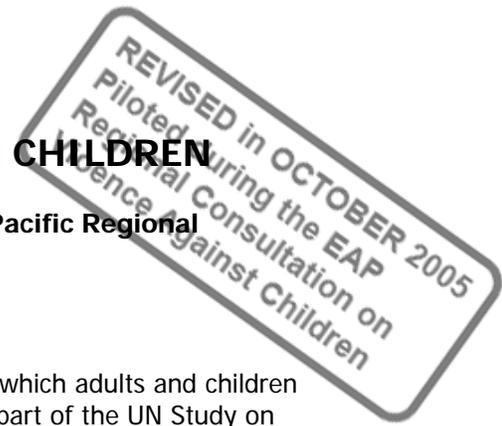


MINIMUM STANDARDS FOR CONSULTING WITH CHILDREN

Piloted in the preparations and related processes for the East Asia Pacific Regional Consultation for the UN Study on Violence Against Children, 2005.



What are minimum standards?

They are statements that describe the minimum expectations of the ways in which adults and children should behave and operate at the East Asia Pacific Regional Consultation as part of the UN Study on Violence Against Children (UN Study).

The standards have been developed using a collaborative approach with members of the East Asia and Pacific Region Steering Committee for the UN Study on Violence against Children¹ (Steering Committee). They are based on existing documents produced by the Steering Committee and others and are seen as an essential tool for those involving children in consultations in the region.

Why do we need minimum standards?

Participation is a right. These minimum standards are based on children's rights as outlined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, in particular in Articles 2, 3, 12, 13, 17, 19, 34 and 36:

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

The Minimum Standards have been produced to ensure that participation of children in the East Asia Pacific Regional Consultation for the UN Study (Regional Consultation) is high quality and consistent throughout the region.

Who are they for?

1. Adults who are consulting with children and young people in the UN Study, in particular for those who are:
 - a) sending children to participate in the regional consultation (and preparatory consultation);
 - b) organising sub regional, national or sub national consultations and activities with children;
2. Children and youth who are facilitating the involvement of other children in relation to the UN Study;
3. Supporting adults (facilitators, interpreters, admin staff);
4. Children who are participants in the consultation (Under 18 Delegates).

About the standards

The standards are organised in a step-by-step format, outlining which standards need to be met before, during and after a consultation. Alongside each standard is a list of relevant guidelines or procedures that should help to implement the standard as well as an icon indicating which principle of participation the standard falls under. A package of procedures, guidelines, forms and briefing papers (the Protocol) is annexed to the Minimum Standards.

The standards are designed to be relevant and achievable in the different country contexts of the East Asia and Pacific region.

¹ Steering Committee Members: Child Workers in Asia, ECPAT International, NGO Advisory Panel on the UN Study on Violence Against Children, Office for the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Plan International, Save the Children Alliance, Terre des Hommes Germany, World Vision APRO, UNESCO Bangkok, UNICEF East Asia Pacific Regional Office and an Independent Expert.

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How should the minimum standards be implemented?

These minimum standards draw a line, stating what is and is not acceptable in terms of children's participation in the East Asia Pacific Regional Consultation for the UN Study on Violence Against Children. The Steering Committee has approved these standards and is therefore accountable for them. The standards are a statement of the lowest level of practice acceptable to the Steering Committee to ensure meaningful children's participation. Consequently, it is expected that all the standards in this document will be met.

These standards will be implemented by two main groups: the East Asia Pacific Regional Steering Committee and 'National Focal Agencies' (national agencies that have agreed to support and promote children's participation from their countries at the Regional Consultation).

In order to effectively promote meaningful participation these Minimum Standards need to be:

1. **Enforced:** they have clear enforcement mechanisms and a penalty if they are not all met (which is that children will not participate);
2. **Non negotiable:** they draw a line to show what is acceptable or not acceptable and represent a starting point;
3. **Transparent:** they have criteria and clear enforcement mechanisms that make decision making more obvious;
4. **Permanent:** they are fixed, and as they outline the 'bottom line' the only way they should move is up;
5. **Agreed:** one organisation or group is accountable for them (the Steering Committee) and key implementing agencies for the standards (National Focal Agencies) understand and agree on them.

