

Children's Council

Children Make their Voices Heard

Manual for Practitioners



by Patricio Cuevas-Parra

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Children's Council

Children Make their Voices Heard

World Vision is a Christian humanitarian organisation working to create lasting change in the lives of children, families and communities living in poverty. Inspired by our Christian values, we are dedicated to working with the world's most vulnerable people. World Vision serves all people regardless of religion, race, ethnicity or gender.

World Vision was founded in 1954 and has been active in Lebanon since 1975. World Vision promotes the well being of Lebanon's children and their communities through emergency relief, community development and advocacy.

Through its development projects, World Vision has improved schools, cared for the health of children, supported farmers, protected the environment, created new employment opportunities and provided a brighter future for refugees.

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To access the tools mentioned in the manual, visit this wvcentral folder on line at www.wvcentral.org/cop/cwbr/child-rights-network-IG/default.aspx

World Vision Lebanon

During my time in Lebanon, I have met extraordinary boys and girls that have showed me that they have the potential to change their society and to contribute to make their country a better place where children's rights are fully respected. I have watched them mature from children to adolescents and young adults and seen them grow in confidence and responsibility. Along the way, they have taught me that children, adolescents and young adults can be powerful partners with whom we must engage. They have proven to be responsible and productive members of society in a way I have never thought about. I have become convinced that to be a truly effective, child focused organisation, it is vital that we at World Vision take the time to actively listen to those who are at the centre of our mission – the children.

I would like to conclude my remarks by expressing that I feel tremendously proud and privileged to introduce this book that will be pivotal in increasing child participation programmes in our organisation. We hope that this book will also raise awareness in Lebanese society about the necessity of dialogue on children's rights and to increase opportunities for children to participate. Children are the present and the future of Lebanon and we must listen to their voices.



Perry Mansfield
Country Director
World Vision Lebanon

Children's Council Board

Through the Children's Council we have learned how to become leaders and more about the characteristics and mission of a leader.

When child leaders acquire the characteristics that allow them to lead a group in a perfect way, in that moment the group evolves, perseveres and can reach its aims.

I think that a leader needs to learn from the characteristics, talents and capacities of the group so that communication and experiences become mutual.

We conducted many workshops for other children and we were able to simplify the message by talking in a language that everyone could understand.

This project and this book will help us to be better leaders and allow children from the Council to better negotiate with adults while choosing the topics that we want to talk about.



Melissa, aged 15
Board Member
Children's Council

World Vision MEER

Our Regional Advocacy strategy looks at promoting results-oriented advocacy at the national and community levels for the poorest and most vulnerable children. We believe that empowering girls and boys is a key element to success in implementing local level advocacy programmes and we are confident that mobilisation of children for a purpose is an effective way to transform governmental systems at the national and local levels.

Children's involvement in local level advocacy work is a valuable approach to hold governments accountable for needed services including health, education, child protection, and birth registration. We are committed to collaborative efforts and partnering with children to transform policies and services for lasting change. By promoting children's voices we are increasing accountability, improving dialogue and enhancing government services.

It is our hope that this manual for practitioners will support this approach to empower children in a sustained way.



Sharon Payt, Esq.
Regional Advocacy Director
Middle East and Eastern Europe
World Vision International

World Vision International

Children have a passion for justice and truthfulness. They crave authentic and meaningful experiences, and are careful about how they use their time and energy. This places a huge responsibility on adults who seek to work effectively with children, and fulfil their right to be involved in decisions that affect their lives. This manual offers practical guidance on creating effective structures for child participation, as well as developing the skills and knowledge required for children to manage these structures, and conduct advocacy work at local and international level.

The manual is rights based, experiential and fun and builds from several years of work with Lebanese children from diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds. It draws on learning from both adults and children as they worked together to develop the Children's Council.

This partnership exemplifies all that is best in respectful collaboration between different generations. Creating a safe space for children to come together and define a new vision and way of relating that crosses cultural and religious boundaries in a turbulent context is no small achievement. I congratulate the Children's Council and the advocacy staff at World Vision Lebanon for this significant contribution.

Paul Stephenson
*Director,
Child Development & Rights,
World Vision International*



Higher Council for Childhood

The concept of launching a Children's Council falls within the implementation of the International Convention on the Rights of the Child. It is an incorporation of the principle of participation, which is at the centre of all rights.

Participation is a real representation of aspirations, since it means culture, a way of life and a way of thinking and since it refines the child's personality and grants children the ability to claim, defend and protect their rights. World Vision decided to establish a representative council for children to be an institutional frame that holds them together without any discrimination and in which they are represented from all districts and categories, be them children in schools or institutions, children with disabilities or children at risk.

This is the common point with the Higher Council for Childhood that adopts a participatory method with non-governmental organizations and cooperates with them through the Participation Committee that has put in place an action plan in order to promote children's participation in Lebanon. This plan highlights the importance of creating structures and spaces for children to express themselves and participate as a national priority.

The democratic practice, openness to others, gaining dialogue, negotiation and tolerance skills as well as building self confidence and critical thinking skills are some of the results expected from the Children's Council, which we want Lebanon's children to experience in order to grow up with values and behaviors that would make them active and productive citizens capable of building Lebanon's future.



Dr. Elie Mekhael,
*General Secretary of the
Lebanese Higher Council
for Childhood*

World Vision Lebanon recognises the empowerment of children to engage in advocacy work themselves as one of the most effective strategies. This child rights-based approach has a strong focus on mobilising children, building their capacity to undertake grassroots and national level advocacy, and play a critical role in removing the barriers that prevent children from enjoying their rights. World Vision Lebanon seeks to invest in children and young people based on the belief that they are innovative and driven to work for the promotion of social justice.

By focusing on raising awareness and promoting the application of the international human rights conventions, especially the Convention on the Rights of the Child in accordance with the cross-cutting principles of non-discrimination, best interest of the child and participation, World Vision Lebanon Advocacy Department is committed to working with and on behalf of children.

We established the Children's Council as a long-term initiative, framed against the Convention on the Rights of the Child, to realise the aspiration to build the capacity of children to exercise their rights, show them that they have the power to promote diversity and tolerance through sharing in common activities, and equip them with the tools, knowledge and skills they need to influence their communities and peers.

We are committed to children who expressed in multiple consultations and research that they seldom have the chance to participate, to express their opinions and to be listened to. After participating in the Children's Council activities, boys and girls articulated great appreciation for the opportunity to participate and to be heard. They stated that they felt more confident and more aware of their potential and ability to make a change in their own lives and the lives of other children. While the audience of the manual is adult facilitators, the manual is for the children- to help us adults learn how to better work with them. We hope this publication will provide sustainable and meaningful opportunities for children to engage in grassroots advocacy work.



Patricio Cuevas-Parra
*Advocacy Director
World Vision Lebanon*

Aim and Objectives

The aim of the Children's Council Manual for Practitioners is to provide standards, procedures, methodologies and tools for adults to partner with children to implement the Children's Council in order to provide children with equal opportunities to participate and actively engage in activities at the grassroots and national level.

The main objectives are to:

- Promote a child rights-based approach to child participation based on the principles outlined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- Assist adult practitioners in planning, preparing and assessing activities with the Children's Council.
- Provide guidance to field staff to conduct child-friendly sessions and provide techniques to use the peer-to-peer approach.
- Provide resources to promote participatory learning environments for children.
- Provide suggestions for tried and tested activities for the Children's Council.
- Identify lessons learned, strengths and opportunities for the improvement of the Children's Council.

This Manual for Practitioners includes the experiences and lessons learned from the Children's Council facilitated by World Vision Lebanon from 2007-2010. Given the success and impact of previous Children's Council activities, World Vision Lebanon seeks to scale up these efforts in order to sustain and increase the long term impact of the Council in providing a space for children to speak out and participate.

The intended audience for this Manual for Practitioners is adult staff members at the grassroots level such as Community Mobilisers, Project Coordinators, Social Animators, facilitators and other professionals who interact with children.

"The Children's Council speaks on behalf of all the children of Lebanon so that children's main ideas are heard, that is to defend children's rights. In the Council we do many activities such as drama and games. We feel that this is very important in our lives. We wrote a book, we did performances and held a festival to promote our rights. We have meetings where we can express our ideas and opinions freely... and we have so much fun."

Tracy, aged 13



Members of the Children's Council will be provided with this manual to help them retain their knowledge, to build up on their success and to use their skills in their communities in new initiatives.

The Manual for Practitioners will be shared with concerned parties, including local and international NGOs, UN agencies, Government offices and Community-based Organisations in order to build upon the experiences and knowledge gained through the implementation of child participation and child-led advocacy initiatives.

Chapter I

Children as Citizens

This chapter focuses on children's right to participation and their role as citizens. It discusses necessary elements for organisations to work with children, and how children feel about their right to participation.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child asserts that children have the right to freely express their views and State Parties have the obligation to listen to the views of children and to facilitate their participation in all matters affecting them within the family, schools, institutions and judicial procedures.

In 2009, the Committee on the Rights of the Child issued a new 'General Comments' to highlight the pivotal importance of the right to be heard and to participation. The Committee recognised that the right to participation, outlined in article 12, is a right in itself and one of the four general principles of the Convention. This statement implies that article 12 should be always considered in the interpretation and implementation of all other rights.

Child participation is an essential component for informed, effective and responsible citizenship. It is also a fundamental right granted in the International Convention. Citizenship is not just an expression of political rights, such as the right to vote or to stand for election. There are many other ways to exercise citizenship and the Convention explicitly recognises civil rights for children.

Some of the citizen's rights that are an indivisible part to the right to participate are: Non-discrimination (art. 2), right to have a name and nationality (art. 7), right to express an opinion (art. 12), right to freedom of expression (art. 13), right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion (art. 14), right to freedom of association (art. 15), right to have access to information (art. 17), right to an education that promotes the development of talents and abilities (art. 29) and the right to fully participate in cultural and artistic life (article 31).

"It's important for children to speak about their rights and their problems. Anyone could talk about children's problems but when children speak themselves, the message will be more powerful because they are talking about their own concerns that they face."

Yuhanna, aged 15



Convention on the Rights of the Child

The Convention on the Rights of the Child was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 20 November 1989 and entered into force September 1990. This is the most highly ratified instrument in international law, 193 states have signed and ratified the Convention. Lebanon signed it in 1990 and ratified in 1997. Only two countries have not ratified the Convention: The United States and Somalia.

The Convention has an impressive substantive content that provide civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights for children and young people. The Convention defines a 'child' as a person below the age of 18, unless the laws of a particular country set the legal age for adulthood as younger than 18.

The Convention addresses the particular human rights of children and sets minimum standards for the protection of their rights. The rights guaranteed by the Convention cover a broad variety of issues related to provisions, protection and participation. This instrument sets out a wide range of human rights from the protection of children without families to the right to education, protection from economic exploitation to the rights of disabled children to special care, amongst many other rights.

The Convention is a legally binding instrument. This means that countries that have ratified the Convention have obligations such as to follow the principles stated in the instrument, to implement its articles and adapt the local legislation and to submit periodic reports to Committee on the Rights of the Child.

The main principles of the Convention are participation, non-discrimination, best interest and right to life, survival and development. The right of participation is included in the following articles:

The right of participation is included in the following articles:

- Art 12: Right to express an opinion
- Art 13: Right to freedom of expression
- Art 15: Right to freedom of association and peaceful assembly
- Art 17: Access to information
- Art 29: Respect for human rights and responsible life in a free society.
- Art 31: Right to fully participate in cultural and artistic life.



Pivotal Role of Child Participation

The right to participate, which comprises the notion of children as decision-makers on issues that affect their lives, is pivotal to ensure inclusiveness and ownership, build democratic societies, reduce dependency and achieve a broader impact. The challenge however, is how to make this happen.

Professionals from the field of development and human rights are always striving to raise awareness about the denial of rights and limited participation of millions of children. In this context, recurrent questions come to development workers while they are designing and implementing programmes: What can children do to exercise their rights? How can they respond to injustice and inequality? Why exactly we should insist on advocating on behalf of children and why not include them as active advocates? How can we build a model where children become part of the decision-making process in the organisations in which they participate?

Answering these questions is not easy, and making it happen is even more difficult, yet not impossible. Indeed, the long term impact of including children in these processes may not be seen until they are the adults of the next generation. Advocacy

initiatives should be directed towards influencing and educating society in order to change beliefs, attitudes and practices and to promote ethical and meaningful child participation based on equality, trust and mutual respect. To achieve this goal, children play a critical role in connecting child participation strategies at the grassroots level.

No child rights advocacy initiatives will succeed unless children affected by unjust situations become aware of their rights and participate fully in the fundamental aspects of the determined strategy. Children should be included in all stages of advocacy work to strengthen their capacity to exercise their rights and to remove the barriers that prevent them from enjoying them.

Organisations should be challenged to develop child rights-centred strategies that strengthen participation and to provide children with opportunities to influence decisions, programmes and activities. Children should be provided with the space to participate in community initiatives and to develop their capacity to influence stakeholders throughout their active involvement.

Building Meaningful and Ethical Child Participation

Promoting child participation requires social commitment and action to make it happen. Meaningful child participation can improve intercultural relations as well as children's self image, acceptance and relationships with other groups. Ethical participation of children provides a solid platform to reaffirm social values, sense of belonging, equality, dialogue and respect for the evolving capacities of children.

Building meaningful participation, children will be able to be actively involved in social and cultural development and to bring positive social change to their peers and communities. They have the passion, creativity, idealism and desire to work to build a better society in which everybody has the opportunity to freely participate and an equal chance to enjoy their rights and develop their potential and talents.

Tip: It is important to bear in mind that opportunities that children have to express their views in the Children's Council, may not be present at home or school. It is helpful to conduct some activities with children to discuss their expectations and the limitations that they may experience on their ability to participate in wider society.

Meaningful participation requires building the leadership skills of children to give them the opportunity to develop their abilities and equip them with tools to become social actors. This approach improves children's socialisation skills by encouraging them to play an active role in their schools, clubs, associations and communities.

Children can also expand their influence beyond their communities. They can influence and negotiate with representatives of local and national government, members of Parliament, media and civil society groups. This will ensure that their voices and rights are taken into consideration in the national agenda and in the legislative arena.

Helpful definitions

Meaningful participation

Children and young people have the opportunity to express their views, influence decision-making and achieve change in areas that affect their lives. Participation is informed, relevant and voluntary. (Getting it Right for Children, Save the Children, 2007)

Ethical participation

Children's participation is transparent, honest, accountable and with equality of opportunity. (Getting it Right for Children, Save the Children, 2007)

Evolving capacities

Children are active agents in their own lives, entitled to be listened to, respected and granted increasingly autonomy in the exercise of rights, while also being entitled to protection in accordance with relative immaturity and youth. (Innocenti Insight: The Evolving Capacities of the Child, UNICEF, 2005)

Citizenship

Citizenship represents the collection of rights and obligations that define the members of a community. All children are born with civil, political and economic rights. These rights enable them to practice their citizenship- at least to some extent. (Children as Active Citizens, Inter-Agency Working Group on Children's Participation, 2008)

Child rights-based approach

A rights-based approach sees the child in the context of family, community, the State and other social structures. The balance between protecting children's right to participate directly in decisions that affect them, and holding children accountable for their own exercise of rights, shifts by age and stages of personal development, not by status. (Here We Stand: World Vision and Child Rights. 2nd edition)

Child empowerment approach

Child empowerment approach is an attitudinal, structural, and cultural process whereby children and young people gain the ability, authority, and agency to make decisions and implement change in their own lives and the lives of other people, including children, youth and adults. (Adapted from Vavrus, & Fletcher Guide to social change led by and with young people. 2006)

Key steps to mainstreaming child participation at the organisational & programming level

In embracing a child participation approach, organisations should review their policies, procedures and structures to ensure that their programmes lead to meaningful, ethical and safe child participation. There are fundamental prerequisites that must be present at the organisational and programming level.

