

**Inter-Agency Working Group on Children's Participation**

# **MINIMUM STANDARDS FOR CONSULTING WITH CHILDREN**



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*Minimum Standards for Consulting with Children*

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# FOREWORD

The recognition of children's right to give their opinions to adults making decisions on their behalf was one of the innovations of the 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Article 12, in which this right is enshrined, was identified by the Committee on the Rights of the Child, at its first session, as one of the fundamental principles of the Convention. One result has been increasing pressure on international bodies to include children in international meetings at which their welfare and rights are discussed, with many examples of successful inclusion of Under-18 delegates in public debates. Indeed, children were a positive force during the Committee on the Rights of the Child Day of General Discussion on Article 12, in October 2006.

These processes should be – and usually are – beneficial to children. Nevertheless, some experiences have been less successful than others and it has been suggested that children's right to participate in events and meetings may be achieved at the expense of other rights, particularly their rights to be protected from risk and harm. Although children's presence in meetings has been extensively described, the processes through which their safety, health and effective participation have been assured have been less-well-documented.

Thus, the publication of the minimum standards for children's participation in events and meetings away from their home base is particularly welcome, especially as it includes a detailed operations manual containing practical guidance about how to achieve these standards, from the first invitation to a meeting to follow-up activities after children return home. This is a major contribution to global efforts to increase the quality and effectiveness of children's participation, based on systematic experiences in preparing children for meetings, facilitating representative selection of children, ways of involving them in adult discussions, modes of facilitating their contributions and including these in outcome documents.

Although founded on the principles governing children's rights, these minimum standards are not mere theoretical ideas. Together with the Operations Manual, they represent the joint efforts of a group of organizations, based in Southeast Asia and experienced in the theory and practice of children's participation, to ensure that the presence of children at the 2005 Regional Consultation in Bangkok, under the UN Secretary-General's Global Study on Violence Against Children, was meaningful, appropriate, adequately resourced and safe. After evaluating the experiences gained in that process as well as the minimum standards and

operations manual used, the original sub-group on children's participation serving the Steering Committee for the Regional Consultation decided to continue their collaboration as the Inter-Agency Working Group on Children's Participation (IAWGCP). Their first task was to develop a generic form of the minimum standards and operations manual used in the Consultation, which can be used to guide those responsible for children's participation in any meeting or event in which their opinions are sought. By setting standards, as well as giving detailed guidance about how they may be achieved, this publication is essential reading for anyone shouldering this responsibility.

The IAWGCP members emphasize that the standards they propose are only the minimum by which children's rights can be assured when they take part in major meetings and events. Readers and users of this guide are invited to improve on both minimum standards and operations manual, ideally including children's opinions when making such adaptations, as was the case with some processes within the development of the original minimum standards. Children's participation is still in its infancy and much remains to be learned, not least how to ensure that children are involved in decision making at national, community and family levels. Yet this publication is a welcome and significant contribution to both the theory and practice of children's participation.

**Jaap E. Doek**

Former Chairperson of the UN Committee  
on the Rights of the Child

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

*The Minimum Standards on Consulting with Children* and the associated *Operations Manual* were developed as part of a process to ensure meaningful and high-quality children's participation in the UN Study on Violence against Children East Asia and the Pacific Regional Consultation and associated meetings. Thus, many individuals, especially children and technical experts, as well as national and international non governmental organizations and intergovernmental organizations have contributed to, provided invaluable advice on and otherwise influenced the final text. The East Asia and Pacific Steering Committee on Violence against Children, which organized the Consultation, supported meaningful children's participation throughout the process.

Helen Veitch, child-participation consultant, organized children's participation at and for the Regional Consultation. Helen compiled information from a variety of sources, developed and wrote the Minimum Standards and Operations Manual, including piloting and improving the content based on a six-month evaluation project. The Inter-Agency Working Group on Children's Participation (IAWGCP) would like to express heartfelt appreciation and thanks to Helen for her dedication and skill in successfully completing this immense task.

The IAWGCP would also like to express appreciation for the work of the members of the East Asia and Pacific Steering Committee on Violence against Children Sub-group on Children's Participation – Henk van Beers, Mattias Bryneson, Judith Ennew, Manuel Finelli, Dominique Pierre Plateau, Kritsana Pimonsaengsuriya and Junita Upadhyay – for their leadership, technical input and advice.

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Last, but very much not least, thanks are due to all the children and young people who supported and participated in the UN Study on Violence against Children consultations in East Asia and the Pacific.

The Minimum Standards and Operations Manual have drawn on publications, toolkits and other materials from several different organizations, including resources from ECPAT International, FICE Scotland (Fédération Internationale des Communautés Educatives, Scotland), ILO-IPEC Sub Regional Office for East Asia, the Save the Children Alliance and World Vision Asia Pacific.

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# INTRODUCTION

Since the 1990 World Summit for Children in New York, children have increasingly been involved in international events and meetings in which their rights and welfare are discussed. The rationale for this is usually described as their 'right to give an opinion' on matters concerning their lives (Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989). However, their involvement in making decisions remains limited, and they may have no actual place at the decision-making table.

Children's participation in international meetings and conferences is limited by adult control over:

- The resources required for children to attend;
- The topics of discussion;
- The agenda and procedures of the meeting;
- The selection process;
- The topics on which children are asked to give their opinions.

Over the years, many of these issues have been addressed to a certain extent. Nevertheless, two separate evaluations of children's participation in the United Nations General Assembly's Special Session on Children in May 2002 (Special Session) highlighted certain concerns

(Etherton, 2002; Ennew et al, 2004). In particular, a 2004 research assessment focused on the participation of children from the East Asia and Pacific region in the Special Session and related international forums; while the researchers highlighted the vision and commitment of the organizing group of agencies, they identified several potential or actual violations of children's rights:

- Selection processes that were not always transparent or representative;
- Negative or paternalistic attitudes among adults;
- Failure to protect children adequately from potential threats to their health and well-being or from abuse and exploitation;
- Inadequate preparation of children for their roles in the forums;
- Lack of follow up after the events.

