placed to assess; communication skills, for example.

I always ensure the young people are fairly confident they understand the role of the position they are interviewing for before considering their panel questions. It sounds pretty obvious, but the questions the young people choose should be ones that they can actually assess: so, the candidates' ability to communicate with young



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people, or their presentation skills. The young people are also able to assess the candidates personality, so can ask questions like 'if you could be any object in the world, what would you be and why?' or 'what does Save the Children mean to you?'

Once the questions have been created and agreed, ideally the young people will be able to see a copy of the shortlisted candidates' CVs. This isn't always the case and sometimes the young people prefer not to see the CV so as to be completely impartial. It's just best to ask them what they want.

Before the interviews, the young people decide who is asking what and who will chair the interviews, greet the candidates, etc. I prepare recording sheets for the young people so they can make notes and score the candidates and feed back to the adult panel at the end of the process.

During the interview process the young people lead and I just observe. However, at the end of each interview I chair the feedback between the young people and they all agree on their scores. Doing this after each interview helps the young people digest the information from the candidate and ensure their notes are comprehensive enough to give good feedback to the adult panel. Usually, at the end of the interviews the young people meet with the adult panel and agree on a way for them to feed back. Usually, the adult panel give some of their feedback about the candidates to the young people as well.

The young people receive remuneration for their time with vouchers, usually £40 for a whole day. When the successful candidate has been chosen, the young people are notified by post or email. A nice touch is including a thank you letter for the young people, which looks good on their record of achievement in school.

Why do you think it's important to involve children and young people in the recruitment process?

From my experience supporting young people on a recruitment panel, I always feel that the young people give a really impartial view of the candidates. They often pick up on things that the adult panel miss, as their questions aren't what the candidates are expecting. They have no preconceived opinions about the candidates in relation to previous employment, etc. They assess what they see and what they hear only.

The young people's panel can be quite daunting for adults, and the young people take it extremely seriously. By putting people slightly outside their comfort zone you can see what sort of person they really are. Well, that's what I think anyway! As a children's charity with the UNCRC so integral to our work, I think that we should be setting the standard when it comes to involving children and young people in the running of the organisation, especially when it comes to recruiting staff who have a lot of face-to-face contact with children and young people.

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What challenges have you faced?

Challenges I have experienced in young people's recruitment panels have never been to do with the young people. Good training, enough time and communication avoid any challenges. Personally, as recruitment isn't part of my job, my time capacity is sometimes a challenge. However, we all muck in here so there is always someone to help out.

It can be a challenge chasing up the job spec or CV if the people overseeing the interviews have no experience of involving young people, or if the adult panel haven't fully bought into the idea of young people being involved. In Wales, when we involve young people in interviews, they have equal input into who gets appointed. This is essential if young people are not to be tokenised in the process.

What advice would you give to other people hoping to involve children and young people in the recruitment process?

Give yourself enough time to do everything, from the date of the advert to planning lunch for the young people and setting up the room for the interviews.

Make sure the young people are fully confident that they know what they are doing and who they are interviewing for.

Ask for help if you haven't been part of the process before. If the young people are experienced, they will be more than happy to tell you what they need.

Co-ordinate the young people's feedback, as they can get very excited after the interview and all speak at once. If they don't make notes, they will forget quite easily what previous candidates have said. Make notes of words or phrases during the interviews that the young people may not understand. One of the things the young people will be looking for is language they can understand, but sometimes there are things like names of organisations that might need explaining. Let the young people lead the feedback to the adult panel. No one says it quite like a young person!

Links

The Recruitment Pack – Involving Children and Young People in Recruitment. Save the Children Scotland, 2007. Available at: http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/en/54_3114.htm

A training pack for people who want to involve children and young people in recruitment processes or are already doing so but want to improve their practices.

National Children's Bureau (2007) *Participation Works – How to involve young people in selection and recruitment*. Available from: www.participationworks.org.uk

E Michel and D Hart, *Involving young people in the recruitment of staff, volunteers and mentors*, National Children's Bureau and The Prince's Trust, 2002. Available at: http://www.ncb.org.uk/members_area/publication_view.aspx?PubID=41&searchTitle=&searchAuthor=Michel&searchISBN=&searchYear=&searchSeries=-1&searchKeyword=&pageIndex=1&searchSubject=0 This pack was produced to help organisations wishing to involve young people in the recruitment of their staff, volunteers or mentors.

Children's participation in governance

This how-to guide will give you lots of ideas for how you can involve children and young people in decision-making and the governance of Save the Children at local, regional, national and international levels. It includes examples of governance in practice and tips for ensuring that the experience is as meaningful as possible.

Please use this guide in conjunction with Part One to ensure that you have all the information you need.

What is governance?

Governance is the leadership and management of processes, systems and performance in arenas such as the state (government), the family, community, businesses and organisations. Children can and do participate in a wide range of governance structures at local, regional, national and international levels, both with the support of Save the Children, and independently.

At Save the Children, "good governance is achieved by a board of appointed or elected individuals who are committed to defining and ensuring the accomplishment of organisational goals. The goal of governance can be stated in the most simple and direct terms: Governance must ensure that an organisation effectively and efficiently strives to achieve its stated goals while protecting the public interest and trust."⁶

As the primary stakeholders, children and young people have a key role to play in the governance of Save the Children. In order to use our resources most effectively and efficiently, it makes business as well as common sense to involve children in determining where they should be targeted.

