



Training module

**Embedding and institutionalising
children's participation**
Part A: Organisational structures

Trainings
module



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Kindernothilfe is a German children’s rights organisation that supports vulnerable and marginalized children and youth to develop their full potential. We partner with local non-governmental organisations in 33 countries and empower children to lead independent, self-fulfilled lives.

Terre des hommes International Federation is a network of ten national organisations committed to realizing children’s rights and to promote equitable development without racial, religious, political, cultural or gender-based discrimination.

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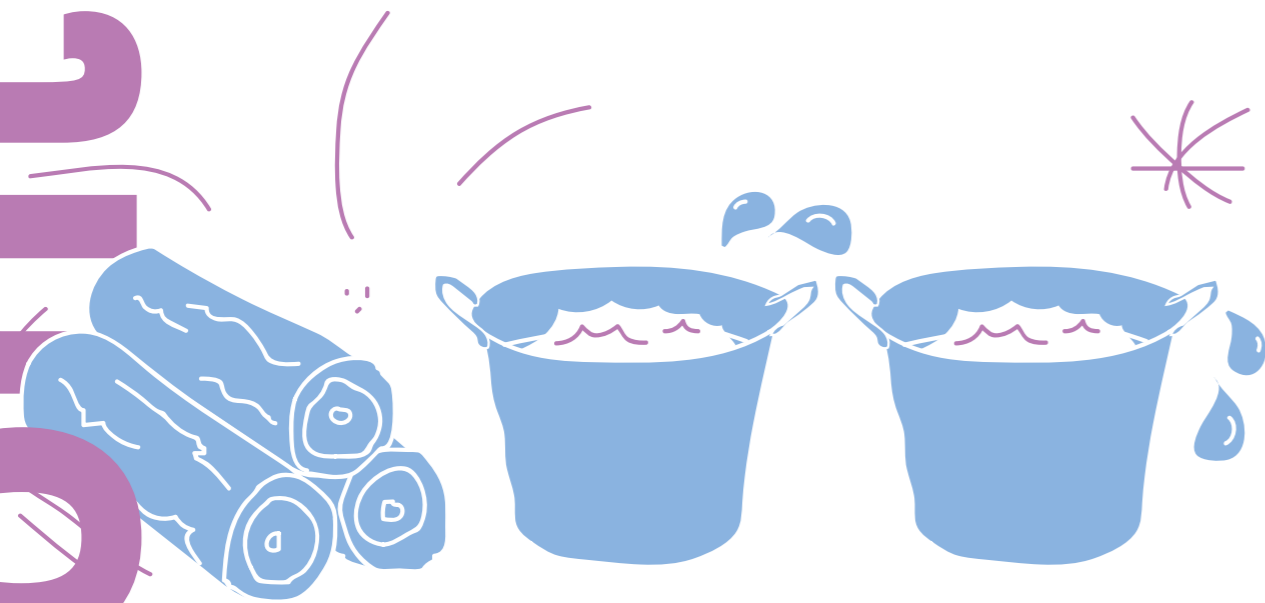


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Introductory guidance

Introductory guidance

Purpose

To strengthen knowledge, skills, dialogue and action initiatives to establish inclusive platforms and processes for sustained and meaningful participation of children internally in NGOs.

Target

Embedding children's participation in internal organisational structures - NGO staff, CAC members, and other relevant stakeholders, such as caregiver representatives

Purpose

Optional half day and ¾ day workshop plans.

This module promotes experiential learning, reflection, dialogue and action planning by adults and child representatives to embed and institutionalise children's participation in organisational structures¹. Institutionalisation of children's participation requires policies, budget allocations and human resources to support ongoing structures/ platforms for children's participation and representation, as well as budgets for capacity building of children and adults and transparent dissemination of information.

This Workshop supports efforts to embed structures such as the Children's Advisory Committees (CACs) in ongoing organisational structures, and to strengthen the capacity of staff and children, so that children's participation and representation in NGO governance and project implementation is sustainable beyond the Dialogue Works project.