In addition, the researchers noted growing international concern about the approaches used for involving children in international adult settings in which children have little or no influence on the actual decision-making process. Much of the blame for these shortcomings was placed on a lack of forward planning, particularly unrealistic budgeting, and failure at the regional level to collaborate

fully with national organizations working with children in participatory processes.

Thus, in 2003, when the same group of organizations in the East Asia and Pacific region began discussing the participation of children in a regional consultation to take place in 2005 for the UN Secretary-General's Global Study on Violence Against Children, they decided to build on lessons learned through previous collaboration. This entailed developing an adequate plan, including sufficient resources, for children's participation in this consultation. A long-term aim was to use the regional consultation to promote local-level, institutionalized participation of children in decision-making processes as a foundation for their meaningful representation at regional and other international events. The immediate goal was to ensure that children's rights to participate were not achieved through the violation of other rights. To achieve this, the organizations agreed to establish a set of minimum standards for children's participation in international meetings. Many further lessons were learned while developing these standards for the regional consultation. In evaluating the young delegates' contribution to that meeting and the effectiveness of the minimum standards and associated protocol, the organizing committee for children's participation recommended establishing generic standards for use in the East Asia and Pacific region and elsewhere.

## Why generic standards?

Children have a right to be consulted when issues that concern them are being discussed. To a greater or lesser degree, almost all issues concern children. Involving children in formal consultations is one way of fulfilling this right. However, organizers of formal consultations typically face a number of challenges that need to be dealt with to ensure children can indeed fully exercise their right to be heard.

As a result of their participation in previous formal conferences, there has been an increasing awareness among decision makers and the general public of the need to involve children in meetings. The advantages of including children and their views are:

**Improved decision-making processes.** Through joint decision making with adults and/or the lobbying of decision makers, children can influence policies and practice. Involving children in conferences can ensure that discussions are grounded in children's realities and lead to improved decisions.

**Better understanding of children's capacities.** By interacting with children, adults gain a better understanding of children's concerns, their capacities and their rights.

**Greater public awareness about participation.** High-profile media events provide visibility and allow children to communicate their concerns and demands. Including children in conferences demonstrates children's right to take part in events that concern them and helps to promote a culture of participation in the organizations involved.

**Improved children's knowledge and skills.** Children can acquire information, knowledge and understanding by attending conferences, improving their leadership and communication skills. Children can also develop their self-esteem and a greater sense of responsibility and democratic citizenship.

**NOTE:** *Inviting children to participate in formal conferences is only one option for consulting with children. There are many valid alternatives. Experience shows that participatory activities with children at the local level, close to where children live, encounter fewer constraints (and may often be the preferred option) compared to formal events. Formal conferences or consultations are more effective when based on a process of local activities with children.*

Minimum standards for inviting children to formal consultations or conferences can ensure that their participation is of high quality and consistent, offering children a genuine opportunity to express their views and to influence decision making.

## What are minimum standards?

Minimum standards are statements of the lowest acceptable level of practice by both adults and children to ensure meaningful children's participation in a formal consultation or conference. Minimum standards 'draw a line', stating what is and is not acceptable for children's participation.

In general, minimum standards need to be:

1. **Adhered to:** They should have monitoring mechanisms and sanctions if they are not all met;
2. **Non-negotiable:** They draw a line to show what is acceptable or not acceptable;
3. **Transparent:** Clear criteria for each standard give details of the steps an agency needs to take;
4. **Permanent:** They are fixed and followed consistently and constantly;
5. **Agreed upon:** One organization or group is accountable for them (the organizing committee) and key implementing agencies for the standards (local partners) understand and agree on them.

In addition, minimum standards must be based on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, particularly, Articles 2, 3, 12, 13, 14, 15, 17, 19, 34 and 36. In summary:

- Children have rights to be listened to, to freely express their views on all matters that affect them, to freedom of expression, thought and association, and of access to information;
- Participation should promote the best interests of children and enhance their personal development;
- All children have equal rights to participation, without discrimination;
- All children have the right to be protected from manipulation, violence, abuse and exploitation.

### Who are minimum standards for?

Primarily, the standards are for adults who are helping to facilitate children's participation in a consultation or conference. In particular, they apply to the following two groups:

- a) **Organizing committee.** This is usually a team of people representing different organizations or different parts of one organization, who have the task of organizing an event that involves children. They may need to raise funds and to supervise appropriate staff to run the event. Typically, an organizing committee is the main decision maker for an event and decides how it will be run (and consequently how children's

participation will be organized). The committee often consists of policy or programme management staff who are likely to be involved in the event itself.

- b) **Agencies sending children to participate in the event.** This group usually works more closely with children because they are responsible for selecting and preparing children to attend the event. They may also be involved in selecting and preparing suitable adults to accompany children, as well as organizing follow-up activities with children. For the purposes of this document, this group is called local partners. **Local partners** include policy or programme management staff who work with children at a more local level than the organizing committee.

The following groups of people typically implement minimum standards: an event's management team (public relations, programme officers, administration, coordinators, rapporteurs, documenters), event facilitators, accompanying adults or 'guardians', translators, venue and hotel staff (including security personnel), child-protection officers, medical staff, adult participants or delegates to an event, parents or carers, media, the hosting organization and the children who attend.

