



10 STEPS FOR REPORTING AND ENGAGING WITH CHILDREN

For the office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence Against Children (OSRSG-VAC), children's participation is a key component of her mandate and a cross-cutting priority*. Throughout its different actions the SRSG-VAC promotes a culture of meaningful and representative child participation, where children, as key stakeholders in all matters concerning their safety and wellbeing, are also actors and agents of change in the development of integral protection systems. A key aspect of a culture of meaningful participation is bridging the gap between children who are taking actions and decision makers, by facilitating access to information that can be used by children to input their own actions and initiatives, and by creating spaces for children to interact with decision makers and UN officials.

We hope that United Nations entities, agencies and programs who engage with children incorporate a culture of systematically establishing interactive dialogues with them, and find these guidelines useful in the process of doing so.

*A/RES/64/146, which calls upon all States to develop policies and effective mechanisms at the local and national levels to enable children to be heard and to participate safely and meaningfully in the monitoring and reporting processes related to the implementation of the Convention-

SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE'S BRIEFING WITH CHILDREN

The Special Representative regularly briefs children on the margins of every UN General Assembly, and presentation to the Human Rights Council.

On the margins of the UN General Assembly 2022, the Special Representative held an interactive dialogue with over 100 children, on how the climate crisis affects violence. Children from different countries put forward their questions on this issue.



Click or scan to access the video

You can also go directly to our website violenceagainstchildren.un.org, click on 'Child Participation', and then on 'Videos'



WHY BE ACCOUNTABLE TO CHILDREN? WHY REPORT TO THEM EVEN THOUGH WE DON'T HAVE TO?

Children have the right to seek and access information, especially that 'aimed at the promotion of his or her social, spiritual and moral well-being and physical and mental health'**. They also have the right to share freely with others what they learn, think and feel, in all matters affecting them. For these rights to be implemented, the spaces for children to access information and to express their views need to be facilitated, and created to fit children's needs.

Even though United Nations agencies that engage on children's issues are not mandated to report to children, the OSRSG-VAC encourages other organizations to do so for the following reasons:

It promotes a culture of meaningful participation, where children are treated as critical stakeholders for meeting the 2030 agenda.

It strengthens a two way communication channel with children.

It enables children to access decision making spaces.

It opens up a channel for children to put forward their messages and recommendations.

It's an educational opportunity in regards to specific issues, but also in regards to how the United Nations work.

**Convention of the Rights of the Child, Article 17

STEP BY STEP TOWARDS REPORTING TO CHILDREN



1 Outline what you wish to achieve after briefing children

What's your expected outcome? For children to be informed? For them to be able to put forward their messages? Discuss it with your team and make sure to be transparent to children when they're invited to participate.

2 Choose an issue and stick to it

Sometimes it can be very tempting to want to include a number of issues United Nations agencies might be working on to meet the 2030 agenda, but when engaging directly with children we recommend framing the conversation within one issue **that children will want to know more about**. For example, when the OSRSG-VAC briefed children on their report to the General Assembly in 2022, even though the document reported on all the actions taken forward by the mandate, the briefing with children was framed on one issue the report delved into: how the climate crisis affects and increases violence against children.

Children who participated in the event, had the opportunity to unpack what this means, put forward their questions and messages, and connect with others who are also motivated by the issue.

3 Partner with children and include them from the beginning!

Partner with child-led networks, with organizations who directly engage with children, and with organizations who are active on the issue you will be focusing on. Children will be able to advise on the format, date, technology to be used, issues to address, etc. Ultimately, they will be able to determine if the event you're planning is actually 'child friendly'.

4 Set the date and format according to children's needs

It might not be during office hours, or even office days.... It's important that children don't have to miss school to attend the event.

5 Reach those hardest to reach

When reaching out to children and organizations who directly engage with children, make a special effort to reach those who are generally left behind: children in vulnerable settings or communities, such as children with disabilities, indigenous children or from ethnic minorities, children in street situation, and / or children in working conditions.

