Child Participation – Problems and Solutions

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

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 * 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 |

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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 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: 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 education in your community better and solve some of the problems that you have told us about.”
3. 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.
4. 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.
5. Together with children, discuss their suggestions and ask questions to make sure you understand what they are suggesting and to whom.
6. 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)