## The process of establishing standards

In October 2003, the organizations involved in enabling children from the region to attend the Special Session jointly set up a Regional Steering Committee for the UN Secretary-General's Global Study on Violence Against Children (UNVAC). At its first meeting, the Steering Committee created a separate coordinating group to work on children's participation issues. Over time, this developed from a group sharing information by e-mail to an Advisory Group on Children's Participation, which directly supported a consultant charged with managing all aspects of children's participation in the regional consultation for the UN Study, in June 2005.

### Objectives

The Steering Committee's primary purposes were to ensure:

- Participation of children in the regional consultation process, giving them equal voice with adult participants and ensuring that their views were reflected in all outcome documents;
- Wide participation in the process among government, civil society and children.

The Advisory Group on Children's Participation expanded these general principles into several desired outcomes:

- Children would present and discuss children's experiences of violence in their own country rather than provide personal testimonies;
- A transparent and fair process should be used in the selection of these children, who would, for practical reasons, be regarded as delegates rather than as representatives;
- Children would be well prepared and properly informed before the regional consultation by meeting first in a separate forum;
- The children's forum would prepare, enable and empower children as far as possible for their roles in the regional consultation. This would mean that there would be no separate (parallel) meetings with children during the regional consultation. Based on many experiences, the Advisory Group believed that children often had no real interaction with adults during parallel meetings;
- Children would be equal participants alongside adults and thus be referred to as 'under-18 delegates'. Their opinions would be valued equally with those of adults and taken into consideration. The final outcome document would reflect the views of both adults and children. No separate 'children's statement' or 'declaration' would be produced, unless children decided otherwise.

### The minimum standards strategy

Several measures were used to reach these goals. The first, and most important, of these was the development and implementation of minimum standards on children's participation for the regional consultation. The term 'minimum standards' referred to the most basic requirements of the Steering Committee and the agencies sponsoring under-18 delegates to the consultation.

To ensure that both organizations and individuals fully understood and adhered to those standards, a protocol (or manual) containing details of all necessary working documents and procedures was created to provide step-by-step guidance.

The Steering Committee hired a consultant to develop the minimum standards and the protocol, to manage the preparations and then to oversee the meaningful and safe participation of children in the regional consultation. The consultant also documented the process of developing, administering and evaluating all stages of children's participation in the consultation.

In each country, National Focal Agencies (NFAs) took the lead in facilitating national consultations with children and ensuring that children who would attend the regional consultation were properly selected and well prepared. NFAs were also responsible for administrative and logistical

issues in relation to the participation of children. This included obtaining signatures to voluntary consent forms from both children and their parents, as well as providing reliable guardians to accompany them.

NFA representatives met in April 2005 in Bangkok to discuss the UN Study process and children's involvement in the regional consultation. This meeting also provided an opportunity for discussing the principles and first draft of the minimum standards and protocol. Thus, the NFA meeting was an important step in:

- Promoting national ownership of the minimum standards;
- Stimulating support for children's participation at the national level;
- Building capacity among NFAs on participatory processes;
- Identifying gaps in the preparations for the regional consultation.

To help prepare children for selecting others to represent them as well as to help selected under-18 delegates better understand the consultation and their roles in it, the consultant developed a children-friendly booklet (which was translated where necessary).

### National-level preparations

Prior to the regional consultation, and often associated with under-18 delegate selection process, ten countries in the East Asia and Pacific region conducted national consultations on violence, in most of which children participated. These national consultations gave national under-18 delegates a mandate from their peers. In addition, the recommendations adopted at the national consultations were used as the basis for discussion during the children's forum. Through these national and local consultations, a total of 6,001 children were consulted, providing recommendations and ideas for solutions that later informed discussions among the under-18 delegates in the children's forum.

Adults were also prepared for the participation of children in the regional consultation. All delegates, whether older or younger than 18 years, received a background paper on children's participation and a copy of a child-protection policy for the consultation.

### Regional consultation, June 2005

In addition to the consultant, who coordinated all activities relevant to children, a number of other professionals were contracted to ensure the meaningful and safe participation of the young delegates. Guardians were recruited and checked by the sponsoring organizations. These guardians

accompanied the children from their homes to and from Bangkok and throughout the children's forum and regional consultation.

In addition, the children were protected and facilitated by:

- A children's participation coordinator in charge of logistical issues in relation to participation during the children's forum and regional consultation;
- A child-protection officer with overall responsibility for all aspects of child protection during the regional consultation. The child-protection officer was the first point of contact for any child-protection concerns for children, the Regional Steering Committee (Steering Committee) and all participants (both delegates and staff) at the consultation;
- A lead facilitator for the children's forum as well as for children's involvement in the consultation;
- A second facilitator to guide the team of volunteers who supported working-group sessions during the consultation so that children's participation was promoted without violating their rights. These volunteer facilitators were recruited from among consultation participants and were instructed to make sure that children had appropriate opportunities to join in discussions with adults;

- Translators/interpreters for children whose first language was not English to translate simultaneously throughout the children's forum and the regional consultation;
- A media coordinator to ensure that children were not exploited by journalists and photographers;
- A nurse, who was present and available for consultation at all times.

### Children's forum

The children's forum took place during the two days before the regional consultation. As preparation, Steering Committee members talked of their experiences in attending international meetings. In addition, the facilitator helped the under-18 delegates discuss many aspects of violence against children, using role play and other techniques. Those interested in the role of spokesperson were trained for interviews with journalists.

Working in groups, the under-18 delegates discussed the nature of violence in the UN Study's six categories in their countries and the recommendations they had brought from their national consultations. They then produced a document outlining combined suggested solutions to and recommendations on the problem of violence against children in the East Asia and Pacific region. This document was the basis of the under-18 delegates' PowerPoint presentation on the first morning of the consultation. The

document proved to be an excellent tool, both in supporting under-18 delegates' discussions in working groups during the consultation and for measuring the influence they had on the Outcome Statement. Slightly more than half of the recommendations in the Outcome Statement were related to the under-18 delegates' recommendations.

