

CHILD PARTICIPATION IN LOCAL GOVERNANCE

A UNICEF GUIDANCE NOTE

PFLG

Public Finance and Local Governance

SOCIAL POLICY

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1. Background

1.1 Introduction

Child participation has been widely acknowledged as one of the most important dimensions of children's rights for the last 30 years. While 'participation' can refer to many different aspects of a child's engagement with the world around her/him, participation in the context of governance is often considered in relation to article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of

the Child. Article 12 recognizes a child's right to be heard or express views freely, to have her/his views considered seriously in decision-making and to have a government ensure the realization of these rights (*see Box 1*)¹.

Although there have been a number of efforts to facilitate child participation on the national and international level, the focus is increasingly on child participation in local governance specifically. A recent stocktaking exercise concerned with UNICEF engagement in decentralization and local governance revealed that UNICEF country offices frequently support child participation at the local level. Between 2011 and 2015, 43 UNICEF country offices engaged in such efforts,² either through stand-alone projects or as part of the Child Friendly Cities initiative.³

Meaningful child participation, including at the local level, presents a number of challenges, however. In practice, child participation is often tokenistic, it may exclude vulnerable groups, and evidence of its impact is frequently limited. The local government context also presents unique challenges as well as opportunities, which must be understood to ensure the effectiveness and sustainability of child participation.

Box 1. Convention on the Rights of the Child, article 12

1. States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.
2. For this purpose, the child shall in particular be provided the opportunity to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting the child, either directly, or through a representative or an appropriate body, in a manner consistent with the procedural rules of national law consistent with the procedural rules of national law.

1.2 Purpose and structure of the guidance note

This guidance note explores the key considerations for UNICEF country office staff when supporting child participation in local governance, with the focus on participation in local government structures and processes. The purpose of this note is to support UNICEF country offices to incorporate meaningful child participation in local governance.

The guidance note is based on an extensive literature review and four case studies⁴. The country case studies, which document UNICEF experiences of supporting child participation in local governance in Belize, Ethiopia, Nepal and Turkey, are referenced throughout the text.

1 Landsdown, Gerison, 'The realisation of children's participation rights', in A Handbook of Children and Young People's Participation: Perspectives from Theory and Practice, edited by Barry Percy-Smith and Nigel Thomas, Routledge, 2009, pp. 11–24.

2 De Wijn, Marija, Global Stocktake of UNICEF Engagement in Decentralization and Local Governance, UNICEF, New York, November 2016.

3 United Nations Children's Fund, 'Child Friendly Cities: Welcome', <<http://childfriendlycities.org/>>, accessed 7 August 2017.

4 United Nations Children's Fund, 'Child Participation in Local Governance – UNICEF Country Office Case Studies', September 2017.

THE NOTE COMPRISES:

- **Part 1** – which explains the importance of child participation in relation to child rights and local governance
- **Part 2** – which details key concepts and rationale
- **Part 3** – which presents the programming steps: situational analysis, design, implementation, operational considerations, and monitoring and evaluation
- **Part 4** – which offers a brief conclusion.

2. Key concepts and rationale

2.1 What is child participation?

Child participation can be defined as children (individually and/or collectively) engaging with opportunities to form and express their views and to influence matters that concern them directly and indirectly.⁵

Meaningful participation involves a transfer of power from adults to children, which transforms the status of children from passive recipients

to active agents, who are informed and able to influence decisions affecting their lives.⁶ Participation thus requires information sharing and dialogue between children and adults based on mutual respect, and demands that full consideration of children's views is given, taking into account their age and maturity. General comment No. 12 (2009), The right of the child to be heard summarizes the basic requirements for the implementation of a child's right to be heard. The United Nations defines children, adolescents and youth by age (see Box 2).

2.2 What is a local government?

A local government is a specific institution created by a constitutional, legislative or executive power to deliver a specified range of functions within a clearly defined, smaller geographic region.⁷ Generally, for a local authority to be considered a local government, it must fulfil four requirements: It must be a corporate body, have its own political leadership, perform local public functions, and prepare, approve and implement its own budget.⁸

Box 2. Defining children, adolescents and youth

A child is defined as a person under 18 years of age. While this guidance note mostly refers to 'child participation', this includes adolescents aged 10–18 years. The United Nations defines youth as aged 15–24 years; youth aged 18–24 years are not covered by the UNICEF mandate and are therefore not the focus of this note. It is important to remember, however, that youth aged 18 years and above can help to achieve results for children, including minor adolescents, particularly in the area of participation.

⁵ Lansdown, Gerison, 'UNICEF conceptual framework for measurement of adolescent participation' (draft document), June 2017.

⁶ Lansdown, 'Realisation of children's participation rights', p. 13.

⁷ Shah, Anwar, *Local Governance in Developing Countries: Public Sector Governance and Accountability*, World Bank, Washington, D.C., 2006.

⁸ Boex, Jamie, 'The Vertical Assignment of Functions and Expenditure Responsibilities', *Local Public Sector Initiative Working Paper*, May 2015.

2.3 Why child participation in local governance?

Participation is a key aspect of sustainable development and good governance. Goal 16 of the Sustainable Development Goals emphasizes the role of governance, inclusion, participation, rights and security in sustainable development. In particular, target 16.7 is to “ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels”⁹.

From a rights perspective, there are strong arguments for the participation of children in the governance of their cities, towns and villages. While child participation is a right in itself, it also leads to the realization of other rights. General comment No. 20 (2016) on the implementation of the rights of the child during adolescence, for instance, calls on States parties to ensure that adolescents are involved in the development, implementation and monitoring of all relevant legislation, policies, services and programmes affecting their lives, including at the local level. General comment No. 20 also explicitly mentions the importance of participation as a means by which adolescents can negotiate and advocate for the realization of their rights, and also hold States parties accountable (article 24). Child participation at the local level can thus lead to better services, more responsive local policies and plans, and a more effective use of local budgets in support of children’s priorities.

There are also practical reasons to promote child participation in local governance. While it’s important for children to interact with adults who are part of national power structures, participation at the local level is considered key to ensuring that children’s participation endures.¹⁰ For children living outside of a capital city, sustained participation at the national level may be impractical as this would require regular travel, and it is less likely to occur in response to children’s immediate needs and priorities. There are fewer logistical barriers to implementing participation at the local level as an established part of children’s engagement with government. Locally grounded child participants are also more likely to legitimately represent the interests of their peers than those children who engage exclusively in national processes, which may have little connection to local issues.

Globally, there is a growing incidence of child participation mechanisms being successfully embedded in state structures, especially at the local government level. This suggests that local authorities are particularly well positioned to promote child participation.¹¹

⁹ Resolution adopted by the United Nations General Assembly, ‘Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development’, A/RES/70/1, 25 September 2015.

¹⁰ White, Sarah C., and Shyamol A. Choudhury, ‘The Politics of Child Participation in International Development: The Dilemma of Agency’, *European Journal of Development Research*, vol. 19, no. 4, December 2007, p. 529–550.

¹¹ Marshall, Chelsea, Laura Lundy and Karen Orr, *Child-Participatory Budgeting: A Review of Global Practice*, Plan International, 22 September 2016, p. 15.

