



GUIDELINES ON THE RIGHT TO PARTICIPATION OF CHILDREN, ADOLESCENTS AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN SAVE THE CHILDREN ITALIA



Save the Children

By the Movimento Giovani Area:

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For Save the Children, gender respect has always been a key priority.

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PREFACE

The right to participation of children and adolescents is one of the four principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which finds its first reference in the vision of our founder Eglantyne Jebb.

Over the years, as Save the Children Italia, listening to the point of view of young people has guided the identification and implementation of many of our educational projects in the most deprived areas, making participation, over time, the common thread of our work.

With the aim of giving voice to one's own rights and those of one's peers and taking personal action to fight injustice and discrimination, the SottoSopra programme was launched in 2013.

Since then, it has permanently involved more than 3,000 young people, becoming what is now the "Movimento giovani per Save the Children", a widespread network of young people throughout Italy.

Over the years, their commitment, their attentive and critical look at the here and now and the world, has shown us that rights are never "one size fits all", new ones are born, and it continues to be necessary to promote knowledge, awareness and defence of them.

It was, for example, the young people of our youth movement who made us realise how urgent the issue of affectivity and online gender-based violence in peer relationships was, prompting us to demand greater commitment from their peers and adults, to ensure safe spaces and a greater ability to recognise and deal with uncomfortable situations.

And again, it was by listening to the young people who took to the streets shouting that there is no "Planet B" that we decided to strengthen our commitment to the issue of climate justice, to make more coherent choices of sustainability and to bring their voices forcefully to the institutions, in a network with other associations and also in international forums.

Over the years, it has often been the young people who have broadened our horizons of engagement, pointing out priorities and results to be achieved together.

This document is a concrete example of this, proof of an *idem sentire* that aims to become

an internal organisational culture and inspire other organisations in putting the leading role of young people at the centre, not only on paper and in international conventions, but every day, in the actions, concrete choices and working methods of us adults.

These guidelines on the right to participation - written also with the involvement of the Movimento giovani - have, in this sense, the ambition to generate a change that not only affects the lives of young people, but also contaminates the *way* adults act and the *world* in which they act.

In 2013, when establishing their Movimento, the young people of SottoSopra emphasised that their participation stemmed “from the pleasure of being there”. To be there means to inhabit the world with awareness and commitment, participating in a meaningful way, everywhere in the world, just as stated in Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Danilo Dolci wrote “there are those who teach by guiding others like horses, step by step... and there are those who educate, without hiding the absurdity that is in the world, open to every development but trying to be frank to others as to themselves, dreaming of others as they presently are not ...”

These guidelines do not tell us “step-by-step” what to do, nor do they seek to model or crystallise replicable good practices - which are nevertheless recounted as authoritative and valuable experiences. Instead, they aim to generate questions, make us uncomfortable and warn us of the risk of always doing things the same way thinking it is the right one.

We hope that these guidelines can be a living tool, and that they can be enriched by the field experience of those who will test and also question them. May they be used, inside and outside Save the Children, to build an open and inclusive imagination and dream the world “as it is now not”.

Claudio Tesaro


President Save the Children Italia





...TEMPO PER PIANIFICARE IL
...STRESS!
...SOSTAIO DI CURA (PARENTI) E
...PRATICHE ESSENZIALI DI

**MOVIMENTO
GIOVANI**

per  Save the Children

1 Our Commitment to the right to participation of children, adolescents and young people

1. OUR COMMITMENT TO THE RIGHT TO THE PARTICIPATION OF CHILDREN, ADOLESCENTS AND YOUNG PEOPLE



Every child has the right to express their views, feelings and wishes in all matters affecting them, and to have their views considered and taken seriously

Article 12 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child



The word “participation” is used by Save the Children to express the situation in which children and adolescents think independently, express their ideas and views effectively and assertively, and interact with others in positive ways: it means involving children and adolescents in decisions that affect their lives, the lives of their families, the community and the wider society in which they live.

The right to participation of children and adolescents is laid down in Articles 12,13,14,15 and 17 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). Specifically, they concern the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; the right to information, freedom of expression and the right to assemble. But it is above all Article 12 that emphasises the principle of participation of children and adolescents by recognising their right to express views freely in all matters that concern them (in relation to their age and maturity).

CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD - ARTICLE 12

Since 1989, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) has constituted the international legal basis for the citizenship rights of children and adolescents.