### Under-18 delegates' participation in the regional consultation

The regional consultation took place in Bangkok from 14-16 June 2005, with 289 delegates, including 26 younger than 18 years (12 boys and 14 girls ranging in age from 12 to 17). During the consultation, time was equally split between plenary and working-group discussions. To ensure continuity and depth of discussion, each delegate remained in one of the six thematic working groups throughout the consultation. The under-18 delegates had prepared themselves during the children's forum to take an active part in the working-group sessions and to highlight their consolidated recommendations.

### Evaluation

Evaluation results from delegates and members of the Steering Committee indicate that the regional consultation ended with a general feeling of accomplishment. Under-18 delegates generally stated that they felt they had participated with equal status to adults throughout the

plenary and working-group sessions. They said that they were listened to and their views respected and taken into account (Veitch, 2005).

The evaluation process also identified key lessons regarding the minimum standards and protocol. The general conclusion was that the minimum standards strategy had been successful in ensuring meaningful and ethical participation of children in the regional consultation, especially in setting up systems and marshalling resources within the current stage of development of children's participation within countries. On the basis of the lessons learned, the minimum standards and protocol were amended and given limited electronic circulation for further feedback.

### **Inter-Agency Group on Children's Participation**

After the regional consultation, the Advisory Group on Children's Participation became the autonomous Inter-Agency Group on Children's Participation<sup>1</sup> and set about developing generic minimum standards and protocol for guiding and endorsing meaningful, ethical and safe children's participation in formal consultation processes. This generic model is now entitled the Minimum Standards for Consulting with Children and the Operations Manual on Children's Participation in Consultations.

However, the member organizations of the Inter-Agency Group have emphasized that involving children in international events and meetings is not always the most effective way of getting young people's opinions and experiences represented at such levels of decision making. The minimum standards have been developed in relation only to formal processes of consultation and do not apply to children's participation practice in general. Formal meetings between children and adults will probably always reflect the relative power of adults. Regardless of the extent to which children's equal status at meetings is stressed, it is adults who call the meetings and set agendas. Moreover, unless they are carefully administered, the minimum standards could even be misused as a tool through which adults might deny children, or certain groups of children, access to public forums.

Nevertheless, the intention of these generic minimum standards and the supplementing operations manual is to promote the effective, meaningful and ethical participation of children in international forums in which they are encouraged to make their contribution as world citizens.

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<sup>1</sup> Members of the East Asia and Pacific Interagency Group on Children's Participation are: UNICEF EAPRO, Plan International, Knowing Children, ECPAT International, Save the Children Sweden, Save the Children UK, World Vision.

## About these Minimum Standards

The following Minimum Standards on Consulting with Children (Minimum Standards) were developed as a multi-agency tool to facilitate and support the participation of children in formal consultations. They are based on a year-long pilot project of participatory activities at the national and regional levels as part of the United Nations Study on Violence against Children.

The standards are organized in a step-by-step format, outlining those that need to be met before, during and after a consultation. Alongside each standard is a list of criteria that details the steps to be taken. Relevant guidelines or procedures that should help implement the standard are also included. The package of procedures, guidelines, forms and briefing papers (the Operations Manual on Children's Participation in Consultations) supplements the Minimum Standards. The Minimum Standards describe what agencies need to do to ensure that children participate meaningfully in a formal consultation. The Operations Manual describes how agencies can go about putting these in place.

## Principles of children's participation

These Minimum Standards are based on five principles of participation:<sup>2</sup>

### 1. Transparency, honesty and accountability

**What do we mean?** Adults involved in consultations with children follow ethical and participatory practice and put children's best interests first.

**Why is it important?** There are inevitable imbalances in power and status between adults and children. Transparency, honesty and accountability are needed for children's participation to be genuine and meaningful.

**Example:** All opportunities for under-18 delegates to voice their opinions (through presentations or taking on tasks at a consultation, such as chairing a discussion) are well planned by consultation staff and clearly communicated to the under-18 delegates – with ample opportunity for them to prepare.

### 2. A children-friendly environment

**What do we mean?** Children experience a safe, welcoming, inclusive and encouraging environment that enables participation.

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<sup>2</sup> These principles are adapted from the principles of participation outlined in 'Draft Practice Standards in Children's Participation' by Save the Children Alliance.

**Why is it important?** The quality of children’s participation and their ability to benefit from it are strongly influenced by the efforts made to create a positive environment for their participation.

**Example:** Small, facilitated, working-group sessions form the basis of discussions and decision making in a consultation.

### 3. Equality of opportunity

**What do we mean?** Participatory work should include groups of children who typically suffer discrimination or who are often excluded from activities, such as girls, working children, children with disabilities and rural children.

**Why is it important?** Children, like adults, are not a homogeneous group. Participation should provide for equality of opportunity for all regardless of age, location, ethnicity, gender, abilities, class, caste or other factors.

**Example:** Professional translators able to make simultaneous translation on a one-to-one basis are provided for all under-18 delegates who require language assistance during the course of the consultation.

### 4. Safety and protection of children

**What do we mean?** Involvement in a consultation must not expose any young delegate to threats or actual harm to well-being. A child’s safety and health is considered in every possible way, with safeguards put in place. This includes both physical and emotional well-being.

**Why is it important?** Organizations have a duty to protect the children with whom they work and to minimize the risk of abuse and exploitation or other negative consequences as a result of their participation.

**Example:** A formal procedure is set up to allow any under-18 delegate to make a complaint, in confidence, about any issue concerning involvement in the consultation.

### 5. Commitment and competency of adults

**What do we mean?** Adults working with children are committed to the aim of consulting with children and are trained and supported to carry out participatory practices.

