



Save the Children

So you want to consult with children?

A toolkit of good practice



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Vision

Save the Children works for:

a world which respects and values each child
a world which listens to children and learns
a world where all children have hope and opportunity

Mission

Save the Children fights for children's rights

We deliver immediate and lasting improvements to
children's lives worldwide



Save the Children

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Introducing the toolkit

«How can we involve children in discussions about what adults ought to be doing to make their lives better?»

«How can we make sure that the children feel that their views and opinions have been listened to and respected?»

«What can we do to make sure that both the children and the adults are properly prepared for such discussions?»

«What do we have to do to ensure that the children involved are safe and protected at all times?»

«How can children and adults be equal partners in representing our organisation or country on a delegation to a formal meeting?»

If you would like to involve children in discussions about issues that affect them but don't know how to do it, then we hope that this toolkit will provide you with a lot of useful material for getting started. If you've already begun to involve children in policy or other discussions, we hope that you may find some useful ideas here to help you take this work forward.

This toolkit is based upon the experience of Save the Children – the largest international children's rights NGO – in helping to facilitate children's meaningful participation in the process leading up to, and including, the 2002 UN General Assembly Special Session on Children. This process included not just the 500 or so children that attended the Special Session on Children itself in New York but the many thousands of other children who were involved in related events and activities in their countries and regions throughout 2001 and 2002.

Introducing the toolkit

«Children’s participation is an ongoing process of children’s active involvement in decision making (at different levels) in matters that concern them. It requires information sharing and dialogue between children and adults, which is based on mutual respect and power sharing. Genuine participation gives children the power to shape both the process and outcome. Participation is proactive.»

Save the Children’s UK regional office in South and Central Asia

The Special Session process presented all those working to support children’s participation with many challenges:

- How could governments best use this as an opportunity to involve the young citizens of their countries in a debate about the future national and international agenda for children?
- How could governments and NGOs ensure that a diversity of children’s voices were heard, including the more marginalised and discriminated-against, and that children themselves would be involved in the selection of their representatives?
- How could the Special Session itself – and other inter-governmental events held in the run up to the Special Session – be child-friendly events which would enable the children and young people present to actively engage with the proceedings?
- What sort of minimum standards for children’s participation should be established – for example, around selection procedures, the sharing of information and the way meetings were run – to ensure that it was ‘meaningful’ and a positive experience for the children involved?
- What does it mean to give ‘careful consideration’ to child protection issues when involving children in policy and other consultations?
- How could the quality of children’s participation in this process be evaluated?
- How could children continue to be supported in their work once the New York Special Session event was over and all the delegates returned to their home countries?

The material and information presented in this toolkit represent the best efforts of those involved at local, national, regional and international levels, including Save the Children, in meeting these numerous and diverse challenges.

What kind of consultation processes does this toolkit cover?

- Participatory processes outside a child’s home environment or community, such as residential or conference-based consultations with children. This may include:
 - meetings where only children are present, discussing their views on an issue and/or preparing for a meeting with adult decision-makers
 - meetings between children and adult policy makers as part of or as the end-point of a longer and larger consultation process

- dialogues with adults that are not part of a formal consultation process but in which they are able to inform and influence decision-making forums. These may include, for example, high level inter-governmental conferences on children.
- Participatory debate and consultation that involves children in formal decision-making processes. These may include:
 - consultations with working children, sexually exploited children or children affected by HIV.
 - consultations concerning legal or constitutional reform on issues affecting children such as education reform or juvenile justice legislation.
 - consultations on development planning at the national level. For example around National Plans of Action (NPAs), Poverty Reduction Strategy Policy (PRSPs), national budget setting/monitoring, 'education for all' plans or as part of a process of reporting on the implementation and monitoring of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).

This toolkit:

- is mainly aimed at governments, international agencies and NGOs who want to involve or consult with children in a meaningful way. It is not intended for project workers or researchers working on their own unless they are involved in structured consultations or focus group work.
- is designed to help you create a participatory environment in which such children can express their views and take part in policy debates and discussions. It is not a detailed resource of participatory activities/exercises (although it does tell you where to find help on such activities).
- is for use in participatory processes that take place outside a child's home environment or community (for example, in a conference or residential setting).
- is about participatory debate and consultation rather than participatory learning.

Introducing the toolkit

«I think (the Special Session on Children) has now set a precedent that children MUST be actively included in policy matters and events which concern them. Moreover, in a hundred and one ways children have demonstrated their immense capabilities, and the richness and relevance that their contributions bring to the discussions. In all levels in a variety of agencies there are now an increased number of advocates and supporters for children's participation.»

Source: Etherton, M. Creating a Process Fit for Children: An Evaluation of Save the Children's Support to Children and Young People's Participation in the National and International Preparations for the UN Special Session on Children (February 2000 to September 2001). 2003

For more information on the range of consultation processes this toolkit might cover, please refer to the next section

So you want to consult with children?

(starts at page 7)

If you are looking for information on other ways in which you can consult with children – for example, by using participatory action research (PRA) approaches – you may like to use relevant sections of this toolkit together with other publications and material referred to in the

Guide to other resources

(starts at page 79)

Quite deliberately, this toolkit does not contain material on specific activities – such as ‘ice-breakers’, ‘energisers’ and so on – that can be used in such consultations. Suggestions and detailed advice on such activities can be found in the wide range of publications that are listed in the Guide to Other Resources section at the end of this toolkit. The focus instead is on what needs to be done to make sure that such exercises have the best chance of success.

Your starting point is the next section

So you want to consult with children?



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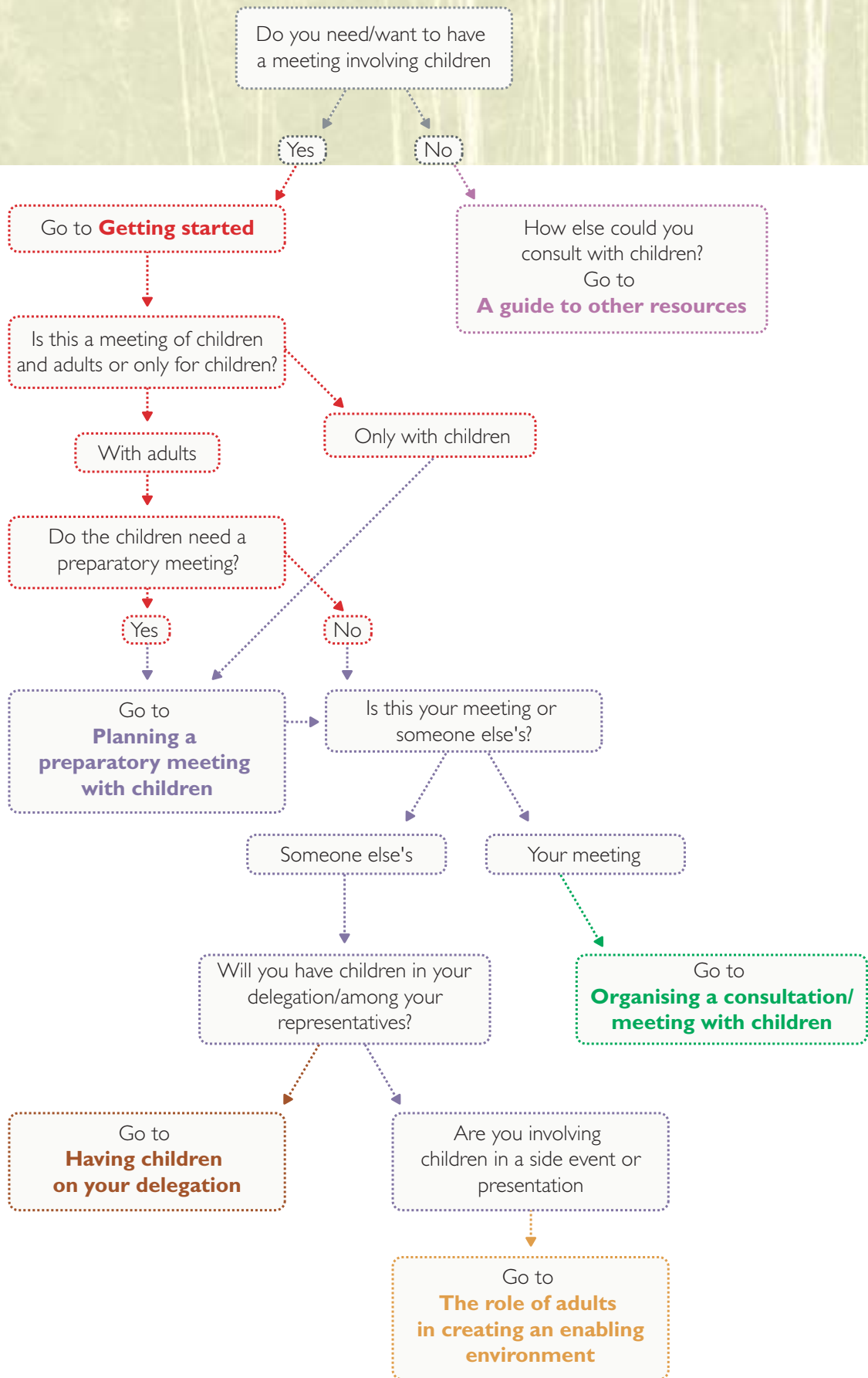
A guide to other resources

So you want to consult with children?

