Child Participation – Needs Assessment

**Consultation Guide and Transcription Tool[[1]](#footnote-1)**

In-school children aged 8-11, 12-14, and 15-17

Out-of-school children aged 8-11, 12-14, and 15-17

Time needed: 1.5 hours

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| **Topics:**   * Reasons that children drop out of school * Safety in and around school * Children’s perceptions of teachers * Children’s experiences learning |

**Topics:**

* Reasons that children drop out of school
* Feelings about school, and safety and protection in their communities
* Daily activities of out-of-school children, including risks, protective factors, and impact on their well-being

**Topics:**

* Children’s priorities for the education response
* Children’s recommendations for the education response

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| **Before you begin**   * Hold separate consultations with boys and girls to be able to disaggregate results by gender and/ or if culturally more appropriate, particularly for adolescents. * Separate children by age group (8-11, 12-14, and 15-17, or other variations) to keep discussions age-appropriate and comfortable for younger children and adolescents. * Choose a safe, accessible location for the discussion where children cannot be overheard by teachers or other children. * Hold the discussion at a time that is convenient for children and adolescents, and not during school hours. * Hire a sign-language interpreter for at least one discussion per gender and age group. Actively reach out to children who are D/deaf/ hearing impaired to let them know that the consultations will have interpretation. * Obtain parent/ guardian consent ahead of time |

**Introductions and informed consent**

10 minutes

(Note: Parent/ caregiver consent must be collected before the activities start)

**Introduce yourselves to the children**

1. Tell children your names, where you work, and who is the facilitator and who is the note-taker. Explain: “The facilitator will moderate discussions, and the note-taker will record what happens and what you say.”
2. Say: “We’re here to find out more about children’s experiences at school, your problems, and your ideas for how to make things better. We will share what children tell us, so that people are better able to look after and support children who are experiencing a crisis. We cannot promise to address all of your problems or to do everything that you recommend, but we will share what children tell us with people who make decisions so that they hear your ideas.”
3. Explain: “Everyone’s participation is anonymous and confidential. We will be writing down what you tell us, and taking pictures of what you write or draw, but we won’t write down who says or does what. The information we collect today will be used in a report anonymously.”
4. Say: “But, if during the activity, someone shares something that makes us worry that you or another child might be at risk of being harmed, we will have to let others know so that we can keep you safe. It is important that you do not share with others outside this group who says what, so everyone in the group feels comfortable to share their opinion.”
5. Explain: “We would like to hear from all of you: everyone’s opinion matters. We’re not here to judge, we’re here to listen to your opinions with an open mind, your opinions help us to better understand the reality here. And, if you do not want to answer a question, you do not have to. You can ask us questions at any time.”
6. Say: “Today’s session will take about 1.5 hours. We will stay here for at least 15 minutes after the end of the discussion if there is anything that you’d like to tell us that you don’t want to say in front of the group. Sometimes discussions bring up different feelings and memories. If you would like to speak to someone about these feelings, please come and tell us at the end.”
7. Say: “Please be respectful of everyone who speaks. Everyone is free to say what they want, and no one is going to laugh at what others say too. Agreed?”

**Children’s consent to participate**

1. Say: “Your parents have agreed to your participation today, but I’d like to ask you: do you agree to take part in this discussion? Feel free to say no! It's okay if you prefer not to participate. And you can stop participating at any time: you can just tell me to stop and nothing will happen. Your choice to participate or not will not change how you and your community are served by humanitarian organisations. You can also choose to participate in some activities but not participate in others: that's fine. If you prefer not to participate, you can stay or leave this room, feel free to do what makes you feel better.”
2. Ask: “Do you have any questions about what we will be doing today?”
3. Ask: “Who would like to speak to us today? If no, it’s okay to leave. Otherwise, we will get started. Remember, you can stop whenever you want to.”

Once you have said all of the above please make sure to note that informed consent from taken verbally – note we will NOT be taking any names – just put a tick against the below for each child present that gives consent – and the other facilitator can witness this was done.

