



GUIDELINES FOR DEVELOPING CHILD FRIENDLY REPORTS

For the office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence Against Children (SRSG-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 that has been adapted to fit children's needs.

The following guidelines for United Nations entities, agencies and programs have been developed to support those who engage with children, in the elaboration of child-friendly materials.

The office of the SRSG VAC encourages international organizations, UN agencies, Member States, and Civil Society Organizations to develop child friendly versions of content that has been initially created for an adult audience, with the goal of bridging the gap between children and decision makers, by helping to even their access to similar information.



WHAT DOES CHILD-FRIENDLY MEAN?

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**. For this right to be implemented it isn't enough to make the information available: it needs to be packaged in an accessible format for children.

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.

STEP BY STEP TOWARDS CHILD-FRIENDLY CONTENT

1 Identify KEY MESSAGES to transmit to children.

When adapting materials initially created for an adult audience, we recommend **not trying to summarize** all the content for children, but rather identifying the most relevant key messages to transmit. You can do this by responding to the following questions:
Of all the content currently in the report, which parts will be most interesting for children? What do THEY want to read? Which information will be useful for THEIR actions? What will they not be interested on? If I had to choose three to five most important messages to transmit, which are they? Is this useful for children? How am I empowering or helping them by making this content available? Is it relevant for them?

2 Write in easy and simple language, and keep it short

Writing in simple language is always harder. And simple is not less important. We recommend asking yourself: Is this the easiest and simplest word I can use? Will children understand this term? Is it too technical? Meaningful participation isn't just about adults making the information available and accessible to children. It's mostly about assuring that children will understand it. When concepts may be difficult to understand, or when they're too technical, we recommend explaining it.

3 Share it with children

Once you have drafted the content, share it with groups of children for their feedback, including children from vulnerable communities and traditionally discriminated. It's important that all children - children with disabilities, indigenous children, from different cultures and backgrounds - can understand or relate to the content. Their feedback is important! Ask them to point towards anything they would change, don't understand, or expand on. *They will be the ones to advise if the content is or isn't child-friendly.*

4 Invite children to react and to share messages for other children.

When children are reviewing the content, invite them to use that report to transmit their messages to other children or to decision makers. Tell them that their words will be incorporated in the report as quotes (along with their first name, their age, and country). That way your document is owned by children, and is an avenue for children to speak up.



5 Design and illustrate it! Make it pretty and fun!

Not everything needs to be said with words, and images and illustrations will help complement the text and support what is being said. We recommend working with an illustrator and identifying which parts of the content need to be illustrated and how. If working with an illustrator is not an option, there are free apps that can help you design content and illustrate it. Also, when designing it, think about the costs that will mean for local partners to print it: using white as a background will be cheaper to print, and therefore it will be more accessible to children.

6 Translate - make it available in different languages and formats

Translate the content into different languages to make it more accessible to children. And if you can, translate it into animated formats - like videos - to make it accessible to wider audiences, including children with disabilities.

Sometimes it will be challenging to address certain issues with children, especially those more sensitive, or related to violence, protection and well-being. We always recommend consulting with experts to make sure children are protected throughout the process. Also, we recommend empowering children to take action, and providing examples of how children are being part of the solutions, throughout the child friendly resources you develop. Keep the conversation open! Your child-friendly report can be an entry point to strengthening your communication with them.

You can access all of the mandate's child friendly assets in our website violenceagainstchildren.un.org (Click child participation).



If you plan to engage children throughout the process, make sure you address safeguarding. In our website violenceagainstchildren.un.org click on 'child participation' and then 'child friendly', and you can find a child-friendly explanation of what safeguarding is, and which are some of the measures we recommend taking.



*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.

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