3. Key programming steps for meaningful child participation in local governance

Local governments are generally considered well placed to facilitate child participation. For any UNICEF country office to support meaningful child participation in local governance, however, it must first understand the specific local government context. It is therefore crucial to collect evidence on and compare different approaches to child participation in local governance to strengthen programming and, ultimately, make participation work for children as well as local decision-makers.

This section covers the key programming steps that UNICEF country offices must take to support meaningful child participation in local governance. These steps reflect those described in the Programme Policy and Procedure manual:

- **Step 1: Situational analysis**
- **Step 2: Design of the child participation mechanism**
- **Step 3: Implementation**
- **Step 4: Operational considerations**
- **Step 5: Monitoring and evaluation**

Step 1: Situational analysis

As policy, institutional and cultural contexts vary by country, there is no one-size-fits-all formula for meaningful child participation. Within many countries, there is also substantial domestic variation in policy, institutional and cultural contexts at the subnational level. Engaging in a rigorous situational analysis prior to programme design and during implementation can increase the duration and scale of benefits related to child participation and limit the risk of failure. In terms of extending the benefits, the situational analysis can help to identify strategic pathways to institutionalize child participation, and to anticipate potential resistance.

Four key contextual issues must be considered as part of the situational analysis:

- child policy framework
- decentralization framework
- institutional landscape
- social, cultural and political context

The situational analysis for women and children conducted as part of the UNICEF country programme development process will often contain elements that can inform the situational analysis for child participation in local governance. In most cases, however, a stand-alone analysis will be warranted, given the complex and dynamic nature of the local context.

CHILD POLICY FRAMEWORK

As a first step, the situational analysis should consider the extent to which any national child policy framework (e.g., national plan of action for children or national child rights policy) both supports child participation and is operationalized at the local government level. A nationally adopted child policy framework helps to facilitate child participation, enshrine and protect children's rights and empower local governments to take action to implement child-friendly services locally. National child rights policies can also support the foundation and legitimacy of child participation in local governance. But while many countries have in place a national child rights policy that includes provisions for participation, local government will rarely, if ever, operationalize a national policy framework for child participation.

NOTE ON IMPLEMENTATION

The development of a specific national policy on child participation in local governance can support implementation at the subnational level. In Nepal, for instance, the government adopted a national framework on Child Friendly Local Governance, which enabled the operationalization of child participation in local governance.

Key programming questions for UNICEF staff

- Is a national child policy framework in place and does it make reference to child participation?
- Does the national child policy framework explicitly enable child participation in local governance?
- Is the national child policy framework operationalized at the local government level?

Box 3. The decentralization framework: Key instruments

- Organic laws/local government acts
- Decentralization policies and implementation frameworks
- Specific acts and national guidelines pertaining to fiscal decentralization, local development planning and budgeting, local participatory processes, etc.
- Relevant sector laws and policies (e.g., health, education)
- Local government policies and guidelines

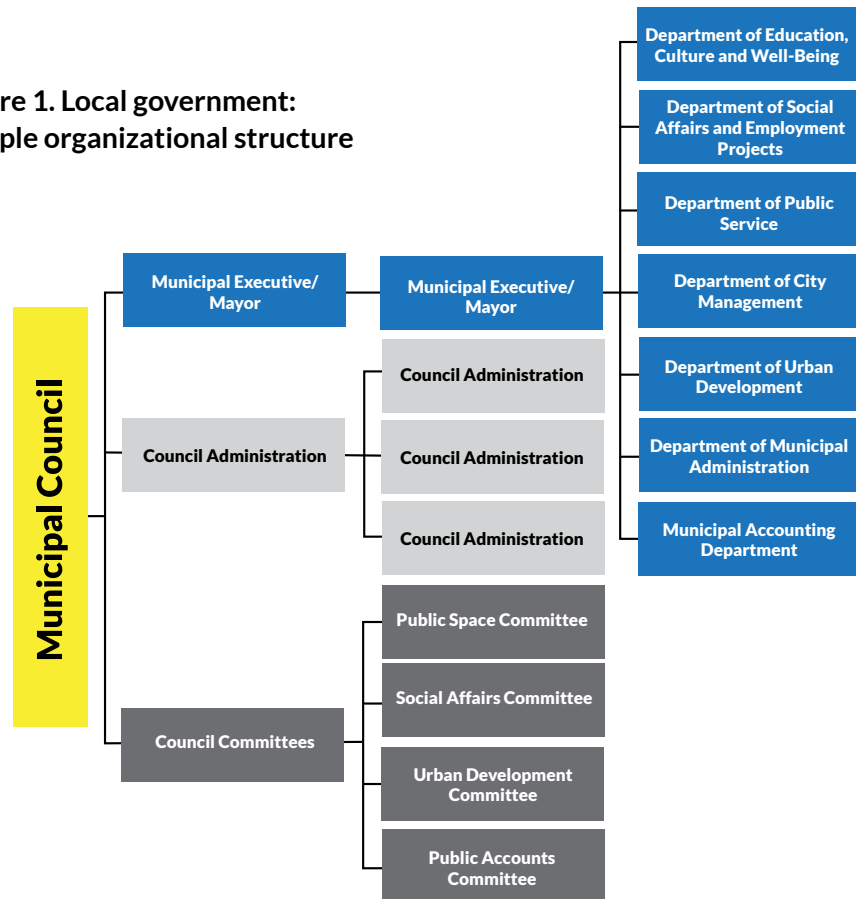
DECENTRALIZATION FRAMEWORK

Successful child participation crucially depends on whether the programme design and associated participatory practices are fit for context. The national decentralization framework, which consists of a number of policies, acts and guidelines, establishes the organizational structure of local governments as well as key local government processes and responsibilities (*see Box 3*).

Mapping local government actors and structures: Mapping the different actors and structures within local government can help to identify the most relevant actors for children to engage with and structures that could potentially facilitate child participation. The decentralization framework provides details of various formal local government structures, and actors (e.g., mayor, councillor), and their main roles and responsibilities (*see Figure 1 on page 6*).

Understanding decentralization frameworks is also critical because they frequently stipulate formal requirements

**Figure 1. Local government:
Sample organizational structure**



Box 4. Child participation in Turkey's decentralization framework

for establishing mandatory or elective committees for community participation in general or, in some cases, for child participation specifically. For instance, article 76 of the Municipality Law in Turkey provided UNICEF Turkey with a key entry point to support child participation in local governance (see Box 4).

The decentralization framework in Turkey is highly conducive to citizen participation. In a municipality, the main decision-making body is the municipal council, which by law requires direct participation by citizens through the establishment of citizens' assemblies. Article 76 of the Municipality Law stipulates that any proposal made by the citizens' assembly will be added to the municipal council's agenda for consideration. Municipalities can also elect to establish assemblies of children, youth, women and people with disabilities, which carry the same legal standing as citizens' assemblies. By joining a children's assembly, children can influence a municipality's priorities. It is not compulsory, however, for municipalities to establish these additional assemblies, and many have been unable to do so as yet.

In the absence of dedicated children's committees, other local government committees or structures such as a social affairs committee or devolved sector department (e.g., department of education) can facilitate child participation. Alternatively, a new committee or structure with child participation as part of its remit can be piloted. From a sustainability perspective, however, it is preferable to build on existing local government structures rather than to establish new ones.

