

A TOOLKIT FOR MONITORING AND EVALUATING CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION

BOOKLET

2

Measuring the creation of a participatory and respectful environment for children



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We save children's lives. We fight for their rights.
We help them fulfil their potential.

This guide was written by Gerison Lansdown and Claire O'Kane

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Cover photo: Members of Child Brigade, an organisation of street and working children in Bangladesh. (Photo: Ken Hermann)

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HOW TO USE THIS BOOKLET

This booklet provides indicators and practical tools to help you measure the extent to which there is a respectful and supportive environment for children's right to participation in your country or context. On page 3, we present 25 indicators (around structure, process and outcomes) that cover three categories:

- protecting the right to participate
- promoting awareness of the right to participate
- creating spaces for participation.

We have created a table for each category (starting on page 5), which you can use to help you assess (or 'score') the current situation in your country against structural and process indicators, though not outcome indicators. You can subsequently use the information in the tables as a baseline, a resource for education and sensitisation, as the basis for dialogue with governments, or as a tool for developing an advocacy strategy around participation.

The third part of this booklet (see page 14) discusses what you need to know about collecting data in order to monitor and evaluate participation activities. This includes who you need to involve in collecting data, where you can find other kinds of data, and how long the process might take. We have also included some tools to help you find out what different groups of stakeholders (for instance, children and young people, teachers, parents, or local government officials) think about whether there is a respectful environment for children's participation.



A girl from Ethiopia's Amhara region who is part of an EU-funded programme with 400,000 adolescent girls and boys on reproductive health involving peer education, discussion groups, clubs and counselling.

INTRODUCTION

Despite considerable progress in working to achieve children's rights over the past 25 years, very few countries have created child-friendly environments in which children are recognised as active agents in their own lives. In general, children continue to be viewed as passive recipients of adult care and protection, with legislative frameworks operating on a presumption of incompetence until children reach 18 years of age. Far too often, adults make decisions on behalf of children without any reference to children's own knowledge, experience or preferences. Obviously, there are important exceptions to this pattern, with some jurisdictions providing opportunities, for example, to enable children to vote at 16, to take responsibility for healthcare decisions in accordance with levels of competence, to make choices in respect of adoption, to choose their own religion, or to apply to the courts independently in some family matters. However, the pattern of entitlement remains very fragmented and inconsistent.

Children's participation has often tended to be identified solely in terms of NGO projects and programmes – for example, child parliaments, campaigns, consultations on legal and policy issues, involvement in conferences, and children's clubs. These initiatives are important and can provide significant platforms through which children can begin to influence the communities they live in and the laws, policies and services that impact on their lives. However, sustained change towards recognition that children are entitled to be active participants in all aspects of their lives, consistent with their evolving capacities, requires more than programmes and projects. A commitment is also needed to address all those areas of children's lives such as the family, the civil and criminal courts, healthcare, school, residential homes and in prisons.

Adults need to recognise that the right to be heard applies to individual children in relation to decisions that affect their lives specifically, but also to the wider arena of policy-making and service provision. Efforts to promote participation therefore need to engage the wide range of professionals who work with and for children – teachers, doctors, nurses, police, judges, social workers, psychologists, residential workers, religious leaders – and the systems and institutions in which they work. Efforts are needed to promote a legal, policy and social context in which participation rights are systematically respected. Until this happens, children's participation initiatives will function as short-term, isolated and ad-hoc pockets of good practice. And if governments are to fully comply with their obligations under the UNCRC, there needs to be clarity as to the nature and scope of the changes that are needed.

However, there are as yet no agreed indicators against which organisations can assess whether children's participation rights (as elaborated in the UNCRC) have been implemented effectively and for all children. It is therefore hard for governments to adopt a strategic approach to moving forward in meeting their obligations to children, and equally hard for advocates of children's rights to monitor progress. The General Comment on Article 12, adopted by the Committee on the Rights of the Child, provides a valuable and comprehensive interpretation of what governments are expected to do to implement children's right to participation.¹ This booklet builds on the General Comment to provide a set of specific targets against which you can track a government's progress in turning those obligations into reality on the ground.²

I HOW CAN YOU MEASURE CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION?

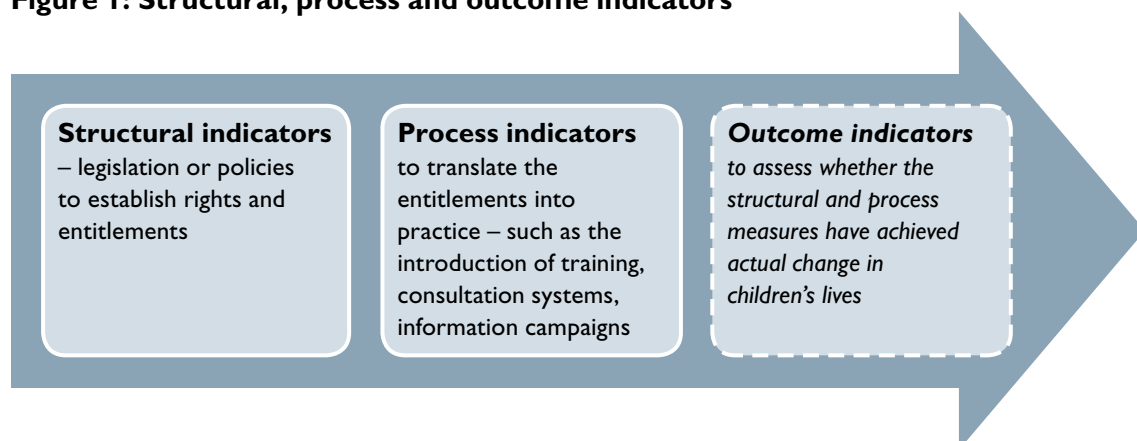
Below, we present 25 indicators, which, if fully implemented, would contribute to a profound change in the status of children, their opportunities to be actively involved in all settings, and their role in society at all levels. There are three possible types of indicators: structural, process and outcome indicators (see Figure 1). The framework we have used provides only **structural** and **process** indicators, which can be determined by reviewing legislation, policies, systems, mechanisms and services.

