Working together: Including children in research on violence against children

A Resource Pack for Research Practitioners

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Dedication

This resource pack was developed in 2020 as the world grappled with the COVID-19 pandemic. **Ilke Nackerdien***, a young research assistant at the Children's Institute, University of Cape Town, who worked on this publication, was one of the many who succumbed to COVID-19 during 2020. We dedicate this resource pack to her memory.*

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Preface

Respecting, supporting and promoting children's participation is a human rights obligation. This resource pack takes us beyond rationalising or justifying the right to be heard. As such, it contributes to the larger and long-term goal of fulfilling children's rights within research by challenging and inspiring us to seek new ways of working with children as partners and rights holders in all our research endeavours.

With an explicit focus on children's participation in research on violence against children (VAC), the pack provides valuable guidance to researchers and policymakers, helping them understand how children's participation in research can be supported and demonstrating how it adds value and rigour to the process of building sustainable violence prevention programming.

The pack has been developed in recognition of the fact that a high ethical standard is required when conducting research with children, as well as an understanding of the ethical complexities involved in research specific to violence against children. The pack, therefore, sets out to prompt reflections on what works in a particular context and what is needed to support an ethical approach, as well as to explore children's participation during different stages and aspects of the research process.

The focus of this resource pack is not on *if* we will engage in participatory research, but instead on *how* we can best support meaningful research initiatives with children. Our goal is to move towards approaches where children's rights to participate are respected throughout the research and children are viewed as partners and change agents with valuable expertise to share.

The resource pack is produced under the umbrella of the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children in the Global EVAC Knowledge Network: A Forum for Users and Producers of Evidence. We are grateful to the End Violence Partnership, the End Violence Lab and especially to Catherine Maternowska for investing in supporting the development of this resource. Its development has been a lengthy process, across time zones and was severely disrupted during 2020 by the COVID-19 pandemic. It is our belief that it fills a long-standing gap in the vital field of violence prevention.

Acknowledgements

This resource pack was developed by Lucy Jamieson (Senior Researcher, University of Cape Town, Children's Institute), Clare Feinstein (Head of Programmes Child Protection, Save the Children International), Alana Kapell (Senior Adviser Child Participation/Child Rights Programming, Save the Children International) and Nicole Dulieu (Research and Evidence Advisor, Save the Children International). We would like to thank Leora Hodes and Ilke Nackerdien for their collation and curation of the resources in the library. We also acknowledge the support of our Advisory Board in reviewing earlier drafts: Debi Fry, Catherine Maternowska, Sian Platt, Mary Ann Powell, Sabine Rakotomalala, Irene Rizzini, Mónica Ruiz-Casares, Sarah Stevenson, Amanda Third, and Kay Tisdall. Their comments and feedback have helped to bring this pack into its final form.

The following people are recognised for contributing their expertise to the resource pack: Lillian Artz, Helen Beckett, Gabrielle Berman, Patrick Burton, Tara Collins, Patricio Cuevas-Parra, Elizabeth Dartnall, Anne Graham, Philippa Hill, Zubedy Koteng, Megan Malan, Mr Nahar, Christina Nomdo, Mandi McDonald, Alina Potts, Lucy Powell, Mónica Ruiz-Casares, Reah Shin, Katherine Sorsdahl, Neziswa Titi, Catherine Ward, and Melinda van Zyl. In addition, a number of experts in the field were invited to identify and present examples of best practices and key resources for inclusion. We would also like to thank Josh Lowe and Susan Sellars for copyediting and Josee Nahkle for design and layout.

We especially acknowledge the children and young people with whom we have worked and who have helped us learn and refine our practices over the years.

How to use this pack

This pack is designed to help researchers and practitioners go beyond treating children simply as subjects and, instead, work with them as partners and rights holders. Children's participation in research is about fulfilling children's rights and meeting our human rights obligations. It can also lead to breakthroughs in prevention approaches and response mechanisms, as well as a reduction in violence against children.

Taken together, these materials will help you to overcome the challenges and barriers to children's participation in research. They cover all aspects of the research process, from design, to execution, distribution and advocacy.

This guide is, we believe, the first of its kind. It includes research, tips from experts, and case studies, including information on how to manage the unique ethical challenges of working with children in this way.

It is structured as 10 sections, covering different aspects of the research process. You can read it end-to-end, or jump right to where you need to go. Each section begins with key learning points and features reflection exercises – so be sure to make notes as you go and discuss how to apply what you are learning with your colleagues.

All of the resources featured in the pack are open access, to make it as usable as possible. Some premium products and publications are included in the 'Resources by Theme' listed at the end. As far as possible, we want researchers of all ages and from all contexts to find the tools featured in this pack accessible and easy to use. This means that we have tried to use simple language and a user-friendly format.

What is covered

Section one: Get acquainted with the topic

This section will introduce you to the key concepts that underpin engaging children in research.

Section two: Participation in practice — An introduction

You'll learn the basics of how participation works in practice: defining participation, ensuring quality, and three key models for children's participatory research.

Section three: How to keep research ethical

This section shows you how to ensure that every stage of research, from its earliest conceptualisation to its outputs, is executed ethically.

Section four: Understanding and obtaining genuine consent

This section is a guide to how researchers can preserve children's autonomy and understand the difference between consent and assent.

Section five: Making research equitable

This section explains how to ensure that all children have an opportunity to participate without discrimination, bias or favouritism.

Section six: Managing risk and protecting children

This section explores how researchers can keep the children they work with safe.

Section seven: Preserving researchers' safety

Researchers can also be at risk, including from secondary trauma or burnout. Here's how to reduce that risk.

Section eight: A step-by-step guide to participatory research

This section contains practical tips and tools for working with children throughout a project, from design and conceptualisation to dissemination and advocacy.

Section nine: Working with children in large-scale studies

Large-scale research projects bring with them their own challenges for children's participatory research – this section shows how to overcome them.

Section ten: Child-friendly resources

This section shares key resources that support child-friendly processes, methodologies and information sharing.

