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WORKING PAPER

Evidence Review of Adolescent and Youth Participation

Impact in Governance and Policymaking

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Executive summary

Over recent decades, adolescent and youth participation in governance and policymaking has expanded significantly, driven by both a rights-based imperative and a growing recognition that young people bring unique perspectives that older generations cannot substitute for. Participation can build the skills, confidence and civic agency of those involved. It can make institutions better informed and more responsive to the needs those institutions are meant to serve. Participation can also impact society more broadly with institutions performing differently as adults interact with younger generations. Yet, while the benefits to participants themselves are well documented, evidence of the impact of participation on institutions and society at large remains fragmented, context-specific and is often limited.

This review focuses on the institutional and societal outcomes of participation. It aims to address a central question: what are the outcomes for government institutions and society at large when adolescents and young people participate in policy development and implementation? It is guided by a framework that retains the four elements of the Lundy (2007) model, namely, the normative requirement of ensuring space, voice, audience and influence as conditions for child participation. The framework adds two levels of impact: institutional change, such as changes to policies, legislation, budgets and administrative practice; and the wider policy and societal changes that follow.

The term ‘adolescent and youth participation’ in this review means that these actors, individually and collectively, form and express their views to influence matters that concern them. While the review’s intended focus was on children and adolescents under 18, much of the literature uses broader definitions of 'youth' or ‘young people’, which include children and sometimes extend to age 24 or 25, in some cases even older. Youth are included not as a separate focus but because literature frequently merges them with adolescents, without disaggregated data for those under 18. Sources therefore were included even where no lower age limit is stated, on the grounds that the population may plausibly include individuals under 18. The review thus uses 'children' (up to 18) and 'adolescents' (from 10 up to 19) where sources refer to these age groups, and 'young people' where the population plausibly includes children.

The review was conducted following searches on academic databases, grey literature, reference harvesting and consultation with UNICEF offices. Over 2,000 records published between 2000 and 2025, in English, Spanish and Portuguese were screened; 111 were read in full, and 51 studies among academic references and grey literature were included. The conclusions should be read in light of some important limitations, namely, inconsistent age brackets, limited disaggregated data and varying definitions of 'participation', which complicate comparison across studies. Few studies isolate the causal contribution of adolescent input to observed outcomes, most capture results at a single point in time, and evidence is disproportionately drawn from practitioner self-reports, which tend to skew towards positive results.

The evidence suggests that adolescent and youth participation can produce significant changes to policies, legislation and budgets across different sectors. In health, participation has led to tangible improvements in service quality and accessibility, including some contributions to population-level gains. In education, meaningful student participation in school governance produces measurable improvements in school climate, teacher–student relationships and some learning outcomes. In child protection, child-led organizations and peer networks have functioned as protective mechanisms in their own right, enabling collective action that supported legal action against abusers and traffickers.

Evidence of tangible impact is strongest at local governance level, where proximity to decision-makers increases the opportunities to influence and orients participation towards implementation. More broadly, adolescent and youth participation is associated with increased public trust in government, stronger democratic socialization and shifts in adult attitudes towards children and youth as competent civic actors.

The review also identifies a set of risks that arise when participation is poorly designed or inadequately supported. These are risks of unsupported participation rather than arguments against participation itself, and the evidence on negative outcomes is much thinner than the positive evidence. The most pervasive is adult capture or tokenism, although the fear of tokenism should not itself become a reason for inaction. Weak institutional follow-through and accountability can raise expectations without the capacity or willingness to respond, risking disillusionment and the exploitation of young people's time and goodwill. Participation can also expose children to retaliation or re-victimisation and reinforce the marginalization of some groups when the most vocal actors dominate. Finally, open processes can produce proposals that sit in tension with established interpretations of children's rights, underscoring the role adults must play in guiding and informing children in line with their evolving capacities.

Three clusters of headline recommendations emerge from this analysis. For programming, participation should be embedded in formal governance structures with real resources and follow-through, with pre- and post-assessments built in from the outset and data consistently disaggregated by age, gender, disability, and race or ethnicity. For advocacy, the concrete examples documented across this study provide a strong foundation for making the case for adolescent participation at national and global levels. For future research, longitudinal designs, independent evaluations and greater geographic diversity are essential, alongside greater attention to ethical dimensions.

What the evidence shows, ultimately, is that adolescent and youth participation can drive real change in institutions and society. Realising this potential requires investment in both meaningful participation and rigorous research.

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Introduction

Over the past decades, numerous mechanisms have been created to promote adolescents' and young people's participation in governance and policymaking. [1] These range from youth parliaments and local councils to digital platforms, and operate at local, national and international levels. Despite recent progress, many barriers remain in ensuring adolescents and young people have a meaningful say in decisions that impact their lives. From age discrimination to tokenism, from the lack of information to limited resources, many adults still fail to recognize how adolescents can actively shape the civil, political and legal processes that affect them.[2]

Yet there are compelling reasons why adolescent and young people's contributions to policymaking and governance mechanisms matter.[3] The first argument is rights-based. For individuals under 18, Article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child establishes a child's right to express their views freely in all matters affecting them, and to have those views given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity. For young people over 18, participation is enshrined in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, including a range of civil liberties that enable direct participation, grant legal standing and recognize the right to vote. Following this first argument, participation carries an intrinsic value: it must be encouraged because it is beneficial to the rights holder and because it is an entitlement, regardless of what follows after participation takes place.

The second logic is instrumental: participation is valued for what it contributes beyond the individual. Adolescent and youth participation can be a mechanism to improve the quality and effectiveness of policies and programmes, on the grounds that they bring a unique knowledge and perspectives that older generations cannot substitute for. Many theorize that participation is an important element of democratic decision making, as it can contribute to more accountable political systems, strengthen civic culture and develop a generation of active citizens who continue to contribute to democratic life into adulthood.

The rights-based argument for adolescent participation stands on its own merits and creates an obligation on duty bearers to ensure the right is fulfilled. On the other hand, the instrumental case – that participation produces better policies and thus improves governance, institutions and society at large – can benefit from a stronger and more systematic evidence base. Substantial research documents how participation builds individual skills, agency and self-esteem in young people. Yet, evidence of benefits to institutions and society at large remains fragmented, context-specific and is often methodologically limited. Available evidence can be anecdotal and difficult to verify, with limited data linking participation to broader development outcomes.[4] The literature tends to focus more on process outcomes than on longer-term institutional and societal impacts, and comprehensive assessments of large-scale interventions are almost entirely absent.[5]

This review attempts to fill this evidence gap. It is organized around this central question: ***What are the outcomes for government institutions and society at large when adolescents and young people***

participate in policy development and implementation? This includes participation in formal governance processes: national children's and youth parliaments; local governance mechanisms, including participatory budgeting and youth councils; and sectoral policy processes in health, education, child protection and related areas, led by government institutions or civil society organizations.

