These Guidelines were developed in Zimbabwe by the Ministry of Labour and Social Services with the support of UNICEF and Save the Children UK and with the participation of children.
National Child Participation and Protection Guidelines

2010

Ministry of Labour and Social Services

Government of Zimbabwe

unicef

National Child Participation and Protection Guidelines
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National Child Participation and Protection Guidelines
The Government of Zimbabwe as a member of the international community has ratified a number of international conventions such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) which provide guidance on care, protection and the promotion of children’s rights, and the right to participation by all children. Zimbabwe has also enacted a number of other national legislative instruments and policies that complement the international conventions in the process. The government also implements extensive social protection programmes for children such as the National Action Plan for Orphans and Vulnerable Children (NAP for OVC) programme which is a social protection programme that promotes community protection and care for vulnerable children.

The NAP for OVC programme has as one of its objectives: Increase child participation where appropriate in all issues that concern them from community to national level, considering their evolving capacities. In promoting the mainstreaming of Child Participation and Protection nationally in a structured manner, MoLSS, with technical support from UNICEF, and through wide consultation with organisations that implement OVC interventions, has developed National Child Participation and Protection Guidelines. The Guidelines give preparatory information to any entity (individuals and organisations) that seeks to work with children by providing information and guidelines for understanding and practicing child participation and protection particularly in terms of access to participation, safety and security during activities. A toolkit for effective child participation is also presented in the Guidelines.

Ultimately, the National Child Participation and Protection Guidelines are designed to contribute to the realization of meaningful child participation as a right for all children within an environment that ensures their protection, while at the same time positively steering the good intentions of all actors promoting child participation in a uniform way from community through to national level.

I therefore encourage all persons interacting with children to adopt and use the Guidelines and in the process generate useful feedback that will be used for the continuous refinement of the Guidelines.

L. C. Museka
SECRETARY FOR LABOUR AND SOCIAL SERVICES
Harare 2010
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The National Guidelines for Child Participation and Protection were developed by the Ministry of Labour and Social Services with the assistance of UNICEF and the implementing partners of the Programme of Support to the National Action Plan for Orphans and Vulnerable Children.

The development of the document was specifically supported by the following partners: Catholic Relief Service Zimbabwe; Dananai Child care Organisation (DACHICARE); Save the Children Fund Norway; Save the Children Fund UK; Mavambo; GOAL Zimbabwe; Child Protection Society; Action Aid Zimbabwe; SNV Zimbabwe; Biomedical Research and Training Institute; CARE International; Hope for a Child in Christ (HOCIC); Scripture Union; Family Support Trust; World Vision and KAPNECK Trust. These partners provided invaluable technical input through feedback meetings, technical reviews and discussions and facilitation of children’s participative activities throughout the process.
In Zimbabwe the National Action Plan for Orphans and Vulnerable Children (NAP for OVC) specifies that, child participation is one of the seven programme objectives. Specifically, the NAP states that it aims to: "Increase child participation where appropriate in all issues that concern them from community to national level, considering their evolving capacities." At the same time child participation is seen as fundamental to child protection in that children can play a role as agents of change in their own environment and community. For example during consultative exercises children were invariably the group who were able to identify peers in need of support, children who were out of school, working or subject to abuse. Thus the enduring links between participation and protection are reflected in these guidelines.

However whilst there was consensus amongst all partners including Government agencies, non-government, community and faith-based organisations that child participation should be fundamental to all activities at all stages of the programme cycle, there was a lack of conceptual clarity and shared understanding of child participation.

Thus, in order to define child participation and understand what it means in practical terms for all stakeholders, including the children themselves, these National Guidelines were developed.

The guidelines were developed during 2009 through a series of consultations and events with both children and adults facilitated by non-governmental organisations funded through the Programme of Support to the NAP for OVC. The National Guidelines were subsequently presented for final amendments and approval to the implementing partners of the Programme of Support in April 2010.
WHAT IS CHILD PROTECTION?

Child protection refers to a set of services or mechanisms put in place to prevent and respond to violence, abuse and exploitation which threaten the well being of children. The mechanisms may be put in place by individuals, organisations and government in the form of simple rules, regulations, policies and legislative enactments.
WHY IS CHILD PROTECTION IMPORTANT?

Child protection is important because under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child all children have a right to be protected from harm. Protection from violence, abuse and exploitation is essential in order to ensure children’s survival and their continued healthy development as they grow towards adulthood and full citizenship. Enabling children to grow up in a protective environment means that they will develop into healthy and responsible adults, who are ready to take their place in society. When children participate in the design and delivery of the protective environment it will be more effective and successful than when they are not.

All children have the right to protection. They have the right to survive, to be safe, to belong, to be heard, to receive adequate care and to grow up in a protective environment.

A family is the first line of protection for children. Parents or other caregivers are responsible for building a protective and loving home environment. Schools and communities are responsible for building a safe and child-friendly environment outside the child’s home. In the family, school and community, children should be fully protected so they can survive, grow, learn and develop to their fullest potential.