Resources by theme

This section provides references and links to all the resources in the pack and other useful resources by theme.

Types of resources

There are five main kinds of resources provided in this pack. You can identify them as you read using the symbols below:

Case studies

These practical examples, written by researchers, practitioners or policymakers, provide tangible examples of how the principles discussed in this pack have been applied.

Expert insights

We have commissioned guidance from experts who have worked with children and young people. This guidance elaborates on or clarifies important points in the pack.

Tools and key resources

These in-depth materials further illuminate the themes discussed in the pack and provide useful starting points for designing and undertaking research on violence with children.

Optional exercises

Conducting good quality, ethical research with children involves constant reflection on what can be done better. For that reason, we include optional exercises to complete with your colleagues or collaborators (including children) to encourage good work practices.

Reading lists

Comprehensive and vetted reading lists are a hallmark of this publication. These materials, provided at the end of each section, can help deepen theoretical knowledge or enhnace understanding of how participatory research is linked to the rights of children before exploring participatory research in practice.

Section one:

Get acquainted with the topic

This section provides you with a basic grounding in the concepts and human rights frameworks that underpin this resource pack and children's participatory research, as well as explaining our aims and intentions for the pack.

We cover the following topics:

- The key concepts that have guided the creation of this pack
- The human rights that define and shape children's participation
- Some benefits of children's participatory research

This section includes the following materials:

- An introductory Q&A covering the basics of our approach (3 minute read)
- A case study illuminating quality children's participation in research (3 minute read)
- An introduction to a key resource on a wide range of child rights topics (3 minute read)
- A reading list delving deeper into the concepts discussed earlier (a selection of longer reads)

You could skip this section if: You are already well acquainted with the theoretical basics of this topic and would like to start exploring practical resources.

The basics — Q&A

What are the key concepts underpinning this pack?
The focus of this resource pack is not on *if* it is important to engage children in participatory research, but instead on *how* we can best support meaningful research initiatives with children.

Our goal is to move towards approaches in which children's right to participate is respected in all phases of research, and children are viewed as partners and rights holders.

This pack draws on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). In particular, the UNCRC General Principles, including Article 12 (the right to be heard), children's civil rights as freedoms (articles 7, 8, 13–17, 39), the right to be protected from violence (articles 19, 24, 28, 34, 37, 39), and the right to participation (articles 12, 23 and 29).

Violence against children occurs in all environments and cultures. As such, we **recognise the importance of local expertise and culturally-relevant approaches** to conducting research.

We emphasise the importance of **building researchers' capacity** to work with, and for, children in each phase of research.

We believe that **working in partnership** is crucial, whether with research teams or with children as partners.

What human rights underpin children's participation in research?

> *The concept of participation emphasizes that including children should not only be a momentary act, but the starting point for a regular and equal exchange between children and adults on the development of policies, programmes and measures in all relevant contexts of children's lives.* (UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2009, General Comment No. 12, para 13)

Article 12 of the UNCRC – the child's right to be heard – is the fundamental tenet for children's participation. But supporting children to fully exercise this right means moving towards the full realisation of children's civil and political rights, which include: the right to freedom of expression, thought, conscience, religion, association, peaceful assembly, protection of privacy, and access to information (articles 13–17 of the UNCRC). These rights have been broadly conceptualised under the term 'participation'.

It is also important to note that the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child has identified four rights as general principles (survival and development, equality and non-discrimination, best interests of the child, and participation). This means that they must always be considered and applied in the implementation of all the other rights. Article 12 is a general principle and so it, too, must be considered when implementing all other rights including the right to protection.

How do we define a child?

For the purposes of this resource pack we understand a child to be someone under the age of 18, as defined in Article 1 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

We recognise that in some cultures a child or childhood development is determined by an individual's attainment of certain milestones (and not age alone) and in certain jurisdictions the age of majority may be attained earlier.

Case study: Jozi Lights — Participatory research in practice

The Jozi Lights programme worked closely with children in three African countries and managed to effectively reach the most vulnerable children as a result. In this case study, Melinda van Zyl presents reflections from the staff.

What was the programme?

In 2015, Save the Children International's Urban Strategy Initiative, with funding from Save the Children Sweden and Save the Children Italy, conducted a participatory research study entitled Jozi Lights, in Mozambique, South Africa and Zimbabwe.

The objective of the study was to investigate the strategies employed by children who were engaging in unaccompanied rural to urban migration.

Save the Children was in the process of implementing a multi-country, cross-border child protection programme with European Union funds, which simultaneously worked in countries of origin, transit and destination, to prevent and reduce violence for 80,000 unaccompanied children on the move.

How and why did it involve children's participation?

It was important that the programme teams understood whether or not the interventions being implemented in countries of origin (raising awareness of migration risks, promoting information on how to migrate safely and through regular channels, anti-trafficking strategies) were considered relevant and if they were being used by the children targeted for their uptake.

To do this, the Jozi Lights study contracted a consultant from the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Dr Alain Tschudin, who designed and implemented a mixed methods study that relied heavily on ethics in practice and focused on building rapport and resilience in the child research participants.

Participants included migrant children who had arrived at their destination, or who were temporarily in transit. Only children in urban areas were included, this enabled field assistants and researchers to meet with them on a recurrent, weekly basis, over the course of four to six weeks.

Continuity, with regular meetings (as opposed to doing only one or two focus group discussions), was important to us: for building relationships, building urban survival skills, and promoting the safe sharing of progressively sensitive information over the research timeline.

Qualitative information was gathered through focus groups and with the use of mixed creative media; quantitative demographic and other data was also collected and interpreted through quantitative advanced analysis to explore suggestive patterns or trends.

What were the benefits of this approach?

If we hadn't embarked on participatory research with children, the drivers of migration would not have been so well defined. These drivers emerged as: violence at home; protection risks in border towns; the amount of work children were required to undertake; and the services children could not access.

We also learnt that, with the right interventions, children who had engaged in internal migration to border towns were unlikely to cross international borders if they managed to access essential services or find better prospects in the border towns upon arrival.