In attempting to answer the research question, this analysis aims to:

1. generate evidence to support UNICEF's programming and advocacy on civic engagement and participation;
2. document and analyse evidence of how adolescent and youth participation in policy development affects governance outcomes and institutional effectiveness beyond benefits to young people themselves;
3. identify specific examples and models of implementation, including the contextual factors that produced or contributed to impact;
4. define lessons learned and recommendations.

This analysis recognizes that adolescents and young people are not a homogeneous group. Gender inequality, social norms, disability, ethnicity, socioeconomic status and geographic location all shape who participates, how and with what effect. Young people from poorer backgrounds are less likely to participate in politics, and inequalities linked to gender and ethnicity compound this disadvantage, although the exact mechanisms remain unclear.[6] Participation can even lead to negative outcomes when it overlooks or reinforces the exclusion of already marginalized young people and groups within them.[7] This review therefore attempts to consider equity dimensions in cases where the evidence permits it, including examples and cases that address the participation of girls, minorities and other under-represented groups.

Terminology

This review uses the term 'children' for individuals under 18, as per the Convention on the Right of the Child's definition, and 'adolescents' for individuals aged 10–19, consistent with UNICEF's definition.

The United Nations defines 'youth' as persons aged 15–24, while UNICEF considers 'young people' as those aged 10–24. Sources do not define these terms consistently, and age brackets vary across studies and are sometimes not reported at all. This lack of consistency presents a persistent challenge in assessing the literature, as the blurring of age groups makes it more difficult to compare studies and to standardize participation effects.[8]

This review uses 'adolescents' for its population of interest, 'children' when referring to sources specifically with under-18s, and 'adolescents and young people' or 'adolescents and youth' where sources cover mixed- age or undefined cohorts, noting age ranges where they are specified.

'Adolescent participation' is understood as adolescents, individually and collectively, forming and expressing their views and influencing matters that concern them directly and indirectly.[9] The review focuses on participation in policymaking and on contributions made to improve the well-being of communities or society in general, consistent with UNICEF's definition of civic engagement.[10]

'Governance', broadly understood, encompasses the processes, relationships and institutions through which decisions about policies, resources and services are made, implemented and distributed.[11]

'Policymaking' involves the processes through which authorities or civil society organizations define problems, set priorities and allocate resources, typically through official initiatives, policies and programmes.

'Government institutions' refers to public authorities at local, subnational or national levels, including legislatures, executive bodies and administrations, as well as the public institutions through which policies are delivered, such as schools and health facilities.

'Outcomes' of adolescent and youth participation, for the purposes of this review, are understood at two levels: institutional change (to policies, legislation, budgets and administrative practice); and the wider policy and societal changes that follow, beyond the impact on adolescents and young people themselves. See 'Analytical Framework' for details.

'Society at large' refers to communities and population groups beyond the participating adolescents and young people, including families, other children and young people and adults.

Analytical Framework

This evidence review is grounded in a framework that builds on Laura Lundy's (2007) seminal work articulating Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).[12] Lundy (2007) proposed a four-element model that disaggregates the provision into its these requirements:

- Space, safe and inclusive opportunities for children to express views must be in place;
- Voice, meaningful forms of expression across diverse communication modalities must be facilitated;
- Audience, views must be actively listened to by those with decision-making authority;
- Influence, views must be given due weight and acted upon as appropriate.[13]

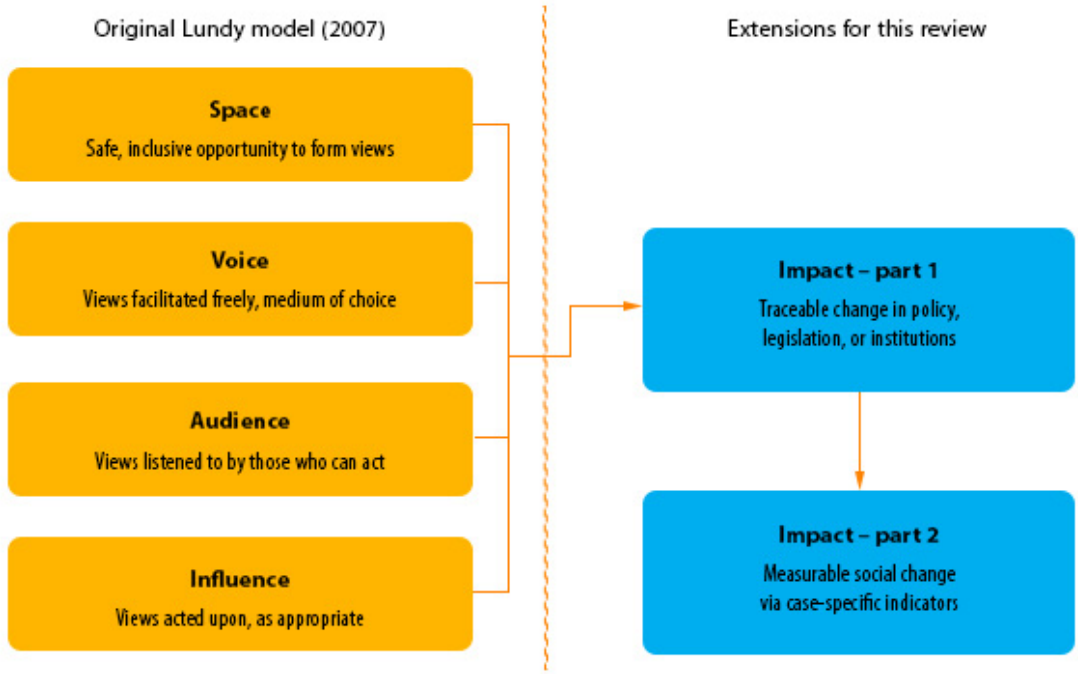
For the purposes of this review, which is concerned with the societal and institutional benefits of adolescent participation in policymaking and governance, this framework requires additional dimensions of analysis. To demonstrate the instrumental value of participation, this review aimed to identify evidence not only that adolescents and young people were included, but also that their inclusion made a difference to policy outcomes and, in some cases, provoked broader changes in society at large.

To address this 'so what?' dimension of adolescent and youth participation, this review therefore applies a **Participation-to-Impact Framework** (see Figure 1), which retains the four original Lundy elements as essential for participatory processes, and adds an assessment of two levels of impact:

- Impact – part 1 examines process-level institutional change: whether adolescent or youth inputs led to documented policy changes, changes or reform in legislation, or improved institutional functioning. Although, in some cases, this level of impact may represent a layer of 'Influence' per the Lundy model, this is not always the case. Influence, in Lundy's framework, refers to the right of children to have their views given due weight and acted upon as appropriate, which is a procedural obligation on decision makers that can be fulfilled without an observable institutional change. This extension of Impact – part 1, by contrast, is concerned with whether that change occurred.
- Impact – part 2 examines substantive policy and social outcomes: whether policies developed with adolescent participation produced changes in service delivery and uptake, or evidence of longer-term societal impact as measured by case-specific indicators.