Girls and boys should be encouraged and supported to speak up for children’s rights and to take an active role in their own protection against abuse, violence, exploitation and discrimination.

PRINCIPLES OF CHILD PROTECTION – “WHAT EVERY CHILD AND COMMUNITY SHOULD KNOW ABOUT CHILD PROTECTION”

1. Every child should have the opportunity to grow up in a family. If a family is unable to care for the child, steps should be taken by the authorities to address the reasons and make every effort to keep the family together.

2. Every child has a right to a name and nationality. Registering a child’s birth helps to ensure a child’s right to education, health care and legal and social services. Birth registration is a vital step towards protection from abuse and exploitation.

3. Girls and boys must be protected from all forms of violence and abuse. This includes physical, sexual and emotional abuse, neglect and harmful practices such as child marriage and genital mutilation/cutting of girls. Families, communities and authorities are responsible for ensuring this protection.

State parties…
shall take specific legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of torture, inhuman or degrading treatment and especially physical or mental injury or abuse, neglect or maltreatment including sexual abuse…

4. Children must be protected from all work that is hazardous. Work should not prevent them from attending school and should not harm their physical and emotional development. Children should never be involved in the worst forms of child labour, such as slavery, forced labour, drug production or trafficking.

5. Girls and boys can be at risk of sexual abuse and exploitation in their home, school, workplace or community. Measures should be taken to prevent sexual abuse and exploitation. Sexually abused and exploited children need immediate help to stop such abuse.

6. Children are vulnerable to trafficking where protection for children is weak or missing. The government, civil society and families are responsible for preventing trafficking, as well as helping children who are victims to reintegrate into their families and communities, in the child’s best interest.

7. Justice for children should be based on child rights. Depriving children of their liberty (incarcerating them) must not be resorted to. Procedures that are sensitive to children who are victims or witnesses of crime should be adhered to in terms of the Children’s Act.

8. Income support and social welfare services can help keep families together and children in school and ensure access to health care.

9. All children, including children with disabilities, have a right to age-appropriate information, to be heard and to participate in making decisions that concern them. Fulfillment of this right enables children to take an active role in their own protection against abuse, violence and exploitation, and to become active citizens.

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1 Child Trafficking includes taking away a child under false pretences through promises for jobs or education opportunities while the child would be used for prostitution, slavery and other forms of child labour.
WHAT IS CHILD PARTICIPATION?

Child participation means that children take part in making the decisions that affect them. In any situation it means that they should feel safe in expressing their views and that their opinion is valued by their peers and adults. This is provided for in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), Article 12, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC), Article 7.
WHY IS CHILD PARTICIPATION IMPORTANT?

The UN CRC states that children have the right to be heard and considered in decisions affecting them (Article 12). Child is the word used in the CRC to describe people under 18 years of age. ACRWC Article 7 states that “every child who is capable of communicating his/her views shall be assured the rights to express his/her opinion freely in all matters…”

The Zimbabwean Government, through its National Action Plan (NAP) for Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC) has done this by making sure that Child Participation is at the centre of their strategy for working with children and so Child Participation is one of the key objectives of their National Action Plan.

We should encourage child participation not only because it is a right, but because it helps us as adults and professionals to make appropriate decisions which are more likely to have longer term benefits for children.

There is increasing acceptance of the principle of children's participation; the challenge is to turn this acceptance into action.

WHAT EVERY CHILD AND FAMILY SHOULD KNOW ABOUT CHILD PARTICIPATION

1. Child participation is a right for all children, both boys and girls and including children with disabilities

2. Children and families should know why the children are being asked to participate, and which organizations are involved

3. Children must first give informed consent to being involved in any participative process and have the right to withdraw at any time

4. The opinions of boys and girls should be heard, respected and considered equally. The methods used for participation should encourage both boys and girls to join in. In some cases this might mean holding separate sessions for boys and separate sessions for girls.
THE STAGES OF PARTICIPATION

Sociologist Roger Hart wrote a book called *Children’s Participation: the Theory and Practice of Involving Young Citizens in Community Development and Environmental Care* for UNICEF in 1997. Child participation has been discussed and talked about and promoted and developed over many years. In the early stages many of the attempts to implement the principles were tokenistic. This means that they were minimal gestures aimed at creating a false impression of the involvement of children. However as the results of effective participation have been seen many more organisations and governments are making serious efforts to include participation policies in their activities. They can see the benefits and recognise the valuable contribution children can make to the design of policy and services. This results in more effective and targeted planning and thus more effective use of resources. It also contributes to the development of a democratic civil society where young people are encouraged to take their civic responsibilities seriously and can develop skills which will equip them for citizenship.

This groundbreaking work put the work of young people and adult allies around the world in the context of a global movement for participation. The "Ladder of Children’s Participation," also called the "Ladder of Youth Participation," is one lasting tool from the book.
This Ladder of Participation has 8 different steps or rungs which describe different levels of participation. Individuals and organizations must decide which of these levels of participation is the most meaningful or will have the most important effect. Many people believe that shared decision making is most beneficial to both children and adults while others believe that children are most empowered when they are making decisions without the influence of adults. Sometimes we need to make a decision about the level of participation depending on the specific issue being addressed. Hart notes that the last three rungs, tokenism, decoration and manipulation are non-participation.