**Why is it important?** Adults can only encourage genuine children’s participation effectively and confidently if they have the necessary understanding and skills.

**Example:** All consultation staff receive briefings and/or training on children’s participation and the specific procedures developed for a consultation.

## GLOSSARY

Adult delegate	Any participant in a consultation who is older than 18.
Child	A person younger than 18.
Child-protection focal person	A person who is responsible for child protection at a consultation, for running a complaints procedure and ensuring everyone at the consultation is appropriately briefed on the child-protection policy.
Children's participation coordinator	A person who is responsible for coordinating activities related to children's participation for a consultation, managing staff (the support team) and liaising between local partners and the organizing committee.
Consultation	A formal conference or meeting (with results that are recognized or that feed into other activities) that takes place at an international, regional, national or local level. The event may be part of a process of consultation at different levels.
Consultation staff	A team of staff employed by the organizing committee who are responsible for organizing the logistics of the event. The team could include a consultation organizer, administration staff, programme staff (with responsibility for content), media personnel as well as a children's participation coordinator.
Content/issue	The subject to be discussed during a consultation (such as violence against children, HIV and Aids, and the internet).
Criteria	Details of the steps an agency needs to take to meet all standards.
Facilitator	A person who is responsible for 'facilitating', or helping, children to express their views in public, using a variety of techniques. Facilitators are generally employed specifically for consultations.

Guardian	An adult accompanying an under-18 delegate. Guardians have responsibility for that under-18 delegate's safety and welfare.
Local area	This can mean region/country or province depending on the level of the consultation. For example, 'There is opportunity for two children from each local area to attend.'
Local partner	An organization responsible for selecting, preparing and following up with children who participate in a consultation.
Media coordinator	A person who is responsible for coordinating media activities (and the media team) at a meeting or event.
Media team	A group of people in charge of media activities at a meeting or event.
Organizing committee	A group of people responsible for organizing a meeting or event.
Participation	Participation, in this document, is about influencing decision making and achieving change. Children's participation is the informed and willing involvement of all children in any matter concerning them, either directly or indirectly.
Reserve	An alternate under-18 delegate who participates in preparatory sessions and can take the place of a delegate who cannot attend a meeting or event.
Risk assessment	The process of identifying and assessing the risks to children involved in an activity (usually leading to an action plan to minimize those risks).
Support team	A team of staff that specifically supports children's participation in a consultation. The team might include a children's participation coordinator (team manager), facilitators (and a lead facilitator), child-protection focal person and administration staff.
Under-18 delegate	Any participant in a consultation who is younger than 18.

# THE MINIMUM STANDARDS

## Before the consultation

Standard	Criteria	Relevant guidelines, forms and procedures
<p>1. Planning of the event allows <b>appropriate time</b> for organizing children's participation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The decision to involve children in a formal consultation and to implement the Minimum Standards is made at least eight months before the event is due to take place. And preparations start very soon after this decision.</li> <li>■ Clear terms of reference for the organizing committee and any subcommittees are finalized by all involved before activities of the different groups begin.</li> <li>■ Preparatory activities to involve children in the consultation start at least six months before the event.</li> <li>■ A preparatory meeting for local partners is organized at least five months before the main event.</li> <li>■ Local preparatory meetings are organized at least three months before the main event (these are likely to be organized by local partners).</li> <li>■ Follow-up activities are developed in collaboration with local partners and mutually agreed upon with the organizing committee prior to the main event.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Step-by-step guide</li> <li>■ Organizing committee guidelines</li> <li>■ Terms of reference for the organizing committee</li> </ul>

## Before the consultation (continued)

Standard	Criteria	Relevant guidelines, forms and procedures
<p>2. A realistic <b>budget</b> is made that includes all possible costs for children's participation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The organizing committee agrees on how finances will be managed before the budget is finalized.</li> <li>■ The organizing committee finalizes and agrees upon the budget at least eight months before the event.</li> <li>■ Clear and transparent information on how costs will be covered is given to local partners.</li> <li>■ Regular financial reports are made and the budget is openly discussed at meetings of the organizing committee.</li> <li>■ Responsibility for raising the budget is allocated.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Step-by-step guide</li> <li>■ Budget guidelines</li> <li>■ Organizing committee guidelines</li> <li>■ Terms of reference for children's participation coordinator</li> </ul>
<p>3. Children-friendly <b>background information</b> on the event is produced, translated and shared with children.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Before activities start, children-friendly information is produced that outlines the aims of the event and the roles and responsibilities of those attending (including under-18 delegates and how they will be involved in the consultation process).</li> <li>■ Local partners translate background information into native languages and share it with children in a timely manner.</li> <li>■ Selected under-18 delegates are required to read and sign a participation agreement (which clearly outlines their role and responsibilities as an under-18 delegate).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ How to produce children-friendly documents</li> <li>■ 'What's all this about...'</li> <li>■ Under-18 delegate participation agreement</li> </ul>

## Before the consultation (continued)

Standard	Criteria	Relevant guidelines, forms and procedures
4. A <b>child-protection</b> policy and strategy is developed for the consultation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The organizing committee develops, approves and signs its child-protection policy.</li> <li>■ All under-18 delegates, local partners, adult delegates and adults supporting children's participation are informed of the policy.</li> <li>■ All staff or volunteers contracted by the organizing committee and local partners are required to comply with the policy.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Child-protection policy</li> <li>■ 'What's all this about...'</li> <li>■ All participation agreements</li> <li>■ Briefing note for hotel staff on child protection</li> <li>■ Staff pamphlet on child protection</li> </ul>
5. A transparent and fair process is used in the <b>selection</b> of under-18 delegates for the event.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Local partners develop systems to ensure that the selection process is fair and transparent and that children are not discriminated against because of age, gender, abilities, language, social origin, class, ethnicity, geographical location or any other reason.</li> <li>■ Under-18 delegates are knowledgeable and informed on the issues to be discussed at the consultation.</li> <li>■ Preparatory events are organized locally where children select under-18 delegates from among their peers and thus give them a mandate to represent them.</li> <li>■ The organizing committee implements a step-by-step registration process (for the participation of delegates at the event), with clear deadlines for each step. This process starts at least two months before the event takes place.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Guidelines for selecting under-18 delegates</li> <li>■ Step-by-step guide</li> </ul>

