



2025 MIDDLE EAST & EASTERN EUROPE REGIONAL CHILD AND YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN WORLD VISION DECISION-MAKING REPORT

Middle East and Eastern Europe Region

World Vision Afghanistan, Albania, Armenia, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Georgia, Iraq, Jerusalem and West Bank, Lebanon, Romania and Moldova, Syria Response, Ukraine Crisis Response.

Executive Summary

The report demonstrates that meaningful child and youth participation is both achievable and impactful across all contexts, including the most fragile and conflict-affected settings. Across the MEER region, children are not passive participants, they are active partners shaping decisions that affect their lives, communities, and futures.

Annual Child Participation reports from MEER Field Offices shows that when children are intentionally engaged, participation leads to tangible positive outcomes. In stable contexts, children influence legislation, national policies, and service delivery systems. In fragile and humanitarian settings, they strengthen programme relevance, protection, and resilience, ensuring interventions are grounded in real needs.

Child participation delivers triple impact:

- for children, by building confidence, agency, and wellbeing;
- for communities, through improved services, accountability, and social cohesion;
- for World Vision, by enhancing programme effectiveness, relevance, and trust.

Critically, the findings confirm that context is not a barrier, instead it shapes how participation happens. With the right approaches, such as safe spaces, inclusive methods, and structured engagement, children can meaningfully contribute to decision-making in any environment.

Finally, the report shows that child participation is not optional, it is a core mandate aligned with World Vision's commitments to deepen impact, strengthen accountability, and deliver more sustainable outcomes. However, children are clear that further progress is needed: moving beyond consultation to real influence, strengthening feedback loops, and ensuring inclusion of the most marginalised.

Cover photo: *Seventeen-year-old Brisilda embodies the impact of engaging children and adolescents in World Vision Albania's programmes. Starting as a camp participant at age 11, she has grown into a volunteer, guiding and caring for younger children with enthusiasm and compassion. Through summer camps and IMPACT youth groups, she has developed confidence, leadership skills, and a sense of responsibility, while actively contributing to her community. Her journey highlights the power of youth participation: when children and adolescents are given opportunities to lead, learn, and care for others, they not only grow personally but also inspire and empower their peers. Brisilda's commitment demonstrates how fostering young people's voices and involvement creates a generation ready to contribute meaningfully to society.*

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World Vision field staff in each of the countries of this region worked diligently to gather the data and findings for each of the FO reports, and strive each day to engage children meaningfully in World Vision programming, advocacy, and decision making.

Introduction

World Vision is committed to supporting and strengthening children's meaningful participation in all decisions that affect their lives, including and especially in World Vision's own decision-making processes that affect children at local, national, regional and global levels. Ensuring that children have a say in projects and programmes that affect their lives and empowering them to take action on issues that they care about is a cornerstone of World Vision's identity and child-focused programming.

This regional report provides high-level insight on the child participation reporting and data from the countries in the MEER Region who submitted their annual FO report in 2025. These FO reports are produced annually as part of the organisation's Operational Requirements for Child Participation in World Vision Decision-Making, summarising an office's local and national level child participation practices, data, and perspectives from boys and girls. It also digs deeper into how child participation is making an impact on children, local communities, and World Vision, giving the Region and FOs more insight into what practices to strengthen and what areas to target for improvement.

This report divides countries in the MEER operating in a humanitarian response capacity to those working in stable development programmes. Countries such as Lebanon and the Jerusalem and West Bank programmes are included in the stable contexts due to the long-term presence of World Vision programming in those countries.

Stable or long-term programming countries include 7 Field Offices: Albania, Armenia, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Georgia, Jerusalem and West Bank, Lebanon, and Romania and Moldova.

Response or fragile context programming countries include 4 Field Offices: Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria Response, and the Ukraine Crisis Response.



Section 1: What do children think is going well in World Vision programming?

Stable or long-term programming countries

Children and youth highlight several key areas where World Vision (WV) programming is succeeding. They specifically value the opportunities for personal growth, the creation of safe spaces, and the ability to influence decisions that affect their lives. The following themes are ranked by how frequently they are mentioned across the country reports as areas of success:

1. Skill development and personal growth

Times Mentioned: 7 out of 7 reports

Why it is going well: Children in emphasize that WV programmes have significantly boosted their confidence, leadership abilities, and practical skills. Programmes like IMPACT Clubs and summer camps provide structured environments for peer interaction and professional growth.