Based on the findings from this participatory research we are turning our attention to working in border towns and developing relevant interventions.

Most importantly, listening to so many children in similar situations (96 children across 6 towns in 3 countries), and taking a closer look at the demographic data of each participating child, shed light on the profile of the children who are most vulnerable.

In this way, we learnt that girls who had migrated from rural areas were less likely to successfully integrate into the formal education system in destination cities than girls who had migrated from peri-urban areas or neighbouring towns.

Similarly, we learnt that children who migrate alone, without the company of peers or anyone at all, struggled for weeks and sometimes months to access services and were overall more vulnerable in destination cities after arrival.

As a result, we were able to seek out and reach the most vulnerable individuals with relevant interventions at a very early stage.

Key resource: Save the Children Resource Centre

At this point, we think it useful to draw your attention to a resource library that can be used to find further information on many of the topics covered in this pack.

Save the Children's Resource Centre is an online library that hosts comprehensive, reliable and up-to date information on a wide range of child rights topics, including the thematic areas of child protection and children's participation.

This eLibrary provides access to full-text publications, reports, toolkits, guidelines, and video clips from Save the Children and other publishers.

The website is open to the public and provides access to over 9,000 quality-assured materials in one convenient location. Registered users can create a personalised library of their favourite materials for easy access. Over 70,000 users from all around the world use the Resource Centre every month.

Learn more here.

Reading list: Understanding the field of participatory research

These articles and book chapters explore the background to children's participatory research today and look particularly at how participatory research can help children to fully exercise their rights.

You should use these materials if you are interested in deepening your theoretical knowledge on this topic before exploring participatory research in practice, or if you would like to better understand how participatory research is linked to the rights of children.

Some of the concepts explored in these texts will be discussed later in this pack, so if you are new to the topic of children's participatory research, you may want to revisit this list after you have explored the rest of the pack.

Alderson, P. (2008). Children as researchers: Participation rights and research methods. In P. Christensen & A. James (eds), *Research with Children: Perspectives and Practices*, Second Edition (pp. 276–290). London: Routledge.

Three main areas are discussed in this chapter: the stages of the research process, the levels of participation, and the types of research methods in which young researchers are involved.

The idea of seeing 'researched' adults as co-researchers and co-producers of data, equally involved in the analysis, is already widely acknowledged. This idea is usually argued for in terms of respect and shared control, and because it addresses power imbalances in the research relationship. It can also be justified in terms of efficiency, and as opening the way to a broader range of collection methods and a fuller understanding of the data.

The same advantages can occur when children conduct research, with more or less help from adults.

Lundy, L., & McEvoy, L. (2011). Children's rights and research processes: Assisting children to (in)formed views. *Childhood,* 19(1), 129–144.

This article reflects on a body of work with children as co-researchers and participants. The authors argue that acknowledging children as rights holders has significant implications for research processes. When children are viewed as rights holders they are not only recognised as able, but also as entitled, to be engaged in research processes.

What is distinctive about a children's rights-informed approach to research is the focus not only on safe, inclusive and engaging opportunities for children to express their views, but also on deliberate strategies to assist children in the formation of their views. In this research, the authors worked with child researchers to build their capacity to understand research processes and to enable children to reflect on their own experiences and locate this within the wider knowledge associated with the research questions. The article concludes with a conceptualisation of this approach, integrating relevant international children's rights standards.

McDonagh, J. E., & Bateman, B. (2012). 'Nothing about us without us': Considerations for research involving young people. *Archives of Disease in Childhood – Education and Practice Edition,* 97(2), 55**.**

The aim of this paper is to highlight the importance of the participation of young people in research and to discuss the key areas of consideration for practitioners conducting research involving young people.

It also addresses specific issues that need to be considered when researching this age group, such as: the participation of young people in the research process, availability of adolescent-specific data, developmental considerations, and the interface between paediatric and adult-orientated healthcare.

Powell, M. A., & Smith, A. B. (2009). Children's participation rights in research. *Childhood,* 16(1), 124–142.

This article explores children's participation in research, from the perspectives of researchers who have conducted research with children.

Researchers' reports, gained using an email interviewing method, suggest that children's participation rights are particularly compromised when the child participants are considered vulnerable and the topic of the research is regarded as sensitive. Such perceptions result in stringent gatekeeping procedures that prevent some children from participating in the research.

This article concludes that children should be viewed, not as vulnerable passive victims, but as social actors who can play a part in the decision to participate in research. Such a view would result in more careful attention being paid to communicating effectively with children about research and ensuring that they have a more central role in decision-making about participation.

Tisdall, E. K. (2018). Applying human rights to children's participation in research. In M. Twomey & C. Carroll (eds), *Seen and Heard: Exploring Participation, Engagement and Voice for Children with Disabilities*. Peter Lang.

How can ideas and concepts from human rights inform and challenge ways of undertaking research with children? Over the last 20 years, there has been a significant turn in the social sciences and related disciplines towards undertaking research 'with' rather than 'on' children.

This turn has several strands: developing participative or creative methodologies to work directly with children; an intense and extensive focus on ethics; expanding the ways that children can be involved in research, from participants to advisers, experts and researchers; and a research objective to present children's 'voices'.

This chapter examines such strands, to consider current challenges and tensions, using ideas and concepts from human rights. In particular, it considers how the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities can challenge conceptualisations of capacity and competence, communication, voice, and research ethics.

Section two:

Participation in practice — An introduction

In the last section we explored some ways in which engaging in participatory research enables children to fully exercise their right to be heard.

In this section we take that theoretical background and start examining how to put it into practice. That includes spelling out a definition of participation and defining criteria and standards for *quality* participation.

We introduce various concepts that will be explored in detail later in the pack, including the notion of **informed consent**, good practices for making research **equitable**, and the best ways to **manage risk** to children and researchers alike.

