

# Child participation standards

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<b>Related documents:</b>	<i>2015-2018 Strategic Plan</i> <i>Child Safeguarding Policy and Code of Conduct</i> <i>Gender Policy</i> <i>Ethical Code</i> <i>Code of Good Governance</i> <i>Complaints and Feedback Policy</i>
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## 1. Introduction

Educo is committed to child participation, as reflected in the following institutional principle:

**Participation:** all of our actions guarantee and promote the right to participation of children and those who support them, in pursuit of full citizenship.

These Child Participation Standards define the way that Educo and its partners work with children to ensure that they can actively participate in those decisions that concern them.

This document is aligned with:

- 2015-2018 Strategic Plan
- Child Safeguarding Policy and Code of Conduct
- Gender Policy
- Ethical Code
- Code of Good Governance
- Complaints and Feedback Policy
- Quality Management and Social Responsibility Policy

## 2. Guiding Principles

The *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (CRC) establishes four guiding principles: non-discrimination; the best interests of the child; the right to life, survival and development; and children's right to express their views and have these taken seriously in all matters affecting them, which we regard as the right to participation.

The right to participation implies that children have the right to freely express their opinion on those issues which affect their social, economic, religious, culture and political lives. This right includes the right to be heard, the right to information and the right to freedom of association<sup>1</sup>. Children's enjoyment of these rights throughout their development facilitates their fulfillment of their other rights.

Educo's Child Participation Standards should be interpreted within the framework of the guiding principles set forth in the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*.

## 3. What are the standards and what purpose do they serve?

The Child Participation Standards establish clear criteria for achieving high quality participation throughout Educo's activities. They apply to all of Educo's activities involving children and establish

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<sup>1</sup> CRIN (2015) <https://www.crin.org/es/biblioteca/publicaciones/principios-rectores-de-la-convencion-sobre-los-derechos-del-nino-una>

expectations of the ways in which the people involved should behave and operate. As such, they should be used to:

- Promote and ensure meaningful child participation practices throughout Educo;
- Share participation practices with other stakeholders and local partners;
- Provide an institutional framework for child participation in Educo's activities;
- Describe what children and third parties can expect from Educo's child participation practices.

#### 4. Who should apply the standards?

The standards should be applied by:

(a) **Educo staff** who work with children:

- People who plan, implement and evaluate programs;
- Teams that organize and/or implement events/activities;
- Child Rights Focal Points.

(b) **Members of local partners** throughout the development of activities which form part of programs or projects carried out in collaboration with Educo.

(c) **Groups of children** who organize their own activities as part of an Educo program or project.

#### 5. General Child Participation Standards

The following General Child Participation Standards should be applied in all activities involving children. However, given the diverse contexts in which Educo works, it will be necessary to adapt the mode and level of participation to the local reality. As such, we should always consider the implications of local socio-cultural practices, as well as of children's age and maturity levels.

The scope of child participation is determined by the principle of the best interests of the child. As such, we will seek to ensure that children participate in those decisions related to those matters that are relevant to their lives.

##### 1) **Children receive information that is transparent and child-friendly, and are treated with honesty.**

This means that:

- The information children receive has been adapted to their maturity level and local context.
- The children participating in the different activities have received, ahead of time, clear and precise information regarding the objectives of these activities.

- The person responsible for the activity should be honest when establishing the activity's objectives and openly share these with the children.

## **2) Children's participation is voluntary.**

This means that:

- The people responsible for the activity ensure that children indeed wish to participate in the activity and have not been pressured or forced to do so.
- Both the children and their parents or caregivers consent to children's participation.
- Children decide when to freely express the opinions they consider relevant.

## **3) Children's participation is respectful.**

This means that:

- Children's opinions are taken into account in decision-making processes related to all matters that affect them.
- Children's religious and socio-cultural backgrounds are taken into account.
- The right to participation does not compromise the fulfillment of other rights. For instance, participation does not interfere with children's schooling or significantly impose upon their leisure time.

## **4) Child participation is relevant.**

This means that:

- Children participate in activities that are relevant to the development of a particular program or project.
- Children participate in activities that are relevant to their interests and needs, starting with the formulation of the program and project in question.
- Participation contributes directly to children's positive development.

## **5) Child participation is inclusive.**

This means that:

- Children's opportunities for participation are appropriate to their needs and maturity levels.
- There is balanced representation in the activities. This includes a diversity of experiences and socio-cultural backgrounds, different ages, gender and capacities.
- A diversity of opinions is encouraged, with maximum attention to particularly excluded groups.

## **6) Child participation is safe and sensitive to risk.**

This means that:

- Children are protected from any form of violence, maltreatment, abuse and exploitation.