The degrees of participation are described as:

8) **Children-initiated, shared decisions with adults**
This happens when projects or programs are initiated by children and decision-making is shared between children and adults. These projects empower young people while at the same time enabling them to access and learn from the life experience and expertise of adults.

7) **Children-initiated and directed**
This step is when young people initiate and direct a project or program. Adults are involved only in a supportive role.

6) **Adult-initiated, shared decisions with young people**
Occurs when projects or programs are initiated by adults but the decision-making is shared with the children.

5) **Consulted and informed**
Happens when children give advice on projects or programs designed and run by adults. The young people are informed about how their input will be used and the outcomes of the decisions made by adults.

4) **Assigned but informed**
This is where children are assigned a specific role and informed about how and why they are being involved.

3) **Tokenism**
When young people appear to be given a voice, but in fact have little or no choice about what they do or how they participate.

2) **Decoration**
Happens when young people are used to help or "bolster" a cause in a relatively indirect way, although adults do not pretend that the cause is inspired by young people.

1) **Manipulation**
Happens where adults use children to support causes and pretend that the causes are inspired by the children.
TRANSLATING THE PRINCIPLE OF
CHILD PARTICIPATION INTO PRACTICE

Child participation can become a reality if it is practised by individuals and by organisations.

Professionals working with children can learn how to listen carefully to children and to make their assessments based on what children have to say. Participation can mean involving a child in a family assessment by asking what is important to them and considering their opinion in the decision making process. It can mean bringing a group of children together to ask them to contribute to design of a new school building or it can mean bringing child representatives to tell an adult group about issues which affect their lives. However, this kind of participation is only real and meaningful if it is followed-up by informing the child or children of the decision or outcome and the process which led to the decision or outcome.

Organisations can adopt the principle of child participation by developing and implementing policies and procedures which include requirements for participation activities at all stages of decision making.

WAYS OF PROMOTING CHILD PARTICIPATION

Individuals and organisations can also support child participation through:

- encouraging and listening to initiatives suggested by children
- seeking information from children
- informing and consulting children about decisions which affect them
THE PRINCIPLES AND BUILDING BLOCKS OF CHILD PARTICIPATION

GETTING STARTED – “WHAT YOU NEED TO THINK ABOUT WHEN PLANNING CHILD PARTICIPATION”

PROTECTION
Organisations and individuals should be able to describe the steps that will be taken in meeting their commitment to protect children as guaranteed by Article 19 of the UN CRC, and the ACRWC Article 16. Organisations can do this by making sure that they have a child protection policy in place which is understood by all of the organisations staff. A sample child protection policy can be found at Annex 1.

TRUST AND RESPECT
Children should feel safe in expressing their views and opinions. It is therefore important to build mutual trust and respect between the adult/s and the children. This can be done by:

- actively listening; taking time to sit down and really listen to what children have to say
- not passing judgment on what they say if they have differing opinions or if their opinions differ from yours
- finding out what they are interested in and offer something that meets these interests (e.g. bring along pictures or toys related to young children’s favourite things)
- Creating enjoyable experiences

In any activity with children it is important to think what is ‘age-appropriate’. For example 15-18 year old young people may find it patronising or uncomfortable to be involved in a consultation held in children’s nursery.

Part of being respectful is recognising children’s individuality and responding to them on this level. One way to do this is to discuss activities or tasks, offer options and encourage them to find their preferred ways of becoming involved.

DIALOGUE
It is only by creating a positive dialogue between children and adults that we can begin to attempt to understand each other’s perspectives. In order to do this, adults must be open and up front about what they can offer. Children respect honesty and adults must never make promises they cannot deliver on.
ACTION AND FEEDBACK
Integral to meaningful participation is listening to children and ensuring their views and experiences influence change (where change can be supported).

Feedback to children is essential. This cannot be an afterthought or something that happens long after the piece of work. Children need to know and feel they have been listened to. They must be told how their ideas will be taken forward. They must be told if their ideas have been accepted and if not why they have not been. They should have opportunities to meet to listen to feedback and discuss outcomes and options. This will contribute to the growth of mutual trust and respect and will help children to develop their critical thinking processes.

CONSIDER POWER IMBALANCE IN ADULT – CHILD RELATIONSHIPS
Children will contribute more effectively in more flexible environments in which they feel safe and able to have a say. Adults should resist the impulse to control and impose. This can be achieved simply through everyday behaviour, by bringing down barriers that symbolise power differences. It is important for adults who are serious about child participation to:

- Attempt to see the world from the child and young person's perspective
- Ensure children, as well as parents / carers give their consent
- Think about the physical location – is it accessible, will they feel safe, comfortable, are there enough seats for everyone? Is seating equal?
- Participate in games, meals and other activities rather than watching
- Be attentive to the different ways in which children communicate verbally and non-verbally

INFORMAL SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN
Informal support can be important for developing understanding and relationships between children and adults. It is often a good idea when setting the ground rules to agree places where they can leave written notes about concerns or suggestions, which will be picked up by (safe) adults. It is also important that children see the adults who are facilitating participation taking part in activities outside the formal environment where they can interact in a relaxed way for example in clubs and at social events.