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| Verbal Consent child 1: | Verbal Consent child 6: |
| Verbal Consent child 2: | Verbal Consent child 7: |
| Verbal Consent child 3: | Verbal Consent child 8: |
| Verbal Consent child 4: | Verbal Consent child 9: |
| Verbal Consent child 5: | Verbal Consent child 10: |
| Staff witness informed verbal consent \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ | |

**Consultation information**

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| Date: | District: |
| Municipality: | School: |
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| Facilitator name: | Note-taker name: |
| Organisation: | Organisation |

**Participant information**

Write down the number of children participating in the activity, disaggregated by sex, age, travel status, and disability.

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| Number of children | # girls: | # boys: | # total: |
| Age of children | 8-11 years: | 12-14 years: | 15-17 years: |
| Travel status | Refugee: | Internally displaced: | Host community: |
| Disability status | # children with disabilities: | | |

**Ground rules and icebreaker**

10 minutes

**Agreement on ground rules**

1. Say: “We want to make sure that everyone is comfortable and ready to fully participate in the activity. We will agree on the rules to follow during the session, okay?”
2. Ask children to suggest rules for the session, such as (to be adapted):

* *Everyone is free to say what they want to say.*
* *No one can make fun of others.*
* *Everyone’s turn to speak must be respected.*
* *We have to listen to what everyone has to say.*

**Icebreaker – Catch the ball**

(Note: The activity below is just an example. Feel free to replace it with a local game or song – anything to make children feel at ease with one another and with the facilitators.)

* Have children stand in a circle and throw the ball to each other. The child who catches the ball says his own first name and that of the child who threw the ball. The child who caught the ball throws it back, and so on to complete the round table of all the children and the facilitators.

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| **Potential adaptation:** If there are participants with physical or visual impairments in the group, replace this game with an alphabet game. The facilitator will go through the alphabet, naming the letters one by one and asking the children whose name starts with that letter. Each child gets to introduce themselves when it is their letter. Facilitators can ask the child to share what their favourite animal is and make the noise. This won’t require movement. |

**Activity 1: Dot Voting**

30-40 minutes

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| Theme | Reasons why children drop out of school | Objective | To identify the 4-5 main reasons for dropping out of school and to rank them in order of severity |
| Resources | 6-10 pieces of paper, tape, markers | Preparation | None |

1. Say: “Now we want to talk about the reasons why some children in your community drop out of school. Can you help me create a list of these reasons?”

Note: “Dropping out” of school means that children who were previous enrolled leave school and don’t come back. This is different from “being absent,” meaning missing a few days of school during the year.

1. Support children to identify at least 4 or 5 reasons. They can suggest more if they like!

If children have trouble thinking of reasons, you can give some examples, but make sure that children do not just repeat or agree with the examples you gave. If the children are unable to come up with any reasons and end up using your examples, note that down here:

Children could not come up with any reasons: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. Write down each reason on a different piece of paper (one reason per piece of paper). Use large, clear handwriting accessible to children with low vision. If children cannot read, draw a simple picture next to the reason. Lay the pieces of paper on the ground so children can see them and read the reasons out loud to the children again. Give each child a marker.
2. Explain: “Now you will vote for the reasons that you think are the most important – the reasons that are the most serious and cause the most children to dropout of school. **You will put a “dot” next to the reasons that you think are the most important to give your vote. You will have three votes.** You can put all three dots next to one reason, or you can choose two reasons, or even three, but no more.”

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| **Potential adaptation:** If there are participants with physical or visual impairments in the group, ask them what adaptation(s) would be helfpul. For example, the participant could share their voting preferences with the note taker, who adds the votes to the pieces of paper on their behalf. |

1. Count the number of dots/ votes for each reason and place the reasons in order of priority (from most voted to least voted). Ask: “Do you agree that this order is correct, or would you like to rearrange the order?”
2. Have a discussion with the children about **each reason** for dropping out – discuss each reason one-by-one. For each reason:

* Ask: “Why do you think this reason is a serious problem?”
* Probe: “Which children are most affected by this reason? Are boys and girls affected in the same way? How about children with disabilities?”
* Probe: “What could be done to change this?”