"Governance covers everything involved in making sure that an organisation is run effectively and achieves its goals."

(British Youth Council)⁵

Why involve children and young people in governance?

Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child states that it is every child's right to take part in decision-making about matters that affect him or her and to have their views taken into account. So when Save the Children makes decisions about how we will work with children around the world, we should consult and involve children in that process.

⁵ Participation Works, *How to Involve Children and Young People in Governance*, 2009

⁶ Governance Best Practice Handbook, Save the Children. Available at: http://www.savethechildren.net/alliance/about_us/accountability.html

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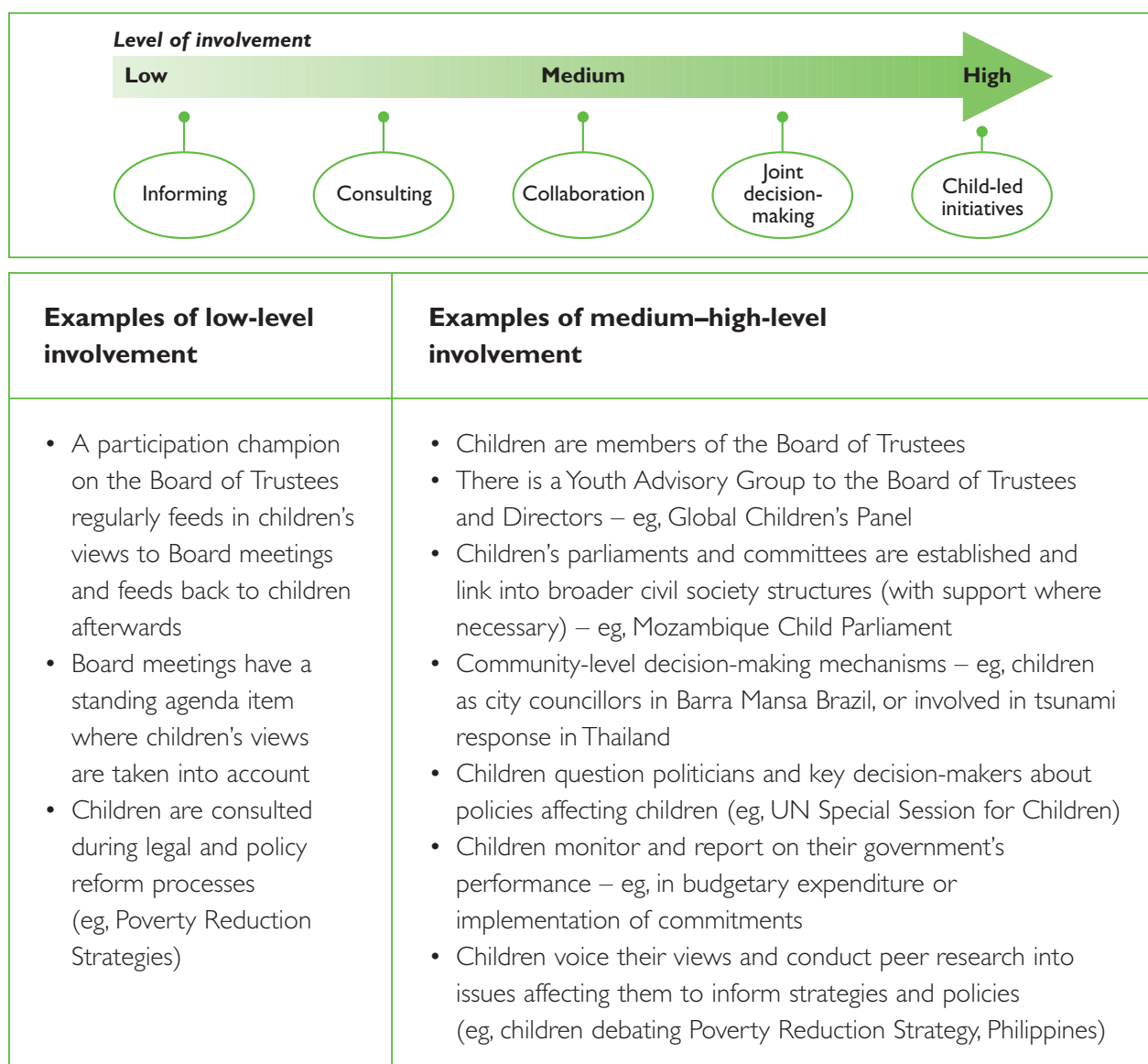
Children can learn valuable skills and gain knowledge, experience and self-confidence that will last them a lifetime.

Children and young people know what they want and what they need. Involving them in decision-making and governance will help us make credible and robust decisions and lead to better quality, relevant and appropriate programme interventions.

Ways of involving children in governance

Here are some examples of how children can be involved in governance.

Children and adults may have different levels of involvement. This may depend on a number of factors including their capacity, resources and time. It isn't necessarily better to operate at a higher level of involvement, but it is useful to analyse how much children are involved and engaged. This will help you to plan and evaluate your work, and also to ensure that adults and children are clear about what is expected of them – and that you understand what they expect of you. Please refer to **Part One – Degrees of involvement** for more detailed information.