The Convention promotes an understanding of childhood and adolescence based on the all-inclusiveness of rights, civil, economic, cultural and, not least, political. In particular, the Convention stipulates that young people should be recognised as full members of society and, as full citizens, should be regarded as having rights and responsibilities in the same way that adults are recognised as having rights and duties in the society in which they live.

Among the various rights recognised by the Convention, of great importance is that to participation, as set out in Article 12, through which children and adolescents can express their opinions and influence decisions on all matters that affect them, in a manner appropriate to their age, level of maturity and developmental capacities. Participation is therefore not a privilege to be granted by adults or a merit to be earned by children, but rather a practice that enhances, empowers and makes children and adolescents responsible as citizens by right.

Article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child is based on two defining elements: the first element is to promote “... the right to express their views, feelings and wishes in all matters affecting them”, thus defining the right from children’s perspective and aiming to relate the child’s opinion to the decision-making processes that adults activate in their interest.

The second element “...the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child”, defines, conversely, the responsibility of adults to take the views expressed by children and adolescents seriously and aims to put adults in a position to listen to and handle the views expressed.

In order to give meaningful implementation to Article 12 of the CRC, and with a commitment to promote a culture of young people participation, in 2023 Save the Children introduced an article in its Articles of Association that makes the involvement of children and adolescents central to the realisation of its mission.

ARTICLE 6 - YOUTH PARTICIPATION

The Association values the participation of children and young people and promotes their active involvement. On the President's proposal, the Executive Board defines the methods of listening to and meeting regularly with representatives of children and adolescents in order to ensure that their views are taken into account in the Association's activities.

The inclusion of Article 6 is the result of the commitment and experience of the Movimento giovani per Save the Children, a network of young people between the ages of 14 and 25, active throughout the country, in promoting the rights of children and adolescents.

The principles behind the guidelines are:

- participation must be a **normal practice**. One cannot limit oneself to experimental actions, but must promote "stable places" for listening, dialogue, consultation and joint decision-making;
- participation must be promoted on a **large scale**. Not a series of initiatives confined within specific contexts, but a process carried out by people and actions that influence and cross-fertilise locally, nationally and internationally;
- participation is a **complex process** that has its own rules and needs of time and resources;
- the participation of children and young people serves to **improve adult decisions** because they are based on listening to the people directly concerned.

In this sense, this document is the result of a shared and participatory pathway and participation - strongly desired by the Management and validated by a representation of the Board - which contains both the point of view of the young people of the Movimento giovani per Save the Children and that of colleagues from different areas of the organisation (from programmes to communication).

It is a significant step in a broader systemic action through which **Save the Children Italia**, in the light of its decades of experience with projects centred on the leading role of young people, is **committed to**:

1. Ensuring that in all interventions promoted and implemented by Save the Children and Partners, the voice and views of children and young people are always heard and taken seriously, as required by the Standards for Ethical and Meaningful Participation (Annex 1). To this end, the organisation promotes the internal dissemination of these guidelines through special training sessions for staff, volunteers and partners to ensure meaningful “participation spaces” (Annex 2). The course may be open to other Tertiary Sector organisations interested in developing their own participation policy.

The organisation ensures the practical implementation of these Guidelines, through the identification and monitoring of appropriate “participation indicators” that will be included in new designs and strategy monitoring, to ensure impact and cultural change (Annex 3).

2. Consolidating a systemic and structural dialogue between young people and the organisation through the following priority actions:

- dialogue with the Board to share and discuss the strategic priorities of the youth Movement for Save the Children;
- stable confrontation between the Senior Management Team and a representation of the Movimento giovani for the planning of synergetic actions and initiatives and monitoring of the results achieved together;
- listening to and involving children and young people in the definition of the organisation’s strategy through workshops and consultations dedicated to them.

Listening to the voice of young people in our Movimento, Save the Children endorses the following recommendations:

THEMATIC RELEVANCE: it is important to involve young people in topics that concern them closely and in which they show an interest. It is also crucial to allow time for consultation in order to research data, identify needs to be addressed, discuss and build critical thinking.

REPRESENTATION: identify representatives/spokespersons on the basis of their thematic experience and capacity for dialogue even in *unfriendly* and/or complex contexts (e.g. institutional round tables, *social media* and presscommunication etc.), strengthen *leadership* and the ability to bring the point of view of everyone without personalising instances and communication.