- **Georgia (Boy):** "World Vision helped me come out of my comfort zone. I learned to work in a team and manage my emotions".
- **Romania (Girl):** "The council helped me overcome my fear of public speaking. And here I am, on a stage, in front of you".

2. Safe and supportive environments

Times Mentioned: 6 out of 7 reports

Why it is going well: Children identify the safety and inclusivity of WV spaces as a primary strength. For many, these centres are the only places where they feel physically and emotionally protected, especially in conflict zones or conservative communities.

- **JWB (Sponsored Children):** They "proudly expressed how they embraced a more nurturing environment in schools and clinics and improved relationships with their teachers and caregivers".
- **JWB (Girls):** Multiple girls mentioned that participation in programmes gives them a reason to be allowed to leave the house and lamented the discrimination in their families and conservative communities between how boys are treated differently than girls (e.g., can play football, leave the house).

3. Advocacy and influencing decision-making

Times Mentioned: 6 out of 7 reports

Why it is going well: Children report high satisfaction with their ability to influence both local and national policies. They feel empowered when they see their recommendations lead to tangible legislative changes or community improvements.

- **Georgia (Girl):** "We met with the mayor of Telavi, shared our needs, and as a result, the municipality is building a stadium for us".

4. Educational and vocational support

Times Mentioned: 5 out of 7 reports

Why it is going well: WV helps bridge the gap between school and the labour market through digital training, career orientation, and academic remedial support.

- **Georgia (Boy):** "I helped my brother and cousin write CVs after learning it in the training, and both of them were employed".
- **Lebanon (Boys and Girls):** They "noticed improvements in their academic performance and school grades" through retention support programmes.

Response or fragile context programming countries

Based on the Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, and Ukraine CP reports, children consistently report that World Vision (WV) programming is succeeding when it provides safe spaces, treats them as partners in decision-making, and addresses their most urgent survival and educational needs.

The following themes are ranked by how frequently they were highlighted as positive outcomes across the four country reports:

1. Safe environments and psychosocial well-being

Times Mentioned: 4 out of 4 reports

Why it is going well: Children all identified the creation of safe spaces as a primary success. These spaces provide a refuge from conflict, displacement, and restrictive social norms, allowing children to play, study, and receive emotional support.

- **Afghanistan:** A 10-year-old girl stated, *"We did not have a place to play before. Now, with this centre, we can study and play together"*. A 9-year-old boy simply noted, *"We all deserve to feel safe"*.
- **Iraq:** Children identified peer relationships and safe spaces to talk as key sources of resilience. One 14-year-old girl in Tuz reported feeling safer attending school after the installation of gender-segregated toilets with locking doors.

2. Meaningful participation and agency

Times Mentioned: 4 out of 4 reports

Why it is going well: Children expressed high satisfaction when they felt their voices led to tangible changes in programming. Being consulted on project design or feedback makes children feel respected, and valued and shifts their role from passive recipients to active partners.

- **Iraq:** A 14-year-old girl in Tuz said, *"I feel more confident when someone listens to what we think, and then things actually change"*.
- **Syria/Türkiye:** The LIFT project was praised for its community-owned approach where adolescents participate in every stage from assessment to implementation.

3. Educational and skill development

Times Mentioned: 3 out of 4 reports

Why it is going well: Success in education was highlighted, and children value support that bridges academic gaps and includes interactive, fun elements rather than strictly lecture-based learning.



Section 2. What do children say could be improved about World Vision programming?

Stable or long-term programming countries

Children provide specific recommendations for improving WV programming and operations. They emphasize the need for deeper influence in decision-making, better inclusion of marginalized peers, and modernized educational content. The following themes for improvement are ranked by how many country reports highlighted them.

1. Meaningful participation and feedback loops

Times Mentioned: 7 out of 7 reports

Why it can be improved: Children in all seven countries expressed a desire to move beyond "consultation" toward true influence over organizational strategy and budgets. Children often feel they share their views but do not always see how those views impact the final budget or project design. They also want more face-to-face interaction with senior leadership.

- **Children from JWB:** Recommended having more voice and influence (i.e., in priorities, influence over budget, shaping area development programme activities and communication with sponsors).

2. Inclusion of vulnerable and marginalized peers

Times Mentioned: 6 out of 7 reports

Why it can be improved: Children identified that programmes must be more intentional about reaching the most vulnerable, specifically children with disabilities and ethnic minorities. Systemic gaps still exist that prevent children with disabilities or those from Roma communities from fully accessing WV spaces.