As highlighted in the introduction this toolkit has been designed to offer advice, ideas and guidance for involving children in consultations at national, regional and international levels.

It is intended as a flexible tool for anyone who has decided, or been asked, to involve children in consultations or similar events where children's views are being sought. For those with a lot of experience in facilitating such processes, we hope that the material contained within this toolkit will act as a friendly reminder of good practice. For those who are new to the field, we hope that the collective experience contained on the following pages will be a useful and timely learning tool.

The toolkit is structured in such a way as to provide you, the reader, with 'signposts' to help you decide how the material and information presented here can best help you. Depending on how you are planning to consult or dialogue with children each section provides a simple summarised checklist of important things you need to think about. Signposts throughout the text direct you to the appropriate section(s) in the toolkit for more detailed or additional relevant material and information. The figure below is designed to give you an overall picture of which sections might be the most relevant for your particular need.



For all:

Go to
Ensuring children are safe and protected
 and
Ensuring quality follow-up

Children's participation is important because

- It improves the relevance and appropriateness of public and organisational decision-making on children's issues by ensuring that those with the direct experience of a situation are able to have their voices heard.
- It brings particular benefits to the poorest and most marginalised groups of children who, even more than most children, have most often been excluded from the social, cultural, political and economic life of their communities and societies
- It acknowledges a shift in the view of children as 'beneficiaries' of adult interventions towards respect for them as 'rights holders' who are key 'makers and shapers' of their own destinies and that of their own societies.
- It is the main means by which children can be more actively included in their society as active and responsible citizens – in societies where they often make up 40 % or more of the population. It also helps prepare children for the exercise of their more formal civic responsibilities as adults.
- It increases the visibility of children's issues and helps to improve the accountability of adult institutions for what happens to children.
- The Convention on the Rights of the Child affirms children's right to express their views freely in all matters that affect them. The Convention also enhances children's participation through the recognition of children's right to seek and receive appropriate information; freedom of expression; freedom of thought, conscience and religion; and the right to form and join associations.

Children's participation should be meaningful

The kind of children's participation that adults support can vary a great deal in its quality. It can range from very poor to very good. The former is sometimes described as 'tokenistic', that is it is more about creating a perception of involving children than in creating practical opportunities for children to influence decision-making. Children's participation that is seen as being of good quality is often described as 'meaningful'. But what do we mean by meaningful children's participation? Based on the experience of the Special Session process we suggest that such participation ought to:

- Provide children with a genuine opportunity to influence decision-making while being based upon honesty and clarity about the extent of, and limits to, that influence.
- Ensure that children are able to freely express their views and opinions and have them treated with respect
- Encourage the involvement of socially excluded and discriminated groups and ensure that their voices and experience are given equal weight in discussions.
- Enable children to negotiate their participation to reflect their own preferences and working methods
- Be a process of learning and discovery (both personal and collective) which enables children to receive new information, understand what it means and then use and respond to it on the basis of their own experience ('Hear, See, Do, Discovery')
- Be a process which encourages the sharing of experiences
- Be flexible enough to respond to the expectations of children
- Promote the best interest of the child and enhance the personal development of each child
- Build self esteem and self-confidence in children so that they feel they are able to contribute and have opinions which are worth listening to.

'Meaningful participation' as defined above does not just happen by accident. It requires certain pre-conditions that help to create the right environment for it to develop. These include:

- A commitment by everyone involved – children and adults – to respect each others' views and to work together for a positive outcome
- Recognition of the stage of development and maturity of the children involved and the use of methods and approaches that respect and build upon that recognition
- Sensitivity and responsiveness to the context in which children live (e.g. as children affected by conflict or HIV/AIDS, children living in remote rural areas, children in or out of school, working children)
- An ability to provide meeting places and facilitate activities and events aimed at encouraging children's involvement
- Knowledge of when and how to intervene to support the process while at the same time encouraging children's growth and development
- Allowing the necessary time for children to work together and come up with their own opinions
- Advising children of the reasons for participation and the possible consequences of different alternatives, thereby offering them the possibility not to participate (which is as important as the right to take part)
- Ensure access to relevant information prepared in a child-friendly way.

«Participation should therefore be appropriate and contextual. This implies ensuring that children have the requisite skills for the expected tasks and that they are able to analyse and discuss issues, make relevant decisions and take appropriate actions.»

Annette Giertsen: Status report
on Children's Participation
– April Update 2003.
Save the Children Norway.

Children's Citizenship

'Citizenship' is often seen as a matter of legal status - being a formally recognised citizen of a particular country and having certain rights and responsibilities as a result, for example being able to vote or carry a passport. This definition usually excludes children from citizenship until they become adults. However, in recent years there has developed an alternative, much more inclusive concept of citizenship that is about good governance and encouraging involvement in public decision-making by all those that have an interest in its outcome.

Children's citizenship is about the active participation of girls, boys and young people in the social, economic, political and cultural arenas. It is an incremental process by which they develop the skills, understanding and values to influence public decision making and outcomes at the local, national and international levels in an environment that recognises them as competent social actors.

Citizenship for children and young people empowers them to exercise their rights and responsibilities alongside adults in the interest both of their peers and others. Their participation challenges existing inequalities and the root causes of poverty and positively contributes to a more just and democratic world.

This definition is based on definitions developed during SC-UK Cross-Regional workshop on Citizenship, 26-27 April 2001, as well as earlier definitions developed by SC UK OSCAR.



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Getting started

Do you need or want to have a consultation or meeting involving or with children? Read this section for good tips on getting started.

Involving children and young people in decision making through consultative processes offers ONE practical example of children's participation in practice. Its purpose should be to ensure that children are given the space to have real access to decision-making through direct and active involvement in the planning and design of policies, programmes and services. If these are informed by the direct experience of children, they are much more likely to have a positive, beneficial and lasting impact on children's lives.

Consultations can occur at every level – from the very local up to the international level. A local consultation may revolve around a school or community project or a local government initiative. At the international level, consultations may provide a platform for children's involvement in regional or global policy-making for children.

Whatever the level or circumstances, the following ideas to consider when preparing and conducting consultations with children are intended to ensure their meaningful participation in the process.

Checklist

- Everything that you do should be guided at all times by a primary concern for the best interests of children
- Establish a transparent and fair process for selection of young participants to the consultation process
- Provide children with good information about the process in which they are being asked to participate
- Design a consultation process or event in partnership with the children and young people involved



Getting started

«The concept [of] choosing a representative, what this means and why it is being done must be very clear to the children. The process of selection must be transparent. It should develop a sense of integration among children (rather than a sense of competition) and provide enough opportunities for children to get to know other children, helping them make [a] better judgement on who should represent them.»

From: UNGASS Documentation Workshop Report. December 15-16, 2001. National Confederation of Co-operatives (NATCCO), Project 4, Quezon City, Philippines.
Prepared by Carie T. Francisco, SC-UK Programme Officer/31Jan2002

Selection of participants

Selecting the participants to a consultation process is never easy.

Inevitably there is often a need to reach a compromise between the ideal process and the realities of everyday life. Establishing a transparent and fair process for selection, however, is crucial to ensuring that everyone understands why they are involved and that those children selected are able to represent the views of a wider group of children and young people.

Some important things to remember

- The selection process should target those children with an interest, direct experience or expertise in issues relating to the subject of the consultation.
- The children selected should relate to a wider constituency or group of children. Participants might include, for example:
 - Children selected by their peer group to represent them.
 - Children who represent a more formal peer group network (children's organisations, associations and movements) and therefore legitimately represent a much larger group of children.
 - Children able to speak on behalf of a broad cross-section of children.
 - Children with a solid understanding and experience of issues relating to children and young people in their country.
- The selection criteria and process should ensure that as wide and as diverse a group of children as possible are represented. Some key considerations in this area may include:
 - Gender
 - Age of participants (both 'younger' and 'older' children)
 - Religion
 - Rural versus urban place of residence
 - Regional balance (within country or region)
 - In- and out of school
 - Socio-economic background
 - Ethnic background
 - Children with disabilities

- The children selected should have the necessary support to enable them to feed back their experiences and propose follow-up action to other children after the consultation.

Providing information

Children need good information about the process in which they are being asked to participate. The better informed they are, the more involved and committed they will be. It also helps them to decide if they want to be involved in the first place and, if necessary, helps them choose the best representatives.

Some important things to remember

- Provide children with clear, sufficient, relevant and transparent information which may include:
 - Objectives of the consultation
 - Description of the consultation process (including timescale)

This information should be available in relevant languages and in child friendly formats.

- It is always good practice to prepare children and young people as much as possible before they arrive at a consultation meeting so that they understand the context for the consultation and what sort of process they are involved in. Additional information will be needed on:
 - The venue and date
 - The programme of activities being planned
 - The number of participants
 - The criteria for participants
 - The facilitators
 - Logistics and support available
- After the initial communication, consider following up with additional useful information (climate, costs, use of facilities, exhibition spaces etc.). Make any documents available beforehand (in relevant languages and child friendly formats as above) so that child participants have a chance to review them before discussions begin.