Organisational considerations must be present

- Organisational priority and political will to promote meaningful and safe child participation.
- Organisational culture that supports and is committed to long-term child participation strategies.
- Accountability mechanism to ensure ethical, safe and meaningful child participation.
- Child rights-centred initiatives.
- Allocation of resources for sustainable child participation.
- A capacity building programme for staff and community members to understand and work with child participation.
- Project models for engaging children into programming, especially in designing, implementation and evaluating.

"The main contribution, in my opinion, would be tolerance. We should accept other children and then help them. I think more of children's rights and I am now a more responsible person, even at home with my sisters and brothers. I dream that the Children's Council will help all the children of Lebanon. My dreams started when they elected me as a board member."

Aline, aged 13



Programming considerations

- Facilitate the creation of formal or informal structures for child participation.
- Ensure child-friendly and safe spaces for gathering.
- Ensure that the involvement of children is informed and active and shapes the direction of the project or programme.
- Ensure a non-discriminatory approach, equal opportunity to be involved and fair representation of girls, boys, different religious and economic backgrounds, abilities, ethnicities and nationalities.
- Consider the children's evolving capacities whilst planning activities.
- Encourage representation or peer to peer voting.
- Set up child protection standards and procedures and do proper risk assessment of overall project and individual activities/ components.
- Encourage children's contribution to develop their own child-friendly protection policies.
- Conduct capacity building for children to equip them to become agents of change.
- Ensure the programme is flexible and adapts to children's desires, hopes and needs.



"Children's Councils activities are good because they help children to participate in activities and meet new friends. I hope to keep on going with the activities such as writing skills workshops and visiting Beirut to meet other Councils. We rarely have the chance to participate in activities, we don't have any opportunity in our village beside the Children's Council, and because of this it is very important for us."

Hassan, aged 14



What children think about their right to participate?

Based on the principles outlined in article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, World Vision Lebanon conducted a child consultation where four hundred boys and girls were consulted for their views on issues that affect them. The primary purpose was to discover how well children understand their rights, what they think about participation, what their experiences are in exercising their rights and what their suggestions are for initiatives that would help children develop to their full potential.

During the consultation, that included a child-friendly forum and activities such as puzzles, games, drawing pictures, writing about personal stories and voting on the biggest issues, children expressed that they seldom have the chance to talk and to be listened to. Children highlighted their desire for participation and expressed their wish to be heard in decisions that affect their lives. They complained that parents and other adults easily forget that children have rights when it comes to decision making. Whilst they acknowledged that they may not be ready to make full decisions about their lives, they still felt that their opinion should at least be considered.

Children also noted that the lack of activities and space in

their communities is a major obstacle in fulfilling their right to be heard and participate. When such opportunities do arise, the children expressed their frustration at not being consulted in the design of the activities.

Children identified several themes that affect them and they categorised the most important issues according to their priorities. Children put in first place their desire to be heard in decisions that affect their lives and described the topics in which they would like to be consulted as: leisure time activities, their education and family matters.

Focus group discussions highlighted that children want to live in a community where all children can exercise their rights and children's opinions are respected. They want more dialogue and more activities to give children a chance to participate in sports, arts, summer camps, excursions and volunteering. Children suggested that establishing children's clubs or similar structures could be a good idea to promote the participation of children without discrimination and give each one the option to express their ideas, gain confidence, meet children from different backgrounds and to do something helpful for children in the country.



Chapter 2

Choosing a Child Participation Structure: Children's Council



One of the key components of sustainable child participation is the existence of formal and informal structures, which provide children with the space to come together and make their voices heard. Some children's collectives are established in a natural and informal manner such as student's associations and children's clubs, while others require more sophisticated structures and allocation of resources, for instance, children's councils and children's parliaments.

"The Children's Council does activities about child labour, protection from violence, diversity, accepting others and of course on children's rights. All children have a special chance because they are supported by the Children's Council in order for them to make their voices heard to the world and to ask the whole world to acknowledge and respect their rights."

Melissa, aged 14



The following structures exemplify some of the types of organisations that can be used in child participation initiatives. Student Associations seek to represent and provide services to students on issues relevant to their schools. Children's Clubs aim to gather children who have common interests in areas such as sport, arts, games and hobbies. Children's Council, an organised body of children with a structure and membership, looks for social change at the community and national level. Children's Parliament, a formal structure similar to National Parliament composed of children who want to influence local or national legislature, brings children's voices to leaders and decision-makers.

For the purpose of this manual, the children's council has been identified as the most suitable structure to build meaningful child participation according to the objectives of this handbook. Field practitioners are free to choose other structures that they consider relevant for their own contexts.

Children's Council

World Vision Lebanon believes that by establishing a Children's Council, boys and girls can play a critical role in advocating for social change and provide a platform for lobbying for the inclusion of child rights in the governmental agenda, mobilising and educating children on their rights and monitoring effective social and policy change.

The Children's Council is a body of child members set up at the community level to provide a space for children to participate in grassroots advocacy initiatives and to promote informed, effective and responsible citizenship.

The Children's Council aims to build children's capacities on child rights, development, peace education and to equip children with tools, knowledge and skills to enable them to influence their communities and peers to contribute to a more just and egalitarian society.

Through the Children's Council girls and boys develop life skills such as self-confidence, self-awareness and self-esteem. Opportunities are created for children to meet and give their views on what matters to them and what is happening in the society around them. The Children's Council also encourages children to become key players in promoting respect for diversity, protection and dialogue in their communities.

Objectives of the Children's Council

- Create an adequate space for children to participate and meet peers from different backgrounds across social, religious and ethnic boundaries, especially the most vulnerable.
- Contribute to child's empowerment by involving children in decision-making process about issues that affect them.
- Promote the informed, effective and responsible citizenship of children.
- Build children's capacities on child rights, life skills, tolerance and diversity.
- Engage children in learning about social justice centred topics.
- Provide children with opportunities to use their skills and talents.
- Equip children with tools and knowledge to enable them to implement their own child-led initiatives and influence their communities and peers.

These objectives are reached through direct and indirect awareness raising, child-friendly trainings, forums, games, performances and other activities where children get together and share their experiences.

In order to achieve the overall objectives, the principles of gender equality, best interest of the child and non-discrimination must be considered as key cross-cutting issues at all stages of programmes.

"In the Children's Council my personality became stronger. When I see that children rights are violated, I have the confidence to challenge it and say that it is wrong and should not happen. For everyone who doesn't know about child rights, I explain and talk to them about these rights. It makes me happy that I can be helpful for children in Lebanon."

Yuhanna, aged 15



Key Children's Council components

The three main components of the Children's Council are:

Representation and peer election:

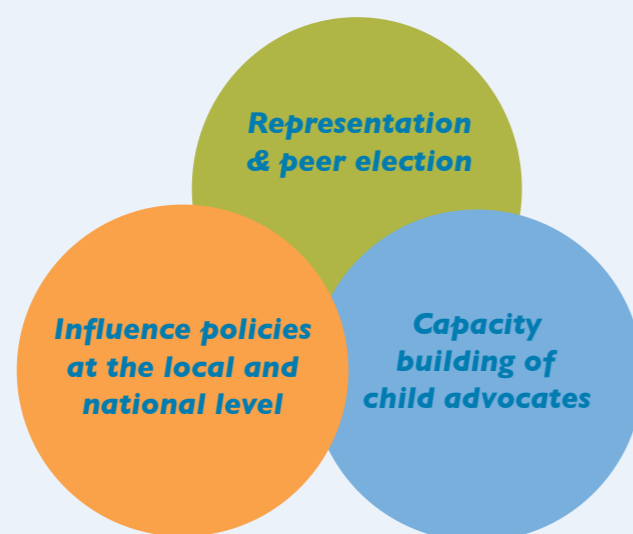
Establishment of the Children's Council at the community level, selection of local representatives and election of the National Council and Board members.

Capacity building of child advocates:

Children engage in learning centred on child rights, child protection, life skills, advocacy techniques and peace education which provides them with opportunities to use their skills and talents for social change.

Influence policies at the local and national level:

Children are equipped with tools to implement their own child-led initiatives and engage in influencing decision-makers at the community and national level.



Composition of the Children's Council

The Children's Council implemented by World Vision Lebanon is a structure divided into three levels:

- Local Children's Council
- Assembly of Representatives
- Board Council

Local Children's Council

A Children's Council was established at the community level in the World Vision Area Development Programmes (ADPs) and Palestinian refugee camps. The local Children's Councils are each comprised of 20 children aged 10-17, grouped and attended to according to their group age: 10 to 13 and 14 to 17. Each Council elects four delegates (two girls and two boys) who will represent the local council in the Assembly of Representatives. Each local council meets once a month and plays a significant role in engaging children in activities, including:

- Participating in monthly recreational activities and capacity building events, including leadership skills, child rights, peace education and thematic workshops, etc.
- Representing children at community level initiatives.
- Attending meetings with local stakeholders and community members.
- Conducting grassroots child-led campaigns.
- Providing input to the National Children's Council on specific issues raised by children in their communities.
- Providing input on specific issues raised by children in their communities and participating in consultations, community mapping, reaching the most vulnerable children and other similar activities.

Assembly of Representatives

The Assembly of Representatives is comprised of 32 members who are the delegates elected in the local Councils. The Assembly elects four Board members who represent the Council at the National Level. The Assembly meets twice a year and plays a key role in ensuring that the local councils become part of the decision making process. The main activities are:

- Electing the Council Board
- Providing leadership in sustaining the Children's Council through exchanging experiences and good practices from their communities
- Planning national events and incorporating children's voices into an overall agenda

Council Board

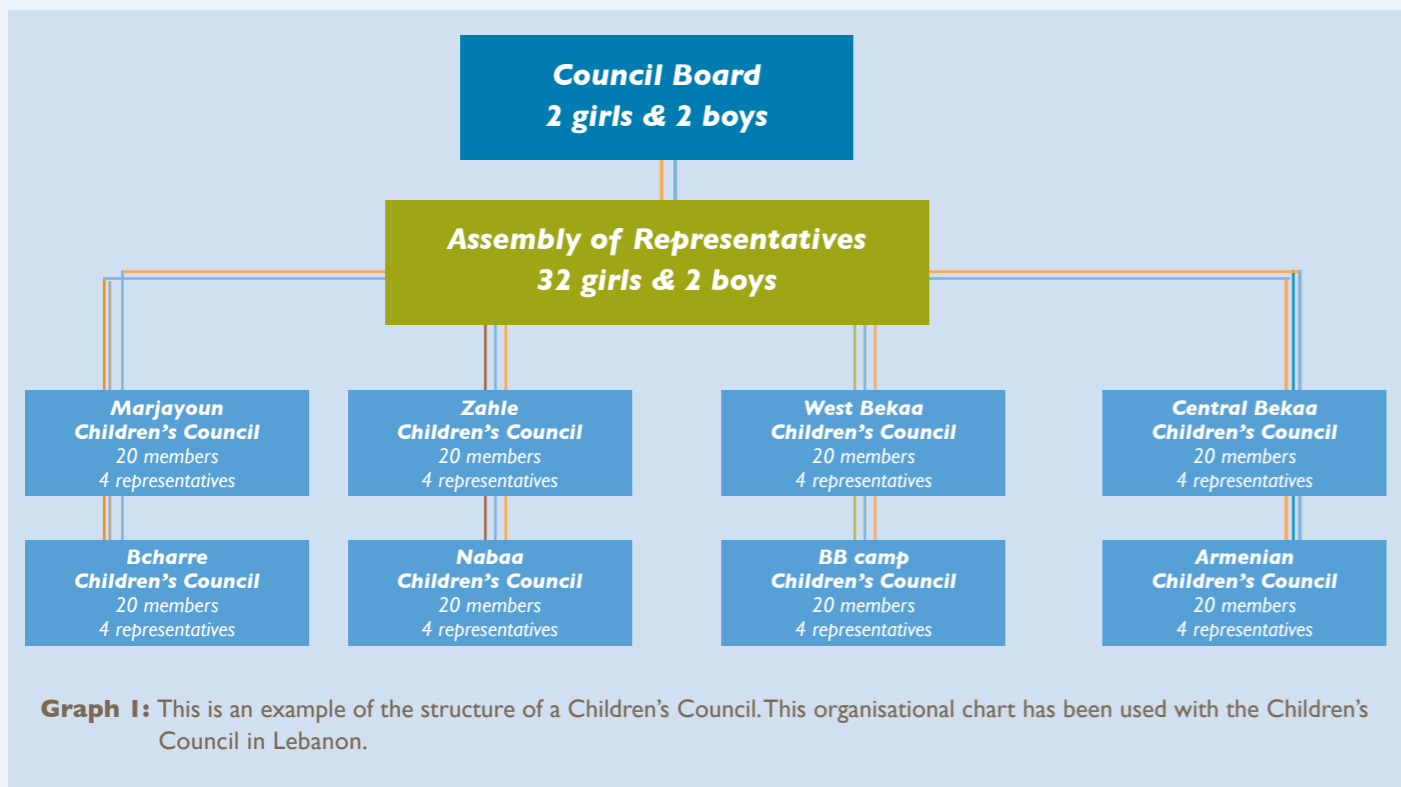
The Board Council is composed of four members: two girls and two boys. Board members meet every three months and they share responsibilities based on their capacities and interests. All of them have the same role and the structure does not consider a chair of the board. The responsibilities of the board members are:

- Leading the Children's Council annual plan.
- Representing children at national level events.
- Acting as a spokesperson for media interviews.
- Attending meetings with stakeholders.
- Participating in planning, organising and evaluating activities.
- Ensuring cooperation between the Children's Council and other child-led organisations.
- Contributing ideas and opinions on Children's Council decisions.

"There are Children's Councils in different parts of Lebanon. Each Council is composed of 20 children between the ages of 9 and 18. The children elected 4 board members of Children's Councils to represent them here in Lebanon. The board members are Aline, Melissa, Youhanna and I. Our role is to raise awareness about children's rights and how these rights should be protected."

Tracy, aged 13





Process to Join the Children's Council

It is essential to outline a transparent and accountable process to join the Children's Council in order to provide children with a fair and equal opportunity to voluntarily participate and take part in Children's Council activities.



Selection Criteria

The aim of using selection criteria is to provide a fair pathway by ensuring that there is no discrimination based on age, gender, disability, ability, race, religion, social background or any other factor.

Requirements for joining the Council

- Girls and boys between the ages of 10 and 17.
- Leadership potential and motivation to make a difference in the community.
- Interest in participating in extra-curricular and community activities.
- Interest in child rights related issues.
- Ability to interact effectively with other children.
- Willingness to represent children from the community.
- Live in areas where the Children's Council is implemented.

Selection Process

- The selection process will be publicly announced using different means of child-friendly, accessible communications such as; posters, leaflets, school blackboard announcements, etc.
- Children nominate themselves by communicating their desire to the Project Coordinator, community volunteers or other person appointed.

- Children fill out a child-friendly registration form.
- Children are invited to participate in an activity where through games, drawings, play or other means they can express their will to join the Council.
- A selection committee will be responsible for selecting children on the quality and originality of submissions.
- Children will be notified of the acceptance or refusal of the nomination. Those who are not accepted will be offered the opportunity to join alternative initiatives.

Selection Committee

The selection committee will consist of the three members to ensure transparency and to avoid conflicts of interest in the selection process:

- Field Project Coordinator
- Children's Council Coordinator
- Child representative

Wanna make a **CHANGE?**
Are you interested in learning new things?

من حق قبلون
ان يبيس طفولته

Child Rights
Leadership Skills
Cooperation + Dialogue
Creative Writing

Hey, JOIN the
Children's Council!

If you are 10-17 years old, register for the Children's Council and take part in many activities
For more details contact:



World Vision
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Election of Representatives

One of the pivotal components of the Children's Council is representation and peer election. At the community level, children elect four delegates that represent them in the National Council, who will elect the four members for the Board Council. The Children's Council uses proportional representation to provide a fair representation of all the Councils.

All girls and boys have the same right and opportunity to run for election and nobody is prevented from standing for election.

The Children's Council uses a plurality vote with a gender representation component to provide a fair gender balance in the composition of the council. This election system

considers that local delegates and the board council are composed of two girls and two boys. Each Children's Council member votes for one girl and one boy in two separate ballots.

