



INTERACTIVE  
DOCUMENT



Joining Forces Guidance

# Child Participation in Advocacy





# Acknowledgments

This guide is the result of collaborative efforts, and we extend our heartfelt gratitude to everyone who contributed to its creation and refinement.

We wish to express our deepest appreciation to **Richard Wamimbi**, who started this document and shared his invaluable expertise on meaningful child participation. Our thanks also go to **Helen Shipman**, who served as the Editor, enriching the content with critical insights, filling in gaps, and ensuring the document met the highest editorial standards.



Special thanks to the **Child Participation Working Group**, especially their Chair, **Patricio Cuevas-Para**, for carrying the baton and making sure this guide crosses the finish line. We would like to also thank the **Safeguarding Reference Group** for their insightful feedback and unwavering support throughout this process.



We are immensely grateful to the **Joining Forces Secretariat**, specifically **Jessica Herrera**, **Simon Domingo**, and **Courtnae Butcher** for their dedication to the development of the Advocacy Guide and their efforts to launch and disseminate it to the wider Joining Forces.



Finally, we wish to acknowledge **Mario Stephano** and **Pamela Zuniga** for their substantial feedback, which greatly enhanced the quality and impact of this document.



This work is a testament to the power of collaboration and shared commitment to advancing child participation in advocacy. We hope this document helps practitioners and advocates alike in their work as we all continue our efforts to ensure that children are safely enjoying their rights.



# Contents



1. Introduction.....	4
2. Child participation .....	6
3. Children’s participation in advocacy activities.....	11
4. Promoting child participation throughout the advocacy process ....	17
5. Choosing your advocacy activities and approaches.....	36
6. Evaluating.....	54
Annexes .....	56





Click this icon to return to the Contents page

# 1. Introduction

This guide has been developed by Joining Forces to support program staff to promote meaningful participation of children in advocacy activities. It is part of our key resource materials which are designed to develop the capacity of program staff on key topics linked to Joining Force's objectives.

## 1.1 Aims of this guide

This guide aims:

- ➔ To guide program staff to support the realization of children's right to meaningfully participate in decisions that affect their lives, with a focus on children's participation in advocacy activities.
- ➔ To provide practical guidance and best practices on how to integrate child participation in a meaningful manner when designing and implementing advocacy activities and programs. This includes child-led advocacy and advocacy at community, regional and national levels.



## 1.2 How was this guide developed?

The guide was developed by the Joining Forces Secretariat and Child Participation Working Group of experts from Joining Forces member organizations, in collaboration with consultants. It is based on a desk review of child participation in advocacy resource materials (e.g. guides, toolkits and other relevant evidence-based literature). The desk review identified promising practices and high-quality tools that could inform this guide. Joining Forces Member organizations also provided case studies of successful child participation in advocacy activities which are presented throughout the guide.

## 1.3 Target users of the guide

This guide is designed for use by Joining Forces country program staff who work on child participation and advocacy activities at the community and national level. Some will have extensive experience supporting child participation, others may be new to this area of work.



Click the tabs for quick access to each section

## 1.4 How to use this guide

The guide is divided into four sections:

1. Introduction
2. Child participation
3. Children's participation in advocacy activities
4. Promoting child participation throughout the advocacy process

A variety of practical tools are provided throughout the guide to support children's meaningful participation in advocacy activities, either in online links or in the annexes. Staff are advised to consult their child participation and advocacy technical leads to understand how to adapt suggested tools to their particular context.

### A NOTE ON TERMINOLOGY

Within this guide, we use the term children to refer to any person below the age of 18 years. We recognise, though, that children may prefer different terms, such as youth or adolescents. When collaborating with children on advocacy work, it is good practice to explore their preferences and understandings of different terms and tailor your communication accordingly.

18↓

"children" refers to any person below the age of 18 years

# 2. Child participation

## 2.1 What is child participation?

We live in a world where adults have substantially more opportunities than children to make their voices heard. Adults are also granted key decision-making roles at all levels of society, from household decisions to deciding national policies. This power imbalance is often explained in terms of children's 'developing' capacity, with children depicted as lacking the ability to make their voices heard or participate successfully in decision-making forums. They are framed as being simply "too young".



However, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) states that **child participation is a basic human rights for all children** (see **BOX 1 ↓**). Child participation refers to children's opportunities to 'contribute to decisions and take action on issues that affect their lives'\*. It ranges from children being consulted on their views to children actively collaborating on or leading initiatives. Successful child participation allows children to express their views, have these views respected and considered, and take desired actions. Although child participation is an individual right within the UNCRC, it is also a working method that crosscuts all themes and contexts, including in research, advocacy and programming. Children's participation can therefore be framed as a set of civil rights to be fulfilled, a principle to be applied, and a means to fulfil other rights.

\* World Vision (2016), [Unpacking Gender Equality Approach to Children and Young People's Participation](#), p.6

### BOX 1: CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION RIGHTS IN THE UNCRC

The following articles of the UNCRC directly or indirectly refer to children's participation rights:

- ➔ **Article 12** of the UNCRC – the child's right to be heard – is the fundamental tenet for children's participation. As one of the four guiding principles of the UNCRC, Article 12 is both connected to and indivisible from all other rights enshrined in the Convention. There are additional articles (Articles 13-17) that specifically intersect with Article 12 and directly help to define the meaningful participation of children. These civil rights have been broadly conceptualized under the term "participation" and include the right to freedom of expression, thought, conscience, religion, association, peaceful assembly, protection of privacy and access to information.
- ➔ **Article 23** emphasizes the importance of creating conditions that facilitate the active participation of children with disabilities in the community.
- ➔ **Article 29** encourages education which prepares the child for a responsible life in a free society and promotes peace, tolerance and equality.



If you require child-friendly versions of the UNCRC, in different languages, see [UNICEF's child-friendly text](#) ↗.

## 2.2 Who is responsible for child participation?

As program staff working for child-focused organizations, **we all have a responsibility** to advocate for children to have meaningful opportunities to make their voices heard and participate in decisions that affect their lives. We can do this by supporting specific advocacy activities that call for the realization of children's participation rights or by taking **proactive steps** to ensure that children have the chance to meaningfully participate in the design, planning, implementation, and evaluation of all our programming, including advocacy activities. Joining Forces strongly supports the promotion of child participation in all our members' work (see **BOX 2** ↓).

- ➔ Save the Children (2011), [Every Child's Right to be Heard. A Resource Guide on the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child General Comment No 12](#) ↗
- ➔ UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre (1992). The Levels of Child Participation, adapted from Hart, Roger A (1992). Children's Participation: From Tokenism to Citizenship.

## BOX 2: JOINING FORCES POSITION ON CHILD PARTICIPATION

Joining Forces understands that respecting and supporting children's participation is a human rights obligation. The governance of the project (CEO and Steering Teams) has affirmed that meaningful child participation is critical to the implementation of the Joining Forces initiative and is essential to how we collectively add value to promoting child rights and protecting children from violence.\*

We have therefore developed the following position paper which provides a framework for securing game-changing investments in children's participation. It challenges governments, other donors, UN agencies, civil society actors and private sector actors to prioritize, enable and fund child participation.



Joining Forces (2021). Policy Brief. [Children's Right to Be Heard: We're Talking; Are You Listening? ↗](#)

\* Joining Forces (2021). Policy Brief. [Children's Right to Be Heard: We're Talking; Are You Listening?](#)

## 2.3 Minimum requirements for meaningful, safe and inclusive child participation

Child participation can take many forms, from gathering children's views to supporting them to participate in decision-making forums or lead their own initiatives. However, sometimes even well-intentioned attempts to encourage child participation end up being tokenistic, with children's involvement or voices having little or no impact on key stakeholders and decision makers. Compounding this, **many contexts are not naturally supportive of child participation**, with decision-making forums or processes often tailored towards adults, making it harder for children to meaningfully participate.

Yet, children's participation in decision-making is more impactful – both for the children and society as a whole – when children are given a chance to participate in an environment that supports their empowerment. General Comment No.12 of the Committee on the Rights of the Child provides a recognised benchmark for assessing whether we are promoting meaningful participation of children, referred to as the **nine minimum requirements for child participation** (see **BOX 3 ↓** below).



The nine minimum requirements are critical for supporting children's participation since they:

- ✔ a. Help us to assess whether our intended actions promote the safe and meaningful participation of children
- ✔ b. Help us to create environments that are more supportive of child participation
- ✔ c. Hold us to account in terms of our responsibilities for ensuring children's voices are heard and respected, both at the level of the Joining Forces consortium and member organisations.
- ✔ d. Contribute to improved program quality (including advocacy) since we are drawing on children's expert knowledge of their lives and communities.

#### TOOL: MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS FOR CHILD PARTICIPATION CHECKLIST

When engaging in advocacy activities with children, it is good practice to take time to reflect on whether we are following the nine minimum requirements. Annex A includes a Child Participation Requirements Checklist\* which draws on the following guidance:



Save the Children (2021), [The Nine Basic Requirements for Meaningful and Ethical Children's Participation](#) ↗

\* Adapted from Save the Children (2021). The Nine Basic Requirements for Meaningful and Ethical Children's Participation



**BOX 3: NINE MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS FOR CHILD PARTICIPATION**

- ✓ 1. **Transparent and informative:** children must be provided with full, accessible, diversity-sensitive and age-appropriate information about their right to express their views freely and their views to be given due weight.
- ✓ 2. **Voluntary:** children should never be coerced into expressing their wishes and they should be informed that they can cease involvement at any stage.
- ✓ 3. **Respectful:** children's views have to be treated with respect and they should be provided with opportunities to initiate ideas and activities.
- ✓ 4. **Relevant:** the issues on which children have the right to express their views must be of real relevance to their lives and enable them to draw on their knowledge, skills and abilities.
- ✓ 5. **Child-friendly:** environments and working methods should be adapted to children's capacities. Adequate time and resources should be made available to ensure that children are adequately prepared and have the confidence and opportunity to contribute their views.
- ✓ 6. **Inclusive:** participation must be inclusive, avoid existing patterns of discrimination and encourage opportunities for including girls and boys living in marginalized situations.
- ✓ 7. **Supported by training:** adults need preparation, skills and support to facilitate children's participation effectively and to provide them, for example, with skills in listening, working jointly with children and engaging children effectively in accordance with their evolving capacities.
- ✓ 8. **Safe and sensitive to risk:** in certain situations, children's expression of their views may involve risks. Adults have a responsibility towards the children with whom they work and must take every precaution to minimize the risk to children of violence, exploitation or any other potential negative consequence of their participation.
- ✓ 9. **Accountable:** children receive feedback on how their contribution has advised, informed or influenced developments to date and accountability processes are integrated throughout child participation initiatives.\*

~ ~ ~ ~ ~  
\* Adapted from Committee on the Rights of the Child (2009), General Comment 12:  
The right of the child to be heard

# 3. Children's participation in advocacy activities

Children can, and should, participate in wide range of activities and decision-making forums. This guide focuses specifically on supporting **children's participation in advocacy activities**.

## 3.1 What is advocacy?

Advocacy is 'the deliberate process of influencing those who make decisions about developing, changing and implementing policies' \*.

It involves identifying an issue of concern, developing solutions, building support, and bringing issues, solutions, and political will together to ensure that the desired change takes place. Successful advocacy:

- Holds duty bearers accountable and helps to build healthier democracies
- Delivers evidence-based recommendations to decision makers to influence human rights and children's rights legislative and policy outcomes
- Challenges and changes opinions and mind-sets
- Seeks political commitments for change and/or justice, including addressing human rights issues
- Contributes to changes in policy, legislation and/or practice
- Supports marginalized or excluded groups to speak out and be heard directly, including children who are often excluded from decision-making processes.

\* CARE International (2014), [The CARE International Advocacy Handbook](#), p.1



### CASE STUDY 1: THE POWER OF ADVOCACY TO HOLD DUTY BEARERS ACCOUNTABLE - CHILD-FRIENDLY ACCOUNTABILITY INITIATIVE - CHILDFUND

In September 2016, the Childfund Alliance's child-friendly accountability initiative was launched. Through this initiative, the Childfund Alliance works to empower children to hold governments and local leaders accountable to their obligation to end all violence against children, as per Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Target 16.2. The initiative is designed to ensure that duty bearers in charge of protecting and realizing children's rights actually fulfil their responsibilities. If they fail, or choose not, to do so, the initiative aims to enable children and their representatives to seek recourse. Activities undertaken as part of the initiative include helping children to access age-appropriate data and information, mapping child protection services, and developing advocacy and media campaigns, social mobilization initiatives, and a shared web-based platform.