Getting started

- Make extra efforts to communicate with children living in remote areas and other 'difficult to reach' situations
- Use a variety of communication methods to get the information out to as many children as possible and to ensure that those who do not have access to the latest forms of information technology are not marginalised or excluded from the process
- Make sure that you also take literacy levels into consideration when sending out information for a meeting or consultation.

Designing a consultation / meeting

In order to be effective, consultations and meetings should be thoroughly planned. Ideally the consultation process will be designed in partnership with children and young people. There are various ways of doing this:

- Set up a steering group of young people to design or advise on this.
- Children and young people's expectations of the consultation / meeting can be established through contact with children's organisations or by asking NGOs or other civil society organisations to facilitate this. These could then be compiled by the facilitator(s) / steering group and be used to design an overall programme which corresponds to the expectations of the young participants.

If involving children and young people in the design of a consultation or meeting beforehand is not feasible, try to find other ways of ensuring that participants have the opportunity to have input into its content. Starting a consultation process or a meeting with an 'expectations' exercise can be a good means of doing this. Facilitators can then use the results of these discussions to organise the process or programme around a set of common expectations – for example, through the use of thematic-based group work.

Signposts to other relevant sections of the toolkit

Is a child-only consultation / meeting being organised?

Go to the section on

Organising a consultation / meeting with children (starts at page 23)

Is a meeting of children and adults being organised?

Do the children need a preparatory meeting?

Go to the section on

Planning a preparatory meeting for children (starts at page 39)



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Organising a consultation / meeting with children

The beginning and set up of the consultation or meeting are crucial. They set the tone and mood for the process or event. It is at this moment that an atmosphere, environment and synergy can be created and facilitated which truly enables children to be heard in matters that affect them. This is the moment when adult organisers or facilitators can give out a message that children's views have and will be taken into account and that they themselves are the protagonists of the process.

Checklist

- Identify Objectives and Learning Needs
- The design of the process and programme should be inter-linked. Plan and design the details of the workshop based on the objectives and assessment of learning needs
- Plan carefully the logistics, including budget and venue
- Equal access to participation is the key to meeting a child's individual and special needs
- Good facilitation and good translation are crucial to positive outcomes
- Large (plenary) groups can be intimidating. Consider working in smaller break out or «community» groups
- Consider how to facilitate good and meaningful interaction between children and key adult decision-makers and the media
- Remember that young adults (just Over 18s), especially those who have been involved in consultations or meetings around the same issues, can be an invaluable resource for similar processes involving children (Under 18s).
- Take into account the role and responsibilities of accompanying adults.
- Make sure good child protection policies are in place.
- Make sure that evaluation is built in as an integral part of the consultation process.



Organising a consultation / meeting with children

Identifying objectives and learning needs

Good preparation will help to effectively design a consultation process that is best suited to your needs and those of the other participants. An appropriate consultation / meeting design will build upon information concerning:

- The objectives for the consultation and/or meeting and the desired outcomes (for example, advice on new legislation, ideas on changes in policy or policy priorities)
- The profile of the participants (age range, sex, experience, region, language etc.)
- Any learning needs of the participants (in relation to skills, knowledge and attitudes)
- The time and resources available.

Identifying the learning needs of participants:

To identify the learning needs of the group it is useful to consider three different types of learning needs relating to the participant's skills, knowledge and attitudes.



Hand: Skills
Head: Knowledge
Heart: Attitudes

For example, more knowledge may be required on the topic under discussion (for example, a new law or a change in policy). Assertiveness skills may be required to enable children to be effective in their negotiations with adults. Or, positive attitudes towards equal opportunities for children with disabilities may need to be encouraged.

Thus, when designing a consultation or meeting you may need to consider how much emphasis to place on sharing new information, developing skills or bringing about attitudinal change before moving on to the substance of the event.

Planning and designing the consultation or meeting

Based on the overall objectives of the consultation and the learning

needs assessment carried out as above the facilitators can plan and design the details. An overall design, in addition to plans for each session and the linkages between them, needs to be carefully mapped out.

Key tips include:

- Identify realistic estimates of the time needed for each activity.
- Create time within the programme for participants to get to know each other and share the experiences of the preparation with their networks at home.
- Allow for a maximum amount of time to be spent in small group sessions. Work in smaller groups has been proven to be far more participatory and enjoyable and less intimidating than plenary sessions.
- Wherever possible, avoid plenary sessions full of ‘talking heads’. When using plenary sessions, take care to make them as interesting and interactive as possible e.g. by briefing adult speakers on the audience and by letting the children choose how to present their input.
- Although it is always tempting when setting an agenda to try and cover every possible topic, nobody enjoys being in meetings all day. Ensure that there is some free time as well as some optional planned social activities. These can include visits to tourist areas, shopping, sports activities, project visits, etc.
- Ensure that the way the consultation or meeting is organised creates space for fun and that there is opportunity to **HAVE FUN!**

Planning the logistics – budget and venue

In most cases a budget will have to be prepared and identified for the consultation process or event, keeping the following broad categories in mind.

- Travel and accommodation costs for both participants and facilitators
- Material costs: Photocopying, fax, computer time, stationary, flipchart paper and pens, etc.
- Venue: meeting rooms, open spaces for outdoor activities, equipment, water, etc.
- Resource Persons/Facilitators fees
- Documentation e.g. using a rapporteur, video, tape recording.
- Miscellaneous.

Organising a consultation / meeting with children

The logistics have to be very well planned and figured out. There is a need to allocate roles and responsibilities amongst the planning team members for each of the above mentioned areas.

A key ingredient to making a success of a consultation process or meeting is finding a **child-friendly venue** where participants can be comfortable, safe and able to concentrate on the work in hand.

This may include:

- A space where furniture can be arranged according to the wishes of the children (for example, avoiding conference-style rooms with fixed seating)
- Space for different types of activities including drama, art and small discussion groups in addition to a larger room for plenary discussions or activities.
- A space which is accessible to children with disabilities (this includes rest rooms and so on).
- Easy access to **safe** outside areas for leisure and recreation
- A separate eating area.

Try to hold the event in a residential setting, if at all possible. This allows for:

- A more child friendly atmosphere
- More opportunities for informal interaction in the evenings / outside the 'official' programme
- More fun and more space for other activities, particularly for outdoor activities
- More security as the children are all together and can be better supervised
- An all-inclusive deal, including meals.

Remember that any location must allow for the highest quality of child protection.

Responding to individual and special needs

Children are not a homogenous group and will come to a consultation / meeting from a range of backgrounds with a diverse set of experiences, views and needs. **Equal access to participation** is the key to meeting a

child's individual and special needs, and may imply that some children will need much more support and time than others.

Key issues to consider here include

- Allow plenty of time for personal and group interchange and sharing so that children can build relationships, friendships, networks and webs of solidarity among themselves.
- Make sure that all language needs are well catered for.
- Make sure that all aspects of the process and programme are accessible to all children – from games and energisers through to access to all parts of the venue.
- Take into consideration the dietary requirements of the children participating.

Facilitation

This is where all the above need to meet in the actual event or process. There is the additional need to review and monitor the facilitation process at every stage of the consultation or meeting. Those involved in facilitating need to consult with each other and assess group energy. There should be flexibility in the programme to allow this and time should be allocated for facilitators to meet with representatives from the participants group to review each day.

Key assets for effective facilitation

- a. be attentive at all times
- b. be adaptable
- c. if you don't know, say so
- d. trust the resources of the children and young people's group
- e. honour each child and young person
- f. tap children and young people's energy
- g. be yourself
- h. keep intervention to a minimum
- i. monitor the energy level
- j. don't be attached to your own interventions
- k. take everything that occurs as relevant
- l. improvise/flexible/creative
- m. when in doubt, check it out

«Children and young people's group facilitation is the art of guiding the children and young people's group process towards the agreed objectives. A facilitator guides the process and does not get involved in content. A facilitator intervenes to protect the group process and keep the group on track to fulfil its task.»

From: Karkara, R. (2002)
Resource Book on Facilitating
Children's Organisation
and Children's Citizenship
and Governance

Organising a consultation / meeting with children

- n.** seek agreement
- o.** use question and suggestions
- p.** negotiate and contract
- q.** be culturally sensitive
- r.** start well
- s.** use conflict resolution
- t.** invite feedback
- u.** acknowledge and affirm
- v.** have a sense of humour

From: Karkara, R. (2002)
Resource Book on Facilitating Children's Organisation
and Children's Citizenship and Governance

Some important things to remember

- Appoint a lead facilitator(s) who is responsible for the design of the programme – in partnership with the young participants – and for guiding a team of facilitators through the process.
- Bring together a facilitation team which reflects, as far as possible, the diversity of the participants in terms of gender representation, geographical diversity, different languages and so on.
- Give priority to bringing young facilitators into the process.
- If the programme is designed around smaller working groups, the number of facilitators needs to reflect the number of groups. In addition, remember that if the design of the programme is to remain a fairly open and dynamic process which allows for inputs by the young participants, then there will need to be some spare capacity (additional people) in the facilitation team to deal with this.