DIALOGUE: encourage the development of network actions with other territorial entities, experts and institutions to broaden knowledge and awareness. Guarantee spaces for participation, functional listening and dialogue. To this end, it is crucial to create a safe environment for sharing views.

TRAINING: delve into the topics through training/information, considering the different needs and levels of awareness/knowledge.

TIME AND METHODS OF INVOLVEMENT: encourage the sharing of the process and the importance of everyone's contribution to create mobilisation on a given theme/action, always considering the timescales of girls' and boys' lives (school/study/leisure/work).

INCLUSIVITY: encourage listening to and appreciation of divergent opinions, with flexibility and openness to generative engagement with each other.

EVALUATION AND ACCOUNTABILITY: identify ways of measuring impact that account for what has really changed as a result of the girls' and boys' participation.





2 **Participation in Save the Children Italia**

CARD 1

PARTICIPATION IN PROGRAMMES



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The participation of children and young people in their contexts of reference (from school to local area) is fundamental to foster the development of critical thinking and the ability to positively influence their lives and those of their communities in a responsible and conscious manner.

Our experience over the years has shown us that the nature of participation varies according to the age and developmental abilities of children and young people. But participatory practices have proved effective even with the youngest children (as early as kindergarten), provided that listening and expression spaces are created that put them at ease and that they are provided with appropriate information and tools to support their participation. Fundamental in this is the extension and spread of a culture of young people participation and activism, which becomes a common heritage starting from the school organisation and reaching the communities.

The benefits of participation in programmes

Empowerment of children and young people in programmes: participation raises awareness of being an active citizen and, therefore, of recognising that one has rights.

Involvement at an early age increases self-confidence and the ability to bring about positive change in one's own life and/or the lives of others. Participatory modes develop valuable skills because they stimulate teamwork, critical information gathering, opinion formulation, negotiation and communication skills.

Community empowerment: participating in the life of the community, starting with the school community, and feeling an active part of it is the necessary prerequisite for developing a sense of responsibility and belonging, which fosters emotional and social well-being, which is also functional in combating phenomena such as school drop-out, social exclusion and educational poverty.

Considering children and young people as agents of change also means recognising their role as experts on the issues that concern them most closely and taking their ideas into account when designing programmes/actions targeted at them and implies that these are more in line with their needs.

The added value of participation should therefore not only be sought in the in the opportunities for empowerment and growth of children and young people, but also in the actual ability to make educational services more appropriate, relevant and sustainable (as can happen, for example, in the school context).

TIPS

In the activation of a participatory process, the involvement of children and young people goes through some fundamental stages. We report below how they are also interpreted by the young people of the Movimento giovani per Save the Children:



Needs analysis:

starting from the identification of one or more rights of the UN Convention that are perceived as “denied” in their own context, it is important for children and young people to become interested in and fully understand the issues that arouse their interest.



Information:

promoting informed participation means ensuring that, before taking action, children and young people deepen and mature their own views on the issue with which they are dealing.



Planning:

planning activities aimed at achieving an objective of change means defining actions, timeframes, methods, resources needed to develop them and a corresponding monitoring plan. At the same time, it is necessary to identify the key interlocutors i.e. the adults “responsible” for that change. It is crucial at this stage, in order to avoid generating frustration, to establish with children and young people concrete and measurable objectives so that every small achievement can be celebrated.



Implementation:

various actions can be implemented at local and/or national level, from retraining actions to awareness-raising activities, from dialogue with institutions to peer education actions. The type of action varies not only according to the issue/problem identified, but also according to the context, the composition of the group, and the goal of change. Fundamental is the distribution of roles and tasks in order to facilitate the participation of everyone, each in the way they feel most appropriate.



Evaluation:

what demonstrates the effectiveness of participation cannot be disregarded if it is to become a stable practice. It is essential to support the children and young people in asking themselves what worked in the participatory process (with reference to quality and space see Appendices 1 and 2) and what changed as a result of their participation (see Appendix 3).