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| **NOTES: Activity 1 – Dot Voting** | | | |
| **Reason for dropping out** | **# of dots/ votes** | **What children said about this reason**  Write down what children said, in their own words | **Exact quotes from children**  Write down direct quotes from children using “…” |
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**Activity 2: Agree/ Disagree/ Don’t Know**

30-40 minutes

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| Theme | Safety in school and on the way to school, perceptions of teachers, and learning | Objective | To explore children’s perceptions of their safety, their experiences with their teachers, and their understanding of the curriculum |
| Resources | 3 pieces of paper, tape, markers | Preparation | Prepare the 3 pieces of paper to make 3 signs using large, clear handwriting:   1. Write “Agree” and draw 😊 2. Write “Disagree” and draw ☹ 3. Write “I don’t know” and draw **?**   Hang each sign in a different area of the room. |

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| Theme | Feelings about school, and safety and protection in their communities | Objective | To explore children’s feelings about school, and their experiences of risk and protective factors in their communities. |

1. Say: “I am going to read out some statements. After I read a statement, think about whether you agree with the statement, disagree with the statement, or don’t know. Answer honestly, based on whether the statement is true for you (not whether it’s true for me!). Any answer is good.”

1. Continue by saying: “Then I will ask you to move. If you agree, go to the ‘Agree’ sign and move to that area of the room. If you disagree, go to the ‘Disagree’ sign, and go to that area of the room. If you don’t know, go to the ‘Don’t know’ sign, and go to that area of the room. [Point to the signs in each area of the room/space].”
2. Say: “Now we will practice with a simple statement. Ready? ‘Green is my favourite colour.’” Give children time to move to different areas of the room and check their understanding.
3. Say: “Great! Now we will do the same thing for the statements about education. Remember to listen to each statement and then move to the part of the room with the sign that reflects your answer. It’s okay to have a different answer from your friends!”
4. After **each statement** is read, and once children have chosen where to stand, facilitate a discussion with the children.  Tell children that if they change their mind, they are free to move and give another answer.
   * Ask 2-3 children who agreed: “Why do you agree with the statement?” or use the discussion probes in the table below.
   * Ask 2-3 children who disagreed: “Why did you disagree?” or use the discussion probes in the table below.
5. Ask children to go back to the middle of the room and then read the next statement.
6. The note-taker takes accurate notes of what children said. At the end of the discussion, the note-taker counts the number of children who agreed/ disagreed/ did not know.

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| Statements | Discussion probes (optional) |
| 1. I feel safe in my school | * What makes you feel safe? Do boys and girls feel safe in the same way? * Why don’t you feel safe? What is missing in your school to make you feel safer? |
| 1. I don’t have any problems on my way to school | * Do you feel safe on the way to and from school? Do boys and girls feel equally safe? * What kind of problems do you encounter on your way to or from school? Are these problems different for boys and girls? |
| 1. Teachers at school are nice to students | * Why do you say teachers are nice to you? Are all teachers nice to you? * What do teachers do when they’re mean to you? When your teachers aren’t nice to you, can you tell other adults? |
| 1. If I have a problem, I can tell my teacher | * How do your teachers help you if you have a problem? Do you confide in both male and female teachers? * Why wouldn’t you tell your teachers? Who else would you tell if you needed help? |
| 1. I understand the lessons that the teacher teaches in class | * What makes it easy for you to understand the lessons? What does the teacher do to help you understand? * What makes it difficult for you to understand the lessons? What would help you understand better? |

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| Statements | Discussion probes (optional) |
| 1. I want to go to school (or I want to go back to school) | * What makes you want to go or go back to school? If you were there before, what did you like about it? * What makes you not want to go or go back to school? If you were there before, what did you not like about it? What are you doing instead of going to school? |
| 1. I feel safe in my community | * What makes you feel safe? Do boys and girls feel safe in the same way? * Why don’t you feel safe? What is missing in the community to make you feel safer? |
| 1. If I have a problem, there is someone I can talk to | * Who do you talk to if you have a problem? How does this person help you? * What makes you unsure of who to talk to if you have a problem? |

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| **Potential adaptations:** If there are participants with physical or visual impairments in the group, ask them what adaptation(s) would be useful. It may also be useful to adapt the approach if children seem to copy each other’s’ answers. Adaptations can include:   * Ask children to stand in a line, with their eyes closed. Ask them to take a step forward if they agree with the statement, a step back if they disagree and to not move if they don’t know. * Ask children to stand or sit in a circle. Ask them to close their eyes. Ask them to lift their right arm if they agree with a statement, to lift their left arm if they do not agree with the statement, and raise both hands if they don’t know. * Print out the emojis and make sure each child has three pieces of paper (one smile, one sad face, and one question mark). Ask children to vote after each statement, by holding up the type of emoji that best fits how they feel about the statement. |