Outcome measures involve qualitative research or surveys to explore the actual experiences of children. They provide insights into whether the legislation, policies and services that have been introduced to enable children to participate are actually working as intended in practice. The reason outcome measures are not included here is that this tool is designed to provide you with an overall picture of whether the government in your country or context has introduced the necessary measures to enable participation to take place. If you want to find out how effective those measures are, you could undertake additional qualitative research to discover, for example:

- 1 The extent to which children are aware of their rights
- 2 The extent to which children feel they participate in activities within their local communities
- 3 The extent to which children feel that their views are listened to in family decisions.

In each case, you should disaggregate the data by age, gender, geographical location, school attendance, or other variables.

Figure 1: Structural, process and outcome indicators



- 1 **Protecting the right to participate** (structural and process indicators): these indicators provide a set of legislative and policy measures which are needed to underpin and set standards for the right of every child to be heard. They are important in ensuring that in any given country, the opportunity for children to express their views and have them taken seriously is not reliant on the goodwill of individual adults with whom they are in contact. These indicators provide the essential foundation for participation, although do not in themselves provide any indication as to whether children feel that their views are actually being heard or that they are able to influence matters that affect them.

- 2 **Promoting awareness of and commitment to participation** (process indicators): these indicators outline the measures that are needed to ensure that children have an awareness of their right to participate, and that adults receive the necessary training and support to enable them to promote and protect children's right to participation. It is not enough to invest in legal reform; rights are meaningless unless children are aware that those rights exist, why they are important, and how to exercise them. Similarly, little will change for children if the adults who have power over them and responsibility for them either do not understand that children have a right to participation or do not respect that right.
- 3 **Creating spaces for participation** (process indicators): these indicators provide a set of measures for assessing what action is taken to implement the necessary systems and structures to enable children to participate, as individuals and as a group, and in the public arena as well as in their day-to-day lives.

Protecting the right to participate	Promoting awareness of and commitment to participation	Creating spaces for participation
1 Right to participate is included in national laws or constitutions 2 An independent commissioner or ombudsman is established 3 Accessible and child-friendly court procedures are in place 4 Provisions are in place for children's views to be heard in all civil and criminal proceedings 5 Children's evolving capacities are respected through legal provisions 6 Public service complaints mechanisms and means of redress are in place 7 Children in need of protection and care are entitled to be involved in decisions affecting them 8 Children are entitled to democratic structures in schools 9 Children have the right to establish their own organisations 10 Laws define parental responsibilities and include respect for the views of the child	11 Education is free and compulsory 12 Children have access to independent information from a wide range of sources 13 Government information is available in child-friendly and appropriate formats 14 Human rights education is included in the curriculum 15 Child rights training is provided for professionals and policy-makers working with children 16 Programmes for parent education are available 17 Research is undertaken to assess respect for children's participation	18 Mechanisms are in place to consult children on legislation, public policies, services and resource allocation 19 Mechanisms are in place for children to provide feedback on the quality, accessibility and appropriateness of public services and policies 20 Children are represented in governance bodies at local and national levels, including through their own organisations 21 Democratic child-led organisations are established at local and national levels 22 Children have access to the media to communicate their views 23 Schools are child-friendly and participatory 24 Children are entitled to access confidential healthcare services 25 Children are consulted in decision-making processes concerning their own healthcare, consistent with their evolving capacities

2 HOW TO SCORE THE SITUATION IN YOUR COUNTRY USING THE INDICATORS

We have created three tables for you to use, one for each area or category you will be assessing (protecting the right to participate, promoting awareness of participation, and creating spaces for participation). For each indicator (row), there are four assessment criteria (columns). Each uses a cartoon face, with expressions ranging from sad to very happy. So in the first table, for example (which looks at legal provisions for children's participation), the sad face means no provision, whereas the very happy face means comprehensive, good-quality provision.





You will need to determine which column most accurately reflects the reality in your country (you will find guidance on how to do this on pages 14–19). You can then highlight or colour in that box, and use Post-it notes to write down examples that illustrate why you have chosen the face (measure) you did.

Taken together, all three tables will provide you with a visual representation of how well your country is doing in terms of respecting children's participation rights. If most of the boxes you have highlighted are in the first two columns (to the left-hand side of the table), that suggests the country you are working in has made relatively limited progress so far. On the other hand, if the boxes you have chosen mostly fall on the right-hand side, then the country is doing well in providing protection for children's right to participation.

These findings can be used by governments, and by advocates for children's rights or children's organisations themselves to:





- undertake a baseline assessment in your country to gain an overview of what provisions are already in place and to identify where there are weaknesses in legislation, policy and practice
- identify priorities for change in order to target reforms or advocacy
- measure progress over time
- support the reporting process to the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

I MEASURING LEGAL PROVISIONS THAT PROTECT CHILDREN'S RIGHT TO PARTICIPATE

Legal provisions	No provision 	Limited provision 	Moderate provision 	Comprehensive quality provision 
1 Right to participate is included in national laws or constitutions	No legal provisions introduced	Limited reference to the right to be heard in some specific legislation – eg, due process in criminal proceedings	Children's Act (or equivalent) provides a generic recognition of the right of children to express views and have them taken seriously	Constitution recognises children's right to be heard, and generic provision elaborated in all relevant legislation including education, health, child welfare, etc
2 An independent commissioner or ombudsman is established	No such office or body is in place	An office has been established but lacks independence from government	An independent office has been established but it has limited contact with children	An independent children's commissioner is in place, with appropriate funding, supported directly by children and works through networks of or consultations with children
3 Accessible and child-friendly court procedures are in place	No child-friendly court procedures	Rules and procedures for child-friendly court procedures developed but not yet put into practice	Child-friendly court procedures applied in selected courts, mainly in urban areas	Comprehensive child-friendly procedures in all courts. Children provided with information about their rights
4 Provisions are in place for children's views to be heard in all civil and criminal proceedings	No rights for children to be heard in civil or criminal proceedings. All decisions made by adults without reference to children. No mechanisms for legal aid for children	There is guidance for professionals in the court system to encourage listening to children but no explicit right for children to be heard. Legal aid mechanisms are being developed	The law requires that children are heard in civil and criminal proceedings, and that their views be represented in court, but it is not widely implemented. Legal aid mechanisms are in place for children, mostly in urban areas	There is effective implementation of the law requiring that children are consulted in all relevant criminal and civil proceedings and that their views be represented in court. Children in all parts of the country have ready access to legal aid mechanisms