Also, always keep in mind both gender and geographical balance in all your direct engagements with children.

Throughout these steps remember: you want to cultivate a relationship with children, beyond this particular event.





6 Support the event with child friendly resources

Child-friendly content is content that has been 'made' or developed for children, keeping in mind their age, their evolving capacities, their right to be protected from all forms of violence, their language, and accessibility and limitations amongst other aspects.

You can create child-friendly resources with the content that will be referenced during your briefings with children, but make sure to make the content available before the event, and accessible in different languages and formats. If you will be inviting children to submit questions in advance, make sure they have the resources so they can react to them.

In our website violenceagainstchildre.un.org click on 'Child Participation' and then on 'Resources for adults' to access the guidelines for creating child friendly resources. Or click or scan the following QR code.



7 Invite children to share their video questions for the event, with clear instructions on how to do it and by when... and take time to rehearse with moderating children.

There are many benefits to inviting children to submit their questions in video formats: children can express their views, they can speak in their own language, and it will make your event more dynamic. When inviting children to submit their video questions, make sure to send them instructions in a child friendly format, including:

- Information on when and how their video will be used.
- How to record the video (horizontally? Vertically? With their phone?)
- The length of the video.
- The issue they are invited to ask about.
- What information to include (and not include) about them. We suggest they only include their first name, age and country.
- A consent form for themselves and their parents to sign authorizing you to use the video.
- Deadline for sending the video.
- Where to send their video to.

Remember to make a special effort to invite children from different countries, regions, and backgrounds.

AND REHEARSE!

You might not need to rehearse, but those children who are moderating might feel more comfortable if they do. Having a rehearsal meeting will be a good opportunity for moderating children to meet each other, go through the script, meet the adults involved, go through any questions they may have, and feel more relaxed ahead of the event.

8 Apply and explain safeguarding to children

When engaging with children, especially when it comes to addressing sensitive issues, it's important to make sure children are safe throughout the process. Online events require taking special safeguarding measures, such as:

- .Asking participants to provide their age when registering for the event.
- .Only displaying children's first name during the event to protect their identity and privacy.
- .Disabling the chat functionality so children cannot be approached by strangers.
- .Inviting children to post question in the Q&A box, and screening all questions and messages before approving them to assure children are not exposed to inappropriate content.
- .Agree on reporting protocols, appoint safeguarding focal points during the event, and inform children who they are and how to contact them.

Make sure you explain all of these to children. To access a child friendly version of safeguarding applied during online events, go to our website, child participation, and click on child friendly. Or scan or click on the following QR code.



9 Children lead, moderate, ask questions and react!

Your event should be led by children, and it should be engaging for children to want to follow. For that, we recommend outlining a dynamic script with different children appearing on screen. You can ask a few to facilitate and take turns in introducing video questions and transmitting questions from the audience. After the decision maker responds to the questions put forward by children, invite those who are moderating to react and use that space to transmit to others what they think.

Remember to have in place signed consent forms from all children appearing on screen.

10 Use outcomes, give back to children, and give the event an after life

After the event, make sure to extract outcomes from the event, by systematizing children's main messages. Discuss with your team members how these should inform your work moving forward. Then report back to all children who participated in the event (as moderators, sending video messages, or in the audience), with outcomes, with the recording of the event, and any relevant key messages or action points, including how the event outcomes will be informing your work.

And give it an after life and make the most of it! You will never be able to reach children everywhere. Because of time zones, languages, and accessibility, you will be leaving children out. We recommend you combine the resources and share them with organizations, Member States, UN agencies, so they can share it with children, beyond the event itself.

Scan or click on the following QR code, to access an example of systematized resources after the Special Representative's briefing with children on the margins of the General Assembly 2022.



And finally..... REPEAT THE CYCLE!

We recommend periodically reporting to children, and adopting these moments as part of your work. You will strengthen your relationship with children, while empowering them to be active agents of change.