The plurality vote system does not require that candidates get the majority vote (51% of votes); the two girls and two boys who receive more votes than any other candidate win the election.

The term of the local representative is one year and they can serve more than one term. Board members serve for a two-year term and cannot be reappointed after one full term.

Requirements of candidates

This list was developed in conjunction with the Children's Council board members.

- Be imaginative and creative.
- Be energetic and open to ideas and suggestions.
- Have initiative and charisma.
- Have motivation in regards to advocating for child rights.
- Have a sense of responsibility and commitment.
- Ability to work well with other children.
- Desire to represent other children.

Campaign

- Candidates nominate themselves and fill out an election form.
- Candidates can launch campaigns and produce some materials.
- Aspiring candidates participate in forum.
- Candidates have three minutes to deliver a speech about their ideas and why they should be elected as a delegate.

For me it is very important to represent the children from my village and to convey what they need and the activities they want to have. I am very interested in meeting children from other cultures and ethnicities and to exchange the things that we have in common. I have learned a lot in the trainings and I never thought that I was able to do it. The Children's Council has created a place where I feel very valued and where everyone can give an opinion and be listened to. I am very committed to continue working for other children when I grow up.

Aline, aged 14

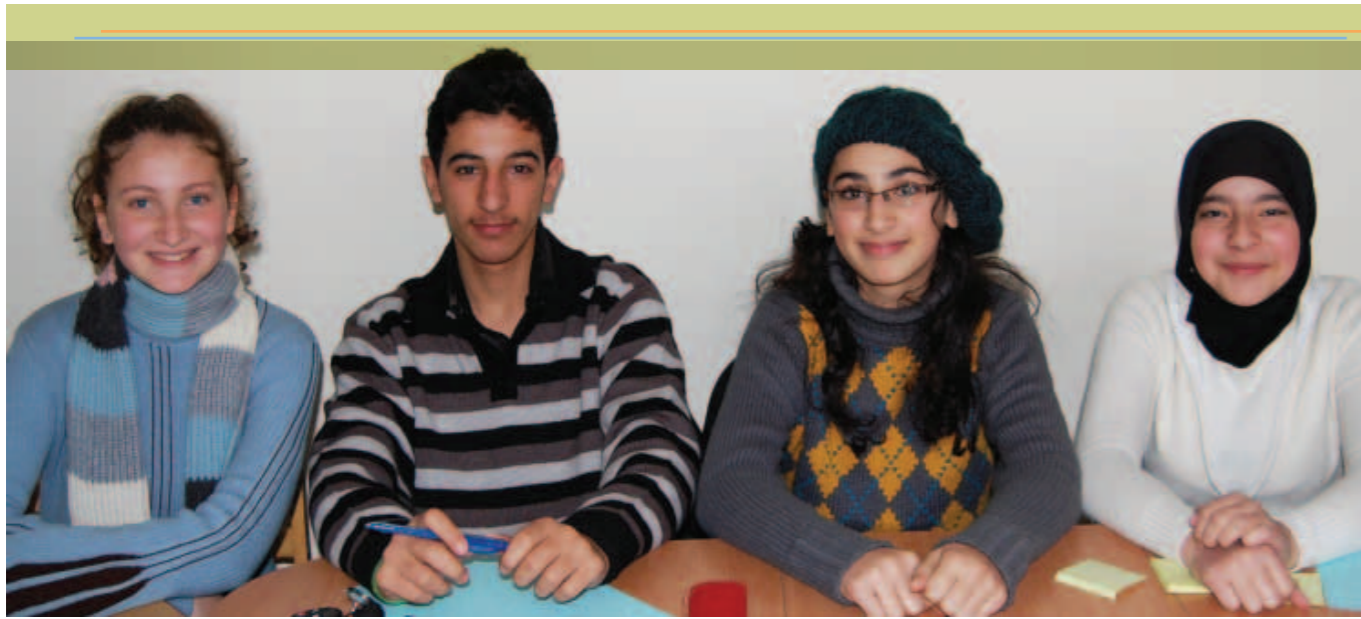


Voting

- The election will occur during the Children's Council plenary meeting.
- Children receive two ballot papers; one containing the name of girl candidates and one other with the boy candidates.
- Children mark their favourite candidates on the ballot papers and deposit them in the ballot box.
- Facilitator prepares a tally board that contains a column for each candidate and a finish line for the favourites.
- Facilitator counts the votes and adds them to the tally board.
- Results will be released after all votes are counted.
- Winners have one minute to deliver their acceptance speeches.

Follow up for adult facilitators

- Ballots and record of the election will be kept on file for two weeks.
- Conduct an orientation session with the winners to brief them in their new roles.
- Watch children who lost the election closely and provide support if needed.



Melissa (14), Youhanna (16), Tracy (13) and Aline (13)
Board members elected by their peers in 2008. They are serving a two-year term.

Tip: It is recommended not to conduct the election in the first session of the council.
 ☺ This will give children the opportunity to get to know each other and have sufficient time to make informed voting decisions.

Tip: In some cases, it is recommended to establish a system for allocating a reserved seat to children from minorities in order to ensure religious or ethnic balance.
 ☺



Chapter 3

Addressing Critical Issues

Selection of Facilitators and Staff Competencies

In implementing the Children's Council, the selection of an adult facilitator is essential for long term success and critical in bringing change to the way staff members work. The Convention on the Rights of the Child conveys an innovative approach that transforms the image of the child by recognising that children are holders of their own rights. Facilitators should challenge their own traditional attitudes that discourage the participation of children based on the belief that they are not ready to make choices in important matters in their lives.

Staff members may face challenges and experience difficulty in understanding the process of child participation. Organisations need to develop strategies, mechanisms and capacity building programmes to educate staff and bring the changes necessary to fulfil the participation rights as stipulated in the Convention.

The facilitator is a catalyst in the processes through which the Children's Council achieves its goal of influencing decisions that affect children's lives and ensuring their rights and needs are taken into account in their communities.

The facilitator's competencies are paramount to success in ensuring children's meaningful participation. A perfect project model can fail if the staff member lacks the minimum competencies based on skills, knowledge and attitudes. Therefore it is critical to develop a framework with an emphasis on hiring and training well qualified and committed facilitators. Orientation and training programmes must ensure that facilitators and other personnel who interact with children are equipped with the core competencies to work with them. This framework should also consider performance appraisals against the competencies agreed.

"I enjoy the activities because I am learning many new things. We have fun and we are very relaxed. In the school we have a very strict system with no opportunities to say something and if you do something wrong you are punished. The Children's Council is totally different, our facilitator is cool and always smiling. He gives us freedom to express our ideas and he is always supporting us and making us feel good."

Nour, aged 12

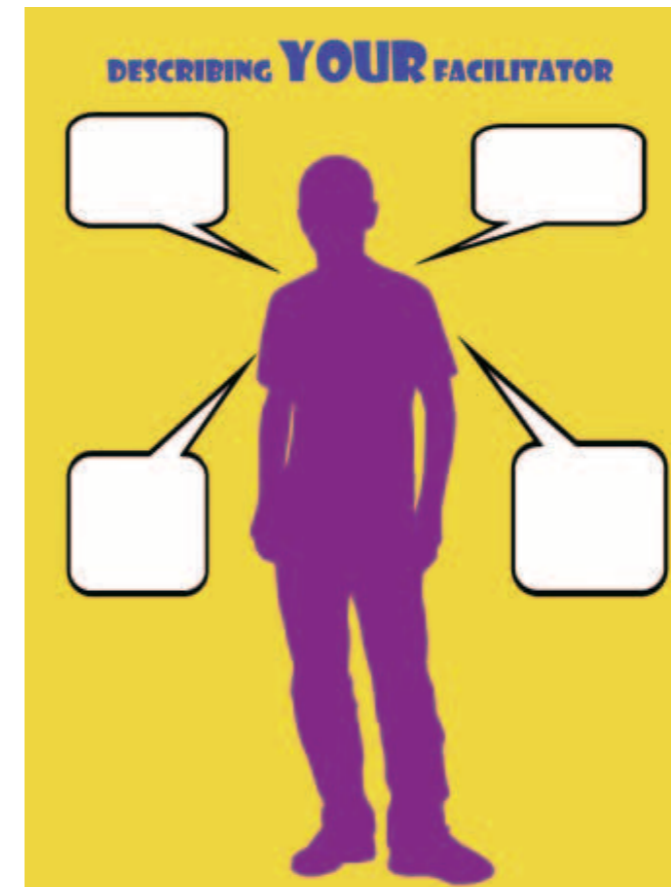


Including children in recruiting and evaluating staff

In order to promote more democratic practices for participation, children can be included in some of the stages of the hiring process and staff appraisals. There are diverse methodologies that allow children to be consulted in this process without putting them in a stressful situation in giving them adult responsibilities.

Field staff have learned from experience that children have the ability to develop their own viewpoints using visual elements that help them to capture their ideas and encourage them to express their opinions. Through the 'Describing

Your Facilitator tool' children are empowered to visualise the profile of the person that they want as the facilitator of their activities. Once children agree on the main characteristics, skills and abilities, these suggestions should be included in the Facilitator job description. To avoid unrealistic expectations, it is important to explain to children that the job description profile is an ideal description of the desired facilitator and it is not always possible to find a person to fit all of the characteristics; however there is organisational commitment to recruit the best employee for the Children's Council needs.



Using the Describing Your Facilitator tool

- Hang a photograph of a person with speech bubbles on the wall.
- Distribute sticky notes and markers to each child.
- Ask children to write down in the speech bubbles the characteristics, skills and abilities they would like from an adult working with them.
- Ask children to write the emotional skills (friendly) and technical /intellectual skills (e.g.: good at using child friendly language)
- Ask children to suggest any other quality that a facilitator needs to have.
- Children discuss and agree on the main characteristics and present their suggestions to the group. Adult facilitator should not interfere with the discussion but help the group to document the findings.

A suggested description of the main responsibilities of the Children's Council Facilitator:

- Develop and design activities and tools for children to ensure meaningful, productive and enjoyable child participation.
- Provide training to equip children with knowledge and skills on child rights, participation and peace education among other relevant topics.
- Develop creative activities and a positive environment to ensure equal participation of children from different backgrounds across all social, gender, disability, religious and ethnic boundaries.
- Develop tools to raise awareness and promote the Convention on the Rights of the Child among children.
- Assist children to implement their own child-led initiatives and to become agents of positive change in their communities.
- Facilitate grassroots advocacy initiatives to raise awareness on child rights and child participation at the community level.
- Ensure that Child Protection standards and procedures are in place during Children's Council activities.
- Interact and network with other child-focused organisations and community-based organisations involving children, parents, communities and staff members.



Board members used the Describing Your Facilitator exercise and they highlighted the following skills/abilities of their facilitator:

- Reacts rapidly to any given situation
- Takes children's opinions into consideration
- Has a sense of humour
- Cultured and well-educated
- Has a good heart
- Has a joyful spirit
- Tries not to hurt children's feelings
- Has good ideas
- Is wise
- Does not bother children
- Communicates using easy language
- Energetic and enthusiastic
- Charming
- Sympathetic to children



Facilitator skills and abilities

- Interest and ability in child rights-based participatory approach.
- High ability to interact and communicate effectively with children.
- Have practical skills to motivate and facilitate children's expression.
- Creative spirit, sense of humour and compassion.
- Ability to face difficult situations and sensitive issues regarding child participation and protection.
- Displays cultural, gender, religious, race, nationality and age sensitivity and adaptability.
- Well-developed conflict resolution skills.
- Appreciate children and demonstrate care for them.
- Ability to develop a meaningful adult-child partnership.
- Have flexibility in terms of schedule.
- Ability to build trust and respect.

In my experience working with the Children's Council, I learned that children, wherever they come from, have similar dreams, hopes and concerns, despite the widespread belief that we, Lebanese, live in a very complex and divided society based on our religious or ethnic differences. Children do not want to be labelled as anything but what they are; they just want to be children and to have the same opportunities to participate as others.

I also learned that it is imperative to promote transparent and accountable mechanisms of child participation. Children need to have a voice not only in the project implementation but also in the design of activities and project decision-making. We are called to intensify our efforts to promote children's opinions with due respect for their autonomy. We must provide them with the opportunities to choose the thematic topics in which they want to be involved.

The activities of the Children's Council have to be flexible, creative, interactive and above all fun. We should avoid creating activities that are adult-oriented rather than children-centred activities. We have to be very careful not to impose our ideas or priorities based on our funding opportunities.

Mario Stephano, Children's Council Coordinator, WV Lebanon

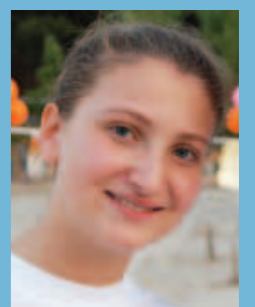


Child Protection Considerations

The Children's Council promotes a participatory approach that recognises children's rights to participate and to be involved in their own development. However, this approach needs to be linked to protection initiatives to ensure the safe and comfortable participation of children. In this process, it is essential not to exclude children in developing child protection strategies; they are capable, according to their age and maturity, to contribute with their own resources, skills and knowledge to establish a safe environment for playing, learning and interacting with other children.

"I was in charge of disseminating the child protection information to children. This was very good because I communicated the ideas in our own way so that it was simpler and less complicated than adult's language. The good thing was that we had a complaint box and an adult to talk to if we wanted to complain about something. Some children are shy and they prefer to use the box, others like talking. In our culture we are discouraged to complain about adults but with the complaint box we feel that we can say something that bothers us."

Melissa, aged 14



The protection measures need to include the following:

- World Vision Partnership Policy on Child Protection.
- World Vision Behavioural Protocol Guidelines.
- Child abuse reporting system to report cases of abuse and misconduct against children, including a complaint box where children can drop anonymous complaints.
- Child-friendly posters and leaflets to inform children about protection issues.
- Appoint an adult as the a child protection focal person for the Children’s Council.
- Conduct a risk assessment to identify gaps or protection threats related to children’s direct involvement in WorldVision activities and potential risk due to association and/or empowerment process, even if not directly linked to World Vision sponsored activities.
- Prevention measures to reduce risks and vulnerabilities due to children’s participation in the Council activities.
- Informed written consent from parents or caregivers
- Contact details of child protection resources and emergency medical help.
- Awareness raising and child protection training programme to educate staff, communities and stakeholders on issues pertaining to protection. Assist and support children affected by a protection incident.

Children’s Council staff members are pivotal in ensuring the safe participation of children and they must take all actions to ensure the full implementation of the Child Protection Policy and related guidelines and protocols. To meet the minimum standards for the protection of the child, a member of staff, volunteer or community member needs to be appointed as a child protection focal point person. This person is responsible to oversee child protection issues and to assist children to be informed on their protective rights and ensure the accomplishment of all requirements to adequately protect children.

The child protection focal point is also in charge of assessing risks that can jeopardise children’s safety and well-being, and engage children in managing and assessing their own risk. If risk assessment shows a current or potential threat to safety, the activities must be postponed, cancelled or redesigned. All relevant decisions related to safety issues need to be properly communicated to children.

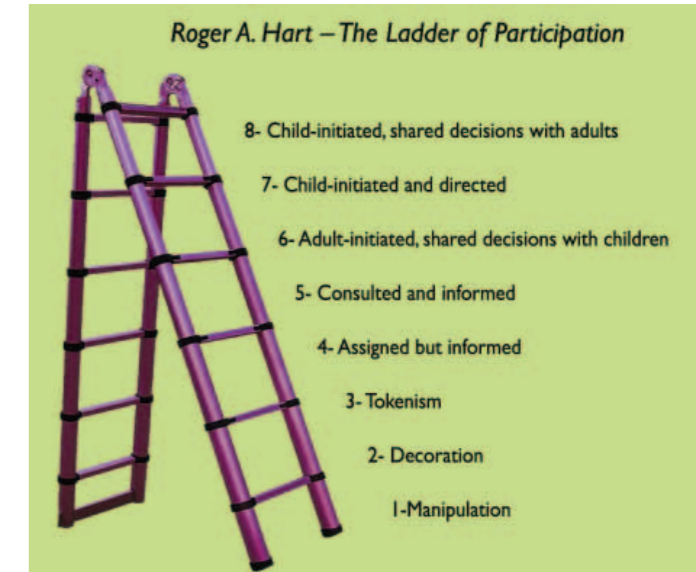
Minimising the risk of tokenism and manipulation

The Committee on Rights of the Child in its General Comment No. 12 (2009)-The right of the child to be heard - made a call for mechanisms to avoid tokenistic approaches that limit children’s expression of views or fail to give their views due weight.

