

CHILD PARTICIPATION PRACTICE STANDARDS

Overall Key Points

- Participation is about having the opportunity to express a view, influencing decision-making and achieving change
- Child participation is an informed and willing involvement of all children, including the most marginalized and those of different ages and abilities, in any matter concerning them either directly or indirectly
- Child participation is cross-cutting theme and should be included in all sector projects
- Child participation should be analyzed in the context of dividers and connectors in a community

Child protection mainstreaming requires meaningful and appropriate child participation. This outlines a few of the ways to meet child participation practice standards. For the full list of practice standards, please see the reference below.

Standard 1: An ethical approach: transparency, honesty, and accountability

- Girls and boys are able to freely express their views and opinions and have them treated with respect.
- Clear goals and targets are agreed upon with the children concerned.
- The roles and responsibilities of all involved (children and adults) are clearly outlined, understood, and agreed upon. Children understand how much impact they can have on decision-making and who will make the final decision.
- Children are provided with, and have access to, relevant information regarding their involvement.

Standard 2: Children's participation is relevant and voluntary

- Children are involved in setting the criteria for selection and representation for participation.
- Children's participation is voluntary and they can withdraw at any time they wish.
- Support from key adults in children's lives (eg, parents/guardians, teachers) is gained to ensure wider encouragement and assistance for the participation of girls and boys.

Standard 3: A child-friendly, enabling environment

- Ways of working build the self-esteem and self-confidence of boys and girls of different ages and abilities so that they feel they are able to contribute and that they have valid experience and views to contribute.
- Methods of involvement are developed in partnership with children so that they reflect their preferred mediums of expression.
- Child-friendly meeting places are used where girls and boys feel relaxed, comfortable and have access to the facilities they need.

Standard 4: Equality of opportunity

- Children's involvement aims to include all rather than a few, this could mean reaching out to children in their local settings rather than inviting representatives to a central point.
- No assumptions are made about what different groups of children can and cannot do.
- If there is a limit to how many children can participate, children themselves select from among their peers those who will represent them in participatory initiatives based on the principles of democracy and inclusion.

Standard 5: Staff are effective and confident

- All staff and managers are sensitized to children's participation and understand the organizational commitment to children's participation.
- Staff are able to express any views or anxieties about involving children in the expectation that these will be addressed in a constructive way.

Standard 6: Participation promotes the safety and protection of children

- The protection rights of children are paramount in the way children's participation is planned and organized.
- Safeguards are in place to minimize risks and prevent abuse (eg, children are adequately supervised and protected at all times; risk assessments are in place for residential activities away from home; children are protected from abuse from other children).
- Consent is obtained for the use of all information provided by children and information identified as confidential needs to be safeguarded at all times.
- Child protection procedures recognize the particular risks faced by some groups of children and the extra barriers they face to obtaining help.

Standard 7: Ensuring follow-up and evaluation

- Children are supported to participate in and initiate follow-up and evaluation processes.
- Children are supported and encouraged to share their participatory experiences with peer groups, local communities, organizations, and projects with which they may be involved.
- The results of monitoring and evaluation are communicated back to the children involved in an accessible and child-friendly way, and their feedback is taken into account in future participation work.