Remember that the smaller the group the more participatory the process. Any group work should therefore aim to involve a maximum of 15 people per group.

- Circulate the draft programme to the team of facilitators beforehand for their comments and inputs.

■ Organise a one / two day training of facilitators to take place immediately prior to the consultation / meeting. This can be a space where, among other issues, various methods of facilitation can be shared to make the process as dynamic and creative as possible.

Role of facilitation team

- To work with the participants to help them develop their own individual ideas and prioritise the issues that the group want to raise
- To ensure equal participation of genders, ages and different cultures and that a diversity of opinions is respected.
- To establish the ground rules at the beginning of the event with the participants to encourage full participation as well as mutual respect and tolerance for different experiences and values.
- Where relevant, to make the group aware of the challenges posed by the use of several languages and to ensure that no one language dominates the discussions in either group work or plenary sessions.
- To be aware of the different backgrounds of the participants so as to design a process that reflects different contributions and be aware of 'sensitive' issues that may require attention.
- To prepare participants to deal with any media requests that might arise.

Some criteria for the selection of facilitators

- Fully qualified and proven experience in working with young people.
- Mixture of adults and young people ('Over 18s')
- Multicultural and, where possible, reflecting the same geographical backgrounds as the participants
- Gender balance
- Familiarity with the use of interactive facilitation techniques
- Ability to speak fluently the language used by the children or, where this is not possible, to ensure that all language groups are treated equally.

Translation

Language should never be a barrier to participation. Unfortunately, it often is. It is therefore essential that planning and resources are

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dedicated to making sure that all children have good access to the same information (both verbal and written) so that they all have an equal opportunity to meaningfully participate. Good interpretation is crucial to ensuring that all participants have the same understanding of both the process and discussions. Children will start to feel marginalised if they feel that their language is not being used to an equal extent (for example, in plenary sessions) or if a language they do not understand seems to be dominating discussions. At the same time, most children are not used to having to rely on good translation, which may easily cause frustration and a feeling of exclusion.

Overcoming potential barriers to effective interpretation

- Make sure that facilitators recognise the importance of interpretation and pay sufficient attention to it when facilitating their groups. Emphasise to facilitators the importance of all participants understanding the discussions and being able to take part
- Discuss the question of interpretation in daily briefings with the facilitation team so that any problems can be dealt with as and when they arise
- Encourage children to speak out when they are unable to follow discussions
- Get information beforehand on the experience of interpreters. Ask the more experienced interpreters to brief the less experienced. 'Pair' less experienced interpreters with someone who is more experienced to help those with less experience to function more effectively
- Make sure that children are fully aware of what it means to work together with interpreters
- In plenary sessions use the different languages to an equal extent
- Set up a «help desk» which can also be used to process and deal with interpretation needs and problems
- Have a team of people available whose job it is to make sure that the interpretation is working well. This is particularly important in large gatherings where many different languages are being used.

Organising effective interpretation

- Ideally, there should be teams of interpreters available who are able to translate to and from a specific language and who are used to working

with children and understand the particular needs and circumstances of children's meetings.

- The size of the teams and the number of interpreters will obviously depend on the size of the event and interpretation needs. Interpreting for long periods is incredibly difficult and therefore sufficient – and good – back up is essential.
- Organise teams of interpreters into pairs so that they can always work with the same group of children. Children prefer to keep the same interpreters and the good understanding that develops between them is often a key ingredient in ensuring that interpretation works well. This will also allow interpreters to take breaks. Each 'pair' of interpreters should work with a maximum of 6–10 children.
- Consider an afternoon briefing for the interpreters immediately prior to the event. It is also beneficial if, during this briefing, interpreters get a chance to meet the event's facilitators.
- Interpreters should receive in advance copies of all written information available to participants.
- It is also useful to have a team of people available who can translate documents during the consultation or meeting.

Do's and Don'ts for interpreters

- Show respect for children. Interpret exactly what they say. For example, «My name is ... and I come from ... my experience is»
- **Avoid** «she/he says ... What she/he wants to say is that ... I do not understand what she/he is saying, but I think». **Never** give your own opinion.
- If you do not understand what the child has said make sure you get clarification **before** you start interpreting.
- If someone is speaking too quickly for good interpretation, make an agreed sign – for example, the signal of 'T' for Time – to ask them to pause.
- When a child is speaking, especially in a plenary session, stand up together with them and interpret when they have finished speaking.

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- Make sure you inform the facilitators or organisers if any of the children with whom you are working needs any special attention or does not feel well.

Accompanying adults as interpreters

If the consultation or meeting does not include specialised interpreters this important role will need to be undertaken by accompanying adults in addition to their other roles and responsibilities (See the section on Ensuring Children are Safe and Protected).

An important point to remember

Working as an interpreter in a children's meeting is hard work but usually wonderfully rewarding. Good child-friendly interpreters often develop an excellent rapport with the children with whom they are working. Interpreters are crucial to making it possible for children to communicate and therefore to the success of the event.

Working in «communities»

One successful way of creating an enabling environment at the outset of a meeting or consultation is through the use of small 'community groups'

- Small groups ('communities') build up a sense of self-confidence, safety, intimacy, friendship and immediate participation for **all** young participants as opposed to large **plenary** sessions or larger groups that can be intimidating at the beginning of a meeting.
- Community groups can be formed according to language and/or culture groupings at the beginning in order to overcome early on the barriers to communication.
- Working in small communities helps each child to participate and to be seen and heard immediately.
- As the consultation or meeting progresses, allow for the organic creation of other communities (based on age, issues of interest, topics

or themes to be discussed etc).

- Community groups can continue to function during the process – and even beyond – and therefore become a point of reference for young participants.
- Community groups can ensure that a diversity of views are represented in all parts of the process. For example, members of committees (evaluation, media etc) can be selected from each of the community groups.

Media, dignitaries and decision-makers

At many gatherings of children and young people, the media, local, national or international dignitaries and decision-makers are interested in what the young delegates have to say. This is a great opportunity for the children and young people to have their voices heard. However, there are also risks that need to be considered and prepared for in advance.

Some important things to remember depending on the type of consultation or event being organised

- Assign a media co-ordinator (press officer) beforehand to ensure thorough planning on practical arrangements for media access to the venue and to the young participants (credentials if applicable, room for media conferences/briefings, equipment, security/well being/ briefing of young people)
- Plan and agree designated ‘slots’ (i.e. specific times) when media and dignitaries have access (for example, opening and closing sessions, press conferences, space for pre-arranged interviews). This avoids a situation where the presence of media or dignitaries can cause disruptions to an already tightly scheduled event.
- Plan and co-ordinate proactively for the participation of child journalists who can cover the event from their own perspective.
- Media guidelines for young people should be prepared and sent to participants ahead of the event. It is also a good idea to include space

A reminder of some key issues

- *Were the ground rules clearly established at the beginning of the process to ensure that the role of adults remained purely facilitative? Have adult facilitators been provided with training to support them in their role?*



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A reminder of some key issues

- *Were the ground rules clearly established at the beginning of the process to ensure that the role of adults remained purely facilitative? Have adult facilitators been provided with training to support them in their role?*
- *What consideration has been given to ensuring that more marginalised groups of children and young people are invited to attend? For example, were children and young people with disabilities invited, were efforts made to secure an accessible venue? Will the conference be accessible to children and young people with different first languages? Have all relevant ethnic groups been invited? Have excluded young people – out of school, on the streets, in institutions – been invited?*



in the agenda for briefing participants on dealing with the media.

- If appropriate, consider the creation of a **Media Committee** at the beginning to ensure that media activities are undertaken according to the interests and needs of the young participants. This is also a good means of bringing together a group of young **media spokespeople**.
- It is important to have the full consent and agreement of both individual young participants and their respective parents or guardians to the child's participation in media work. This can be done by asking the children and their parents/guardians to sign a **media consent and release form prior to the event**.
- Consider organising a **DIALOGUE** between the children and adult policy makers and decision takers. This will provide the children with an opportunity to present their key messages and action points and to engage in an inter-generational dialogue.

Involving youth (Over 18s)

Over 18s, especially those who have been involved in consultations or meetings around the same issues, can be an invaluable resource for events involving children (Under 18s).

Over 18s can participate in consultation processes in a variety of different ways – as volunteers, as part of the team of facilitators, as presenters, as part of the evaluation team.

Established youth organisations are often a good resource and a good link.

Evaluation

Those planning the consultation need to review and monitor each of the stages in the cycle described above.

- Involve the participants in the evaluation of the process. Create a small **Evaluation Committee** at the beginning of the event.

- Make sure that evaluation is built in as an integral part of the consultative process. Find innovative ways of conducting an evaluation ('freedom walls' etc.).
- Base an evaluation on children's expectations - these should have been solicited at the beginning of the process. Also consider what has been achieved in terms of:
 - **Personal learning** (new skills, experiences that help support follow up processes, experiences that help children feel respected and involved).
 - **Group outcomes** (personal and group interchange and sharing, building up networks and relationships)
 - **Impact** (their proposals have an impact, their contributions are linked to decisions taken by decision-makers, they influence the attitudes of adults)
- Consider bringing Over 18s into the evaluation process to assist (see above).