In order to address the risks of manipulation and tokenism it is critical to adopt an equitable process from the beginning to ensure effective, transparent and ethical child participation. Participation always involves risks but can be minimised or prevented by education and training and by developing good practices and standards.

The Committee stresses that the right to participation cannot embrace unethical practices such as adult manipulation, placing children in situations where they are told what they can say, or exposing children to risk of harm through participation.

Roger Hart’s “Ladder of children’s participation” identifies three levels of non-participation models; manipulation, decoration and tokenism. These rungs of the ladder are characterised by scenarios such as: the absence of informed choices, hierarchical paternalistic relationships where adults make decisions for children, activities designed and led by adults where children are asked to play a predetermined role without understanding the objectives of the activity, children being consulted with no feedback provided, children having no opportunities to develop their own ideas, opinions or statements and children engaging in campaigning without the opportunity to decide or provide input.



World Vision is developing child participation minimum standards which will likely focus on the following principles:

- Boys and girls are respected and valued at all phases of participation.
- Child protection is upheld and woven throughout the entire child participation process.
- Through participation boys and girls strengthen ties to their community.
- Participation is meaningful, appropriate and safe.
- Appropriate child friendly activities and methods will be used at all times.
- Children, their caretakers and communities should understand the purpose of any child participation activity.
- Participation is voluntary. It is a right not an obligation.
- All participation activities require adequate preparation and follow-up with the engaged boys and girls.

Risks are minimised when children are:



Key points checklist

- Fully informed of the activities
- Voluntarily participating
- Participating not merely consulted
- Treated as equal actors in decision-making processes
- Involved in the planning, implementation and evaluation
- Provided with training, capacity building and tools for effective participation

The Committee on the Rights of the Child has stated that is pivotal to undertake appropriate measures to assure that children can exercise their right to participate without discrimination based on race, colour, sex, language, religion, ethnicity, nationality, disability or other status.

Gender inequality, imbalance of power and vulnerabilities

Experience from the field has shown that child participation cannot be discussed without considering crucial issues such as power relations, struggle for equal representation, ethnic segregation, gender discrimination and social vulnerabilities that exclude children from participating equitably in community activities.

Many girls face several obstacles to participate as a result of unequal power relations and patriarchal values, where girls are valued less than boys or are banned in participating in social activities with their peers.

Children with disabilities are often excluded from participating in decision-making due to a combination of social, cultural, and physical barriers affecting their daily lives. Street children are usually stigmatised, marginalised, given less attention and few opportunities for participation. Refugee children experience restricted networks of social contacts and a higher incidence of discrimination and harassment that limit their ability to

participate in activities with other children.

It is also important to acknowledge that children and adults have a relation that is characterised by an unequal distribution of power. In several consultation processes, children complained that adults tend to control or manipulate their decisions, adults decide on the agenda and activities without consulting children. They criticised the fact that adults usually prioritise discipline and order rather than the children's creativity and the freedom to express their ideas.

While implementing the Children's Council, it is crucial to identify and overcome the challenges described above and to ensure the integration and inclusion of vulnerable children in the council activities. One of the main objectives of the Children's Council is to promote the principle of non-discrimination and the celebration of diversity to tackle traditional stereotypes and change discriminatory attitudes that are a root cause of social exclusion.

Children's Council inclusion methodology

- 1 Assess key issues that affect the ability of children to participate on an equitable basis.
- 2 Develop a culturally-sensitive outreach strategy in effort to reach all children in the communities.
- 3 Design participatory sessions that are inclusive and accessible to children of all abilities.
- 4 Develop accessible child-friendly materials that are inclusive and gender sensitive.
- 5 Conduct meetings and activities in suitable, safe and accessible venues.
- 6 Schedule activities when they do not interfere with children's responsibilities.
- 7 Promote gender, religious and ethnic balance within the staff that interact with children.

In order to assess the ability of children to participate and to create an environment that addresses inequality, imbalances of power and vulnerabilities it is important to identify the factors and categories that play an important role in the participation process:

- Well-balanced gender representation
- Wider age range with equal opportunities for younger and older children
- Well-balanced religious diversity
- Children from rural and urban contexts
- Children attending and out of school
- Children with disabilities
- Child refugees or asylum seekers
- Working and street children
- Children in institutions
- Children with household responsibilities

Helpful tip 😊

Sometimes it is necessary to develop creative solutions to barriers to participation, in order to encourage all children to be included. An 'open policy' is not enough, as many children will need to be encouraged through specific activities and inclusive approaches that ensure everyone benefits. As an example, a field officer from a rural community in Lebanon became aware that some older girls were not comfortable joining the Children's Council because of the cultural restrictions around girls interacting with boys after puberty. As a solution, they invited the mothers of the teen girls to attend the council activities. The mothers were given activities so as not to interfere with the children's engagement and this helped to ensure everyone felt comfortable and included.



"We visited orphaned children and spent one day with them. We did games, drawings, competitions and other fun things. The day was very important for us because we learned and shared experiences with other children. I think they loved it too. We need to do more activities like that."

Sarah, aged 12





Tip: Maintain good links and communication channels with the community. Methods of invitation and engagement with the children need to be planned in collaboration with community members so that activities have the maximum intended impact.

Tip: At all times child protection issues need to be highlighted so as not to put any children at risk of potential recourse from employers, teachers or parents.

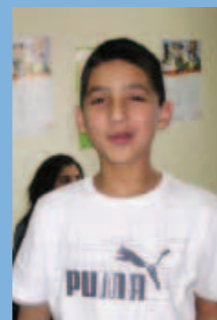
Tip: In the event that some children need to attend the meetings with parents or siblings, make sure that the accompanying relatives do not interfere in the regular activities and provide them with some activities to entertain them.

Tip: Provide capacity building to educate staff on the child empowerment approach. Reduce the number of adults in meetings and ensure that the adults are aware of their role as facilitators, not as decision-makers during the Children's Council activities.

Tip: It is important that we do not build a child's expectation that they will always be listened to. It is helpful to have some sort of exercise with children about expectations around participation where these issues can be raised.

"There should be more Children's Councils, and children should defend their rights themselves. This activity was very good because we talked about child rights and we learned how children can help other children when their rights are violated. We are very concerned about working children."

Haider, aged 14



Chapter 4

Let the activities begin!

Consulting with children to plan activities

In order to best achieve the goal of promoting informed, effective and responsible participation, the first step is to conduct a consultation session with the children on their thoughts and ideas on the issues that are relevant to them, how they would like to participate and what the topics are that they want to learn.

The consultation will give children the chance to brainstorm on the initiatives they want to implement with the Children's Council. The facilitator will help children to plan accordingly by selecting the precise number of activities that is feasible to conduct. The consultation findings shall be documented and the children's input needs to be integrated into the designing process. It is important to set up a transparent mechanism to give feedback and inform the children of the final results and decisions.

We voted for the problems that we consider most relevant to children and we decided to write about street children in the report. We put ourselves in the place of the street children and it is a terrible situation that no children want to live.

Kassem, aged 14



Suggested material and resources for consultation session

- Folders for children including note pad, pen, coloured pencils and eraser
- Plastic ID badge holders
- Lots of coloured paper
- Markers, scissors, glue and other stationary items
- Flipchart paper
- Set of pictures about child rights, A3 size
- Evaluation forms
- List of participants
- Refreshment and biscuits

Consultation session

The consultation process can be conducted in the format of a child-friendly forum that includes recreational, fun and creative activities in a child-friendly venue decorated with as much visual material as possible. The recommended duration of this forum is two hours. It is important to begin with an introduction about the consultation, the methodology and outcomes. This will help children to understand the procedure, ensure transparency about the goals and set realistic expectations about the process.

During the evaluation of the Children's Council activities, children voted on which activities they enjoyed learning the most.

The results in order are:

- 1 Attending the leadership skills training
- 2 Writing their own book about child rights
- 3 Meeting with people and children with disabilities
- 4 Attending the media training and being interviewed on television channels
- 5 Meeting with children without families
- 6 Attending child-events in Geneva and Philippines
- 7 Producing the song/video to promote child rights



There are many different ways to create a productive and amusing environment to consult children. Tools and activities vary depending on the purpose of the consultation, the topics, and the age and number of children. The following techniques have been used by the Children's Council staff in consulting with children and have been proven to work well:

- Games to help children to understand the process they will be dealing with.
- Icebreakers to give everyone the opportunity to introduce themselves and feel comfortable in the group.
- Using photographs and illustrations to introduce the Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- Educational games on the concept of diversity, tolerance and acceptance of others.
- Puzzles to identify child rights and issues that concern them.
- Postcards to match ordinary situations related to the child rights.
- Drawing pictures to express their viewpoints on topics affecting them.
- Writing and talking about personal stories.
- Brainstorming to generate ideas about initiatives that they want to conduct.
- Voting for their favourite child-friendly initiatives.
- Developing creative ways to present their ideas and recommendations to the larger group.



A successful consultation basically relies on a skilled facilitator who is able to create a positive atmosphere, to help children visualise their ideas and to reach agreement among the participants. The facilitator has a key role in promoting a discussion that is respectful, open, objective, sensitive and collaborative.



A useful 'Facilitator's tip list' has been prepared based on the experiences of the Children's Council staff in conducting consultation sessions with children:

- Introduce yourself and tell the children something about you that is important or attractive for them.
- Be charming, nice, easygoing, sweet, funny and warm... but be yourself.
- Listen more than you speak.
- Use a simple language that is appropriate to the age and maturity of participants but do not speak in such a simple way that children feel that you are fooling them.
- Do not use technical words, acronyms or expressions in foreign languages.
- Position yourself in an approachable relaxed manner; sit down on the floor or take a lesser position.
- Do not take calls on your mobile during the activity.
- Make efforts to learn the names of children.
- Use visual material to open discussions.
- Be aware of the power situation in the group and minimise its effects by giving equal opportunities to everyone to participate.
- Value and respect every individual's contribution.
- Do not criticise or disapprove of children's opinions but if you consider it important to correct a child's statement you can challenge the idea but not the child.
- Do not focus on the information you want to get; focus on the things that children want to communicate.
- Ask questions without pushing or suggesting the desired answers.
- Enjoy the children's laughter rather than putting order in the session.
- Do not scold children and never scream at them.
- Do not get stressed over small things; the important thing is the process and the end-result rather than perfection.

Tip: There are two excellent guides that can be used for reference while consulting with children:

- Minimum Standards for Consulting with Children produced by the Inter-Agency.
- Working Group on Children's Participation and Children as Change Agents produced by World Vision Canada.



Learning module I

Building Leadership Skills in Children

Overview

The 'Building Leadership Skills in Children training module' aims to provide encouragement, empowerment and opportunities to children to develop their social skills and to equip them with tools to play a more active role in their communities. By the end of the sessions, children will be able to undertake leadership roles, become more independent and develop decision-making confidence.

During the sessions, children will be provided with techniques and competencies in leadership and assertive self-expression by participating in team building games, public speaking sessions, presentations, debates, storytelling, role plays, drama and other confidence building activities.

These activities will help children to build their self-esteem,

self-respect and self-reliance. Previous experiences with the Children's Council have proved that one of the best ways of building confidence in children is creating spaces for learning and fun where children can interact socially with others using music, dance, painting and writing to express their viewpoints.

In order to succeed, it is important to assess what children really want to do and what they get the most joy from. It is important to give children different options of activities so they can freely choose the modules they want to join and to use their energy in positive, creative and stimulating activities. It is crucial to make efforts to identify qualities or areas in which children are good at and appraise their interest and capabilities to participate.

Objectives

- Equip children with tools and resources to develop leadership skills.
- Improve children's socialisation and communication skills.
- Build upon children's self-confidence, independence and empowerment.
- Encourage children's self-expression, creativity and ideas.
- Provide children with opportunity to play a more active role in their communities.

Duration

- The training workshop is designed to be conducted in seven sessions over a 7 or 14 weeks period.
- Each session varies from 45 to 90 minutes long, including two breaks.



Session One

Understanding different types of leadership styles



Objectives

- Explain the difference between types of leadership.
- Identify characteristics of leadership styles.
- Help children to understand the unique qualities that they have as leaders.



Duration: 45 minutes



Resources

- A set of six photographs of people in positions of authority and a set of six photographs of children leading some activities, flipchart paper, markers and masking tape.



Method

- Use a set of photographs of different types of people in leadership positions such as a teacher in a classroom, a politician in a rally, a religious leader giving a public speech, a police officer directing traffic and a TV celebrity. Ensure good gender balance in the photographs. Children will discuss the situation they observe in the photographs and the differences among authority, power and influence.

Helpful Information

Leadership

Process of social influence in which one person can enlist the aid and support of others in the accomplishment of a common task.

Leader

Individuals who, by their actions, facilitate the movement of a group of people toward a common or shared goal.

Power

Leadership comes from a position within an organization and this position gives a person ability to enforce actions through the control of a means of punishment.

Authority

Leadership does not come from power; it comes from the moral legitimate ability of a person to compel another.

Influence

Leadership comes from the level of credibility that allows one person to influence a group of people towards a specific result. It is not dependent on title or formal authority.



- Use a second set of photographs of children in ordinary situations such as a child talking with other children, a child speaking in public, a group of children doing a performance, children acting in a play and children doing a public campaign. Ensure good gender balance, ability and ethnic balance in the photographs. Children discuss the situation they observe in the photographs and connect the situations to leadership styles which are not only authority and power.
- Explain the definition and different leadership styles using the wider circle tool that is divided in different sections, each one representing different leadership styles.
- Distribute small photographs of people in leadership positions and children in ordinary situations. Ask participants to place the photographs in the wider circle tool according to the criteria of power, influence and authority.
- Review the photographs in each section of the wider circle tool and explain to the group if the location is right or wrong and why.
- Open a group discussion to determine the understanding of the concepts, agree on the main points and summarise the key ideas that children need to keep in mind. For those who do not completely understand the concepts, the facilitator may do a brief review and add more examples to illustrate the concepts.

Session Two

Identifying the qualities of a child leader



Objectives

- Give children an opportunity to develop their leadership and socialisation skills.
- Equip children with tools to help them play a more active role in their communities.



Duration: 90 minutes

- Resources: Pens, markers, sticky notes, masking tape, 'What makes a good child leader?' tool and 'Road to leadership' tool.



Method

- Explain to participants that every girl and boy has the ability to become a leader in their communities. Each child can learn how to become a leader; they just need the opportunity to gain the skills needed and learn how to develop self-confidence and self-awareness.
- Hang the 'What makes a good child leader tool?' on the wall and explain to the children that this tool will help them to think about the qualities of a child leader.
- Distribute pens and sticky notes to each child.
- Ask children to write down the characteristics that a child should have to become a good leader.
- Ask children to place the sticky notes on the speech bubble.
- As a group, ask children to share their opinion on the characteristics that the group identified. Participants can add more qualities if they consider necessary for discussion purposes.



Once children agree on the qualities of a child leader, hang up the 'Road to Leadership tool' and explain the nine key elements of leadership in children.

- 1 **Visualisation:** Have a clear idea about the things you want to achieve and how you intend to meet your goals.
- 2 **Inspire:** Have the passion, persistence and ability to motivate other children to join efforts towards accomplishing common goals and dreams.
- 3 **Confidence:** Have the will to talk in public, meet new friends, give ideas and think about things that you never thought you could do
- 4 **Teamwork:** Have the ability to work with other children as a team, consult and ask for feedback, and give everyone credit for their ideas.
- 5 **Self-actualise:** Have the ability to understand and accept yourself with all your strengths and weaknesses.
- 6 **Decision-making:** Have the ability to come to decisions by consensus, sharing and communicating with others.
- 7 **Thoughtful:** Treat children in a kind and considerate way. Be open-minded, respectful and caring.