APPROPRIATE CHOICES
Respecting children’s competency to make decisions, with support, is integral to participation. This means increasing opportunities for children to have a say, where previously they have not. They are often barred from making simple choices which adults take for granted. For example children in institutional care often have little choice about their routine, about what they eat or who they socialise with since this is controlled by the staff. If this has been the experience of children they often have difficulty making the simplest
choices. Participation can therefore involve the children in learning how to make simple and informed choices for themselves without fear of retribution or punishment. Adults facilitating participation must also provide children with the opportunity to become involved, likewise children must be given the choice not to participate if they are not agreeable. If they do not then think carefully about why they have made this choice and how the context could be changed in the future to make participation more appealing and appropriate.

**APPROPRIATE PLACES, MATERIALS AND TIMING**

It is important to consider the needs of all children when developing and implementing participative activities. Children of different ages and abilities may need extra help in order to participate. A child with a physical disability may need to participate in places which they can easily access, out of doors, or in a place with no stairs. They may need special assistance to get from home to the place where an event is taking place. A child with an intellectual disability, or who is very young, or who cannot read and write may need specially designed materials with pictures. Sometimes more time for events may be needed if children need to have information translated or repeated.

**WHAT ARE THE KEY BUILDING BLOCKS TO MAKE PARTICIPATION A REALITY?**

**FOSTERING OTHER RELATIONSHIPS**

Developing relationships with other children is hugely important as it gives them the opportunity to make new friends and to develop a social group. By sharing in a common positive experience they can gain strength and confidence and develop peer relationships. These provide opportunities for children to take responsibility for each other and the activity. This can be done by:

- Agreeing that the group takes responsibility for the individual’s actions
- Setting up visits
- Working in pairs and in groups
- Setting up social activities and making opportunities for children to chat
- Supporting the older age group to facilitate a mixed age group of their peers and younger children
- Supporting children to resolve their own peer conflicts in mini-circle time discussions
- Encourage youth groups to undertake their own social action projects and exchanges to other youth organisations
CHOOSING TO INVOLVE CHILDREN

Individuals and organisations can decide on participation activities only when they are clear about what they aim to achieve. A social worker can commit to listening to children and acting upon their views and wishes each time they undertake a family assessment. An organisation can establish a consultative group of children to help design a new housing development. The one thing they must have in common is a commitment to establishing positive relationships with children. These activities should also be seen as part of a wider plan to develop a culture of participation.

When considering planning participation the following questions should be answered:

- What is the focus of the decision-making?
- What is the content of decision-making?
- What is the level of decision-making power?
- What is the nature of participation: formal or informal?
- How frequently are children involved?
- Which children will be involved?

Individuals and organisations can also consider ways to promote children’s participation, for example:

- Fund and promote organisations that involve children in all decisions affecting their lives
- Establish a system where children can complain about personal support and services more generally
- Ensure confidentiality, safety and child protection are paramount in any activity or planning process
- Encourage staff to always include children in project planning, assessments, reviews and monitoring.

WHAT CHILDREN SAY ABOUT PARTICIPATION

- It won’t happen without the right resources to support it
- Make sure there is flexibility about meeting times so they can happen at times that suit us
- Make sure to use a different way of communicating with children in ways we will find easy, for example we like text messaging and listening to the radio
- Make sure you give us feedback when we have contributed
- Make sure it’s fun!
1. FOCUS GROUPS

A focus group involves an organised discussion with a selected group of individuals to gain information about their views and experiences of a topic. This technique is particularly suited for obtaining several perspectives about the same topic. The benefits of using focus group for child participation include gaining insights into children’s shared understandings of everyday life and the ways in which individuals are influenced by others in a group situation. The role of the moderator is very significant. Good levels of group leadership and interpersonal skill are required to moderate a group successfully.

Focus groups are a good way:

- to explore the perspectives of groups of children directly on key issues
- to develop an understanding of the group(s) views and ideas

Focus groups are generally popular with children and can be particularly productive if the participants know each other. Focus groups usually involve groups of 5-8 although smaller groups work better with younger children.

Guidelines for using focus groups:

- Make sure the group has something in common such as age, gender, interests, or culture
- Conduct your focus group in a familiar setting where young people are comfortable, e.g. schools, clubs, or youth centres
- You may choose to use a facilitator with experience in working with children, and running focus groups

2. QUESTIONNAIRES

Questionnaires can be a useful tool when gathering information to make an assessment or for monitoring and evaluation purposes. These can be used to collect responses directly or indirectly from a general or target group of children.

Before you start designing your questionnaire, you will need to write down exactly what you want to find out. Check that other key staff members agree that these are your objectives. There is need to check for available literature and similar data that already exists.