We cover the following topics:

- A practical definition of children's participation
- How to define good quality participation
- The three main approaches to children's participatory research

This section includes the following materials:

- A 'checklist' on how to define children's participation (1 minute read)
- A short introduction to the nine basic requirements for quality participation (4 minute read)
- A short introduction to three approaches for children's participatory research (15 minute read)
- Various case studies and expert insights (10 minute reads)
- A key resource on child-led research (5 minute read) and reading lists on the nine basic requirements and each of the three approaches (a selection of longer reads)

You could skip this section if: You have an existing knowledge of the definition of children's participation; child-led, collaborative and consultative models of children's participatory research; and the UNCRC Committee's nine basic requirements for quality participation.

How to define children's participation: Four basic criteria

The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child defines children's participation as:

> *… **ongoing processes**, which include **information-sharing** and **dialogue** between children and adults based on **mutual respect**, and in which children can learn how their views and those of adults are taken into account and **shape the outcome of such processes**. [Emphasis added]* (UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2009, General Comment No. 12, para 3)

This definition moves away from participation as merely asking children what they think or viewing them as sources of data. Instead, it moves towards a model where children are entitled to actively participate in defining and shaping processes and learning from them.

Four basic criteria define children's participation:

Criterion 1. Children have an opportunity to freely form and express their views
Criterion 2. Children's views are respected and taken seriously
Criterion 3. Decision-making processes are informed by children
Criterion 4. Children understand and see the results of their participation

Many research efforts have succeeded in meeting certain aspects of these criteria, during certain phases of a research initiative, but few have succeeded in taking into account all criteria during every interaction with children. For example, too often children do not see the results of their participation (criterion 4) nor is it evident how their contributions informed the process and its outcomes (criterion 3).

For research to be truly participatory, researchers must realise each element of the basic criteria during any interaction with children.

Nine basic requirements for quality participation

The four basic criterion are a useful tool and can help reflective thinking about whether or not children's participation is truly being supported within a research initiative. But how do we define **'quality' participation**?

The UNCRC General Comment No. 12 (see paragraphs 132–134) outlines a set of **nine basic requirements** for appropriate ways to give due weight to children's views in all matters that affect them.

These basic requirements are a direct result of evaluations and research with children and adults, amassed over 15 years. They provide us with an internationally recognised road map for defining and measuring quality participatory processes and should be applied during the planning, implementation and monitoring of any initiative with children.

Table 1 sets out each of the requirements and provides you with key questions to help you apply them in practice.

At this stage, the questions are intended simply to introduce the kinds of issues you need to consider in children's participatory research.

Optional exercise

Gather a group of colleagues or collaborators. Pick a recent research project or projects you have worked on, and discuss the answers to the questions in the table in that context.

Table 1. UNCRC's nine basic requirements and how to apply them

Nine basic requirements	Key questions to help apply the basic requirements
1. Participation is transparent and informative	Do children have enough information about the activity to make an informed decision about whether or not, and how, they wish to participate? Is information shared with children in child-friendly formats, using accessible methods and language that they understand? Are the roles and responsibilities of adults and children clearly defined? Do children understand how they (and/or their communities) might benefit from the research? Do children understand the limitations of the research and why there are constraints? Do children understand how the information they provide may be used and how feedback will be provided to them?

Table 1. UNCRC's nine basic requirements and how to apply them

Nine basic requirements	Key questions to help apply the basic requirements
2. Participation is voluntary	Is children's participation voluntary and have they provided informed consent (or have their guardians provided consent if they are unable to)? Have children been given enough information and time to ask questions and seek clarification from people they trust about the research and to decide whether or not they want to participate? Can children stop participating at any time if they wish? Have adult/child power imbalances been addressed to ensure a truly voluntary process?
3. Participation is respectful	Are children's own time commitments (to study, work, play) respected and taken into consideration? Has support from key adults in children's lives (e.g., parents, carers, teachers) been gained to ensure respect for children's participation? Are ways of working culturally appropriate, sensitive and responsible?
4. Participation is relevant	Are the issues being discussed and addressed of real relevance to children's own lives? Are children participating only because they feel pressure from adults?
5. Participation is child friendly	Are child-friendly approaches and methods used? Are the approaches and methods used suitable for the children participating? Have the approaches been defined together with children? Are child-friendly meeting places used? Are such places equally accessible to all children? Do the ways of working build self-confidence/self-esteem among children of different ages, genders, cultures and abilities?
6. Participation is inclusive	Are children of different ages, genders and backgrounds, including younger children, children with disabilities, children from different ethnic groups etc., given opportunities to participate? Are parents and other adults encouraged to allow children with disabilities to participate? Are children encouraged to address discrimination through their participation? Do all children have equal access, including the most marginalised children?
7. Participation is supported by training for adults	Have researchers and gatekeepers been provided with training on child rights, participation, safeguarding, child-friendly communication and participatory tools? Do researchers have confidence in facilitating children's participation?

Table 1. UNCRC's nine basic requirements and how to apply them

Nine basic requirements	Key questions to help apply the basic requirements
8. Participation is safe and sensitive to risk	Are the principles of 'do no harm' and 'best interests of the child' applied? Have the risks been identified and efforts made to minimise them? Has a conflict sensitivity analysis been completed? Are child safeguarding policies applied? Do children feel safe when they participate? Is the space safe (both physically and mental/emotionally in accordance with the topic)? Are there appropriate reporting mechanisms and procedures in place to provide psychosocial support (or other urgent support) to children if needed?
9. Participation is accountable	Are children supported to participate in follow-up and evaluation processes? Do adults take children's views and suggestions seriously and act upon their suggestions? Are children told about how their views have been used and what effect this has had? Have communication and follow up mechanisms been defined together with children?

Source: Adapted from: Save the Children. (2018). *Protecting children in conflict Centenary Commitment: Process guidance for studies*. Unpublished document, Save the Children.

Reading list: Defining quality participation

The UNCRC's nine basic requirements should give you a clear sense of how you might distinguish good quality participation from tokenistic or even harmful forms of participation.

This reading list is designed to help you explore and interrogate this distinction in more depth. It includes a range of models for defining and measuring quality participation, looking at how to ensure participation at all stages of the research process, and at how to monitor and evaluate children's participatory research.