The role of adults

as facilitators of the process is crucial in:

- ensuring inclusiveness by creating the conditions and a peaceful climate in which everyone has the opportunity to express themselves, participate and feel comfortable (with regard to sexual orientation, religion, age, status, migration *background*, (dis)abilities);
- always defining the scope for participation (process steps and level of involvement) upstream of each activity to avoid generating frustration and/or false expectations;
- encouraging the progressive autonomy of the group by being ready to step back according to the participation space defined upstream in the process;
- supporting the group in its relationship with the other adult interlocutors involved in the process by ensuring a respectful and inclusive adult-young people dialogue;
- accompanying children and young people in the deepening and planning phases through the use of materials and tools in line with the needs of the group;
- carrying out evaluation and self-assessment activities to account for the results of their participation;
- ensuring the voluntary nature of participation;
- ensuring safe and risk-sensitive participation by implementing safeguarding measures (identification of risks and related mitigations) some of which are shared and co-designed with children and young people (co-responsibility pact/"rules of the game");
- limiting the risk of *young people washing* and striving to ensure that the voices of children and young people are truly the driving force behind the actions identified for change.



The Fuoriclasse Council to support the *governance* bodies in the school

Fuoriclasse in Movimento is a network of 250 schools committed to the prevention of early school leaving through the promotion of student participation.

The network of schools, established in 2017, is characterised across the board by the Fuoriclasse Council, a participatory process run by representatives of teachers, students and pupils, aimed at identifying shared solutions to improve the school from below.

The representatives work on four areas: school spaces, teaching, peer and adult relations, and collaboration with the local area.

The Fuoriclasse Council is in some cases an important vehicle for the dissemination of a participatory culture in the school, enhancing the role of male and female students even in decision-making bodies where formally their contribution is not expected.

This is the case of the secondary school “Cantore” - Istituto Comprensivo “Montaldo” (Genoa, Marassi district) which has formally recognised the value of student participation in school governance, despite the fact that in the first cycle of education there are no student representation bodies.

Specifically, it stipulated that the representatives of the Fuoriclasse Council would periodically take part in Class Councils, with a twofold objective: on the one hand, to inform about the work of Fuoriclasse in Movimento, and, on the other, to bring specific classroom instances to their teachers and in turn participate in an important decision-making moment in the school process that affects them.



The experience of teenage committees in the Neighbourhoods of Social Innovation

In the context of social innovation, young people assume a central role as protagonists of change, actively engaged in protecting the rights of children and adolescents. The programme “QUI, un Quartiere per crescere” set up 5 Standing Committees of young people in the social innovation areas of Rome Ostia Ponente, Prato Macrolotto Zero, Naples Pianura, Palermo Zen 2 and Turin Porta Palazzo Aurora, offering them a platform to share needs, train and lead local development initiatives. The committees actively participate in decision-making processes and institutional round tables, thus ensuring that young people are really listened to and can influence change in their neighbourhood. The aim is to create a collaborative ecosystem in which civil organisations, public institutions, universities and business actors work together to promote the rights of children and adolescents.

A tangible example of active participation is the Permanent Committee of Prato’s Macrolotto Zero, which is part of the Macrolotto Zero Observatory Neighbourhood Committee thanks to the openness of the Municipality of Prato. The Observatory has successfully addressed the issue of safety in the skate park area, obtaining a change in the municipal budget of €50,000 to improve the safety of the site. In this experience, the young people felt listened to and involved in the design of the initiative, thus strengthening their commitment and willingness to actively participate in the change in their neighbourhood. The story of Prato shows that when young people are involved and valued, they become effective agents of social change, contributing to improving the quality of life in their communities and promoting the rights of children and adolescents.



The City Councils of young people of the Movimento giovani and Civico Zero

The Councils are groups made up of young people from the local area, migrants and/or young people with a migrant *background* who meet periodically at Civico Zero premises with the aim of fostering *peer-based* inclusion processes. Starting from the experiences and issues felt most urgently by the young people in the group, the young people discuss what it means to suffer discrimination and to be an active part of a process of inclusion.

Over the years, various actions have been carried out through the work of the Councils, from engagement with institutions to the realisation - also through the use of artistic languages that break down language barriers - of awareness-raising and reporting initiatives that have aimed to recount migration and reception by reversing the alarmist and mainstream narrative.

These include, by way of example, the *Human Library* activity carried out by the Turin Council. It is to all intents and purposes a human library in which young people turn into books, recounting “chapters” of their lives or those of fellow travellers who could not or would not show their faces. Shared in this way, the stories - on the themes of travel, identity, home and work - take on not only a value of testimony and sometimes of denunciation, but also represent a starting point for reflecting on these themes in different contexts and with different people.

The exchange between young people with different histories and backgrounds highlighted their ability to build a dimension of the future based on resilience, on the reworking of each one’s experiences, and on the added value that a heterogeneous context such as the Council can create.