These added elements are not intended to revise the legal requirements of Article 12. The Lundy Model's four elements already translate those into practical criteria. The Participation-to-Impact framework used in this review is analytical not normative, and adds elements to permit the investigation of the downstream impact of participation.

Figure 1. Participation-to-Impact Framework



Case studies and literature reviewed were assessed against all six elements of this Participation-to-Impact Framework where evidence permitted. However, in practice most sources did not provide sufficient procedural detail to verify compliance with all four elements of the Lundy model. It is also unclear in most cases if participation mechanisms followed established parameters of meaningful participation (see Box 1). In assessing the two levels of impact, institutional and societal, the review therefore adopted a pragmatic approach, treating documented evidence of participation as indicative of a minimum threshold of engagement that would typically precede impact. **Impact claims are thus grounded in the best available evidence, with the caveat that the quality or standards of adolescent or youth participation could not always be verified.**

Box 1: What does meaningful participation look like?

The Committee on the Rights of the Child, in its General Comment No. 12 (2009) on the right of the child to be heard, sets out the foundational legal basis for adolescent participation.[14] Under Article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, States parties are under a strict obligation to assure every child of the right to express their views freely in all matters affecting them, and to give those views due weight in accordance with the child's age and maturity. The Committee emphasizes that Article 12 imposes no age limit on this right, and discourages States parties from introducing age thresholds, either in law or in practice, that would restrict children's opportunity to be heard (CRC/C/GC/12, para. 21). Crucially, the obligation extends beyond individual proceedings to collective processes of decision making

and policymaking, including the development of legislation, policies and programmes (CRC/C/GC/12, para. 12).

The Committee is equally clear that participation is not a one-off event but an ongoing process, and that tokenistic approaches, which allow children to be heard but fail to give their views genuine weight, are incompatible with the Convention's requirements (CRC/C/GC/12, para. 132). Building on this foundation, the Committee identifies nine core requirements that any participation process must meet to be considered meaningful. It must be: transparent and informative; voluntary; respectful; relevant; child-friendly; inclusive; supported by training; safe and sensitive to risk; and accountable (CRC/C/GC/12, para. 134). Taken together, these requirements shift the benchmark from access – whether children were present in a process – to quality – whether the conditions under which they participated lead to influence.[15]

Methodology

This review combines academic database searching with the retrieval of grey literature and reference harvesting from included sources. The approach was designed to respond to a research question that sits at the intersection of disciplines (including child rights, political science, public administration and development studies) and to accommodate an evidence base that is fragmented across academic and practitioner literatures.

Search strategy

- Database searches were conducted between August and October 2025, covering major academic repositories across political science, education, public health and interdisciplinary development studies. Search terms combined concepts of 'adolescent', 'youth', 'young people', 'participation', 'governance' and 'policy', using Boolean operators to capture relevant variations.
- Date filters were applied to include sources from January 2000 to October 2025, reflecting both the consolidation of CRC implementation frameworks and the growth of participatory governance mechanisms over this period.
- Academic database searches were supplemented by the retrieval of grey literature from major institutional repositories, including UNICEF Innocenti and the OECD. Sources from key international NGOs working on children's rights, such as Save the Children, also emerged during this step.
- Reference harvesting was conducted on sources that met inclusion criteria (see below) at full-text stage, and on a selection of recent literature reviews. This was particularly important given that practitioner-documented cases of adolescent participation impact are rarely indexed in academic databases.
- Colleagues in UNICEF regional and country offices were also consulted to identify reports, evaluations and programme documentation not otherwise accessible through database searches.

Screening and selection

The primary population of interest was children and adolescents under 18. However, a significant share of the literature does not use child rights frameworks and frequently includes children and adolescents among 'youth' or 'young people', definitions that often extend to age 24 or 25, in some cases even older. Applying a strict under-18 threshold would have excluded a substantial body of relevant evidence and introduced a different distortion, since many programmes documented in the literature involve mixed-age cohorts without disaggregated data for those below 18.

The decision was therefore made to include sources where the age bracket of 'youth' or 'young people' is not defined, on the grounds that without a stated lower bound in these sources, the population may plausibly include individuals under 18. Sources that explicitly define their

population solely as adults, or that specify age brackets beginning at 18 or above, were excluded. This is an inclusive rather than a restrictive approach to age, and its implications are flagged throughout the analysis. Where findings derive from cohorts that may include participants significantly older than 18, this is explicitly mentioned.

The screening process proceeded in two stages:

- Over 2,000 records were identified across academic databases (Google Scholar, JSTOR, PubMed, SciELO, ScienceDirect, SpringerLink, Web of Science) and other repositories (UNICEF Innocenti and OECD). These were first screened at abstract level against the inclusion and exclusion criteria described below. Sources meeting the abstract-level threshold were shortlisted for full-text review; 111 sources were read in full.
- After full-text screening, inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied again and 51 sources were ultimately included in the review. Tags were added manually to each included source, which covered sector, geographical area and UNICEF involvement, and enabled systematic cross-source analysis at the synthesis stage. A table summarizing key information of included studies is in the Annex.

Inclusion criteria

- Population: sources where participants are under 18, or where the age bracket of 'youth' or 'young people' is not explicitly defined
- Language: English, Spanish and Portuguese
- Date: sources from 2000 to October 2025
- Thematic focus: sources containing evidence, analysis or documented cases bearing on institutional, governance or societal outcomes; sources documenting only individual-level benefits to participants (skills, empowerment, wellbeing) were included only where they also contained relevant institutional or societal outcome evidence.

Exclusion criteria

- Population: sources documenting participation by adults only, with no child or adolescent component (i.e. age bracket explicitly comprises only individuals aged 18 and above)
- Language: sources available in languages other than English, Spanish or Portuguese
- Date: sources published before 2000
- Thematic focus: participation documented exclusively individual welfare decisions (for instance, clinical, judicial or child protection case management) with no broader sector-wide policy or governance dimension; sources containing no evidence bearing on the research question, including descriptive accounts of participation mechanisms that do not address outcomes or impact of any kind.

Evidence synthesis

Following full-text screening and tagging, synthesis proceeded in stages. All included sources were read in full and then grouped thematically using the tag taxonomy applied during screening. The primary grouping logic followed UNICEF's sectoral framework, given the frequency of sources referring to them (namely health, education and child protection). These were supplemented by two inductively constructed groupings: child parliaments and local governance (youth parliaments, advisory boards and local governance structures); and broader societal gains (democratic culture, civic trust and institutional accountability), where evidence pointed to diffuse systemic effects that would not fit a single sector. Key findings were then extracted from each grouping and synthesized across sources. Illustrative examples were selected to reflect as broad a geographical spread as possible.

