



Save the Children



**The Open
University**

**Monitoring, Evaluation,
Accountability and Learning (MEAL)**

12 The child participation global indicator

Keywords: participation; consultative participation; collaborative participation; child-led participation; practice standards; Convention of the Rights of the Child



Introduction

This session presents the child participation global indicator, providing a good overview of its scope, definition, its elements and the methodology to assess it. The session also explains how Save the Children understands child participation, its different types and why it is important to monitor it. Completing this session will take you about one hour.

Learning Outcomes for this Session

Knowledge and Understanding

When you have studied this session, you should be able to:

1. Understand the importance of monitoring child participation.
2. Identify what needs to be in place and who needs to be consulted to fill in the child participation indicator reporting tool.

Practical and Professional Skills

When you have studied this session, you should be able to:

1. Measure and accurately report on the child participation indicator.
2. Understand how the results can be used.

I Why monitoring children's participation?

I.1 What is child participation?

Child Participation is a right. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989) acknowledges that children are social actors in their own right, and are entitled to be involved in all matters that affect their lives.

Article 12 of the UNCRC directly relates to child participation. However, child participation is also embedded within the other articles in the UNCRC. For example, if we wish a young person to express their opinions about issues that affect them (article 12), they need information (Article 17) to make an informed comment and to gather with others to discuss issues (Article 15). Without freedom of thought (Article 14) children would not be permitted to have anything to say. All conditions need to be in place for children's participation to be meaningful. Please refer to Session 8: Children's participation in MEAL to further explore what child participation is.

Activity I (exploratory)

Think of a time when as a child you were asked what you thought about something and your opinion was taken into account. How did you feel?

Participation can take many forms and can vary depending on the context, culture, children's age, etc. Sometimes children have more power, sometimes adults do. When there is true collaboration the power relation will be balanced and both adults and children will be at the same level. Three types of child participation have been established to categorise these different levels in the adult-children power relation: consultative participation, collaborative participation, and child-led participation. There are times when it looks like children are participating but they are not truly doing so. We describe this as non-participation.

Activity 2 (SAQ)

Look at the list below and link the correct type of participation with its description.

Non-participation – Consultative – Collaborative – Child-led	
?	1. Involves children partnering with adults in some capacity, through which adults and children work in partnership to make decisions and implement projects.
?	2. Formal participation, just to tick the box, but without any real meaning or content. Can be decorative or manipulated.
?	3. Children are empowered to lead their own projects or initiatives either individually or as part of their own organisations, clubs or parliaments. Adults may act as facilitators or offer advice and support to children.
?	4. Participation involves adults seeking the views of children to increase their knowledge and understanding of children’s lives and the issues affecting them. It recognises children’s beliefs as well as their expertise but is adult-led and managed.

Activity 3 (SAQ)

Compare the three types of child participation. Do you think there are any types that are preferred over others?

1.2 Why does Save the Children monitor child participation?

Child participation is a crucial pillar of our work and it is integrated in our Programme Quality Framework¹. We need to involve children significantly in order to understand what their issues are and provide a clear direction on how to orientate our policies and programmes. We can learn a lot from the insightful ideas and creative solutions of children. But if we want to make sure we are involving them in the right way, we need to monitor how well we are actually involving children in our work.

This is the purpose of the child participation global indicator – to measure the quality and the scope of child participation in Save the Children’s projects.

¹ The Programme Quality Framework captures the core elements that define programme quality for Save the Children. It is a programme development tool with application for planning, proposals and advocacy. It can also be used as a diagnostic for self or peer review of the extent to which country programmes have been able to build the architecture of quality programmes. You can find more information in session 1 Introduction to the course and Monitoring & Evaluation in Save the Children as well as in [OneNet](#).

The focus of this indicator is on internal quality of our programmes, not the impact of child participation in the wider community. We want to monitor and document the quality of child participation practices in order to improve programme quality and relevance overall, and be credible advocates for child participation. This is the only non-thematic global indicator in our system. For further information about the global indicators revisit Session 2: Save the Children MEAL system overview.

2 Assessing and reporting the indicator

2.1 The indicator definition: involving child participation

The indicator captures the extent to which projects **involving child participation** comply with Save the Children's Practice Standards in Child Participation (CHP).