The situational analysis should be sensitive to formal and informal differences across local governments. Formal differences include organizational and institutional variation across contexts (e.g., urban vs rural local governments) and tiers (e.g., provincial vs district governments) or type (e.g., general-purpose local governments

**Box 5.
Common local
government
tasks and
responsibilities**

- Formulating strategies through the development and implementation of strategic plans, policies, annual development plans and budgets, land use management and spatial plans, etc.
- Management and delivery of local services (e.g., primary health care, education, water and sanitation, social welfare services) as well as the development of local infrastructure and the management of local parks, museums and libraries
- Monitoring and evaluation of local service delivery
- Passing local ordinances/by-laws
- Collecting local administrative data such as census and tax data
- Generating local revenue through tax collection and services fees
- Representing and advocating for the community with national and subnational stakeholders such as the ministry of planning and finance, sector ministries, subnational public authorities, etc.

vs special-purpose local governments such as school districts or utility boards). Gaps in the on-the-ground implementation of the decentralization framework frequently cause informal differences. A thorough situational analysis thus involves verification and discussions with local government stakeholders following a desk-based review of the decentralization framework.

Identifying local government processes:

Identifying key local government processes can highlight entry points for child participation in local governance. The decentralization framework establishes the main processes, for example, planning and budgeting (see Box 5). The discrete steps in these processes – from data collection to monitoring and evaluation – as well as the timeline and actors involved are then often set out in specific guidelines (see, for instance, Uganda’s [Local Government Development Planning Guidelines](#)). Such guidelines can serve as a starting point for entering into discussions with local officials to anchor child participation. Where national guidelines for local government development planning are still in development or are open to adjustment, child participation mechanisms should be integrated.

Particularly relevant to child participation are local government processes around formulating strategies, monitoring and evaluating service delivery, local ordinances, and collecting administrative data. Local government processes

comprise various informal aspects, which the situational analysis should reflect.

Mapping local government service delivery functions: Mapping local government service delivery functions is important in order to logically connect child participation to functions that local officials have some discretion to change. Children may become disillusioned with the participation process if they raise priorities that are beyond the control of local government.

The types of services provided by local governments can vary significantly by country and even by local government context (e.g., rural or urban) and/or tier (e.g., provincial or district). In addition, it is crucial to understand how different responsibilities relating to a specific service or

Local governments are often assigned some responsibility for education policy implementation, but in many cases must rely on higher levels of government for resources related to infrastructure, such as school-buildings. Children may become disillusioned with the participation process if they raise priorities that are beyond the control of local government. For example, responding to the need for new bathroom facilities in a local elementary school may instead be the responsibility of the ministry of education.

public good are ‘unbundled’ or divided across different levels of government (see Box 6).

Information about functional areas controlled by local governments can be found in local government acts and decentralization policies. In many countries, a ‘schedule’ specifies local government functions. But while the decentralization framework establishes de jure local government control over particular functional areas, the reality may be quite different. Local government associations and individual local governments

are often best placed to provide information on de facto local government functions and financing.

In practice, three factors influence local control over specific functions and financing. First, while decentralization reforms are being initiated, ministry departments may continue to deal with service delivery functions formally devolved to local government. Second, even when a function is formally under the control of a local government, local sector staff (e.g., social workers, engineers) often have substantial discretion to interpret and implement, independently of the local government council, how local services are delivered. Finally, the current financial position of the local government is also a factor. A formal schedule of local government functions will not, however, reveal how budget deficits might influence the level and type of local control over certain functional areas.

Larger municipalities may offer more entry points for meaningful child participation than small rural local governments. Cities are usually assigned more service delivery responsibilities relevant to children and have stronger technical capacity and more discretionary resources. Yet larger municipalities often also have more distributed veto points in the overall governance process. For instance, in large cities and metropolitan areas, which frequently match small countries in population size, it may be difficult for child participants to exert real influence over decision-making processes. This underscores the importance of using robust mapping exercises to understand the local context.

Box 6. Local government service delivery functions in education



Note on implementation

Where the scope of local government authority limits the scope of child participation, there are potential solutions to address this issue. For example, local governments, particularly in middle-income contexts and/or in urban contexts, can be persuaded to allocate a small proportion of their annual budget to address priorities identified by child participants.

A similar but top-down approach could include advocating at the national level for local governments to have a budget for child participation. In Nepal, UNICEF advocacy led to central government providing local governments with discretionary 'child block grants', which can be allocated to projects and initiatives as desired, provided that the beneficiaries are children. UNICEF Nepal supports the participatory processes used to enable children to identify priority projects and initiatives to receive the funding.

The above approach does mean, however, that participation is project based rather than mainstreamed. Another option is to limit participation efforts to areas where local governments have explicit legal and financial discretion and to make sure that child participants are aware of the scope of participation. Local government advocacy directed at relevant line departments and ministries could also be used to address priorities that fall outside of local control.

Key programming questions for UNICEF staff

- Which are the most relevant local government actors (e.g., council, mayor, departments) to engage with?
- Which local government structures/committees could facilitate child participation?
- Which local government processes provide entry points for child participation?
- What are the main functions of local governments and what is the potential scope for child participation?
- What type of local government is most conducive to meaningful child participation?

INSTITUTIONAL LANDSCAPE

Analysing the institutional landscape is key to identifying relevant government counterparts, local facilitators and existing participation mechanisms to support child participation.

Identifying relevant counterparts and partners: When engaging at the local government level, a wider range of actors across both national and local levels becomes relevant. UNICEF counterparts in child participation often include ministries of youth affairs, social affairs and/or education. Such actors' influence on local affairs is potentially limited, however,

Box 7. Potential partners

- Global or regional local government associations (e.g., United Cities and Local Governments)
- Development partners (e.g., UNDP, UN-Habitat)
- International NGOs (e.g., Plan International, Save the Children)
- Ministries of local government, youth affairs, social affairs and/or education
- National child rights actors (e.g., children's ombudsman)
- Local government or mayor's associations
- Civil service academies or local government training institutes
- National/local NGOs and youth organizations

particularly in countries with strong local government autonomy. Non-traditional UNICEF partners, like ministries of local governance, mayors or other elected local officials, and local government associations, may play a crucial role in meaningful and sustainable child participation at the local level (see Box 7). These non-traditional partners are often more likely to have cultivated networks of local actors and organizations that contain valuable, highly place-specific operational knowledge across a diverse set of localities, which can be used to help institutionalize child participation. In addition, UNICEF country offices have found it useful to

collaborate with other development partners such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) as well as with local and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) (see Box 8).

Identifying potential facilitators: It is crucial to identify local government actors, local NGOs and/or community-based organizations that can facilitate child participation activities. Yet UNICEF country offices frequently find it a challenge to identify local facilitators with sufficient capacity to support child participation at the local government level. Ideally, facilitators will have experience of working with children and supporting child participation, and knowledge of local governance, and be able to build constructive relationships with local government.

From a sustainability point of view, internal local government facilitation, or external facilitation that can be maintained in the long term, is preferred. The process of identifying potential facilitators must therefore consider whether their roles can be institutionalized. For instance, where external facilitation is relied upon, local governments may be able to contract

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registered NGOs or professional associations to provide this support, whereas contracting local voluntary associations or community groups may not be possible. Alternatively, external facilitation can be used as a short-term measure to help build capacity for internal local government facilitation.