Case studies

This review will be complemented by separate case studies, each examining in greater depth how adolescent and youth participation has contributed to institutional and societal change in a specific context, applying the analytical framework described above. The cases also aim to identify successful examples of adolescent and youth participation and different models of implementation, shedding light on the contextual factors that produced or contributed to impact.

The case studies will be published as separate reports as each is completed, and their findings are therefore not reflected in this review.

Limitations

Several limitations of this review deserve acknowledgement:

- Inconsistent age brackets: as mentioned earlier, a significant share of the literature uses 'youth' definitions extending well beyond 18, sometimes to age 24, 25, or older, making it difficult to isolate findings attributable specifically to the under-18 population.
- Limited disaggregated data: evidence on younger age brackets, gender dimensions, and the experiences of vulnerable or marginalised groups within adolescent participation processes is largely absent.
- Definitional inconsistency: 'participation' is defined inconsistently across sources, ranging from consultation to sustained co-governance, which complicates cross-study comparison.
- Attribution gaps: few studies are designed to isolate the causal contribution of adolescent input to observed governance or policy outcomes; causal claims are frequently asserted rather than demonstrated. For instance, feedback loops back to young participants and shifts in adults' attitudes towards participation are rarely documented.

- Publication and reporting bias: many sources and cases are retrieved from grey literature and practitioner self-reports, skewing toward positive results and programmes with institutional capacity to document their work.
- Absence of longitudinal data and control groups: most studies capture outcomes at a single point in time, with no comparator group, limiting what can be inferred about sustainability or counterfactual impact.
- Geographic skew: evidence is disproportionately concentrated in high-income countries, with countries in the Global South substantially underrepresented.
- Predominantly qualitative evidence base: quantitative and mixed-method studies are rare, and this constrains the generalizability of findings.
- Inconsistent ethical standards: ethical considerations in research involving children, informed assent, safeguarding, power dynamics in data collection, are rarely addressed in sources.

These limitations are not unique to this review; they reflect the current state of the field. They are flagged here to calibrate the reader's expectations and to identify the research gaps that should be prioritized in future work.

Evidence Synthesis

The evidence is organized across five thematic groupings that emerged from the literature analysis: health, education, child protection, children's parliaments and local governance, and broader societal gains. The first three follow UNICEF's core sectoral framework; the latter two were constructed inductively from the evidence, reflecting distinct and cross-sectoral institutional modes of adolescent and youth engagement, and the more diffuse systemic effects that also cut across sectors.

Within each grouping, findings are presented moving from the most directly attributable outcomes, where a traceable link between adolescent participation and policy or institutional change is documented, towards more long-term effects. Illustrative examples were selected to reflect as broad a geographical spread as possible. Limitations specific to each thematic area are flagged at the end of each subsection. A final section addresses the negative outcomes and risks that recur across the literature as an important complement to the positive evidence presented throughout.

Health

Adolescent participation in health contexts has been shown to produce tangible improvements in the quality of services and access. In Viet Nam, children and young people from three poor districts in Ho Chi Mihn City (n=465, ages 6–18) engaged through participatory surveys and focus groups, shed light on the situation of unregistered migrant families who were unable to access health and social welfare services, leading directly to procedural changes within local government that allowed faster access.[16] In India, a school-based programme for tobacco prevention involving peer-led activism of children grades 6–10 (aged 11 to 16 approximately) contributed to a significant decrease in cigarette smoking over two years compared to the control group; findings from this initiative shaped a national policy for combatting tobacco.[17]

Child- and youth-led peer health initiatives have been particularly effective in sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) across several contexts, and this sub-sector accounts for a significant share of the literature in health-related work. Well-designed, peer-based approaches are particularly well-suited in SRHR given that young people are more likely to discuss sensitive health issues openly with peers, and peer educators bring more credibility and cultural proximity compared with adults.[18] In Peru, a study across six cities showed that adolescents deployed as peer promoters in secondary schools achieved a significant increase in condom use over 18 months.[19] In Senegal, 70 adolescents, including house servants, shoeshine boys and teenage mothers, trained as SRHR peer educators to target particularly marginalized groups, reached 28,000 young people, ultimately driving the mainstreaming of adolescent SRHR into national education policy; the experience was replicated across other Francophone African countries.[20] A review of 137 peer education interventions in different parts of the world found documented effects which included increased SRHR knowledge, improved condom self-efficacy, delayed sexual initiation and reduced

sexually transmitted infection rates, although authors caution that effect sizes could be modest and evaluation quality across the interventions was variable.[21]

Many significant gaps persist across this body of evidence. Policies do not always engage adolescents meaningfully across all states of development and implementation.[22] For instance, the degree to which adolescents shaped the design of peer-led programmes is often unclear, therefore, where programmes are designed by adults and then delivered by adolescents participation may not be meaningful. Comparing studies and measuring effects may also be complicated by the lack of a shared definition of 'participation'. The evidence of policy impact remains largely anecdotal and long-term impacts are often difficult to assess, given short project timelines.[23]

Education

Student participation in school governance can produce measurable improvements in school climate, relationships and academic outcomes. A consistent theme across studies addressing participation initiatives in schools is that when students are meaningfully involved in school-level decision-making, measurable improvements follow in school ethos, teacher–student relationships and learning outcomes.[24] An evaluation of Rights Respecting Schools (RRS) in 31 schools in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (United Kingdom) (a UNICEF initiative to embed children's rights in school culture and practice), found that both teachers and pupils reported more positive relationships based on mutual respect, reduced bullying and improved pupil engagement.[25] Across OECD countries, students in schools that provided platforms for voicing opinions tended to perform better on reading assessments than those in schools that did not seek student feedback.[26] Experts warn that this type of correlation may run in the opposite direction, in that academically stronger schools may simply find it easier to introduce participatory structures, making it difficult to determine whether student engagement drives performance or whether high-performing schools are more disposed to implement democratic practices.[27]

Several studies also show that in-school participation mechanisms function as a pathway to more active citizenship. Longitudinal evidence from the United States showed that involvement in student government during high school was the most potent predictor of adult participation in such democratic processes as voting and political campaigning.[28] The Islamic Republic of Iran's national School Mayor project, in which students are elected to govern their schools, showed significantly higher participation levels than control schools after nine months; participation contributed not only to measurable improvements in school infrastructure but also to more community engagement, even in a context where broader political participation is restricted.[29] The review of rights-based school programmes in the United Kingdom suggests that giving students scope to influence decisions develops their citizenship capacities and could foster future activism.[30]

Many research gaps remain. Most evidence is based on perceptions. The mere existence of a school council or similar structure does not guarantee meaningful participation nor does it automatically produce positive outcomes or lead to changes on issues that students consider most

important. Direct causal attribution between participation and institutional or social outcomes is methodologically challenging. Studies rarely evaluate hidden costs of participation or rigorously explore the links between participation and formal learning outcomes.[31] Evaluations of rights-based school programmes in the United Kingdom tend to focus on more easily measurable processes rather than on educational impact, with low response rates and opportunistic sampling, which tend to weaken the trustworthiness of findings.[32] In addition, RRS programmes trigger much broader changes, including in school leadership, staff training and whole-school ethos, making it difficult to isolate the specific contribution of student participation to observed outcomes.