For more information on the Childfund Alliance's approach to accountability, see Childfund Alliance (2017), [Toward a Safe World for Children. Child-Friendly Accountability in the Context of Target 16.2 of the SDGs. Recommended Methodology](#) ↗

Joining Forces supports a **child rights-based approach to advocacy**, in which the advocacy process and outcomes reflect human rights values, including children's rights. In the case of advocacy on issues affecting children, this means that advocacy efforts should:

1. **Involve children.** Children have the right to express their views on all matters that affect them, and they should, whenever possible, have an opportunity to be involved in advocating for their own rights.
2. **Focus on governments' legal duties.** Child rights-based advocacy is directed towards ensuring that all laws and policies comply with the rights and principles in the UNCRC.
3. **Hold duty-bearers accountable.** A child rights-based approach to advocacy recognizes that children have rights and those with an obligation to fulfil those rights (duty-bearers) must be held accountable.
4. **Recognize the equal rights of every child.** Rights apply to all children without exception or discrimination.\*

When supporting children's participation in advocacy, it is critical that children's rights remain at the centre of all our work.

\* UNICEF (2020). [National Human Rights Institutions Series. Tools to support child-friendly practices. Advocacy with and for Children in the Work of National Human Rights Institutions](#), p.8

## 3.2 The advocacy process

Advocacy work covers a diverse range of objectives and approaches. However, the advocacy process is typically the same, moving from identification and analysis of a problem, to planning, implementation, and evaluation of the resultant advocacy activities. If you are undertaking advocacy work that includes participation of children, the advocacy process typically covers the steps outlined in figure 1. Since advocacy is **a dynamic process**, we often need to revisit and revise several steps of the process.

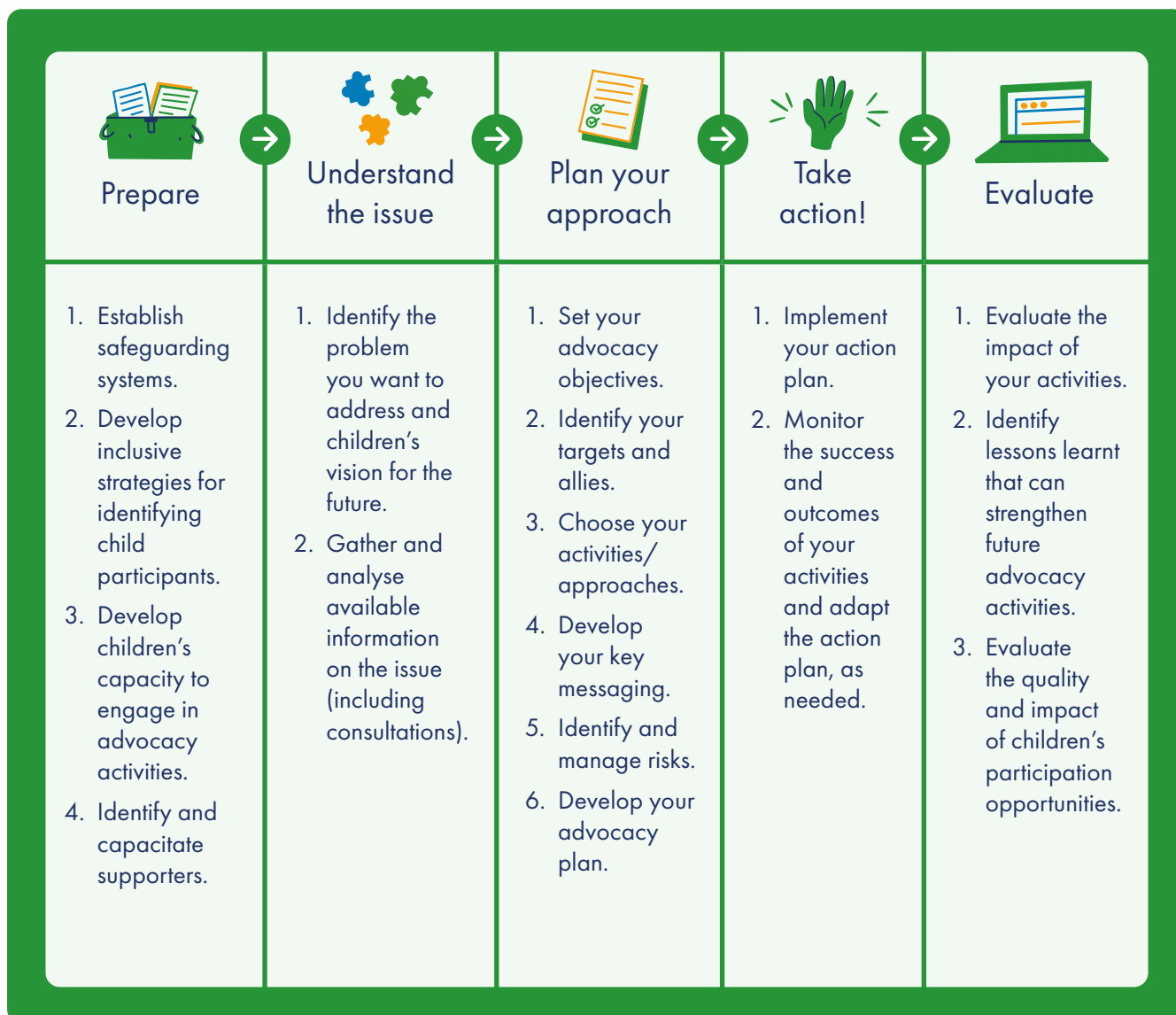


Figure 1: Typical advocacy process when children's participation is included

### 3.3 Children's participation in advocacy work: Progress so far

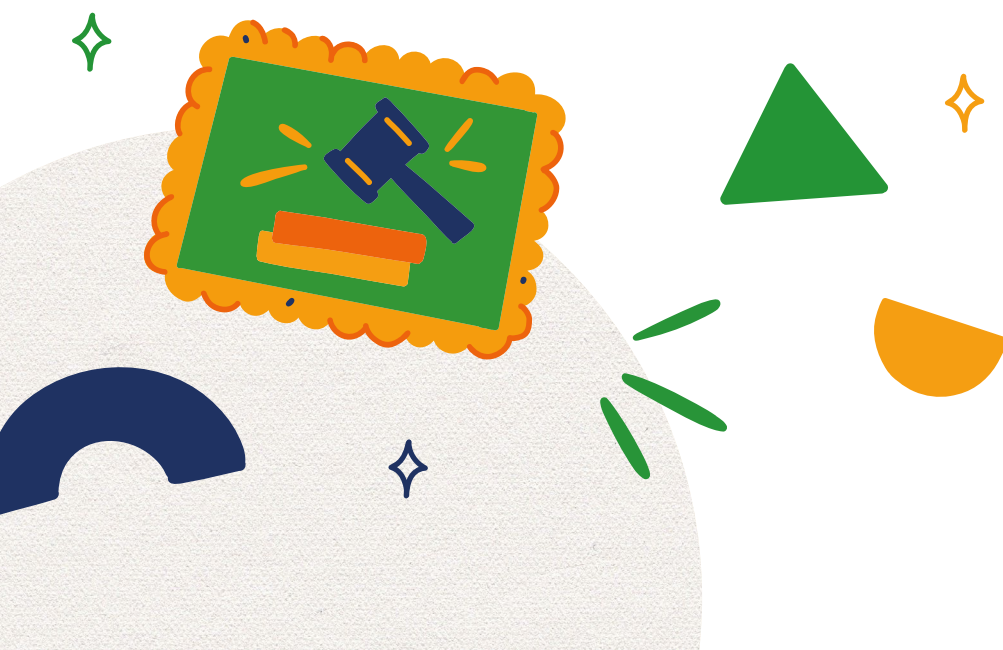
In the three decades since ratification of the UNCRC, subsequent legal and normative standards have reinforced and developed children's right to participate, resulting in notable progress. For instance, there has been a growing number of high-level international spaces in which children exercise their civic participation rights, such as the Day of General Discussion (see **CASE STUDY 4 ↓**), as well as strategic platforms, including children's parliaments or school councils, where children can participate in national, regional, and local/rural level decision-making, including budgetary and government spending reviews. The growth of such forums for child participation demonstrates an increased awareness of the value of child participation, at least among some decision makers.

When specifically considering **children's participation in advocacy**, there have been growing demands by children to have their voices heard in public debates. This is demonstrated by their dominant role in some global and national-level campaigns.\* Children all over the world are stepping into the role of **human rights defenders** (see **BOX 4 ↓**) to advocate for the realisation of their rights, their peers' rights and the human rights of all. Operating as individuals or in a group (e.g. as part of an NGO, child-led forum or association), they exercise their right to be heard and their civil rights and freedoms to advance and safeguard human rights and fundamental freedoms. High profile child rights defenders include Malala Yusafsai, who campaigned for girls' right to education in Afghanistan and Greta Thunberg, a climate action activist.

\* Joining Forces (2021). Policy Brief. [Children's Right to Be Heard: We're Talking; Are You Listening?](#)



For benefits of child participation, see World Vision International (2017). [Children and Young People's Participation. An Essential Approach for Ending Violence against Children ↗](#)



**BOX 4: CHILD HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS**

The UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders\* states that any person or group of persons working to promote human rights can be considered a defender. These range from intergovernmental organisations to individuals working within their local communities. Human rights defenders can be of any age, gender, from any part of the world and come from a wide range of backgrounds. Child human rights defenders are referred to be many different terms, including child “actors”, “agents of change”, “active citizens”, “civic actors” and “child activists”.



Child Rights Connect (2022). [Advancing the rights of Child Human Rights Defenders \(CHRDs\) through the Universal Periodic Review \(UPR\) ↗](#)

\* UN (1998), [Declaration on human rights defenders](#)

Research by World Vision and the University of Edinburgh found that child activism to end child marriage in Bangladesh was possible because of the investment of children. Their investment had three dimensions: practically, child activists were willing to use their time and energy to stop child marriage; emotionally, they were passionate about their cause, as something important for potential child brides, to improve their communities and to promote children’s rights more generally; and they were invested and rewarded personally, bolstered by pride and often parental and community affirmation.\*\*

\*\* Cuevas-Parra, P. and Tisdall, E. K. M. (2022) ‘Investing in activism: Learning from children’s actions to stop child marriage’, Childhood, London, England.

**CASE STUDY 2: THE IMPACT OF CHILDREN’S MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION - “IT TAKES A WORLD” CAMPAIGN - WORLD VISION INTERNATIONAL**

World Vision’s ‘It takes a world to end violence against children’ campaign is an example of a successful campaign that has used child participation to notable effect. The campaign has been the NGO’s largest to date, involving 87 participating countries. It seeks to build a world where no child has to live in fear of violence. Since launching in 2017, the campaign has impacted the lives of 268 million children. In 2021 alone, over 804,000 children and young people meaningfully participated in the campaign and over 2 million advocacy actions were taken by supporters. Children’s roles included undertaking child-led research in Brazil, working with World Vision on strategy

## CASE STUDY 2 ↑

development for foreign policy, participating in global conferences and summits (including the UNICEF Global Conference for Children and Youth and the Solutions Summit), and developing podcasts on ending violence against children.

This collective effort, which saw children's voices and experiences at the heart of the campaign, led to 265 significant contributions to policy or policies related to ending violence against children. 65 of these were related to allocating, increasing or defending government funding to address ending violence against children.

↓ [World Vision \(2022\) Campaign Report Progress ↗](#)

### 3.4 Barriers to children's participation in advocacy

Despite many children's growing desire to make their voices heard and take a seat at decision-making tables, they still face considerable barriers that prevent them meaningfully participating in advocacy activities. These include:

- ➔ Children's civic rights being overlooked. This is based on social norms which uphold adult voices and privileges and position children as passive rather than potential change agents\*.
- ➔ Use of 'adult' structures for advocacy which may be unfamiliar or uncomfortable for children. Ideally, these structures will adjust to children's capacity. However, at present, this is rarely the case, so children often need supporters to help them access and navigate these structures\*\*.
- ➔ Not enough dedicated resources for children's participation in advocacy, such as access to internet or funding for child activists' activities\*\*\*.
- ➔ Exclusion of more marginalized children from decision-making forums, including those designed for children, such as children's parliaments or school councils.

Although many of these are deep-rooted barriers that require substantive normative changes, there are ways of reducing or challenging barriers to children's participation. In the remainder of this guide, we outline ways in which children can be supported to either participate in or lead advocacy activities.

\* Civicus: World Alliance for Citizen Participation, Save the Children (2017), [Peers and Partners: Empowering Children to take Civic Action](#)

\*\* World Vision (2015) Children advocating for their children's rights. <https://www.wvi.org/child-participation/publication/children-advocating-their-children%E2%80%99s-rights>

\*\*\* McMellon and Tisdall (2020) Children and Young People's Participation Rights: Looking Backwards and Moving Forwards. International journal of children's rights.