Children's 'evolving capacities' to participate

When working with children, you need to take into account their 'evolving capacities' to participate. Children's development cannot be defined by age only and there are many factors that affect a child's capacity to participate, including their cultural background, previous experiences, level of education, sibling order, etc. Once you're aware of the age range and backgrounds of the girls and boys you'll be working with, tailor your approach and activities to their capacity and support them where necessary. See *Part One – Putting children's participation into practice* and *Toolkit* for some examples of the methods you can use to engage and work with children and young people.



Jasmine Whitbread during the first-ever annual Global Children's Panel meeting with Save the Children's Board of Trustees.

How can we create an environment where children are actively supported and encouraged to take part in governance?

Save the Children can support children to take part in governance but we can also support other duty-bearers to involve children in decision-making. We can empower children to express their opinions, but these can often go unheard if adults aren't prepared or used to listening to children's views and taking them on board when making decisions. Here are some things we can do to prepare others for sharing decision-making and collaborating with children:

- Advocacy, sensitisation and capacity-building with government in order to make the government understand the value of an increased voice for children, and make the changes necessary to allow children's voices to be heard (eg, lobbying to increase children's participation in Poverty Reduction Strategy planning).
- Strengthening the mechanisms that enable governments to be accountable for their actions on behalf of poor and socially excluded children – eg, through the establishment of offices of children's ombudsmen or commissioners, and the strengthening of coordination mechanisms in government on policies affecting children.
- Strengthen the mechanisms that make governments accountable for their actions on behalf of poor and socially excluded children (eg, by creating children's ombudsmen or commissioners).

How to involve children in organisational governance and decision-making – a step-by-step guide

There are important steps to consider when involving children in the governance of Save the Children at Head Office and country programmes. Adequate planning and preparation are vital if children and young people are to have a meaningful role in governance structures. Here's a step-by-step guide to facilitating child participation in governance and decision-making, focusing on the following key areas:

1. Recruiting children and young people
2. Preparing children
3. Preparing adults
4. Identifying points of influence.

1. Recruiting children and young people

It's important to plan carefully how you will choose or elect young people to take part in governance processes. Ideally, they should be a diverse group, representing a cross-section of children's views. In reality, this can be hard to achieve. It's easier, for example, for a well-educated, vocal child to get involved because they will need less support and training, and may already have some experience. However, those children and young people who are more marginalised or who need greater support are often those who can benefit most from the process in terms of the skills and confidence they can gain.

Children and young people need to be able to communicate easily with wider groups of their peers in their own countries or communities. They are not a homogenous group and they may only feel comfortable speaking from their own points of view. They may need training and encouragement to speak on behalf of other children and young people.

Important points to consider:

1. Who will select the children – adults or other children?
2. Children may already be part of existing governance structures. It is often more effective and efficient to work with and strengthen existing structures such as children's parliaments, than to set new structures up from scratch. Existing mechanisms will potentially already be representative and well established within local, regional and/or national decision-making structures.
3. If there is a selection process, does it exclude or disadvantage some children? For example, if you are asking children to deliver a presentation or write an essay, will those who are less literate be at an unfair disadvantage?
4. Make sure you establish well in advance how much time, capacity and resources you have to support children in these activities. Will you need the ongoing support of one staff member? All staff members must be effective and confident about working with children. They should also be able to commit to building up a rapport and a trusting working relationship with children over time.

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5. Are you clear about what the children will be doing and what they expect of you and of their involvement? And do you have a clear idea of the timescale? It's important to convey this information clearly to children so that they can decide if they want to take part and discuss their involvement. Each child is different, and you must be open to tailoring the role to the individual so that both the child and the organisation can benefit from the experience. Have you thought about involving children in the process of devising the role from the beginning?
6. Think about what children will get out of their involvement (eg, training and recognition).
7. Are there any barriers that might prevent someone from taking part? (eg, they don't have access to the Internet, but their involvement would require them to access email regularly. What can you do to take away these invisible barriers?)

2. Preparing children

Follow these steps to ensure the children are well prepared and have a clear idea of their roles and what you expect of them.

1. Plan an induction for the children. This will depend on where they live, their age, their availability and any access issues they may have.
2. If all the children are from the same country and you have the resources and capacity to facilitate it, a residential training weekend is a good option. It gives them the chance to meet one another in an informal setting outside school. If this isn't possible, you could set up regional induction meetings or work with local staff to provide a personal induction for each young person.
3. Remember to adhere to the Child Participation Practice Standards (see page 17).
4. You must also adhere to all Child Safeguarding and safe participation guidelines (see pages 18–21).
5. Work collaboratively with staff members who the young people trust and who already have relevant experience.
6. Involve children in the process of planning their induction – ask them what they would like to cover. They may also want to work with you as facilitators or to plan the sessions.
7. Make the induction as engaging and interesting as possible and allow time for the children to get to know one another informally and have fun together.
8. Create a Volunteer Role for each young person, outlining what they will be doing, what you expect of them and what they can expect of you.
9. Invite one or two of the adults who are responsible for decision-making within the organisation (eg, a trustee) to come along and meet the children and answer their questions.
10. Consider including within the induction process training on specific skills such as public speaking or chairing meetings.



Bill Bell, Save the Children's Head of Child Rights and Protection, with Dominic, 16, from South Africa, at a meeting of the Global Children's Panel.

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3. Preparing adults

Save the Children staff may not all be used to collaborating with young people and you may need to do some groundwork to prepare them for the process. If children are involved in high-level strategic decision-making, it's likely that you'll be working with the Trustees, Directors and Senior Management staff. If the children will be involved in decision-making related to programme or thematic work, you may work with Programme Managers or Heads of Teams.