Session Three

Learning about self-esteem

Objectives

- Help children to understand, value and use the key principles of self-esteem.
- Improve children's confidence and peer interaction.

Duration: 90 minutes

Resources:

Playing cards, 'Self-esteem' tool, 'Assessing yourself' tool, pens, pencils, markers, coloured pencils, masking tape and sticky notes.

Method

- Explain to participants the basic principles of self-esteem and its connection with leadership and social skills.
- Explain to children that self-esteem is the perception or judgment that children hold about themselves. Self-esteem is a process in which children discover

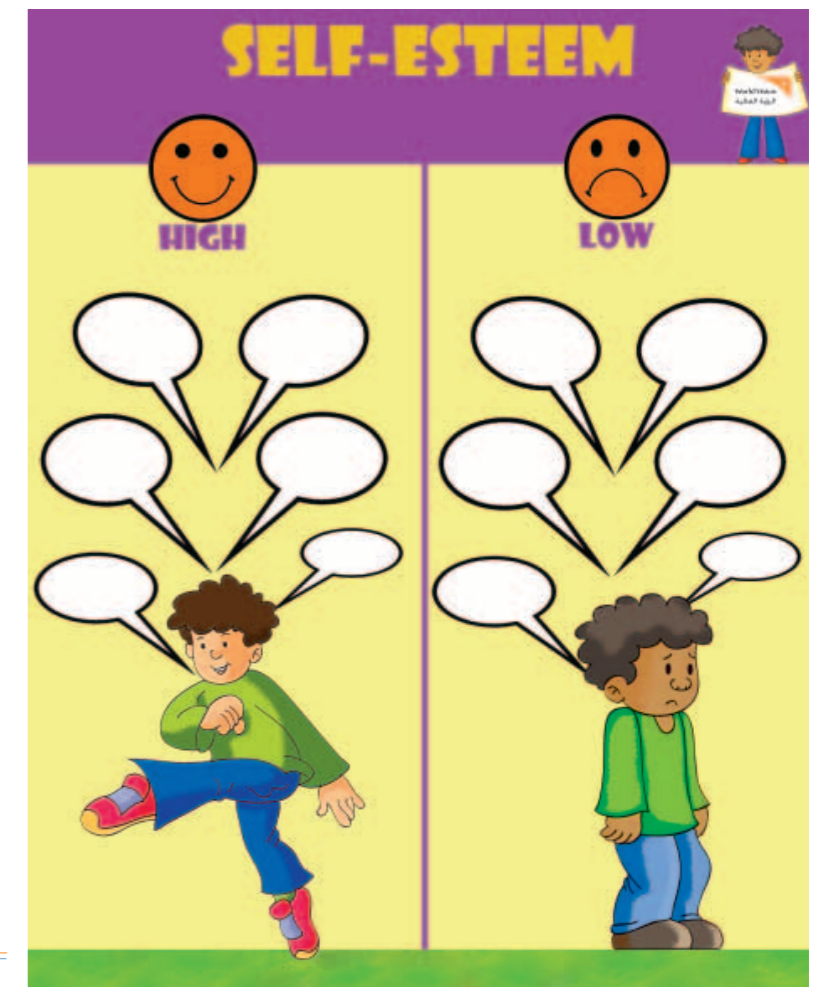
their natural abilities, strengths, weaknesses and build an opinion about themselves. Self-esteem is heavily influenced by the positive or negative messages, values and attitudes that children receive from their families, teachers, friends and peers.

- Divide the participants into two groups. Each group receives a set of playing cards that contain aspects of high/positive self-esteem and low/negative self-esteem.
- Ask the children to read the cards and discuss them in a small group.
- Hang the self-esteem tool on the wall. Ask the children to place the playing cards on the bubble text in the two columns of the tool (high and low self-esteem) according to their understanding.
- As a group, ask children to share their opinions on the elements of self-esteem and how this can positively or negatively affect children's personality. Children can add more characteristics if they consider necessary for the discussion.



"I learned that diversity is in all aspects of life. No two people were born the same. We should accept others regardless of religion and confession. Our message from the play of today is that there should be no difference between poor and rich."

Jennifer, aged 14



High/Positive self-esteem	Low/Negative self-esteem
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Being with other children ● Help others ● Take responsibility my actions ● Learning from my mistakes to improve next time ● Identity and accept your limitations. ● Taking initiatives and including other children ● Being positive while facing problems ● Discuss things calmly ● Respect other children and their ideas ● No bullying, no ridiculing other children ● Acknowledge other children's talents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Being alone rather than socialising with others ● Being selfish ● Blame others for my actions ● Thinking that my mistakes are other children's fault ● I do not acknowledge my limitations ● I prefer that other children take the lead on activities ● Being negative while facing problems ● Discuss things aggressively ● Do not respect other children's ideas ● Harass other children to feel I am better ● Do not recognise other children's gifts

Assessing yourself

- Once children finish the self-esteem exercise, conduct an individual activity to encourage children to identify positive aspects about themselves and to focus on their strengths. This will help to reinforce positive self-esteem.
- Distribute the A4 'Assessing yourself' tool, coloured pencils, pens and markers.
- Ask children to draw a picture of themselves on the A4 paper using any technique they want. They can also cut and glue photographs.
- Ask them to write down things in the text bubble that they like about their personality, about their skills and talents and about their physical appearance. Emphasise that only positive things are allowed.
- On completion, they share their drawings with the group and the characteristics they have identified.



Tip: If some children have difficulties in identifying positive characteristics help them by giving several options based on your observation (eg: good at writing, smiley eyes, etc). Use positive affirmations but be realistic and believable.

Session Four

Enhancing social skills

Objectives

Promote social skills acquisition and positive interaction with others.
Provide children with tools to empathise with other children in a variety of social environments.

Duration: 90 minutes

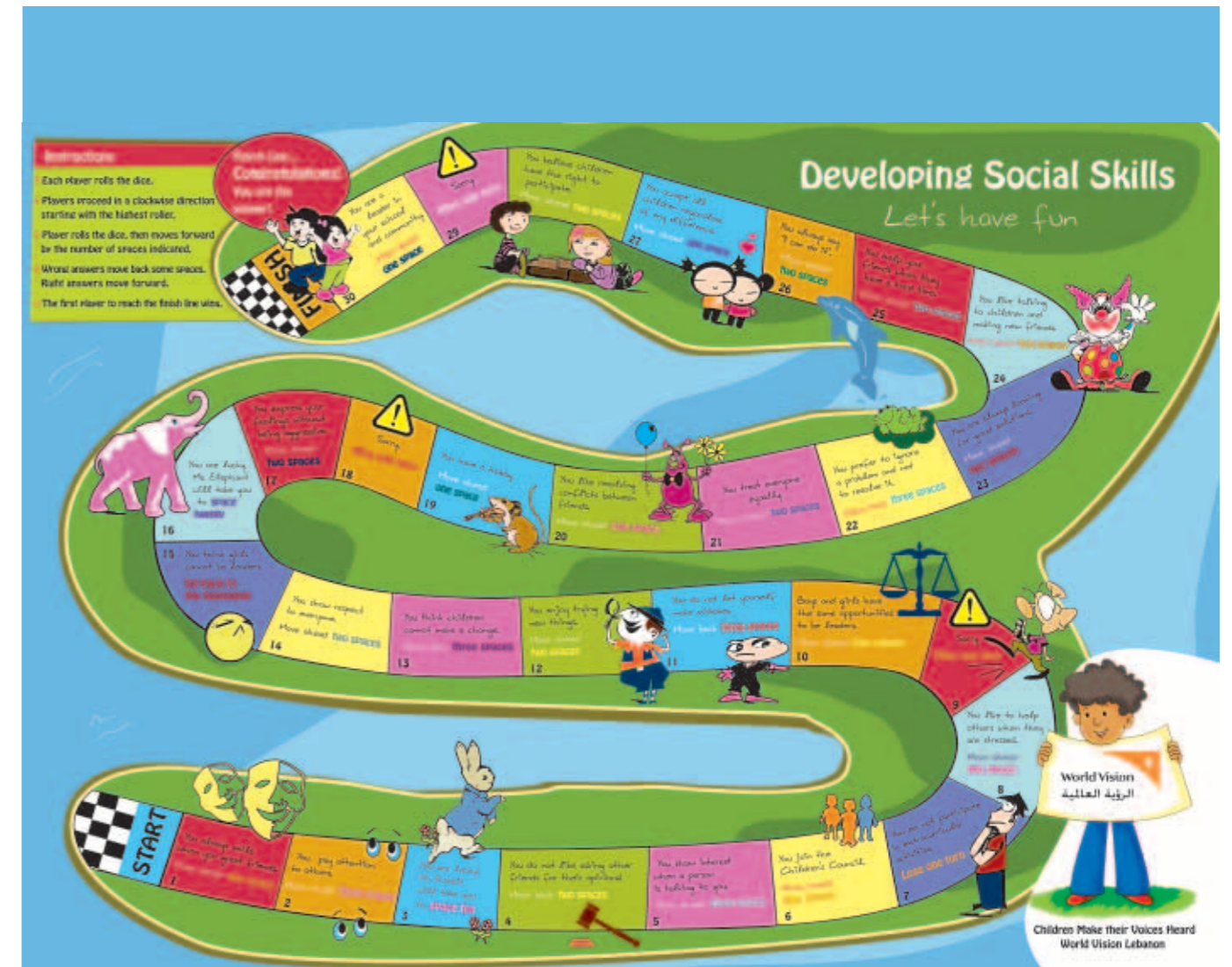
Resources:

Board game, flipchart, pen, pencil, markers, masking tape and sticky notes.

Method

● Explain to the children that social skills are about how we relate and interact with other people. These skills range from saying hello to resolving conflicts. Social skills are understood by establishing models of interaction with others, by coaching children and giving them opportunities to understand and practice those skills.

- To make this session educational but fun, use the 'Developing Social Skills' board game.
- Divide the participants into teams of three or four children. Each group receives a board game.
- Explain the game instructions. Emphasise that children need to read and discuss each square of the board game. Ensure that each group has at least one strong reader/literate child.
- Children play and the first group to get the finish line receives a surprise award. Give extra time in order to let all groups complete the board game and to get the finish line.
- As a group, discuss the topics related to social skills. Ask children why in some stops they were rewarded by sending them forward or penalised by sending them back. For those who do not completely understand the concepts, the facilitator may give a brief review and add more examples to illustrate the concepts.



Explaining social skills

Once children finish the board game, use the 'Social Skills Map' tool to explain basic social skills to the children and relate them to what was learned from the board game.

- Hang the 'Social Skills Map' tool on the wall.
- Explain to the children that social skills are learned experientially from birth and throughout our entire life.
- Social skills include both verbal and nonverbal forms of communication, manners, interactive sensitivity, ability to listen, empathy for others, body language, social-ability and more.
- Emphasise that social skills can always be learned and improved.

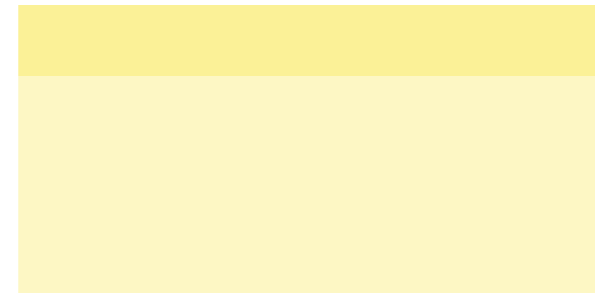


Social skills when you are with other children or adults

- Saying hi and bye when you meet others
- Introducing yourself
- Smiling
- Being caring and asking things about others
- Listening carefully when they answer your questions
- Being sympathetic if a friend has a problem
- No gossiping about other people
- Being sensitive about personal issues
- Treating everyone equally regardless their race, gender, disability status, religions or nationality.

Social skills when you are attending Children's Council meeting

- Participating in meetings and giving ideas
- Being friendly and talking with other children if they are alone or they are new in the group
- Showing respect for all opinions
- Saying positive things about other children's ideas
- Expressing your ideas or feelings without being aggressive
- Accepting that some children will not agree with your ideas
- Allowing everyone to be part of the decision-making
- Looking for solutions when there is a problem



Session Five

Visualising yourself as a leader through a wishing board

Objectives

- Encourage children to articulate their individuality and create dialogue with others.
- Help children to capture their views about the future using visual material.

Duration: 60 minutes

Resources:

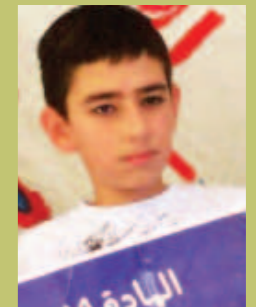
Coloured papers, pens, pencils, colouring pencils, markers, magazines, newspapers, photographs, scissors, glue, masking tape, A3 cardboards and photographs of each participant.

Method

- Visual materials are very useful tools that help children express their ideas and opinion using graphics, colours, textures, photographs and drawings. This activity reinforces and uses children's natural creative ability and encourages them to visualise themselves as leaders using the wishing board method.
- Distribute A3 cardboard and stationery items.
- Ask the children to identify two or three goals or wishes that they would like to accomplish this year. Ask them to connect these things to their activities in the Children's Council. Encourage them to think of achievable things and give some examples (e.g.: make more friends, have more free time for fun or lead some of the council activities).
- Ask them to visualise what these achievements look like to them and put those images on the cardboard in a way that they can tell a story. Explain that it is important to place a photograph of themselves on the cardboard to create the sense of an individual wishing board.
- Encourage children to use all available elements such as photographs, drawings, illustrations, magazines ads and to cut and paste onto the cardboard phrases or words that inspire them.
- Once the children finish, ask them to show the wishing board to the group and explain how they visualise themselves.
- Ask the children to take the wishing board home and place it in their room. This wishing board will help them to focus on the things they want to do and to check the steps they are taking to reach their objectives.

"We are all sons of God regardless of the person's religion or confession and we should all be close to each other and not alienate others. Diversity is in everything, and this is good."

Elias, aged 13



Tip: It is important to assess family reaction to the wishing board. Some parents may not like the results of this tool because it could affect their own desires about their children's future; for example, parents may prefer that their daughter gets married rather than continuing her education.