Some of the concepts explored in these texts will be discussed later in this pack, so if you are new to the topic of children's participatory research, you may want to revisit this list after you have explored the rest of the pack.

Lansdown, G., & O'Kane, C. (2014a). *A toolkit for monitoring and evaluating children's participation: Introduction. Booklet 1***.** London: Save the Children.

This is the first booklet in a toolkit comprising six booklets. The toolkit provides a conceptual framework for measuring children's participation, together with guidance on how to undertake monitoring and evaluation and practical tools that can help you gather the information you need. It can be used by organisations working directly with children, by child- and youth-led organisations, and by governments that are committed to fulfilling their obligation to respect children's right to participate.

Booklet 1 explains the background to the toolkit and provides an overview of children's participation. It includes a brief guide to monitoring and evaluation, with definitions for key terms and some useful resources.

Laws, S., & Mann, G. (2004). *So you want to involve children in research? A toolkit supporting children's meaningful and ethical participation in research relating to violence against children***.** Stockholm: Save the Children Sweden.

Save the Children produced this toolkit to encourage meaningful and ethical participation by children in work around violence against children, particularly in the UN Study on Violence Against Children.

The toolkit draws on case studies from around the world to put forward ideas on how children can be involved in primary and secondary research. Among the strengths of this toolkit is its practical approach and commitment to including children at all stages of the Secretary-General's study.

Shaw, C., Brady, L.-M., & Davey, C. (2011). *Guidelines for research with children and young people***.** London: National Children's Bureau Research Centre.

These guidelines have been produced for researchers who are contemplating involving children and young people in their research project, whether as participants or in a more active role.

They set out the general approach of the National Children's Bureau Research Centre to research with children and young people, and these principles are illustrated throughout with examples from the work of the Centre.

The guidelines provide practical guidance for researchers, through all stages of the research process, from planning to dissemination, and consider different ways in which children and young people can be involved in the research process.

Recommended viewing: Members of the South African Child and Youth Advisory Committee to the International and Canadian Child Rights Partnership (ICCRP) (for more information see the ICCRP case study, p. 25) made this short video to help youth understand the nine principles recommended by the United Nations to ensure meaningful participation.

Three approaches to children's participation

This section looks at three approaches to children's participation in research: child-led research, collaborative research, and consultative research. They are based on the 'continuum of participation' used by Lansdown and O'Kane (2014a) to describe the type of engagement and balance of responsibilities between adult researchers and children and young people.

These approaches are not a measure of quality, but provide a key tool to define the methodology for research and the resources needed, as well as helping to set clear expectations of children and partners. All three levels of engagement are valid and can be appropriate depending on the goals of the initiative, the age and capacity of the children, the children's own priorities, and the context in which the engagement takes place.

To ensure quality processes, it is essential that the UNCRC's nine basic requirements are realised and applied within each approach.

Research initiatives may use different approaches at different stages of the study. There is a dynamic and interconnected relationship between them. Research can, for example, start off as a more consultative process, move on to becoming collaborative, and then create space for children to initiate their own agenda as they acquire the necessary confidence and skills.

In addition to these three approaches, a fourth category of research exists: children as subjects, in which children's active participation is completely excluded from research. This approach cannot be considered participatory and is, therefore, not elaborated on here.

Table 2 explains the basics of these approaches and provides illustrative examples for each one.

Table 2. Approaches to children's participation in research

Classification	Definition	Example
Child led	Children initiate their own research and activities. They create their own processes and determine the issues and methodologies that are most important to them. Children maintain control of the research, at all stages. Adults may serve as facilitators, or as child protection or technical advisors.	*Children have decided that they want to take action to reduce violence in their community. They have noticed a high level of alcohol consumption in the same areas where children play and travel to/from school. Over the course of three months, children carefully document the violence they witness, survey other children and pick up the empty liquor bottles/bags in key areas. With this data they draw conclusions about the forms of violence children are exposed to and the rate/frequency of alcohol consumption. They use this evidence to petition the local government and community members. Example inspired by: www.concernedforworkingchildren.org/wp-content/uploads/Young-citizens-address-alcohol-abuse.pdf.*
Collaborative	Adults invite children to take an active role in the planning and implementation of research. Or, children have an idea and seek out a partnership with adults to support the process. In either scenario, it becomes a partnership between adults and children to define the methodology, questions, data collection, analysis and reporting.	*A local NGO wants to undertake research to better understand how online/cyber bullying is affecting children in the community. Early in the planning stages, they partner with a local group of children also addressing issues related to violence and protection. Together, the NGO and children develop a research plan and strategy.*
Consultative	Adults seek children's views to build knowledge and understanding on an issue. Consultation may cover multiple stages of the research through the formation of an 'advisory group'. Alternatively, it could be specific to one stage, such as tool validation or advocacy.	*A children's network is invited to participate in a research initiative focused on child marriage. Child marriage is a key priority for the network, and they want to be part of the process. They feel it is important to ensure that children in their country are consulted, but they do not want to invest a lot of their time and limited resources in the initiative. The adult researchers work with the children to define when/how they want to engage and shape the process. Together they decide that the*

Table 2. Approaches to children's participation in research

Classification	Definition	Example
		children will help set up focus group discussions in different communities. The children also ask the team to develop a child-friendly final report so they can use the research findings in their ongoing advocacy work.
Children as subjects	Adults conduct the research without any form of engagement with children or young people other than as the subjects of the research.	*The Violence Against Children and Youth Surveys (VACS) are nationally representative household surveys of males and females ages 13 to 24. They are designed to measure the prevalence, and incidence of sexual, physical and emotional violence in childhood, adolescence (before age 18) and among young adults (before age 24). The surveys also identify risk factors, protective factors and the consequences of violence. Children are sometimes invited to answer the questions but are not part of the research team administering the surveys.*

Expert insight: How child-led research creates new participation opportunities for children

Patricio Cuevas-Parra (Director, Child Participation and Rights, World Vision International) explains the possibilities offered by child-led research in more depth. He argues that one distinguishing factor of this approach is the confidence it gives to child researchers to speak out and challenge those with power.