Child Protection

Evidence from initiatives focused on children who have been victims of violence, exploitation and abuse suggests that participation can function as a protective mechanism in its own right. A compilation of case studies across the world commissioned by UNICEF in 2009 documents that, where children were engaged in prevention and response efforts (through child-led organizations, peer education networks, theatre and advocacy projects, community monitoring committees, and consultation processes for national plans of action) there is evidence of concrete protective outcomes.[33] These include: increased school enrolment; reduction of early marriage; children breaking silence around abuse and exploitation; families and communities becoming more responsive to protection concerns; and governance structures incorporating child-generated recommendations into policy frameworks.[34] Similar patterns are documented in child labour initiatives in South and Central Asia by Save the Children, where children participating in child clubs and community structures brought police and legal action against abusers and traffickers in Bangladesh and Nepal.[35]

Child-led organizations and peer networks emerge as particularly effective mechanisms for reaching survivors of violence or for prevention work, enabling collective action that amplifies individual voice and reaches vulnerable children who may fall outside formal service structures.[36] A review of programme documentation commissioned by Save the Children Sweden, primarily in Latin America, found that children participating in school municipalities, village committees and youth clubs used these structures to denounce violence, prevent early marriage through negotiation with parents, and promote legal action against abusers.[37] Girls' participation was found to be especially consequential. In Nepal, multi-ethnic groups of girls organized to map dangerous locations and to run campaigns, competitions and complaint box initiatives against sexual abuse and exploitation, and were themselves empowered to resist early marriage.[38] Their brothers were drawn into protective action as a result, shifting gender dynamics within families and communities, as boys who had previously harassed girls began instead to protect them. [39]

The evidence base remains largely descriptive and qualitative, with significant limitations in attribution, and gaps about ethical considerations. Findings are often based on assessments by implementers rather than on independent evaluations.[40] There is also a challenge in accessing government-led examples of institutionalized child participation in protection contexts, given the

sensitivities involved.[41] The literature also says little about whether institutions responded when children raised concerns. Literature often does not systematically disaggregate findings by gender nor does it analyse the gender dimensions of outcomes, a limitation that is especially significant in child protection contexts where girls face disproportionate risks. There is also a near-absence of ethical safeguarding protocols in documented initiatives. Engaging children exposed to violence carries inherent risks of re-victimization, stigma and exposure that are rarely addressed in the documented initiatives.[42]

Children's Parliament and local governance

National children's parliaments have generated documented policy changes, although evidence of direct attribution remains largely anecdotal. The Plurinational State of Bolivia's Children's Parliament, established by law and convening twice annually in the national congress, produced over 100 legislative proposals from its creation in 2003 up to 2005.[43] During this period, proposals put forward by child legislators influenced an amendment to the national birth registration law, eliminating costly legal procedures for corrections, a concrete policy outcome directly attributed to them.[44] In Lesotho, a Shadow Children's Parliament facilitated by World Vision in 2010, in which young people debated pending child protection legislation before an audience of ministers, was followed within a year by the passage of the long-awaited Children's Protection and Welfare Act, including an amendment reflecting young people's concerns about the treatment of child offenders.[45] However, some scholars argue that, beyond such examples, these mechanisms of adolescent and youth participation have had limited lasting influence in decision-making,[46] in part because adults often lack the capacity or training needed to sustain these initiatives.

Local governance mechanisms, including participatory budgeting, youth and child councils, and child-friendly city programmes, show stronger evidence of tangible impact, particularly in smaller municipalities where children and youth have more direct access to decision-makers. A systematic literature review of developing country contexts found that youth efforts targeting local or organizational-level policy had strong impacts in a majority of the eleven cases considered, while national-level impact was achieved in only two cases. [47] This pattern was attributed to the proximity of local government, fewer veto actors and the orientation of local participation towards implementation rather than formulation.[48] In Nepal, over 60,000 children participated in UNICEF-supported consultations used to identify needs and priorities at the local level in 2015/16, with 54 per cent of child-identified priorities incorporated into local government plans and US$ 30 million in child block grants allocated nationally, a large-scale institutional result.[49] In the municipality of Barra Mansa, Brazil, a children's participatory budget council, in which over 6,000 young people annually join assemblies, allocated municipal funds to school repairs, security and playgrounds; with girls specifically identifying safety needs such as lighting in pedestrian tunnels.[50] A youth council in Regensburg, Germany, influenced reductions in public transport costs for children, contributed to cycle route planning and sports development, and helped establish an anti-discrimination office, particularly significant in a city where over half of migrants were under 15 years old.[51]

The key research gaps are consistent across this literature. Available evidence is largely drawn from programme evaluations or stakeholder reflections rather than from independent longitudinal research, making attribution difficult to establish. There is generally more emphasis on showcase examples and cases than on sustained monitoring and evaluation or child impact assessment, limiting the ability of researchers to demonstrate cumulative benefits.[52]

Other long-term societal gains

This section concerns effects that extend beyond specific policies and institutions. Some of the evidence below, notably on democratic socialization, is measured at the level of those individuals who participated and is only included for the aggregate implications for democratic culture rather than for the benefits to the individuals.

Adolescent participation in public institutions is associated with increased public trust in government and stronger legitimacy of democratic systems. OECD countries whose national youth strategies meet core good governance standards – including being participatory, cross-sectoral and backed by political commitment – tend to report higher youth interest in politics compared to the general population.[53] At the local level, child participation initiatives in Latin American municipalities had the effect of sensitizing and mobilizing broader adult constituencies, families, teachers, NGOs and municipal authorities, stimulating wider participation processes and generating understanding of more democratic city administration models.[54] Indeed, the lasting value of participatory processes lies not only in their institutional continuity but also in the civic capabilities they build in the young people who exercise them and on the communities around them; this effect ultimately sustains democratic culture beyond any single initiative.[55]

Sustained youth participation in governance produces democratic socialization effects, with adolescents who participate meaningfully more likely to remain civically engaged as adults. A review of longitudinal and cross-sectional research found that engagement in extracurricular and community-based organizations in adolescence predicts civic engagement in adulthood with potentially long-lasting effects, bolstering political engagement and providing civic knowledge and skills.[56] As noted earlier, a large-scale United States of America (United States) study found that the most potent predictor of adult participation in democratic processes (including voting, working in political campaigns and joining social movements) was involvement in student government during high school, replicating earlier findings.[57]