- In **BiH**, child-led research highlighted "*systemic gaps in support for children with disabilities, Roma children, and those from economically disadvantaged backgrounds*". In **JWB**, youth noted an "*urgent need for more inclusive activities for children with disabilities*".

3. Educational reform and modernized content

Times Mentioned: 5 out of 7 reports

Why it can be improved: Children want WV to update its training topics to match current global realities, such as digital literacy and professional orientation. Students feel school curricula are often disconnected from the labour market. They want WV to fill this gap with training on AI, civic education, and practical job skills.

- **Romania (student):** "*In the final years, the focus shouldn't be on all subjects, but on the ones we're tested on*".
- **Georgia (Boy):** Suggested adding new topics such as "*law, civic education, innovation, artificial intelligence, and start-up development*".

4. Physical infrastructure and safety

Times Mentioned: 5 out of 7 reports

Why it can be improved: Children called for improvements to the physical and digital environments where they live and learn. Children identified a lack of safe play areas, accessible buildings (ramps), properly equipped laboratories, and the skills to keep safe in digital spaces.

- In **BiH**, youth advocated for "relocating betting shops away from school zones" to improve safety. In **Romania**, they recommended prioritizing "inclusive infrastructure with accessibility features for students with disabilities".
- In **BiH**, children led research focused on cyber violence, with over 300 participants sharing their experiences and perceptions of online abuse, its emotional impact, and the lack of adequate protection mechanisms. These findings not only informed programming but will serve as advocacy tools in dialogue with decision-makers and professionals.
- In **Albania**, 25 youth from IMPACT groups engaged with national cybersecurity and children's rights authorities, gaining knowledge on online safety and the EU Better Internet for Kids (BIK+) platform, and planned peer education sessions.

5. Community outreach and awareness

Times Mentioned: 5 out of 7 reports

Why it can be improved: Reports noted that many children and parents are still unaware of WV's work or how to use its feedback channels. To build trust in conservative areas and reach more peers, children suggested more direct outreach in schools and more sessions for parents.

- **Georgia (Boy)** "Not many of my classmates know about World Vision. Ambassadors or school visits could help reach more young people".



Response or fragile context programming countries

For Response contexts, children generally ask for more interactive engagement, better physical infrastructure, and the expansion of existing services to meet unmet needs.

1. Interactive engagement and meaningful participation

Times Mentioned: 4 out of 4 reports

Why it can be improved:

Children expressed a strong desire to move beyond being passive recipients of aid toward having a more active, fun, and influential role in programming.

- In **Ukraine**, children noted they are currently not involved in formal decision-making like project design or evaluations. In Iraq, children found lecture-based learning boring and requested more interactive methods.
- **Iraq (Girl,13):** "We need more activities where we can express ourselves, not only listening to adults talk".
- **Iraq (Boy,12):** "Classes are helpful, but we want more group work and fun learning, not only writing".

2. Service continuity, adequacy, and scheduling

Times Mentioned: 3 out of 4 reports

Why it can be improved:

Reports indicate that children want services to be more frequent, longer-lasting, and scheduled more conveniently.

- In **Iraq** and **Afghanistan**, children noted that session timings often conflict with school or household chores. In **Ukraine**, they suggested expanding current Child-Friendly Space (CFS) schedules into full Resilience Centres.
- **Afghanistan (Girl, 7):** "Please continue the PSS [psychosocial support] sessions so more girls can learn".
- **Afghanistan (Boy, 13):** "We want the health team to come to our village more often".

3. Physical infrastructure and safety

Times Mentioned: 3 out of 4 reports

Why it is going well: Children highlighted that the physical environment of schools and centres needs significant upgrades to ensure dignity and safety. This is particularly critical regarding sanitation and accessibility. Children in **Iraq** specifically mentioned that the lack of privacy in school toilets was a major barrier to attendance.

- **Iraq (Girl):** "We do not feel comfortable using the toilets at school because there is no door that locks. It makes us scared and embarrassed".
- **Iraq (Boy, 11):** "If the school is clean and safe, we will not skip classes".
- **Afghanistan:** Boys and girls requested safer play areas and noted that distance to programme sites remains a major barrier for those in remote provinces.

4. Resource gaps and unmet basic needs

Times Mentioned: 3 out of 4 reports

Why it is going well: Children highlighted a severe lack of basic materials and the need for sustained financial support for their families.

