Child Participation – Problems and Recommendations

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

In-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 |

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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: 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. |

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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| **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 1 – 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 2: 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 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. 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 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?” 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 2 – 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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**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)