Adolescent participation also generates intergenerational understanding, shifting adult attitudes towards children as rights-holders and competent civic actors. An analysis relying on grounded theory interviews with 16 youth (age range 14–20) and 24 adults across 8 organizations in the United States found that adults who initially held ambivalent or negative assumptions about youth capacity consistently revised those views after collaborative governance experience, coming to see young people as community assets rather than as clusters of risks. They reported that organizations functioned more responsibly and innovatively when youth were present at decision-

making tables.[58] An ethnographic study of youth councils across the Boston metropolitan region, USA, found that the majority of adult stakeholders came to view youth as 'capable, powerful and necessary voices within the political process'.[59] Similarly, in an evaluation of an Australian youth-led domestic violence prevention programme, adult stakeholders came to view the young ambassadors (16–23 years old) as capable public educators, valuing their capacity to communicate and engage effectively across diverse audiences.[60]

The evidence underpinning these societal changes varies significantly. Many of the findings come from research in established democracies. Data on democratic socialization rely on correlational or self-reported data. At the same time, the mechanisms contributing to the long-term engagement of young people in civic action or political behaviour are complex and not always well understood.[61]

Negative outcomes

Across sectors, the literature identifies a consistent set of risks that arise when adolescent participation is poorly designed or inadequately supported. These demonstrate the risks of unsupported participation and are not arguments against participation itself. Indeed, the evidence on negative outcomes is thinner than is the positive evidence.

The most pervasive negative consequence is the risk of adult capture or tokenistic participation. Adult capture may happen when rights language is deployed as a tool of adult control rather than for genuine empowerment, or when participation is performative, happening in response to incentives rather than to conviction. It could also happen when adolescents and young people are systematically excluded from the decisions that matter most to them, such as those about teaching, learning or protection, even when participatory spaces exist.[62] Tokenism could take place when processes are held after decisions are taken, or without enough time, or through patronizing structures. However, as warned by Lundy (2018), the fear of tokenism should not itself become a reason for inaction; its consequences are not inevitably negative, as children can be galvanized into further action. By avoiding participation because it *might* be tokenistic children are denied their right to be heard altogether.[63]

A second cluster of negative risks to inadequate participation relates to weak institutional follow-through and accountability. Indeed, when programmes lack credible follow-through and feedback mechanisms, they risk disillusionment and the exploitation of young people's time and goodwill.[64] In some cases related to peer education, for instance, one-off training of youth and adults' over-reliance on youth volunteerism were important challenges, and could reduce accountability among adult duty-bearers.[65] Raising expectations without the institutional capacity or a willingness to respond can be a problem across school councils, peer education programmes, child protection initiatives and governance mechanisms alike. At the same time, the risk of disillusionment should also be read with caution: protecting children from disappointment is not a valid reason to deny them a human right.[66]

A third cluster of risks relates to safety concerns and equity. In protection contexts specifically, visibility through participation can expose children to retaliation or re-victimisation;[67] and participation confined to programme spaces without connection to wider governance structures risks reinforcing the very exclusions it seeks to address. In addition, the presence of the most vocal or articulate can also reinforce discrimination and the marginalization of some groups.

Finally, open participation processes can produce proposals that sit in tension with established interpretations of child rights, raising questions about the limits of child-directed advocacy. In 2014, during the Plurinational State of Bolivia's Children's Parliament, a group of child legislators, drawing on their own analysis of economic conditions, proposed lowering the minimum working age to ten years. This recommendation conflicted with international minimum-age standards and shocked facilitating NGOs.[68] The case underscores that children's positions will not always align with adult-defined interpretations of their rights. It also illustrates both the independence of child voices in open processes and the critical role adults must play in guiding and informing children throughout the process, particularly on legal and complex issues, in line with their evolving capacities.[69] In addition, participatory structures alone are no guarantee of effectiveness, especially when dependent on elected officials whose turnover and shifting political priorities can destabilize even well-established initiatives. Mechanisms embedded in formal governance structures thus remain heavily dependent on the political will, resources and legitimate influence that decision makers and institutionalized power are willing to extend to them.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The evidence reviewed here confirms that adolescent and youth participation in governance and policymaking can produce significant changes to policies, legislation and budgets, impacting policymaking and child outcomes as a result. Yet this evidence remains sparse, methodologically limited and geographically uneven. Stronger and more systematic information is needed before confident causal claims are made.

The evidence, reviewed alongside established guidance on child participation,[70] also points to conditions under which positive impacts at institutional and social levels are more likely: a supportive legislative and policy environment; adults who are trained, competent and confident in working with children; investment in social norms that recognize and value children's participation; and feedback and follow-through mechanisms that connect inputs to decisions. Where these conditions are absent, the risks described above become more likely.

The following recommendations are addressed to UNICEF and its partners.

For participation programmes

- The most consequential outcomes in this review emerge where participation is meaningful and embedded in formal governance structures rather than confined to one-off consultations. Programming should prioritize mechanisms that connect adolescent input to decision-making cycles with real resources and follow-through. Additional evidence is needed on online participation, which the literature reviewed here did not focus on but which is an emerging area of work, especially since the COVID-19 pandemic.
- At the same time, participation structures should avoid the excessive formalization that can strip participation of its responsiveness and adaptability, especially at a time when children and young people favour informal mechanisms of participation.
- Programmes should also build in pre- and post-assessments from the outset, enabling systematic documentation of impact on governance and institutional outcomes, rather than attempting to reconstruct results retrospectively.
- Finally, participation data should be consistently disaggregated by age bracket, and particular attention given to younger cohorts so that the specific dynamics and contributions of younger children can be better understood and supported. Additional measures to ensure data is disaggregated by gender, disability, ethnicity and socioeconomic status would also ensure adequate monitoring and equitable access.

For advocacy on adolescent participation

- Concrete examples provide a strong foundation for advocacy at national and global levels, as documented across health, education, child protection and local governance from: peer educators shaping national SRHR policy in Senegal; child-identified priorities incorporated

into local government plans in Nepal; and participatory budgets allocating municipal funds in Brazil.

- UNICEF and child rights organisations should deploy these examples to make the case for meaningful participation and should continue to advocate for the application of meaningful participation standards in initiatives already underway, insisting that these be transparent, voluntary, inclusive, respectful, child-friendly, supported by training and accountable.[71]

For future researchers

- Future studies should prioritize longitudinal designs supported by investment in baseline data, independent evaluation and greater geographic diversity.
- Disaggregated data on younger adolescents, girls and marginalized groups remain especially scarce, and closing these gaps is essential to building a more robust and equitable evidence base.
- Beyond data gaps, the field also needs more methodological investment and diversity: quasi-experimental and mixed-method designs capable of isolating the contribution of adolescent participation to observed outcomes, as distinct from the broader programme and contextual factors that typically accompany them. Such designs should capture both the effects on participating adolescents and the wider institutional and social outcomes, allowing for connections between the two to be traced.
- Ethical dimensions, including informed assent, safeguarding and power dynamics in data collection involving children, also deserve far greater attention than the current literature affords them, and should be treated as standard requirements rather than optional considerations in future research design.