Opportunities for accompanying adults

Child protection is at the core of a respect for and the promotion of children's rights. It is therefore dealt with in a separate section in this toolkit **Ensuring children are safe and protected** (start at page 63).

Good practice in child protection means, among other things, that all under 18s involved in consultations / meetings should be accompanied by an adult who is responsible for their safety and well-being at all times.

However, facilitating meaningful participation (allowing children to participate on their own terms) means that it is often best to make consultations **children's only** spaces. This means closing the meeting to all but the children, facilitators, interpreters and organisers.

At the same time, it is important to recognise that many of the accompanying adults may be experienced professionals. It is therefore important that they have something useful to do during the time in which the children they are responsible for accompanying are involved in

A reminder of some key issues

- *Have children and young people of different ages been invited? Has consideration been given to whether they should be grouped according to age? To interest areas? To seeking mixed age workshops?*
- *Has thought been given to the setting, the entertainment, cultural differences within the participants?*



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A reminder of some key issues

- *Will adequate adult support be available to the children and young people and is their role clearly defined from the outset?*

their own meeting.

- Consider therefore organising a separate parallel event for accompanying adults where they can meet each other, discuss together how they can take forward work on children's participation and especially support children to follow up the outcomes of their own event.

Signposts to other relevant sections of the toolkit

For more information on the supportive role played by accompanying adults, please refer to the section on

Ensuring children are safe and protected

(starts at page 63)



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Involving children and young people in a formal ('adult') meeting is a reflection of their right to participate in decisions made about them. To ensure that this is meaningful for the children and young people, one recommendation is to hold a preparatory event specifically for Under 18 delegates prior to the formal meeting. This allows the young participants time to meet each other, to share information, perspectives and experiences and to plan their contributions to the formal meeting.

Signposts to other relevant sections of the toolkit

The information contained in previous sections of the toolkit

■ **Getting started** (starts at page 15)

■ **Organising a meeting with children** (starts at page 23)

are equally relevant when planning a preparatory event for U18 delegates participating in a formal meeting (such as the United Nations General Assembly Special Session on Children). The suggestions below are intended to **complement** this information by providing additional suggestions that are pertinent to children's participation in **formal meetings**.

Checklist

- Establish transparent selection criteria in advance and make this clear to all involved.
- Base your selection criteria on the principle of achieving good representation.
- Make all official texts or documents relating to the formal meeting available in child-friendly formats and relevant languages **well in advance**.
- Make sure that children and young people are well prepared before



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their arrival – that they understand the process and purpose of the preparatory event and the formal meeting and the link between the two.

- Consider carefully the role of both children and adults at the preparatory event.
- Consider inviting both children and adults as presenters. Consider carefully beforehand the role of presenters and make sure they are well briefed in advance.
- Facilitation is crucial to positive outcomes and plays a key role in ensuring that young delegates have realistic expectations of their participation in the formal meeting.
- If one of the outcomes of the preparatory event is an opportunity for the young delegates to select among themselves who should represent them at the formal meeting make sure you establish a good, fair, well thought out and carefully planned process **together with** the young participants.
- Consider holding shorter and separate briefing sessions for other young delegates who will be attending the formal meeting but have not been able to attend the preparatory event.

Selection of participants

If there is a limit on the number of U18 delegates able to participate in the preparatory event, it is important to establish transparent selection criteria in advance and to make this clear to all involved. Limits on the number of participants may arise due to:

- considerations of space or resources (human and financial)
- a need to keep the group of participants to a ‘manageable’ size in order to achieve a substantive meeting with a substantive outcome

Selection criteria in situations where the number of participants is limited should be based on the principle of achieving good representation. For example:

- Children selected by their peer group to represent them
- Children who belong to children’s organisations, associations and movements and therefore legitimately represent a much larger group of children
- Regional balance (within country or within region)
- Gender balance

- Age balance
- Children with and without disabilities
- The number of children per country as compared to size/population of country (applicable only for international meetings).

Background information

Preparing children and young people prior to their arrival ensures that they understand the process and purpose of the preparatory event and the formal meeting.

Before the meeting ensure that all delegates have a copy of all official texts or documents relating to the formal meeting as well as child friendly versions in their language.

The role of children and adults

Children and young people should be involved at the earliest stages of planning through to the event itself and the production of any conference report. Indeed, the initiative for the event might well come from children and young people themselves.

They could be involved in:

- Defining aims and objectives;
- Determining the structure of the event;
- Planning the specific contributions;
- Inviting speakers;
- Chairing and presenting;
- Facilitating/Running workshops;
- Evaluation;
- Conference report.

Adults' role would be to offer the skills and knowledge, which the children and young people identify as necessary to support them, including, for example:

- Provide information where needed;
- Provide support in tackling problems and difficulties as they arise;
- Advise on any child protection or safety issues, particularly if the conference is residential;

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- Advise on venues, administrative and organisational matters;
- Help with funding and the management of the finances;
- Help with media coverage, press releases;
- Help with dissemination of any conference outcomes.

Role of presenters (child and adult)

Both child and adult presenters need to be invited well in advance so that they have time to prepare.

They should be informed in advance about the context of the meeting (its purpose, number of participants, breakdown of age, nationality etc.) and the purpose of their presentation.

All presentations should be interactive. Nobody enjoys being spoken to for an hour.

Role of facilitation team

In addition to the role of facilitators as outlined in the section

Organising a consultation / meeting with children, facilitation in a preparatory event to a formal meeting also needs to

- Ensure that the young delegates have realistic expectations of their participation at the official meeting.
- Be aware of and be able to 'manage' the different backgrounds of the participants (especially the psychosocial needs of children who have suffered trauma or other stressful experiences) and their different roles in the formal or official meeting (for example, as members of NGO or government delegations).

Outcomes for the preparatory meeting

It is important to ensure that the delegates know of any opportunities for the specific participation of children and young people at the official meeting. The preparatory meeting is an opportunity for the delegates to select amongst themselves who should represent them. This should **not** become the focus of the meeting, but rather seen as one of many outcomes.

A good process should be established **together with** the young participants for the selection of speakers / presenters during the official meeting.

A calm and supportive team should be assigned to help young delegates prepare their presentations / interventions in the official meeting. 'Coaching' should be done in an objective and non-partisan way with the minimum of pressure. The aim should be to help young delegates prepare their interventions and **never** to write their interventions for them.

Consider creating a **Drafting Committee** to make sure that the full range of views and opinions are heard in any final communiqué or presentation on behalf of the meeting.

Opportunities for children not attending the preparatory event

Consider holding separate and shorter briefing sessions for other young delegates who will be attending the formal meeting but have not been able to attend the preparatory event.

While such briefing sessions may be shorter, they should still be of a high quality. Ensure that as much of the important preparatory information is conveyed to participants, that interpretation facilities are available and that the same written information is available to them.

Ensure that **ALL** young delegates get the T-shirt, the bag etc., available to those at the preparatory event.

Try and organise at least one event outside the main programme that allows both the groups to meet each other.

Activities for Over 18s

Over 18s, especially those who have been involved in consultations or meetings around the same issues or in formal adult meetings, can be an invaluable resource for preparatory events for Under 18s. (Just) Over 18s can bridge the gap between child and adult delegates and can help prepare and support a younger age group's participation in a formal event or meeting.

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Signposts to other relevant sections of the toolkit

Will you have children in your delegation or among your representatives?

Go to the section on

Having children on your delegation (starts at page 47)

Are you involving children in a side event or presentation at a formal meeting?

Go to the section on

The role of adults in creating an enabling environment (starts at page 55)

Do you want to know more about the role of accompanying adults?

Go to the section on

Ensuring children are safe and protected
(starts at page 63)



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Having children on your delegation

The presence and active participation of children in formal or high level meetings on issues of concern to them has shown to be a positive experience for all concerned. As children's participation in conferences has increased over the past decade, their formal participation in the main body of conferences appears to have had a greater impact than their participation only in parallel events or fringe meetings.

One of the most effective ways of ensuring children's formal participation in meetings on children's issues, especially at the regional or international level, is through their inclusion on governmental and non-governmental delegations. The participation of children on delegations is also essential because:

- Children know their situation best, what needs to be changed and often have concrete ideas of how to change it.
- Children have a democratic right to express their views and to take part in determining the world they wish to live in.
- Including children improves understanding for those in government and non-governmental organisations, and enables the development of initiatives that are both appropriate and relevant.
- Including children will demonstrate, in a very concrete and practical way, that their views count and that your government or non-governmental organisation takes them seriously.

By including young people as part of a national or organisation delegation will also contribute to increasing awareness and interest in the topics under discussion among other children and young people. This will occur through an open delegation selection process and as the delegate(s) interact with their peer group through public meetings, workshops, mail,

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e-mail, Internet 'chat' sessions or public debates shown on television.



Checklist

Give plenty of time and thought to:

- Processes for identifying and selecting young delegates
- Preparing and briefing young delegates

Identifying young delegates

There are many organisations who work directly with children or who are in direct contact with them, for example, non-governmental organisations (especially children's or child rights organisations), children or youth organisations, community organisations, public or professional bodies or government departments. Such organisations can help develop an appropriate process for selecting young delegates.