Session Six

Enhancing Public Speaking Skills

Objectives

- Provide children with basic communication skills and tools for presenting their ideas in public.
- Reinforce confidence by strengthening public speaking skills

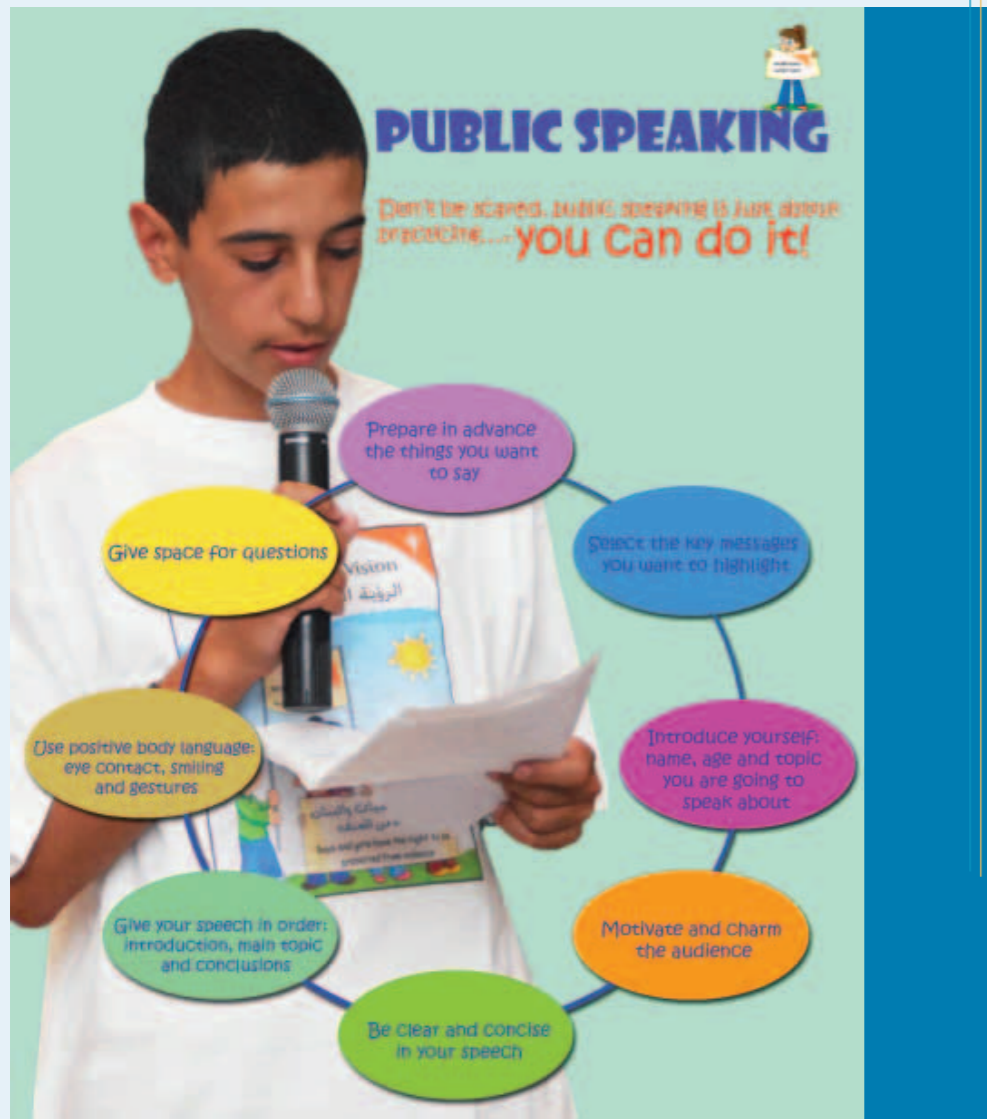
Duration: 90 minutes

Resources:

“Public Speaking” tool, “Assessing your public speaking skills” tool, pens, markers, masking tape and sticky notes.

Method

- Hang up the “Public Speaking” tool on the wall.
- Explain to children the eight key steps to public speaking success:
 - 1 Prepare in advance the things you want to say
 - 2 Select the key messages you want to highlight
 - 3 Introduce yourself: name, age and topic you are going to speak about
 - 4 Motivate and charm the audience
 - 5 Be clear and concise in your speech
 - 6 Give your speech in order: introduction, main topic and conclusions
 - 7 Use positive body language: eye contact, smiles and gestures
 - 8 Leave time for questions



Role-playing game

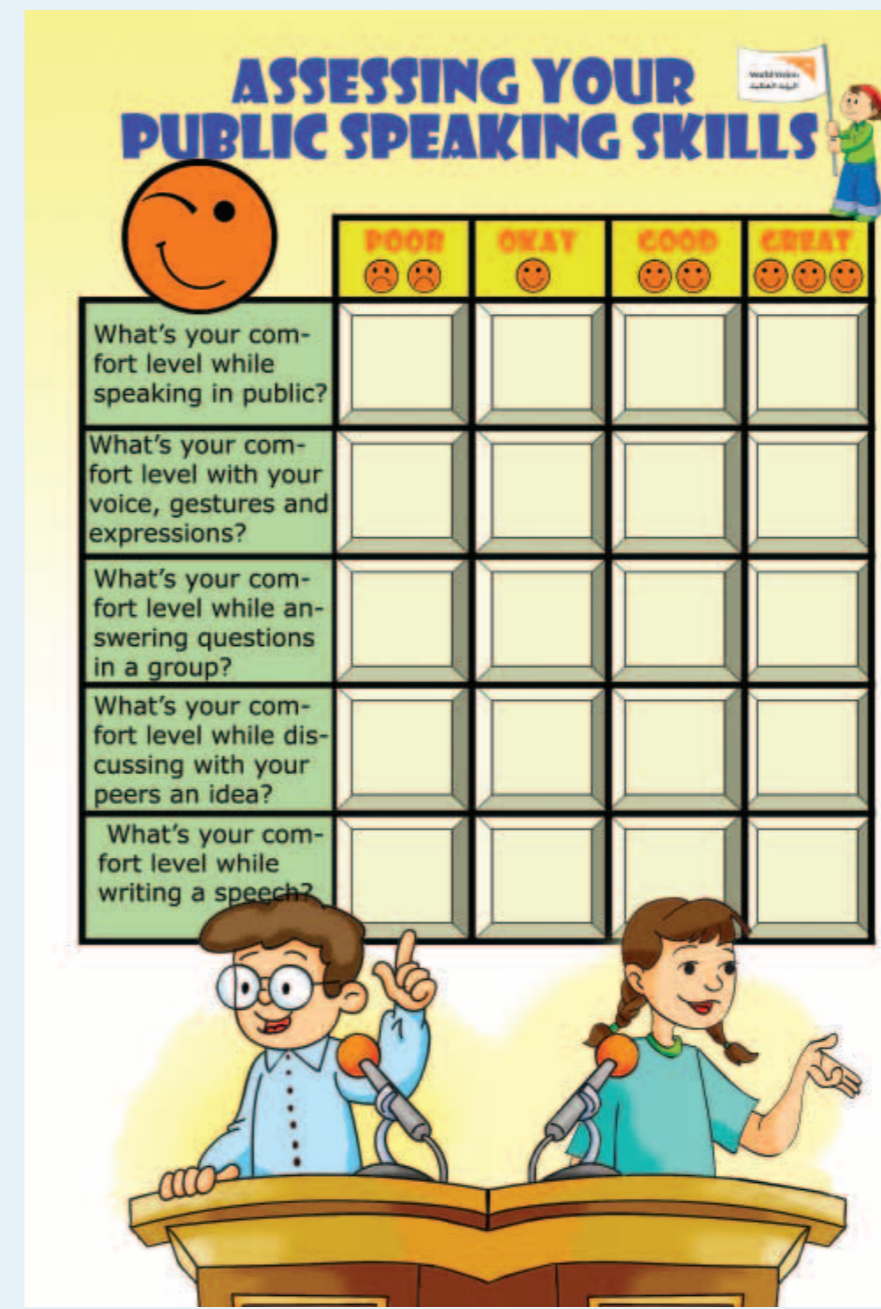
- Divide the group into two teams. Each team chooses a topic and creates an imaginary situation that involves performing a public speech.
- Members of each team create role-play characters and divide their roles amongst themselves (speaker, presenter, reporters, audience, etc).
- Each group has three minutes to perform their play.
- As a group, ask the children to evaluate the plays and ask the following questions:
 - Why did you choose that format to deliver the message and who was your audience?
 - Which was the main point to convey in your speech?
 - Why this message was interesting for you and what do you want to achieve?

- Ask children to think about their public speaking skills and evaluate them using the four columns: Poor, Okay, Good, Great.
- Self-assessment questions include:
 - What is your comfort level while speaking in public?
 - What is your comfort level with your voice, gestures and expressions?
 - What is your comfort level while answering questions in a group?
 - What is your comfort level while discussing an idea with your peers?
 - What is your comfort level while writing a speech?

- This self-assessment will help children to identify their strengths and weakness in public speaking and take specific actions that will maximise their natural potential.
- Discuss with the children the actions they would like to take to improve their public speaking skills. Plan accordingly.

Assessing public speaking skills

- Once children finalise the discussion about the role-play, distribute the A4 self-assessment tool.



Tip: Keep in mind that not all children are good in public speaking. Each one has different talents and no one can be forced to do something that they do not feel comfortable with. The fear of public speaking is very common among children and adults.

Helping a child to deliver a speech

- Hang the “Public Speaking Tips” tool on the wall.
- Divide the group into two teams and explain to the children that “Rania is 13 years old. She is a new member of the Children’s Council. She has been chosen to deliver a speech. She is a bit stressed because this is the first time that she will make and deliver a speech in front of people.
- Help her achieve success!”
- Ask the teams to think of a few basic public speaking tips that they can give Rania
- Ask the children to choose the tips that they consider the most important and write them down on sticky notes.
- Ask the children to place the sticky notes in the speech bubble on the tool. Each child explains to the group why he/she gave those tips.
- As a group, the children discuss and agree on the top ten tips for public speaking.



Session Seven

Engagement with the Media

Mass media can be a valuable partner in facilitating the debate, encouraging the dialogue and promoting the social change sought by children. Mass media allows children to connect with others and to spread positive and engaging messages broadly and quickly. Both traditional mass media and the newer web-based and social media platforms offer children an incredible opportunity to communicate and to reflect on the issues that concern them. However, working with media may also create risks that need to be taken into account before engaging with them. Media may not report desirable stories, or cover issues in the way the children seek to have them covered.

Children may also be exposed to child protection issues, especially on sensitive topics such as violence, HIV and AIDS, and discrimination. In order to minimise these risks, organisations should implement a media management plan which includes safety standards for media/reporting. Children need to be given training and access to resources related to media interviews to ensure safe, ethical and meaningful participation that ensure minimum child protection standards are respected.

Objectives

- Provide children with the knowledge, tools and skills to define messages when engaging with media as part of their activities.
- Give children the opportunity to express their opinions about children’s rights issues they encounter in their environment.

Duration: 90 minutes

Resources:

A4 paper, pens, markers, magazines, newspapers, photo and video camera, video documentary “Children’s engagement with the media”.

Tips for public speaking:

- Speak loud so everyone can hear
- Speak clearly taking care of pronunciation
- Speak slowly but with energy and enthusiasm
- Use eye contact and smile
- Use facial expression and hand gestures



Method

- Show children the 4-minute video documentary “Children’s engagement with the media”.
- Divide children into small teams.
Ask them to discuss the following questions regarding the video they watched:
 - What role did the children play in the media interviews?
 - What was good or bad about what they did?
 - Did TV presenters /interviewers respect the children’s opinion?
 - What messages did the children convey in the interviews?
 - Do you think the children were well prepared?
Why or why not?
- Do you think the media is a good tool for children to use?
Why or why not?
- What would you recommend that the children do the same next time?
- What would you recommend that they change?
- As a group, ask children to present their findings and to agree on the main conclusions.
- Ask children to write down the information gathered in the group discussion to be used while developing an action plan for media engagement if it is needed in the future.

Role-playing game

- Divide the children into teams. Each team chooses an activity, event or campaign that they want to promote using the media
- Ask children to develop a media plan and divide their roles (reporter, camera person, photographer, spoke person, etc).
- Ask children to use the “Public Speaking” tool to prepare the media interview.
- Each team has three minutes to present their role play.
- Once the team finish their presentations, as group discuss what went well, what went wrong, lessons learned and the next steps.

Tips on how to talk to reporters

- Use the PowerPoint presentation “Tips on how to talk to reporters” developed by the Communications Department.
- Explain to children why the media want to talk to them?
 - You are the news.
 - You know something they want to know: you are an “expert”.
 - You are able to speak for a large group of people: you are a “representative”.
- Explain to the group why children would want to talk to the media?
 - Gets your message to lots of people fast.
 - Helps change people’s minds.
 - Spreads your ideas and concerns so that other children and people can support you.
 - Demonstrates to adults that children are experts with good ideas on many topics.
- Give children tips on how to make the most of a media interview.
 - Whenever you are talking to a reporter imagine they are always recording you.
- Bring relevant resources and materials to the interview
- Use examples and interesting words to describe what you are talking about.
- Don’t guess information you don’t know.
- Don’t use big words.
- Decide upon the most appropriate child to talk to the media before the interview.
- Explain the rights they have in an interview
 - To know the topic of the interview before the reporter talks to you and what information they want from you.
 - Time to prepare for the interview.
 - To not answer questions if you don’t know the answer or if you don’t want to answer them.
 - To record the interview yourself.
 - To have someone from WorldVision with you to keep you safe.
- Engagement with the media module might take more than one session. Discuss with children how to proceed and arrange a schedule based on the children’s interest and time.

When we were elected as representatives for the Children’s Council, we didn’t have any experience of how to deal with the media and to develop our ideas to reach the maximum number of people, adults and children. Then, we had training about this and we started our Journey with the media.

This experience was so exciting because you don’t get the chance everyday to be on TV and get media attention.

We were able to be good representatives of the Children’s Council. We communicated to readers and TV viewers our experience in all the activities we have participated in, so this experience didn’t remain just for us, but we shared it with everyone in order to work together to build a society based on giving all children their rights in a complete way.

Tracy, aged 13



Children have a natural and compelling media presence, especially when they are well prepared to speak with journalists. Opportunities for children to speak for themselves in what is usually a “grown-up” format are rare. As a result, there is a certain novelty in putting children at the centre of a media event. However, it is important that children are equipped with the necessary skills and content so that the conversation moves beyond that novelty into a meaningful discussion of the issues they are representing. In my experience, children are very receptive to basic media training and quickly become mature, articulate and engaging spokespeople.

Brian Jonson,
Regional Communications Director



Tip: Liaise with your World Vision communications colleagues. They have vast experience with media involvement; they can provide media training, assist children with media requirements and ensure safe and ethical collaboration with the media.

Tip: Ensure that reporters acknowledge and sign the child protection policies and behavioural protocols. Ensure that children are accompanied by a staff member at all times. Ensure that children voluntarily agree to be interviewed and get parental consent.

Tip: MEER Child Protection Team has developed an excellent tool that can be used for reference: Keeping Children Safe Online.



Learning module 2

Writing Skills for Children

Overview

The ‘Writing Skills’ module aims to equip and empower children by letting them tell stories of their own experiences, hopes and desires. This writing workshop seeks to help children express their creative side and allow them to document their campaigns, activities and reports capturing their environment and society through their own eyes.

Children will also be provided with a space to gather their own views through debate, brainstorming, child-friendly research and other means to give them the opportunity to write papers, public statement, tales, stories and their own child-led alternative report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child and other United Nations agencies.

Children will learn how to use the power of written language in a child-friendly way to influence, lobby, network, and advocate for child rights in support of the participation principles outlined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Children have expressed in many consultations that they want to have more opportunities to take action for their responsibilities in their society and participate in decision making processes at the community or national level. This module will provide them with the tools to use their natural talents and to develop analytical skills, improve vocabulary and encourage the use of internet resources to get information.

“When we wrote the book ‘From a Child’s Point of View’ we got the opportunity to express our ideas regarding our rights as children. Who better than a child, can express a problem that affects the child himself?”

So, this book came from the bottom of our hearts, to reach children who read this book and they might find in it a reflection of a personal problem and it might help them to overcome and find a solution for it.

We launched the book at a big event where a lot of children, officials and people from the media were invited. This book got a lot of media attention and great coverage.

This book was an opportunity to express our ideas, our thoughts and our rights not only by talking but as well through the written word that reaches everybody in a large way.”

Aline, aged 13.



Objectives

- Encourage children to be creative and enable them to share their ideas by writing their own stories, papers or reports
- Support children to produce their own child-friendly written material to promote social change.

The 'Writing skills' module includes several sessions that are designed to inspire the creative side of children to flourish and to develop their writing skills through:

- Brainstorming and debating to motivate contributions from all children.
- Reading stories about other children to acknowledge and celebrate similarities, differences and diversity.
- Using illustrations and photographs to inspire children's imagination.
- Writing personal stories to express viewpoints.
- Writing letters to stakeholders in support of children's rights.
- Role-playing to stimulate the use of language in interaction with others.



Session One

Writing letters or speeches in support of children's rights

Objectives

- Encourage children to articulate their individuality and communication with others by writing their personal viewpoints.
- Learn about writing genres and structures that children can use to effectively communicate their ideas and opinions.

Duration: 60 minutes

Resources:

Pens, pencils, magazines, newspapers, photographs, A4 papers.