Endnotes

[1] See 'Terminology' for key concepts.
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[15] Participation also varies in the degree of control afforded to adolescents: Lansdown (2018) distinguishes consultative, collaborative and adolescent-led participation, each of which can be meaningful when the requirements above are met, but which give adolescents different degrees of influence over the agenda and the process. Lansdown, Gerison, 'Conceptual Framework for Measuring Outcomes of Adolescent Participation' UNICEF, New York, NY, March 2018, <https://www.unicef.org/media/59006/file>.
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[28] Ibid., 31.

[29] Piran, 'School Mayors of Iran: Learning Social Participation in an Unfavorable Environment'.

[30] Flutter, 'Pupil Voice and Agency'.

[31] Davis et al., 'Inspiring Schools: Impact and Outcomes – Taking up the Challenge of Pupil Participation', 4.

[32] Quennerstedt, 'UNICEF'S *Rights Respecting Schools Award* as Children's Human Rights Education', 5 citing Jerome et al 2015.

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Annex: Summary of included sources

The evidence review includes 55 sources, listed alphabetically by first author. County and population figures are drawn from each source.

Author and year	Short title	Source type	Country	Population / age (n)	Sector
1. **Asker and Gero (2012)**	*The Role of Child and Youth Participation in Development Effectiveness*	Grey literature (report)	Global (multi-country)	Children (<15) and youth (15–24) (United Nations definition)	Health/HIV/AIDS, WASH, education, governance
2. **Ataol, Krishnamurthy and Van Wesemael (2019)**	*Children's Participation in Urban Planning and Design: A Systematic Review*	Peer-reviewed article (systematic review; 30 studies reviewed)	Global (mainly Europe and N. America)	Children 0–18	Child protection; Education; Gender equality; Urban planning; Climate change
3. **Augsberger, Collins and Gecker (2017)**	*Best Practices for Youth Engagement in Municipal Government*	Peer-reviewed article	United States (Boston metro area)	Broadly "youth," primarily high-school age; one council extends to age 25 (27 interviewees)	Urban planning; health; education
4. **Avis (2015)**	*Increasing Youth Participation in Accountability Mechanisms*	Grey literature (policy report)	Global (multi-country)	Youth 15–24 (UN definition)	Child protection; Urban planning
5. **Bacalso, Bárta and Moxon (2023)**	*Youth Political Participation: Literature and Policy Review 1980–2023*	Grey literature (literature and policy review)	Global (mainly Europe and N. America)	Youth, incl. under-18	Governance; Education; Gender equality; Climate change
6. **Bartlett (2005a)**	*Good Governance: Making Age a Part of the Equation*	Journal article (editorial / synthesis)	Multi-country	Children and adolescents (varied ages)	Governance; Urban planning; Child protection; Education; Health; WASH
7. **Bartlett (2005b)**	*Integrating Children's Rights into Municipal Action*	Journal article (review, commissioned by Save the Children Sweden)	Global (multi-country)	Children and youth (no definition)	Governance; Urban planning; WASH; Education; Health; Child Protection
8. **Cabannes (2005)**	*Children and Young People Build Participatory*	Journal article (multi-case)	Ecuador, Brazil, Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela	Children and youth (varies by case)	Governance; Urban planning

Author and year	Short title	Source type	Country	Population / age (n)	Sector
	Democracy in Latin American Cities				
9. **Cano Hila and Pose Porto (2021)**	*Impactos de las experiencias municipales de participación infantil*	Peer-reviewed article (empirical)	Spain	Children and adolescents (no definition)	Governance; Urban planning
10. **Carter (2015)**	*Development Outcomes of the Political and Social Inclusion of Young People*	Grey literature (evidence synthesis)	Global	Young people 10–25	Governance; Child protection; Education; Health and immunization
11. **Chatterjee, Cocco-Klein et al. (2020)**	*Evaluation of UNICEF Work for Children in Urban Settings*	Grey literature (evaluation report by UNICEF)	Brazil, Philippines, Spain, Syrian Arab Republic, Belize	Children, adolescents and youth (no definition)	Governance; Urban planning; Child protection; Education; Health; WASH
12. **Cocco-Klein (2020)**	*Evaluation of UNICEF Work for Children in Urban Settings: Belize Case Study*	Grey literature (evaluation report by UNICEF)	Belize	Children, adolescents and youth (no definition)	Governance; Urban planning; Child protection; Education; Health
13. **Cook (2008)**	*Understanding the Effects of Adolescent Participation in Health Programmes*	Peer-reviewed article (narrative review)	Global (multi-country)	Adolescents: ages 10–19. Youth: 15–24. Young people: 10–24	Health; Gender equality
14. **Cooper and Hays (2007)**	*Engaging Youth for Positive Change: A Critical Analysis of Case Studies on Local Action*	Peer-reviewed article	United States	Adolescents (junior / high school)	Education; Gender equality; Health; Governance
15. **Cory, Kuchel et al. (2024)**	*Participation of Indigenous Children and Young People to Improve Health and Wellbeing*	Peer-reviewed article (perspective)	Australia	Children, adolescents and young people (no definition)	Health
16. **Cushing and van Vliet (2016)**	*Children's right to the city: the emergence of youth councils in the United States*	Peer-reviewed article	United States	Children and youth, primarily high-school age 14–18 (some to 24)	Governance; Urban planning
17. **Davis, Williams and Yamashita (2005)**	*Inspiring Schools: Impact and Outcomes – Taking Up*	Grey literature (report)	United Kingdom	Secondary school students	Education; Gender equality; Urban planning

Author and year	Short title	Source type	Country	Population / age (n)	Sector
	the Challenge of Pupil Participation				
18. **Feinstein and O'Kane (2009)**	*Children and Adolescents' Participation and Protection from Sexual Abuse and Exploitation*	Working paper (UNICEF Innocenti)	Global (multi-country)	Children and adolescents (<18), though some cases up to 19	Child protection; Gender equality; Humanitarian emergencies
19. **Flutter (2024)**	*Pupil Voice and Agency: Exploring the Evidence-Base*	Blog post	United Kingdom	Primarily primary school pupils	Education
20. **Gottschalk and Borhan (2023)**	*Child Participation in Decision Making: Implications for Education and Beyond*	Working paper (OECD)	OECD countries	Children (0–18) and youth (no definition)	Education; Governance; Child protection; Climate change
21. **Guerra (2005)**	*Citizenship Knows No Age: Children's Participation in Barra Mansa's Municipal Budget*	Journal article (case study)	Brazil	Children and adolescents (9–15)	Urban planning; Governance
22. **Hipskind and Poremski (2005)**	*Youth in Governance: Supports and Resources Are Critical Components for Youth Success*	Journal article (case study)	United States	Youth (high-school / college students)	Urban planning; Governance
23. **Huxley (2010)**	*Youth Participation in Development: A Guide for Development Agencies and Policy Makers*	Grey literature (guide with several case studies)	Global (multi-country, most in Asia and Africa)	Youth (aged 15 to 24)	Governance; Health
24. **Lansdown (2011)**	*Every Child's Right to Be Heard: Resource Guide on the UNCRC General Comment No. 12*	Grey literature (resource guide with case studies)	Global (multi-country)	Children (<18)	Child protection; Education; Health
25. **Lansdown and Sedletzki (2022)**	*Effective, Representative and Inclusive Child Participation at the Local Level*	Grey literature (UNICEF study)	Europe (11 countries)	Children <18 (councils from age 8–17; up to 25)	Education; Gender equality; Governance