# 4. Promoting child participation throughout the advocacy process

Within this section of the guide, we look at the main steps in the advocacy process in turn, providing tips and best practices for promoting children's meaningful participation. Given the wide scope of children's participation in advocacy activities (from participating in consultations to leading the design of campaigns), the guide aims to provide a starting point for Joining Forces' members to work on child participation in advocacy, rather than comprehensive guidance.



## 4.1 Step One: Prepare for children's participation in advocacy

Children's participation in advocacy can be immensely impactful. However, to maximize its impact, we must carefully plan for advocacy activities that involve or are led by children. We should:

- Ensure there are robust safeguarding and risk management systems in place
- Develop inclusive outreach strategies to identify child participants, including ways of reaching more marginalized children
- Identify and capacitate staff/volunteers to support children's participation
- Build the capacity of child participants to successfully engage in or lead advocacy activities.

### 4.1.1 Establish safeguarding systems

During children's participation in advocacy activities, safeguarding policies, procedures, and practices should be employed to actively prevent harm, abuse, and distress, and ensure a survivor- and child-centred response in the event of any safeguarding violations. Specifically, it is the responsibility of Joining Forces members to take steps to prevent children and vulnerable adults being exposed to harm or abuse and report any allegations or

suspicion of abuse or harm.\* These responsibilities apply to all staff, partners and volunteers. Joining Forces members should follow their organization's safeguarding standards during all interactions with children as part of their advocacy programming. The Joining Forces Safeguarding Reference group, consisting of global safeguarding experts from the six agencies, has developed safeguarding tools and guidance to assist member organizations to meet basic safeguarding minimum standards (see **TOOL BOX BELOW ↓**). For advice on how to implement these tools, please consult your organization's safeguarding focal points **before starting work with children.**

\* Joining Forces (2020) Joining forces to strengthen safeguarding. <https://joining-forces.org/blog/joining-forces-to-strengthen-safeguarding/>

#### TOOLS: JOINING FORCES SAFEGUARDING RESOURCES AND TOOLS

- ➔ The Joining Forces Interagency reporting and response protocol for safeguarding incidents
- ➔ The Joining Forces Self-assessment tool.

### Possible safeguarding risks linked to children's participation in advocacy

All our work with children includes safeguarding risks. However, children may face additional risks when participating in advocacy activities due to the nature of the issue, the advocacy context, or the type of activities/approaches being used. These risks include, but are not limited to:

- ➔ Safety and reputational risks associated with an advocacy topic, if the topic is particularly sensitive in a specific context or is not considered appropriate for children to speak out on. These risks might include formal punishments, such as criminal charges, social sanctions, such as ostracization, threats of violence, or reputational damage, such as defamation by the media.
- ➔ Safety and reputational risks linked to gender norms which make it riskier for girls to speak out publicly on a topic than boys, for instance.
- ➔ Safety risks of attending public events, such as protests or sit-ins, including the risk of being arrested or caught up in outbreaks of violence.
- ➔ Safety and psychological risks associated with technology-facilitated violence, such as child sexual abuse and exploitation (including grooming), spread of discriminatory messages, threats of violence, sexting, doxing, and online bullying from perpetrators based across the globe, not just locally.\*\*

\*\* UNICEF East Asia and the Pacific Regional Office (2022). [Evaluating online Safety Initiatives: How to build the evidence base on what works to keep children safe online](#)

- ➔ Safety, social, and reputational risks associated with children's advocacy interests clashing with those of their family or community.
- ➔ Social and health risks associated with overuse of the internet at the expense of in-person hobbies (if advocacy is being conducted extensively online).
- ➔ Ethical risks associated with children not fully understanding what their involvement entails.
- ➔ Burnout from long-term or intense investment in topics close to the child's heart.

We will never be able to remove all risks associated with children's participation in advocacy. However, by undertaking a detailed risk assessment and developing a robust risk management plan in collaboration with children, we can help to mitigate these risks (see [ANNEX E 7](#)).

### 4.1.2 Develop inclusive strategies for identifying child participants

All children have a right to participate in and contribute to decision-making that affects their lives. Yet, in reality, children are often excluded from the process. Some children are more at risk of being excluded from participatory processes, such as advocacy activities, than others, with barriers to participation varying per context. Children who are typically at increased risk of exclusion from meaningful opportunities to participate include children engaged in full-time labour, children with disabilities, children in conflict with the law, displaced children, children living in institutions, children from minority groups, children from indigenous groups, and LGBTQIA+ children. Gender norms also play a critical role in reducing girls' or sexual and gender minorities' opportunities to exercise their full citizenship rights, including making their voices heard. This is particularly the case for those from groups already at risk of exclusion, such as minority ethnic or racial groups.\*

\* Plan International (2020). *Engaging Girls, Boys and Youth as Active Citizens. Position Paper*





## Tips for engaging the most marginalized children in advocacy

- Undertake an inclusion assessment in collaboration with or led by children, to identify which children are excluded and any barriers to specific children's inclusion, such as physical barriers (e.g., inaccessibility of project site), financial barriers (e.g. transport costs) and social barriers (e.g., gender norms that inhibit girls' engagement in leadership roles).
- Use inclusive outreach strategies that target rather than exclude marginalised children. For example, avoiding only using schools or online forums to identify child participants since doing so could exclude working children or those without connectivity. Design outreach strategies in collaboration with children, who have unique insights into children's exclusion.
- Sensitize children on their right to participate, including more marginalized children. Clearly explain that participation is the right of all children.
- Sensitize duty bearers on the right of all children to participate. Share success stories to challenge social norms that inhibit children's participation, such as patriarchal gender norms or depictions of children as obedient and vulnerable rather than potential change agents.
- Design activities that are tailored to the age, maturity, gender, and ability of participating children, with adaptation or inclusive support provided for those who need it.
- Provide capacity building for children to support their participation, such as technical trainings on how to safely use the internet for children without regular online access.
- Allocate sufficient budget to support children from the most economically vulnerable households to participate (e.g. budget for transportation, supplies, internet access etc).
- Use child-led monitoring and evaluation processes, or – at the very least – consult children, so that any unforeseen barriers to children's participation can be identified.

**CASE STUDY 3: ENSURING ALL CHILDREN HAVE A CHANCE TO PARTICIPATE - “IT’S TIME TO TALK!” - KINDERNOTHILFE, SAVE THE CHILDREN CANADA AND TERRE DES HOMMES INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION.**

‘It’s Time to Talk! – Children’s Views on Children’s Work’ was launched in March 2016. The goal was to enable working children to have their views heard in local, national and global decision-making processes. The project formed fifteen Children’s Advisory Committees (CACs) globally, which included working children and provided opportunities for children to participate as advisers, analysts, and advocates. Through collaboration with more than 50 civil society partners, 1,822 children (52% girls, 48% boys) aged 5 to 18 years were consulted about their working lives in 36 countries across the world. These included potentially most marginalized child workers, such as those engaged in less visible work (e.g., paid domestic work, work in massage and dance parlours, sex work, and begging). To achieve this, Time to Talk provided neutral spaces in which to listen to the perspectives of girls and boys working in diverse settings. CAC members and children also analysed the strengths and weaknesses of existing policies and practices concerning working children during 21 consultations and developed key messages for different stakeholders on how best to support different child workers during 93 consultations.


The project’s close engagement with a diverse range of working children and commitment to inclusivity revealed the diversity of children’s working lives, and the complexities of creating and implementing policies and practices which support children’s development, well-being, and protection. Based on children’s own experiences and messages, 12 key policy and practice recommendations to enhance children’s protection, well-being, and development were presented to governments, international agencies (ILO, and other UN agencies, etc.), civil society organisations, Alliance 8.7, donors, and other key actors.\*

---

\* Kindernothilfe, Save the Children Canada, and Terre des Hommes International Federation (2017). [It’s Time to Talk! Children’s Views on Children’s Work](#)

## Ensuring informed and voluntary participation

We have a responsibility to ensure that children's participation in advocacy activities is informed and voluntary. We must provide children with honest and accurate information about the scope and implications of their participation in an age-appropriate, child-friendly way. This includes explaining:\*

- 
- The purpose of the advocacy initiative/activity.
  - Their role(s), including what is expected of them
  - The level of support you, as an organization, can provide
  - The time required (overall length of time, plus more detailed information on scheduling)
  - Location of their participation (including whether online or offline)
  - Possible benefits and risks of participation (including impacts on access to other services).

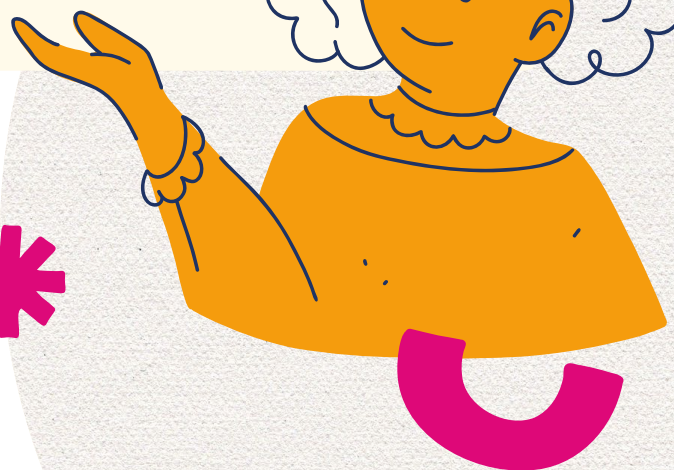
Before engaging in advocacy activities, children must first give their informed agreement, or 'consent'. They must not be coerced to participate but do so of their own free will. We need to be aware that, as adults, in many cultures children may feel obliged to agree to our requests. We should therefore be careful to stress that it is their choice to participate or not and there will be no repercussions if they say no. Caregivers should also provide informed consent for children to participate in activities, while recognising children's rights to freedom of association or peaceful assembly. All consent should be recorded via assent and consent forms.

Since child participation is sometimes viewed as rebellious or inappropriate behaviour, be prepared for caregivers refusing to consent for their child to participate. This can be especially difficult to manage if the child is keen to participate. Preparation is key to mitigating this risk (see **TIP BOX BELOW** ↓).

\* Adapted from SOS Children's Villages (2020). [Toolkit for Children and Young People's Participation in Advocacy](#)

### TIPS! WORKING WITH RELUCTANT CAREGIVERS

- ➔ Initiate advocacy activities with children in communities where you have already started community sensitization on children's participation rights.
- ➔ Organize workshops for caregivers where they can learn more about the advocacy issue and have an open space to ask questions. Consider household gender dynamics when deciding how to approach different caregivers.
- ➔ Take time to explain the advocacy activities with caregivers, including what the activity entails and hopes to achieve, the time commitment required, any risks and benefits, and the types of people with whom their children will interact.
- ➔ Also explain your organization's safeguarding measures.
- ➔ Listen respectfully to caregivers' concerns and, where possible, work with them to find solutions to these concerns that will allow their children to participate.
- ➔ Share examples of other successful advocacy activities with caregivers. It can be effective to ask former child participants to share their experiences with caregivers of prospective child participants.
- ➔ Continue to keep caregivers updated of their children's participation in the advocacy activity, including their achievements.



### 4.1.3 Develop children's capacity to engage in advocacy activities

A core part of preparing children to participate in advocacy activities is supporting them to develop relevant skills and knowledge. This is also likely to be an **on-going process** throughout your engagement with child participants, involving formal trainings and coaching or peer mentorship. The exact nature of the **capacity development** will depend on the children's existing skills and knowledge, and the types of activities being implemented. However, figure 2 outlines some of the likely skills and knowledge required by children participating in advocacy activities:

#### KNOWLEDGE



- ➔ Information on child rights, globally and in the local context, including participation rights
- ➔ Information on what is advocacy, the advocacy process, and possible advocacy approaches
- ➔ Information on the importance of measuring the outcomes of advocacy activities and possible methods for doing so
- ➔ Information on the chosen topic (including broader perspectives/ counter arguments, current evidence-base, key actors/ stakeholders etc).

#### SKILLS



- ➔ Self-expression and communication skills, including communicating ideas, developing written messaging etc
- ➔ Decision-making skills
- ➔ Teamwork and cooperation skills
- ➔ Social networking skills, both online and offline
- ➔ Self-evaluation skills
- ➔ Specific technical skills linked to the advocacy activity being undertaken, such as digital skills (e.g. developing memes, using digital media), research skills or public speaking skills.

Figure 2: Examples of possible knowledge and skills required by children participating in advocacy activities.\*

\* Adapted from Eurochild (2021). Training Tool on engaging children in advocacy work on their right to participate in decision-making processes. [https://eurochild.org/uploads/2021/01/Training\\_Tool\\_on\\_engaging\\_children\\_in\\_advocacy\\_work.pdf](https://eurochild.org/uploads/2021/01/Training_Tool_on_engaging_children_in_advocacy_work.pdf)



If you are working with children who have relevant prior experience working on advocacy activities, consider asking them to co-develop and/or co-facilitate trainings or workshops that align with their skills. Encourage them to share their experiences and learning with their peers so that the training is based on real-life, relatable experiences. Remember to regularly ask children's feedback on capacity development activities so that you understand what capacity development modalities are most effective, and what content or skills requires further support so you can tailor future trainings accordingly. Feedback can be through formal evaluations (e.g. training evaluation tools), online platforms, or informal discussions. Always offer anonymous ways of providing feedback so that children feel able to communicate their opinions freely.