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I MEASURING LEGAL PROVISIONS THAT PROTECT CHILDREN'S RIGHT TO PARTICIPATE *continued*





Legal provisions	No provision 	Limited provision 	Moderate provision 	Comprehensive quality provision 
5 Children's evolving capacities are respected through legal provisions	No legal provisions for children to express their views on matters of custody, guardianship, medical treatment, religion, etc	Children are legally entitled to express their views, from age 15	Children are legally entitled to express their views, from age 10. The law provides for fixed ages when children can give consent (to adoption or medical treatment, for example)	Children are entitled by law to express their views from the earliest age possible – in accordance with their capacities. In addition to fixed ages for consent, the law provides that children below those ages, who can demonstrate competence, can also give consent. The law is well understood and widely implemented
6 Public service complaints mechanisms and means of redress are in place	No feedback or complaints mechanisms in place	Complaints procedures in urban centres are accessible to some children. Follow-up mechanisms not effective	Complaints procedures widely available. Follow-up, referral and response mechanisms are working well in some areas	Complaints procedures are mandated by law and easily accessible by all children. Follow-up, referral and response mechanisms are well-established, accessible and effective
7 Children in need of protection and care are entitled to be involved in decisions affecting them	All such decisions are made by adults without reference to children	There is no legal requirement that children's views should be heard	The law requires that children are consulted on all matters that concern them and their views be given due weight, but this is not widely implemented	The law mandates that children must be heard directly at all stages of child protection and care processes, and it is effectively implemented

continued opposite

I MEASURING LEGAL PROVISIONS THAT PROTECT CHILDREN'S RIGHT TO PARTICIPATE *continued*





Legal provisions	No provision 	Limited provision 	Moderate provision 	Comprehensive quality provision 
8 Children are entitled to democratic structures in schools	There are no student councils or other mechanisms in schools through which children can voice their views	There are student councils in some experimental schools. The best students are appointed by teachers. Students debate issues but have no influence over decisions	Student councils are widespread in schools. Members of student councils are elected by the students, but children's decision-making power is limited	There are mandatory student councils and school management committees where students have real control over important decisions. Student councils are fully representative of the student body
9 Children have the right to establish their own organisations	Children are prevented by law from forming their own associations. Child workers are prevented from joining labour unions	Legislation entitles children to form their own associations, but bureaucratic procedures make it very difficult for children to formally register their associations	Procedures for establishing and registering children-led associations have been simplified with the result that the number of registered children-led associations is growing steadily	Children are entitled by law to form their own associations and to join unions. Responsible government departments process applications for children-led associations in a professional and timely manner
10 Laws define parental responsibilities, including respect for the views of the child	Parents have complete authority over their children	The government provides some encouragement for parents to involve children in decision-making in the family	The government supports parent education courses which explicitly encourage parents to involve children in decisions in the family	The law defines parental responsibilities and includes provision that parents must consult children when making decisions that affect them

2 MEASURING WHETHER THERE ARE EFFORTS TO PROMOTE AWARENESS OF AND COMMITMENT TO CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION

	No information or awareness 	Limited provision 	Moderate awareness or provision of information 	Comprehensive awareness programmes and access to information 
Promoting children's awareness				
I1 Education is free and compulsory	Education is not free and is only compulsory at primary level	Primary education is compulsory and free	Primary and secondary education are free and compulsory but there are low rates of enrolment, attendance and completion	Primary and secondary education are free and compulsory, and there are high rates of enrolment, attendance and completion
I2 Children have access to independent information from a wide range of sources	Children have no access to independent information	Children's access to information is largely limited to better-off children in urban areas	Children have access to a wide range of information, but there are large disparities in the types of information different groups of children have access to	Children have access to a wide range of information from various sources, including radio, television, libraries, books, press, internet, and helplines
I3 Government information is available in child-friendly and appropriate formats	Government documents are not produced in child-friendly formats or formats that can be accessed by children with visual or hearing disabilities	A few government documents are available in child-friendly formats, but there is usually just one such format for all children	Child-friendly government documents are widely available	Information is readily available in appropriate formats for children of different ages and children with visual or hearing disabilities. Government departments are mandated to produce key documents in formats that are accessible to all children

continued opposite

2 MEASURING WHETHER THERE ARE EFFORTS TO PROMOTE AWARENESS OF AND COMMITMENT TO CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION *continued*

	No information or awareness	Limited provision	Moderate awareness or provision of information	Comprehensive awareness programmes and access to information
				
Promoting children's awareness <i>continued</i>				
14 Human rights education is included in the curriculum	Human rights education is not included in the school curriculum	The government is willing to consider including human rights in the curriculum but no action has been taken yet	Human rights education is included in the curriculum but only taught in a limited number of schools	Human rights education, including children's rights, is included in the curriculum, teachers are trained in its delivery, and appropriate teaching resources are provided
Promoting adults' awareness and commitment				
15 Children's rights training is provided for professionals and policy-makers working with children	There is no training available on children's rights	There are some workshops on children's rights, which have been provided for some professional groups and policy-makers	Some courses for professionals and policy-makers are beginning to introduce training on children's rights	All pre- and in-service training for professionals and policy-makers working with and for children includes training on children's rights, as well as the development of competencies for assessing capacity. The government issues clear guidance to policy-makers about the obligation to introduce and support children's participation in policy-making

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2 MEASURING WHETHER THERE ARE EFFORTS TO PROMOTE AWARENESS OF AND COMMITMENT TO CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION *continued*









	No information or awareness	Limited provision	Moderate awareness or provision of information	Comprehensive awareness programmes and access to information
				
Promoting adults' awareness and commitment <i>continued</i>				
16 Programmes for parent education on children's rights are available	There are no programmes available for educating parents about children's rights	Some NGOs and civil society organisations provide education and awareness-raising for parents about children's rights	Government provides limited resources to civil society organisations to develop parent education programmes	Government has supported the development and dissemination of parent education programmes in all areas of the country
17 Research is undertaken to assess respect for children's participation	There has been no research into respect for children's participation, nor monitoring and evaluation of attitudes or practice	Individual academic institutions have commissioned research into attitudes towards children's participation	Some professional groups undertake post-training evaluations to assess changes in attitudes towards children's participation	Government commissions regular research to monitor and evaluate changing attitudes among all professionals, policy-makers and parents towards children's participation, and uses the evidence to inform policy-making



PHOTO: MICHAEL TSEGAYE/SAVE THE CHILDREN





Boys and girls from Ethiopia's Amhara region take part in a group discussion on gender education.