1. Where possible, involve adults in deciding the most appropriate way for them to involve children in governance. You may need to offer them training first so that they understand the scope of what they could do.
2. Once you have negotiated how they will work with the children, give them clear information about what you and the children expect from them, what the children will be doing and what you hope to achieve, and discuss frankly any doubts or questions they may have.
3. In order for adults to be open to taking young people's views seriously, they may need to relinquish a little of their power and adapt the way they work – for example, how they run meetings, and the language they use. This may be a challenging and unusual experience for some. Support your colleagues through this process and give them the opportunity to voice their concerns.
4. Invest time in getting support from key adults by outlining the benefits to children, adults and the organisation and reminding them of Save the Children's commitment to involving children in this way.

4. Identifying points of influence

Strategic decision-making within Save the Children happens at many different levels and in many different ways, ranging from departmental and country programme planning to Alliance Members Meetings and Board Meetings. If children and young people are to have any say in the decisions that are made at any of these levels, adults must recognise and communicate *how* children can influence these decisions. At what point is the final decision made, and how can children feed into this process? Too often, decisions are taken and children are consulted as an afterthought.

Adults must take responsibility for planning how children will participate meaningfully in the decision-making process.

1. It's important to establish the mechanism for children's participation in governance (eg, an advisory panel). This ensures that children are already on board and well prepared for their involvement. They will already have received training and be clear about their roles. They will probably have a staff member working with them who can take the time to support them through the process on your behalf. They will also be able to consult more widely with their peers to ensure a greater representation of views.
2. Identify the strategic decisions that need to be made and when action plans will be developed. Give this information to children and young people as clearly as possible.

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3. Make the questions you ask the children as relevant to them as possible. For example, they may not be able to comment on global Alliance issues, but they do know what's important to them in their own countries.
4. Explain clearly to the children how and when they should give their views and how they will be taken into account in the decision-making process.
5. Answer children's questions honestly and openly.
6. Once children have shared their views, make sure you thank them and tell them what to expect in terms of feedback.
7. Feed back to children how their views have been taken on board. Take time to explain which of their recommendations have been acted on, and which haven't and why. (See the case study on [page 90](#) for a child-friendly example.)

Some dos and don'ts

When involving children in governance, there are some things you should make sure to do, and some things to avoid. Please refer to [Part One – Child Participation Practice Standards](#) for more detailed information.

Do:

- Prepare adults and children well for the process
- Make sure all adults are on board and support them to respect children's views
- Make sure that children have all the information they need about the process in a format that is engaging and clear
- Think about the new skills that the children can develop during the process, how you can support this and how you can reward them for their involvement
- Feed back to children
- Make sure that adults and children understand their roles and what is expected of them and that they are clear about the aims.

Don'ts

Some common pitfalls:

- Children's views are not taken seriously.
- Adults feel challenged by the process and reject the validity of the children's views.
- Adults fail to give children enough time to give their recommendations/views.
- Children don't fully understand what is being asked of them because they haven't been given clear information.
- Children feel unable to give their views about issues that have no relevance to them.
- Children are asked for their views as an afterthought and they aren't integrated into the decision-making process.
- Adults fail to feed back to children about how their views have been taken on board. As a result, they feel de-motivated and are unlikely to participate in this way again.
- Children find the experience boring and uninspiring.

Some issues to consider

Retaining children's interest

Children and young people generally like to see quick results and want to feel their involvement has made a difference. Save the Children may sometimes move at a slower pace than children would like, and they may become bored or de-motivated by the lack of progress. It's important to try to retain children's interest and motivation. Here are some points to consider:

- Do you give the children regular feedback and updates?
- Are you planning to celebrate their achievements in some way (eg, an award ceremony)?
- How will the children see the impact their recommendations have made? How will you show them what has changed?
- Are your meetings fun and engaging? How can you make them more so?
- Children can quickly sense when they are not being taken seriously. Is this the case? If so, what will you do about it?

Accountability to children

In March 2009, Save the Children's Global Children's Panel met with the Trustees and Directors and gave them their views about what accountability means to them. They came up with three simple and effective guidelines:

1. **Keep a promise** – do what you said you would do.
2. **Communicate** – make sure you communicate well with children about what you are doing and why, feed back properly to them and enable children to communicate with you.
3. **Be faithful** – be respectful and honest when you involve children.

Case study – Global Children's Panel

The Global Children's Panel is a group of inspiring young people from across the world who work with Save the Children UK to influence high-level decision-making within the organisation, to hold it to account about what it has done for children, and to raise issues of importance to children globally. This initiative is part of the Change for Children commitment to ensure that children are central to the work of Save the Children UK.

Since March 2008, the panel members have met annually with the Board of Trustees and Directors of Save the Children UK. At each meeting they have been asked to give their recommendations about areas of strategic importance to Save the Children UK. The children have also practical advice about how best to

Children's participation in governance

improve accountability to children. They have raised issues of importance to them and to other children in the countries and regions they represent.

The panel members have all had significant experience of our work – through programmes, as members of children's organisations we support, as fundraisers, or as advocates for children's rights.

A wider group of children and young people in each participating country are being encouraged to 'accompany' the Children's Panel through membership of Advisory or Accompanying Groups. These groups will simulate dialogue and exchange ideas and issues between groups of children in different countries and regions – beyond the members of the Global Children's Panel.

