

## Basic requirements for quality child and adolescent participation<sup>1</sup>

*Nine basic requirements for the implementation of the right of the child to be heard are outlined in the Committee on the Rights of the Child's General Comment on Article 12. These requirements can be used by staff as a tool to plan, monitor and evaluate child and adolescent participation in the programme cycle. To be effective and meaningful, participation needs to be a process, not an individual one-off event.*

Basic requirement	Guiding questions
<b>1. Participation is transparent and informative</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do children and adolescents have enough information about the programme to make an informed decision about whether and how they may participate?</li> <li>Has relevant information about the process been shared with parents/caregivers to ensure informed consent and encouragement for participation?</li> <li>Is information shared in accessible, diversity-sensitive and age-appropriate formats and languages that children, adolescents and parent/caregivers understand?</li> </ul>
<b>2. Participation is voluntary</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is child and adolescent participation voluntary?</li> <li>Have children and adolescents been given enough information and time to decide about whether they want to participate or not?</li> <li>Are they fully aware that they can cease involvement at any time they wish?</li> </ul>
<b>3. Participation is respectful</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are strategies and activities planned and facilitated in ways that a) recognize and respect children and adolescents' existing skills, competences, interests and initiatives? b) build on positive cultural practices and c) enable respect for differences of opinion among participants?</li> <li>Are children and adolescents' own commitments (to study, work, play, etc.) respected and taken into consideration to inform the design and timing of activities?</li> <li>Has support from key adults in children and adolescents' lives (e.g., parents, careers, teachers) been gained to ensure respect for their participation?</li> <li>Does the organization have flexible policies that allow staff to work at times that suit participants? (e.g., weekends, evenings?)</li> </ul>
<b>4. Participation is relevant</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is space provided for children and adolescents to highlight and address the issues they themselves identify as relevant and important?</li> <li>Are the objectives and issues being addressed of real relevance to their own lives?</li> <li>Do children and adolescents feel any pressure from adults to participate in activities that are not relevant to them?</li> <li>Are UNICEF and its partners responsive to adolescent-led initiatives and suggestions?</li> </ul>
<b>5. Participation is child friendly</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are child and adolescent-friendly approaches used, and adapted to different abilities, ages and genders?</li> <li>Are children and adolescents encouraged to explore issues using their own preferred forms of communication and approaches, including creative participatory tools?</li> <li>Are they encouraged to work together in peer groups to support one another and to take forward their own ideas and initiatives?</li> <li>Do processes allow sufficient time for trust building among children and adolescents, and with adults?</li> <li>Does the process allow to build self-confidence and self-esteem?</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from: UNICEF (2020) *ADAP Guidelines for adolescent participation and civic engagement*, and Save the Children (2013) *Guidelines for Children's Participation in Humanitarian Programming*

<b>6. Participation is inclusive</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do children and adolescents of different gender, age, ability and background have opportunities to participate and influence decision making?</li> <li>• Are proactive efforts made to reach girls, boys and adolescents with disabilities, part of minority groups, that are out of school, stateless, refugee or migrant, that are living in alternative care, in remote, rural and urban communities, etc.?</li> <li>• Are efforts made to analyse and overcome barriers for inclusive participation (through consultative and collaborative planning with marginalized groups)?</li> <li>• Have the activities (space, pace, roles, etc.) been adapted so that they cater for a range of abilities and everyone can engage?</li> <li>• Have partnerships with disability rights organizations/ working children's associations/ ethnic minority organizations/ feminist groups, etc., been established to support equitable participation opportunities?</li> <li>• Are children and adolescents encouraged to reflect on existing patterns of discrimination and to address discrimination through their participation?</li> </ul>
<b>7. Participation is supported by training</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are there plans and budget to support capacity-building of children and adolescents on child rights, participation, gender equality and other topics relevant to them?</li> <li>• Do staff (UNICEF, partners, and volunteers) have sufficient knowledge, confidence and skills to facilitate ethical and effective participation of children and adolescents?</li> <li>• Have staff been provided with training on child rights, participation, child safeguarding, facilitation and child/adolescent-friendly participatory tools?</li> <li>• Have adult duty-bearers received training on children's rights and adolescent participation to increase the likelihood that adolescents' views are taken seriously?</li> </ul>
<b>8. Participation is safe and sensitive to risk</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are the principles of 'do no harm' and 'best interests of the child' sufficiently considered when designing, implementing and monitoring the project/programme?</li> <li>• Have risks associated with participation been identified and efforts taken to minimize them in consultation/collaboration/or led by children and adolescents themselves?</li> <li>• Are procedures for child safeguarding applied?</li> <li>• Have all staff, partners and volunteers received training on child safeguarding, PSEA and how to respond to children and adolescents in distress and/or to potential disclosures of abuse?</li> <li>• Do all staff partners and volunteers know what actions and behaviours are prohibited, what the sanctions are, and how and to whom they can report any concerns?</li> <li>• Has a child safeguarding focal point been allocated for the programme/project and are roles and responsibilities of chaperones, facilitators, and the focal point clearly defined?</li> <li>• Have referral systems and pathways been established for psychosocial support, other forms of support and emergency cases (e.g. accident)?</li> <li>• Have children and adolescents, as well as their parents/caregivers, given their informed assent/consent to participate?</li> <li>• Are children and adolescents informed and aware of the child protection code of conduct, and do they know how and to whom they can report any concerns?</li> </ul>
<b>9. Participation is accountable</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do adults take children and adolescent's views and suggestions seriously and act on them?</li> <li>• Do UNICEF staff and partners consider children and adolescent views to tailor programme interventions across development and humanitarian contexts?</li> <li>• Are children and adolescents given feedback about the extent to which their views were taken into account?</li> <li>• Are they supported to actively participate in follow-up research, monitoring and evaluate on processes?</li> <li>• Do agencies have indicators, plans and budget to monitor and evaluate the quality and outcomes of the participation process?</li> </ul>