- All activities involving children should contemplate a strategy for preventing risk from maltreatment and for creating a safeguarding environment.
- Prior to any activity, a risk assessment (see Appendix 2) should be carried out and appropriate mechanisms should be established for minimizing and controlling risks, including *in itinere* risks.
- Adequate measures are taken to protect children and ensure their safety during their participation, for example mechanisms for coordinating with local health services in the case of an emergency.
- Prior to photographing, recording or interviewing children, they should be informed about what the images and/or information will be used for and should give their consent.
- Communication media interested in covering an activity involving children should follow the indications defined by Educo and comply with the Child Participation Standards, the Child Safeguarding Policy and the Code of Conduct for Working with Children.
- The participation activities are carried out in hours which are appropriate for children.
- Children's participation does not subject them to stressful situations.
- All people working with children understand and have signed Educo's Child Safeguarding Policy and Code of Conduct.

#### **7) Child participation is child-friendly.**

This means that:

- Appropriate language is used.
- Environments, working methods and communication are appropriate to the context and children's maturity levels. The activities should be fun, practical and meaningful.
- Whenever possible, children's participation will take place in a family setting or an environment that is familiar to them.

#### **8) The people responsible for the activities in which children participate have received adequate training.**

This means that:

- Educo staff that have direct contact with children receive special training in communication and facilitation techniques, and are also provided with information about children's development.
- All Educo staff is open to training and to learning from children.
- The people who facilitate the participation activities should have adequate prior training and experience in this area.

#### **9) Child participation is accountable.**

This means that:

- Children's participation should not be a one-off activity, but rather a continuous process.
- Children have the opportunity to express their opinions and provide feedback before, during and after the activity.
- Children are informed of the results of their participation, which are followed up on and monitored.

- When activities are carried out with or through other entities, they are monitored and evaluated in a joint and coordinated way.
- Educo establishes internal communication channels to communicate those issues/actions undertaken with children, so that the teams can take appropriate measures.

## 6. Implementing the standards

- The people responsible for the programs and project should ensure that children's participation in these will be meaningful.
- The methodology used to carry out activities involving children's participation will be based on dialogue. Children decide when to freely express their opinions or partake in certain actions; and adults learn from the children and actively listen to and collaborate with them when asked to do so. Children are accompanied with sensitivity, kindness and understanding through active communication.
- To guarantee the application of the standards, it is important that planning is consistent and assigns the necessary and appropriate resources for carrying out the participatory actions (timing, space, materials that are respectful of people, the communities and the environment).
- The Child Rights Focal Points will be responsible for presenting and explaining these standards to all stakeholders involved in the programs and projects, and for making sure that they are fully aware of their implications.
- All programs and projects should include a strategy for child participation throughout the project cycle, as well as a monitoring mechanism that has been validated through a participatory process that includes children.
- This document will be reviewed periodically and its content refined.

## 7. References

- **Guidebook on Child Participation in the Philippines** (Council for the Welfare of Children National Committee on Child and Youth Participation, 2014)
- **Putting children at the centre** (Save the Children) [http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/sites/default/files/docs/Putting\\_Children\\_at\\_the\\_Centre\\_final\\_\(2\)\\_1.pdf](http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/sites/default/files/docs/Putting_Children_at_the_Centre_final_(2)_1.pdf)
- **So you want to consult with children?** (Save the Children) <http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/resources/online-library/so-you-want-consult- children-toolkit-good-practice>
- **Building a culture of participation** (National Children's Bureau) <http://resourcecentre.savethechildren.se/library/handbook-building-culture-participation-involving-children-and-young-people-policy-service>
- **Children and Young people's Participation. Training Workshop Guide** (ChildHope and Development Focus) <http://www.childhope.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/Childhope-CYPP-Toolkit-FINAL.pdf>
- **Child and Youth Participation Resource Guide** (Unicef) [http://www.unicef.org/ceecis/Child\\_Youth\\_Resource\\_Guide.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/ceecis/Child_Youth_Resource_Guide.pdf)