Piloting of the Minimum Standards and Protocol

The current document is based on the findings from an eight month evaluation project in which the Minimum Standards and Protocol were closely monitored and evaluated at each stage of implementation. Feedback was received from all key stakeholders including Under 18 Delegates and forms the basis of this revised version of the Minimum Standards and Protocol.

Child participation should be meaningful

In the past, children's participation has all too often been neglected or tokenistic. Members of the Steering Committee support meaningful, good quality children's participation in the Regional Consultation in order that children have a genuine opportunity to express their views and to be involved in the UN Study and interventions designed as a response to the Study's findings.

Principles of children's participation

These standards are based on four principles of participation.



1. An ethical approach: transparency, honesty and accountability

What do we mean?

Adults involved in the Regional Consultation 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. An ethical approach is needed in order for children's participation to be genuine and meaningful.



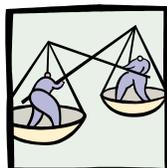
2. A children friendly environment

What do we mean?

Children experience a safe, welcoming, inclusive and encouraging environment that enables participation.

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.



3. Equality of opportunity

What do we mean?

Child participation work should encourage those groups of children who typically suffer discrimination and who are often excluded from activities to be involved in the process for example, girls, working children, children with disabilities and rural children.

Why is it important?

Children, like adults, are not a homogeneous group and participation should provide for equality of opportunity for all regardless of age, situation, ethnicity, gender, abilities, class, caste or other factors.



4. Participation promotes the safety and protection of children

What do we mean?

Child protection policies and procedures form an essential part of participatory work with children.

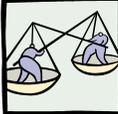
Why is it important?

Organisations have a duty of care to children with whom they work and everything should be done to minimise the risk to children of abuse and exploitation or other negative consequences of their participation.

Definitions

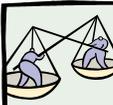
Child/under 18:	A person below the age of 18 years old
Under 18 Delegate:	Any participant in the consultation who is under 18 years old
National Focal Agency:	National NGO/agency that has agreed to support and promote children's participation from its country at the Regional Consultation.
Adult Delegate:	Any participant in the consultation who is over 18 years old
Guardian:	Adult accompanying an Under 18 Delegate. Guardians have responsibility for all aspects of the Under 18 Delegate's rights and welfare.
Facilitator:	A person who is responsible for 'facilitating' or making easy, children's capacity to express their views in public using a variety of techniques. They are generally employed specifically for consultations, they are different people to the Guardian.
Child Protection Focal Person:	A person who is responsible for child protection at the consultation, for running a complaints procedure and ensuring everyone at the consultation is appropriately briefed on the child protection policy.
Participation:	Participation, in this process, is about influencing decision-making and achieving change. Children's participation is an informed and willing involvement of all children, including those who are differently abled and those at risk, in any matter concerning them either directly or indirectly.

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Standard	Relevant Guidelines, Forms and Procedures	Principle
Before the consultation		
1. A realistic budget needs to be made that includes all possible costs for children’s participation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Step by Step Guide ▪ Budget Guidelines 	
2. Children friendly background information on the UN Study and regional consultation is produced, translated and shared with children.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ How To Produce Children Friendly Documents ▪ ‘What’s all this about...’² 	
3. A child protection policy and strategy is developed for the consultation, all Under 18 Delegates, adult delegates and adults supporting children’s participation are informed of the policy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Child Protection Policy ▪ Briefing for Under 18 Delegate ▪ All Participation Agreements 	
4. Potential Under 18 Delegates are provided with relevant information regarding their involvement in the consultation process.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ ‘What’s all this about...’ ▪ Under 18 Delegate Participation Agreement 	
5. A transparent and fair process is used in the selection of Under 18 Delegates for the Regional Consultation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Guidelines for Selecting Under18 Delegates. 	
6. Systems are developed to ensure that in the selection process under 18s are not discriminated against because of age, gender, abilities, language, social origin, class, ethnicity, geographical location, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Guidelines for Selecting Under 18 Delegates 	
7. Potential Under 18 Delegates have time to consider their involvement. Processes are established to ensure that Under 18 Delegates are able to and have given their personal informed consent to their participation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ ‘What’s all this about...’ ▪ Under 18 Delegate Participation Agreement ▪ Consent Form 	
8. All Under 18 Delegates are accompanied to the consultation by a suitable adult who will take responsibility for their safety and welfare.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Guidelines for Selecting Guardians ▪ Consent Form 	
9. Consent is obtained for the use of all information provided by under 18s and information identified as confidential needs to be safeguarded at all times.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Consent Form ▪ Media Release Form 	
10. A formal complaints procedure (run by the Child Protection Focal Person) is set up to allow Under 18 Delegates to make a complaint in confidence about any issue concerning their involvement in the consultation. Information about the complaints procedure should be	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Child Protection Policy ▪ ‘What’s all this about...’ ▪ All participation agreements 	