### TOOLS FOR DEVELOPING THE CAPACITY OF CHILDREN ON PARTICIPATION AND ADVOCACY

The following training tools and guides provide advice on how to develop children's capacity on key elements of child participation and advocacy



Eurochild (2021). [Training Tool on engaging children in advocacy work on their right to participate in decision-making processes. Advocacy Toolkit](#) ↗



Plan International (2021), [Diverse and empowered girls: a practical guide for girl activists](#) ↗ (includes child-friendly step-by-step guidance on activism, including capacity building activities on core skills, such as leadership, gender transformation, and understanding other points of view)



Save the Children (2008) [One Step Beyond: Advocacy handbook for young people and children](#) ↗ (includes child-friendly step-by-step guidance on activism, including exercises introducing children to advocacy and core skills, such as self-reflection and creative thinking)

#### 4.1.4 Identify and capacitate supporters

Advocacy is typically conducted in 'adult' spaces or using 'adult' formats, such as debates or conferences. Children sometimes need help to navigate these spaces and learn how to adapt their messaging to suit what is often an adult audience. The people who provide this support, referred to within this guide as '**supporters**', may be practitioners from Joining Forces member organizations, youth or peers who are already engaging in advocacy work, community leaders, or other community members, such as caregivers or teachers.

##### SELECTING SUPPORTERS

Care is needed when selecting and preparing the people who will support, facilitate or accompany children during an advocacy activity. Supporters should:

- ➔ Be appropriately vetted. Supporters must have the required police vetting certificate, police record or equivalent according to their country of residence.
- ➔ Have the required skills and knowledge. Supporters in leading roles must have a good level of knowledge, skills and experience facilitating the likely advocacy approaches. Those with less experience may still be involved, under the supervision of more experienced colleagues. This works as an effective form of 'apprenticeship' whereby supporters learn through experience.
- ➔ Agree to and sign all relevant safeguarding policies. This includes organization-specific codes of conduct and safeguarding policies.
- ➔ Voice a strong commitment to empowering children to participate. Supporters should clearly understand that their role is to support children's participation rather than take the lead.
- ➔ Meet the criteria for chaperones, if relevant. Where travel away from home is likely, the selection of adult supporters must take into account the organization's relevant guidelines on chaperoning, and the fact that each child must be accompanied by an assigned adult they know and trust.





#### TIP: SELECTING POTENTIAL SUPPORTERS

The following types of questions can help assess potential supporters' attitudes and values:

- ➔ **Scenario-based questions:** these can be useful for assessing supporters' potential ability to empower rather than overpower children.

*Example question: what would you do if the children you were working with designed an advocacy activity that you felt was very unrealistic?*

- ➔ **Value-based questions:** these can also be used to assess supporters' norms and beliefs relating to children's participation. Consider drawing on stereotypes, such as gender stereotypes that limit girls' participation, or age-based stereotypes that depict 'good' children as obedient and passives.

*Example question: do you think it is appropriate for children to meet directly with their local chief to share their concerns about a local issue or should they ask an adult to communicate their views?*

## Developing supporters' capacity

All supporters should be fully trained on relevant skills and knowledge to enable them to empower children to participate in the advocacy activities before they interact with children.

### TOPICS INCLUDE:

- ➔ Child safeguarding, including appropriate and inappropriate behaviours, understanding and identifying different types of abuse and exploitation, reporting suspected abuse and exploitation (including understanding the boundaries of their role), and providing child-centred and trauma-informed support to children who disclose abuse.
- ➔ Child participation, including the legal basis for child participation (e.g. the UNCRC and relevant national legislation), child-friendly techniques for engaging and empowering children, and being inclusive.
- ➔ How to support a specific advocacy activity, including sensitization on the objectives of the activity, methods used, and possible risks/benefits (including how to conduct a risk assessment).



## SAMPLE TRAINING TOOLS/RESOURCES FOR DEVELOPING THE CAPACITY OF SUPPORTERS



[Summary Engaged and Heard! UNICEF Training on Adolescent Participation and Civic Engagement ↗](#) (online training course, developed by UNICEF, contributes to building supporters' capacity to promote, design and implement at-scale programming for meaningful adolescent participation and civic engagement.)

-  Save the Children (2007), [Advocacy Matters: Helping children change their world. A Save the Children guide to advocacy – Facilitator's Manual ↗](#)
-  Childhub academy (2021), [The Quest: A Guide for Child Support Workers to Better their Professional Practice ↗](#)
-  Child Protection Hub and Terre des Hommes (n/d), [Supporting Children's Participation ↗](#)

## 4.2 Step Two: Understand the issue

At the heart of all advocacy initiatives is a problem that needs to be addressed; a change that needs to be made. When supporting children's participation in advocacy, it is good practice to involve children in identifying the problem (or tightening our definition of the problem if you have been asked to advocate on a specific issue) and agreeing what changes we would like to see happen as a result of the advocacy. To facilitate this, we can support children to gather information and evidence on the issue and possible solutions so that they can communicate convincingly on the issue.

### 4.2.1 Identify the issue and children's vision for the future

Explain to child participants that advocacy involves **identifying an issue or challenge**. Remember children often have a unique vantage point within their communities and may identify problems that adults overlook or do not view as problematic. Once the issue has been agreed, we then think about how what changes we would like to see. This is our **vision for the future** and lies at the heart of our advocacy strategy. Use **child-friendly tools**, such as dream trees or vision clouds, to brainstorm possible issues affecting children and their communities and children's vision for change.



### CHILD-FRIENDLY TOOLS FOR IDENTIFYING PROBLEMS AND VISIONS FOR CHANGE

The following tools can be used to support children to identify key issues in their lives which they would like to address through advocacy.



Plan International (2021), [Diverse and empowered girls: a practical guide for girl activists](#) ↗ (includes a simple, child-friendly exercises for identifying objectives, such as creating a dream tree)



UNICEF (2019), [Youth Advocacy Toolkit](#) ↗ (includes child-friendly tools, such as vision clouds, and problem and solution trees)

### 4.2.2 Gather and analyse available information

Once we have identified our issue, it is important to gather information on this issue so that children and supporters can i) understand the problem from all angles and can communicate convincingly on the topic, ii) know who can either make or challenge the desired change, and iii) know what advocacy is currently being done on the topic, including what is working well or not working. Children's roles might include:

- ➔ Designing and leading the information gathering strategy
- ➔ Leading or contributing to a stakeholder mapping
- ➔ Leading or collaborating on consultations with key informants, including other children
- ➔ Leading or collaborating on a mapping of similar advocacy activities/campaigns
- ➔ Participating in consultations.



### TIPS: SUPPORTING CHILDREN TO GATHER AND EVALUATE INFORMATION ON A PROBLEM

#### Do.....

- ✔ Ensure you and other supporters have access to the most up-to-date information on the chosen advocacy topic. If needed, provide necessary resources to enable children to research the chosen advocacy topic, such as internet credit/access.
- ✔ Make information available to children in a format that is appropriate for their age, language and developmental status.

## TIPS ↑

- ✓ Remind children to evaluate all the information that they gather. Encourage them to ask who produced this information? Why did they produce it? Was their choice of method(s) strong? Can we trust this information?
- ✓ Encourage children to review information on different sides of the argument. It is easier to challenge counterarguments if we understand them.
- ✓ Remind children to keep a record of what information is open source and what is not. Stakeholders may share internal documents with them. Encourage them to always ask how these can be used in public activities.
- ✓ Support children to contact other organizations or groups who are doing advocacy on the same topic to share resources and learning. Provide resources to support this, such as airtime, internet access, transportation, and accompaniment.

**Don't.....**

- ✗ Overlook or undervalue new sources of information, such as trending social media sites, even if these are not 'typical' formal sources of information. Children often have the most up-to-date knowledge on what are relevant social media sites.
- ✗ Encourage children to search for information online without first sensitizing them on online safety.



For different child-participatory approaches to child research, see: Childfund International (2012), [Child- and youth-friendly participatory action research toolkit ↗](#)

**CONSULTING CHILDREN**

Child-focused advocacy should always **consult children, recognizing them as experts on their lives**. Be guided by children about **appropriate methods of consultation** for the chosen topic. For example, if discussing a sensitive topic, some children may prefer one-on-one consultations for greater privacy while others may feel more secure in focus group discussions where they can choose which questions to answer. If possible, **offer more than one form of consultation** (e.g. workshop, interview, focus group discussion, online chat etc), so that children can choose how they participate. **Tailor your consultation methods** to the age and developmental capacity of the targeted children, using child-friendly approaches that are engaging and fun (See **TOOL BOX BELOW ↓**). Always **obtain informed assent and consent** from the child and their caregivers before involving them in consultations.



## CHILD-FRIENDLY CONSULTATION TOOLS

There are lots of different child-friendly approaches for encouraging children to think about a problem and share their views. The following toolkits provide examples of tools which might be helpful during consultations with children on an advocacy topic. These tools can either be child-led or delivered to children by adult supporters.



Queen's University Belfast and The Centre for Children's Rights (2018), ['Facilitators' Pack Day of General Discussion 2018: Protecting & Empowering Child Human Rights Defenders'](#) ↗ (includes guidance on consulting children on sensitive topics, including 'Tips for discussing sensitive issues', 'Pointers for developing a group work contract', 'Distress protocol' and 'Safeguarding procedures')

- ⬇️ AWGCP (2007), [Operations manual on children's participation in consultations](#) ↗ (includes guidance on producing child-friendly materials)
- ⬇️ UNHCR (2012), [Listen and Learn: Participatory assessment with children and adolescents](#) ↗ (includes a wide range of child-friendly activities for gathering children's opinions on issues affecting their lives)
- ⬇️ Horizons, Population Council, IMPACT, Family Health International (2005), [Ethical Approaches to Gathering Information from Children and Adolescents in International Settings: Guidelines and Resources](#) ↗
- ⬇️ Child Rights Coalition Asia, Plan International, Childfund Korea, Save the Children (2021). [Child Participation Guidelines for Online Discussions with Children](#) ↗



## 4.3 Step Three: Plan your approach

The planning phase allows children the opportunity to lead or participate in the design of the advocacy strategy and plan. This means setting objectives, identifying targets and allies, choosing activities, developing key messaging, identifying risks, and developing an advocacy action plan.

### 4.3.1 Set your advocacy objectives

Our advocacy objective **clearly defines what we hope to achieve**. In child-focused advocacy, it should state what children want to change, including their vision for the future. When developing objectives with children, or supporting them to lead on the process, take time to explain the benefits of making objectives **SMART**: specific, measurable, achievable, results-orientated and time-bound.

→ To create an equal world for all children (N.B., this is aspirational, but it is very general and difficult to translate into concrete actions).

→ To raise awareness of the benefits of girls in our community remaining in school rather than being married before the age of 18 years.



#### TIPS ON MANAGING CHILDREN'S EXPECTATIONS WHEN DEVELOPING GOALS/OUTCOMES

When developing objectives, we want children to feel empowered and inspired to make a change. However, these aspirations may sometimes be unrealistic, given the context, available capacity, or resources. When objectives are unrealistic, there is an increased risk that child participants will feel frustrated if their advocacy activity does not provide the hoped-for results.

To support children to develop aspirational objectives that are also realistic, we can:

→ Explain to children why the most successful advocacy activities tend to have SMART objectives.



## TIPS ↑

- ➔ Ask children to assess their own proposed objectives against the SMART criteria; this gives them an opportunity to recognise any challenges and come up with their own changes, rather than being told that their ideas may be unrealistic.
- ➔ Be upfront about the time and resources available for the advocacy activity so that children can think about what can realistically be achieved.
- ➔ Manage children's expectations about what is realistic within the given time frame, based on previous advocacy activities. For example, make sure they understand that changing deep-rooted norms typically takes years. It can be helpful to provide examples of similar advocacy activities so they get a sense of the timeframe and amount of work required to see changes.
- ➔ Remind child participants that advocacy activities often do not go to plan, even when we have SMART objectives. We therefore need to be flexible, and this might mean tweaking objectives once the activity has started.

### 4.3.2. Identify your targets and allies

For children to undertake effective advocacy, they need to understand who the key targets and allies are relating to the chosen advocacy issue.

**Stakeholders:** within policy advocacy circles, a stakeholder is someone who is either affected by a decision or who can affect that decision.