CARD 2

PARTICIPATION IN ADVOCACY ACTIONS



The benefits of participation in *advocacy*

Empowerment: through participation in *advocacy* processes, young people acquire new skills such as thematic training, knowledge of legislative processes, *public speaking* skills, and the ability to network and work together with adults and peers to achieve a common goal. It is also important to facilitate pathways in which more vulnerable young people or those at risk of social exclusion are involved so that their point of view is also included with a view to non-discrimination and *empowerment*.

Citizenship practice: participation in *advocacy* processes is a practice of citizenship and active contribution to public life; it represents an exercise in democracy that should be encouraged as it allows one to develop capacities and also exercise other rights such as the right to freedom of expression and information.

Through the full expression of the right to de facto participation, young people have the opportunity to demand the implementation of all other rights enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Better policy decisions: through meaningful participation of young people in decision-making processes on issues and policies that directly affect them, more effective decisions will be made because they are more responsive to their needs.

The benefit is therefore mutual in that it increases young people's trust in and knowledge of institutions, and at the same time strengthens the accountability of institutions towards children and young people.

TIPS

Advocacy, as an activity aimed at influencing public policy, is a process that relies on many variables: the uncertainty and length of time needed to bring about change and the complexity due to the co-responsibility of certain policies (governance) require time, perseverance and preparation.

It is necessary to involve children and young people only in situations where there is a real interest in listening and duly taking their point of view into consideration, avoiding participation being reduced to a mere formality as an end in itself.

In order to have meaningful participation, it is important to build and share a path with the young people, so that they are truly protagonists and aware of the type of engagement.



Identification of the theme:

identify an issue relevant to young people on which one can contribute to bring about political change (see Standard 4) or in a complementary way identify an opportunity for political discussion on an issue on which the involvement and/or listening to the voice of young people would be crucial.



Greater insight:

propose a pathway or in-depth meeting, on issues and *advocacy* tools, to support young people in substantiating their demands effectively (see Standards 1-3-5-7).

Implementation (see Standards 3-5-6-7-8):



- **Identification of potential allies who can support the demands** of other young people groups and/or Tertiary Sector networks with which to carry out *advocacy* work based on common objectives.



- **Elaboration of *advocacy* messages and requests** with respect to the issue identified and existing *advocacy* opportunities.



- **Plan moments of institutional engagement** promoting intergenerational dialogue through meetings between young people and institutional representatives (e.g. audiences and/or events).



Accountability and Monitoring:

acceptance by institutions of young people's requests (see Standard 9).
Definition of relevant monitoring tools to measure the impact of actions.



Youth advocacy and climate change

In 2021 Save the Children started an *advocacy* process with the involvement of the young people of the Movimento giovani on the topic (a priority for them) of climate change. To accompany this journey, awareness-raising and empowerment moments were created together through thematic in-depth discussions with internal and external experts, interviews with decision-makers, and workshops on advocacy methodologies and tools.

Their willingness to engage with other youth associations active on the issue of climate change led to the promotion of peer-to-peer exchanges and the definition of common advocacy messages and demands.

The Movimento giovani focused on the topics of education and participation, calling for the establishment of a formal mechanism for the participation of young people in climate policies in Italy and the inclusion of young people in official national delegations to international summits on the topic. The young people directly conveyed their requests to representatives of institutions, starting with the Ministry of the Environment and Energy Security, within the framework of several intergenerational dialogue moments organised before and during COP27 and COP28.

Thanks also to the pressure they exerted, Italy included for the first time two representatives of the Consiglio Nazionale Giovani in the national delegation to COP28 and organised a formal discussion between young people and the special envoy for climate change on the outcomes of the conference. This represents a first step towards the establishment of formal discussion forums between young people and institutions.

CARD 3

PARTICIPATION IN MOBILISATION ACTIONS AND COMMUNICATION



The benefits of participation in communication and mobilisation

Putting the participation of children and young people at the centre of the communication and mobilisation strategy for those working on children's and adolescent rights is central, in terms of:

Empowerment: through participation in communication and mobilisation actions, children and young people develop leadership skills, self-confidence, a sense of social responsibility and thus civic involvement.

More effective communication: enhancing young people's ways of communicating brings new ideas, approaches and creative solutions to challenges and issues, fosters innovation and creativity. Furthermore, considering young people's point of view makes targeting campaigns more authentic, credible and effective.