Child-led research refers to a process whereby children and young people are involved in all stages of research, from planning and conducting fieldwork to analysing data and disseminating findings.

From the perspective of children and young people, essential features defining a process as child-led are: (1) the control that children have over the different phases of the research process, (2) the focus on topics that matter to them, (3) the role of adults as facilitators who assist, but do not manage, the child researchers, and (4) the motivation to make a difference in their lives using their findings to influence decision-making.

Through child-led research, children and young people have opportunities to connect with their peers using their usual ways of communicating. This allows them to produce data that merges their peers' experiences with their own. An underlying enabling factor that supports this approach is the conviction that child researchers are some of the best-positioned individuals to conduct research that focuses on their lived experiences. Thus, they are able to bring perspectives from their own lives, and influence the research outcomes based on their own insights.

However, one of the challenges that child researchers face is the sceptical attitudes of others who believe that only adults can conduct research. This resistance towards recognising children's abilities indicates that more effort is needed to change mindsets about how children are viewed by society.

Findings from my own research show that the primary motivation for children and young people to participate in child-led research is to make a difference in their lives and bring about social justice and change to improve their lives and communities. This suggests that an important component of the child-led research process is to share their findings with others and put their recommendations into action.

For instance, child researchers from Brazil researched how children's identities are interlinked with violence, and, in Romania, they explored the intersection between media and violence. With their findings, they sought to put pressure on stakeholders and decision makers to address the issues explored.

Nonetheless, children's ability to engage in knowledge dissemination is contextual and relies on the networks that child researchers have and the support they receive from adults acting as brokers. For instance, child researchers in Bangladesh used local media and meetings to share their findings and influence local government officials, while Syrian child researchers were supported to share their findings at the global level in order to generate a broader debate on their lives as refugees.

Child-led research is not only a participatory methodology used to generate empirically-grounded knowledge, but, because children are involved in the generation of data, it contributes to the creation of new opportunities for children and young people to participate and to use their findings to influence decision makers on issues relevant to them. The evidence that child researchers bring to the debate gives them the confidence to speak out and challenge those with power, whether they are policymakers, or community leaders.

Key resource: Child-led research: From participating in research to leading it

This World Vision study (Tisdall & Cuevas, 2019) argues that child-led research provides promising opportunities to engage children and young people in shaping policy and practice, ultimately creating change that can lead to better lives for them.

World Vision's campaign, 'It takes a world to end violence against children', incorporated a number of child-led research projects. Young researchers were involved in every stage of the research process – from design and fieldwork, to the analysis and dissemination of findings. The first case study involved Bangladeshi children and young people researching birth certificates and the second was conducted by a group of Syrian refugee children in Lebanon and Jordan on issues relevant to their lives.

The report also includes an analysis of six child-led research projects carried out by young researchers in Brazil, Chile, Ghana, Romania, Sierra Leone and Sri Lanka, who used the learning and knowledge generated by the young researchers in Bangladesh, Lebanon and Jordan to develop their own projects.

In these six projects, child-led research provided children and young people with new avenues to influence decision-making by using the findings of their own research to put pressure on stakeholders and decision makers in relation to issues around violence against children.

Listen to the authors present the findings of the research at wvi.org/stories/child-participation/child-led-research-participating-research-leading-it.

Reading list: Child-led research

This reading list explores the theory and practice of child-led research in greater depth.

Esterhuizen, L. (2012a). *Child led data collection: A guide for young people to learn how to do research and create positive change*. Stockholm: Save the Children Sweden.

This manual has been developed for both young people and adults. Young people can use it to better understand data collection and learn how to do it, step-by-step. Adults and civil society organisations can use the manual to support young people and help guide and support them as they work on child led data collection.

The manual includes sections on understanding research, planning for data collection, interview (qualitative) and survey (quantitative) methods, data analysis and advocacy, and dissemination.

Kellett, M. (2011). Empowering children and young people as researchers: Overcoming barriers and building capacity. *Child Indicators Research*, 4(2), 205–219.

This article explores the concept of children-as-researchers through an exposition of the work of the Children's Research Centre at the Open University, United Kingdom. It situates the work of the Centre within an empowerment and rights framework and charts its journey, from the first pilot work to its recognition as a centre with significant international reach.

The paper focuses on issues, challenges and outcomes, and draws on examples of children's research. The impact of child-led research, in terms of its contribution to the body of knowledge on childhood and our understanding of children's lived experiences, is examined along with a discussion of how child-led research can be influential in policy and practice contexts.

Ritterbusch, A. E., Boothby, N., Mugumya, F., Meyer, S., Wanican, J., Bangirana, C., Nyende, N., Ampumuza, D., & Apota, J. (2019). *Window on the world of violence against children outside of family care in Uganda: Pushing the limits of child participation in research and policy-making through youth-driven participatory action research (YPAR)*. AfriChild.

This paper explores the nexus of child and youth-driven participatory action research and child protection practice through both ethical reflections and empirical evidence on violence and resilience. It aims to support researchers in academia and international development practitioners to think through what participation really means for our research practices and policy commitments to social justice for children in adversity.

The intergenerational research team in this study involved children, adolescents and young people living in extreme adversity in the qualitative research process. The team used auto-photography and social cartography to give children an active role in the visualisation of their worlds and narratives of violence and resilience. The children and young people involved the study used visual data and texts to influence high-level policy making In Uganda.

What is participatory action research (PAR)?

Participatory: This means that the people who want or need changes to be made in their surroundings or situations take part in making those changes. Participatory tools are people-based and evidence-based, mobilising and bringing together perspectives through dialogue, critical reflection and action.

Action: This is the part that really makes PAR different from other types of research. It means that at the end of the research and discussions, something happens. The information is not only recorded, but also moves people to some sort of activity.

Research: This is the systematic, careful investigation or exploration of a topic of interest in order to determine facts or knowledge about it. PAR researchers use both qualitative and quantitative research techniques, and the research methods used can vary significantly with each PAR project.