Mapping existing child participation mechanisms: Mapping existing participation mechanisms may help to establish potential links. In many contexts, a number of existing child participation mechanisms will already be in place. In Ethiopia, for example, there is a range of participation mechanisms, with varying degrees of functionality, supported by a number of different actors (*see Box 9*). Ideally, adding a new child participation mechanism at the local government level is not done in isolation, rather it builds upon and links to any existing mechanisms.

Box 8. Examples of partnerships

- In Turkey, UNICEF partnered with the Middle East and North Africa arm of global umbrella organization United Cities and Local Governments to identify and approach potential pilot municipalities for the Child Friendly Cities initiative.
- As part of the design phase of a Child Friendly Cities initiative, UNICEF Belize conducted a strategic partner analysis. This identified the Ministry of Labour, Local Government and Rural Development (responsible for municipalities, reconstruction and development) as a key partner, along with Belize Mayors' Association (a local government association established to address growing urbanization). UNICEF Belize also found the partnership with UNDP particularly advantageous, as the sharing of UNDP expertise provided a local governance perspective. This illustrates how the identification of development partners is also important from a strategic perspective.
- In Nepal, training on the Child Friendly Local Governance framework, and on *bal bhela* children's consultations in particular, is provided to all local governments by the Local Development Training Academy (an academy responsible for the training of local self-government in Nepal) as well as through partner NGOs at the national, regional and local level.

Box 9. Child participation mechanisms in Ethiopia

- Children parliaments instituted by the Ethiopian Institution of the Ombudsman. Children parliaments are implemented in varying degrees across Ethiopian regions and are supported by a range of actors including UNICEF, NGOs and government partners.
- School parliaments implemented by the Ministry of Education.
- Youth centres supported through the UNICEF Child Protection Section. Youth centre purposes include providing a place for meeting, recreation, information sharing and/or the provision of youth-friendly services such as skills training and reproductive health services, especially related to HIV prevention and including free voluntary HIV testing.
- Community Care Coalitions serve as community resource centres for vulnerable groups, including youth. These voluntary groups, which are independent of the government, are widely established in Ethiopian communities.

Key programming questions for UNICEF staff

- Which government actors could play a role in supporting child participation in local governance?
- Which development partners (e.g., United Nations agencies and international NGOs such as Plan International, World Vision and Save the Children) and local NGOs can support child participation in the local context?
- Which local actors could help to facilitate child participation mechanisms?
 - o Do they have expertise in child participation? Can they be trained?
 - o Do they have knowledge of local government processes and can they establish effective relationships with local governments?
 - o Can facilitation by these actors be institutionalized or organized in such a way that it is sustainable in the long term?
- What child participation mechanisms are already in place? Which actors support these existing mechanisms? How may mechanisms be linked?

SOCIAL, CULTURAL AND POLITICAL CONTEXT

Critical to the design and implementation of effective child participation mechanisms is a thorough understanding of the social, cultural and political complexities at play. One challenge of implementing child participation in any context is the manner in which society defines and conceptualizes children, including through enforcement by both formal and informal norms.¹² Another challenge is to understand the contradictory ways in which child participation is defined and conceptualized (see Box 10). In light of these challenges, the importance of changing the culture surrounding child rights in communities and society cannot be overlooked.

Understanding these challenges of social, political and cultural context helps to identify complementary actions to enhance the benefits of child participation in local governance. For instance, social understandings of child participation that have a narrow focus on children only might reveal the need to engage in awareness-raising, capacity development and training to recognize parents and guardians and communities as key stakeholders in children's lives. Investing in broader communities of participants, and including parents and guardians and community members in the design and implementation of participation mechanisms also makes successful child participation more likely. In religious communities, it may be worthwhile to identify and engage with religious leaders and to seek support from faith-based organizations.

¹² United Nations Children's Fund, 'Speak Africa Literature Review' (draft document), UNICEF, 14 November 2010.

Box 10 | Dilemmas in how society understands child participation

The social, cultural and political context is likely to affect how child participation is defined and conceptualized. In some countries, there is likely to be considerable variation in how child participation is framed across different subnational jurisdictions (e.g., rural vs urban). This table lists some potential negative and positive framings of various elements of child participation.

	NEGATIVE FRAMING	POSITIVE FRAMING
Purpose of child participation	Avoidance of future problems	Emphasis on the current potential of child participants to introduce positive change in society
View of adolescents	Homogeneous objects of concern ('problem makers')	Heterogeneous agents of change
Aligning social values and norms	Children and adolescents should not have opinions	Intergenerational relations and different perspectives

To understand how society conceptualizes child participation also involves relating cultural, social and political framings to government capacity and the exercise of political will. If children are perceived in a limited way as 'objects of concern', then policy work in the form of national legislative support – including a robust child policy framework – could help to reframe children as heterogeneous agents of change. To avoid the use and abuse of child participation for political purposes, local government actors may require training and sensitization on how to effectively and respectfully interact with child participants. Sensitivity to the specific societal framings of child participation is a critical prerequisite for child participation to have a constructive impact.

Key programming questions for UNICEF staff

- Are there cultural, religious or political obstacles to child participation?
 - o Are communities and parents supportive?
 - o Are local government actors open to child participation?
- How can potential obstacles be overcome?
 - o Can national actors provide support (advocacy)?
 - o Which actors within the community can champion child participation?
 - o What are the training and capacity development needs of key actors, including parents, community stakeholders, local government actors and children themselves?
- What potential risks does participation present for children?

Step 2: Design of the child participation mechanism

With a clear understanding of the contextual issues established, it is time to address the more practical aspects of the participation mechanism design. It is important to note that the design elements presented here should be considered holistically rather than in a linear fashion.

Again, there is no one-size-fits-all formula for design. Rather design elements should be decided upon while considering context (as described in Step 1) and in collaboration with key stakeholders, particularly children and local government actors. Issues relating to institutionalization and sustainability should be carefully considered throughout the design process.

Box 11. Objectives of child participation in Belize

- Bringing a child/adolescent perspective to issues affecting youth in municipalities to ensure that their rights and needs are reflected in and promoted by municipal plans.
- Facilitating knowledge sharing about best practices and lessons learned for agendas relating to child/adolescent rights, gender equality, and sexual and reproductive health within municipal plans.
- Improving child/adolescent understanding of the principles behind municipal plans and their role in improving the lives of young people.
- Strengthening the skills of children/adolescents (especially vulnerable and disadvantaged young people) in areas such as leadership, decision-making, communication, problem-solving and advocacy, to facilitate their effective participation in municipal development planning.

Participation mechanism design must consider the:

- objectives of child participation
- degree of child participation
- focus of child participation
- child participation process
- child participants.

OBJECTIVES OF CHILD PARTICIPATION

It is imperative to be clear about the purpose of the participation activity, as this will avoid participation for the sake of participation and the risk of tokenism.¹³ Objectives may centre on children's right to participate and children's skills, but they can also have an external focus such as improving public decision-making and strengthening local government services (see Box 11).