Impact of and on mobilisation: supporting actions initiated by young people for their peers means significantly reaching the *target group*. To this end, it is important to enhance what young people achieve in terms of communication, support them with tools, channels and even educational opportunities to amplify their voice. Young people spend a lot of time on social media and digital platforms: being present on these channels and expanding peer-to-peer narratives with a positive, information-conscious voice is what makes it possible to reach young audiences more effectively.

TIPS

Ensuring meaningful participation in communication and mobilisation actions requires a careful balance between the right to protection, participation and the overall well-being of young people. This translates into an integrated approach that takes into account the capacity building of those involved, adult supervision and safety - including informed consent and exposure limits (including online). Specifically, in order to ensure meaningful involvement, particularly with regard to the issue of communication responsiveness, there are no fixed rules, but a number of factors can be taken into account.



Thematic relevance:

involve young people on topics that are relevant to them, on which they are active and have established positions, and/or initiate an in-depth course of action (e.g. on new topics) to ensure an in-depth understanding and thus an informed position. At this stage, it is useful to identify one or more thematic spokespersons to facilitate communication and participation.



Alignment on objectives:

share the organisation's communication and mobilisation objectives by ensuring that they are aligned with the needs and expectations of young people, considering the possibility of redefining them in a joint logic. This is the stage where the level of participation (including decision-making spaces) is determined and transparency is also ensured in sharing what are the drivers behind each communication choice.



Time management:

involve young people in time planning and ensure the flexibility of the adults involved in the process by choosing appropriate times for the activities that are respectful of the boys' and girls' life and study/work commitments (e.g. prefer weekends and/or afternoons wherever possible). Ensure that, while prioritising efficiency in response times, an inclusive approach is maintained to guarantee that the views of everyone are represented.



Target content and channels:

- provide space for young people in the creation of content for digital communication channels and/or mobilisation actions, enhancing their *expertise*;
- use communication channels, mainly digital, adapted to the young target audience and customise messages according to their preferences, interests and behaviour (from challenges to trends to the involvement of influencers in the dissemination and deepening of messages), thus contributing to a greater dissemination (and impact) of campaigns;
- offer a variety of communication channels (social media, platforms, targeted events) and ensure a constant and engaging presence in the different contexts, online and offline, frequented by young people. This favours the creation of more solid and lasting relationships with young audiences, encouraging greater engagement and active participation in the proposed initiatives.



Evaluation:

provide for stable moments of evaluation of the process and the results achieved in relation to the impact in terms of communication and/or engagement.



The “Have you ever done it?” campaign

“Have you ever done it?” is the awareness-raising campaign on the issue of online gender-based violence among adolescents that the Movimento giovani per Save the Children launched in 2023. Compared to the Movement’s other campaigns, its genesis was peculiar, because it was born within a programmatic initiative, the DATE project (*Develop Approaches and Tools to End online teen dating violence*), which lasted two years and initially involved two city groups of the Movimento giovani per Save the Children (Reggio Calabria and Venice). However, in light of the interest in such an important and highly topical issue, it was jointly decided to make it the Movement’s national campaign. There was therefore work to broaden the objectives and the actors involved, in order to carry out an action that would have a strong communication impact and use effective channels for the specific target group of adolescents. The working group included thematic experts, young people from Reggio Calabria, Venice and Rome, the editorial staff of the Movimento giovani and the Save the Children communication office, together for the realisation and dissemination of content and communication products. This very diverse group of actors greatly enriched the work on the campaign even though it required a number of readjustments and longer timeframes to allow every point of view to be heard. The end result is truly representative of the point of view of young people, while contemplating design and communication requirements.

To find out more about the “Have you ever done it?” campaign frame the QRcode, watch the video and discover the activities.



CARD 4

PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH



The benefits of participation in research

A new look at childhood and adolescence issues: doing research through the eyes and words of children adolescents and young people provides a unique and privileged perspective on issues relevant to childhood and adolescence. “Research with children” is a new way of thinking about knowledge processes that goes beyond the conceptualisation of childhood and adolescence from the adult perspective and recognises them as active subjects of research, encouraging participation and listening.

Empowerment of children and young people: playing the role of a researcher allows them to try out new activities, get involved in roles that are unconventional for them, and foster interests aimed at leisure time or future educational and professional paths. It allows young people to immerse themselves in, learn and explore new topics, acquire both technical research skills (from identifying the research question, to writing the outline, to conducting an interview) and videomaking, and transversal skills such as teamwork, empathy and effective communication.