Source: Save the Children. (2018a). *Youth voices: Participatory action research with adolescents affected by the Syria crisis in Egypt and Lebanon*. Save the Children.

Save the Children. (2018b). *Participatory action research – A 'how to' guide for use with adolescents in humanitarian contexts*. Save the Children.

This report by Save the Children is on a project implemented using participatory action research with adolescents affected by the Syria crisis in Egypt and Lebanon. The report is divided into three sections:
- The first section provides an overview of participatory action research – what it is and how it can be applied in work with adolescents and youth in humanitarian contexts.
- The second section summarises youth voices, identifies the lessons that have been learnt from them, and highlights key recommendations for each phase of the project.
- The third section is a 'how to' guide that draws on experiences from the Egyptian and Lebanese contexts of the pilot project to provide practical, user-friendly guidance for anyone considering introducing the PAR approach.

Case study: Empowered Aid — How collaborative research is helping to transform gender and power dynamics in the delivery of humanitarian aid

Empowered Aid, a three-year, multi-country participatory action research study in Uganda and Lebanon, brought refugee girls into the research process. This case study was written by Alina Potts.

What is 'Empowered Aid' aiming to achieve?

The aim of Empowered Aid is to better prevent sexual exploitation and abuse in relation to accessing relief items such as food; shelter; water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH); fuel and firewood; and cash or voucher assistance. Its goal is to support the creation or adaptation of aid delivery models that actively work to reduce power disparities and give women and girls a sustained voice in how aid is delivered.

Participatory action research proactively acknowledges and addresses power imbalances between the affected population and researchers/humanitarian aid workers. Refugee women and girls are included as part of the research team in each country, with girls ranging in age from 15–17 years. The girls work alongside the researchers to implement the project in an intergenerational partnership.

How did the project involve girls in research?
Throughout the project there has been an emphasis on ethically and safely engaging with the adolescent population. One of the first things the team learnt was that young women (aged 18–19) felt more comfortable joining adolescent girls, than being grouped with older women. This is not uncommon, given that in many cultures 'adolescence' can extend beyond 17 years of age.

Another issue was childcare, given that several of the adolescent girls involved in the research in Uganda had children of their own. Also, culturally, it can be common for children to be engaged as caregivers when mothers are unavailable. We spoke with the girls in advance and described the childcare that would be available, so as to prevent girls being pulled out of school or away from their homes in order to take care of children while their mothers attended workshops or other project activities.

Design workshops were held (separately) with women and girls, during which they selected the areas of focus for the research. This was done through a participatory voting process in which different types of aid were discussed and everyone was given stickers to place on their choice. This reinforced, especially for the girls involved, that their choices were heard and informed the direction of the research. The design workshop also included participatory exercises around power, as well as the types of methods to be used and key concepts/definitions of the main areas of study.

These participatory processes continued not only at the design stage, but throughout the research process. Data collection included participatory visual techniques that can work for all ages, but are well-suited to adolescents, such as body mapping and open-ended stories ('vignettes'). We also held workshops to reflect on the research together and to undertake participatory data analysis. Ensuring that the adolescents/children engaged in research are also part of these meaning-making processes is crucial, as evidenced by the many powerful insights they shared.

"Sometimes if the girl tells her parents and they are reasonable, they will go to a children's rights association and provide them with information about the incident and offender such as his phone number, his details, his picture. They might find him and interrogate him, but he can deny the incident. I know a lot of girls who went through this. Parents sometimes insist on knowing what's wrong with their girl and urge her to speak so she tells them everything. Some parents are understanding and open while some parents are not and might prohibit her from doing everything. They even might beat her and blame her." – Qualitative interview with adolescent girl

For more on the project and reflections on ethical and safety measures, you can listen to a conversation with the research leads on International Rescue Committee's podcast: soundcloud.com/user-425988972/empowered-aid.

For more information, tools and reports, see globalwomensinstitute.gwu.edu/empowered-aid-resources or contact apotts@gwu.edu.

Reading list: Collaborative research

This reading list explores the theory and practice of collaborative research in greater depth.

Bradbury-Jones, C., & Taylor, J. (2015). Engaging with children as co-researchers: challenges, counter-challenges and solutions. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology,* 18(2), 161–173.

This article critiques the ethical, methodological and practical issues associated with engaging (or employing) children as co-researchers or primary researchers.

The discussion is framed around six challenges: children's lack of research competence; training requirements; balancing insider/outsider perspectives; remuneration; power differentials; and child protection.

For each challenge the authors propose a counter-challenge and offer pragmatic solutions to the issues raised, so the paper holds practical utility for social researchers who use this type of participatory approach.

Lundy, L., McEvoy, L., & Byrne, B. (2011). Working with young children as co-researchers: An approach informed by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. *Early Education and Development,* 22(5), 714–736.

Examples of young children being engaged as co-researchers are rare. This article draws on a research project that sought to ascertain young children's views on after-school programmes and involved a university-based research team working along with two groups of co-researchers, each composed of four children aged 4–5 years.

The article discusses the contribution made by children to the choice of methods and development of the research questions, as well as their involvement in the interpretation of the data and dissemination of findings. It suggests that, although there are limits to what young children can, and will want to, do in adult-led research studies, an explicit UNCRC-informed approach requires the adoption of supportive strategies that assist children to engage in a meaningful way, with consequent benefits for the research findings and outputs.

Porter, G. (2016). Reflections on co-investigation through peer research with young people and older people in sub-Saharan Africa. *Qualitative Research,* 16(3), 293–304.

This article reflects on a series of collaborative studies in which co-investigation with peer-researchers played a central role.

The first concerns work with young people, trained as peer-researchers in a child mobility study in Ghana, Malawi and South Africa; the second is about a research project on youth and mobile phones, in which some of the young peer-researchers have a continued involvement; and the third is on a study of older people's mobility in Tanzania.