**Targets/Audiences:** these are the individuals, groups or institutions to whom we advocate. They have sufficient influence to cause a change, either promoting or ending child rights violations. They can be categorized into primary and secondary targets. Targets may be resistant to your advocacy objectives (see **TIP BOX BELOW ↓**).

- ➔ **The primary–targets/audiences** are decision–makers with the authority to approve and make the desired change/objective. Possible primary-targets of child rights-based advocacy include relevant ministries, members of parliament, council of elders, chiefs and clan-heads, traditional leaders, religious leaders, and other community leaders.
- ➔ **The secondary–targets/audiences** are individuals and groups which can influence the decision-makers. The positions and actions of these 'influencers' can be important in achieving the intended objective if they successfully affect the opinions and actions of the decision-makers. For example, first ladies may influence presidents, staff may influence bosses, and friends and relatives may influence chiefs. Some primary-targets/audiences can also be secondary-targets/audiences if they influence other decision-makers.

**Allies:** these are individuals, groups or institutions who are supportive of your advocacy objective(s). They might include people affected by the problem, or people or organizations who are willing to work with you to help achieve your advocacy objectives, such as civil society organizations, celebrities or members of the media.

#### TIPS: ENGAGING RESISTANT TARGETS

Some primary or secondary-targets/audiences may oppose your advocacy objective(s). It is still helpful to encourage children to include these people in the stakeholder mapping so a decision can be made on whether to address their concerns as part of the advocacy strategy. If they have little impact on the change process and will be hard to influence, resources are probably better used elsewhere. However, the safety and reputational risks of children directly engaging with resistant stakeholders should be clearly identified in the risk assessment. You may collectively decide that there is need to engage these stakeholders, but – if the risks to children are high – it is safer for adult supporters to have any direct engagement.

#### TIP: TARGETING MEN AND BOYS

When an advocacy activity aims to change gender norms or roles, we should target men and boys, particularly fathers and brothers. This might involve, for instance, targeting fathers and religious and traditional leaders to broaden their understanding of the dangers of child marriage, and the long-term benefits of education and women's work. Equally important is reaching out to boys at a young age to encourage equitable gender attitudes and norms so that they can be change agents in their communities. It can be very powerful for girls to talk about gender inequalities with men and boys as they provide unique sights into the issue. However, it is good practice to discuss the gender dynamics with girls beforehand so they can think through, or even role play, how they will react if they face gender discriminatory attitudes or behaviours. It is also important to discuss with boys how they can support their female peers in such situations in a manner that is empowering for the girls.



### TOOLS/EXERCISES: MAPPING TARGETS AND ALLIES

For examples of child-friendly tools or exercises to support children to identify key targets and allies, and their level of influence, see:



Plan International, YAG, UNESCO and A World at School (2022), [The Education We Want: An Advocacy Toolkit](#) ↗ (focuses on education-focused advocacy but has helpful tools that can be adapted)



How to Child Rights (2022), [How to use recommendations from UN and Regional Human Rights monitoring and review processes to advance Children's Rights \(annex 3\)](#) ↗



Eurochild (2021). [Training Tool on engaging children in advocacy work on their right to participate in decision-making processes. Advocacy Toolkit](#) ↗

### 4.3.3 Develop your key messaging

As supporters, our responsibility is to ensure that the messaging developed for child-rights focused advocacy activities is developed by or resonates with children, reflects their reality, and aligns with their vision for the future. It is therefore critical that children participate in each stage of the development and testing of messaging. Children's roles might include:

- ➔ Researching successful and less successful messaging used by similar campaigns/activities
- ➔ Leading or participating in brainstorming sessions where key messaging is developed
- ➔ Providing feedback on proposed key messaging through written or verbal consultations
- ➔ Leading or participating in message 'testing'.

# 5. Choosing your advocacy activities and approaches



Advocacy involves a range of approaches, from lobbying ministers to staging local protests at school. It is likely that children will be familiar with some of these approaches, but not others, depending on their previous experience. Take time to explain different approaches, particularly if the children you are working with are relatively new to advocacy and participation. It is helpful to cover:

- ➔ What each approach involves, including the likely time commitment.
- ➔ The benefits of different approaches
- ➔ The likely challenges of different approaches in your context
- ➔ Circumstances in which a specific approach has proven particularly effective
- ➔ Circumstances in which a specific approach has proven particularly ineffective
- ➔ Whether any specific approaches have previously proved more successful than others with your target stakeholders
- ➔ Skills needed to successfully implement each approach
- ➔ Which approaches are currently being used for this issue and their level of success
- ➔ Risks of different approaches, including risks to children, their supporters or their families
- ➔ The approximate budgets needed for different approaches.

Don't forget that many children already engage in advocacy. Take time to ask about their own advocacy experiences and encourage them to consider how learning from these can help them design and implement the planned advocacy activity.

## Possible activities and approaches

The following section provides an overview of the best-known and most widely-used **advocacy approaches that lend themselves to child participation\***: For each, a couple of key considerations are listed to help children and supporters choose an appropriate approach.

1. **Conducting investigations/assessments and producing evidence-based recommendations for change:** This involves supporting children to undertake surveys or consultations, conduct their own research, develop evidence-based recommendations, and participate in consultative forums or working groups to develop recommendations, proposals, and policy inputs. Information and recommendations can then be presented to targets.
  - ➔ Where children are new to these types of activity, supporters need to be sufficiently skilled in undertaking assessments/research so that they can equip children with the skills needed to undertake credible and valid research projects/assessments and empower them to take ownership of the process.
  - ➔ Approaches that include data collection typically need a dedicated budget, including transport, materials, refreshments, and (possibly) per diems for participants. If approaches are face-to-face, remember that you may need to budget costs for the child and their accompanying adult(s).
  - ➔ Research and policy development tend to be 'adult' spheres. Although this should not be the case, in reality, children may need support to frame their information and recommendations to help them gain recognition.

\* Adapted from SOS Children's Villages (2020). Toolkit for Children and Young People's Participation in Advocacy



UNICEF (2019), [Youth Advocacy Guide Workbook](#) ↗ (includes child-friendly guidance on developing position papers to present to decision-makers)



2. **Public policy dialogue and lobbying, including face-to-face consultative meetings led by or involving children:** This approach involves children speaking out at meetings, conferences, and other events, and engaging in direct lobbying of local and national politicians and authorities. It also involves children engaging in face-to-face meetings with targeted decision makers (lobbying). This advocacy approach is one of the most frequently used by children and is often the starting point in a series of activities.
- ➔ Public policy dialogue and lobbying can be extremely empowering for children by providing an opportunity for them to directly engage with decision-makers. It can also be extremely enlightening for decision makers for whom this may be the first time they have heard children speaking out on a topic.
  - ➔ The nature of public policy dialogue and lobbying means that only a few children are likely to be directly involved in consultations with decision makers. However, others play a vital role by gathering information/evidence and preparing for the consultations.
  - ➔ Public policy dialogue and lobbying is typically most effective when children are confident, can clearly communicate their views and are well informed on the topic, so can answer questions. They must also be willing and able to speak out for others as well as themselves and should receive sufficient capacity development to prepare them to participate in what are typically adult forums.
  - ➔ If travel is required, sufficient budget is needed to cover transport and daily living costs of the children and their accompanying adults (see **BOX 5 ↓**).

**CASE STUDY 4: SUCCESSFUL PARTICIPATION AND CONSULTATION METHODOLOGY:  
THE DAY OF GENERAL DISCUSSION (UNCRC)**

The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child dedicated its 2018 DGD to the topic 'Protecting and Empowering Children as Human Rights Defenders', to foster a deeper understanding of the content and implications of the UNCRC with regards child human rights defenders. On 28 September 2018, more than 400 participants, including approximately 60 children, attended the DGD in Geneva, Switzerland. Participants included NGOs, state representatives, students, academics, and representatives of UN agencies and human rights mechanisms. In addition, more than 800 participants from across 66 countries followed the DGD through the United Nations' webcasting service, and there was a significant following of the day via social media.

For the first time, children played a central role in the planning, implementation and follow-up of an event arranged by the Committee. Children also took active part

## CASE STUDY 4 ↑

during the day, participating as speakers, moderators and audience members, alongside adults. The views, perspectives and recommendations of children across the world influenced policy makers at different levels, with children coming up with suggestion to help governments, schools, parents, and businesses to empower and protect child rights defenders\*. Their participation was based on the following methodology, developed by The Centre for Children's Rights at Queen's University Belfast (QUB), in partnership with Child Rights Connect and an International Advisory Group of Children: 'Facilitators' Pack Day of General Discussion 2018: Protecting & Empowering Child Human Rights Defenders' ↗.

\* UNCRC Day of General Discussion (2018) Protecting and Empowering Children as Human Rights Defenders Report

#### BOX 5: TOOLS/RESOURCES FOR SUPPORTING CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION IN GLOBAL EVENTS

Engaging children during global events requires particularly rigorous planning and preparation. Global engagements usually involve international travel and for many children it will be the first time they are travelling so far from their families and loved ones. It is therefore important to allow sufficient time for planning and preparing children for the event. There is also a need for specific consent forms which explain the advocacy activity to the child and their caregivers and also includes information on the process and requirements of international travel.\*\*

- ➔ For a checklist detailing considerations for each step of the process of planning, implementing, and reviewing children's participation in global events, see World Vision (2017) Leading the Way. <https://www.wvi.org/child-participation/publication/leading-way> ↗.
- ➔ For a sample consent form for use when children are participating in global events, see **ANNEX C** ↗.

\*\* World Vision International (2017). Leading the Way. Guidance on the Participation of Children and Young People in Global Engagements



IAWGCP (2007), Operations manual on children's participation in consultations ↗



World Vision International (2017). Leading the Way. Guidance on the Participation of Children and Young People in Global Engagements ↗

**3. Reporting to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child and other complaints mechanisms:** This involves children raising their concerns about child rights issues through mechanisms set up to promote accountability. For instance, they can submit their own, child-led reports to the Committee on the Rights of the Child or can work with other organizations, such as civil society organizations, to contribute to adult-led reports submitted to the Committee. The latter might include contributing to other UN reporting mechanisms, like the Universal Periodic Review and Voluntary National Reviews\*. Children can engage directly with UNCRC-related activities through Child Rights Connect in Geneva or other channels. They can also make a complaint about a child rights violation to the Children's Rights Commissioner/Ombudsperson or equivalent in their country.

- ➔ Alert children of their right to complain and how to do so. Provide capacity building, if needed, to support children to use complaints mechanisms so that they can express their concerns in their own words. Raise children's awareness of the different mechanisms available for reporting rights violations and the pros and cons of using each mechanism.
- ➔ To assist with planning, keep track of the UN reporting calendar and participate in national NGO networks to engage with advocacy processes in good time.
- ➔ Support children to get to know their national Commissioner or Ombudsperson and build a strong partnership with these individuals as a basis for future advocacy work.

\* World Vision International (2021). [Review of the 2021 Voluntary National Review: 44 countries presenting VNRs Main Messages](#)



World Vision International (2017). [Children as Change Agents: Guidelines for Child Participation in Periodic Reporting on the CRC](#) ↗



**4. Traditional media-based actions/campaigns:** These involve promoting advocacy messaging via traditional media, such as newspaper, television, radio, and posters/billboards. Children's activities cover a wide range, from being interviewed on television or appearing in a newspaper article, to displaying messaging on posters, bags, caps, T-shirts, or billboards. Children can also design their own radio shows.

- ➔ If undertaking more technical activities, such as developing a radio program, it is likely that some children may require experts on hand to help them with production. Peers who are experienced in a particular media medium can also provide technical assistance.



- ➔ Remind children that developing media comes with a responsibility not to reinforce negative stereotypes, such as gender-, age- or ethnicity-based stereotypes. Encourage them to also produce content which promotes public perceptions of children as active citizens.
- ➔ Consider introducing children to participatory media programming which involves providing a platform for intergenerational dialogue and debate through which children and their families are prompted to discuss content traditionally considered 'taboo' and consider ways to address these issues.
- ➔ Ensure children and their caregivers understand the benefits and risks of engaging with audiences via mass media.



IAWGCP (2007), [Operations manual on children's participation in consultations](#) ↗ (includes guidance on involving children in media activities)

**5. Digital/Social media-based activities:** These involve children engaging in advocacy via social media platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok, YouTube and other social media. Children can make videos/podcasts/posts that are either factual/documentaries, or creative videos/podcasts/posts that tell a story. They can also create websites or blogs through which to express their views.