Community empowerment: research with children' enables children and young people to get closer to their local area, create relationships and dialogue with stakeholders at different levels, developing a sense of civic responsibility and belonging to a community. It offers them a real chance to influence positive change in their communities, promoting understanding of reality itself, affecting policies and practices.

TIPS

In order to ensure the meaningful participation of children, young people in research processes, one must consider:



Adequate training of adults:

on active listening, a *child-friendly* and inclusive approach, participatory tools and methodologies.



Sharing of the objectives and pathway:

assigning value to ideas, recognising the contribution of each participant and organising joint feedback of the results of the pathway carried out together.



Proximity/presence of adults:

it is important to ensure continuous accompaniment by adults in research processes. Investigations deal with what are sometimes sensitive topics or complex concepts to convey that require guidance, professional support and appropriate training.



Privacy:

it is essential to ensure that the *privacy* of the children and young people involved is respected and protected.



Innovation:

in the field of *peer-to-peer* research methodologies, one of the challenges is innovation, which can be strengthened precisely by exchanges of ideas between children, adolescents and young people.



Experiences of participatory research

In our surveys, as well as being privileged interlocutors in quantitative and qualitative research activities, children, adolescents and young people are frequently involved in the role of co-researchers.

Through a participatory approach, they are involved in all stages of research development: from the construction of research instruments to the implementation of data collection and the development of policy recommendations.

Particularly effective is their involvement as peer researchers, a role in which everyone, accompanied on a workshop course of training and discussion with experts in participatory research and videomaking, can take an active part in the collection of information in the field among peers.

One example is the survey on the topic of child poverty and teenage aspirations that involved young people from Milan, Catania and Naples in conducting interviews with their peers (13 and 22 year olds) living in areas characterised by socio-economic disadvantage.

The peer-to-peer approach allowed the interviewees to overcome barriers and obstacles in recounting their experiences, enabling the young “researchers” to take a closer look at the challenges and aspirations of these teenagers and photograph reality through their eyes.



Attachments

ANNEX 1)

The quality of participation: the 9 international standards for ethical and meaningful participation

The quality of a participatory process has to do with certain “qualifying” elements. These guidelines adopt the 9 international standards¹ as a qualitative reference for ethical and meaningful participation and provide for the monitoring of each standard by means of a specific checklist, i.e. guiding questions to be taken into account in all interventions (programme, advocacy, communication, research) involving children and young people and which must also be asked of them for an evaluation of their participation.

Standard	Checklist
Standard No. 1 Participation is transparent and informed	Were the children/young people sufficiently informed about the objectives of their participation to be able to consciously choose whether and how to participate? Was the information shared in an accessible language in line with the age and background of the participants e.g. different languages, (dis)abilities? Have the roles and responsibilities of all those involved been shared and understood?
Standard No. 2 Participation is voluntary	Have the children/young people had enough time and information to decide whether or not to participate? Can they decide to terminate their participation whenever they want?
Standard No. 3 Participation is respectful	Were the commitments of the children/young people (study, play, etc.) respected and taken into account in the planning of activities (e.g. outside school hours)? Are the activities planned and facilitated in a way that respects the abilities, interests and life and cultural habits of children/young people? Can children/young people freely express their opinion and point of view and be assured that they will be respected? HAS support from the key figures around them (teachers, parents, educators, guardians, etc.) been guaranteed, i.e. do adults understand the value of children’s participation and do they support it?