WRITING LOGICAL FLOW

Introduction	Present the main topics and a brief overview about the ideas	Write here
Body	Write down the first point	Write here
	Write down the second point	
	Write down the third point	
Conclusion	Develop solid conclusion on the topic	Write here
	Closure	

Method

● Explain to children that every piece of writing contains three elements: topic, key messages and supporting information. Each of these elements needs to be organised in three key sections to make the piece logical, believable and attractive. The sections are:

- **Introduction:** including the main topics and a brief overview about the ideas that you are going to develop in the text.
- **Body:** containing all supporting information, details and facts about the topic.
- **Conclusion:** recapitulating the main points and restating the purpose of the writing.

- Hang the "Logical flow of writing" tool on the wall and ask the children to write a small piece on a selected topic. Each child is free to choose the own theme.
- Distribute photographs, illustrations, magazines, newspapers to help children find a topic.
- Ask children to fill in the writing logic flow chart based on their topic.
- Ask children to write their letter based on the logic flow format.
- Ask the children to read their pieces to the group. Ask for opinions and feedback.
- Ask children to make a list with the things that were good and the things that should be improved.
- Compare the children's letters to other letters that have been produced to influence the public opinion.
- Develop in conjunction with the children a schedule and action plan to improve children's writing skills. Some possible activities could include workshops to learn writing techniques, sentence structure, figurative language and writing style.

Session two

Writing stories and tales about child rights

Objectives

- Encourage children to identify a purpose for their writing and communications skills.
- Produce stories or tales that reflect their learning on children's rights while improving language and literacy skills.

Duration: 90 minutes

Resources:

Pens, pencils, magazines, newspapers, photographs, A4 paper.

Method

- Distribute the child-friendly version of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- Distribute a set of photographs that illustrate different situations related to child rights.
- Each child selects a photograph and explains its significance and the implicit messages in the shot.
- Once the children finish their presentation, each child chooses a topic on which they want to write about.
- Ask the children to use the "Logical flow of writing" tool to help them to use good structure for their piece of writing. It is very important, however, to encourage creativity and connection to the topics rather than focus only on a perfect structure.
- Each child shares their story with the group including the reasons the topic was selected and the key messages they want to convey.
- The facilitator provides the children individual feedback on their writing style including grammar, punctuation, evidence provided and structure.
- This activity might take more than one session. Discuss with the children how to proceed and arrange a schedule based on the children's interest and time.



Children published their own book

This book 'From a Child's Point of View, a collection of stories and photos written and taken by 32 children', was one of the Children's Council initiatives to give the children of Lebanon a chance to speak out through a celebration of their creativity.

For eight weeks, children, aged 9 to 17, from Beirut, Marjayoun, Ibel El Saqui, Khyam, Burj el Barajneh Camp and the Bekaa Valley attended weekly writing skills sessions. There they learned about their rights through debate, brainstorming sessions, and reading. A qualified Arabic teacher and a social worker taught them the creative writings skills they needed to put their ideas in writing.

Children were challenged to write stories that expressed their viewpoints and opinions with reference to issues

related to child rights issues which they encounter in their own environment and which reflect how they see their own society.

Children were also trained in photography skills with the aim of understanding both the technical and creative side of photography. During the training, each child received a disposable camera to capture their environment and society through their own eyes. With these newly acquired skills, children were able to illustrate their stories in photographs.

At the end of the project, 32 stories and photographs were included in a book which was launched in March 2008. The book received considerable media attention, mostly due to its unique content, attractive and appealing messages, and the young age of the authors.



Learning module 3

Engaging children in advocacy work

Overview

Children expressed in many consultations that they wanted to be more involved in advocacy work and to learn tools and skills to strengthen their capacity to exercise their rights and to remove the barriers that prevent them from enjoying their rights. Children articulated that they could be more active and productive citizens if they were provided with the space and opportunities to promote positive social change in their communities.

Including children in advocacy initiatives plays a significant role in giving a voice to children and provides a solid platform for mobilising and educating children on their rights. The Committee on the Rights of the Child stated in its General Comments No. 12, that the views expressed by children should be considered in decision-making and in the development of policies. The Committee also highlighted that the voices of children have increasingly become a powerful force in the prevention of child rights violations, especially for the prevention of violence in schools, combating child exploitation and education for street children.

This learning module aims to create opportunities for children to become advocates for child rights in their communities and the possibility to influence the national and international arena through raising awareness on the situation of child rights in the country.

This module is built on the skills learnt by the children in the previous modules and seeks to provide a platform to connect and apply their acquired knowledge from the grassroots to the global advocacy level. During five sessions, members of the Children's Council will receive training on child-friendly research methods to equip them with the knowledge, skills and tools to find information about issues that affect children in the country. With their new skills, children will be able to engage in data collection and report writing in order to develop child-led alternative reports to be submitted to the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the UN Human Rights Council Universal Periodic Review. Reports can also be used and submitted at a national level.

The Committee on the Rights of the Child has made a strong call to value and encourage the participation of children in the United Nations reporting system. Committee members have great interest in meeting the children who have been engaged in writing child-led reports to the Committee.

In addition, the findings and recommendations included in the reports produced by the children can be used as a platform for networking and campaigning at the local or national level to lobby for practice and policy change in support of the principles and articles outlined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

In order to achieve meaningful child participation in the advocacy work and in the reporting processes, the following steps have been identified from field staff as critical:

- Children voluntarily opt to enrol in the activity after they are fully informed about the project.
- Appropriate adult facilitators are identified to support children in conducting the research and report writing.
- Training is conducted for facilitators on the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other International conventions and the reporting system mechanisms established at the United Nations, among other relevant information, to equip them with knowledge and tools needed to support the children

in submitting a child-led alternative report to the United Nations.

- Children are included in designing the curriculum so they can contribute by highlighting the issues that concern them, how exactly they would like to learn, and what the focus of the content of the report should be.

- Ensuring that the information and content are appropriate to the local context, especially for the meanings of certain technical and legal terms, such as 'ratification' and 'advocacy', to find an appropriate expression in the local language.

- Assess the level of understanding of the children with respect to child rights and other aspects of international laws. If needed provide an orientation session before starting the research activities.

- Conduct a risk assessment to identify potential threats based on sensitivities related to reporting on children or human rights.

One of the main challenges of this initiative is to balance the genuine expression of children and to develop a product that conforms to the structure of reports required by the United Nations. Another is to find adequate data and case studies to be included in the report. Children rarely have access to these resources and in some places such resources do not even exist. Facilitators play a key role in helping children to find information and in setting mechanisms to ensure the quality of the evidence provided.

In our Children's Council in Marjayoun we decided to research cluster bombs and landmines and how this situation affects the life of children in Lebanon. We live in fear of cluster bombs and this causes psychological problems and lack of freedom of movement in our villages. This is violence against children.

Joelle, age 13



Children's Council submitted a Child-led report to the UPR, UN Human Rights Council

45 children aged 11 to 17 who are members of the Children's Council drafted an unprecedented children's submission to the United Nations Human Rights Council Universal Periodic Review. This was believed to be the first time that a report written by children was submitted to the Universal Periodic Review mechanism.

Over three months, children attended workshops to increase their skills and creativity and enable them to share their experiences by writing their own report. Children engaged in data collection and report writing. In addition, children were equipped with the tools to conduct grassroots child-led initiatives, through trainings on advocacy campaigning and video and photography skills. Once the children finalized the child-friendly field-based research, they presented their findings, in the form of a report, to the UN Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review in Geneva.

The report written by children was included in the stakeholders report prepared by the United Nations and its review was conducted in November 2010. The children's report will help to inform the Human Rights Council about the situation of children in Lebanon.



Sessions One to Five

Writing a report to the United Nations

Objectives

- Provide children with the tools and skills to look for evidence on how they experience their rights
- Enhance children's skills to actively participate in decision-making and advocating for social justice.

Duration:

120 minutes per session over a period of five or ten weeks. All sessions include a 30 minute break.

Resources:

Pens, pencils, coloured pencils, A4 paper, flipcharts, masking tape and markers.

Method

To ensure meaningful, ethical and enjoyable participation, the methodology of the research consisted of five, two hour sessions over a period of two months.

I am proud of the Children's Council. We wrote a report and sent it to the United Nations and this report highlights the situation of children in Lebanon and all the problems that they face. We are sure that the UN will listen to us and take this matter into consideration.

Melisso, aged 14



I had the privilege and pleasure to meet and work with young members of the Children's Council in Zahle. The purpose of the meeting was a first for me – although I had often sought children's views about their rights, I had never been part of a process which intended to put the pens directly into the children's hands and let them write their own report.

Nervously, I tried to explain as simply as possible the complex structure of the UN human rights system, and how they could play a role in calling for the protection and implementation of their own rights. The reactions of the children were amazing – they quickly grasped what I was trying to convey, asking intelligent questions which demonstrated a maturity level well beyond what I was expecting, and set about the task with great enthusiasm. I had gone to that meeting to share what I knew, but came out of it humbled, excited by what I had seen, hugely optimistic for those children's lives, and feeling far more like the student than the teacher.

Jennifer Philpot-Nissen,

Senior Policy Advisor for Human Rights, Advocacy and Justice for Children, WVI



EASY STEPS IN CONDUCTING CHILD-LED RESEARCH



Brainstorming on main issues to research

Prepare questionnaire and tools

Identify data that is going to be used

Start data collection

Conduct analysis of the data obtained



Debate and agree on the findings

Write the final report

Submit report to the United Nations

Child-friendly advocacy plan around the report findings

Summarize the report through drawings and illustrations

Celebrate the end of the project and have fun



First session

- Explain the activity to the children and the process they will go through.
- Explain the United Nations system using the child-friendly PowerPoint presentation on the topic. This includes the UPR or CRC reporting systems according to the report that children are going to write.
- Before continuing with the activity, ask the children if they agree to engage in this research initiative. Offer alternative activities for those who are not interested in joining the workshop.
- Hang the 'Easy steps in writing a research report' tool on the wall and explain to the children the process for writing a report on children's issues. Give time for questions.
- Distribute photographs, illustrations and newspapers to help children brainstorm the main issues that they want to research. You can also use the playing cards on child rights or any other tool to assist the brainstorming session. Ask the children to write up the ideas on a flipchart.

Second session

- Ask children to recap ideas and topics highlighted from the brainstorming session using the flipchart.
- Ask children to choose the topics that they consider more relevant to them and the issues that they believe need to be included in the report.
- Divide the group into small teams to prepare questionnaires and tools that are going to be used to obtain information.
- Identify resources that are going to be used and help the children to access data.
- Organise the roles of the same small teams to start the data collection during the week. Children can collect the data in one or more weeks, depending on the situation. Be flexible with time.



Third session

- Ask children to recap the last session.
- Each team has five or ten minutes to report back to the group on the data collected and interviews conducted during the week or any other useful information.
- Ask children to conduct an analysis of the data obtained. In this phase the children will need more support on the examination and breakdown of the information.



Fourth session

- Ask children to summarise the last session and present the main findings and key issues that arose during the data collection phase.
- Give time for debate and ask the children to agree on the major findings and issues that will be included in the final report.
- Ask the children who want to volunteer to write the final report. The writing team cannot exceed five children. Ensure a fair and balanced representation of the children involved in the project.

Fifth session

- Ask children to review the last session, present the final report and agree on the content.
- Divide the group into small teams and distribute flipchart paper, pens, pencils, markers, coloured pencils, masking tape and sticky notes.
- Ask the children to summarise the final report through drawings and illustrations. Once finalised, each team has five minutes to present their visuals to the group.
- Hang all the visuals on the wall and ask the children what they would like to do with the information they have.
- If the children consider it relevant and helpful, they can develop a child-friendly advocacy plan around the report findings. Advise the children not to be too ambitious and to focus on two or three actions.
- Submit the report to the United Nations (Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights or Committee on the Rights of the Child depending on the report written by the children).
- Celebrate the end of the project and have fun together.



Final steps

Conduct a lesson-learned session with children and staff involved. It is important to document the entire process so that other child-led organisations can benefit from the lessons learnt. Follow through with the next steps around the advocacy plan and provide support to the children in carrying out planned activities.

Tip: There are two excellent resources that can be used to understand and facilitate the participation of children in the reporting process: Children as Change Agents (WV Canada) and A guide for Non-governmental organizations reporting to the Committee on the Rights of the Child published by the NGO group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Reports to the Committee on the Rights of the Child

Every six years, State parties must submit a report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child. This report should provide information on the measures adopted as a follow-up to the suggestions and recommendations made by the Committee, the measures taken to monitor progress, allocation of budget and other resources devoted to children, statistical data disaggregated by gender and age and the obstacles encountered.

To review a country report, the Committee hears from government, non-governmental organizations, inter-governmental organizations, children and young people.

Reports the UN Human Rights UPR

The UPR was created by the UN Human Rights Council in 2007. NGOs can input to this process through the submission of short reports detailing particular human rights situations of interest or concern in each country as they come up for review.



Learning module 4

Conducting child-led community-based advocacy campaigns

Overview

The participation of children in issues and decisions that affect their lives and their communities is still seen as a special concession rather than a guaranteed right. In child consultations conducted by field staff, children noted that one of the major barriers for their participation was a lack of local, common ongoing activities and events for them to come together and make their voices heard.

Children stated that they wanted to engage in other issues that they have identified as important to them, such as

violence against children, child labour, street children and child trafficking. They expressed their desire to build on their previous learning on child rights, tolerance, and diversity and to conduct their own advocacy community-based campaigns.

This module aims to build the capacity of children to engage in initiatives against child trafficking and labour exploitation. At the end of the workshops, the children will be able to campaign safely to raise awareness on those issues and to affirm the importance of their roles as advocates in their communities.

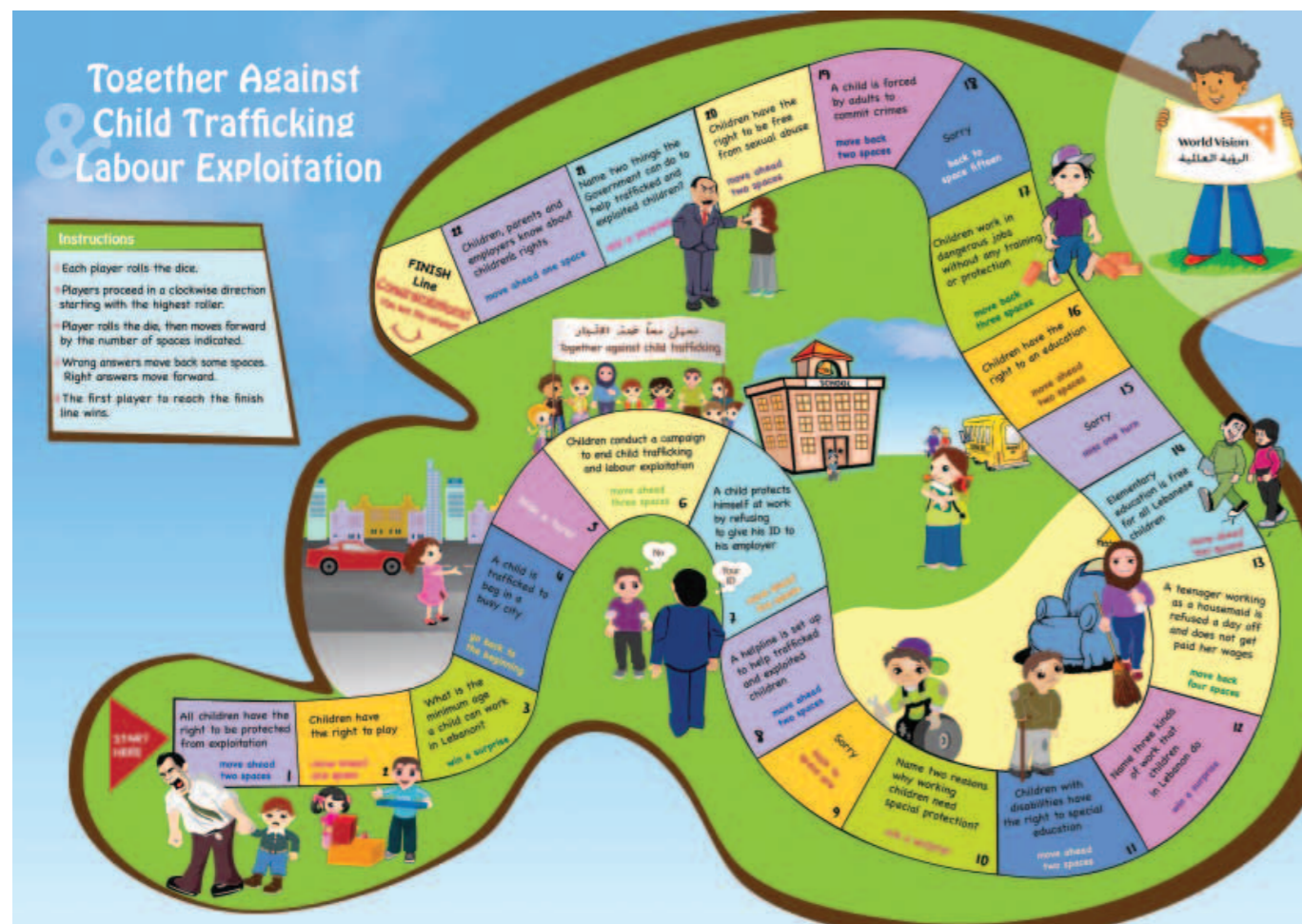


In observing the confidence and capacity of the members of the Children's Council grow, something that has been clear has been their increasing interest to be engaged in more than just the implementation phase of the project. The children have clearly expressed their desire to engage in the whole of the project cycle and this is something that we have tried hard to ensure.