Objectives should not be prescriptive, with participation structured narrowly around desired goals. Instead, the formulation of objectives should create space for children to identify their own priorities. Objectives should reflect what children would like to achieve, having been informed what is feasible within the local context. For monitoring and evaluation purposes (as outlined in Step 5), each objective should be made explicit and be linked to a clear theory of change (see Annex I).

Key programming questions for UNICEF staff

- What would the different stakeholders (children, local governments, etc.) like to achieve through child participation?
- What is the overall theory of change?

¹³ Sinclair, Ruth, 'Participation in Practice: Making it meaningful, effective and sustainable', *Children & Society*, vol. 18, no. 2, April 2004, pp. 106–118.

DEGREE OF PARTICIPATION

The varying degrees of child participation possible are often depicted as steps on a 'ladder of participation'.¹⁴ Each of the eight steps on this ladder describes a different level of control over the participation process; at the top rung of the ladder, children initiate the process and invite adults to join them in decision-making (see Annex II). Similarly, [Booklet 3 of the UNICEF-supported A Toolkit for Monitoring and Evaluating Children's Participation](#) identifies three main levels of child participation: consultative, collaborative, and child-led or child-managed participation.

Different levels of participation may be appropriate for different tasks, activities or projects.¹⁵ The degree of participation may also depend on the local government(s) involved and what they can realistically facilitate among the many priorities that they may have. Both the ladder of participation and toolkit do, however, highlight the need to understand and distinguish between the different levels of empowerment afforded to children.¹⁶

Key programming questions for UNICEF staff

- Given the context and the participation objectives, what is an appropriate and feasible level of child participation?

FOCUS OF PARTICIPATION

Deciding on a focus: The focus of participation may relate to any local government task or responsibility (see Box 5). For instance, children can be involved in one or more of the following aspects:

- decision-making around proposed local policies and/or spatial planning
- data gathering on public issues
- local government planning and budgeting exercises
- monitoring the quality of services and facilities
- evaluating the success of local government policies, programmes, projects and/or services.

The focus of participation should be based on children's priorities and the relevance of the process to children's lives, and should consider the potential for meaningful engagement. For example, local budgeting exercises are quite complex and sometimes contentious, and information must be presented in accessible and understandable formats for participation in such exercises to be meaningful.¹⁷ The monitoring of local government services, including through the use of

¹⁴ Notably in Hart, Roger A., 'Children's Participation: From Tokenism to Citizenship', Innocenti Essays, No. 4, UNICEF International Child Development Centre, Florence, 1992.

¹⁵ Sinclair, 'Participation in Practice', pp. 106–118.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Marshall, Lundy and Orr, Child-Participatory Budgeting.

simple scorecards, is potentially more straightforward. Examples of child participation highlighted in this guidance note focus mainly on local government planning and budgeting exercises, but examples also exist of Child Friendly Cities projects where participation is part of spatial planning, for instance.¹⁸ The scope for child participation may be relatively modest when a project is first set up, but this can be expanded as the project develops.

Identifying relevant local actors: The focus of participation will affect which local government actors are to be involved. For example, if the focus is monitoring the quality of education services and facilities, the primary entry point for participation is likely to be the local government education department. A focus on local development planning and budgeting, in contrast, may call for participants to interact with the council or a council committee.

Alignment with local government processes: It is important to ensure alignment between the focus of participation and the shape and timeline of established local government processes. In Nepal, for example, child consultations are conducted immediately prior to the start of the annual local government development planning cycle so that development plans for the forthcoming fiscal year can reflect current child priorities.

Key programming questions for UNICEF staff

- Which local government processes are of particular interest and relevance to children and thus provide the most potential for meaningful child participation?
- Based on the priority processes identified, which local actors and/or structures are most relevant to child participation?
- When should participation be scheduled in relation to local government processes to maximize results?



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18 Hart, Roger, Pamela Wridt and Selim Iltus, *Child Friendly Cities Initiatives in Countries with a UNICEF National Committee Presence: Stocktaking Assessment Report*, Children's Environments Research Group, City University of New York, New York, July 2015.

PARTICIPATION PROCESSES

Deciding on participation mechanisms: Child participation can be facilitated using a range of participation mechanisms. Child participation in local governance can take the form of direct interaction with local government officials through an existing committee or one established for that purpose (as is the case in Turkey and in Belize). It can also be based on indirect interaction, whereby children's input is facilitated by a third party (as happens in Nepal) including through school-based mechanisms or platforms provided by local NGOs.

Selection of a participation mechanism calls for the consideration of various strategic issues to do with its inclusiveness, local government capacity for its use, options for its institutionalization, and its long-term sustainability. For example, a school-based participation mechanism may exclude out-of-school children, and while a community-based organization may support facilitation in the short term, this may be unsustainable in the long term.

General comment No. 5 (2003), General measures of implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child states the importance of governments developing direct relationships with children, rather than relationships mediated through NGOs or human rights institutions (article 12). Direct participation can be institutionalized and so is potentially a more sustainable mechanism. But this must be weighed up against the potential risks of direct interaction between children and local politicians, particularly in terms of the capacity of local leaders to interact with child participants, and the potential for children to be exploited or to suffer backlash for expressing critical views.

Identifying appropriate communication tools: Communication methods to elicit child participation can take many forms – from drawings and photography to theatre and debates – but should always spark children's interest and ideally make participation accessible and fun. In Nepal, child participants identify their priorities and needs using different types of drawing tools, including 'like and dislike' drawings and drawings of how they envision the future. In Belize, child participants engage by using a range of communication platforms and tools, including WhatsApp, local talk shows (television and radio), drawings and focus group discussions. Whatever methods are selected, appropriate resources must be devoted to translating child participants' outputs – in all their various forms – into formats that local officials can easily understand.

Use of information and communication technology tools can also facilitate participation by children and play a key role in reaching target audiences, particularly adolescents. Such tools not only contribute to data-driven advocacy and programming, but also facilitate varied

mechanisms for engagement, including radio, theatre, television and video.¹⁹ Social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter are especially effective at attracting adolescent engagement.²⁰ This type of real-time engagement may also present risks, however, and clear guidance for children and adolescents is required before using such tools.

A promising platform for communication with adolescents in all environments is U-Report. This UNICEF-sponsored social messaging tool engages with signed-up 'U-Reporters' via Short Messaging Service (SMS) texts to gather and amplify adolescents' views on the issues that affect them. U-Reporters can use the platform to advocate for their local community, at times even communicating directly with local government officials. Though it is by no means exclusively a child participation mechanism, U-Report has great potential not only to encourage child participation, but also to link to decision-making processes at regional and local levels.

Frequency, timing and location of child participation: Practical aspects such as the frequency, timing and location of child participation are also important design elements. Ideally, participation should not be ad hoc, and set guidelines should instead establish the frequency of participation. When deciding on the timing of participation, it is important to avoid clashes with other child priorities such as school or sports, except in certain circumstances where these activities are the entry point to child participation. The physical location for participation (if applicable) should be safe and easily accessible, including for children with disabilities. Other concerns around participation locations include, but are not limited to, the availability of public transport, their sufficient distance from precarious areas, and their public nature and visibility.