²‘What’s all this about the UN Study on Violence Against Children Regional Consultation East Asia Pacific’ A Briefing booklet written in children-friendly text. This booklet has been printed separately from the Protocol.

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Standard	Relevant Guidelines, Forms and Procedures	Principle
produced in a children-friendly format, translated and distributed to all delegates.		
11. The roles and responsibilities of all involved in the consultations (children and adults) are clearly outlined and understood. National Focal Agencies, Guardians and Under 18 Delegates receive briefings on their particular roles.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 'What's all this about...' ▪ All participation agreements ▪ National Focal Agency Guidelines 	
12. All Under 18 Delegates must be fully insured (medical and travel) during their participation in the regional consultation (during travel to and from Bangkok and stay in Bangkok) and should fall under the responsibility of either their National Focal Agency or the organisation hosting the consultation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ National Focal Agency Guidelines ▪ Consent Form ▪ Step-by-step guide ▪ Under 18 Delegate Application Form 	
13. Under 18 Delegates are knowledgeable and informed about the issue of violence against children in their country and should be mandated by their peers at a national level.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Guidelines for Selecting Under 18 Delegates ▪ National Focal Agency Guidelines 	
14. All adult delegates receive a sensitisation briefing at the consultation on how to work with under 18s.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Hosting Committee Guidelines 	
15. The meeting place for the consultation needs to be accessible to disabled Under 18 Delegates.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Hosting Committee Guidelines 	
16. A preparatory workshop for Under 18 Delegates is organised immediately before the consultation to help prepare Under 18 Delegates for the consultation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Hosting Committee Guidelines 	
17. Facilitators are experienced at working effectively and confidently with Under 18 Delegates and able to facilitate an environment that is non-discriminatory and inclusive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Facilitator TOR 	
During the Consultation		
18. One person is given responsibility for child protection issues at all consultations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Child Protection Focal Person TOR 	
19. Under 18 Delegates are given equal opportunity with adult delegates to make statements, presentations and voice their opinions at the consultation. These contributions are reflected in any outcome documents from the consultation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Hosting Committee Guidelines ▪ Facilitator TOR 	

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Standard	Relevant Guidelines, Forms and Procedures	Principle
20. Translators are provided for Under 18 Delegates during the course of the consultation and translation of all appropriate documents needed during the meeting is provided. 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)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Hosting Committee Guidelines ▪ Selection Guidelines for Guardians ▪ National Focal Agency Guidelines 	
21. Media activities follow an ethical code. Children who speak to the media are informed and prepared. Someone is assigned to co-ordinate work on the media and works closely with the Child Protection Focal Person.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Media Guidelines ▪ Child Protection Focal Person TOR ▪ Guidelines for Media Professionals 	
22. No photographs, videos or digital images of under 18s can be taken or published without that person's informed consent.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Media Guidelines ▪ Media Release Form ▪ Guidelines for Media Professionals 	
23. It should not be possible to trace information back to individual children or groups of children.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Media Guidelines ▪ Child Protection Focal Person TOR ▪ Guidelines for Media Professionals 	
24. All delegates (adults and under 18s) are given the opportunity to evaluate their participation practice during the consultation (as part of the scheduled activities).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Hosting Committee Guidelines 	
After the consultation		
25. Under 18 Delegates are given opportunities to feedback and use their experience of participating in the consultation with their peers, or with projects they are connected to and with local communities or organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Follow-up Guidelines 	
26. Under18 Delegates are included in distribution lists for all follow-up documents from the consultation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Hosting Committee Guidelines 	
27. National Focal Agencies provide support to Under 18 Delegates in order that they can be involved in follow-up activities from the consultation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ National Focal Agency Guidelines ▪ Follow-up Guidelines 	