¹ see General Comment No. 12 (2009) The right of the child to be heard

Standard	Checklist
Standard No. 4 Participation is relevant	<p>Do the issues addressed have a real relevance in the lives of children/young people? Is there any form of pressure from adults with regard to their participation? Are the activities in line with the interests and abilities of the children/young people?</p>
Standard No. 5 Participation is for children and young people	<p>Does the approach and methodology used take into account the abilities and interests of children and young people? Does the working methodology used aim to increase confidence and self-assurance? Are child- and young people-friendly spaces used that are accessible to everyone?</p>
Standard No. 6 Participation is inclusive	<p>Is everyone given the opportunity to participate regardless of age, gender, socio-cultural background, (dis)ability? Are adults able to promote an inclusive and non-discriminatory participation process? Are children/young people encouraged to address the issue of discrimination through their participation? If it is necessary to limit the number of participants, is there a mechanism for the election of representatives by children/young people?</p>
Standard No. 7 Participation is supported by training for adults	<p>Do adult facilitators have experience working with children/young people and do they have access to training and refresher opportunities on participatory practices? Are adults able to facilitate the participation of children/young people and support the participatory process also by involving the community?</p>
Standard No. 8 Participation is safe and risk sensitive	<p>Do children feel safe and know who to turn to if they feel in danger while involved in participation activities? Have the risks of their participation in activities been identified and countermeasures identified?</p>
Standard No. 9 Participation is responsible (provide feedback)	<p>Are children/young people supported in the monitoring and evaluation of their pathway (both in terms of quality and impact of their participation)? Do adults take their views seriously? Are children/young people given quick and clear feedback on the impact of their participation? Are the results of evaluation activities reported to the children/young people in an accessible way and is their feedback taken into account in future participation projects? At the end of the course, was an evaluation conducted by the adults on how far the priorities and recommendations of the children/young people were translated and implemented in policies, strategies and programmes?</p>

ANNEX 2)

The space for participation: stages and levels of involvement in the participatory process

In addition to quality (Annex 1), a participatory process cannot disregard the definition of a “space for participation”, i.e. the level of participation (consultative, collaborative, autonomous/*child-led*)² and the stage of the participatory process (needs analysis, planning, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and dissemination) in which the group of children and young people is involved.

	Advisory	Collaborative	Child-Led
Analysis of needs	The children require guidance and information on both the issues to be dealt with and the activities to be conducted.	The young people/ children require guidance either on the issues to be dealt with or the activities to be conducted.	The children do not require guidance on either the issues to be dealt with or the activities to be conducted.
Planning and implementation	Young people/ children have no experience in planning and implementing actions.	Children have experience in carrying out actions, but, for example, do not know how to plan a complex action.	The young people/ children plan and lead the actions on the ground without particular support from adults.
Monitoring, evaluation, dissemination	Young people/ children have no experience with evaluation activities.	They have only partial experience of evaluation activities, e.g. they evaluated the quality of participation, but not the space nor the impact.	Young people/ children lead the evaluation activity on all three levels (space, quality and impact).

This type of evaluation is fundamental for determining the starting point of the group, to establish minimum objectives for participation even in particularly complex contexts and subsequently to monitor the work according to these parameters.

² For a more in-depth analysis of the levels of participation, see also “The Participation Scale” by Roger Hart (see bibliography)

ANNEX 3)

The impact of participation: indicators for measuring change on individuals and in communities

It is essential to think about/look at the impact of participation, i.e. what has changed as a result of the participation of children and young people in terms of the behaviour and/or attitudes registered in peers or adults towards a particular issue, or in terms of changes in practices, regulations or even legislation.

With regard to impact, there are two macro-categories of indicators, to be developed with specific MEAL tools according to the type of intervention:

Impact on individuals (children/young people, responsible adults, facilitators and/or staff, etc.), as a result of the action of the group of children/young people

With reference to the boys, girls and children themselves, the evaluation must be conducted to detect:

- increased self-esteem and self-confidence;
- acquisition of skills (communication, problem-solving skills, negotiation etc.);
- greater awareness of one's rights;
- a sense of efficacy and empowerment.

With particular reference to responsible adults, the evaluation must be conducted to detect:

- greater awareness of the rights and needs of children and young people;
- greater sensitivity to the rights and needs of children and young people;
- improvement in relationship skills with children and young people;
- willingness to consult children and young people and take their views seriously.

With particular reference to facilitators and staff, the evaluation must be conducted to detect:

- greater sensitivity to the rights and needs of children and young people;
- improvement in relationship skills with children and young people;
- greater understanding of the capabilities of children and young people;
- increased efforts to strengthen participation;
- increased ability to engage in dialogue with children and young people.

External impact, changes in the local or national context that have occurred as a consequence of the action of the group of children/young people

The evaluation must be conducted to reveal:

- greater awareness of the rights of children and young people and greater respect in the attitudes shown towards them;
- greater recognition for children and young people;
- greater willingness to involve children and young people in decision-making processes.

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We at Save the Children want every girl and boy to have a future.

We work every day with passion, determination and professionalism in Italy and the rest of the world to give young people the opportunity to be born and grow up healthy, to receive an education and to be protected.

When an emergency breaks out, we are among the first to arrive and among the last to leave.

We collaborate with local entities and partners to create a network that helps us meet the needs of and for children, guarantee their rights and listen to their voice.

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