Establishing feedback and complaint mechanisms: Irrespective of the type of participation mechanism used, an important aspect of any child participation initiative is ensuring that child participants receive ongoing feedback. Children have indicated that good participatory practice includes feedback about why some child participant recommendations are implemented and others not.²² In many cases, however, children and young people receive little or no feedback on the outcome or effect of their participation.²³ At the same time, General comment No. 20 states that participation mechanisms should be accompanied by the introduction of safe and accessible complaint and redress mechanisms. In the specific context of local governance, some budget issues can become highly contentious. Similarly, public participation can become adversarial and contentious when information comes to light that reveals underperformance by service providers or, more specifically, unpopular activities or practices. Feedback and complaint mechanisms should be developed and made available to child participants for such occasions.

19 United Nations Children's Fund, 'Communication for Development: Annual Work Plan 2016–2017' (draft excerpt), UNICEF C4D, 2015.

20 United Nations Children's Fund, Adolescent and Youth Engagement Survey (AYES), UNICEF C4D, 2015.

21 United Nations Children's Fund, 'UNICEF's U-Report social platform hits 1 million active users', News note, 16 July 2015.

22 Marshall, Lundy and Orr, Child-Participatory Budgeting.

23 Ibid.



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Key programming questions for UNICEF staff

- Given the context, what opportunities are there to use direct vs indirect participation mechanisms?
- Which communication tools are children interested in?
 - Do children have access to information and communication technology tools and online platforms?
 - Can a tool such as U-Report support and potentially boost child participation?
- How often can children realistically meet? Where is it appropriate to meet? When would children have time to participate?
- How can feedback to child participants be ensured? How can a complaint mechanism be made available?

CHILD PARTICIPANTS

Deciding on an age range: The Convention on the Rights of the Child does not set a minimum age for participation but cites a child's evolving capacity as the determining factor. While both younger and older children can participate, different age groups will require different communication approaches and have different facilitation needs and varying interests. It is also important to consider whether a child is able

Box 12. Age of child participants

to provide informed consent to participate. UNICEF-supported child participation generally focuses on children aged 7 to 18 years, sometimes with an emphasis on adolescents (see Box 12).

- In Turkey, within the context of the Child Friendly Cities initiative, municipal assemblies target children aged 7–18 years, while provincial child rights committees focus on adolescents aged 14–17 years.
- In Belize, Child Advisory Bodies focus on children aged 8–17 years.
- In Nepal, child club members are aged 12–18 years, while the annual *bal behla* consultations involve children aged 8–18 years.

Ensuring inclusion: In addition to age, the question of power differentials must be considered and addressed in an explicit manner in the design of the participation mechanism. While children as a group are often considered less empowered than adults, certain groups of children may be more or less empowered to speak, organize or be heard. Explicit consideration should be given to how best to bring about children's participation so that it does not recreate existing power structures but gives voice to those who face different forms of marginalization.

In Nepal, for instance, children first discuss their needs and priorities in smaller groups based on age and sex before all participants discuss these matters together. This empowers girls and boys as well as younger and older children to speak freely with their peers, and gives them the opportunity to express their specific priorities and needs in the first instance without feeling intimidated.

Certain vulnerable groups are harder to reach than others. For instance, school-based participation efforts tend to provide a great entry point for reaching children, yet they inevitably exclude many groups, including children with disabilities, children living and working on the streets, other working children and children in institutions.²⁴ In many contexts, adolescent girls are harder to reach and require a different outreach approach than adolescent boys. While the most vulnerable and marginalized children are arguably some of the main groups of concern for UNICEF, their mobility and possible distrust of institutions makes them difficult to reach. Indeed, all case study countries report challenges in ensuring inclusive participation. The use of peer educators and 'recruiters' may be one way to facilitate inclusion of the marginalized. Using role model approaches to bring marginalized children into child participation forums with the help of peers whom they can trust and with whom they feel safe is especially beneficial.²⁵

Tailoring participation forums specifically to vulnerable children, adolescent girls or children with disabilities can enable children who might otherwise be ignored to connect and influence decision-making around issues of particular relevance to them.²⁶ Linking to existing forums and platforms for specific groups of children is another option. In Turkey, for instance, the inclusion of very poor children and children

24 United Nations Children's Fund, *Wheel of Change: Children and Young People's Participation in South Asia*, UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia, Kathmandu, 2004.

25 Ray, Patricia, 'The participation of children living in the poorest and most difficult situations' in *A Handbook of Children and Young People's Participation: Perspectives from Theory and Practice*, edited by Barry Percy-Smith and Nigel Thomas, Routledge, 2009, p. 63.

26 *Ibid.*, p. 67.

with disabilities was largely achieved by linking participation to existing social support mechanisms for these groups of children. Vulnerable children may also have specific training needs, for instance, to boost their confidence to participate.

Maintaining interest: It should not be presumed that children are automatically interested in participating. Systematically providing all children with accurate information, pitched at a level that is understandable and usable by different ages and abilities, increases the likelihood of maintaining children's interest.

Facilitating networking, training and connections to policymaking for participants increases the sustainability of participation efforts.²⁷ Developing local and regional resource centres to promote and sustain participation efforts may support the continuity of initiatives. Moreover, shifting from a model based solely on adult facilitators to an approach that involves parents and communities as well as the self-training of children (e.g. through newsletters and peer education) supports sustained participation.²⁸ The use of peer education or child/adolescent advisers may also help to retain new participants and combat the loss of existing participants as they grow older.

Key programming questions for UNICEF staff

- What mechanisms can be put in place to ensure that vulnerable and marginalized groups of children are represented?
- What mechanisms can be put in place to ensure that all child participants use their voices?
- What kinds of adaptations are needed to enable the participation of children with disabilities?
- What strategies for participant retention can be put in place?

Step 3: Implementation

With a clear understanding of the contextual issues established and the participation mechanism designed, it is time to address implementation. Key considerations for implementation include:

- capacity development and training
- creating and maintaining political will and buy-in
- ongoing national policy dialogue
- continued funding.

CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING

Significant investment in ongoing capacity development and training for local government representatives, facilitators, communities and child

²⁷ Wheel of Change.

²⁸ Ibid.

participants is often required to implement and maintain meaningful participation. For local government in particular, it's important to consider how knowledge and capacity (e.g., around child rights) can be maintained following elections. Institutionalizing the training of local government representatives – through, for example, local government associations or civil service academies – ensures that the ongoing training needs of this audience are met. A standardized training package can also be developed to support the training of stakeholders, and this can be crucial to the scaling up and sustainability of participation.

CREATING AND MAINTAINING POLITICAL WILL AND BUY-IN

Raising concerns about the participation process and service delivery outcomes can be contentious. Creating political will, particularly among local government, is fundamental to achieving successful implementation and to sustaining participation in the long term. Engaging local governments in the design of a participation mechanism is an important factor in instilling in them a sense of ownership. Furthermore, presenting child participation not only as a child rights issue, but also as a way to strengthen key local services may motivate local leaders to demonstrate commitment and disclose results. UNICEF country offices report that the certification aspect of the Child Friendly Cities model also encourages local governments to engage in child rights, as it plays to the political dynamics of (elected) local government representatives. UNICEF Belize, for instance, reported a strong sense of municipal ownership of child participation in local governance, as the Child Friendly Cities model gives elected local officials an opportunity to improve their public image and show how they are helping and serving their community. Other motivating factors for local governments may include media attention in response to successful child participation or awards for those with strong child participation in place.