3 MEASURING THE EXTENT TO WHICH SPACES FOR CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION HAVE BEEN CREATED

	No opportunities for participation 	Limited opportunities for participation 	Moderate opportunities for participation 	Comprehensive opportunities for participation 
In the public arena				
18 Mechanisms are in place to consult children on legislation, public policies, services and resource allocation	Children are never consulted	Some consultations are held with some children on some policies	The views of girls and boys are gathered systematically in relation to a majority of policies affecting children	The development of all legislation, policies and services affecting children takes children's views into account. Children's organisations have a voice in decision-making processes
19 Mechanisms are in place for children to provide feedback on the quality, accessibility and appropriateness of public services and policies	Children have no opportunities to provide feedback on public services and policies	Some local health, education and social welfare services provide complaints mechanisms	Public services are required to establish feedback systems including evaluation forms, surveys and complaints mechanisms	Public services implement effective feedback systems including evaluation forms, surveys and complaints mechanisms. Mechanisms for auditing and inspection involve children on a systematic basis
20 Children are represented in governance bodies at local and national levels, including through their own organisations	Children are not represented in governance bodies at any level	A few youth councils and children's parliaments exist, but are often not sustained for very long	A range of effective mechanisms have been developed for children's representation at local and national levels. These are being spread across the country	Local and national governance bodies are mandated by law to have children represented. Child-led organisations are formally recognised in decision-making processes

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3 MEASURING THE EXTENT TO WHICH SPACES FOR CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION HAVE BEEN CREATED *continued*

	No opportunities for participation 	Limited opportunities for participation 	Moderate opportunities for participation 	Comprehensive opportunities for participation 
In the public arena <i>continued</i>				
21 Democratic child-led organisations are established at local and national levels	There are no child-led associations	Only a few types of child-led associations are active, mostly for only short periods of time	There is a growing number and diversity of child-led associations	A large number of different types of child-led associations are active and effective at local, sub-national and national levels
22 Children have access to the media to communicate their views	There are no opportunities for children to use the media to communicate their views	A few projects exist to support young journalists and reporters	A growing number of opportunities are available for children to broadcast their views. However, access to these opportunities is mostly limited to better-off children in urban areas	Opportunities for children to use the media to communicate their views are readily and easily available for a majority of children (radio, newspapers, internet, social media, television)
In daily life				
23 Schools are child-friendly and participatory	There are no child-centred learning and teaching methods employed in schools	A few schools experiment with child-centred teaching methods	Child-centred learning and teaching methods have been promoted widely in the country	Child-centred teaching methods are mandatory in all schools
24 Children are entitled to access confidential healthcare services	No confidential services are available. All children must get parental consent to access healthcare	Individual health centres provide adolescent clinics, but there are no clear policies on confidentiality	Some services are free and child- and adolescent-friendly, but confidential services are generally only available in urban areas	Free, accessible, child- and adolescent-friendly, confidential services are available throughout the country and are widely publicised

continued opposite

3 MEASURING THE EXTENT TO WHICH SPACES FOR CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION HAVE BEEN CREATED *continued*





	No opportunities for participation 	Limited opportunities for participation 	Moderate opportunities for participation 	Comprehensive opportunities for participation 
In daily life <i>continued</i>				
25 Children are consulted in decision-making processes concerning their own healthcare, consistent with their evolving capacities	No children under 18 years are consulted or involved in decisions concerning healthcare	Some individual medical practitioners consult older children, but there are no policies governing this	Doctors are encouraged to involve children in their own healthcare and/or a policy exists, but no training is provided and implementation is uneven	A policy has been drawn up requiring staff to involve children in their own healthcare as far as possible. Age-appropriate information is provided, as well as training for all health professionals on how to implement the policy



PHOTO: RACHEL PALMER/SAVE THE CHILDREN

3 COLLECTING YOUR DATA

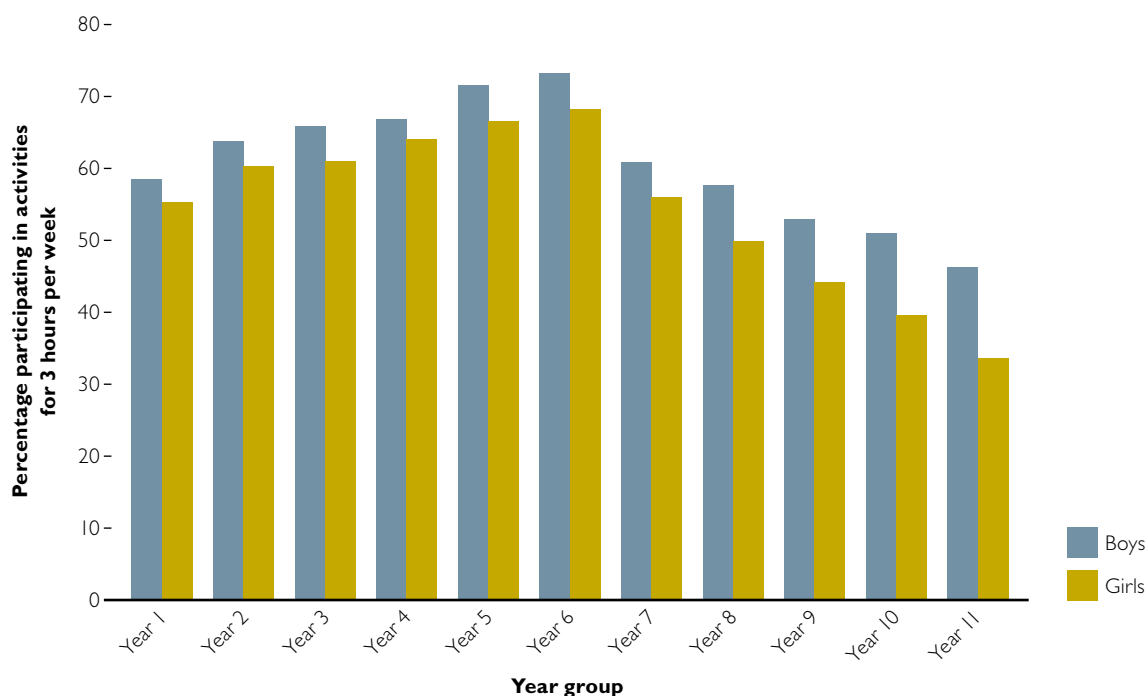
PREPARATION FOR THE DATA COLLECTION

Having established the indicators and assessment criteria you will use, the next step is to collect the data. Before you actually start doing this, there are some important things to think about:

- For each indicator (row) in the table, we have suggested assessment criteria as to what might constitute no provision, limited provision, moderate provision or comprehensive provision. These are for guidance only. They may not be directly applicable to your situation, or there might be other measures of progress which are more relevant. You can choose to substitute your own measures under each column to better reflect the nature of progress taking place. In addition, you might want to adapt the indicators or add to them in order to focus on particular groups of disadvantaged or marginalised children – for example, younger children, girls or children with disabilities.³
- You might want to add some outcome indicators in order to measure progress in the country you are working in. For example, if there are already a number of child-led organisations, you could introduce outcome indicators to measure the numbers of children involved in such organisations over the next five years. Or you might want to measure the percentage of schools that have functioning school councils and undertake research to assess how satisfied children are with their level of representation and influence over decisions.

To give the fullest picture possible, data on the indicators needs to be disaggregated (broken down) – for example, by gender, age group, disability, ethnicity, social class, rural/urban setting, or other relevant factors. For example, if you were collecting information on whether children's clubs were being established, you might want to know in which parts of the country they were being set up, and which children take part in the activities. You could find this out by contacting a number of children's clubs and asking them for information on: how many children attend; how many boys and how many girls attend; and how many are over the age of 12, and how many under 12. Unless you disaggregate the data, it will be difficult to know whether different groups of children (such as those who are most disadvantaged or marginalised) have different experiences in realising their participation rights. For example, in respect of complaints mechanisms, it would be very useful to know which groups of children are actually making use of them and why. Are such mechanisms being used by girls and boys, children with disabilities, and children of different ages? If not, why is this, and how does access to complaints mechanisms need to be improved?

You can present this information in different ways. Figure 2 opposite shows one way of displaying information that has been disaggregated to show the difference in participation between boys and girls. It compares the percentage of boys and girls in different year groups who have participated in activities for three hours a week.

Figure 2: Sample graph comparing boys' and girls' participation in a programme

WHO TO INVOLVE IN DATA COLLECTION

It is up to your organisation to determine how much data you want to collect. Ideally, the national government will be directly involved, either in initiating the process or at least as a key partner. Obviously, the larger the sample of people involved, the more meaningful the results will be. You should certainly involve stakeholders in different parts of the country, reflecting their different experiences and opportunities. For example, children who live in urban areas may have very different experiences of participation in schools, healthcare services, and local democratic systems from those living in remote rural areas; better-off children whose parents pay for healthcare may experience very different attitudes from health professionals than poor children; and children with disabilities in special schools may be less likely to have opportunities to establish school councils. You need to capture all these perspectives if you are to build a comprehensive picture of children's participation rights.

The collection of data needs to be undertaken with a range of different stakeholders, including children themselves, in order to build up a comprehensive picture of the experience on the ground. Take, for example, the right of children to establish democratic school councils. It would be important to get the perspectives of the government, local authority, teachers and children. Governments may argue that the legislation is in place to support this right, but children's experience may be that, in practice, such bodies have little relevance or influence in the school, are managed largely by teachers, and that children's views are not taken into account. All these perspectives are needed to help you decide which column to choose in the tables for any given indicator. The data you are collecting are called **primary data**.

You can start the process by bringing together different stakeholders and giving them the opportunity to go through each of the indicators, to reflect on how they think the country in question is doing in relation to children's participation rights. You might want to bring together different stakeholders in one meeting – for example, children and young people, government officials, professionals (working in education, healthcare or youth justice, for example), parents, and representatives from NGOs. Or you could organise separate events for each group, but there are pros and cons to both approaches:

- **Mixed groups of stakeholders:** by bringing together people with very different perspectives, you can provide an opportunity for people to engage, argue, hear each other's experiences, and perhaps help them understand each other better and begin to change their views. On the other hand, this may not provide sufficient opportunity for each group to explore their particular experiences and concerns.
- **Separate groups:** separate groups may have more time to reflect on their shared experiences, and build up a clearer picture of how accurately they feel the indicators describe their experience of participation. However, it is likely that the different groups will come up with very different ideas of what is and is not being implemented. The divergent perspectives coming out of each group will then need to be reconciled.

The actual numbers of people you involve will obviously depend on the country concerned, and the resources you have available. If you are unable to undertake data collection in many different parts of the country, you could decide to hold a residential workshop and bring together children and other stakeholders from a range of different groups in society to work together on capturing the information.

A child researcher shows her drawing of a school where her rights are respected, as part of a child-led research project on rights in school in La Dalia, Nicaragua.



PHOTO: CESEMA

CHECKING YOUR FINDINGS AGAINST OTHER SOURCES OF DATA

You should also try to cross-check the views elicited during group discussions with different stakeholders with data from a range of other relevant sources. These are known as **secondary data**. These other sources of information are really important to help you build up an accurate picture of children's participation.

Examples of sources of secondary data might include:

- research evidence from academic institutions, national and international NGOs, UNICEF, and research carried out with and by children
- media reports and newspaper cuttings
- government policies and laws
- government budget allocations and expenditure at national, sub-national and local levels
- government strategy papers and plans on relevant thematic issues (for example, education, health, early marriage, child labour, HIV, etc.)
- data from relevant ministries and departments (for example, numbers of children provided with legal representation in court, percentage of schools with democratic school councils)
- periodic government and supplementary reports on children's rights submitted to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC); Universal Periodic Reviews; or other human rights reports
- concluding observations from the CRC and other treaty bodies as well as the Human Rights Council.