- ➔ Social media engagement allows children to have access to a global audience. This comes with benefits and risks. Dedicate sufficient resources to ensure children are adequately capacitated to maximise the opportunities offered through social media, while also managing the risks.
- ➔ Listen to children about the types of platforms that are currently favoured by children and youth as these are constantly changing.
- ➔ Like traditional media, social media has the power to shape, reinforce, or challenge societal norms. Give children space to identify oppressive societal norms in their communities and then reflect on whether they are reinforcing these through their social media content. For example, encourage them to include girls in all their diversity and present them as decision-makers and leaders through gender-transformative stories.
- ➔ Although children are often at the forefront of digital advancements, remember that not all children have access to the internet or social media. To ensure activities are inclusive, it may therefore be necessary to provide resources and training to support children with lower digital literacy to engage in social media-based advocacy activities. Training could include online safety and privacy, and creating impactful digital content, such as memes.



UNICEF (n/d). [How to do digital advocacy](#) ↗

THE YEP4EUROPE CONSORTIUM (2017). [Using digital media for youth engagement and active citizenship](#) ↗ (provides detailed advice on building youth's capacity to use digital media, including digital journalism and using social media for advocacy).

#### TIPS! ONLINE SAFETY TIPS

Globally, children are among the most active and influential users of technology, enthusiastically adopting new digital technology as it evolves. The online sphere provides significant opportunities for children to access rich information, learn, communicate, and access civic engagement opportunities and entertainment in innovative ways. However, the online sphere also presents substantial risks of abuse and exploitation. To minimize these risks, we can:

- ➔ Raise children's and their caregivers' awareness of the risks of online exploitation and abuse, and children's rights when using social media and digital technology. For instance, ensuring they understand that online bullying or harassment are unacceptable.
- ➔ Ensure only prior-agreed project staff have access to children's online profiles, and at least two staff have access to online interactions with children at any one time.
- ➔ Sensitize children who participate in online activities on how to safely and appropriately utilise social media and digital technology. This includes increasing their knowledge about how much personal information can be safely shared online, how to set privacy features on social media, and how to use parental control features (for caregivers). Tips can also be provided on how to recognize potentially abusive behaviour, such as the warning signs of grooming and the dangers of sexting.\*
- ➔ Equip children and their caregivers with the knowledge and skills to seek help and report abuse if it occurs. This includes sensitizing them on your organization's safeguarding reporting system, including different channels of reporting and their reporting rights, and sharing your employee code of conduct so that they understand what behaviours are, and are not, acceptable from staff and volunteers linked to your organization.
- ➔ Design and share psychoeducational materials on online safety that are evidence-based and contextualized to ensure they are as impactful as possible in enhancing online safety.\*\*

\* Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children (2020). Safeguarding Child Speakers During Online Meetings with Adults

\*\* UNICEF East Asia and the Pacific Regional Office (2022), [Evaluating online Safety Initiatives: How to build the evidence base on what works to keep children safe online](#)



### [UNICEF Standards for child safeguarding in online and digital environments ↗](#).\*



See also **ANNEX D ↗**, which includes more detailed Safeguarding considerations for online engagement with children, based on World Vision's internal guidelines.

\* UNICEF (2020) Staying Safe Online: Safeguarding and Digital Engagement. <https://www.unicef.org.uk/child-friendly-cities/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2020/05/Safeguarding-and-digital-engagement-guidance-Child-Friendly-Cities-and-Communities-Unicef-UK.pdf>

#### **CASE STUDY 5: CAPACITATING CHILDREN FOR SUCCESSFUL PARTICIPATION IN DIGITAL ADVOCACY: AMPLIFYING CHILDREN'S VOICES DIGITALLY PROJECT, WORLD VISION**

In an increasingly digital world, girls and boys across the globe shared with World Vision that they wanted to learn the necessary digital skills, knowledge, and tools to raise their voices and influence change nationally and globally. They wanted to engage virtually with their peers, using technology and online methods for broader participation, representation and inclusion, especially around actions to end violence against children. Working together with children from 15 countries, World Vision used digital platforms combined with in-person networks to equip children with the digital tools needed to participate actively and safely in advocacy initiatives. Training modules covered social media, blogging, lobbying, networking, mass mobilisation, and social and behaviour change.

In addition to training, the project also helped children to overcome the challenges of connectivity and access to devices and provided digital spaces and opportunities to promote social change in their communities, countries, and regions. As highlighted by the following young leader, this gave children a chance to connect and feel a sense of collective belonging and purpose.

“The first time I joined a call with hundreds of other children I was very happy because I was giving ideas of how we can promote our rights. Other children were writing blogs to promote our rights, and others were using their social media to communicate our demands. This was major”.

Gheisa, 14, Nicaragua

## CASE STUDY 5 ↑

Having seen the impact of safely supporting children's participation online, World Vision is now planning to scale this up approach to involve more children in more countries through its Amplifying Children's Voices Digitally project. The project will accelerate children's ability to contribute to positive changes around the world and mobilise their peers to engage in changing policy, practices, and attitudes that prevent children from living without fear of violence.\*

\* World Vision International (2021). [Annual Campaign Progress Report It Takes a World](#)



**6. Street-based campaigning:** This involves children engaging in marches, demonstrations, sit-ins, protests, or non-violent direct action.

➔ Remember that freedom of assembly and peaceful association are children's rights under Article 15 of the UNCRC. Don't deny or let others violate these rights.



© PLAN SENEGAL (GIRLS USE HIP HOP TO PUSH FOR POLITICAL CHANGE)

7. **Messaging through performance and creative arts:** Children’s creative work presented to the right audience at the right moment can move the hearts of those in positions of power. Children can deliver advocacy messaging through a range of creative and performance arts, including spoken word/poetry, theatre, murals, sculptures, paintings/drawings, and computer-generated artwork that communicates a specific advocacy message. Children can also create songs with messages, adapting old songs or creating new ones, and share and distribute their music online.

- ➔ Remember that performance and creative arts always communicate a message or story. They become an *advocacy activity* when i) the audience has been identified as an indirect target who can influence a direct target (such as community members who can influence a chief), or ii) there are direct targets in the audience, such as local politicians.
- ➔ Work with children to identify influential performers who are willing to be an ambassador for children’s messaging. For example, you could work with children to engage a local music artist to compose a theme song on the harmful practices or work with children to develop a song, or the use of themed dramas to stimulate conversations.
- ➔ When delivering messaging through performance arts, it is typically more effective if a limited number of messages or themes are chosen so that the audience clearly understands what problems or issues are being highlighted and what are the suggested solutions. The involvement of affected people, such as affected children, can make the performance much more powerful, if they are happy to do so, and it will not harm them.



Plan International (2020). Case Studies, available at: [Girls in Senegal use hip hop to push for political change](#) ↗



8. **Edutainment for child rights:** This involves engaging children through forms of entertainment that also transmit key advocacy messaging. These might include working with artists to develop theme songs that disseminate information on ending violence against children or organizing sporting events for girls and young women that highlight advocacy messaging on gender equality issues.

#### TIPS: DIFFERENT APPROACHES FOR CHILD PARTICIPATION



For tips on children's participation in many of the approaches listed in this section, including conference, policy dialogues, online engagement, and document reviews, see UNICEF (2021), [Tip sheets for adults, adolescents and youth on adolescent and youth: Participation in different settings](#) ↗





### TIPS FOR SUPPORTING CHILDREN TO DEVELOP AND TEST ADVOCACY MESSAGING

- Encourage children to brainstorm messaging ideas. It takes time to develop a strong message and our first attempt is rarely our final message.
- Suggest children ask themselves the following questions when developing a message: What do I want to change? Why? For whom? Where? When?
- Provide examples of successful messaging so that children can learn from actual examples when developing their own messages (see Annex E). However, encourage children to develop their own messages rather than simply copying other (possibly adult-developed) messaging. Remind them that they have a unique insight into the issues affecting their lives that makes them particularly well-suited to developing effective, impactful messaging.
- Support children to identify and explore the evidence base for each key message. This helps prepare them to address any challenges they may experience when delivering their messaging.
- Discuss the benefits and risks of using real life stories or experiences in advocacy messaging. Messaging based on real-life experiences are often more effective. They come from the heart, are emotive and can be particularly convincing. However, as supporters, we also need to encourage children to think through the possible risks of sharing real life experiences or those of others. Ensure children understand the importance of protecting other people's right to privacy and not using real life experiences in a way that violates this right.
- Encourage children to test their messaging on different people before they start their activity to see if the 'ask' or change you wish to make is clear and realistic. This allows them to fine-tune their messaging so that it has the biggest possible impact. They can test messaging on friends, family, teachers, or other community members.



### TOOLS FOR DEVELOPING AND TESTING KEY MESSAGING

For child-friendly guidance and tools/exercises that can be used to support children to develop and test key messaging, see:



Save the Children (2008) [One Step Beyond: Advocacy handbook for young people and children](#) ↗



Plan International, YAG, UNESCO and A World at School (2022), [The Education We Want: An Advocacy Toolkit](#) ↗

## 5.1 Identify and manage risks

As noted in **SECTION 4.1.1** [↗](#), the risks associated with children's participation in advocacy activities vary greatly, depending on the context, advocacy issue, and type of activity. Risk assessments allow us to identify specific risks linked to an activity in a specific local and national socio-cultural, religious, and political context, and plan for ways to minimize or remove possible risks. Since children have invaluable insights into their own lives and safeguarding threats, it is important that practitioners **collaborate with children and other concerned stakeholders to consider risks and opportunities** linked to children's participation in a specific advocacy activity and develop **localized risk mitigation strategies**. As part of this process, it is important to consider gender and conflict-sensitive issues.

When supporting children's participation in advocacy activities, it is good practice to:

- ➔ Undertake risk assessments before the start of any online or offline advocacy activity, and then regularly monitor, assess, and mitigate risks in collaboration with children.
- ➔ Do not only assess risks associated with children's participation, but also analyse the risks of not consulting and not listening to children (e.g., increased risks of adults abusing children if there are no channels for them to share their concerns and complaints).
- ➔ Ensure that during child-led activities, children are actively involved in risk assessments and strategies to reduce risks and to inform decisions about when and how their participation may not be safe or appropriate. As part of this, children should be supported to adjust their plans if proposed activities are not in line with their best interests.\*
- ➔ Develop detailed risk management plans that include, at a minimum: the nature of each risk, the level of each risk, risk mitigation measures for each risk, person(s) responsible for overseeing the mitigation measures, and review date for each risk. These should be 'living' documents that are updated regularly or when a risk changes.
- ➔ Ensure children are actively involved in the development of risk management plans and participate in risk review meetings where the plan is updated. With sufficient training and experience, children can also lead the process.

\* UNICEF (2020). [Engaged and Heard! Guidelines on Adolescent Participation and Civic Engagement](#)



Plan International's Girls Get Equal Youth Toolkit: [How to manage risk to yourself, others and your campaign](#) [↗](#). (child-friendly guidance on how to manage risk)







### TOOL: SAMPLE CHILD PROTECTION RISK ASSESSMENT

The Child Protection Risk Assessment\* ( **ANNEX E 7** ) developed by World Vision is a tool that assists individuals and organisations to consider, prepare for and protect children from any potential physical, social, or emotional harm that may arise from their participation in an activity or project, including advocacy work. The assessment should be completed prior to engaging in any activities that include significant child participation, including but not limited to:

1. One-time or stand-alone participatory processes, including, but not limited to, assessments, research (by and with children), consultations, activity design workshops, and monitoring and evaluation activities.
2. On-going child participation activities that promote children's participation and empowerment, such as children's groups, clubs, forums, child parliaments, advocacy activities, or engagement on child rights issues in national/international decision-making platforms/arenas. In such cases, risk assessments should be conducted periodically throughout the course of implementation, with the frequency of assessment based on the level of risk and instability in the context.\*\*

If you have any questions about how to implement the Child Protection Risk Assessment, consult your organization's safeguarding focal point.

\* World Vision International (2012). Guidance Note: Child Protection Risk Assessment for Child Participation Activities

\*\* World Vision International (2012). Guidance Note: Child Protection Risk Assessment for Child Participation Activities

## 5.2 Develop your advocacy action plan

An advocacy action plan maps out an advocacy activity. It includes, at a minimum i) the change you want to achieve (objectives); who you will target; what activities/approaches you will use; who is responsible for each action; the time schedule; what resources are available; possible risks and ways of reducing these risks; and how you will measure the results.\*\*\* Encourage children to consider for each point in the advocacy plan **what will success look like?**

Children can have different roles in the planning process. These include leading or participating in planning sessions, developing or contributing to the advocacy action plan, and leading or participating in activities reviewing the plan. Be sure to convey to children,

\*\*\* Tearfund (2000), [The advocacy cycle](#)

especially those new to the advocacy, that the action plan **belongs to us all**, even if we allocate different responsibilities to different members of our team. It is important to share in each other's successes and work together to change actions that were less successful.

#### TOOL: ADVOCACY ACTION PLAN OR STRATEGY



For a simple, step-by-step planning tool, with an action plan template, see: UNICEF (2019), [Youth Advocacy Guide Workbook](#) ↗.