ONGOING NATIONAL POLICY DIALOGUE

Successful child participation in local governance may require ongoing advocacy with both local and national stakeholders, particularly in contexts where decentralization reform is in progress. In Nepal, UNICEF combined on-the-ground implementation of child participation with national-level advocacy and policy dialogue, which supported the institutionalization and funding of the initiative. A key lesson learned from Nepal is that successful child participation in local governance relies upon strong engagement with national stakeholders and making use of ongoing decentralization reform processes and platforms.

CONTINUED FUNDING

It is crucial that stable sources of funding exist for child participation forums and that organizations which facilitate children's participation continue to be funded. First and foremost, adequate funding must be allocated over the medium to long term either by central government, or where possible, through local government budgets. For this reason, child participation mechanisms and platforms that can be institutionalized within the local government and/or decentralization framework may be more sustainable. Turkey has institutionalized provincial child rights committees and these are funded through the Ministry of Family and Social Policies. But while priorities identified by children are funded via local government budgets in all of the case study countries, UNICEF continues to provide funding for the operational aspects of most child participation initiatives (e.g., facilitation, meetings, training).

Key programming questions for UNICEF staff

- How can the child participation mechanism, including its operational aspects, be institutionalized?
- How is it possible to generate political commitment to and ownership of child participation among key stakeholders?
- Do ongoing decentralization reform processes provide an opportunity for advocacy?
- How can the child participation mechanism, including its operational aspects, continue to be funded?

Step 4: Operational considerations

Child participation in local governance requires internal expertise and technical skills in child participation, decentralization and local governance, and social sectors (e.g., health, education). Thus, in many UNICEF country offices, multiple programme sections, often including the Social Policy Section, work together to support child participation in local governance.

The number of UNICEF staff dedicated to child participation differs according to the context and size of the particular initiative. Both the Child Protection and Social Policy Sections of UNICEF Turkey jointly support child participation. UNICEF Belize has one staff member dedicated to this area, with additional input and support provided by sector colleagues. In Nepal, UNICEF supports the nationwide child participation mechanism through its dedicated Local Governance Section, which has three staff at the country office level and nine additional staff at the zonal office level.

Maintaining bottom-up programming in multiple locations is a resource-intensive task. This reiterates the importance of establishing partnership

support and institutionalizing child participation within both the national child rights policy framework and the decentralization framework.

It may be possible to boost the effectiveness of any UNICEF child participation activity by:

- assigning an appropriate number of staff to the activity
- ensuring that staff have sufficient capacity and expertise in both child participation and local governance
- making a plan to address internal capacity gaps (e.g., through training or partnerships)
- establishing internal coordination mechanisms, particularly if several programme sections are involved
- giving a realistic estimate of the budget involved
- putting in place a long-term support strategy that covers staffing and funding requirements, especially if participation is to be scaled up.

Key programming questions for UNICEF staff

- What is the expected initial staffing requirement to support child participation? What are the staffing needs in the medium to long term?
- Is there a need for internal capacity development and training?
- Can partnerships or external technical assistance bridge any potential gaps in internal capacity?
- How can the different sections involved effectively coordinate child participation?
- What are the initial funding requirements to support child participation?

Step 5: Monitoring and evaluation²⁹

Though it is a challenge to measure and track the impact of child participation and conduct strong monitoring and evaluation, doing so is crucial both to ensure that participation moves beyond tokenism and to demonstrate results. This work involves engaging with children to collaboratively define the objectives for evaluation and their related theories of change, as well as decide upon feasible mechanisms for participatory monitoring and evaluation.

Outputs should focus on ensuring an enabling environment, on qualitative aspects of child participation such as the legal/policy framework or community attitudes towards child participation in local governance, and on children's satisfaction with participation. Table 1 provides examples of potential output statements, indicators and means of verification.

²⁹ For a more in-depth discussion of these topics, see: Save the Children, 'A Toolkit for Monitoring and Evaluating Children's Participation', <www.savethechildren.org.uk/resources/online-library/toolkit-monitoring-and-evaluating-childrens-participation>, accessed 7 August 2017.

Outcomes should focus on institutionalization, improved local governance for children, and participant capacity. Within monitoring and evaluation, it is important to create space for participation rather than simply define participation. If outcomes are formulated in terms of specific results – for example, reduced teenage pregnancy or more urban green spaces – this will set the tone for child participation rather than leave children free to identify their own priorities. Table 2 provides examples of potential outcome statements, indicators and means of verification.

Integrating monitoring and evaluation in local government

management information systems: Integrating indicators in existing local government management information systems can boost the monitoring and evaluation of child participation. In Nepal, monitoring and evaluation is supported via the central government’s existing reporting system, which requires local government at all levels to report on standard indicators using a computerized system. In the absence of such a centralized system, the systematic review of local government plans and allocations in selected localities may be an alternative means of monitoring and evaluating child participation in local governance.

Key programming questions for UNICEF staff

- What are appropriate output, outcome and impact indicators?
- Can indicators be integrated and tracked within existing local government management and reporting systems?
- How can child participants be involved in monitoring and evaluation?