By going through existing channels you are more likely to be able to reach a diverse group of children involved in ongoing child rights advocacy or work on issues of particular concern to them – for example, children involved in school or youth councils, children involved in the environmental movement, working children, children with disabilities, ethnic minority or indigenous children, refugee children, children affected by war, children affected by HIV/AIDS, children in institutional care or children in the juvenile justice system.

In addition, if you wish to initiate a national process for the selection of young delegates as members of national (governmental) delegations, there are also many ways of reaching out to as many and as diverse a group of children as possible. For example, via schools, the Internet, NGOs, the media, magazines or local councils.

One suggestion with many options is to have a competition in which you ask children and young people to:

- Write about their life or the issue(s) under discussion in a creative way, perhaps through a poem, journal, diary or letter.

- Write a story or essay about their experiences with the issue(s) under discussion in their community, region or at the national level.
- Create artwork that expresses their vision of the issue(s) under discussion – video, drawings and so forth.

To promote a competition, you will need to send out notices nation-wide to various children or youth organisations, schools or child rights organisations. You may also wish to advertise, or obtain public service announcements, in newspapers, on television, radio or otherwise promote the competition via electronic news. The publicity should be written and presented in a child-friendly format. This will also serve to raise awareness within your country of your delegation's preparations for the conference, the work of your delegation at the event and in the follow up process.

Selecting delegates

Consideration should be given to including more than one child on a delegation so that they can share the experience and responsibility and support each other both at the event and in follow up work back home. This also enables a more balanced representation of children and young people on delegations, including for example:

- Age (a balance of age groups, for example younger and older children – 10-14 and 15-17 years)
- Gender, a mixture of boys and girls
- Rural versus urban residence
- Children with and without disabilities
- In- and out of school
- Majority and ethnic minority or indigenous populations
- Socio-economic backgrounds
- Religion

Preparing and briefing young delegates

Once the young delegate(s) have been selected it is important to provide them with an opportunity to prepare for their participation in the meeting so that they can both contribute to and benefit from the event in a meaningful way. This can be done through a well-structured

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programme of introduction to the nature of the conference, the issues under discussion (through provision of information and key documents in child friendly formats) and your delegation's own policies and programmes for children and young people. It is also important that the young delegates meet other members of the delegation as early as possible and that they participate in planning and briefing sessions.

Young delegates would also benefit from an opportunity to meet with a range of children's organisations and groups within country in order to develop their views and perspectives, help them prioritise the key issues they wish to raise at the conference and enhance their ability to speak on behalf of a broad cross-section of children. This can be done by holding workshops or enabling and supporting visits to or inductions with projects and programmes run either for or by children that are relevant to the issues under discussion.

Young delegates should be enabled to arrive in advance of the conference if preparatory events are being organised for young delegates. This will provide them with the opportunity to meet with other children, to share ideas and experiences, to gain a deeper understanding of the nature of the conference and the issues under discussion as well as plan for their participation in the event.

«Underlying issues, politics and other dynamics that can possibly affect the child in the conference must be provided too. Transparency in this regard can equip children with a wider perspective and tools to better understand the controversial issues at hand.»

From: Lessons on Child Participation in the Pre-UNGASS Processes. The Philippines Experience.

A research survey on systems of child participation in preparatory processes for the United Nations General Assembly Special Session on Children

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Explaining the context

Young delegates at conferences are sometimes in a very special position. In some respects they may be privileged in that some activities will be organised specifically for them. However they may also find it very difficult to genuinely influence what is going on around them. They will be targeted by their delegations (government and non-governmental) to lend these bodies credibility and to raise their media profile. However, especially in adult conferences to which children are invited (such as the United Nations Special Session on Children), they may only be allowed to participate in the formal proceedings under very controlled conditions. At such events children, especially those who are not on government delegations, may find it quite difficult to even observe the formal proceedings let alone to actively participate in them.

It is therefore very important that young delegates and those supporting

them understand the purpose of the conference, the context in which they will be participating and what is and is not possible in terms of expected outcomes. It is essential that young delegates do not come to meetings with unrealistic expectations that cannot be met. They should be provided with all the information necessary to make them as aware as possible of the context in which they will be expected to operate. This should include information on the possible limits to their participation, so that they feel confident and comfortable about their participation in such an event and are aware of possible opportunities as well as limitations.

Despite any possible constraints on children's participation in formal or high-level meetings, it is vital that, wherever possible, they are encouraged and supported to attend in order to ensure that:

- The voices of children are heard with their immense diversity of experience, culture and views.
- The lives of children experiencing the major problems confronting children and young people today (poverty, discrimination, war, abuse, exploitation, disease) are as well represented as possible.
- Governments, United Nations bodies and civil society are challenged to radically improve the way they involve children at both national and international levels and attempts to involve them in a tokenistic way are challenged.
- They can take up real opportunities to speak out and demonstrate the strength of children in arguing for their own interests.

Signposts to other relevant sections of the toolkit

Do you want advice on how to maximise the benefits of the opportunity for both adults and children to work together as equal partners during joint meetings?

Go to the next section on

The role of adults in creating an enabling environment (starts at page 55)



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The role of adults in creating an enabling environment

It is essential that children participating in meetings feel secure and are properly looked after.

The role of adults in providing adequate and appropriate support is also covered in the section on **Ensuring children are safe and protected** (starts at page 63).

The experiences and perspectives of children and young people attending meetings are a unique and valuable resource that will provide a very significant input to the discussions.

The checklist below offers advice on how to maximise the benefits of this opportunity for both adults and children and young people to work together as equal partners during such meetings. It contains suggestions for creating an environment in which children and young people are able to participate fully and actively in all aspects of the meeting by ensuring that children are adequately supported, made to feel welcome and are treated with respect by adult participants.

As a participant in a meeting, you can play a part in helping to create an enabling environment for children and young people during both the formal and informal proceedings in the following ways:

In general

- Make sure that child and youth delegates are listened to with the same respect shown to adult delegates. Remember that the children and young people are experts in many of the topics under discussion, and have the same status as the adult delegates.
- Feel free to ask children and young people what they think if they do not seem to be taking an active part in discussions. Ask them in a polite way in order to help encourage their responses. Try to include those who have not already spoken. At the same time, bear in mind that there may be times when children and young people will simply want to listen to

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what is happening.

- Make sure that children and young people are allowed to share their experiences but are not expected to have solutions to every problem. Approach problem solving as a joint process.
- Remember that children and young people are not expected to speak on behalf of all children and young people. They may at times speak from personal experiences, and at other times speak more generally of the experiences of children and young people in their country.
- Make sure that children and young people are included in all parts of the discussions. Do not limit their participation to brief statements at the beginning of discussions.
- Avoid the use of colloquialisms, «buzz words» and unfamiliar acronyms wherever possible to allow children and young people to get fully involved in discussions. But, remember not to oversimplify or «talk down» to the young delegates.
- Address and respond directly to the children and young people, rather than to their accompanying adults. Some children and young people will be accompanied by an accompanying adult or translator who are there to support the involvement of the children.
- Make sure that children and young people have access to adequate translation and that time is always allowed in presentations and discussions for translation for children and young people. Help with translating wherever you can and whenever it is needed.
- Remember that this may be the first experience of a formal or high-level conference for many of the child and youth delegates. While they will have been briefed on the nature of the proceedings, bear in mind that they will be learning about the processes through getting fully involved in them.
- Remember that children and young people will hold a range of opinions on the issues under discussion, just as adult delegates will.

- Make sure that children and young people are not pressured to speak about their personal experiences if they are not comfortable doing so.

As a member of an NGO or government delegation which includes Under 18 delegates

- Make sure that there is designated support within your delegation for your child and youth delegates – an accompanying adult / chaperone who is responsible for their safety and well being at all times during the meeting.

- Make sure that child and youth delegates are treated as equal members of your delegation and that they have the opportunity to participate actively in all aspects of your delegation's activities – in briefing / strategy meetings; as representatives in regional and thematic caucuses; in meetings with your government delegation and so on.

- Make sure, within your delegation, that child and youth delegates are allowed the space to voice their views and opinions and that their comments are accorded equal weight. Include them in all your delegation's discussions.

- Make sure that child and youth delegates know of your delegation's position or views on a particular issue under discussion. You will need to decide if child or youth delegates on your delegation are obliged to support these positions or whether they can also represent what may be the differing views of the children and young people in your country.

- Make sure that you communicate to young delegates the various opportunities available to them to participate in the formal and informal proceedings at the meeting (the NGO caucuses, the formal meeting, workshops and side events, activities specifically designed for young delegates) and the various ways in which they themselves can contribute to the proceedings (lobbying their governments, media activities). **It is important that young delegates are informed about all the options for participation available to them and that they are supported in fulfilling their goals during the meeting.**

- If the Under 18 members of your delegation were unable to attend any

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preparatory events for Under 18s, find a way to introduce them to other children and young people at the meeting – especially to those who were able to attend such preparatory events.

- Make sure that child and youth delegates have copies of the key documents under discussion at the meeting in a language that they can understand. Make sure that the child and youth delegates on your delegation have copies of child friendly versions of official documents, if they are available.