You could involve young people in designing the questionnaire, analyzing and reporting the findings but you must always consider the verbal and literacy abilities of the target group.
When developing a questionnaire for children:

- Decide if you want the child or young person to complete the questionnaire themselves or if it will be completed during a one-to-one interview by a facilitator. This will depend on the verbal and literacy skills of the children and the level of confidentiality required.
- Do not ask a question unless you are sure that you will use the information.
- Keep the questionnaire short and to the point.
- Keep your questions short and clear. Use plain language. Try to avoid abbreviations and terms that need defining.
- Make sure that your questions are balanced and unbiased. If you use a set of responses to ask how children feel or think, make sure there are as many negative as positive points and that they are equally strong.
- Don’t ask double or triple questions. People have difficulty when they want to say no to one part and yes to another.
- Provide relevant information with the questionnaire, so the young people are informed about the topic.
- Test the questionnaire first. Get someone else to read the questionnaire for errors or ambiguities. Then ask a couple of children to read it. Ask them what they think the questions mean, and what type of response they’d give.

3. **WORKSHOPS**

Workshops can be used to provide and disseminate information to children and to gather local information. Workshops will support the development of visions, aspirations and goals. Their overall aim is to develop individual aims and objectives relating to precise themes. They are a positive way of getting informed ideas from young people on a specific situation.

Workshops enable you to:

- Bring young people together to explore and develop their response to a particular situation or proposal that affects them.
- Give young people specific information to help them develop ideas.

The idea of having a workshop may come from young people themselves after a youth event. They may want to explore a topic further.

Workshops are usually structured but informal. Young people get to know each other and have fun, while engaging in focussed discussions.

Before you start planning a workshop you will need to write down what you expect to achieve; ask yourself what are the key themes and objectives of this workshop and make sure that everyone involved in the planning and implementation of the workshop agrees.
Then, plan the workshop. Practice the proposed activities. Work out how long each activity will take. Have extra activities in reserve to liven up or calm down the group.

At the start of the workshop, make sure there are no unrealistic expectations about the final outcomes. Explain all of the other factors that will influence the decision.

When you are running the workshop:

- Listen actively, summarize key points regularly so that participants know they have been heard, and clarify any misunderstandings
- Record key points on flip charts/whiteboard. Then participants can make progress in discussions, and the facilitator can sum up their various views at the end
- Be flexible. Accept any reasonable suggestions from participants to change an activity. If the activity is not working or isn't fun – stop
- Monitor physical and emotional safety. For example, do not force anyone to take part in a role play if they are clearly shy about performing in front of others

When the workshop is over provide feedback to the participants. Let them know what happened to their ideas and proposals. Keep them informed.

4. PERSONAL INTERVIEWS

Personal interviewing is a popular method of consulting children, and a comparatively straightforward one to use.

Interviews appeal to children who:

- Like being listened to (and don't we all?)
- Come from oral cultures
- Are not comfortable speaking in groups

Interviews as a consultation technique are useful when dealing with sensitive issues and conflict situations. Interviews can minimise misunderstandings and help to protect confidentiality and anonymity. They can be conducted almost anywhere and if well run, will produce quality information.

This tool does however have some disadvantages. Interviews can be time consuming, so you may not get a large number of responses. You may also influence the responses/outcome depending on who asks the questions, how, when and where they are asked.

Sometimes young people can be the researchers, conducting the interviews within their own networks, and analysing the findings, but this will require appropriate training, support and payment for the young people.

You must also allow enough time and resources for collating, analysing and reporting on your findings. This may take longer than with a questionnaire.
It is possible to audio taping interview as a back-up and these can be a rich source of information. However some children may be disturbed by the recorder and transcribing tapes can be very time-consuming. Consent must be obtained and a confidentiality agreement made (including details of future use of the tapes) before any interview is audio taped.

5. GROUP INTERVIEWS
Group interviews can be used to explore the opinions of children on key issues, and to develop an understanding of their perspective. This is a rather informal, semi structured method of consultation but the advantages are that it:

- Enables input from a large cross section of people
- Appeals to groups of young people
- Allows for peer support and safety
- Permits group members to hear each other’s views
- Enables young people to be the interviewers
- Allows for group interviews to take place in a variety of locations

Group interviews can lead to further participation by young people, and provide contacts for further consultation on youth issues.

6. WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS FROM CHILDREN
It is important to ask community groups for written submissions (written statements of opinion) on a particular issue. Sometimes young people take the initiative and present their views to council or their community board in a letter, or by using pictures, poetry or essays to explain what they think about a particular issue (see 12 below).

Local councils or and other organisations conventionally request written submissions to:

- Collect ideas from a target group of young people (e.g. a particular age) about a proposed plan or idea
- Gather information for later reference by seeking responses to specific questions
- Find out young people's views on something that affects them

Gathering submissions can be a structured or semi structured process, and is generally suitable for young people from 11–25 years. The respondents may subsequently be invited to discuss their ideas in person.

7. ORAL SUBMISSIONS AND PRESENTATIONS
Children may be invited to submit their ideas verbally in groups or individually. This can be useful for younger children whose writing skills are not yet developed or in communities where literacy levels are uncertain. By encouraging young people to submit their own ideas in person, organisations can gain a deeper understanding of young people's perspective and experiences. Presentations by young people may also be invited, although it is important to
emphasise that not all young people will be comfortable presenting to adults and organisations will need to consider how best to support them in the process.