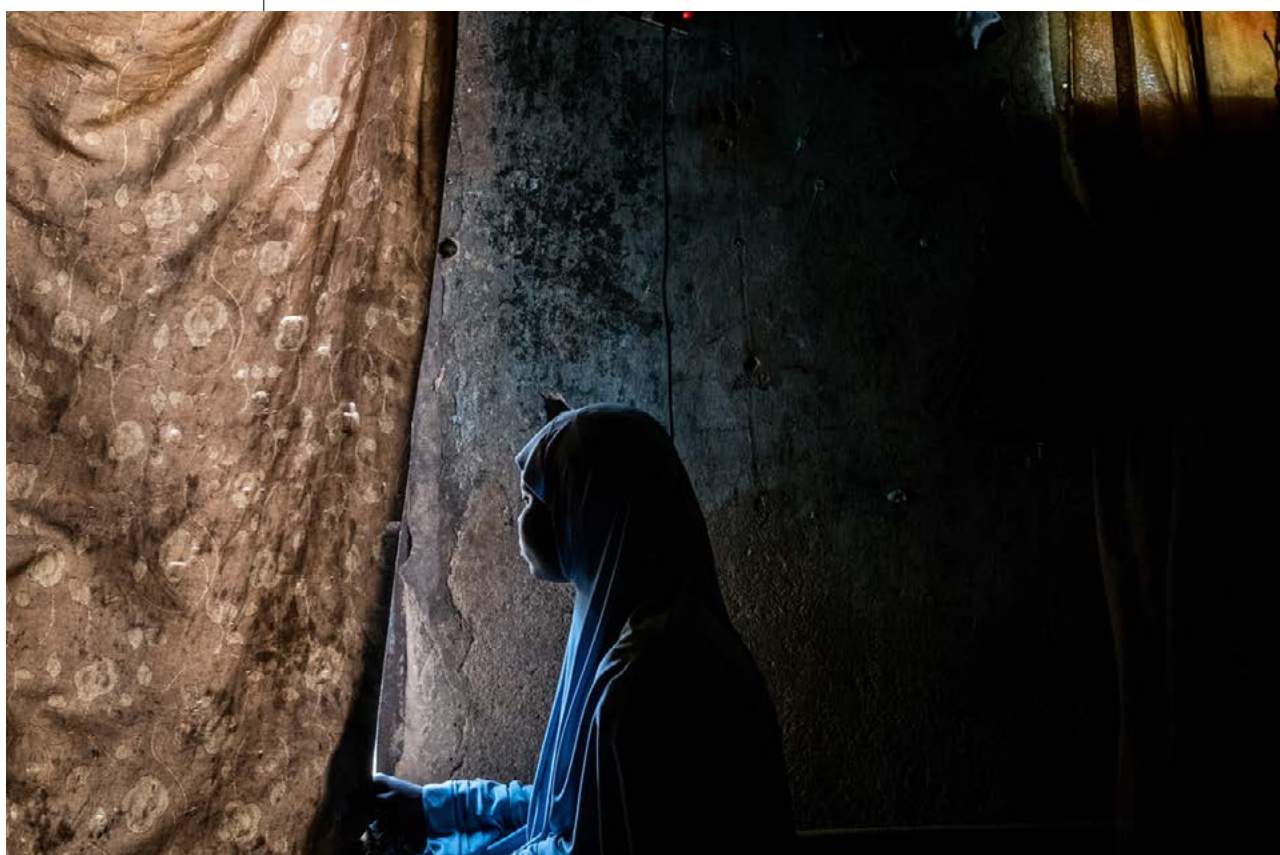


Table 1. Example output statements, indicators and means of verification

Area of engagement	Output statement	Output indicator	Means of verification
Social norms	Communities, including parents, teachers and community leaders, are enabling children to participate in local governance	Proportion of community stakeholders who express commitment to child participation in local governance	Post-training participant feedback questionnaire, or general questionnaires for parents, teachers and community leaders
Laws and policies	Existence of an enabling policy and legal framework on child participation and local governance	Legal/policy framework is in place	Review of legal/policy framework
	National and/or local government allocates budget to child participation in local governance	Share of operational budget for child participation in local governance is covered by national and/or local government budget	Review of national and/or local budget
Capacity	Children have the skills and capacity to participate in local governance	Proportion of children who express having sufficient capacity to meaningfully participate in local governance	Participant feedback questionnaire (after training/meetings)
	Local government stakeholders have the skills and capacity to enable meaningful child participation	Proportion of relevant local government actors who express having sufficient capacity to interact with children in a meaningful manner	Participant feedback questionnaire (after training/meetings)
Creating space and opportunities	Frequency of child participation in local governance is based on established guidelines	Proportion of local governments which follow the established guidelines on the frequency of child participation meetings	Meeting records
	Child participation in local governance is inclusive of girls and boys, and children with disabilities and other vulnerable groups	Proportion of girls and boys, and children with disabilities and other vulnerable groups who actively participate	Participant lists and meeting observations
	Children are satisfied with their participation in local governance	Proportion of children (girls and boys) who express satisfaction with their participation in local governance	Participant feedback questionnaire (after meetings)

Table 2. Example outcome statements, indicators and means of verification

Outcome statement	Outcome indicator	Means of verification
Local government is responsive to the priorities raised by child participants	Proportion of child priorities reflected in plans, e.g., local government development plans and budgets, spatial plans ³⁰	Local budget allocations, local spatial plans, etc.
Child participation in local governance is implemented at scale	Proportion of local governments nationwide that are implementing child participation	Local government reporting mechanisms, e.g., management information systems
Child participants' voices, agency and civic engagement are strengthened	Proportion of former child participants who take an active role in their communities or in local governance	Research and evaluation

30 Depending on the focus of child participation.

4. Conclusion

Child participation is a key right and is of intrinsic value. Well-designed participation mechanisms provide benefits on an individual level and for societies as a whole. Local governments frequently manage services that affect children's daily lives, making child participation at the local government level particularly relevant. Furthermore, from a governance perspective, the participation of children can lead to better and more responsive decision-making and can inform stronger, more effective services.

The complexity of effective child participation in local governance should not be underestimated, however. Child participation at the local government level should be firmly placed within, and take account of, local social, cultural and political realities. Success factors crucially depend on the suitability of a child participation mechanism to the context of its use, the opportunities to institutionalize the mechanism, and the strength of commitment to child participation held by all stakeholders.

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ANNEX I Theory of Change

IMPACT

Children's right to participation

OUTCOMES

Local government is responsive to the priorities raised by child/adolescent participants

Child/adolescent participation in local governance is institutionalized and implemented at scale

Voice, agency and civic engagement of child/adolescent participants is strengthened

OUTPUTS

- Existence of an enabling policy and legal framework
- National and local governments demonstrate commitment to child participation (e.g., through allocation of funding)

Child participation in local governance is inclusive of girls and boys, and children with disabilities and other vulnerable groups

- Children have skills and capacity to participate in local governance.
- Communities enable children to participate in local governance

ACTIVITIES

- Deep situational analysis, including around local governance and decentralization
- Policy advocacy at national and local level
- Capacity development of local government actors

- Design of context-specific and inclusive participation mechanism
- Partnerships

- Awareness-raising and training child participants, incl. the most vulnerable
- Awareness-raising among communities

STRATEGIES

- Advocacy**
- Partnerships**
- Capacity Development**
- Awareness-raising**
- Knowledge Management**
- Innovation**

BOTTLENECKS

Enabling Environment

- Policy gaps on national and local level
- Lack of awareness on children's rights among local government actors

Organizational Systems

- Child participation in local governance is non-existent or tokenistic and unsustainable

Demand for Participation

- Gaps in capacity and awareness among children, particularly the most vulnerable
- Lack of awareness among communities

CONTEXT



UNICEF supports child and adolescent participation in local governance, but not in a strategic, evidence-based and sustainable manner



Children and adolescents have the right to participate in decisions that affect them. UNICEF is mandated to fulfil the rights of all children, especially the most marginalized groups



Colours represent analytical or conceptual alignment between the types of barriers, activities and potential outputs. For example, the purple colour represents barriers at the organizational systems level, which activities can affect these systems, and ways systems can change as a result of children's participation.

Annex II: Ladder of participation

Example	Rung	Type	Degrees of participation
Children identify a problem in their school, initiate a project to solve it and convince adults to run it	8	Child-initiated, shared decisions with adults	Participation
Children produce their own school newspaper or radio-programme	7	Child initiated and directed	
Children are asked to participate in planning of a playground	6	Adult-initiated, shared decisions with children	
Children are consulted by a city mayor about a certain question; their opinions are taken seriously.	5	Consulted and informed	
A group of children is organized to do community work but they are informed of its purpose and feel ownership of the issue	4	Assigned but informed	
Articulate children are selected to sit on a discussion panel with no substantive preparation and no consultation with their peers.	3	Tokenism	Non-participation
Children sing and dance at an event but have little idea what it is about.	2	Decoration	
Children are organized to participate in political demonstration carrying political placards.	1	Manipulation	

Source: Flowers, Nancy, 'Compassito, Manual on human rights education for children', Directorate of Youth and Sport of the Council of Europe, Council of Europe, Budapest, Second edition, January 2009.