When children's representatives have opportunities to influence NGO governance and decision-making, including strategy and programme planning, budget allocations, and capacity building plans, they are able to influence the design and implementation of more relevant, effective and accountable programmes (see O'Kane et al., 2021²).

To embed and institutionalise sustainable platforms and processes for working children's participation in external institutions and governance mechanisms, such as school governance, local governance, national governance etc., please refer to Module B: Embedding and institutionalising children's participation in institutional structures.

Practical considerations

To ensure participation that is safe and sensitive to risk, attention to hygiene and sanitation considerations during face-to-face workshops are noted. If the sanitation situation prevents face-to-face workshops, NGOs are encouraged to adapt the session plans for use through a series of online workshops, using applications that allow work in break out groups and in plenary.

- Pre-reading and opportunities for adults who can read English to participate in an online [UNICEF AGORA training on adolescent participation and civic engagement](#). ●

¹ Module developed by Claire O'Kane and Ornella Barros

² O'Kane, C., Trapp, A., Stephenson, P. & Smith-Brake, J. (2021, forthcoming). Management and government accountability to children: Participation and representation in organisational decision-making. Journal of Youth Development.

Optional Training Plans

The training plan can be adapted by each NGO partner to best suit their context.

Optional ¾ day plan (5:30 - 7 hours)

Time	Activity	Page
40 minutes	A1. Welcome, introductions and positive agreements	9
40 minutes	A2. Why does children's participation matter?	10
30 minutes	A3. Exploring children's participation rights	11
40 minutes	A4. Exploring ways children can participate in NGO decision-making	13
20 minutes	Refreshment break and energizer	
60 -90 minutes	A5. "H" assessment of processes and platforms supporting meaningful participation of children in our NGO	14
60 minutes	Lunch break and energizer	
45 - 60 minutes	A6. Action planning to embed children's participation in NGO decision-making	16

Optional ½ day plan (4 - 5 hours)

Time	Activity	Page
20	A1. Welcome, introductions and positive agreements	9
40 minutes	A2. Why does children's participation matter?	10
60 - 90 minutes	A5. "H" assessment of processes and platforms supporting meaningful participation of children in our NGO	14
20 minutes	Refreshment break and energizer	
45 - 60 minutes	A6. Action planning to embed children's participation in NGO decision-making	16
60 minutes	Lunch break	

Detailed training notes for facilitators

Embedding children's participation in internal organisational structures

Activity A1

Welcome, Introduction and positive agreements

Objective

To introduce the purpose of the workshop and to establish positive agreements, including respect for different views.

Time needed

20 minutes

Use with

NGO staff, volunteers and CAC members

Materials needed

Flipchart paper, pens

Facilitator's notes

This module is primarily designed for face-to-face workshops, but can be adapted for online workshops using Zoom or other online applications, that have opportunities for break-out room discussions.

Practical Steps

1. Welcome everyone. Explain that we are going to make a large circle with people standing in alphabetical order (with 1 metre between each participant if COVID-19 sanitation measures need to be applied). For example, people whose names begin with A, B, C will be near the beginning of the circle, people with names beginning with K, L, M will be in the middle of the circle, and people's whose names

begin with W, X, Y or Z will be near the other end of the circle. Make sure that everyone knows where the circle starts. Once everyone thinks they are in the right order ask each person to introduce their name and to share an action of something they like to do (e.g. Amin pretends to play cricket as he loves cricket, Betty sings, Claudio runs etc.).

2. Explain that during this workshop participants will use activities that encourage reflection, dialogue, learning and action planning to strengthen ongoing platforms and processes for meaningful participation of children in their NGO. Institutionalisation of children's participation requires policies, budget allocations and human resources to support ongoing structures/ platforms for children's participation and representation, as well as budgets for capacity building of children and adults and transparent dissemination of information.

3. Encourage participants to think about previous meetings where they made "positive agreements" to help everyone work together in ways that allow each individual to freely share their views and ideas.