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| **NOTES: Activity 2 – Agree/ Disagree/ Don’t Know** | | | | |
|  | | | **What children said about why they agree/ disagree**  Write down what children said, in their own words | **Exact quotes from children**  Write down direct quotes from children using “…” |
| 1. **I feel safe in my school** | Number of children who “Agree” |  |  |  |
| Number of children who “Disagree” |  |
| Number of children who “Don’t know” |  |
| 1. **I don’t have any problems on my way to school** | # “Agree” |  |  |  |
| # “Disagree” |  |
| # “Don’t know” |  |
| 1. **Teachers at school are nice to students** | # “Agree” |  |  |  |
| # “Disagree” |  |
| # “Don’t know” |  |
| 1. **If I have a problem, I can tell my teacher** | # “Agree” |  |  |  |
| # “Disagree” |  |
| # “Don’t know” |  |

**Activity 3: A Day in the Life**

30-40 minutes

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| Theme | Daily activities of out-of-school children, including risks, protective factors, and impact on their MHPSS | Objective | To understand how children who are not in school spend their days, including the risk and protective factors they face and how these things make them feel and affect their mental health and well-being. |
| Resources | Flipchart, markers | Preparation | Prepare the flip chart as per step 2, like the Note-taking template on the next page, using large, clear handwriting accessible to children with low vision. |

1. Say: “We are going to play a little game: drawing your day!”
2. Take a large sheet of paper (flipchart) and write down the different times of the day: waking up, morning, noon, afternoon, evening, bedtime. You can draw a rising sun, a sun at its zenith, and a setting sun to help the children visualize (see Note-taking template on the next page for an example).
3. Say: “We would like to know more about what a typical day is like for you and what you often do during the day.” Facilitate a discussion with the children, starting with the morning time. Ask them:
   * “What do you usually do each morning?” Note their answers in the “activities” part of the flip chart.
   * “How do you feel at this time of day, when you are doing these activities?” Note their answers in the “feelings” part of the flip chart. Use smiley or frowny faces if you like!
   * “What has changed in your lives since the crisis/ emergency? Are there new problems or dangers in your lives?” Note their answers in the “risks” part of the flip chart.
   * “What could help make you feel safer and happier in your daily lives? What are some solutions to your problems?” Note their answers in the “solutions” part of the flip chart. As a follow-up question, as if any of these things are already happening and who is doing them. If not, ask who could do them?
4. Repeat step 4 three more times, first for midday (noon), and then for the afternoon, and finally for the evening until bed.
5. Remind children that we cannot promise to do everything that they suggest, but that their ideas will be shared with different aid organisations.

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| **Potential adaptations:** If there are participants with visual impairments in the group, ask them what adaptation(s) would be useful. For example:   * The participant can sit close to the facilitator to be able to see the flipchart better (in the case of low vision) * The facilitator can repeat and recap what they are writing on the flipchart so that the participant can follow auditorily. |

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| **NOTES: Activity 3 – A Day in the Life** | | | |
| A group of sun icons  AI-generated content may be incorrect.  **Morning** | A group of sun icons  AI-generated content may be incorrect.  **Mid-day/ noon** | A group of sun icons  AI-generated content may be incorrect.  **Afternoon** | A group of sun icons  AI-generated content may be incorrect.  **Evening/ until bed** |
| Activities: | Activities: | Activities: | Activities: |
| Feelings: | Feelings: | Feelings: | Feelings: |
| Risks: | Risks: | Risks: | Risks: |
| Solutions: | Solutions: | Solutions: | Solutions: |

**Activity 1: Dream School**

30-40 minutes

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| Theme | Children’s education response priorities | Objective | To understand children’s visions for an improved protective learning environment |
| Resources | 10+ pieces of paper (one for each child), tape, markers/ pencil crayons/ crayons, flipchart | Preparation | None |

1. Say: “We would like you to think about what your school (a school) would be like if you were to make it any way you wanted. Here are some things you can consider:
   * How would the building be safe?
   * What would the teachers do?
   * What would you learn? How would children with disabilities be able to learn?
   * How would you get to school?
   * What would surround the school?
   * How would you feel when you were at school?
2. Pass out the paper and colouring supplies. Say: “Now you will have 15 minutes to draw a vision of the future for your school (a school). When you are done, you will have a chance to present it to the rest of the group if you want to.”
3. When they are done, ask each child who wants to present their school. Ask: “Tell us about your school. What are the differences between the school that you drew and the school you go to now?” “What are the differences between the school that you drew and the school that is in your community/ close by/ that you used to go to?” Write down their responses on a flipchart paper.
4. At the end of the activity, write down the gender, age group and location of the children at the top of the school drawings. Take photos of the school drawings to include in the notes.