- **How to work successfully with children and young people from different faiths and cultures** (Participation Works)  
[http://www.participationworks.org.uk/files/webfm/shop\\_files/How%20to%20Faith%20%20guide%2016.06.2008.pdf](http://www.participationworks.org.uk/files/webfm/shop_files/How%20to%20Faith%20%20guide%2016.06.2008.pdf)
- **A guidebook for Training of Trainers on Mainstreaming Children's Participation** (HREA)  
[http://www.hrea.org/erc/Library/display\\_doc.php?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.crin.org%2Fdocs%2Fcwa\\_working\\_together.pdf&external=N](http://www.hrea.org/erc/Library/display_doc.php?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.crin.org%2Fdocs%2Fcwa_working_together.pdf&external=N)
- **Children as active citizens** (Unicef)  
[http://www.unicef.org/eapro/Children as Active Citizens A4 book.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/eapro/Children_as_Active_Citizens_A4_book.pdf)
- **Children's participation in decision making** (Inter-Agency Working Group on Children's Participation)  
<https://plan-international.org/where-we-work/asia/publications/childrens-participation-in-decision-making/>
- **Consulting with children. How to increase children's participation in development programmes** (Plan)  
[http://www.unicef.org/ceecis/Child Youth Resource Guide.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/ceecis/Child_Youth_Resource_Guide.pdf)
- **Mon Guide pour faire un rapport sur la CIDE** (Groupe des ONGS pour la Convention relative aux Droits de l'Enfant)  
[http://www.childrightsconnect.org/wpcontent/uploads/2013/10/PocketGuidetoCRCreporting\\_WEB\\_french.pdf](http://www.childrightsconnect.org/wpcontent/uploads/2013/10/PocketGuidetoCRCreporting_WEB_french.pdf)



**Appendix 1:** Checklist for child participation before, during and after the activity

Before the activity	During the activity	After the activity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What does the activity offer the children? Which issues related to their lives or interests are addressed?</li> <li>• Are the children mentally prepared to participate in the workshop? (adhesion)</li> <li>• Has the activity been correctly explained to the children? (content, objectives, etc.)</li> <li>• Have the necessary protective measures been taken?</li> <li>• Have the children been informed of the date, place and duration of the activity?</li> <li>• Have all children been given the opportunity to participate? (selection of children)</li> <li>• Has all necessary authorization and consent been obtained?</li> <li>• Have children participated in preparing the activity?</li> <li>• What method was used to provide information about the activity?</li> <li>• Within what framework will the activities take place? (setting, framework, child-friendly support, etc.)</li> <li>• Are the materials/timing/spaces appropriate for/adapted to the activity?</li> <li>• Is the person facilitating the activity the most suitable for doing so?</li> <li>• Have regulations been established for the activity (are these presented at the start of the activity, by means of a reminder)?</li> <li>• What budget has been assigned to the activity?</li> <li>• Have the children given their consent?</li> <li>• Is the person accompanying the children moral/ethical?</li> <li>• Have the children who will participate in the activity been taken into account at the time of organizing it? (homogeneity of children's age, attention to diversity/family and community context)</li> <li>• Is there an appropriate number of participants? (adults, boys/girls)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the methodology the most appropriate?</li> <li>• Does the facilitator act in a way that is respectful of children?</li> <li>• Is the language and material used adapted for children? Do the children understand it?</li> <li>• Do all children participate? What is the level of participation?</li> <li>• Is the issue really of interest to children?</li> <li>• Have children been informed of any potential changes?</li> <li>• Is the planning being met? Is the time set aside for the activity sufficient and necessary?</li> <li>• Do the children feel trust?</li> <li>• How is order/discipline maintained? Are the rules respected? (reminder!)</li> <li>• Do the children pay attention? Do the children actively engage in the activity_</li> <li>• Flexibility</li> <li>• All all participants fulfilling their roles</li> <li>• Is progress being made towards the goals?</li> <li>• In case a conflict, how is this resolved?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Were the security measures really effective?</li> <li>• Was the activity beneficial for the children?</li> <li>• Were the participants made responsible for ordering and storing the material?</li> <li>• Was a material inventory carried out? Was any of the material damaged? Was any material created?</li> <li>• Did the children positively value their participation in the activity?</li> <li>• What were children's proposals for improvement?</li> <li>• Did the children arrive safely to their homes?</li> <li>• What was the real level of children's participation (establish indicators for participation levels)?</li> <li>• Were the objectives achieved?</li> <li>• Were the children fully protected? Were they given enough autonomy?</li> <li>• What insufficiencies were detected during the activity?</li> <li>• What could be done to improve future activities?</li> <li>• Will this activity be carried out in the future?</li> <li>• Were children asked their opinion about the activity's development and about the accompanying adult and facilitator?</li> <li>• What did the adults learn from the children?</li> <li>• In case of conflict during the activity, what was the outcome? What did the adults and children learn from this experience?</li> </ul>

## Appendix 2: Tools for assessing and managing risk

### The Seven Stages of Risk Assessment and Management

- 1 Establishing the context, scope and setting
- 2 Identifying risks
- 3 Analyzing risks
- 4 Evaluating risks
- 5 Implementing strategies to minimize risk
- 6 Reviewing risks and preventative measures
- 7 Communicating and consulting

### Identifying Risks in our Organization

Area of Risk	High risk	Medium risk	Low risk
Staff and volunteers			
Place / physical setting			
Activities and programs			
Information			