- What positive agreements have they had in previous meetings? Note suggestions on a flipchart
- Does anyone want to suggest any additional positive agreements? Add these suggestions.
- Emphasise the importance of listening to one another and respecting different points of view.
- Check that everyone agrees with the positive agreements. For example, ask the participants to give a "thumbs up" if they agree with the proposed positive agreements. ●

Activity A2

Why does children's participation matter?

Objective

To consider, share and discuss reasons why it is important for children's views and feelings to be heard in decisions that affect them, and why it is important to institutionalise platforms and processes for meaningful participation of children in existing NGOs.

Time needed

40 minutes

Use with

NGO staff and volunteers and CAC members

Materials needed

Flipchart paper, pens, Poster on why children's participation is important (see Appendix I Poster on Why does Children's Participation matter?, wherever necessary translated into the local language in advance)

Practical Steps

1. Personal reflection activity: Ask each participant to take 1 minute to think about their childhood experiences and to recall a time when their views and feelings were not considered in a decision that was important to them. Think about how they felt. Ask participants to move into a pair with someone else who is a similar age to them and in their pairs they can share their experiences and feelings.
2. In plenary ask for volunteers to share key words that describe their feelings when children's views and feelings are not considered in decisions that are important to them. Note these words on a flipchart (or for online workshops use a Jamboard).
3. Explain that the participants will form mixed groups to have 10 minutes to discuss and identify reasons why it is important for children's views and feelings to be heard in decisions that affect them. Form mixed groups with 5 to 8 participants in each group, mixing participants of different ages and genders.
4. Ask each group to discuss two questions and to record their main responses on flipchart:
 - a) Why it is important for children's views and feelings to be heard in decisions that affect them, and
 - b) Additional reasons why it is important to support children's participation in NGOs and in NGO decision-making? (e.g. decisions about project design, capacity building plans etc.).
5. Bring the groups back together in plenary to share key findings:
 - Ask one group to share three key reasons for question a) why it is important for children's views and feelings to be heard in decisions that affect them.
 - Ask a second group to add any other reasons to question a).
 - Ask the third group to share three key reasons for question b) Additional reasons why it is important to support children's participation in NGOs and in NGO decision-making? Ask the fourth group to add any other reasons to question b).
 - Ask if any other group has additional responses to add for question a) or b).
6. Share the Poster (see Appendix I) on "Why does child participation matter?" Reinforce the suggestions from the group by emphasising that all children have rights to be heard in decisions that affect them, and it is crucial for ongoing platforms and processes to be established in NGOs, as well as in key external institutions such as schools, local government, national government for the views and ideas of children, especially working children to be heard. ●

Activity A3

Exploring children's participation rights

Objective

To familiarise ourselves with children's participation rights

Time needed

30 minutes

Use with

NGO staff, volunteers and CAC members

Materials needed

Poster of CRC picture cards (see Appendix II Poster on Children's Rights translated into local language in advance of the workshop if needed), A4 paper.

Practical Steps

1. Building upon the importance of children's right to participate, explain that we are now going to form mixed groups of adults and children for an activity on children's participation rights, to get more familiar with different types of participation rights that are included in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children.
2. Explain to (or remind) the participants that there is a United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989) that outlines rights for children across the world. In the Convention there are four main types of children's rights:
 - **Rights to survival** for example health care, adequate standard of living
 - **Rights to protection** which help protect children from things that are not good for them, such as protection from violence, exploitation, drugs etc.
 - **Rights to development** for example education, play etc.
 - **Rights to participation** for example, children's expression, access to information
3. Divide the participants into mixed groups of children and adults, and give each group a visual poster on children's rights (see Appendix II) and an A4 sheet of paper. The poster shows the main child rights that are included in the UNCRC. Ask the group members to look at the poster, to discuss and identify which of these CRC articles are participation rights. On the A4 sheet of paper, each group should write the numbers of CRC articles that they consider to be participation rights. →

4. Ask each group to share one CRC article that they think is a participation right. See if the other groups agree. Continue this process till each of the following participation rights are identified:



CRC Participation Right
(Visuals from UNICEF, 2019)

In plenary mention to the participants that some other articles also support children's participation:

- CRC Article 2 non-discrimination means that all children, irrespective of gender, age, disability, country or family situation should have opportunities to experience their participation rights.
- CRC Article 3 best interests of the child is always important to consider when making decisions about a child or children.
- CRC Article 23 children with disabilities also specifically encourages the child's active participation in the community.
- CRC Article 29 on the aims of education encourages the development of respect for human rights and education for responsible life in a free society.
- Article 31 on rest, play, culture and arts also support children's participation in cultural life and the arts. Also children often use arts and play to express their views and ideas. ●

Activity A4

Exploring ways children can participate in NGO decision-making

Objective

To explore ways that children can participate in NGO decision-making.

Time needed

40 minutes

Use with

NGO staff, volunteers and CAC members

Materials needed

Flipchart paper, different colour pens or crayons, poster on the nine basic requirements for effective and ethical participation (see Appendix III Poster on 9 Basic Requirements for Effective and Ethical Participation of Children, wherever necessary translated into local language in advance of the workshop).

Practical Steps

1. Play a 5 minute energizer game (see annex A of Time to Talk Research Toolkit I which includes a range of energizer games). Some games which could be safely conducted while keeping a distance include:
 - Paper, Scissor, Rock (but ensure 1.5 metre distance between participants)
 - Who is the Leader
 - Seven up
2. Re-form the mixed groups of adults and children (from the last activity). Give each group a flipchart and pens (or coloured crayons). Explain that each group has 15 minutes to think about, to discuss, to draw and write: How can children and young people (especially working children) participate in NGO decision-making (e.g. decisions about strategy or project design, capacity building plans, etc.)?

3. In plenary (for 15 -20 minutes) ask each group to take 3 minutes to share their drawing and ideas. Once each group has presented their ideas, briefly discuss:

- What ideas are similar across some of the groups?
- Which ideas are new and exciting? Why?
- Which ideas may be easiest to implement? Why?

4. Explain that in the next activity we will work together to further assess and plan ways to embed children's participation in NGO decision-making. However, before we do, it is important that we remind ourselves of the nine basic requirements for effective and ethical participation of children, that can be used to plan and monitor quality participation processes. See Appendix III.

Refreshment break and energizer games (20 minutes) ●

Activity A5
"H" assessment of processes and platforms
supporting meaningful participation of children
in our NGO

Objective

To assess current strengths, weaknesses and suggestions to improve processes and platforms for meaningful participation of children in NGO decision-making.

Time needed

60 – 90 minutes

Use with

NGO staff, volunteers, and CAC members

Materials needed




Flipchart paper, pens, make a flipchart and handouts for each group of the key questions to consider during the "H" assessment (see Box i)

Practical Steps

1. Explain that in this session, we will use an 'H-assessment' to assess the strengths and weaknesses of existing processes and platforms for meaningful participation of children, especially working children in our NGOs, and to develop suggestions to improve platforms for ongoing children's participation in NGO decision-making.
2. Introduce the 'H-assessment' format (see figure 4 below), by drawing it on the flipchart:
 - In the left-hand column, draw a happy face 😊 to represent strengths and successes;
 - In the right-hand column, draw a sad face 😞 to represent weaknesses and challenges;
 - Above the horizontal line, write 'Assessment of children's participation in our NGO' and in brackets write (the name of the NGO, the date, and the number of girls, boys and adults who are part of this 'H- assessment');
 - Below this line, draw a light bulb to represent 'bright ideas' and their suggestions to improve platforms and processes for meaningful participation of children in NGOs.