The data from other sources will vary significantly in how easy or difficult it is to collect. Some of the data will be easy to find. For example, it will be a fairly simple process to determine whether there is legislation in place to establish participation rights, or whether children are allowed to form their own organisations. However, some information will require fairly rigorous investigation – for example, whether all health authorities provide child- and adolescent-friendly services, if mechanisms for auditing and inspection involve children on a systematic basis, or which groups of professionals receive training on children's rights. It is also important to recognise that the quality will also vary significantly. For example, a report based on rigorous research from a reputable university is likely to be of high quality. However, newspaper reports might be biased, inaccurate and lack any information on what sources they have relied on.



PHOTO: DAN ALDER/SAVE THE CHILDREN

A workshop in Medellín, Colombia – one of the country's poorest and most violent communities – as part of a project on democracy, human rights and peaceful coexistence.

HOW LONG WILL THE PROCESS TAKE?

It is difficult to provide guidance on how much time you will need to work with stakeholders to collect information. It depends entirely on the size of the country, the resources available, and the numbers of people available to help collect the data. It also depends on what you want to get out of the process. For example, you could bring a mixed group of stakeholders together for a day just to get a rough guide to people's perceptions of how far the indicators are being met. This might be a useful way of putting children's participation on the agenda and providing stakeholders with a better understanding of how much needs to change to fully realise children's rights as defined in Article 12 of the UNCRC. You can also use it as a way of bringing children and young people together with policy-makers to create an opportunity for dialogue. This in itself can be an effective sensitisation process and might help in any advocacy work you undertake subsequently on participation.

On the other hand, you could use the process to develop a baseline analysis (that is, the starting point in terms of children's participation rights) in order to monitor progress over a number of years. The findings might be the basis of a report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child. In order to build up this detailed analysis, you could undertake a series of consultations with stakeholders in different parts of the country, analyse the findings, and then bring together representatives from all those groups to explore any differences of view, and then try to reach a consensus score on all indicators. This could be undertaken over a period of several months.

You could explore with the children and young people you are working with what approach to adopt and what you want out of the process. You can then plan the methodology to enable you to achieve that result. You could seek specific funding to undertake a really comprehensive analysis and report.

TOOLS FOR COLLECTING DATA FROM STAKEHOLDERS

The first step will be to bring your stakeholders together and begin the process of introducing the indicators and tables, and exploring the issues they raise. You will need to explain to everyone why you are undertaking the exercise, what you hope to achieve, and which tools you are going to use to collect the data. There are a range of tools you can use, including focus group discussions, interviews, and surveys. **Booklet 5** tells you how to use the different tools that are available.

The following section introduces some other participatory tools you can use with children and other stakeholders to collect the necessary data. They can be used alongside or in addition to focus groups, interviews and questionnaires. The tools offer a more interactive and child-friendly approach to data collection and will provide a greater depth and richness to the data.

I SPACEOGRAM – HOW DO I PARTICIPATE?⁴

This activity is often used when a group is starting work on the topic of “participation”. It is a great way to introduce the topic because:

- it helps participants recognise and discuss their level of participation in different aspects of life
- it encourages reflection on the different types and levels of participation and the areas in which children may be more and less involved (family, school, community, institutions, municipality, etc.), and so deepens our understanding of the concept of “participation”
- it can also help children identify what stops them from participating
- it also gives you a quick snapshot of who is participating and what activities they are participating in at the start of a project or process.

This tool is particularly useful for determining the extent to which a specific law or policy is working in practice and how it is affecting children’s lives. For example, the law may entitle children to establish their own organisations, but the support needed to enable this to happen may not be in place.

Note: The spaceogram works equally well with older children, teenagers and adults; you just have to change the wording on the cards to make it relevant to each age group. You can also adapt the questions to the particular context you are working in.

Time needed

40–60 minutes (depending on how much time you want to allow for discussion).

Resources needed

Two large signs: one saying “I don’t participate” and one saying “I participate fully”; cards with phrases (see below); flip charts, markers, and masking-tape if required for follow-up discussion.

Activity

- Stick the two signs “I don’t participate” and “I participate fully” on the walls at opposite ends of the workspace, and get everybody into the centre between the two.
- Explain how the spaceogram works: it is a combination of a space and a diagram – that is, a diagram created in space. As each card is read out, each person must think about how much they personally participate in that particular aspect of life. If they don’t participate at all, they should go and stand next to the sign that says “I don’t participate”. If they are a very active and constant participant in this area, they should go and stand next to the sign that says “I participate fully”. We have to imagine a line between these two extremes, with zero participation at one end, then an increasing level of participation along the line, till you get to the most active participation at the other end (if people haven’t done this before, it’s easiest to read out the first card, and walk through the various options people have in deciding where to stand; for example, “If you never do this, you’d stand here by the wall. If you participate occasionally, you might stand here, a bit further from the wall. If you sometimes do and sometimes don’t, you might stand somewhere near the middle”, etc).
- Considering the aspect of participation mentioned on the first card, everyone decides where they should stand and moves to their chosen position on the continuum between “I don’t participate” and “I participate fully”. (*Note: If children are new to this kind of activity they may prefer to copy their neighbour. The facilitator should encourage everyone to think for themselves and not do the same as everyone else.*)
- The facilitator asks the group to observe how they have distributed themselves.
- The facilitator asks one or two people to comment on why they are standing at a certain point (maybe one person who participates very little and another who has identified themselves as being very active). Encourage others to listen to these comments and add their own if they wish.
- Read out the next card and repeat the process. (*Note: Instead of the facilitator reading out all the cards, you can place them in a pile face down on a chair or table near the centre of the space, and invite a volunteer from the group to pick up and read out each card.*)
- The facilitator should keep things moving, to try and get through most of the cards in the time available.
- At the end, sit down for a general discussion in plenary. Questions to think about include:
 - Overall, what did we find out about our participation in society?
 - Do we participate more in some areas than others? Which areas and why?
 - Did we observe any difference in boys’ and girls’ participation?
 - How does this help us to understand the meaning of “participation”?