## Before the consultation (continued)

Standard	Criteria	Relevant guidelines, forms and procedures
<p>6. All under-18 delegates are accompanied to the consultation by a <b>suitable adult</b> who will take responsibility for their safety and welfare (known as the 'guardian').</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Local partners distribute the guidelines for selecting guardians to suitable candidates.</li> <li>■ Local partners select guardians, with the involvement of under-18 delegates.</li> <li>■ Local partners make safeguarding checks as soon as a guardian has been selected. Registration for guardians does not proceed without the receipt of a positive safeguarding check.</li> <li>■ Prior to departure, at least one meeting with under-18 delegates and their guardians is organized to help prepare the under-18 delegates. The meeting should include discussions on content and process of the consultation, as well as logistical issues.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Guidelines for selecting guardians</li> <li>■ Safeguarding check form</li> <li>■ Consent form</li> <li>■ Step-by-step guide</li> </ul>

## Before the consultation (continued)

Standard	Criteria	Relevant guidelines, forms and procedures
<p>7. Processes are established to ensure that under-18 delegates are able to attend and have given their personal informed <b>consent</b> for their participation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Local partners translate the consent forms into appropriate languages for under-18 delegates and their parents or carers.</li> <li>■ Local partners arrange a meeting with under-18 delegates, their guardians and their parents or carers to explain the consent form and the roles and processes of the consultation.</li> <li>■ Selected under-18 delegates are given time to consider their involvement before they sign consent forms to actually participate in an event.</li> <li>■ The children’s participation coordinator closely monitors the processing of signed consent forms so that the registration of an under-18 delegate does not proceed without formal consent.</li> <li>■ Consent is obtained for the use of all information to be provided to the media by or about under-18 delegates. Information identified as confidential must be safeguarded at all times.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Consent form</li> <li>■ ‘What’s all this about...’</li> <li>■ Step-by-step guide</li> </ul>

## Before the consultation (continued)

Standard	Criteria	Relevant guidelines, forms and procedures
<p>8. Consultation staff, local partners, translators, guardians and under-18 delegates receive <b>briefings on their specific roles and responsibilities.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Local partners are briefed on their role during a meeting (hosted by the organizing committee) that should take place at least five months prior to the main event. This early meeting helps to ensure that local partners discuss and agree upon the participatory process and child-protection procedures.</li> <li>■ Documents outlining roles and responsibilities for staff, local partners, translators, guardians and under-18 delegates are distributed to potential candidates and they are briefed before they take on their duties.</li> <li>■ Under-18 delegates are briefed on their role, during a meeting with guardians and local partners, before they sign consent forms.</li> <li>■ Local partners brief the guardians on their role during the recruitment process. The child-protection focal person briefs them on the child-protection policy before the preparatory workshop for under-18 delegates.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ ‘What’s all this about...’</li> <li>■ All participation agreements</li> <li>■ Local partner guidelines</li> <li>■ Organizing committee guidelines</li> <li>■ Terms of reference for staff/translators</li> <li>■ Guidelines for selecting guardians and under-18 delegates</li> <li>■ Step-by-step guide</li> </ul>
<p>9. All under-18 delegates are <b>fully insured</b> (medical and travel) during their participation at the event.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Insurance covers under-18 delegates during their travel to, and from, as well as during, the event.</li> <li>■ Briefing materials for under-18 delegates and their parents/carers clearly state where responsibility falls for insurance coverage.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Organizing committee guidelines</li> <li>■ Local partner guidelines</li> <li>■ Consent form</li> <li>■ Step-by-step guide</li> <li>■ Under-18 delegate registration form</li> </ul>

## Before the consultation (continued)

Standard	Criteria	Relevant guidelines, forms and procedures
10. The <b>venue</b> for the consultation is <b>children-friendly and accessible</b> .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ All areas in the venue are accessible to any under-18 delegate with a disability.</li> <li>■ The venue is able to accommodate small discussion groups.</li> <li>■ An additional room is allocated for exclusive use by under-18 delegates and their support team (including guardians, translators, facilitators and administration staff).</li> <li>■ Consideration of access to microphones is given priority in organizing seating arrangements for under-18 delegates.</li> <li>■ Under-18 delegates are given equal consideration with adult delegates in seating arrangements.</li> <li>■ Room layouts facilitate translation with minimal disturbance for delegates who do not need the service.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Organizing committee guidelines</li> </ul>
11. A <b>preparatory workshop for under-18 delegates</b> is organized immediately before the consultation to help prepare them.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ A document is produced from the preparatory workshop listing statements or recommendations from under-18 delegates (agreed upon at the preparatory workshop).</li> <li>■ This document is translated into mother-tongue languages read by under-18 delegates and made available to consultation organizers as a resource.</li> </ul> <p><b>NOTE:</b> All standards under 'during the consultation' are also relevant when organizing a preparatory workshop.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Organizing committee guidelines</li> <li>■ Working agenda for preparatory workshop</li> <li>■ Preparatory workshop evaluation sheet</li> </ul>