For a more detailed template for outlining your overall strategy and advocacy action plan, see: Eurochild (2021). [Training Tool on engaging children in advocacy work on their right to participate in decision-making processes. Advocacy Toolkit](#) ↗, p.29-31

## ASSIGNING ROLES

Once the messaging and activities are agreed, roles and responsibilities need to be assigned to ensure the plan is successfully implemented. As noted earlier, children's roles and responsibilities in advocacy activities are very diverse, ranging from consultations (collecting and incorporating their views) to collaboration (working together) and child-led advocacy (children lead the process). Children should not be allocated roles but rather be closely involved in or lead the allocation process so they can define their own roles and responsibilities.

#### TIPS: ALLOCATING ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

##### Do...

- ✓ Encourage children to lead or collaborate in the role allocation process.
- ✓ Be clear what capacity development opportunities will be available so children can aspire to roles exceeding their current skills or knowledge. Remind them that the advocacy activities are an opportunity to learn and practice new skills.
- ✓ Encourage children with more advocacy experience to provide peer support/mentorship to those with less or no experience so there is space for everyone to fully participate.
- ✓ Encourage children to see back- and front-stage roles as equal. For example, a speaker is only as good as their speech writer.

**Don't...**

- ⊗ Invite children to read a pre-written speech that was composed by adults.
- ⊗ Ask children to perform tokenistic roles that have little strategic value to the advocacy goal, such as presenting flowers or gifts to adult decision-makers or singing a song or performing a play purely for entertainment purposes.
- ⊗ Ask children to pose for pictures with adult decision-makers without giving them any opportunity to enter into dialogue with these adults.\*

\* World Vision International (2017). [Leading the Way. Guidance on the Participation of Children and Young People in Global Engagements](#)

## 5.3 Take Action!

Once you have a plan, you are ready to implement your action plan. This involves supporting children to complete their assigned responsibilities within the action plan and to monitor the effectiveness of the plan. Details on monitoring are covered in the final section (**SECTION 6: EVALUATING ↗**).

### 5.3.1 Implement your action plan

In an ideal world, advocacy activities should be safe and fulfilling for all children. However, even the best planned activity is likely to face challenges and unintended outcomes. These can be disheartening for children, particularly if this is their first attempt at advocacy. The table below outlines some of the common challenges that children may face when participating in advocacy activities and ways in which supporters can help children to overcome these challenges.

Challenge	Possible tips for supporters
Children are disheartened when they do not see immediate progress as a result of their actions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be clear with children from the onset that advocacy rarely sees immediate results. Include this in all trainings for children on the basics of advocacy.</li> <li>• Reassure children that change takes time, and this is very normal.</li> <li>• Support children to develop monitoring plans that capture output as well as outcome level indicators, and changes in attitudes as well as changes in actions. Doing so increases the likelihood that incremental changes will be captured so children can see their progress.</li> <li>• Encourage children to reflect on any personal changes and achievements that have occurred as a result of their participation in the advocacy activity, such as growth in confidence or achieving their goal of speaking in public.</li> </ul>



<p>Child reports backlash from their communities for their involvement in the advocacy activity.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Listen to the child so you understand exactly what this backlash involved.</li> <li>• Assess if the child is facing specific risks or if the situation needs reporting through your safeguarding process. Review the activity risk management plan.</li> <li>• Ask the child if they would like to speak with someone about their feelings (such as a PSS professional).</li> <li>• Encourage the child to share their experiences and feelings with their support network. This could be their family, friends, or peers working on the activity.</li> <li>• Reflect with the child and other participants whether the activity or approaches need to change in light of the backlash.</li> </ul>
<p>Child reports online backlash from their online activities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Listen to the child so you understand exactly what this backlash involves.</li> <li>• Assess if the child is facing any risks or if the situation needs to be reported as part of your safeguarding procedures. Review the risk management plan.</li> <li>• Recognise that online bullying and abuse can have the same impact as face-to-face bullying and abuse. Ask the child if they would like to speak with someone about their feelings (such as a PSS professional).</li> <li>• Encourage the child to share their experiences and feelings with their support network. This could be their family, friends, or peers working on the activity.</li> <li>• Ensure the child knows how to block unwanted connections, even if these are our targets, to increase their sense of safety.</li> <li>• Reflect with the child and other participants whether the activity or approaches need to change in light of the backlash.</li> </ul>
<p>Children are denied access to key targets</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Give children space to express their frustration, particularly if they see adults being granted access.</li> <li>• Brainstorm with children whether there are other ways of accessing these key targets, such as identifying other people who have access and may be willing to share their messaging or facilitate access.</li> <li>• Assess whether children can access the key targets if accompanied by adult supporters.</li> <li>• Review whether this barrier affects the overall advocacy strategy and plan, and adapt, if needed.</li> </ul>
<p>Children report feeling undervalued or not listened to during their activities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepare children from the onset that their participation may not always be appreciated or recognized. However, their participation is a way through which they can challenge inequalities in their communities, including those based on age, and show that children can be change agents.</li> <li>• Take action if you see other people treating children without sufficient respect or ignoring their views during activities. This could involve directly asking children their views in a group setting, to give them the floor to speak, or speaking directly to the person or people involved to explain the children's role and their expertise.</li> <li>• Validate the children's feelings and encourage them to share them with their peers and family for further support.</li> <li>• Encourage children to focus on what they contributed to the activity and the unique expertise they brought to the table.</li> <li>• Work with the children to share their progress and achievements publicly.</li> </ul>



<p>Children receive high praise from targets but then hear nothing further.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepare children from the onset that change takes time. It may be that their message registers and has an impact weeks or even years later.</li> <li>• Give children space to voice their frustrations and disappointment.</li> <li>• Remind children that their work was appreciated and validated by the targets. They were heard.</li> <li>• Encourage children to plan for ways of following up on successful interactions to build a relationship with targets who appear supportive of the advocacy messaging and objectives. Remind them that often our targets are busy people and may need to be reminded of our advocacy asks.</li> </ul>
<p>Children want to expand activities after seeing an impact but there is no budget</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be transparent from the onset about what resources are available. Encourage children to lead or be actively involved in developing the activity budget.</li> <li>• Support children to identify other possible resources in their communities to whom they could pitch their ideas. Support them to package their ideas as a convincing proposal. These could be stakeholders they have already interacted with as part of their advocacy activity.</li> <li>• Support children to safely identify and network with other groups working on the same topic in case they can work together and pool resources. This could be NGOs, school councils or community groups.</li> <li>• Remind children that not all activities incur costs. Encourage them to brainstorm alternative approaches.</li> </ul>

#### TIP! SELF-CARE

When supporting children's participation in advocacy, it is important to recognize that children's enthusiasm for a topic or the sensitivity of a topic can put them at risk of stress or even burn out, if they are participating alongside school, paid work, and/or unpaid work. To reduce the risk of this happening, share information on self-care with supporters, children, and caregivers, and emphasize the importance of children and supporters prioritizing their well-being before they can support other people.



For practical, child-friendly guidance on self-care during advocacy activities and campaigns, see Plan International's Girls Get Equal Youth Toolkit: [Self-care and collective care: How to avoid burn out](#) ↗ (p.105-108).

# 6. Evaluating

Monitoring and evaluating the outcomes and impact of the advocacy activity needs to be a core part of your strategic approach, whereby evidence is gathered for learning, adapting, and follow-up. Every activity in the advocacy action plan should be covered in the monitoring and evaluation plan, including:

- ➔ Key performance indicators which are measured at relevant points in time, including definitions of each indicator.
- ➔ Appropriate methods of data collection to measure each indicator, including child-friendly data collection approaches, where relevant.
- ➔ Who is responsible for each activity in the monitoring and evaluation plan?
- ➔ When each activity in the monitoring and evaluation plan should be conducted (ensuring there is dedicated time to assess the impact and make assumptions and plan next steps).

When engaging children in advocacy activities, it is helpful to not only evaluate the effectiveness of the advocacy activity but also evaluate the **impact of children's participation** on the children themselves and their families and communities. The second focus allows us to generate evidence on the benefits of supporting children's participation in advocacy that can help us to argue for future projects. It can also reduce frustration if the advocacy objective is taking time to achieve since measuring personal transformations and broader normative changes can help children to see that their participation is contributing to change.



## TIP! A FEW SAMPLE QUESTIONS FOR MONITORING CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION IN ADVOCACY\*

- ➔ Did children play a significant role in contributing to the setting of advocacy objectives?
- ➔ Did children play an active role in the advocacy activity? Could their participation have been strengthened?
- ➔ Did children face any barriers to their participation? If so, what were these, could they be overcome, and how?
- ➔ Do children feel positive about the advocacy process and outcomes? Why or why not?

\* Adapted from UNICEF (2020), [Advocacy with and for children in the work of NHRIS \(National human rights institutions\)](#)

Children's roles in the monitoring and evaluation process range from completing training evaluations or participating in evaluation workshops, to supporting or leading on the development of monitoring and evaluation tools and undertaking data collection and data analysis.



#### CHILD-PARTICIPATORY MONITORING AND EVALUATION TOOLS



A recommended resource to measure the scope, quality and outcomes of children's participation is Plan, The Concerned for Working Children, UNICEF, World Vision, and Save the Children (2014) [A Toolkit for Monitoring and Evaluating Children's Participation: Introduction. Booklet 1 | Save the Children's Resource Centre](#) ↗



There are also a variety of child-friendly evaluation activities in UNHCR (2012), [Listen and Learn: Participatory assessment with children and adolescents](#) ↗ and ECPAT (2012). [Youth Power. A Manual on Youth-led Advocacy](#) ↗

# Annexes

## Annex A: Child participation requirements checklist\*

Requirements	Demonstrate efforts to:	Check
1. Participation is transparent and informative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide child-friendly information in appropriate and accessible languages/formats</li> <li>• Define roles and responsibilities, opportunities and limitations</li> </ul>	
2. Participation is voluntary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure children have time to make an informed decision about their involvement</li> <li>• Ensure children can withdraw at any time</li> <li>• Address adult/child power imbalances to ensure a truly voluntary process</li> </ul>	
3. Participation is respectful	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take into account children's other commitments/rights (school/work/play)</li> <li>• Ensure ways of working are culture and gender sensitive</li> <li>• Ensure key adults (parents, teachers) are supportive and informed</li> </ul>	
4. Participation is relevant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure the issues are of real relevance to the children</li> <li>• Support child-defined initiatives and topics</li> <li>• Ensure adults have not pressured children to participate</li> </ul>	
5. Participation is child-friendly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use child-friendly methods and approaches</li> <li>• Ensure meeting places are child-friendly and accessible</li> </ul>	
6. Participation is inclusive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engage children of different genders, ages, backgrounds, and abilities</li> <li>• Provide safe spaces for different groups of children to explore issues relevant to them</li> <li>• Ensure the process is non-discriminatory and inclusive</li> <li>• Ensure those most impacted by discrimination and inequality can equally participate</li> <li>• Ensure methods and tools are accessible and promote equal access</li> </ul>	
7. Participation is supported by training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure staff and partners have the confidence and skills to facilitate child participation processes</li> </ul>	
8. Participation is safe and sensitive to risk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Undertake conflict sensitivity and risk assessments</li> <li>• Develop a safeguarding plan</li> <li>• Ensure all children know where to go for help, if needed</li> </ul>	
9. Participation is accountable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a monitoring and evaluation strategy</li> <li>• Engage children in monitoring and evaluation processes</li> <li>• Define communication and follow up mechanisms with children</li> <li>• Ensure children see the results of their participation</li> </ul>	



\* Adapted from Save the Children (2021). The Nine Basic Requirements for Meaningful and Ethical Children's Participation



## Annex B: Sample consent forms for foreign or domestic travel for advocacy

The following template is adapted from forms developed by World Vision for global travel. The forms can be adapted depending on whether the travel plans are local or international.

### Memorandum of Understanding for a Child on Travel with [Name of Organization]

Date \_\_\_\_\_

[NAME OF ORGANIZATION] has requested that I, [FULL NAME OF CHILD], travel to [NAME OF COUNTRY], to participate in the [EVENT], which will be held in [CITY/TOWN/PROVINCE] from [DATE] to [DATE].

I have been consulted about decisions regarding this visit and the request that I be accompanied by [NAME OF ACCOMPANYING ADULT/CHAPERONE], who will be responsible for my care and protection. I agree to this visit and the choice of accompanying adult.

I understand that if I become ill, have an accident or other emergency, [NAME OF ORGANIZATION] will provide any medical treatment that may be required.

I have read the Behaviour Protocols for the Accompanying Adult. I have been given contact names, addresses and phone numbers in each city where I will be and have a copy of the most recent itinerary. I agree to act responsibly.

I will treat other children and adults with respect. I understand that I will be with others who have different values and cultures and I agree to listen to their views and experiences with respect and hope they will do the same for me.