Links

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www.participationworks.org.uk

Children's participation in emergencies

This guide presents some of the ways in which children can and do participate in emergency situations with Save the Children. It outlines some of the points you should consider when planning for children's involvement and guidance – ensuring that the experience is meaningful and in line with best practice.

Please use this guide in conjunction with Part One to ensure that you have all the information you need.

“It is vital to recognise that if overcoming stressful life events involves beliefs, feelings, competencies and actions, children’s own perspectives on adversity and the strategies they employ for their own protection are critical to coping and resilience. It is perhaps in the context of adversity when support for children’s own efforts is most crucial, since taking away even the slightest element of control from children’s lives under such circumstances can be very damaging.”⁷



“I would tell the G20 that every child should have one meal at least, once a day.” Ulzikhuu Zangad, 16, and a member of Save the Children's Global Children's Panel.

What constitutes an emergency situation?

Save the Children Alliance defines emergencies as: “Situations where the survival, physical or mental wellbeing, or development opportunities for children are threatened as a result of armed conflict, the breakdown of social or legal order or a natural disaster.”

Whenever a disaster strikes, children are particularly vulnerable. In an instant they may lose their home, their community and their security. They face multiple threats from violence, disease, malnutrition, separation, trauma, and lack of shelter, water, food and education.

Save the Children works to protect families' rights to basic services (like water and sanitation) and to make sure that children can get an education wherever they are. We also work to limit the effects of conflict on children and their families, and to promote and ensure children's protection.

⁷ Boyden and Mann, 2000, p.20, in C O’Kane, *Children and Young People as Citizens: Partners for Social Change*, Save the Children (South and Central Asia), 2003

Why should Save the Children promote the participation of children in emergencies?

- Children have rights to information, expression and participation in decision-making during and after emergencies.
- Children's needs and concerns are often different from those of adults; in order to meet them, girls and boys should be consulted.
- Children may naturally participate in the emergency relief effort, and their contribution should be acknowledged and supported wherever this is in their best interests.
- Children's expression and participation can enhance their recovery and wellbeing. It can strengthen their resilience and positive coping strategies.
- Children's participation can make the delivery of relief more effective.
- Children's participation in emergency preparedness, response and reconstruction helps them to build valuable and lasting skills and competencies.
- In a disaster response, children are able to identify and articulate the strengths and weaknesses of delivery. Their views help to improve the effectiveness, impact and relevance of the intervention and the quality of the decision-making.
- Children have access to other more vulnerable and hard to reach children and their communities. They can therefore provide information that helps to identify the most marginalised and vulnerable people.

Children's participation in an emergency is important because it demands that adults actively reach out to children, to ensure they are at the centre of plans, response and reconstruction. Children's perspectives about the emergency situation, the risks and its impact often bring a dimension that adults may not see, feel or witness in the same way.

The degree to which you will be able to involve children in an emergency will depend upon the context and may vary depending on the phase of the emergency response and degree of preparedness. As part of emergency preparedness, it's important to ensure that staff are trained and confident in facilitating meaningful children's participation. In all contexts, it's important to remember your duty to children and responsibility as enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, and reiterated in the Sphere Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standard in Disaster Responses.

The Minimum Standard I of the Sphere Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standard in Disaster Responses states: *"The disaster affected population should actively participate in the assessment, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the assistance programme"*.⁹

"Not involving children ignores their capacities. It also undermines them by sending the message to the adult community and decision-makers that it is okay to exclude children from decision-making, information, consultations and contributing – that children have no role in the public sphere. Children's participation in emergencies is not about evidence, efficiency and effectiveness. It is about rights. The same rights apply in emergencies as in other times."⁸

⁸ UNICEF, *The Participation of Children and Young People in Emergencies*, UNICEF, East Asia and Pacific Regional Office, 2007

⁹ Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standard in Disaster Responses

Children's rights in emergency situations

In times of disaster, there is normally a focus on ensuring children's survival and protection in the first instance. Their rights to participation tend not to be prioritised. However, all children's rights are indivisible, inalienable and mutually reinforcing and their fulfilment should be pursued together. Children who are informed about relief efforts are better able to survive and to protect themselves. Children are increasingly being respected as social actors in emergency situations. We must remember that children have the right to participate – and the right not to participate when they consider the situation to be incompatible for them and their families.

Children's 'evolving capacities' to participate should be taken into account at different stages of the emergency response. Children's development cannot be defined by age only. There are many factors that define a child's capacity to participate, including their cultural background, their previous experiences, their level of education, sibling order, etc. Once you are aware of the age ranges and backgrounds of the girls and boys you may be working with, you will need to tailor your approach and activities to their capacity, and support them where necessary.

“A collaborative relationship between children and their parents/ carers needs to be encouraged, where adults encourage children to take more responsibility for decision-making as their capacity evolves, with adults relinquishing some power, while also continuing to play a caring, supportive role.”¹⁰



A workshop for students from one of the poorest and most violent districts of Medellín, Colombia, discussing difficulties they face in their community.

¹⁰ ARC module on Children's Participation and Inclusion by Clare Feinstein and Claire O'Kane, updated modules on Action for the Rights of the Child, IRC, OHCHR, Save the Children, TdH, UNHCR, UNICEF, 2009

Ways of involving children in emergencies

In the table below, you can see some examples of how children can be involved in emergencies. The table illustrates that children's level of involvement varies according to the activity.