Written oral submissions will not suit all young people, so they are not sufficient as a stand-alone method of consultation. They can be used as part of a consultation process together with other methods/techniques.

8. DISCUSSIONS AND DEBATES

Debates or group discussions can be used in order to collect information directly from children. These are loose, informal groups where discussion on a single topic can be encouraged. This can be a good way to explore young people’s perspectives on key issues, and to develop an understanding of a group’s views and ideas.

In a safe environment, a group of young people can be asked to discuss their views on a specific:

- Issue (e.g. returning home from institutional care)
- Project proposal (e.g. development of a service)
- Situation (e.g. disability or abuse).

Discussions can be a flexible and non-threatening method of consulting young people because they are a semi structured process which allows groups of different sizes and ages to meet informally in places where they feel most comfortable.

It is important for facilitators to make sure that the composition of the group does not form an invisible barrier which excludes some opinions or makes it difficult for some people to speak. For example it might be difficult for teenage boys and girls to discuss their feelings about family relationships in one group. It might be difficult for children whose parents are drug users to discuss issues with their peers whose parent are not. It might be difficult to talk about discrimination if you are the only minority race in the group. Facilitators will need skills and experience appropriate to the particular groups involved. They will need to make sure that a group’s composition is not a hindrance to everyone having an opportunity to speak. They will need to consider gender, ethnicity, status, confidence, and experience in speaking in a group.

Formal debates can be exciting (and intimidating) and are probably best managed in collaboration with schools. Be sure every team knows the rules well in advance. Debates suit young people of 13 and older.

9. BOX OR MODEL CITY / TOWN / VILLAGE EVENTS

The Box City is a method of consulting children particularly those 12 years of age and above. Children brainstorm about what they want in their city / town / village, and create their ideal city / town / village out of boxes. It is a fun and creative activity that children enjoy. It can provide an opportunity for discussion about many aspects of their lives, not just about design. For example if their ideal city town has no school this may provide an opportunity to explore anxieties in education.
10. DRAWING EXERCISES AND COMPETITIONS

When an organisation wants to get opinions from children, you don't need to organise a complete workshop. A single creative activity can be easy to manage and add valuable ideas to planning and decision-making. For example, you can ask a class of school children to draw a picture of how they would like to see their local services. You may get ideas about safety, needs and desires. By making links and contacts with schools, clubs and after school and holiday programmes you can find partners who will organise the drawing activity, and collect the drawings on your behalf.

Drawings are useful and informative because they can:

- Convey key messages in creative, visual form
- Be used as icebreakers before interviews or group discussions
- Be used during interviews and groups discussions
- Are fun and suitable for most young people between 5 and 18 years

11. POSTER, POETRY OR ESSAY COMPETITIONS

Organising a poster or essay competition on a particular theme has worked well as a way of consulting children. Consent and confidentiality are minor issues when you run a competition and you develop a visual or written database of young people's perspectives and ideas on a particular issue or local area. You can publicise the competition through schools, clubs, radio and newspaper advertising. This type of submission (see 7 & 8 above) encourages children as young as 5 to become involved by for example entering a poster competition, while children from 11-18 years of age can usually enter essay writing competitions.

The advantages of a competition are that children as young as 5 can express their views to a wide audience if the posters/poetry/essays are exhibited/published. They also usually elicit a large response and can engage whole families in an issue. Competitions also provide public awareness opportunities for organisations and can help in accumulating information, materials and artwork for future publications, poster campaigns etc. They can also be helpful in developing community links with sponsors.

12. SITE VISITS

If you want to know what a group of young people think about a particular facility or venue, take them there. On the spot, you can give them information that is meaningful, and they can tell you what they see as problems and solutions.

This action-oriented approach appeals to young people. Ideas flow freely when they can see what they're talking about.

Site visits are especially recommended for consulting young people about a local area,
service, need or specific environmental issue. A skilled facilitator is required and this exercise is always carried out with groups, not individuals.

The advantages are that:

- You can get input from a cross section of young people
- They get peer support and feel safe
- They hear each other’s views
- You get to know them, and can develop relationships for further youth participation

13. SUGGESTION BOXES

Suggestion boxes are a good method of collecting confidential and protected information and ideas from a general or target group in order to get a broad idea of a group’s opinion. For example it can provide a safe way for children in institutional care to criticise or complain without fear of retaliation. However like all other consultative methods people will only engage when they believe that their contribution is taken seriously. It is usually a good idea to identify a method of providing feedback for people who use suggestion boxes.

The benefits of using suggestion boxes are that it:

- Is suitable for anyone able to write, including young children
- Can be placed in schools, shopping malls, clubs etc
- Can attract a wide range of anonymous responses (or very few)
- Can indicate themes to follow up.