3. Introduce some of the main questions that participants are encouraged to consider during the "H" assessment (see Box i)
4. Divide the participants into new mixed groups of 6-8 participants in a group mixing adults and CAC members. Each group should complete the "H" assessment.
5. Members of each group should discuss the questions in box i) and record:
 - a) Under the happy face 😊 - Key experiences and views concerning the strengths and success of children's participation in your NGO
 - b) Under the sad face 😞 - Key experiences and views concerning the weaknesses or challenges of children's participation in your NGO
6. Taking into consideration the strengths and weaknesses, members of each group should discuss and record your suggestions (under the light bulb) to improve and strengthen platforms and processes for meaningful participation of children, especially working children, in NGO projects and NGO decision-making.
7. Ask each group to present back 3 main strengths, 3 main challenges, and their 3 key suggestions to improve and strengthen meaningful participation of children in the NGO.

Lunch break and energizer games ●

<p>Strengths/ successes</p> 	<p>Assessment of children's participation in our NGO</p> <p>(name of NGO, date, number of girls/boys/ adults who are part of this assessment)</p>	<p>Weaknesses/ challenges</p> 
	<p>Suggestions to improve:</p> 	

"H" Assessment

Box i

Questions to consider during the "H" assessment on children's participation in NGO work/governance:

During this activity we encourage you to consider:

- i) Whether space or structures (such as child groups/ committees) exist in the NGO that support children, especially working children to regularly come together to express their views, experiences and ideas?
- ii) Whether power relationships between adults and children encourage or discourage working children to express their views and ideas. To what extent:
 - a) Do NGO staff share information with children and encourage working children to freely express their views and ideas?
 - b) Do NGO staff listen to children and take their views seriously?
- iii) To what extent are the nine basic requirements for effective and ethical participation of children applied by the NGO? (see Poster – Appendix III). To what extent is children's participation: 1) transparent and informative, 2) voluntary, 3) respectful, 4) relevant, 5) child-friendly, 6) inclusive, 7) supported by training for adults and children, 8) safe and sensitive to risk, and 9) accountable?
- iv) To what extent do working children's views influence NGO decisions about strategies, programmes, activities and/or budget allocations?
- v) To what extent does the NGO allocate sufficient budget, human and material resources to sustain structures and processes for children's participation in NGO decision-making?

Activity A6

Action planning to embed children’s participation in NGO decision-making

Objective

To discuss and agree actions to embed children’s participation in NGO decision-making.

Time needed

45 – 60 minutes

Use with

NGO staff, volunteers, and CAC members

Materials needed

Flipchart paper, pens

Practical Steps

1. Explain that in this session participants will use an action planning format to plan concrete ways to take forward some of the main suggestions from the “H” assessment.
2. Participants discuss their “H” assessment suggestions to identify priority practical actions and complete the action planning format shared below.

3. NGO staff (and interested CAC members) are also encouraged to discuss and identify actions to ensure sustainable budget allocations and staff support for ongoing children’s participation structures and platforms that last beyond specific projects. For example,

- Can core organisational funding be allocated to support children’s participation structures in NGO work/governance?
- Can funds from the national or local government be mobilised to support children’s participation structures/ platforms?
- Should donors be approached to help embed permanent structures for children’s participation in NGO work/governance structures?
- Can budget lines for children’s participation structures and processes be systematically included in every project funding application?
- Are there other existing children’s groups that can be built upon (e.g. existing working children’s associations, child rights clubs in schools etc.)?

4. Review and refine the action plan and agree immediate next steps.

What action	Why?	How?	When?	Who will be involved?		With what resources and support?
				Lead	Support	

Links to accompanying resources:

To complement materials included in this module, NGO partners and other concerned actors are encouraged to **participate in UNICEF’s online AGORA training on adolescent participation and civic engagement**. The UNICEF online training is a self-paced course that can be completed in under three hours. The online course provides learners with information and knowledge on the rational and conceptual underpinning of adolescent participation, key strategies and interventions to support meaningful and sustainable participation of adolescents, as well as organizational processes required to support it. The course is based on [UNICEF’s Guidelines for Adolescent Participation and Civic Engagement](#).