Consultation with children prior to project design has been particularly effective in ensuring advocacy topics and methods of addressing those topics are designed according to children's opinion and priorities. After the initial design, follow up meetings with children during the preparation and implementation phases have been extremely useful. For example, at the beginning of the 'Children Against Child Trafficking and Labour Exploitation Project' several workshops were held with members of the children's council so that they could decide exactly what and how they would like to learn about the issue of trafficking through input into the workshop curriculum development process.

Carla Lewis
Anti-Trafficking and Gender Officer,
WV Lebanon





First session

- Welcome the children and introduce the new workshop using a board game.
- Explain the game instructions. Emphasise that children need to read and discuss each square of the board game.
- Divide the participants into teams of three or four children. Each group receives a “Together against Child Trafficking” board game. Ensure at least one strong reader/literate child per team.
- Children play and the first group to get to the finish line receives a surprise award. Give extra time in order to let all groups complete the board game and to get to the finish line.
- As a group, discuss the topics related to child trafficking and labour exploitation that they learned from the board game.
- Explain to the children that they will be trained on issues directly related to the situation of children vulnerable to trafficking and labour exploitation in the national and local context, then distribute the “Together against child trafficking and labour exploitation workbook”.
- Using the workbook provide an overview of the national and local context, international and national standards and the problems that child labourers face.



Preparatory steps for conducting a child-led campaign

- Identify a suitable facilitator and design an appropriate curriculum for the workshops. This needs to be done in close collaboration with the children, through consultation sessions with them on their thoughts on the issues that concern them, how exactly they would like to learn and what the focus of the content should be.
- Integrate the children’s feedback to design a relevant and engaging curriculum for the Children’s Council. If feasible, invite working children to be part of the workshops to be considered as key actors in decision-making throughout the whole process. The nature of participation may vary across different contexts and may range from full engagement in all workshops and activities, to a joint excursion, peer to peer interviews or an invitation to an upcoming street festival.
- At all times child protection issues will be highlighted so as not to put any children at risk of potential recourse from employers, parents or feelings of personal anguish.
- It is very important to keep in mind that at all times the problem is viewed from a structural position, rather than individual blame, and the importance of the insight from working children themselves is emphasised.

Objectives

- Build the capacities of children to advocate on behalf of other children.
- Increase the capacity of children to campaign for the protection of children at the community level.
- Promote the rights of children by ensuring their participation in their own development.
- Alter the behaviour of the target community members, so that vulnerable children are better protected and cared for.

Duration:

120 minutes per session over a period of eight weeks. All sessions include a 30 minute break.

Resources:

Pens, pencils, coloured pencils, A4 paper, flipcharts, markers, sticky notes and masking tape and the “Together against child trafficking and labour exploitation” workbook

Method

This activity consists of five, two hour sessions over a period of two months.



Second session

- Recap the lessons learnt from the first session using a role-play game.
- Divide the children into small teams. Each team chooses a topic they learned during the last session and they prepare a play.
- Each team has three minutes to present their role play.
- Once the team finish their presentations, as a group discuss the issues highlighted. For those who do not completely understand the concepts, the facilitator may do a brief review and add examples to illustrate the concepts.
- Using the workbook analyse the situation of child trafficking, as a component of one of the worst forms of child labour. Explain to the children the definition of child trafficking, the forms of child trafficking and the national context.

‘It was a very nice experience. We were distributing balloons that have slogans on them to protect children and inviting parents to take part in the responsibility of implementing this. We felt responsible for spreading the culture of protecting children and we were very happy with this experience.’

Christino, aged 13.



Third session

- Ask the children to summarise what they learned from the last session by drawing their viewpoints regarding the issues covered in the last two sessions.
- Once the children finish their drawings, ask them to list the problems that children face regarding trafficking and labour exploitation. Ask for their ideas, suggestions or recommendations to address those issues. Write up all the ideas on the flipchart.
- Brainstorm with the children how to use the suggestions and recommendations they have collected and how to influence others on these issues.
- If the children agree, they can write a recommendation letter or report to the Government or other concerned parties.
- Ask the children who want to volunteer to write the recommendation letter or report. Experience from the field indicates that the writing team cannot exceed five children. Ensure a fair and balanced representation of the children involved in the project.
- Once the report is finalised, the children, with the support of a staff member, organise a meeting to present, in person, their recommendations to the government or other authority such as a Director of UNICEF or Member of Parliament.



Fourth session

- Using the ‘Anti-child trafficking’ workbook, explain to the children the advocacy tools that can be used to launch their own campaigns in their communities.
- Divide the group into small teams and ask the children to design the advocacy campaign.
- Ask the children to decide the angle, timing, venue and materials needed for the campaign, within the limits of the budget assigned.
- Support the children by giving ideas for the campaigns styles such as a street festival, a forum in which community members will be invited to learn about these issues, a movie night, a child-friendly rally, among other formats.
- Recommend to the children to conduct a one-time activity rather than a series of events. It is suggested that activity does not exceed two hours.



Fifth session

- Ask the children to brief the group on the advocacy community campaign they designed in the last session. Leave time for questions and feedback.
- Ask the children to start working together to design campaign materials (flyers, reports, letters to the Government, brochures, posters, t-shirts etc.). Distribute the stationary material needed.
- It is recommended to get the support of a facilitator or trainer who can provide technical guidance to the children while designing the visuals for the campaign.
- Ask the children to divide their roles and tasks for the community campaign. Ask the children to prepare a logistics check list and help them to follow up on the venue, visuals, invitations, transportation, refreshments, etc.
- Liaise with the World Vision Communications Department to ensure adequate media coverage of the event to support the children in their lobbying and campaigning.

Final steps

- Once everything is ready for the community campaign, decide with the children when is the best day to conduct the activity and follow up closely with the logistics team to ensure that all aspects are covered.
- Document the event with photographs and videos.
- Conduct a lesson-learned session with the children and staff involved.
- Celebrate the end of the activity and have fun.



I have been involved with the Children's Council since its establishment which has proven to be a professionally enriching experience. My role as the Peacebuilding Officer means close engagement with the Children's Council. Naturally many of the initiatives of the Children's Council have had strong peacebuilding components such as Arts for Peace and the Children's Peace Forum.

It has been particularly interesting for me to witness children advocating for the rights of all children regardless of their confessional or ethnic background.

This is powerful because advocating for the rights of children based on the universal principles of the CRC means that all children will benefit regardless of their religion, nationality, ethnicity, political orientation or even their status as refugees, all of which can be considered significant dividers in the Lebanese context.



Olivia Pennikian
Peacebuilding Officer

Children's involvement in international events

Increasingly, children and young people are being granted more space for participation in large-scale events at the national, regional and global level. The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child has made substantial efforts to enhance its engagement with children during the pre-sessional and sessional meetings. Multinational and regional organisations such as the League of Arab States and the European Union are including participation of children in regional forums and counting their voices in the development of policies. Despite

these promising advances, it is very important to set up mechanisms and standards to handle these new challenging environments for child participation. To ensure meaningful and safe participation that goes beyond a token gesture, a helpful tip-list has been developed based on the experience of practitioners from World Vision who have been involved in World Congress III, 20th Anniversary celebrations for the CRC and other regional and global child participation events.



Tips for successful child participation in regional or international events

Planning in advance

- A high-profile and large-scale event involving children requires at least five or six months of preparation. It is necessary to appoint a full-time staff member to manage the project. Tasks need to be divided into the two main fields of logistics/administration and child participation/protection (both require different sets of skills).
- Air tickets, local transportation and accommodation are critical issues. Accommodation requires special attention in order to select a child-friendly hotel that meets child protection standards. Bookings need to be made in advance, especially in the high season or during large-scale conferences when the majority of the hotels will be booked by participants months in advance.

Hotels for child delegates also need to be accessible and close to the event venue (if possible).

- Plan in advance to ensure that children can get their passports and to collect all the legal papers and things needed for other visa requirements. Most of the children won't have passports; many of them don't even have an ID card or birth certificate. Visa applications can be a long and difficult process (even though they have an official invitation from the UN or other organisation to attend the event/conference). Most of children will get the visas but some of them may be rejected.
- Parental awareness raising and informed consent are also critical process which must be planned far in advance.

Selecting children

- Selection and invitation of children needs to be organised between three or four months prior the event to ensure that child participation in the event is informed and meaningful and children have enough time to prepare.
- Children need to be selected from their own constituencies and they must represent a broader group of children (Children's Clubs, Children's Councils, etc).
- It is very important to outline very transparent (and feasible) selection criteria. Some of the aspects that need to be considered are involvement in children's organisations/networks, nominated by peers, knowledge of child rights and able to speak on behalf of others.
- Very important features to consider in the selection criteria are gender, disability, geographical location, racial, ethnic and religious diversity.
- To ensure that children have the same opportunity to be selected as delegates in the global/regional event, language should not be a requirement. Translations need to be provided.
- Once children are selected, a child-friendly orientation session needs to be conducted to ensure that they understand the process that they will be going through. Children also need to have time to prepare material that they want to bring to the event (videos, CD, performances, traditional costumes, etc).

Ensuring Child Protection standards

- Ensure that child protection procedures are in place and appoint a full-time child protection focal point person during the entire event (pre-sessions, plenary and recreational activities). A small child protection committee needs to be appointed to support the focal point person. Gender balance is a requirement for the protection team.
- A child protection reporting system needs to be established to ensure that children and staff can report their concerns. Ensure that the procedures are child-friendly, confidential and widely understood.
- Child protection policies and procedures need to be translated into all local languages of the child participants. Children, chaperones and staff involved in the event need to receive copies of these documents and sign them.
- Each child needs to be accompanied by an adult chaperone of the same sex, who could be a staff member or from a partner organisation. Chaperones must speak English or the language of the country where the event is held. Chaperones would normally act as an interpreter for children. Chaperones cannot have any other responsibilities except taking care of the children.

During the conference in Geneva, children weren't afraid to share any problem or idea they had. Children have asked for solutions for their rights and we expressed and talked about our dreams as children. For me it was a wonderful experience and I've learned to listen to all ideas and suggestions wherever the ideas come from.

Aline, aged 13



Meaningful child participation during the event

- The agenda needs to be prepared in coordination with NGOs, the United Nations and other relevant organisers. Where possible, the agenda could be reviewed by children and include their feedback.
- Ensure that the agenda has a child-friendly timetable with short activities to ensure maximum concentration from the children. The agenda should also include recreation and rest-time.
- Ensure that the organisers have a clear understanding and commitment to child participation. Efforts need to be made to ensure that all presentations and sessions are child-friendly.
- Ensure that children have space to participate and debate during sessions. Check that the event venue has a child-friendly room to let children rest during sessions and breaks.
- To succeed in media work, liaise with the Communications team to appoint one or two Communications Officers to cover the event. At least, one Communications Officer needs to have skills and experience in working with children. Media training for children is pivotal to ensure safe, ethical and meaningful media interviews. Media sessions can be done during the pre-session period. During the training session, select some children as spokespersons (ensure gender, geographic, ethnic diversity).
- Evaluate the activities each day and incorporate recommendations for the next day. Children and staff should be included in the evaluation.
- Conduct a final evaluation of the event with emphasis on successes and lessons learned. Document the process and share with others to contribute to capacity building within organisations. Children and staff members should be included in the evaluation.



Children's involvement in the 20th anniversary celebrations for the Convention on the Rights of the Child

In October 2009, two board members from the Children's Council represented their peers participating in a global event in Geneva to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The event gave the children the opportunity to meet other child representatives from around the world and discuss the issues that concern them with members of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, representatives from Governments, non-governmental organisations and United Nations agencies.

Children from 18 countries, each representing a broader group of children, brought experiences from their own constituencies.

Children participated in several sessions about the Convention on the Rights of the Child, workshops to equip them to actively participate in the plenary sessions and in the thematic working groups.

The Children's Council from Lebanon hosted a side event to launch two books to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the Convention. "From a Child's Point of View" is a book written and photographed by 32 children and young people from Lebanon. "Twenty years on: children and their rights in Lebanon" is a book that looks at the state of children's rights in Lebanon after twenty years of the adoption of the Convention. Two children introduced the books at the event which also included the General Secretary of the Lebanese Higher Council for Childhood and the WWI Global Ambassador.

Chapter 5

More ideas for activities

Ten things that children can do to participate

The best ideas always come from the children; we just need to listen to them and help to make their suggestions operational. This list of ten things that children can do is a result of a creative brainstorming session with children and field staff.

- 1 Support fundraising initiatives:** Select a charity or a non-governmental organisation (NGO) that you want to help (e.g. NGO working with street children) and organise an event (e.g. bingo, fashion show) to raise money to support their activities.
- 2 Express your viewpoints at school:** Organise a group of students and select a topic that everybody is interested in (e.g. environmental protection). Read books and research the theme on the internet. Talk to your teacher and ask his/her permission to present your findings during the classes.
- 3 Conduct an awareness campaign in your community, club, church or school:** Contact an organisation working on child rights (e.g. World Vision) and ask them if they can support you in conducting a campaign to raise awareness in your school or church about some issue that you are concerned about (e.g. child trafficking).



- 4 Organise a human rights movie night:** Select a topic that you consider relevant (e.g. child labour) and find a movie that reflects the issue (e.g. Slumdog Millionaire). Invite your friends and after showing the movie, open a discussion about the theme and how young people can change unjust structures. Consider making an action plan of what you will do based on the ideas.
- 5 Write an article:** Choose a topic of your interest and seek information about it. Write a short article where you can reveal your viewpoints and send it to your local newspaper, school newsletter or NGO website.
- 6 Voluntary activities:** Volunteering your free time and energy to charities or community-based organisations that require extra pairs of hands to implement their projects. Select organisations that are connected to your interests and abilities (e.g. volunteer to take care of elders).
- 7 Join a club:** Search in your neighbourhood for some clubs that you can join (e.g. creative writing club) and register yourself as a member. If you do not find any interesting club, you can organise your own club and invite some instructors who want to volunteer and give free lessons for you and your friends.
- 8 Children networks:** Build up online children's networks (e.g. blogging) to share ideas, experiences, tools and information with other young people. These networks will help in building new friendships and understanding of others.
- 9 Radio programme:** Explore with local radio stations in your community or city if they are interested to hold one-hour radio programme with children. You and your friends can be very active young journalists and research on the issues that are relevant for you and to conduct interviews with people from your community.
- 10 Hold a reflection day:** Identify a national or United Nations international day (e.g. World Refugee Day, June 20) and organise a cultural event in your community or school to celebrate the significant progress made and to highlight the challenges that require attention.



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