Level of involvement 	
Examples of low-level involvement	Examples of medium–high-level involvement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informed or consulted about disaster risk-reduction plans • Consulted for assessments • Informed about where the safe areas are and the safest route to get to them • Involved in rehearsals for emergency situations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child-led or child-focused research to inform disaster risk reduction – giving vital information that will feed into assessments • Involved in the reconstruction of the physical environment • Helping to identify which children are particularly vulnerable • Actively advocating for the issues that are important to children to be visible • Participating in child protection referrals, care plans and safe play areas • Collaborating with adults on setting up and running child-friendly spaces • Informing community members and especially other children about new developments and announcements • Creatively disseminating information (eg, leaflets, dramas, radio, peer education) • Co-facilitating rehearsals for emergency situations • Trained as first aiders • Helping where children see it is needed • Supporting family, friends and community members • Helping to bring injured people to hospital • Distributing materials, food, blankets, etc. • Taking part in reintegration programmes (eg, facilitating training for other young people on skills development) • Monitoring child protection • Helping to trace families • Packing food for distribution • Identifying ways in which the delivery of aid can be done so that it is more effective for children

Children's participation in emergencies

At any one time, children and adults may have different levels of involvement. These levels may depend on a number of factors including their capacity, resources and time. It also depends heavily on how an activity is facilitated. It isn't necessarily better to operate at a higher level of involvement, but it's useful to analyse how much children are involved and engaged. This will help you to plan and evaluate your work, and also to ensure that adults and children are clear about what is expected of them – and that you understand what they expect of you. Please refer to *Part One – Degrees of involvement* for more detailed information.

See *Part One – Putting children's participation into practice* and *Toolkit* for some examples of the methods you can use to engage and work with children and young people.

How to support children's participation in an emergency situation – a step-by-step guide

Now you have some of the background to how children can get involved in emergencies work, this section will give you guidance on how you can make sure this work is as meaningful as possible for children and adults. Use the Alliance Practice Standards to plan and/or evaluate how meaningful and effective your participatory work with children is (see Part One).

In this section you will find specific guidance on:

- how to involve children before an emergency
- how to involve children during an emergency response
- how to involve children post-emergency.

How to involve children before an emergency

Prepare children

Children must be well prepared for the eventuality of an emergency situation. Children can also be meaningfully involved in identifying and mitigating disaster risks in their homes, communities and schools. They can identify safe places to go during an emergency and safe routes to get there. They can receive training in first aid, emergency preparedness and response and prevention of separation from their families. Prepare child-friendly information and training materials for this purpose.

Prepare adults

Adults can be trained to understand what it means to collaborate with children in an emergency situation. Training should promote the benefits of working with children in a participatory way and cover the Alliance Practice Standards on Child Participation. Create space for adults to articulate their concerns or doubts in a supportive and solution-focused environment. Adults should also be given tools and practical advice about how to involve children in assessment, planning and decision-making. Adults can also collaborate with children to support disaster risk-reduction initiatives.

Children's participation in emergencies

Create mechanisms for children's involvement in decision-making

Adults may not be used to involving children in decision-making, and appropriate structures should be established and incorporated into the decision-making process. For example, children's and/or youth groups can be established, and children's and/or young people's representatives can be included in committees with adults (on protection, village development or disaster response).

Plan for processes that make children's participation meaningful

Children's participation needs to be well planned for and resourced in order to be meaningful. This requires commitment to a process whereby adults learn to share power and information with children, and learn to work with them in new ways; and children gain confidence to express themselves and to be involved in decision-making and action planning. Children's participation should not be tacked on as an afterthought, or treated as a one-off initiative. Community-based participation processes can be most effective and sustainable.

Plan for creating feedback and complaints mechanisms

If children are involved at all stages of the planning, they will be in a better position to feed back or complain if things are not going according to plan. You should work with girls and boys from different backgrounds (especially the most marginalised) to devise the most appropriate mechanism, giving them support and training. Remember to also prepare adults for how they will respond sensitively to feedback from children.

Engage children in disaster risk reduction

Enable girls and boys to identify disaster risks and resources in their communities. Enable children and adults to work together to explore and share ideas about how they can mitigate risks and become more prepared for emergencies. Teach them about how to respond in a disaster – they can support themselves, friends, family. Support community-based disaster risk-reduction efforts involving children and adults. Ensure that the most marginalised children are involved. You can also collaborate with schools and education authorities to incorporate child-friendly teaching materials on disaster risk reduction in the school curriculum.

Research with or by children to inform programming

In order to make emergency planning as robust as possible, girls and boys can be trained as researchers and can conduct research into children's needs in an emergency or conflict setting. Alternatively, adults can conduct consultations with girls and boys (from different backgrounds) to inform the planning and implementation of programmes. It is important to recognise the diversity of childhood experiences. Data, therefore, needs to be disaggregated according to gender, age, ethnicity, religion, family income, rural/urban/IDP camp setting, disability, etc.

Children's participation in emergencies

How to involve children during the emergency response

Seek out and support existing children's groups

Children's groups, associations and clubs may already be in existence. Work with them and support them, as they can give valuable insights into children's issues and needs and can be active in the emergency response. Bear in mind, however, that not all children's groups are representative of the poorest or most marginalised children.

Partner with existing agencies

There may already be agencies working with children that are trusted by children and are well established. It makes sense to work in collaboration with them.

Continue to provide support and training to children

Celebrate and support children's involvement. Offer practical materials and other means of support for child-led initiatives and action plans that are in their best interests. At all stages ensure that children's safety and protection are paramount.