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| **Potential adaptations:** If there are participants with physical or visual impairments in the group, ask them what adaptation(s) would be useful. These could include the participant sharing their ideas with the note taker who can write them down or help the participant write them down, or the participant sharing their ideas verbally with the group (without any writing down). |

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| **NOTES: Activity 1 – Dream School** | | |
| **Photos of children’s Dream School drawings** | **How children described the schools they drew**, including differences between the school that children drew and the school they go to now  Write down what children said, in their own words | **Exact quotes from children**  Write down direct quotes from children using “…” |
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**Activity 2: Helping Hands**

20-30 minutes

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| Theme | Children’s recommendations for the response | Objective | To gather children’s suggestions about how some of their wishes for the future could be acted upon |
| Resources | 10+ pieces of paper (one for each participant), markers | Preparation | None |

1. Give each participant a piece of paper and a marker. Say: “For our next activity, we would like you to trace both of your hands on the paper. You can also pair up with a partner to trace each other’s hands.”
2. Say: “We know that you will have some good ideas about what organisations like ours can do to make your school better and solve some of the problems that you have told us about.”

“We know that you will have some good ideas about what organisations like ours can do to make education in your community better and solve some of the problems that you have told us about.”

1. For children 8-11 years old:
   * Say: “We’ve drawn our hands on these pieces of paper. Everybody can use their hands to be kind to other people and to help them. What ideas do you have about how adults can make school better and help children?”
   * Ask: “Are there any ways that children can help other children go to school or when they are at school?”
   * Ask children to write down or draw pictures that explain their ideas about how people can help.
2. For children 12-17 years old:
   * Say, “We’ve drawn our hands on these pieces of paper.”
   * In the right hand, ask each participant to write down 1-5 things (one for each finger) that adults (like parents, teachers, or organization) could do to help make school better and more accessible for children/ adolescents. Ask them to specify who the recommendation is directed at (e.g. parents, teachers, organizations, etc.).
   * Ask each participant to write down in the left hand 1-5 things (one for each finger) that children/adolescents/youth can do to make school better and more accessible for other children/ adolescents.
3. Together with children, discuss their suggestions and ask questions to make sure you understand what they are suggesting and to whom.
4. At the end of the activity, write down the gender, age group and location of the children at the top of the hand drawings. Make sure to take photos of the hand drawings to include in the notes.

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| **Potential adaptations:** If there are participants with physical or visual impairments in the group, and/ or participants who are unable to draw and write, ask them what adaptation(s) would be useful. These could include the participant sharing their ideas with the note taker who can write them down or help the participant write them down, or the participant sharing their ideas verbally with the group (without any writing down). |

**NOTES: Activity 2 – Helping Hands**

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| Age group: | 8-11 years old | 12-14 years old | 15-17 year old |
| **Photos of children’s Helping Hands drawings** | **How adults can help make school better and more accessible for children**  Write down what children said, in their own words | **How children can make school better and more accessible for each other**  Write down what children said, in their own words | **Exact quotes from children**  Write down direct quotes from children using “…” |
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**Evaluation of the session**

5 minutes

* Have children sit in a circle. Starting with one child and moving to the next child to the right, ask children to say one thing they liked today and/or one thing they did not like today.
* Say: “Thank you all for your time and participation today. What you have said will help humanitarians to improve children’s education. The results will be shared with you in a few weeks.”

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| **NOTES: Evaluation** | |
| **What children liked today** | **What children did not like today** |
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1. Parts of this tool have been adapted from Save the Children’s [Guidance – Children’s Consultations in Humanitarian Contexts (2023)](https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/document/guidance-childrens-consultations-in-humanitarian-contexts) and Annexes. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)