### Measures for Mitigating Risk

Identified risks (list below)	(i) No action required (low risk)	(ii) Close monitoring and new review: specify periods and who is responsible for the monitoring and review	(iii) Change activities, policies, plans, procedures, etc. to reduce risk: specify the actions to be undertaken, the period of time and who is responsible (medium/high risk)	(iv) Stop the activity/transfer to another organization: take specific action, period of time and who is responsible
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### Appendix 3: Safety protocol for children participating in Educo's activities

#### Protocol for Adults

##### Core principles:

- All adults carrying out activities involving child participation are expected to adhere to, comply with and promote the rights set forth in the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* and its guiding principles.
- When working with children involved in the activities, it is essential to guarantee their protection and promote their rights.
- Children's health, safety and wellbeing should be paramount in all activities.
- Children should be appreciated, respected and understood within their cultural, religious and particular contexts, and their needs should be identified and satisfied within this context and within the family environment.
- Adults should listen to the children and encourage them to participate in the decisions that affect them.
- The adult accompanying the children should have the full consent of the parents or guardians.
- The parent or guardian should provide written consent for their child's participation. This document must include the name of the adult who will accompany the child.
- All work with children should take a cooperative approach based on trust and mutual respect.
- All adults should read and sign this document, in addition to Educo's Child Safeguarding Policy, as a show of their acceptance of and commitment to the principles and standards established to guarantee the protection and participation of children involved in all Educo or Educo-related activities.
- Children's consent and participation should be voluntary in all activities.

#### Aspects specific to accompanying adults

Accompanying adults' participation in activities involving children takes the form of direct support and guidance for the children who have been entrusted to them by their parents or guardians. This document aims to clearly define the responsibilities of the accompanying adults and emphasize the importance of their role. **The accompanying adult**

- The accompanying adult is the person who is responsible for the safety and welfare of a child during the participation in an event or activity. This is their primary task, and they should not engage in any other tasks that would distract them from fulfilling it.
- The child and his or her parent or guardian should participate in deciding who the accompanying adult will be.
- In function of the local context, the accompanying adult's responsibilities will take effect from the moment the child leaves home to attend an event, and will end when the child is returned home, safe and sound, to his or her parents or caregivers.
- In consideration of their particular vulnerability, girls should preferably be accompanied by a woman.
- In the case of boys, the accompanying adult will normally be a man, although there may be instances when the child requests a woman.
- The accompanying adult should be at least 20 years old, except in exceptional circumstances. If the accompanying adult proposed is under 20, this case should be handled with the informed support of the Director, the TERRA Coordinator, the Child Protection and Child Rights Officer, and the Technical Project Coordinator.

- The accompanying adult will treat children in a positive and respectful way, with appreciation for their individual needs, specific rights and contributions. They will value children's opinions and take these into account.
- The accompanying adult will take a cooperative and collaborative approach to working with children based on a relationship of trust, and will work with them such a way that favors their inherent capacities and develops their potential.
- The accompanying adult should be aware of any situation that may pose a risk to the child under their guardianship and should handle these accordingly, fostering a culture of openness that makes it possible to voice and address any problems or concerns.
- The accompanying adult should avoid actions or conducts that may be interpreted as a bad practice or as potentially abusive.

### **Responsibilities of the accompanying adult**

- Show that they are open to children's opinions and respect their different points of view, without trying to influence their opinions.
- When participating in events, ensure that children can communicate with other people, and especially with other children.
- Demonstrate appropriate behavior that provides a good example to the children participating in the event.
- When participating in events, contribute to the activities for developing the roundtables and children's sessions, in accordance with the instructions provided by the event coordinators.
- Be physically present in the place where the activities are being held, accompanying the children for the entire duration of these activities.
- Be aware of children's physical and emotional needs and inform the event organizers of any difficulties that the children under their guardianship may encounter.
- Ensure that the children can rest and participate in conversations and other activities during the course of the event.
- Provide any additional physical and emotional support that they children may need. Have on hand all of the children's medical and emergency information, along with written consent from the children's parents or guardians to act on their behalf in the event of a medical emergency.
- Know the location of the health centers that are nearest to the place where the activities are being carried out, and always carry a first-aid kit. When the activities are carried out near water, ensure that these places are properly monitored.
- When the activities are carried out together with other institutions, the responsible persons for each institution should be clearly identified. Coordinate with public safety or other safety services agency to ensure the safety of the participating children, especially when these are being carried out in open areas.
- In all activities involving children's participation the institution will provide a telephone number and institutional vehicle for attending to any emergencies which may arise.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of the adult

Identifying document type and number

Date