Consider creating child-friendly spaces

These spaces provide children with the opportunities to play, get together and support one another. They can learn about how to keep safe and healthy. The degree to which children will be able to join in with the running of these spaces will depend on how much staff work to enable and empower children to take a lead – for example, in establishing ground rules for use of the space. These are also a good place to start psychosocial activities and to set up systems that children can use to share complaints or feedback.

Recruit or support effective staff

Ensure that staff are effective in working with children of different ages and abilities, and give them opportunities to develop their skills with support.

Consult creatively with children

Ensure that staff are aware of creative means of engaging girls and boys of different ages and backgrounds so that their participation is fun and rewarding – for example, participatory games, theatre, role-play, drawing, etc.

Involve children in assessments and surveys

Provide training for children to be involved in surveys in their communities and consult with children at all stages of the emergency response.

Promote a non-discriminatory approach

Ensure that all children, regardless of their status, gender, religion or disability, have opportunities to express their views, to access information and to participate in decisions that affect them.

Children's participation in emergencies

Respect and follow-up on children's views

Respect children's views and feedback, and demonstrate that you are prepared to act upon them and take them seriously. Children expect honest feedback about how their opinions have been taken on board, and an explanation about why some of their ideas might not be taken forward.

Creating feedback and complaints mechanisms

Staff should be approachable, effective and used to working with children. Work to find ways of promoting processes and mechanisms through which children can share feedback and/or complaints. Ensure that children clearly understand how the feedback mechanism works, and that it is accessible to children of different ages and backgrounds, especially the most marginalised. Child-friendly information should be developed and disseminated to children and adults about minimum operational standards in an emergency situation. Feedback mechanisms should also provide children with the opportunity to disclose child protection concerns, and effective systems should be in place to respond to these concerns or disclosures in a sensitive, confidential manner.

Children's views on distribution of goods

Opportunities should be created to consult community members – women, men, girls and boys – about the distribution of goods. Children and adults in communities or camps will have important views about what is most needed and about who are most in need. Selection criteria for distribution should be transparent and clear. It may not be appropriate or safe for children to be directly involved in the physical distribution of goods. However, their views should be respected.

Develop child-friendly information

In a conflict or emergency situation, children can benefit from access to child-friendly information on a range of topics, which they can use in order to keep themselves and others safe from harm.

Consult children about their care plan

In situations where a child is separated from their parents, it is especially important to engage them in the development of their own care plan, to ensure they understand what they can expect and what is expected of them to ensure their safety and protection. Children's views about who they want to live with and what kind of support they need should be heard. Decisions should be informed by children's views and made in their best interests.

Reintegration

There are examples of reintegration programmes where ex-combatants have taken part in skills development to support their integration back into society. There are also good practice examples where children have actively advocated for their rights to be protected from abuse and exploitation.

Children's participation in emergencies

Children raising awareness

Children can help to create information, stories, dramas, leaflets and other visuals to demonstrate the risks of separation, recruitment, abuse and exploitation. There are examples of Save the Children's work in Sierra Leone where children have raised the alarm when they have witnessed children are missing. Children can also raise awareness and action on conflict resolution and peace-building.

Education provision

Children can be involved in designing the revival of education programmes by finding suitable and accessible locations, setting school timing, contributing to the selection criteria of the teachers and teaching methodology, helping to create teaching aids that are child-friendly, and so on. Children from diverse backgrounds can be engaged in informal community learning programmes.

Community projects

Children can get involved in designing and planning the physical environment for reconstruction. They can help design programmes and activities. For example, they can help ensure that the activities will be suitable for both girls and boys; girls can be encouraged to help design the criteria for ensuring that bathing, washing, toilets and water points are safe, hygienic, accessible and convenient for them.

Monitoring child protection

There are many examples where girls and boys, either as a separate group or as part of the community child protection committee, have taken part in monitoring child protection. They can report cases of child abuse or other concerns to the protection committee or other concerned authority and act upon those cases with support from adults. They also play an important role in raising awareness and preventing violations of children's rights.

Identify and train youth volunteers

Children and young people can be trained on specific areas of expertise in an emergency response – eg, health, counselling or leadership. They can train other children, young people and adults.

Post-emergency

Ensure learning is captured from emergency responses and built upon to strengthen children's participation in an emergency on an ongoing basis. After an emergency, children can be involved in ongoing processes for disaster risk reduction, reconstruction, reconciliation and peace-building. Processes and mechanisms for children's expression, association, information and feedback can be built into the future development and policies of the organisation to ensure better fulfilment of children's rights.

Ensure children are involved in any disaster risk-reduction activities that will capitalise on recent experiences to lessen the impact of future emergencies.

Some issues to consider

Here are some issues to consider when involving children in emergencies work.

1. Acknowledging and appreciating what children have done and can do, and listening to them, are forms of allowing children to participate.
2. To bring about shifts in the mind-set of most adults, the local culture, philosophy and customs must be understood and respected.
3. Recognise the diversity of childhoods. Children's roles and responsibilities may be different according to age, gender, disability, culture, religion and ethnicity.
4. Encourage inclusive approaches to children's participation.
5. Observe children's and young people's actions in society, and listen to children in normal times.
6. Remember that all assistance should create self-reliance and resilience among the survivors, and not dependency.
7. Rapid assessment should identify what local children and adults have already done and are doing, as well as gaps.
8. Be sure that children understand clearly what their involvement will entail and what they can expect it will lead to, and factor in their willingness to take part, their availability and the feelings of their parents/guardians.
9. Do not assume that what adults tell you about the community covers children's issues.
10. Encourage ongoing processes for children's participation – preparing adults and empowering children – especially the most marginalised.