As described above, children's participation can be consultative, collaborative or child-led in nature. It's important to be able to distinguish between activities where children are simply 'beneficiaries' of an intervention and where they are actively participating in a project or process. For this global indicator, we will not class the following activities as 'participation':

- A child in receipt of a one-off health intervention such as a life-saving drug or immunisation.
- A child who is attending school as part of normal everyday classes.
- A child attending a Child Friendly Space.

Child participation is characterised by activities where children are listened to, have the opportunity to express a view about an issue that is affecting them, and where they can make a positive change related to that issue.

2.2 The indicator definition: complying with the Practice Standards

In 2005 Save the Children developed seven Practice Standards for our child participation activities. However, in 2011 we were part of a broad consensus that child participation should in fact meet nine basic requirements, known as the "Basic Requirements for Effective and Ethical Children's Participation". These were adopted into a General Comment on Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). As you can see in the table below many Practice Standards are also captured on the Basic Requirements.

Seven SC Child Participation Practice Standards	Nine Basic Requirements for Effective and Ethical Children's Participation
1. An ethical approach: transparency, honesty and accountability	1. Participation is transparent and informative
2. Children's participation is relevant and voluntary	2. Participation is voluntary
3. A child-friendly, enabling environment	3. Participation is respectful
4. Equality of opportunity	4. Participation is relevant
5. Staff are effective and confident	5. Participation is facilitated with child friendly environments and working methods
6. Participation promotes the safety and protection of children	6. Participation is inclusive
7. Ensuring follow-up and evaluation	7. Participation is supported by training for adults
	8. Participation is safe and sensitive to risk
	9. Participation is accountable

Table 1: SC Child Participation Practice Standards and Basic Requirements for Effective and Ethical Children's Participation

With the aim of reducing complexity, during the first few years only three of the seven Save the Children (SC) Practice Standards are to be assessed: standard 2 “*Voluntary*”, standard 4 “*Inclusive*” and standard 6 “*Safe*”. These are often referred to as the minimum standards to which all child participation should comply. However, from 2014 the full list of UN Basic Requirements will be introduced for progressive assessment. The current plan is to invite country offices to assess their projects against all nine Basic Requirements on a voluntary basis during the 2014 global reporting process (Country Annual Report). From 2015 onwards all country offices will then be expected to assess all nine UN Basic Requirements.

2.3 The indicator definition: numerator and denominator

The indicator is defined as **the percentage of Save the Children supported projects, involving child participation and complying with the Save the Children Practice Standards: voluntary, safe and inclusive.**

The numerator is the **number of projects involving Child Participation and complying with minimum Save the Children practice standards “voluntary”, “safe” and “inclusive”**. From 2015 onwards the numerator will include all nine UN Basic Requirements, as explained above.

The denominator for 2013 onwards is the **total number of projects in the country programme or a sample of them.**

Ideally, all projects will be counted in the denominator, but a sample of them is also allowed when there are more than ten projects in the country programme. If you decide to use a sample instead of all projects in the denominator, you will need to make sure that you come up with a **random sample** of projects to avoid bias in selection. When the sample is not random, there is usually a tendency to select those projects with higher levels of child participation, or those projects where child participation is better performed. This is not necessarily representative of the real situation in the country programme, which is what we want to know. A specific sampling guidance for the denominator is included in the child indicator technical guidance package provided with the Country Annual Report. Guidance and support can be provided by the Regional Office (RO) and by the global focal points for this indicator².

If you have participated in the assessment and reporting of this indicator in 2011 and 2012 you have probably noticed the different definition of the denominator. The current definition is very similar to the 2011 definition – the only difference is that sampling is now allowed. In the 2012 definition, only projects that have ended and ongoing projects lasting over three years were to be included in the denominator.

The reason for these changes is that the indicator is (relatively) new and it is still being tested and improved. There are advantages and disadvantages for each option. After an inclusive consultation process conducted in 2013 it was concluded that the current definition is the preferred one for most stakeholders.

2.4 How do I get ready to report this indicator?

This indicator is measured through a self-assessment. Let's see what different steps you need to undertake to successfully conduct this self-assessment and report the indicator.