- **Afghanistan:** Data shows 83% of children lack basic learning materials. Children from economically vulnerable families requested "continued food and cash assistance" and more recreational materials.
- **Iraq:** Children recommended that cash assistance programs include more specific child-focused components.
- **Syria Response:** Adolescents highlighted a need for better access to educational resources and learning tools.

Section 3: How are children participating in advocacy?

Stable or long-term programming countries

Children and youth, especially in Eastern Europe, with more stable governments, are actively participating in advocacy to shape policies, laws, and service provision at local, national, and even international levels. Their participation ranges from direct consultation on national legislation to influencing local infrastructure and school quality.

1. Shaping national legislation and legal frameworks

Children have moved beyond mere consultation to becoming co-drafters of national laws and ethical standards.

Type: Legal advocacy and legislative reform.

Spaces & Levels: National Parliaments, Ministries, and State Agencies.

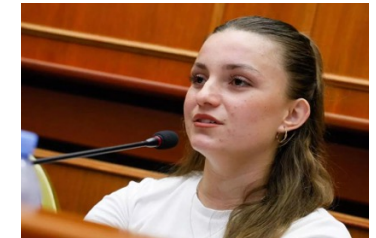
Examples & Quotes:

- **Romania:** Members of the Children's Consultative Council (CCC) contributed to the adoption of the world's first **Law for Children's Participation** in 2024, which now legally mandates public institutions to consult children annually.

Mara, 17, is a youth leader and passionate advocate for children's rights from rural Romania. As Social Media Team Leader of the Children and Youth Consultative Council of World Vision Romania, she amplifies young voices online, transforming their perspectives into impactful messages that reach both peers and decision-makers. Mara has engaged in high-level consultations with national authorities, advocating for equitable education, youth participation, child protection, ending violence against children, mental health, peer-to-peer learning, and the responsible use of technology, social media and AI. As part of World Vision Romania and the Council's advocacy efforts, she contributed to Romania's first "Law on Children's Participation" in 2024—a milestone for institutionalizing youth engagement and ensuring young voices shape decisions that affect their lives.



- **Albania:** Youth inputs were directly incorporated into the amendments of **Youth Law No. 75/2019**, institutionalizing youth voices in policymaking. A youth representative, Xhensura, was featured sharing recommendations during consultative meetings on this law in Tirana (see photo).
- **Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH):** Children developed a **Child Friendly Code of Ethical Research**, which regulates how children are treated as subjects or carriers of research. This was adopted by the Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees.



2. Institutional governance and representation

Children are securing formal audiences within high-level government advisory bodies.

Type: Policy advisory and formal representation.

Spaces & Levels: State-level Councils and National Boards.

Examples & Quotes:

- **BiH:** The Council of Ministers endorsed an initiative to recognize children as members of the interministerial **Council for Children of BiH**, the highest state-level advisory body on child-related issues.
- **Albania:** Children in the **National Council on Children's Rights** advocated for healthy nutrition and violence prevention during meetings with the Deputy Minister of Health and Social Protection.
- **Romania:** CCC members engaged in the Junior Senate initiative, sharing their vision for ideal rural communities with Romanian senators. Mara (16) reminded decision-makers at the Romanian Parliament: *"Let's not lose our curiosity. Always ask: who? why? how?"*.

3. Improving service quality and local infrastructure

Children use their local knowledge to advocate for tangible improvements in their immediate environments, such as schools and community centres.

Type: Infrastructure advocacy and service quality monitoring.

Spaces & Levels: Municipal offices, village councils, and school boards.

Examples & Quotes:

- **Georgia:** Youth-led advocacy in Kakheti resulted in direct collaboration with local government. One girl from Ikalto noted, *"We met with the mayor of Telavi, shared our needs, and as a result, the municipality is building a stadium for us"*.
- **Lebanon:** In Saida, children's feedback on their learning environment led to the provision of new desks in library areas after they expressed that old furniture made it difficult to concentrate.
- **Jerusalem-West Bank(JWB):** A child representative was formally linked with a **village** council, giving the municipality a direct line to children's concerns.

4. Digital safety and cybersecurity policy

With the rise of online threats, children are advocating for modernized safety protocols directly with technical authorities.

Type: Technical policy advocacy and peer education.

Spaces & Levels: National Cyber Security Authorities and digital platforms.

Examples & Quotes:

- **Albania:** During Safer Internet Week, youth presented concrete recommendations to the **National Cyber Security Authority (NCSA)**, such as moving pre-assessment tools from paper to digital formats and developing age-appropriate safety curricula.
- **BiH:** Children co-designed the first **Digital Youth Centre** and its platform (dyc.ba), ensuring the digital service responded to real youth needs.