The drawbacks are:

- You can’t ask individuals for clarification
- People will stop using this method if they do not get feedback

14. YOUTH FORUMS, CONFERENCES AND EVENTS

Youth forums and conferences are a familiar way of getting valuable input into organisational and strategic decision-making, provided the aims are clear and the arrangements well planned. Getting young people involved in organising the forum is important. Their involvement increases the event’s credibility with young people, and ensures the event will work for them. In the process, the young organisers develop skills and experience.

In a forum there can be a two-way information flow, a partnership between young people and council, community organisations and schools. You inform young people, talk with them, and collect their views and ideas directly on key issues or proposals. Young people from 13 – 18 years enjoy the chance to mix with others in a meaningful, fun and social way, and explore ideas about issues that affect them.
Forums and conferences may be:

- Regular events within a district or city (e.g. monthly youth forums run by community advisors)
- Less frequent or annual events, usually for larger numbers of young people.

Youth forums are usually structured but informal, and require skilled facilitators. They shouldn’t be organised like standard adult conferences, because young people are not so willing to sit and listen all day. Attendance is usually by invitation, targeting particular groups of young people. Forums and conferences can lead to local working parties being set up (usually youth initiated) to develop an idea further. Other types of youth events have similar purposes, but are more informal, and can be organised by council ad hoc. At a youth event, researchers can talk informally with groups of young people about their views and ideas on specific issues. Forums and conferences are valuable tools for participation but require personnel to plan, organise and implement and additional resources to conduct (hire of venue, published materials, refreshments). If this is the chosen method of participation organisations should build this into their strategic plan and budget.

15. YOUTH COUNCILS

Youth councils are a well-established method of getting ongoing input and advice from youth. Establishing and supporting a youth council can be a sign of genuine commitment to youth participation.

A youth council is a selected group of young people, whose role is to represent young people’s ideas within a larger organisation. For example a local state authority may establish a youth council to report on young people’s issues to the primary Council. The youth council can only do this if:

- The selection process is fair and sensible
- They are supported to establish structures and guidance
- The primary Council has firm expectations of the youth ‘councillors’
- The youth councillors have confidence and good communication and organisational skills
- The youth councillors constantly use their youth networks
- The advantages of a youth council include being able to access a wide cross section of young people and allows the primary Council to develop young people’s civic skills. An active youth council may use many different methods for involving other young people in council decision-making processes.

For example, they may:

- Carry out surveys, run interviews and small group discussions
- Use the internet and radio talk-back
• Organise youth events and forums
• Join adult working parties
• Network with other youth councils

16. YOUTH WEBSITES
Some organisations have a youth website associated with their own website. Some youth groups establish their own websites. A good website can be an efficient, appropriate way to get young people involved in decisions made by an organisation. It allows a two way information flow. The organisation can communicate information to young people, and a wide range of young people can contribute their views and opinions online. An interactive website is now a mainstream way of gathering submissions. However, it should never be the only option, as not all young people have access to computers or the Internet.

The UNICEF website Voices of Youth (www.unicef.org/voyp) is a good example of how an organisation can promote participation of children using the internet. The NAP for OVC website (www.zimnapovc.co.zw) has a children’s section where children can interact, share information and ideas.

17. PARTNERSHIPS WITH LOCAL SCHOOLS
An organisation can gather ideas and opinions from children by developing relationships with local schools. The key to success is for the school and the organisation to develop a real partnership and for the consultation and participation to become part of normal school activities. This is a useful way to reach a wide range of children, for example:

• In specific groups (age, gender, ethnicity, etc.)
• In alternative education
• With special needs
• In rural areas, or otherwise hard to reach areas.

Educating young people in democratic processes can lead to greater involvement in an organisation’s decision-making, and the school is the natural place for this education to take place.

Staff of the organisation may speak at schools about its role in the community, and young people’s rights as citizens as well as their responsibilities. These visits must link in with the school curriculum (e.g. environmental, health and social studies, or civics education).

Where they are already established school councils can be a ready made interactive link between an organisation and young people. However it would be a mistake to imagine that young people at school are in some ways a ‘captive audience’. It is important that individuals and organisations take time to establish trust, and seek their agreement to participate in any consultation exercises.
18. YOUNG PEOPLE WORKING WITH ADULTS
Sometimes children work with adults as partners in planning and decision-making. Members of youth advisory groups and specific interest groups advise the adults or work as full members of the adult group.

Generally, young people 12 years or older can get involved in this way. It’s usually wise to include more than one young person, so they can support each other in what could otherwise be quite an intimidating situation. In each case, before involving any group in decision making be clear about your purpose, expectations and requirements. Negotiate these and any other conditions together with the young people. The young people should be supported to provide feedback to other young people in their networks.

19. YOUTH ADVISORY GROUPS
Youth advisory groups are used by some organisations as a way of getting direct input from young people for planning or decision-making.

These groups usually have a formal link to organisations. They can be short term or ongoing, single issue or general purpose.

20. SPECIFIC INTEREST GROUPS
Organisations can set up groups of people to contribute to decision-making on a particular issue, project or facility. Such groups can include adults, young people and children on an equal footing. The key is to get the right people involved, with an appropriate range of views, and to recognise their contribution. These groups can add momentum and credibility to a project.