I will follow the instructions of the Accompanying Adult whose role it is to care and protect me. I will not hit or hurt others. I will not drink alcohol, smoke cigarettes or take any illegal drugs. I will not use bad language, make suggestions or offer advice which is offensive or abusive.

If I have any concerns about being with my Accompanying Adult I know that I can contact [NAME AND PHONE NUMBER].

Name, Signature & Date of Birth of the Child & Passport Number & Country of Issue

Date

Name and Signature of [NAME OF ORGANIZATION] Representative

Date

Name & Signature of the Accompanying Adult/Chaperone

Date



## Consent Form for Parents/Guardian

To Whom It May Concern:

I / We, [FULL NAME/S OF PARENT/S/GUARDIAN], of [ADDRESS], do hereby allow my child, [FULL NAME OF CHILD] to travel to [NAME OF COUNTRY], to participate in the [EVENT], which will be held in [CITY/TOWN/PROVINCE] from [DATE] to [DATE]. All expenses related to this trip will be paid by the sponsoring organisation, [NAME OF ORGANIZATION]. These costs include transportation, accommodation, food, passport and visa costs, medical and travel insurance. She/he will be accompanied by [NAME OF ACCOMPANYING ADULT/CHAPERONE], who will be responsible for the care and protection of [FULL NAME OF CHILD]. I/we recognise that if an illness, accident or other emergency involving my/our child should occur, medical treatment may be required and I authorise the [NAME OF ORGANIZATION] personnel who are supervising my child and the medical personnel that they select, to provide such treatment and take measures they deem appropriate under the circumstances. I/we have read the behaviour protocols and discussed them with my/our child, have been given the contact names, addresses and phone numbers of emergency contacts, and have a copy of the most

Name and Signature of Parent/Guardian of the Child & Proof of Identify (ID or Passport Number)

Date

Name and Signature of [NAME OF ORGANIZATION] Representative

Date

Name & Signature of the Accompanying Adult/Chaperone

Date

## Annex C: Safeguarding considerations for online engagement with children who participate in advocacy activities\*

DO	ENSURE	DON'T
<p>Preparation and Planning:</p> <p>Assess the need for ongoing digital engagement with children. Only initiate digital programming with children if the context requires it and risks can be mitigated.</p> <p>Have a protocol in place for securely saving phone numbers and other personal data which only a limited number of staff can access. Agree beforehand when the data will be deleted.</p> <p>Assign specific staff who will be the contacts for child participants; only these people should communicate directly with children.</p> <p>Direct Engagement:</p> <p><a href="#">Obtain and document parental/caregiver digital consent</a> for online engagement with children under 18. Consent can be given through messaging services, such as SMS, but the office must capture screenshots and keep them on file. If taken over a telephone call, the staff member must document his/her name, the child's name, the caller's name, and the date and time consent was given.</p> <p>Provide guidance to supporters and participants on how to safely manage an online group.</p> <p>Prepare advocacy messages in advance. Always ensure messages are age- and gender-sensitive.</p>	<p>Safeguarding Incident Preparedness Plan:</p> <p>Ensure online risks and referrals to authorities are included in the National Office Safeguarding Incident Preparedness Plan Summary (SIPP)</p> <p>Identify Referral pathways through an updated SIPP Summary for the emergency response for children who reach out for support.</p> <p>Direct Engagement:</p> <p>Inform parents and partner organisations about the dangers of harmful websites, mobile applications, cyberbullying and predatory online behaviour.</p> <p>Ensure partners engaging online with children are following safeguarding considerations for online engagement.</p> <p>Ensure staff who engage directly online with children or adult beneficiaries know how to respond when someone discloses abuse or other violence against children.</p>	<p>DON'T engage online/through digital platforms one-on-one with children; ensure that at least two staff are aware and following direct communications with individual children. If staff receive a telephone call or if a child has reached out individually, document the discussion and advise another staff member. National Offices can determine the best method for managing this.</p> <p>DON'T allow <u>all</u> staff access and approval to communicate directly with children.</p> <p>DON'T use Facebook messenger: channel communications into other forms of approved communication, such as SMS, Signal, Telegram, telephone, Skype, Zoom etc.</p> <p>DON'T gather personal data (other than consent when necessary) on online public platforms, such as WhatsApp, Messenger, or publicly accessed Google platforms</p> <p>DON'T manage online groups where the context introduces elevated risks linked to online participation for participants or the organisation (e.g. there are government regulations restricting online engagement, staff are unable to manage new risks, such as cyberbullying)</p>

\* Adapted from World Vision International (2020). Safeguarding Considerations for Online Engagement with Children, Adolescents and Adult Beneficiaries during the COVID-19 Response

<p>Provide all participants with information on how to report abuse or suspicious behaviour (via websites, telephone number, etc.) on a regular basis through various communications</p> <p>Share online safety tips with all children who the office is contacting through digital engagement, and their caregivers.</p> <p>Collect the minimum amount of data needed to perform whatever function you are doing.</p> <p>Explain to those involved why you are collecting data. They should understand why you need the data, how you will use it, who will have access to it, with whom you will share it, and when you will delete it.</p>	<p>Reporting Abuse or other allegations of harm:</p> <p>Ensure any allegations of harm caused by staff or affiliates are reported into a reporting system within 24 hours of discovery.</p> <p>Ensure reporting &amp; referral mechanisms include considerations for online abuse. This includes information on what constitutes online abuse, and where and how to report both off and online abuse.</p>	<p>DON'T use solutions or software before the organisation's IT department has conducted a Privacy Impact Assessment and a Data Protection Impact Assessment.</p> <p>DON'T share or exchange any sensitive and/or personal data with other organisations, governments or donors without a clearly articulated MOU outlining why they need the data, how they will use the data, with whom they will share it, and when they will delete it.</p>
---	---	---

## Annex D: Examples of advocacy messaging on child rights

The following are **examples of advocacy messaging** that relates to a range of child rights topics. These can be provided to children as examples. However, it is best practice for children to develop their own messaging, or support the development of new messaging, that is specific to their context.

Every girl and boy has the right to protection. They have the right to survive, to be safe, to belong, to be heard, to receive adequate care, and to grow up in a protective environment.

Every community should create and implement a plan of action to eliminate all forms of violence against children in the home, school, and community: these include child marriage, physical violence (including corporal punishment), sexual abuse and exploitation, child labour, and verbal/emotional abuse.

Every community should establish safe ways for children to report violence against them through telephone hotlines and accessible social protection centers.

Work should not prevent children from attending school.

A family is the first line of protection for children. Parents or guardians are responsible for building a protective and loving home environment. Schools and communities are responsible for building a safe and child-friendly environment outside the child's home. In the family, school, and community, children should be fully protected so they can survive, grow, learn, and develop to their fullest potential.

Parents, teachers, peer leaders, and other role models should provide adolescents with a safe environment and a range of life skills that can help them make healthy choices and practice healthy, responsible, and safe behavior to avoid substance abuse and conflict with the law.

Girls and boys must be protected from all forms of violence and abuse. This includes physical, sexual and emotional abuse, neglect, gender-based violence, and related harmful practices, such as child marriage. Families, communities, and authorities are responsible for ensuring this protection.

Girls need to know what to do and where to go if they have been affected by sexual assault.

To effectively address gender-based violence, boys and men need to be actively engaged in finding solutions. Their full engagement is needed to work on preventing violence and sexual harassment, resisting peer pressure, and achieving gender equality. This should include work to strengthen their understandings of gender stereotypes and inequalities.

Discussions at home, in school, and in the community between children and their parents, teachers, community leaders, and other role models can help develop healthy attitudes and behaviours. They can contribute to increased respect for girls and their rights, equality in decision-making and relationships, and skills development on how to confront peer pressure, sexual harassment, violence, and stereotypes.

Children must be protected from all work that is hazardous. Work should not prevent them from attending school. Children should never be involved in the worst forms of child labour, such as slavery, forced labour, drug production or trafficking.

Girls and boys can be at risk of sexual abuse and exploitation in their home, school, workplace, or community. Measures should be taken to prevent sexual abuse and exploitation. Sexually abused and exploited children need immediate help to stop such abuse.

All children have a right to age-appropriate information, to be heard and to participate in making decisions that concern them. Fulfilment of this right enables children to take an active role in their own protection against abuse, violence, and exploitation, and to become active citizens.

Girls who marry before 18 are more likely to experience violence in marriage than girls who marry later.

Building non-violent homes, schools, and communities depends on building good parenting skills at home, respect among children/pupils, and between children/pupils, parents, and teachers.

## Annex E: Child Protection Risk Assessment\*

### Section 1: Minimum Conditions for Planning Child Participation Activities

All of the following pre-conditions must be met in order to proceed with the remainder of the risk assessment. If some conditions are not met, plans for children's participation should not proceed until pre-conditions are met.

Are the following pre-conditions met? Circle Yes or No.

CONDITIONS	YES	NO
a. Local child protection threats, issues, and resources have been identified		
b. Plans are in place to ensure children have genuine opportunities to influence the outcome and approach of the activities		
c. Intentional plans have been made to include most vulnerable children in the activities		
d. A complaints and response mechanism exists for children to report inappropriate behaviour by adults or other children in the activities		
e. Plans are in place to get informed consent of child participants and their caregivers		
f. Partner organizations involved in the activity have policies or systems which make them safe organizations for children		
<b>If no is answered for any of these questions, address the condition before proceeding.</b>		

### Section 2: General Context Questions (mark one answer for each question)

1. How stable is the context?	Unstable	Quite Stable	Stable
2. How willing and able are the police to protect people?	Unwilling or unable	Quite unwilling or willing but weak capacity	Willing and able
3. How effective are systems of justice (including effectiveness of laws, investigations and prosecutions, courts and community grievance procedures)?	Ineffective and/or widespread impunity	Somewhat effective	Effective

\* Adapted from World Vision International (2012). Guidance Note: Child Protection Risk Assessment for Child Participation Activities

4. Have there been any specific threats or incidents of violence or reprisals for people advocating for human rights, speaking out about alleged abuses, or criticizing government policy of practice that you know of or have heard about?	Yes, these are frequent	Sometimes	Never
5. To what extent are people free and safe to be able to express their opinions openly?	Little or no freedom (there are reprisals)	Limited freedom (opinions are discouraged)	No or very few restrictions or reprisals
6. To what extent are children's opinions listened to and respected within the family and community?	Children's opinions are discouraged or rarely listened to nor respected	Children's opinions are sometimes listened to and respected	Children's opinions are frequently listened to and respected
7. To what extent are children encouraged to engage in activities not related to school, family duties, or income generating?	Children are discouraged or rarely encouraged to engage in such activities	Children are sometimes encouraged to engage in such activities	Children are frequently encouraged to engage in such activities
8. How effective are local child protection mechanisms at receiving and responding to reports of child abuse, exploitation, or neglect?	Non-existent or ineffective	Somewhat effective, but with clear gaps	Effective

Review your answers to questions 1-8 in Section 2.

- ➔ If any answers are coloured orange or red, proceed to Section 3.
- ➔ If not, decide how often you need to repeat the risk assessment, depending on the stability of the context, or if there are any specific changes that would trigger a review.

### **Section 3: Risk Assessment Tool**

1. Identify potential risks or negative consequences that could occur if you proceed with your intended activities involving or led by children. Think about the potential physical, social, and emotional forms of harm and distress for the children who participate, as well as their families, staff or affiliates, other agencies, and other actors. Try to be as specific as possible.
2. Rate how likely a risk is to occur, on a scale of 1-5, with 1 being unlikely and 5 being very likely.
3. Rate the severity of the consequences of each risk if it were to occur (on a scale of 1-5), with 1 being not severe and 5 being very severe.



#### 4. Complete the following Risk Management Plan:

Risk Management Plan					
Name of Project					
Proposed child participation activities					
Objectives of child participation activities					
Date					
Name of person(s) completing the assessment:					
Possible Risks	Likelihood of risk occurring (scale of 1-5, with 1 being unlikely and 5 being very likely)	Severity of consequences (scale of 1-5 with 1 being not severe and 5 being very severe)	Risk management measures/actions	Person(s) responsible	Review date





## What is Joining Forces?

In 2017, the six largest child-focused agencies – ChildFund Alliance, Plan International, Save the Children International, SOS Children’s Villages International, Terre des Hommes International Federation and World Vision International – joined forces to use the collective power of our six agencies to accelerate change to secure children their rights and end violence against children. We aim to achieve this by piloting and scaling innovative and effective approaches worldwide that are driven by the voices and needs of children. As Joining Forces, we put children at the centre of what we do; we are committed to supporting children to raise their voices, to take action as agents of change and to hold duty bearers to account, thus ensuring children’s experiences and views shape solutions for the problems they face. We have adopted a rights-based approach by placing the principles of participation, inclusion, non-discrimination and equality at the centre of our work. This is to ensure that all children’s needs are addressed, and that no child is left behind.