5. Environmental and climate advocacy

Youth are participating in high-level diplomatic consultations to shape the green agenda.

Type: Environmental advocacy and international consultation.

Spaces & Levels: EU Ambassador meetings and national environmental ministries.

Examples & Quotes:

- **Albania:** Under the **#Youth4Green** initiative, 29 adolescents engaged directly with the **EU Ambassador** to discuss Chapter 27 (Environment and Climate Change), sharing local initiatives like the re-greening of Paskuqan Lake.
- **Romania:** Mara (17), part of the **UK Youth Advocacy Network**, represented Romania at the Global Youth School Meals Dialogue, influencing recommendations for the Global School Meals Coalition Summit in Brazil.

6. Budgeting and resource allocation

Though often the most difficult area to influence, children are beginning to ask for transparency in how funds are spent on their behalf.

Type: Participatory budgeting and accountability.

Spaces & Levels: Senior Leadership Team (SLT) meetings and local government.

Examples & Quotes:

- **JWB:** Children specifically questioned the *"budget for programmes and selection process and criteria for WV volunteers"* during meetings with senior leadership.
- **Romania:** CCC members recommended that the national budget include *"dedicated funds... to support child participation"* to ensure the new participation law is effective.

Response or fragile context programming countries

Children and youth are engaging in advocacy across a spectrum of levels, from local community improvements to national legislative reform. Their participation has shifted from being passive beneficiaries to active partners who influence budgets, service quality, and legal frameworks.

1. Formal governance and institutional advisory

Children are securing formal roles within advisory boards to ensure organizational and state priorities reflect their lived realities.

Type: Institutional representation and advisory panels.

Spaces & Levels: State-level Councils, Children Empowerment Panels, and Senior Leadership forums.

Examples & Quotes:

- **Iraq:** The **Children & Youth Working Group (CYWG)** serves as a pioneering platform where youth aged 12–19 contribute to policy dialogues and launch manifestos on climate, mental health, and education reaching over 1,700 participants.
- **Syria Response (Türkiye):** Through the Tools for Change project, **Children Empowerment Panels** were formed for each sector to act as leaders in accountability, validating and amending humanitarian tools to ensure they are child-appropriate.
- **Ukraine:** The **Children eSafety Council** ensures that all digital safety activities are consulted with and shaped by children's voices.
- **Afghanistan:** Children engaged directly with leadership through the **Nutrition Dialogue**, where their recommendations improved service programming.

2. Improving service quality and resource allocation

This level focuses on tangible improvements to the safety, inclusivity, and effectiveness of local services.

Type: Participatory budgeting, infrastructure advocacy, and service monitoring.

Spaces & Levels: Municipal offices, village councils, and project-level design workshops.

Examples & Quotes:

- **Iraq:** Girls in Tuz advocated for safer facilities, with one 14-year-old noting: *"We do not feel comfortable using the toilets at school because there is no door that locks. It makes us scared and embarrassed"*. This led to **gender-segregated WASH upgrades** with locking doors and MHM-friendly designs.
- **Afghanistan:** During project design, children identified risks in fetching water, leading to **inclusive water system rehabilitation** through the WAAN project.

3. Global awareness and climate action

Youth are leveraging their collective voice to influence the green agenda and international humanitarian standards.

Type: Global campaign advocacy and environmental festivals.

Spaces & Levels: International Global Days, national festivals, and cross-sector research.

Examples & Quotes:

- **Iraq:** Young advocates led creative initiatives like the **Art for Climate Festival** and **Our Climate, our Kitchen** and launched manifestos on climate resilience that resonated on global platforms like World Youth Day.
- **Afghanistan:** Children used the **ENOUGH campaign** to express their priorities and influence actions on issues concerning them.

4. Peer-led community advocacy

Children act as agents of change within their own neighbourhoods, challenging social norms and promoting safety.

Type: Peer-to-peer education and community awareness.

Spaces & Levels: Community learning circles and peer-led clubs.

Examples & Quotes:

- **Afghanistan:** An 8-year-old girl in Herat, inspired by the It Takes a World campaign, began leading informal learning circles for younger girls. She shared: *"Before, I was shy to speak in front of others. Now, I talk about children's right for education in my community"*.
- **Iraq:** Peer-led **Environmental and WASH Clubs** allow children to monitor school safety and co-design improvements with teachers, fostering leadership and community responsibility.