- Take the time to explain any jargon or complex phrases used in documents or in discussions.

- Make sure that children and young people are prepared for contact with the media. It is important that media exposure is planned carefully to avoid unwanted, harmful or invasive attention. Children and young people should be supported in getting their message out in the way that they want. They should never be obliged to discuss personal experiences with the media against their will. It is also important to be aware of any potential security risks for children and young people associated with speaking out.

As a side event facilitator – creating a child friendly space

Many high-level meetings organise side events (caucuses, workshops) which often run parallel to the official or formal proceedings. It is important that children are able to participate in all aspects of the proceedings and decision-making processes of a meeting, both formal and informal. Here are some guidelines to help you ensure your side event is a child friendly space.

Creating an enabling environment

- Do not dismiss children's views. If you disagree, challenge the view and not the person. Ensure their views are treated with equal respect

- Ensure that points raised by children are fully discussed. In the same way as a point discussed by any person would be discussed by the group.

- Children have the right to be treated in the same way as other

contributors. Don't intimidate children by making them stand out, for example if you see that they want to make a comment do not say things like ' now lets hear from our young friend' or make them stand up to talk etc.

- As facilitator of the side event, no doubt you have laid down some rules for those participating. Make sure everyone who participates knows the rules before you start, and make sure these rules are made easily understandable to all.
- Make sure that everyone gets a chance to speak: do not let one or two individuals dominate the floor, whether they are children or adults.
- Make sure you look around for children who may want to speak, they may be less assertive about putting their hand up.

Language

- Ensure that language is clear and easily understood by everyone. Avoid using jargon and technical language.
- Many children are from non-English speaking countries. Ensure there is enough time for translation.

Access to information

- Information: Make sure that children in your side event have access to information about the issues being discussed, set aside some time to answer any questions they may have on this.
- Leave room in the discussions for people to ask questions if they do not understand.

Representation

- Children participating in this meeting hold their own views and opinions and sometimes represent a number of other children from their organisation or country. However it is important to acknowledge that children are responsible for their own opinions, as are all people at the meeting. Therefore children cannot claim to talk on behalf of all children in the world.
- Try to ensure that children are not coerced or intimidated by adults when it comes to them expressing their views or voting.

The role of adults in creating an enabling environment

Intervention slots

- You may like to have children speaking at your side event. So as not to involve children in a tokenistic way, children should only be invited to make an intervention if they are comfortable in doing so and have an obvious expertise or direct experience of the issue under discussion or can be properly prepared to speak on the issue (e.g. by meeting with children affected by that issue before they leave). You may like to bring together a group of adults and children to develop a strategy for identifying potential speakers.
- Remember that it is not reasonable to invite children to make a lengthy intervention at the last minute. Ensure that they have time to prepare together with calm and supportive adult(s) who can help them in an objective and non-partisan way with the minimum of pressure.
- Unless you want the child or youth to speak entirely on their own behalf, you should ensure that the content of any presentation or speech is agreed before it is given or disseminated.

Decision making

- Ensure that children are able to participate fully in the decision making processes of the side event, whether that means being given a vote, having children on the drafting team and so forth.

Suggestions

- If your side event is one which runs throughout an official meeting – for example, a caucus – it may be an idea to have a space before it starts each day or at the end of each day's meeting for children to be able to raise any issues they may have had in terms of their participation or to ask about issues they are unclear on.
- You may like to appoint some people in the side event to act as link people for children. This needs to be a child friendly adult who has experience of enabling children to express their views freely and openly. This person should be informed in advance of the event of their role.



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Ensuring children are safe and protected

Concern for the safety and well being of children is at the core of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

A key element in working to safeguard the welfare of all children is the promotion of their rights. Bearing in mind the Convention on the Rights of the Child, children have the right:

- To have their health, safety, well being, and their best interest considered **paramount**.
- To have their welfare and development promoted and safeguarded so that they can achieve their full potential.
- To be valued, respected and understood within the context of their own culture, religion and ethnicity, and to have their needs identified and met within this context and within the context of their family wherever possible.
- To be listened to and to have their views given careful consideration, and to be encouraged and helped to participate in decisions which affect them.

In order that these rights are respected, when accompanying adults/facilitators are in contact with children, they should:

- At all times treat children with respect and recognise them as individuals in their own rights.
- Regard them positively and value them as individuals who have specific needs and rights and a particular contribution to make.
- Work with them in spirit of co-operation and partnership based on mutual trust and respect.
- Value their views and take them seriously.
- Work with them in ways that enhance their inherent capacities and capabilities, and develop their potential.
- Strive to understand them within the context in which they live.

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Checklist

- Make sure that accompanying adults are fully briefed on their role and responsibilities before departure (establish a code of conduct) and again upon arrival at the consultation or meeting.
- Children and young people should also be briefed about child protection issues both before their departure and once they arrive at the consultation or meeting.
- Assign child protection focal point(s) who have responsibility for the children's security and support needs during the consultation/meeting and in the evenings at any accommodation venues.
- Set up a central database with all details of the young participants.
- Provide each young participant with an 'emergency number card' containing key numbers and addresses.



Providing medical support

Prior to departure, each accompanying adult should get written permission from the child's legal guardians to act on their behalf in case of medical emergency. It is important to ensure that all children have access to medical services and medical care, as required. This will involve:

- Ensuring that all children have full insurance coverage prior to departure.
- A nurse/doctor being available on-site or on-call during the consultation or meeting
- A room being set aside where young participants can rest if they are feeling ill
- Basic medical supplies or a first aid kit being available on-site
- All information regarding participants' medical needs or conditions being kept safely together on a database or in a folder with one person responsible for holding this information.

Duty of care

In addition to the general principles of good practice in work with children, the accompanying adult should recognise that they, as adults, have responsibility and legal duty, to ensure the safety of the children with whom they travel for a consultation or meeting.

Children can be at risk of harm or abuse from a range of sources. It is the responsibility of the accompanying adult/facilitator to minimise the risk of harm by promoting good practice and by identifying and managing potential risks.

Suggested code of conduct

It is important for the accompanying adults/facilitators in contact with children to:

- Be aware of situations which may present risks and manage these
- Ensure that a culture of openness exists to enable any issues or concerns to be raised and discussed.
- Ensure that a sense of accountability exists between staff so that poor practice or potentially abusive behaviour does not go unchallenged.

In general it is inappropriate to:

- Spend excessive time alone with children away from others
- Take children to places where they will be alone with the chaperone/facilitator.

The accompanying adult/facilitator **must never**:

- Hit or otherwise physically assault or physically abuse children
- Develop physical/sexual relationships with children
- Develop relationships with children which could in any way be deemed exploitative or abusive
- Act in ways that may be abusive or may place a child at risk of abuse.

The accompanying adult/facilitator must avoid actions or behaviour that could be construed as poor practice or potentially abusive. For example, **they should never**:

- Use language, make suggestions or offer advice which is inappropriate, offensive or abusive
- Behave physically in a manner which is inappropriate or sexually provocative
- Have a child/children with whom they are working to stay overnight in the adult's room

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- Do things for children of a personal nature that they can do for themselves
- Condone, or participate in, behaviour of children which is illegal, unsafe and abusive.
- Act in ways intended to shame, humiliate, belittle or degrade children, or otherwise perpetrate any form of emotional abuse.
- Discriminate against, show differential treatment, or favour particular child(ren) to the exclusion of others.

Accommodation for children and their accompanying adults

For Save the Children staff, the organization's child protection policy stipulates that 'staff and others must never... sleep in the same room or bed as a child with whom they are working.'

The following recommendations should be taken into consideration when planning residential meetings:

- Ask the children if they have a preference with whom they would like to share a room.
- In general try to put children together who speak the same language. At the end of a long day it is more relaxing to speak your mother tongue.
- Rooms should be single sex – girls with girls and boys with boys.
- Put children together who are close in age.
- Be aware of possible conflicts and arrange accommodation to minimise these, wherever possible or appropriate.

Other elements of good practice in child protection

- Children and young people should also be briefed about child protection policy.
- In addition to accompanying adults, focal persons should be assigned by the meeting's organisers. Each focal person should have designated responsibility for security and support needs either during the meeting and/or in the evenings at any accommodation venues.

- Focal persons must ensure that the children and young people know the name(s) of the person(s) they can report any concerns to.
- Children should be made aware that they are also free to contact another designated NGO representative or conference/meeting representative should they have any questions or if their accompanying adult is not available or appropriate.
- A central database should be set up by the meeting's organisers with all details of young delegates (contact details during the meeting, of the accompanying adult, of the parent or legal guardian). Registration forms for young delegates attending meetings should be designed to gather all the information necessary to ensure child protection.
- An 'emergency number card' should be provided to each young delegate with key numbers /addresses (focal points, doctors, hotel etc.).

The role of accompanying adults ('chaperones')

WHY adult supervision of young delegates?

It is essential that children participating in meetings feel secure and are properly looked after. This corresponds to **all** children under the age of 18 years and not just those who may be participating in a meeting for the first time or travelling outside of their country for the first time.

Ensuring that adults accompany child delegates to meetings is an example of good practice in child protection policy.