Case study – an example of Children's Forums in a refugee camp

Save the Children UK has supported the development of Children's Forums in Bhutanese refugee camps in Jhapa, Nepal since 1997, increasing space for children to implement activities for their development. Children were democratically elected to the Forum with the supervision of the Camp Management Committee members. In addition to girls and boys aged 12 to 18 years being elected to the Forum, a Junior Forum for children aged 5 to 11 was started. The specific issues children explored and presented to officials have included the education system, children under stress, disease, water shortages, drugs and early marriages. Responses by the camp and relief agency administrators have led to improved school facilities, changes in teacher behaviour, checks on corporal punishment, awareness of early child marriage and gender-related violence, increased access to hygienic sanitation, and a more adequate supply of water.

Interview with Claire O'Kane, Child Participation Adviser – Myanmar (Burma)



Tell us about how you involved young people in emergencies

In the response to Cyclone Nargis in Myanmar (Burma), Save the Children has involved children in a variety of ways, including: consultations with children to inform child protection assessments and project planning; seeking children's views and ideas regarding their care plans and family tracing efforts if they were separated from parents; involving children in decision-making about what activities to run in a child-friendly space and what the rules are for a child-friendly space; establishing information centres through which children can access child-friendly information, and give feedback and/or complaints to improve Save the Children's programmes and accountability to communities; actively involving children in an evaluation of our post-Nargis response; and supporting children's active participation in community-based child-led disaster risk reduction.

Why do you think it's important to involve young people in emergencies?

It is crucial to involve children and young people in emergencies, as they are social actors who are playing important roles in their families and communities to recover from a disaster or emergency. Their contributions should be valued, and they should be supported to access information and opportunities for expression and participation in decisions affecting them. Children have rights to participate. Opportunities to express themselves, to participate and/or to form their own associations can build upon their positive coping strategies, enhancing their resilience and wellbeing. Furthermore, emergency relief and response efforts will be more effective and appropriate if girls, boys, women and men – especially the most marginalised – are actively involved in all stages of the humanitarian response.

What challenges did you face and how did you overcome them?

One of the key challenges was timing and availability of children and young people to engage in participatory processes. Neither working children nor school children have much free time. Thus, staff (and organisations) needed to be flexible to work with children at times they were available to participate, especially at weekends or evenings. The other main challenge was adult attitudes. In the Myanmar context, socio-cultural traditions expected children to listen to adults and did not expect children to speak up. Time and preparations were needed to convince organisational staff, village leaders/local officials, parents or carers about the importance and benefits of involving children.

Children's participation in emergencies

Links

ARC module on Children's Participation and Inclusion by Clare Feinstein and Claire O'Kane. Updated modules on Action for the Rights of the Child. IRC, OHCHR, Save the Children, TdH, UNHCR, UNICEF, 2009. Available at:

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Child protection and safeguarding – what is the difference?

Child protection involves recognising signs of physical, sexual or emotional abuse or neglect and acting on them. Child safeguarding involves keeping children and young people safe from a much wider range of potential harm, and looks at preventative action, not just reaction.

Why is it important to safeguard and protect children?

It's a dangerous world and children tell us so:

“We the children declare that physical and psychological violence is a serious problem in this region. We regret that most laws to protect us have not been implemented.”

“We regret that all countries in this region have ratified the UNCRC; however, children continue to suffer the effects of abuse and violence and exploitation.”

(UN Study on Violence)

Child sexual exploitation and abuse is a global phenomenon. It occurs in all countries and in all societies. It involves the physical, sexual, and emotional abuse and neglect of children. It is nearly always preventable.

Save the Children believes that:

- Children have the right to a happy, healthy and secure childhood
- The abuse of children is an abuse of their rights as set out in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
- Child abuse is *never* acceptable.

Why is safeguarding children a priority for organisations such as ours?

The simple answer is – **because of the children**. The rights of children to protection and to be free of exploitation are abused every day through degrading and humiliating punishment and torture. We want the rights of children to be upheld in all areas, and to work with children to meet their rights of non-discrimination, participation, best interest and others.

As an organisation we have to get this aspect of our practice right. Save the Children *has to be safe for children. It's "business critical" and it's a critical business:*

- It's part of our mission statement
- We advocate for safeguarding children
- Our reputation is on the line, along with our credibility, our funding and support, and our standing in the communities where we work

We are a target:

- Abusers often target organisations such as ours
- It gives them status, power and opportunity.

Definitions of child abuse

What is sexual exploitation, abuse and neglect?

A person may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. Children and young people may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting; by those known to them or, more rarely, by a stranger.

Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child, including by fabricating the symptoms of, or deliberately causing, ill health to a child.

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional ill-treatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person, age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children, causing children frequently to feel frightened, or the exploitation or corruption of children.

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative (eg, rape or buggery) or non-penetrative acts. They may include involving children in looking at, or in the production of, pornographic material, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development, such as failing to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing, or neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

Sexual exploitation means any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust, for sexual purposes, including, but not limited to, profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of another.

UN Secretary General's Bulletin 2003