Key Finding on Impact: Children report significant personal growth from these activities. In Iraq, a 14-year-old girl observed: "I feel more confident when someone listens to what we think, and then things actually change". Similarly, in Afghanistan, children who participated in leadership dialogues later initiated their own peer-led hygiene sessions, demonstrating increased agency and self-value.



Section 4: How are children participating in decision-making?

All contexts

Children participate in decision-making through a range of formal and informal channels, moving from being passive project participants to active partners in project design, organizational governance, and national advocacy.

How children are participating in decision-making

Children's participation occurs across several levels of influence:

- **Project design and assessment:** Children help identify community needs and propose solutions before a project begins, ensuring interventions are relevant. For example, in Iraq and Afghanistan, children's input led to **gender-sensitive WASH upgrades** and inclusive water system rehabilitations.
- **Organizational governance:** Youth groups, such as **Children's Advisory Boards and Consultative Councils**, meet with World Vision Field Offices' Senior Leadership Teams (SLT) to influence budgets, volunteer selection, and strategic priorities.
- **National policy advocacy:** In Romania, children's advocacy contributed to the adoption of the world's first **Law for Children's Participation**, which now requires public institutions to consult children annually. In Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), children influenced national youth laws and ethical research codes.
- **Service quality monitoring:** Children use community feedback and accountability channels to report on the adequacy of health, education, and protection services, triggering real-time adjustments.

Most common methods used

The most frequent methods used to facilitate children's participation include:

- **Child-friendly feedback mechanisms (CFFM):** These include accessible **suggestion boxes, storytelling, drawings, and verbal check-ins** adapted for different ages and literacy levels.
- **Focus group discussions (FGDs) and interviews:** These are the primary tools for capturing qualitative data during assessments, research and evaluations.
- **Specialized participatory tools:** To ensure engagement is meaningful and fun, teams use tools like **Body Mapping** (to discuss safety), the **Spiderweb Tool** (to rank priorities), and **visual aids**.
- **Formal consultative bodies:** Structured groups like the **Children's Consultative Council (CCC)** in Romania or **IMPACT Clubs** in Albania provide a platform for sustained, high-level engagement.
- **Direct leadership dialogues:** Face-to-face meetings with **National Directors, Ministers, and local Mayors** allow children to present their Programme for Children's Well-Being directly to decision-makers (WV Romania).

What is working well and why?

Effective participation is driven by several key factors:

- **Closing the feedback loop:** This is one of the most critical elements. When staff return to communities to explain which suggestions were implemented and why, it **builds trust and encourages future engagement**.
- **Safe and supportive environments:** Children are most willing to participate when they feel emotionally and physically safe. In conflict areas or conservative communities, **gender-segregated spaces and female facilitators** are essential for inclusive participation.
- **Seeing tangible impacts:** Participation works best when children see their ideas lead to **visible changes**, such as a new sports stadium in Georgia, the relocation of betting shops away from schools in BiH, or new desks in Lebanese school libraries.
- **Peer-to-peer models:** Children often feel more comfortable and confident when participating alongside peers. Peer-led initiatives, such as youth-led hygiene sessions or cyberbullying campaigns, **foster leadership and agency**.
- **Cultural and contextual adaptation:** Framing participation within local values, such as **Islamic principles of respect and responsibility** (Afghanistan), has reduced community resistance in conservative areas. Using creative methods like games and arts instead of long lectures makes **participation more age-appropriate and engaging**.



Section 5: Recommendations to make children's participation more effective

Children and youth across the different contexts in MEER have shared consistent feedback on what they need to make their participation even more effective. Their recommendations focus on moving from mere consultation to **meaningful influence**, ensuring **transparency** through better feedback loops, and creating **inclusive, safe environments**.

The following are recommendations identified by children and youth:

1. Transparency and feedback pathways:

Children in almost every country emphasize that participation is only meaningful when they understand what happens to their input. They want clearer feedback pathways, visible responses to their suggestions, and transparent communication that shows how their ideas are considered, valued, and reflected in final decisions across programmes and partnerships.

2. Meaningful influence over budgets and strategy

Children are increasingly asking for a seat at the table where high-level financial and strategic decisions are made, not just for day to day activities. They want a voice in budgeting, project design, and assessments, and call for participation to be institutionalised—through formal roles and dedicated budgets—so engagement is consistent, credible, and sustainable.