However it is important to make sure that selection of any interest group is well informed and involves the appropriate stakeholders, to avoid unnecessary conflicts of interest.

21. YOUNG PEOPLE JOINING AN ADULT WORKING GROUP
When you invite representatives of young people to join an adult working group:

- Include at least two, for peer support
- Support the young people in all practical ways
- Provide the names of at least two adults they can go to for help

22. OTHER IDEAS FOR INVOLVING YOUNG PEOPLE

- Offering opportunities for volunteering or paid employment to young people within an organisation
- Establishing a mentoring or ‘buddy’ system
- Invite young people to attend skills development and training alongside organisational staff
- Develop strategies for participation within organisations using some of the techniques described above. Developing an organisational youth policy is an example of a direct strategy. Promoting use of organisational facilities and services is an example of an indirect strategy.
SAMPLE CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 We X organisation commit ourselves to making sure that we do not place children at any risk of harm and make it our mission to develop and implement organisational policy and programmes in defence of the rights of children.

1.2 In this document “children” refers to anyone under the age of 18.

2. VALUES, PRINCIPLES AND BELIEFS

2.1 We commit ourselves to ensuring that children are physically safe and protected from violence, abuse, exploitation or other harm.

2.2 We believe that child abuse is a violation of children's rights and is never acceptable.

2.3 We accept that all children have equal rights to protection from abuse and exploitation.

2.4 We understand that our commitment to protecting the children with and for whom we work will require us to engage in cooperative working practices with the Police and all other agencies with responsibility for ensuring the welfare of children, including national and international NGOs.

2.5 We believe that when we work through partners they also have a responsibility to meet minimum standards of protection for children in their programmes.

3. WHAT WE WILL DO?

3.1 We will ensure that all staff, consultants, volunteers and partner organisations are aware of the problems of violence, abuse and exploitation and are able to identify risky or harmful situations.

3.2 We will ensure, through awareness raising and our own good practice, that staff and others minimise the risks to children.

3.3 We will ensure that staff and others are clear what steps to take where concerns arise regarding the safety of children.

3.4 We will ensure that action is taken to support and protect children where concerns arise regarding possible abuse.
4. **HOW WILL WE DO THIS?**

4.1. We will include adherence to the Child Protection Policy as a requirement for all our staff, volunteers, consultants and partner organisations and specify this in contracts, Job Descriptions, Terms of Reference, and partnership agreements. Partner organisations including national and international NGOs, and providers of residential child care accommodation services, must agree to adhere to this Policy or have their own Child Protection Policy before partnership with our organisation is undertaken.

4.2. We will provide learning opportunities for staff to develop and maintain the necessary attitudes, skills and knowledge to keep children safe, ensuring all staff receive child protection training as part of their induction.

4.3. We will make sure that we have Child Protection Procedures in place to help us respond to any concerns raised in a systematic and thoughtful way.

4.4. We will provide essential information, advice and support to those responsible for keeping children safe and help children who are being abused to get help.

4.5. We will provide written guidelines which describe standards of appropriate behaviour in all our contacts with children.

4.6. We will be guided through the child protection process by the principle of 'best interests of the child'.

5. **OUR COMMITMENT**

5.1. We will familiarise ourselves with the Child Protection Policy and work to protect the rights and promote the interests of children.

5.2. We will strive to establish and maintain the trust and confidence of children, their families and fellow professionals.

5.3. We will respect the rights of children whilst seeking to ensure that their behaviour does not harm themselves or other people.

5.4. We will work to uphold public trust and confidence in our organisation and its departments.

5.6. We will be accountable for the quality of our work and take responsibility for maintaining and improving our knowledge and skills.
6. OUR BEHAVIOUR

Specifically, child protection means the protection of children from harm. This Child Protection Policy mandates us to:

6.1 Respect the physical integrity of all children and never hit or otherwise physically assault or abuse children

6.2 Never engage in sexual relations with children under 18 years, including children who may be exploited in the commercial sex industry

6.3 Never directly exploit children or place children in situations which would leave them vulnerable to any form of exploitation

6.4 Refrain from employing children at home as domestic servants who are under 18 years

6.5 Never condone or participate in behaviour of children which is illegal, unsafe or abusive

6.7 Report any suspected case of violence, abuse or exploitation of a child by staff, partners or others to X organisation senior management

7. SANCTIONS

7.1. It is the responsibility of the individual’s line manager to investigate any allegations, complaints or suspected breaches of this Code of Conduct.

7.2. Where the allegation, complaints or suspected breaches of this code of conduct may constitute a criminal offence, it is mandatory to inform the Police.

7.3. In the event of a criminal investigation the Staff member under investigation should be suspended from work and prohibited from any professional contact with children until the investigation is completed.

7.4. Where breaches of the code of conduct are identified and there is no criminal investigation sanctions will be applied as defined in the Regulations of the Ministry of Social Solidarity.

7.5 Where the policy is contravened by consultants, volunteers and partner organisations of X organisation these sanctions will apply and may be extended to include an immediate termination of contract