1. Define your denominator:

- ✓ *Get the full list of projects implemented in your country office this year.* You can obtain the list from the Award Management System. Those projects that started or finished during the year are also to be included.

What is a project?

It is not straight forward to decide what a project is. By a project in Save the Children we understand a 'structured undertaking of limited duration with a clearly defined scope. Through its component activities, a project mobilises inputs in order to produce specific outputs or results that will contribute to achieving an objective.' (Save the Children's Glossary of monitoring and evaluation terms)

- ✓ If there are more than ten projects in your country programme, you'll need to *decide if you want to include all of them in your analysis or if you want to use just a sample.* If you use a sample make sure **projects are selected randomly and**

² Please refer to the technical guidance included in the latest Country Annual Report pack.

according to the sampling guidance included in the technical guidance package. Ask for support at the RO, the global focal point for the indicator, if you are unsure of how to do this.

- ✓ Once you have the number of projects in the denominator, *enter the number in the database*, where appropriate.

2. **Analyse the projects in your denominator to decide if they involve child participation and are to be assessed.** Children may not have had participated necessarily in all projects included in your denominator. Hence, not all projects in your denominator are to be assessed. **Only those projects involving child participation are to be assessed.** So first, you need to analyse the range of projects you have included in your denominator to identify those in which children have participated in any sort of way. Participation can mean that children have been consulted, have collaborated with adults or have lead in some activities. Those projects where there has not been any participation will be excluded from the assessment. In that case, they will be included in the denominator, but are not eligible to be included in the numerator (second part of the indicator, as referred above).

Activity 4 (SAQ)

True or false? Read the situations below and decide if there is meaningful child-participation as understood by SC and if these projects should be included or excluded from the assessment.

Situation	Is this child participation? If yes, can you tell what type of participation it is?
1. Children present to their government a petition to stop child marriage that they have prepared.	
2. Children are invited to present a petition to stop child marriage to their government, with adults from Save the Children. The Press are led to believe the children have prepared it, but it has been solely prepared by adults at Save the Children.	
3. Children attending after school clubs are actively involved and consulted by Save the Children staff to plan the activities for the next year.	
4. Children are interviewed as part of the data collection phase of a mid-term evaluation.	
5. Children are involved in the mid-term evaluation planning and disseminate the results amongst their peers.	
6. Children attend a school class, respond to the questions asked by the teacher and are engaged in the activities proposed for the session.	
7. A school is being built in the area and community members (including children) participate in the construction.	
8. Children are invited to a consultation meeting, where they are asked questions relating to the new strategy that Save the Children is developing. The children are told their views will be taken into account, but in reality the adults have already decided how they will write the strategy and the children's views will not be taken into account.	

3. The third step to report this indicator is to **assess those projects that involve child participation**. Once you have identified the projects that involve child participation, they need to be assessed against the three SC minimum Practice Standards (until 2014) or the nine UN Basic Requirements (from 2015 onwards). The assessment should be done in consultation with partners and staff involved in the project. Whenever possible children should also be consulted to reflect their views on the quality of their participation³. The reporting tool that was used in 2011 and 2012 provides guiding questions to assess each standard. The new database system will also include these questions to guide you through the assessment.
4. **Enter the assessment in the database**. The database will calculate automatically which projects involving child participation comply with the minimum Practice Standards (until 2014) or the nine UN Basic Requirements (from 2015 onwards). This figure is the numerator of the indicator. Projects that comply only partially with one or more standard (or Basic Requirement from 2015 onwards) will not be included in the numerator, but they will still be reflected in the analysis, so progress towards full compliance can be captured.

3 What can you do with the results?

The results of this indicator are consolidated and analysed annually at global level. They are used for reflection, decision making and learning. They help in identifying good practice, but also gaps, so they can be addressed. It also helps to advocate internally and externally for child participation at all levels in society.

At country office level the data will provide the management with critical information on the scope and quality of child participation in all projects and thus enable the setting of targets and monitoring progress. The data will provide valuable information to plan improvement, share of best practices and request for support or technical assistance. It can also be a great opportunity to discuss with children how their participation can be improved.

³ The technical guidance package includes a guide with activities and tips to consult with children on this assessment. Please use it.