3. Training and capacity building

Children recognize that they need specific skills to engage effectively with adults and decision-makers. They call for targeted mentoring in advocacy, communication, media literacy, and decision making, alongside practical opportunities to practice leadership. Supporting peer leadership and facilitator roles can help children build confidence and engage more effectively with adults and institutions.

4. Inclusion of marginalized peers

Children frequently advocate for the inclusion of those often left out of the conversation. They highlight the need for accessible approaches for children with disabilities, safe spaces for girls, and intentional inclusion of minority and economically disadvantaged groups—ensuring participation reflects diverse experiences and leaves no child behind.

5. Safe, modern, and accessible spaces

Children emphasise the importance of both physical and digital spaces that enable meaningful participation. They call for formal platforms such as child parliaments, modernised digital tools, child friendly online safety resources, and flexible logistics that accommodate school schedules and enable wider, more consistent engagement.

What impact does child participation have on children, communities and World Vision?

Child participation is creating transformative change at the personal, communal, and organizational levels, shifting children from being passive beneficiaries to active agents of change. The reports highlight the following impacts:

Impact on children

For children, participation is a catalyst for **personal development and psychological well-being**. Child participation strengthens children's confidence, agency, and psychosocial wellbeing. Children develop leadership, advocacy, and practical life skills, overcome fears, and build emotional resilience—particularly in fragile contexts—through being heard, supported by peers, and engaged in safe, child friendly spaces.



Impact on local communities

Child-led initiatives are driving **tangible improvements and shifting social norms** within their communities. It is improving community infrastructure, safety, community norms and social cohesion. Children influence physical improvements, lead awareness campaigns on key risks, and contribute to cultural shifts—prompting greater adult respect for children's voices and strengthening trust and collaboration across generations.

Impact on World Vision

For World Vision, child participation ensures that programming is **relevant, effective, and ethically sound**.

- **Programmatic relevance:** Listening to children allows the organization to refine service delivery in humanitarian responses or programme interventions in stable contexts to meet needs and respond to children's ideas. Real-time feedback through child-friendly mechanisms allows World Vision to refine service delivery to be more effective and inclusive. Children's perspectives during initial assessments ensure that interventions address their most urgent, lived realities rather than adult assumptions.
- **Institutionalised consultation mechanisms:** Children are increasingly securing formal roles within advisory bodies, allowing them to influence high-level decision-making and organizational strategy within WV as well as shaping legislation at national levels in some countries.
- **Enhanced accountability and trust:** By closing the feedback loop—explaining to children how their input was used—World Vision reinforces a culture of transparency and accountability. This shift from making decisions for children to making decisions with them is described as a strategic necessity that builds long-term community ownership. Children also act as leaders in validating and amending the tools used by humanitarian actors to ensure they are accessible and safe.

Conclusions

These findings show that child participation delivers meaningful impact when children are treated as partners in decision making rather than passive consultees. The evidence highlights strong gains for children, communities, and World Vision, while children themselves are clear about what must improve—particularly transparency, inclusion, and influence over strategic decisions. For practitioners, this presents both affirmation and responsibility: to build on effective practice, strengthen feedback and accountability systems, and continue shifting power and mindsets so participation is consistent, inclusive, and genuinely shapes decisions that affect children's lives.

While the commitment to child participation is universal, the focus and methodology differ substantially between stable transitioning contexts and fragile response environments. Offices in this region show a clear distinction in how child participation is utilised based on the stability of the environment.

For stable and transitioning contexts, the focus of child participation is on **civic engagement, legislative reform, and long-term career readiness**. For response and fragile contexts, participation is a tool for **protection, resilience-building, and meeting basic survival needs**.

Fragile contexts face additional, unique barriers that are less prevalent in stable regions, such as:

- **Gender restrictions:** In **Afghanistan**, the ban on secondary education for girls and restrictive social norms severely limit the ability of adolescent girls to participate in public forums or learning sessions.
- **Security and access:** In **Iraq and Jerusalem-West Bank-Gaza (JWG)**, escalating violence and movement restrictions often force the suspension of participation activities or prevent staff from reaching remote communities.
- **Institutional instability:** While stable contexts have more formal structures, they are still vulnerable to political shifts. In **Albania**, the dissolution of the Ministry for Children and Youth impacted the sustainability of youth-led initiatives.

Staff and children in this region face unique challenges to involve children meaningfully in decision-making and harness their insight for tangible action and change. However, they are building from a strong foundation with good practices in each Field Office. With this and the enthusiasm of young people to make change in their local communities and national societies, there is great hope for children today and for the future.