Final note: If you are using this activity to get a snapshot of the current state of participation by a particular group, you need to turn each space diagram into a paper diagram. One way to do this is to have a co-facilitator draw a diagram as each card is read out, with the people represented as dots; but you must make sure the diagrams are correctly labelled.

Cards for “How do I participate?” activity

Photocopy and cut



	Cultural events in my area
Decisions about my healthcare	Participation in a church or religious group
Decision-making in my school or college	Environmental conservation activities
In a committee or working group of adults	As a member of a political party
Local community organising in my village or neighbourhood	Decision-making in the district or town council
Decision-making in my home	In an organisation led by children and young people
In the press or media	In decision-making in an NGO (non-governmental organisation)
In local children's councils or parliaments	In a local or national campaign or action group

2 STAKEHOLDER DISCUSSION

This activity is designed to help you start building up the picture of how to complete the three tables. Using coloured stickers for different stakeholders, you can enable each group of stakeholders to build up a visual picture of how they assess progress on each of the indicators. If you are bringing together a range of stakeholders, such as children and young people, government officials and parents, you can provide each group with its own colour. If you are holding separate discussions for different groups, you might want to break each up into smaller groups. For example, if you are holding a meeting just for children, you could divide them into girls and boys or different age groups and give each group a different colour with which to score the indicators. If you have a group of professionals, you might divide them into groups of teachers, health workers, police, etc. The findings from these different groups can then be compared and any differences of opinion identified and explored.

Time needed

See above – depends on what you are seeking to achieve, although it might take more than one day.





Resources needed

- Large copies of each of the three tables on the wall (with space for new indicators to be added).
- Lots of different coloured stickers or pens (depending on how many groups you are dividing the discussion into).
- Space to enable participants to walk around and view the tables.










Activity

- 1 Introduce the idea of mapping the environment for children's participation and explain why it is important, and what the process is for. Make it clear that this process is not about measuring an individual project or programme but is aiming to build a much broader picture of how children participate in society as a whole. Allow space for participants to ask questions and explore their own thinking about participation in their sector or country.
- 2 Place large copies of the three tables around the room on flip charts for everyone to see. Participants will be able to see that in each of the three tables, some general indicators have been developed. For each of these indicators, children and adult stakeholders will have opportunities to analyse whether there is 'no provision', 'limited provision', 'moderate provision', or 'comprehensive quality provision'. If you are working with children, you might want to prepare some child-friendly versions of the tables to make them easier to understand.

For example:

	No provision 	Limited provision 	Moderate provision 	Comprehensive quality provision 
7 Children are listened to by their parents	They don't listen to me	They only listen to older boys	Sometimes they ask me what I think	They always listen to me and care about what I think
8 Schools are child-friendly and participatory	Teachers just talk at us. We have to listen and write things down	Some of us have nice teachers who listen to us	Things seem to be getting better. There are more fun things happening in school	School is really fun. We do lots of activities and play. We can ask questions, and work on projects

- Children, young people and different adult stakeholders should then be given the chance to move around the room to look at the tables. They should have the opportunity to ask for clarification if there are any indicators they do not understand.
- The facilitator can then ask the group to review each table in turn, making sure everyone has a common understanding of each indicator. The group should be given the opportunity to add to or change any of the indicators to make them more relevant to their country or situation.
- Each participant is given some stickers and asked to place a sticker in one of the four columns, ranging from the sad face to the happy face, to show their view about the current status of each indicator. These stickers should be different colours, with each group of stakeholders taking a specific colour. For example:

Stakeholder	Colour sticker
Girls	
Boys	
Mothers	
Fathers	
Community or religious leaders	
NGO staff	
Local officials	
National officials	
International NGO/UN staff	

Each participant should be encouraged to think carefully about the current status of each indicator. They may want to discuss in small groups before deciding where to place their sticker. You could decide to encourage participants to get together to

discuss this, either by forming separate stakeholder groups or creating groups to achieve a mix of different stakeholders.

- 6 When they are ready, they place their sticker for each indicator in the column according to one of the four faces. They should have enough stickers to place one on each row of the table. You might also consider providing participants with Post-it notes so that they can write down their reasons for choosing that column, or any other comments they wish to make. During this process, one facilitator should remain near each of the three tables to clarify any queries or misunderstandings relating to the indicators in each. The facilitator can also keep note of discussions that take place while participants are deciding where to place their stickers.
- 7 Once everyone has placed their stickers, you will probably be ready for a tea break!
- 8 In a plenary session, encourage participants to look at the scores, and any patterns regarding the scores given by different stakeholders. You will almost certainly find there are differing opinions reflected in the scoring for each of the indicators. Encourage the participants to consider these questions:
 - What do the overall findings reveal? How enabling is the local or national environment for children's participation?
 - What are the weakest areas? What are the strongest areas?
 - Do all children benefit from areas where there are provisions? Or only some? If only some, which children benefit and which do not?
 - Are there significant differences in opinion? If so, on which indicators? Explore the reasons.
 - Are there any areas where there are significant differences in ratings between children and adults? If so, what are the reasons? Or any differences between other stakeholder groups?

This activity may take up to a day, so ensure there is plenty of time for tea breaks in between. You may find that there are a number of indicators which the participants are unable to assess. For example, they may not have the information needed to assess whether children's organisations are genuinely controlled by children themselves, or they may not know if children of all ages are widely consulted on legislation and policies. Where there are gaps in knowledge, you should note these on the tables. If it is information which can be easily accessed, such as finding out whether a law or policy exists, you can complete this data yourself after the meeting. If it is simply not available, then you should indicate this on the table.

You may also want to consider facilitating 'buzz group discussions' as the day proceeds. A buzz group is a small intense discussion group involving up to three people. The full group can be divided into buzz groups to respond to a particular question or issue that has arisen in the course of the overall activity. Alternatively, the tables may be completed over time – say, one per week during regular children's meetings. However, at some point, it is useful to bring different stakeholders together to review and explore any different scores. To reflect on whether the most marginalised groups of children have equal opportunities to realise their rights, some of the indicators will need to be disaggregated according to gender, age, disability, ethnicity, social class, rural/urban setting, or other relevant factors.



A child research team in La Dalia, Nicaragua, enjoying a warm-up game before starting work.