Author and year	Short title	Source type	Country	Population / age (n)	Sector
26. London (2007)	*Power and Pitfalls of Youth Participation in Community-Based Research*	Peer-reviewed article	United States	Youth researchers 14–17 (n = 7); surveyed children 5–18 (n= 194)	Child protection; Education; Gender equality; Migration; Urban planning
27. Mager and Nowak (2012)	*Effects of Student Participation in Decision Making at School: A Systematic Review and Synthesis of Empirical Research*	Peer-reviewed article (systematic review)	Multi-country (majority in United States, United Kingdom, Ireland and Canada)	School-age students	Education
28. Mandoh, Redfern and Mihrshahi (2023)	*How Are Adolescents Engaged in Obesity and Chronic Disease Prevention Policy? A scoping review*	Peer-reviewed article (scoping review)	Australia, Canada, United Kingom, United States	Adolescents 10–24	Health
29. McLeod (2007)	*Whose Agenda? Power and Relationship in Listening to Looked-After Young People*	Peer-reviewed article	United Kingdom	Young people (aged 9–17)	Child protection
30. Mwale, Msiska et al. (2021)	*Evaluating Young People's Ability to Sustain an Evidence-Based Social Accountability Approach to Improve Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health in Ntcheu, Malawi*	Peer-reviewed article (evaluation)	Malawi	Youth 14–29	Health
31. OECD (2020)	*Governance for Youth, Trust and Intergenerational Justice – Fit for all generations?*	Grey literature (report by the OECD)	42 countries (34 OECD/EU + 8 non-members)	Youth 15–24 (some to 29/30)	Governance; Health; Education
32. O'Kane (2003)	*Children and Young People as Citizens: Partners for Social Change*	Grey literature (programme documentation)	South and Central Asia	Children and young people	Governance
33. Pal (2008)	*Makkala Panchayats: Institutionalization of*	Peer-reviewed article (case study)	India	Children / adolescents 6–18	Governance

Author and year	Short title	Source type	Country	Population / age (n)	Sector
	Children's Participation in Local Decision-Making				
34. **Perry, Stigler, Arora and Reddy (2009)**	*Preventing Tobacco Use Among Young People in India: Project MYTRI*	Peer-reviewed article (group RCT)	India	Adolescents from 6th to 10th grades; n = 14,063	Health
35. **Piran (2005)**	*School Mayors of Iran: Learning Social Participation in an Unfavourable Environment*	Journal article (case study)	Islamic Republic of Iran	Adolescents aged 11–14	Education
36. **Quennerstedt (2022)**	*UNICEF's Rights Respecting Schools Award as Children's Human Rights Education*	Peer-reviewed article (analytical review)	United Kingdom	Primary and secondary school pupils	Education
37. **Richards-Schuster and Checkoway (2010)**	*Youth Participation in Public Policy at the Local Level: New Lessons from Michigan Municipalities*	Peer-reviewed article	United States	Youth (including adolescents)	Governance; urban planning
38. **Robinson (2014)**	*Children, Their Voices and Their Experiences of School: What Does the Evidence Tell Us?*	Grey literature (commissioned review)	United Kingdom	Primary school pupils	Education
39. **Ross, Kerridge and Woodhouse (2018)**	*The Impact of Children and Young People's Participation on Policy Making*	Grey literature (government-commissioned report)	United Kingdom *(Scotland)*	Children and young people	Child protection; Education; Health and immunization
40. **Sarkar and Mendoza (2005)**	*Bolivia's Children's Parliament: Bringing Participation to the National Stage*	Journal article (case study)	The Plurinational State of Bolivia	130 Representatives (≤12) + 27 Senators (13–17)	Governance
41. **Save the Children (2004)**	*Wheel of Change: Children and Young People's Participation in South Asia*	Grey literature (report)	South Asia	Children and young people (marginalized groups)	–

Author and year	Short title	Source type	Country	Population / age (n)	Sector
42. **Sebba and Robinson (2010)**	*Evaluation of UNICEF's Rights Respecting Schools Award*	Grey literature (Evaluation report by UNICEF)	United Kingdom	Primary and secondary school pupils	–
43. **Shephard (2017)**	*How Young People Influence Policy: A Literature Review*	Grey literature (systematic review)	Global (focus: developing countries)	Youth 15–24	–
44. **Struthers, Tilbury and Williams (2017)**	*Young People Leading Change in Domestic Violence Prevention: R4Respect*	Peer-reviewed article (process evaluation)	Australia	12 Youth Ambassadors 16–23 (3 under 18)	Child Protection
45. **Tilkin, Alcedo et al. (2008)**	*Promoción de la participación protagónica de niños y adolescentes expuestos a la violencia*	Grey literature (report, Save the Children)	Colombia, Peru, Brazil	Children and adolescents exposed to violence	Child protection; Gender equality; Urban planning
46. **Todd, Dharmayani et al. (2025)**	*How Are Adolescents Participating in the Transformation of Healthy Food Environments?*	Peer-reviewed article (scoping review)	Global (81% high-income)	Adolescents 10–19; n = 20,697 (70 studies)	–
47. **UNICEF (2017)**	*Child Participation in Local Governance: UNICEF Country Office Case Studies*	Grey literature (Report - UNICEF case studies)	Nepal, Belize, Türkiye, Ethiopia	Children and adolescents 8–18	Urban planning
48. **UNICEF (2020)**	*Advancing Child-Centred Public Policy in Brazil through Adolescent Participation*	Grey literature (Report - UNICEF)	Brazil	Adolescents (focus: Afro-descendant, Indigenous, girls)	Urban planning
49. **Vijfeijken, Gneiting, Schmitz (2011)**	*How Does CCCD Affect Programme Effectiveness and Sustainability? (Plan International)*	Evaluation report (grey literature)	Global (multi-country)	Children, adolescents and youth (no definition)	Education; Health; WASH
50. **Villa-Torres and Svanemyr (2015)**	*Ensuring Youth's Right to Participation in SRHR Policies and Programmes*	Peer-reviewed article (systematic review)	Global	Young people 10–24; adolescents 10–19	Gender equality; Health and immunization

Author and year	Short title	Source type	Country	Population / age (n)	Sector
51. Zeldin (2004)	*Youth as Agents of Adult and Community Development*	Peer-reviewed article	United States	Adolescents / youth, mean 16.8 (range 14–20)	–

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