## Before the consultation (continued)

Standard	Criteria	Relevant guidelines, forms and procedures
<p>12. <b>Facilitators are experienced</b> at working effectively and confidently with under-18 delegates and able to facilitate an environment that is non-discriminatory and inclusive.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Appropriate recruitment procedures are instituted to find experienced facilitators for the consultation and preparatory meetings.</li> <li>■ Communication and coordination between facilitators at the preparatory workshop for under-18 delegates and consultation staff starts at least one month before the event.</li> <li>■ All facilitators (at the preparatory workshop and the main consultation) receive training on participatory techniques before they begin their duties. Facilitation plans are discussed by all to ensure roles and responsibilities are clear.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Facilitator terms of reference</li> <li>■ Organizing committee guidelines</li> </ul>
<p>13. Staff specifically recruited to organize the consultation are <b>committed to children's participation and are competent</b> in participatory practices.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Recruitment procedures for staff ask potential candidates to demonstrate their commitment and/or experience in participatory practices.</li> <li>■ All consultation staff receive briefings and/or training on children's participation and the specific procedures developed for the consultation.</li> <li>■ A monitoring mechanism is developed to ensure that all staff practise participatory and children-friendly processes.</li> <li>■ Writing of terms of references is completed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Organizing committee guidelines</li> </ul>

## During the consultation

Standard	Criteria	Relevant guidelines, forms and procedures
14. One person is given responsibility for <b>child-protection</b> issues at the consultation (known as the child-protection focal person).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The child-protection focal person implements the following activities before the consultation begins:                             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) A risk assessment for under-18 delegates;</li> <li>b) Setting up a team of child-protection officers;</li> <li>c) Developing a step-by-step action plan for incidents and emergencies;</li> <li>d) Briefing all staff and delegates (including the production of appropriate briefing materials).</li> </ol> </li> <li>■ The child-protection focal person conducts daily briefing meetings with guardians and the child-protection team during the consultation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Child-protection action plan</li> <li>■ Child-protection risk assessment</li> <li>■ 'What's this all about...'</li> <li>■ Child-protection team terms of reference</li> <li>■ Child-protection focal person terms of reference</li> </ul>
15. A <b>formal complaints procedure</b> is set up to allow under-18 delegates to make a complaint in confidence about any issue concerning their involvement in the consultation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The child-protection focal person is responsible for developing and implementing the complaints procedure.</li> <li>■ Information about the complaints procedure is produced in a children-friendly format, translated and distributed to all under-18 delegates.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Child-protection focal person terms of reference</li> <li>■ Under-18 delegate participation agreement</li> <li>■ 'What's this all about...'</li> </ul>

## During the consultation (continued)

Standard	Criteria	Relevant guidelines, forms and procedures
<p>16. Under-18 delegates are given equal opportunity with adult delegates to <b>make statements, presentations and voice their opinions</b> at the consultation. These contributions are reflected in any outcome documents from the consultation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ All opportunities for under-18 delegates to voice their opinions (through presentations or taking on tasks in a consultation, such as chairing a discussion) are well planned by consultation staff and clearly communicated to under-18 delegates – with ample opportunity for them to prepare.</li> <li>■ Small, facilitated working-group sessions form the basis of discussions and decision making at the event.</li> <li>■ All decision-making processes at the event are transparent and participatory (including how under-18 delegates are selected for specific tasks).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Organizing committee guidelines</li> <li>■ Facilitator terms of reference</li> <li>■ Working agenda for preparatory workshop</li> </ul>

## During the consultation (continued)

Standard	Criteria	Relevant guidelines, forms and procedures
<p>17. Appropriate systems are put in place to ensure that under-18 delegates are able to <b>communicate in their mother tongue</b>.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The organizing committee translates key documents related to the event (agenda or outcome statement, for example) and distributes them in good time to under-18 delegates.</li> <li>■ Professional translators able to make simultaneous translation on a one-to-one basis are provided for all under-18 delegates that require translation during the course of the consultation.</li> <li>■ Guardians provide translation for under-18 delegates during the time they are not in the consultation sessions (during travel, before and after the consultation and on any excursions).</li> <li>■ Training of translators on participatory is instituted prior to the start of their work. Facilitators closely monitor the translation during the event and regular briefings between facilitators and translators.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Organizing committee guidelines</li> <li>■ Selection guidelines for guardians</li> <li>■ Local partner guidelines</li> <li>■ Translator terms of reference</li> </ul>

## During the consultation (continued)

Standard	Criteria	Relevant guidelines, forms and procedures
<p>18. <b>Media activities follow an ethical code.</b> Children who speak to the media are informed and prepared.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The organizing committee appoints a media coordinator to liaise between journalists and the under-18 delegates and work closely with the child-protection focal person to make daily assessments of media activities.</li> <li>■ The organizing committee develops media guidelines in consultation with the media team and both parties agree upon them before media interactions take place.</li> <li>■ Informed consent is gained from under-18 delegates before the taking of photographs, videos or digital images.</li> <li>■ The organizing committee and media team agree on how best to package the views of under-18 delegates for the consultation (through video, photography and written work) and the subsequent resources and preparation required to ensure under-18 delegates' view points have impact on the media.</li> <li>■ Guidelines for media professionals and other materials (press releases, for example) are distributed to journalists.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Media guidelines</li> <li>■ Child-protection focal person terms of reference</li> <li>■ Guidelines for media professionals</li> <li>■ Media release form</li> </ul>

## During the consultation (continued)

Standard	Criteria	Relevant guidelines, forms and procedures
19. Under-18 delegates who take on media tasks are <b>aware of the impact of doing media interviews</b> and undertake risk assessments on the issue.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ All under-18 delegates are informed of the extent of media interest in the event and risks in engaging with media.</li> <li>■ All under-18 delegates undertaking media activities receive comprehensive training prior to any media interaction.</li> <li>■ All under-18 delegates are informed of their right to refuse to engage with some or all forms of media.</li> <li>■ All under-18 delegates wishing to engage with the media make risk assessments (in collaboration with their guardians and a media professional).</li> <li>■ The media team assesses the risks on a case-by-case basis with under-18 delegates, with possible risks explained for each interview.</li> <li>■ The media team makes certain that mechanisms are in place to ensure that under-18 delegates who do not wish to engage with media are protected from being approached by any journalist during the event.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Media guidelines</li> </ul>