Other relevant resources:

- [Article 15 resource kit materials](#) (available in English and Spanish) to strengthen CACs as effective child-led organisations
- Time to Talk (2019) Children’s participation in development cooperation: [Getting ready for the journey of children’s participation](#)
- Save the Children (2020) [The right of children to participate in public decision-making processes](#).
- Videos on children’s participation including:
 - [What is political participation?](#) (< 5 mins)
 - [‘Raised Voices’](#) - Film about Children’s Participation Rights (1993) (~23 mins, most parts in English, but some parts in Spanish)
 - Ted Talk by a 12 year old girl [“What can adults learn from kids”](#) (~ 8 mins)

Appendix I: Poster on Why does Children's Participation matter?

Appendix

-  1. Children have a right to be heard.
-  2. Children get knowledge, skills and confidence when they express their views and participate in decisions and actions that concern them
-  3. When children's views and feelings are considered by others it **enhances their care and protection.**
-  4. Participation promotes **civic engagement.** Through participation children can become active and effective advocates to defend their rights.
-  5. Children know their situation best.
-  6. When children share their views and experiences it **helps organisations (NGOs and governments) to make better decisions and better programmes to improve children's lives. Children's views can help improve practices, policies, services and budget allocations.**
-  7. When adults listen to children and take their views seriously it helps them be **more accountable to children**

Appendix II: Poster on Children's Rights

Appendix

Visual summary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child by UNICEF, 2019

1 -18 DEFINITION OF A CHILD	2 NO DISCRIMINATION	3 BEST INTERESTS OF THE CHILD	4 MAKING RIGHTS REAL	5 FAMILY GUIDANCE AS CHILDREN DEVELOP	6 LIFE, SURVIVAL AND DEVELOPMENT	7 NAME AND NATIONALITY
8 IDENTITY	9 KEEPING FAMILIES TOGETHER	10 CONTACT WITH PARENTS ACROSS COUNTRIES	11 PROTECTION FROM KIDNAPPING	12 RESPECT FOR CHILDREN'S VIEWS	13 SHARING THOUGHTS FREELY	14 FREEDOM OF THOUGHT AND RELIGION
15 SETTING UP OR JOINING GROUPS	16 PROTECTION OF PRIVACY	17 ACCESS TO INFORMATION	18 RESPONSIBILITY OF PARENTS	19 PROTECTION FROM VIOLENCE	20 CHILDREN WITHOUT FAMILIES	21 CHILDREN WHO ARE ADOPTED
22 REFUGEE CHILDREN	23 CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES	24 HEALTH, WATER, FOOD, ENVIRONMENT	25 REVIEW OF A CHILD'S PLACEMENT	26 SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC HELP	27 FOOD, CLOTHING, A SAFE HOME	28 ACCESS TO EDUCATION
29 AIMS OF EDUCATION	30 MINORITY CULTURE, LANGUAGE AND RELIGION	31 REST, PLAY, CULTURE, ARTS	32 PROTECTION FROM HARMFUL WORK	33 PROTECTION FROM HARMFUL DRUGS	34 PROTECTION FROM SEXUAL ABUSE	35 PREVENTION OF SALE AND TRAFFICKING
36 PROTECTION FROM EXPLOITATION	37 CHILDREN IN DETENTION	38 PROTECTION IN WAR	39 RECOVERY AND REINTEGRATION	40 CHILDREN WHO BREAK THE LAW	41 BEST LAW FOR CHILDREN APPLIES	42 EVERYONE MUST KNOW CHILDREN'S RIGHTS
43-54 HOW THE CONVENTION WORKS	<h2>CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD</h2>					

Appendix III: Poster on 9 Basic Requirements for Effective and Ethical Participation of Children

From the Committee on the Rights of the Child
General Comment on a Child's Right to be Heard, 2009

Note: The Time to Talk [Toolkit I](#) and [Toolkit II](#) provides more guidance on how these basic requirements can be applied as a planning tool in participatory work with children and young people.

1. Participation is transparent and informative
2. Participation is voluntary
3. Participation is respectful
4. Participation is relevant
5. Participation is child-friendly
6. Participation is inclusive
7. Participation is supported by training
8. Participation is safe and sensitive to risk
9. Participation is accountable



Trainings module



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