AGREEING THE FINAL SCORES FOR EACH INDICATOR

It is very likely that each stakeholder group will have significant differences of opinion when they consider each of the indicators in each table. You will then need to go through another exercise to help the groups reach a consensus for scoring each indicator. The next exercise will help you do that.

VALUE LINE DISCUSSIONS

Value line discussions are useful when there are differences of opinion. The value line provides a mechanism to enable people to stand (or sit) on a line to show and explain their position and their rating on a particular indicator. The facilitator can encourage discussion and help different stakeholders listen to each other's views. After they have listened to each other, they may be able to agree on a rating that they feel is justified.

Time needed





Up to one day (depending on the number of areas to be explored).

Resources needed

- Space to enable participants to form a line.
- Coloured tape, or flip chart paper to make a visual line across the room.

Activity

- 1 Explain to the different stakeholders that because they had a number of differing views and scores on some of the indicators, you are going to use 'value line discussions' to help them explore those differences. Before beginning the discussion, it is important that participants have the chance to agree some ground rules to respect each other's opinions. Everyone needs to be willing to listen to each other's views and opinions, and be open minded. You should stress that by listening to each other's perspectives, they may be ready to negotiate and agree a score for any particular indicator.
- 2 Look at the stickers on the tables and identify which indicators have most variation in terms of how people have scored them. Identify a maximum of ten indicators that could be explored using value line discussions.
- 3 Create a line across the room in which one end represents 'no provision' (table 1) or 'no awareness' (table 2) or 'no participation' (table 3), and the other end of the line represents 'comprehensive quality provision', etc. This is the value line.

No provision 	Limited provision 	Moderate provision 	Comprehensive quality provision 
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- 4 Explain that the idea is for participants to go to a point on the value line that most closely represents their view on how far the indicator is being implemented. Then explore each indicator in turn and ask each participant to decide where they want to stand or sit on the line.
- 5 Once everyone has decided where they want to position themselves, encourage people to explain how they came to that decision. Encourage different stakeholders to listen to each other's views. Then see if anyone has been persuaded by the arguments of others and if they want to move to a different position.
- 6 Move back into a plenary group. Discuss any significant findings concerning differences in opinions. For example, are there any areas where there were significant differences in the opinions of children and adults? Or among any other stakeholder groups? What were the reasons for such strong differences of opinion?
- 7 Based on the discussion, see if the group can agree on a score that it feels is justified, taking into consideration the different viewpoints shared and any other sources of evidence it has been able to draw on.
- 8 Repeat the process with any of the other indicators where there were significant differences of opinion.
- 9 Once you have achieved a broad consensus on the findings, you will then have a detailed picture of children's participation in your country. You can then discuss how you are going to use this information. You can explore with children and young people what they want to do next. For example, they might want to produce a report for the government, or to present to the Committee on the Rights of the Child. They might use the information to help them decide their priorities for advocacy and campaign work. What are the most significant findings? Where do the participants feel it might be possible to achieve change? Which stakeholders or partners might be interested in working with them on these issues?

SUMMARY

The process of completing these tables with a broad range of stakeholders has considerable value. First, it will highlight to all involved the profound and wide-ranging implications of the UNCRC for children's role and status in society. Second, it will provide a forum for challenging assumptions about how children feel and what they would like to change. It will enable adult stakeholders to gain insights into the actual experiences and perceptions of children and young people, and the extent to which they are currently involved in decisions on matters that affect them, and how far they want to be involved. Thus, it will begin to open up space for identifying what needs to change. Third, it will highlight differences in perspectives between adults and children as to whether children's right to be heard is currently being respected. For example, government officials may feel they have made important progress by introducing a new human rights curriculum into all schools. However, children may report that the reality in schools is that it is not being delivered, and that they have no idea about their rights, nor even that teachers are supposed to be delivering that curriculum. Such discussions will help governments to gain a better understanding of the effectiveness and outcomes of their policies.

Finally, the tables will provide you with a visual check on how children's right to participation is being respected and implemented in the country you are working in. The results can be used to track progress over time, as a resource for education and sensitisation, as a basis for dialogue with governments, or as a tool for developing an advocacy strategy.



A safe play area for children set up following floods in Pakistan.

ENDNOTES

¹ CRC General Comment No.12, The Right of the Child to be Heard, CRC/C/GC/12, July 2009

² General Comments are documents produced by the Committee to help governments understand a particular article in the Convention, or a particular issue. For example, in addition to Article 12, there are several General Comments including one on Article 19, the right to protection from all forms of violence, one on children with disabilities, and one on adolescent health. You can see all the General Comments at: <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/comments.htm>

³ See, for example, Take Us Seriously, UNICEF, https://www.dropbox.com/s/sov6fxomlxwp9lk/Guidelines_Brochure_for_formatting_rev.pdf

⁴ This tool was developed and shared by Harry Shier, from CESESMA, a Nicaraguan NGO

A TOOLKIT FOR MONITORING AND EVALUATING CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION

BOOKLET

2

Measuring the creation of a participatory and respectful environment for children

This toolkit looks at how to monitor and evaluate children's participation in programmes, communities and in wider society. It is aimed at practitioners and children working in participatory programmes, as well as governments, NGOs, civil society and children's organisations seeking to assess and strengthen children's participation in society.

The toolkit comprises six booklets:

Booklet 1: Introduction provides an overview of children's participation, how the toolkit was created and a brief guide to monitoring and evaluation.

Booklet 2: Measuring the creation of a participatory and respectful environment for children provides a framework and practical tools to measure children's participation in their community and society.

Booklet 3: How to measure the scope, quality and outcomes of children's participation provides a conceptual framework for children's participation and introduces a series of benchmarks and tables to measure children's participation.

Booklet 4: A 10-step guide to monitoring and evaluating children's participation looks at involving children, young people and adults in the process. It includes guidance on identifying objectives and progress indicators, systematically collecting data, documenting activities and analysing findings.

Booklet 5: Tools for monitoring and evaluating children's participation provides a range of tools that you can use with children and young people, as well as other stakeholders.

Booklet 6: Children and young people's experiences, advice and recommendations has been produced by young people who were involved in piloting the toolkit. It consists of two separate guides: one for adults and one for children and young people.

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