Appendix 1: Summary table of differences between contexts

Feature	Stable / Transitioning Contexts	Response / Fragile Contexts
Primary Goal	Civic agency and legal rights	Protection and resilience
Advocacy Level	National Parliaments and Ministries	Local community and project design
Key intervention or service focus	Education quality, youth empowerment and digital safety	Basic needs (Water, Health, Food, PSS)
Participation platforms	Advisory Boards and Youth Councils, children's groups; school councils	Child-Friendly Spaces (CFS); schools
Main Barrier	Institutional/Political instability	Physical safety and restrictive norms

Appendix 2: Consolidated child participation and impact data

The following table consolidates data from the provided reports regarding child participation spaces, membership numbers, and the key impacts achieved through their involvement.

Country	Spaces / Participation Mechanisms	Membership / Reach Numbers	Key Impacts
Afghanistan	Child-Friendly Spaces (CFS), Child Protection Committees, Remedial Education Program, Child-Friendly Feedback Mechanism (CFFM)	3,644 total participants; 2,759 children in CFS/CP committees; 1,000 in remedial education; 273 in CFFM	Inclusion of safe water systems in project designs; adjusted PSS and mobile health schedules to align with child needs; increased confidence and peer-led hygiene sessions
Albania	Children and Youth Advisory Board (CAB), IMPACT Clubs, Multifunctional Youth centre (MYC), Summer Schools	1,558 children total; 551 in IMPACT clubs; 168 in Durrës MYC; 21 CAB members; >1,000 in Summer Schools	Incorporated youth input into National Youth Law amendments; influenced National Cyber Security Authority digital safety tools; joint local oversight of MYC
Armenia	Needs Assessments, Project Design/Execution consultations, FGDs, and Monitoring Surveys	1,495 children total; 48 in FGDs/KIIs; 1,447 children participated in surveys	Mandatory child participation targets established for all Day Care centre annual plans; gained active citizenship skills through advocacy

Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH)	CAY Advisory Board, 23 child/youth associations, Digital Youth centre, Migrant Response groups	3,537 children total ; 25 Advisory Board members; 1,136 in local initiatives; 529 children on the move	Membership in the State Council for Children (highest advisory body); developed Child Friendly Code of Ethical Research ; relocated betting shops away from school zones
Georgia	Youth Clubs (ERTAD Project), SLT Consultations, Happy Spaces (Ukraine Response)	Over 316 children ; 216 in impact measurement; 11 vulnerable youth in SLT meetings; >100 in monitoring	Construction of a new sports stadium by the Telavi municipality; adapted project to include individual psychological sessions ; improved teamwork and family communication
Iraq	Children & Youth Working Group (CYWG), Environmental/WASH Clubs, Tree of Life peace sessions	Over 1,700 in CYWG ; 180,964 children reached; 883 directly engaged in MEAL/feedback processes	Gender-sensitive WASH upgrades (privacy doors, locking units); co-designed new digital innovation concept ; catch-up classes redesigned for interactive learning
Jerusalem-West Bank(JWB)	IMPACT Clubs, Makani Clubs, Child Protection & Advocacy (CPA) groups	Over 450 children ; 359 in activity design; 75 in annual reviews; 20 in SLT meetings	Formal link established between child representative and village council ; improved relationships with teachers/caregivers; increased self-esteem and leadership in girls
Lebanon	Children's Councils, IMPACT+, Child Protection Committees (CPCs), FGDs	10,847 session participants (5,374 girls, 5,473 boys); 227 in sector FGDs	Physical school improvements (new desks in libraries); redesigned activities to be shorter and interactive ; children led cyberbullying awareness as peer advocates
Romania and Moldova	Children's Consultative Council (CCC), "I want to be in 9th grade" Summer Camps	Over 1,700 children ; 20 active CCC members; 544 camp participants; 1,178 survey respondents	Adoption of the first Law for Children's Participation (2024); established 2025 as the National Year of the Child ; direct influence on national education and transport policies
Syria Response	Children Empowerment Panels (LIFT Project), MSNA Spiderweb Tool sessions	Not specified by exact total, but holistic coverage of governorates	Children validated and amended humanitarian accountability tools ; identified missing tools for earthquake response; community-owned program model
Ukraine (UCR)	Child eSafety Council (Dignity Online), CFS Feedback Mechanisms, ADH-16 Dialogue	Quantitative data limited for FY25	Recommendation to transform CFSs into Resilience Centres ; advocacy to include CFS services in official public funding lists



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