Summary of this session

1. Child Participation is a right, recognised and protected by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. It is about having the opportunity to express a view, influence decision making and achieve change.
2. Participation can take many forms: consultative, collaborative and child-led.
3. The purpose of this global indicator is to measure the quality and the scope of child participation in Save the Children's projects.
4. The denominator of this indicator is "all projects in the Country Programme" or a sample of them when there are ten or more projects. If you use a sample, remember to follow the guidelines for random sampling.
5. The numerator is the number of projects complying with the three minimum Practice Standards "voluntary, safe and inclusive" until 2014. From 2015 onwards the projects will be assessed against the nine UN Basic Requirements.
6. The data is used for learning and reflection and to advocate internally and externally for the improvement of children's participation.
7. Partners and children should be consulted as much as possible during the assessment. The results should also be shared with them.

Self-Assessment Questions (SAQ) answers

Activity 2:

Collaboration	1. Involves children partnering with adults in some capacity, through which adults and children work in partnership to make decisions and implement projects.
Non-participation	2. May be tokenistic or manipulative. Is not considered participation.
Child-led	3. Children are empowered to lead their own projects or initiatives either individually or as part of their own organisations, clubs or parliaments. Adults may act as facilitators or offer advice and support to children.
Consultative	4. Participation involves adults seeking the views of children to increase their knowledge and understanding of children's lives and the issues affecting them. It recognises children's beliefs as well as their expertise but is adult-led and managed.

Only non-participation is negative. The other three types are all equally as valid and are suited to different projects and stages of the programme cycle. For further guidance please see the guide “Children’s Participation in the analysis, planning and design of Programmes”, referenced below.

Activity 3:

This indicator also provides an excellent opportunity for the country programmes to discuss with both their partners and children how child participation can be improved in their work. We can also learn a lot about the ways we involve children, the strengths and gaps and the most frequent types of child participation in our projects. We can identify best practice and success factors. Lastly, measuring the extent of child participation in our work will also show externally that this approach is central to Save the Children.

Activity 4:

Situation	Is this child participation? Should this project be assessed against the practice standards?
1. Children present to their government a petition to stop child marriage that they have prepared.	YES , this is child-led participation.
2. Children are invited to present a petition to stop child marriage to their government with adults from Save the Children. The press are led to believe the children have prepared it, but it has been solely prepared by adults at Save the Children.	NO , if children have not taken part in the preparation of the petition but the Press believe that they have, this is decorative or tokenistic participation, hence, not considered child participation as understood by Save the Children.
3. Children attending after school clubs are actively involved by Save the Children staff to plan the activities for the next year.	YES , this can be considered collaborative participation.
4. Children are interviewed as part of the data collection phase of a mid-term evaluation.	YES , this can be considered consultative participation.
5. Children are involved in the mid-term evaluation planning and disseminating the results amongst their peers.	YES , this can be considered collaborative participation.
6. Children attend a school class, respond to the questions asked by the teacher and are engaged in the activities proposed for the session.	NO , When children are only attending a regular class (or project activities) this alone is not considered child participation, even if the teacher or facilitator is using participatory techniques.
7. A school is being built in the area and community members (including children) participate in the construction.	NO , even if children are participating with the rest of the community, depending on the circumstances, this could even be considered child labour, but not child participation.
8. Children are invited to a consultation meeting, where they are asked questions relating to the new strategy that Save the Children is developing. The children are told their views will be taken into account, but in reality the adults have already decided how they will write the strategy and the children's views will not be taken into account.	NO , this is tokenistic participation, as the adults had already decided the strategy details and were just consulting children to say they had done so.

References

1. [Child participation indicator reporting package](#), including: technical guidance; Save the Children Practice Standards on Children's Participation; sampling guidance; and activities to consult with children. Please refer to the latest version made available with the Country Annual Report guidance.
2. [Child participation page](#) on OneNet.
3. [Child participation raw data and global reports](#) (available in OneNet, under M&E page)
4. The [UN Basic Requirements for Effective and Ethical Children's Participation](#)
5. Children's Participation in the analysis, planning and design of Programmes. A guide for Save the Children staff. Claire O'Kane. 2013. Save the Children UK.
6. Convention of the Rights of the Child: <http://www.unicef.org/crc/>

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