Experience from child participation in meetings during the last decade has shown the vital role played by such accompanying adults ('chaperones') in providing adequate and appropriate support to children and young people. Some elements relating to the supporting role of adults have been outlined in the previous section of this Toolkit – **The role of adults in creating an enabling environment.**

The purpose of this section is to outline the importance and responsibilities of accompanying adults ('chaperones') of young delegates in meetings.

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For some young delegates, they may be participating in such a meeting for the first time. Or, their participation may involve them travelling outside of their country for the first time. They will be confronted by new places, different styles of life, different languages etc. It is therefore important that their physical and emotional needs are met during such an experience. In addition, many organisations require, on the basis of good practice in child protection policies, that any young (under 18) member of a delegation be accompanied by an adult who is responsible for the young person's safety, well-being and security **AT ALL TIMES** throughout their stay away from home.

WHO are the accompanying adults, and WHEN do they start to act as such?

It is recommended that each child attending a consultation or meeting be accompanied by a designated accompanying adult ('chaperone') who will be responsible for the care and custody of the child from the time s/he leaves her/his parents / guardians to travel to the meeting until s/he has safely returned to her/his parents / guardians at home.

The accompanying adult should ideally be someone who knows the child, who speaks the same language and with whom the child has a trusting relationship. Gender balance should also be considered – women should accompany girl delegates (unless otherwise agreed upon with the young person's parents/guardians).

It is important that the responsibilities of the accompanying adult are fully explained and agreed upon before departure to a meeting and within your delegation, including the under 18 delegate and his/her parents/guardians. **The model Parent / Guardian Consent form included in this section is crucial to this.** (You can find this form on page 72).

Expected responsibilities of the accompanying adult include:

- Facilitating the child(ren)'s travel to the meeting and back home, which will include transport to the airport, providing support at customs, check-in, boarding the plane etc.

- Facilitating the movement of the child(ren) from one place to another during the time of the meeting.
- Being aware of the child(ren)'s whereabouts at all times.
- Providing information, advice and support to the children when needed.
- Providing encouragement and support for the children's participation in the meeting.
- Ensuring that the children are able to communicate with other groups of children through interpreters and the extra provision of translation support, whenever possible.
- Ensuring that the children can relax and participate in the discussions.
- Being aware of the physical and emotional needs of the child(ren) in your care and assisting in meeting these needs as appropriate.
- Providing any other physical and emotional support that the children might need. This should include the accompanying adult having the child(ren)'s medical and emergency information in their possession at all times, with written permission from the child(ren)'s guardians to act on their behalf for medical emergencies.
- Informing the meeting organisers of any difficulties that the children under their care may be experiencing.
- Offering opportunities, and providing support for, de-briefing, feedback with their peer group and follow up activities once the children have returned home.

SAMPLE PARENTAL / GUARDIAN CONSENT FORM

TITLE / NAME OF OFFICIAL and ancillary EVENT(S)

Parent/Guardian Consent Form

I/We, (names of parent(s)/guardian(s):) _____ give my/our consent for my/our son/daughter/ward (**name of child**): _____, born on (**date of birth of child**): _____, Passport No. (**Passport No. of child**): _____, to travel to (**place**) in the company of (**name of chaperone**): _____, of (**chaperone's home address**): _____ Passport No. (**Passport No. of chaperone**): _____, to participate in the (**title / name of official and ancillary event(s)**) which will take place from (**inclusive dates**) _____.

I/We appoint (**name of chaperone**) _____ to be responsible for my/our son/daughter/ward (**name of child**) _____ during this trip. In particular, I/we authorise (**name of chaperone**) _____ to make decisions concerning any emergency medical treatment for my/our son/daughter/ward (**name of child**) _____ which may be required during this trip. I/We affirm that arrangements for medical insurance to cover our son/daughter/ward during this trip have been made or will be made, in consultation with the delegation of which our son/daughter/ward is a member.

I/We understand that (**name of organisers of official and ancillary events**) associated with (**title / name of official event**), assume no responsibility for my/our son/daughter/ward (**name of child**) _____ or for any injury or loss sustained by my/our son/daughter/ward (**name of child**) _____ arising out of or related to from my/our son's/ daughter's/ ward's participation in the (**title /name of official and ancillary events**) _____.

I/We affirm that I/we have full authority to give the consent provided for in this document.

Name of Participant: _____
(Print name clearly)

Name(s) of Parent(s)/Guardian(s): _____
(Print name(s) clearly)

Parent(s)/Guardian(s) Signature(s): _____

Date: _____

Acknowledgement and Agreement by Accompanying Adult (Chaperone)

Acknowledged and Agreed to:

Chaperone's Signature: _____

(Full name of Chaperone:) _____



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So much work, effort and resources go into organising and planning consultations with children that, sometimes, very little thought is given to the **concrete and systematic** follow up of processes.

Follow up is fundamental as part of the larger process of engaging children and young people in the development of their own country. It is also important to ensure that the expectations and aspirations of children and young people involved in any consultative process are fully supported once the consultation has ended and participants return to their own communities. Accompanying adults, facilitators and staff within child rights organisations can play a crucial role in this.

While children want to have their own space in which their ideas and collective strategies can emerge, they also want adults to help create the enabling environment for them to participate independently in civil society.

Making adequate resources available is therefore crucial to creating such an environment in which children and young people will be able to continue taking individual and collective initiatives to engage with those powerful people in their lives who are already taking decisions that affect them.

Some key issues to consider

- Has planning been undertaken to ensure that the outcomes from the consultations are followed through and that the children and young people are able to use the experience of participating in projects or work in their local communities?
- Has provision been made for children to sit down together and assess their experience of the consultation? (This should be included in planned activities with children, with appropriate time and budget

«One major concern expressed by a majority of children was their uncertainty in relation to the action that adult decision-makers will take. They had tabled their priorities and come up with certain solutions. They were interested to know what the decision-makers will do to address their issues. Children were concerned that the Parliament will end and there will be no follow up.»

From: The Sri Lankan Children's Challenge – Report (November 2001). Save the Children.



Ensuring quality follow-up

«Children involved in evaluating their experience in the Special Session on Children process repeatedly expressed «a considerable amount of individual commitment to doing a number of things» back in their own countries.» They involved a range of activities and initiatives: reporting back to the young people who selected [them] to go to the particular event; talking to a lot of other children – in school, in clubs – about all the issues and learning; writing articles for the local newspaper. And so on.»

Source: Etherton, M. Creating a Process Fit for Children: An Evaluation of Save the Children's Support to Children and Young People's Participation in the National and International Preparations for the UN Special Session on Children (February 2000 to September 2001). 2003

allocation for it.)

- Have all children participating in the consultative process had access to information about what happens next?
- Have the children received meeting reports and other documents? Organisations acting as intermediary channels of communication must ensure that information is received directly by each child.

Some practical suggestions for quality follow-up

Lack of follow up and monitoring can be very de-motivating for young participants who may have made many trade-offs to be involved in consultative processes (missing school, missing work, being away from family and friends and so on).

- At the completion of the project, share with the children and young people the results of the work that they have done. If applicable, share with them how their work fits into the larger picture.
- Provide practical support to ensure that young participants can feedback to and follow up actions with their peer group back home / in their own communities
- Be clear from the beginning whether or not children and young people will be able to be involved in any additional follow up action related to the consultation or whether this is a one-off event. If follow up action is possible, make sure that this is built into the process from an early stage and that children and young people are aware that a longer-term commitment may be required from them.
- If follow up action is possible, build into the consultative process the space to develop plans together with children to actively support their involvement in the development, implementation and monitoring/evaluation of the outcomes of any consultation process.
- Provide assistance to other key players (civil society, governmental authorities etc.) in order to encourage and enable them to involve children in follow up actions.

- Let children know if the commitments adults made were implemented or whether the documents (outcomes) produced by children at the meetings have been included / integrated in the plans of adult organisations / agencies. And if so, how?

«One of the lessons learned from children's involvement in the Special Session on Children process is that «with adequate and timely resources children can achieve a great deal in their own interest. They will have an impact.»

Source: Etherton, M. Creating a Process Fit for Children: An Evaluation of Save the Children's Support to Children and Young People's Participation in the National and International Preparations for the UN Special Session on Children (February 2000 to September 2001). 2003



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Links to Relevant Web-Sites:

The Carnegie United Kingdom Trust *<http://carnegie.peasy.com>*

Child Rights Information Network (CRIN) *www.crin.org*

ELDIS development guide and participation sources
www.ids.ac.uk/eldis.html

Institute of Development Studies (IDS) Participation group
www.ids.ac.uk/ids/participation

National Children's Bureau *www.ncb.org.uk/projects/projpart.htm*

Resource Centres for Participatory Learning and Action Network
(RCPLA) *www.nur.edu/rcpla/*

Save the Children UK Development website
www.savethechildren.org.uk

International Save the Children Alliance website:
www.savethechildren.net

Links to e-mail discussion / learning groups

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/ChildParticipationInSouthAsia>

ChildParticipationInSouthAsia-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

*«We are not
the sources of problems;
we are the resources
that are needed
to solve them»*

Message from the Children's Forum,
UN Special Session on Children, 2002