## During the consultation (continued)

Standard	Criteria	Relevant guidelines, forms and procedures
<p>20. All delegates (adults and under-18s) are given the opportunity to <b>evaluate their participation practice</b> during the consultation (as part of the scheduled activities).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Evaluation forms are distributed to under-18 delegates during the preparatory workshop.</li> <li>■ Guardians have daily de-briefing sessions with under-18 delegates and report any concerns that arise during those briefings to the child-protection focal person.</li> <li>■ Evaluation forms are distributed to under-18 and adult delegates before the end of the consultation – adequate time is allocated for completing the forms.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Organizing committee guidelines</li> <li>■ Selection guidelines for guardians</li> <li>■ Guardian participation agreement</li> <li>■ Under-18 delegate evaluation form</li> </ul>
<p>21. <b>Follow-up activities are finalized</b> and agreed upon during the consultation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ A meeting to discuss short-term and long-term follow-up activities takes place during the consultation, bringing together relevant organizations (such as governments, local partners and the organizing committee).</li> <li>■ Follow-up activities include opportunities for children and adults to review jointly any commitments, and assess progress.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Organizing committee guidelines</li> <li>■ Follow-up guidelines</li> <li>■ Step-by-step guide</li> </ul>

## After the consultation

Standard	Criteria	Relevant guidelines, forms and procedures
22. Under-18 delegates are given opportunities to <b>feedback and use their experience of participating</b> in the consultation with their peers or with projects they are connected to and with local communities or organizations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Local partners implement plans for under-18 delegates to report back to peers, projects or communities they are connected to (as well as possible media interviews).</li> <li>■ Local partners conduct de-briefing interviews with under-18 delegates no later than one month after the consultation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Follow-up guidelines</li> <li>■ Local partner guidelines</li> </ul>
23. Under-18 delegates receive <b>follow-up documents from the consultation</b> in their native language and in an accessible format.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The organizing committee produces and distributes children-friendly versions of follow-up documents to under-18 delegates.</li> <li>■ Local partners translate follow-up documents into the native languages of under-18 delegates (and other children likely to receive them).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Organizing committee guidelines</li> <li>■ Local partner guidelines</li> </ul>
24. Local partners provide support to under-18 delegates so that they can be <b>involved in follow-up activities</b> from the consultation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Local partners implement follow-up activities according to plans drafted and agreed upon before and during the consultation.</li> <li>■ Local partners communicate back to the relevant authorities or organizations any children's assessments of progress in meeting commitments made during the consultation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Local partner guidelines</li> <li>■ Follow-up guidelines</li> </ul>

## Useful websites and publications

CRIN Resource – Minimum Standards for Consulting with Children

[www.crin.org/resources/infodetail.asp?id=7932](http://www.crin.org/resources/infodetail.asp?id=7932)

ECPAT International

[www.ecpat.net](http://www.ecpat.net)

Knowing Children

[www.knowingchildren.org](http://www.knowingchildren.org)

Plan Asia Regional Office

[www.plan-international.org/asia/](http://www.plan-international.org/asia/)

Save the Children Sweden – Southeast Asia and Pacific Regional Office

[www.scswedenseap.org](http://www.scswedenseap.org)

UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Regional Office

[www.unicef.org](http://www.unicef.org)

World Vision

[www.worldvision.org](http://www.worldvision.org)

Ennew, J., Hastadewi, Y. and Plateau, D.P., 2004, *Seen and heard: Participation of children and young people in Southeast, East Asia and Pacific in events and forums leading to and following up on the United Nations General Assembly Special Session on Children, May 2002*, Bangkok: Save the Children Southeast, East Asia and the Pacific Region.

Etherton, M., 2002, *Creating a process fit for children: Children and young people's participation in the preparations for the UN Special Session on Children*, Unpublished, Save the Children; also reproduced in an earlier version as Thanks for everything.

Steering Committee, 2005, *What's all this about the UN Study on Violence Against Children Regional Consultation East Asia Pacific?*, Bangkok, Steering Committee for the East Asia and Pacific Regional Consultation for the UN Study on Violence Against Children.

UNICEF, 2005, *Report on the East Asia and Pacific Regional Consultation on Violence Against Children, Bangkok June 14 to 16, 2005*, Bangkok, UNICEF Regional Office for East Asia and the Pacific.

Veitch, H., 2005, *Evaluation report on children's participation at the East Asia Pacific Regional Consultation for the UN Study on Violence Against Children*, Bangkok, UNVAC Regional Steering Committee.

The Minimum Standards were produced by Helen Veitch, consultant on children's participation.



The CD-ROM in the back cover pocket contains the *Operations Manual on Children's Participation in Consultations*, which is a package of guidelines, forms and briefing papers that supplement the *Minimum Standards on Consulting with Children*. In the CD-ROM, the Operations Manual is provided in pdf format for reading and in Word format for inserting the necessary information into templates to use for specific purposes.

### The Operations Manual is presented in ten sections as follows:

SECTION 1: PLANNING MATERIALS

SECTION 2: PREPARATORY MATERIALS

SECTION 3: SELECTION

SECTION 4: REGISTRATION FORMS

SECTION 5: BRIEFING MATERIALS

SECTION 6: CHILD PROTECTION

SECTION 7: PREPARATORY WORKSHOP

SECTION 8: MEDIA

SECTION 9: TERMS OF REFERENCE

SECTION 10: FOLLOW UP