Experience in these projects illustrates the complexities of co-investigation, not least the ethical concerns that have to be addressed when working with marginalised people, whatever their age. It also highlights the potential benefits of such collaboration for individual peer-researchers, academic research quality and, in the long term, better policies and practice.

Case study: ICCRP — What one research partnership learnt from having child advisors

The International and Canadian Child Rights Partnership (ICCRP) appointed an advisory committee of children and young people to guide all aspects of research. This case study was written by Tara Collins and Reah Shin.

Why did the ICCRP appoint an advisory committee?

The ICCRP has been addressing the question of how children's participation in international and Canadian child protection programmes and policies can be monitored. Our team consists of a partnership between children, young people, practitioners, and academics from Brazil, Canada, China, South Africa, and the United Kingdom.

Before finalising the research protocol, the team obtained ethical clearance to establish a 10-member international Child and Youth Advisory Committee (CYAC), with members aged 10–24. CYAC members were a valuable part of the ICCRP, as they provided guidance and expertise on research design, data collection, analysis, publication, conference presentations and more.

What challenges did the ICCRP face?

The ICCRP did experience challenges in establishing and working with the group. There was an important learning curve for everyone, as adults and young people were challenged by each other in a healthy environment. Issues included: Who will 'lead' the CYAC meetings? What are the limitations of our virtual dialogues? How will we work together with our time zone and language differences? What would make our participation meaningful?

One of the biggest lessons learnt from the CYAC was the team's collaborative work on ensuring inclusivity, creativity and the safety of members.

For example, although Zoom provided a sense of connectivity and cohesiveness for communication among CYAC members, "it is not necessarily heard by other people" (Cleyton from Brazil, quoted in Collins et al., 2020, p. 7).

Additional time and effort on planning and resources was required for the CYAC members to connect online. For example, in South Africa where Internet access is limited, ICCRP researchers had to fly and drive to the rural Eastern Cape province to reach the young people there and courier hardcopy documents to them to ensure that all CYAC members received supporting documents for CYAC meetings, due to the limited Internet connectivity.

This meant additional costs for transportation, flights, cellular data and more. Together, it was decided that the meeting documents would be sent to all members three weeks in advance of meetings so that all members had time to review documents before the meetings were held.

How were these challenges overcome?

An essential response to overcoming the challenges was clear communication between the adult researchers and the child and youth advisors. Haley from Canada shared:

"One of the things that allows me to stay engaged is when there is very clear communication. That has always been very helpful for me. I've never questioned what the expectations were of myself. If I wanted to become more involved, all I had to do was just express that interest and it was always supported. Any extra engagement that I offered was always ensured by others that it was sustainable and very clearly appreciated. There was validation and peer support and clear communication."
(Collins et al., 2020, p. 7)

What benefits emerged?
CYAC and ICCRP wanted to ensure that our virtual communication was a platform to promote and practice equal access and voice. The development of relational practice, humour, care and empathy for one another always kept us moving forward despite the challenges.

Although we may not have all the answers and solutions to the challenges we face, it was important for us to allow for an open and honest dialogue so as to address the issues together.

The ICCRP has experienced numerous benefits from partnering with young people in the research. According to the CYAC members, these include:

- Developing understanding, experience and knowledge of children's participation
- Personal and professional growth for young people
- Diversity and cultural competence in ICCRP research process
- Enhancing curiosity among young people and raising possible future research questions

For more details on the work of the partnership, please refer to www.ryerson.ca/iccrp.
You can also contact us at iccrp@outlook.com or tara.collins@ryerson.ca.

Reading list: Consultative research

This reading list explores the theory and practice of consultative research in greater depth.

Casas, F., González, M., Navarro, D., & Aligué, M. (2013). Children as advisers of their researchers: Assuming a different status for children. *Child Indicators Research,* 6(2), 193–212.

This article discusses the different roles that children can assume in research, their relationship with adult researchers and the best questionnaire formats for different age groups. The recommendations are based on a study that allowed the authors to examine children's choices. After training on the aims and objectives of the exercise, the authors conducted focus groups with children (aged 8, 10 and 12) to explore the value criteria children use to make decisions on the visual ways of presenting the questions, scales, and labels, and on the directions and options available for responding to each question.

Collins, T. M., Jamieson, L., Wright, L. H. V., Rizzini, I., Mayhew, A., Narang, J., ... & Ruiz-Casares, M. (2020). Involving child and youth advisors in academic research about child participation: The Child and Youth Advisory Committees of the International and Canadian Child Rights Partnership. *Children and Youth Services Review***,** 109, 104569.

This article explores the role and contributions of Child and Youth Advisory Committees (CYACs) in the research process. It discusses the establishment of CYACs and how they supported a three-year multi-country research project addressing children's rights to participation and protection, as well as the monitoring of this connection internationally in several countries in the Global South and North: Brazil, Canada, China and South Africa.

This article describes the creation and functioning of the CYACs and the strengths, challenges, and creative processes involved in implementation. The findings relate to ethics regulation, differing expectations and assumptions about CYAC involvement, as well as virtual communication. These are discussed with the inclusion of the perspectives of adult researchers and CYAC members.

Mercieca, D., & Jones, P. (2018). Use of a reference group in researching children's views of psychotherapy in Malta. *Journal of Child Psychotherapy,* 44(2), 243–262.

This paper explores the processes and outcomes of a children's reference group within the context of child psychotherapy research in residential care. The reference group was set up to consult children about the design of a research project that seeks to evoke, represent and understand children's views on psychotherapy.

Children contributed to the design of visual data collection methods and identified key ethical issues from the point of view of young psychotherapy service users, especially in relation to issues of trust within a residential care context. Children also reviewed and appraised research information material.

Moore, T., Noble-Carr, D., & McArthur, M. (2016). Changing things for the better: The use of children and young people's reference groups in social research. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology,* 19(2), 241–256.

This paper describes the use of reference groups made up of children and young people and promotes them as a space within which researchers and children can regularly discuss and reflect on the research to establish if it is necessary, if they have the skills to participate, and the impact on themselves and others. Such practices can help researchers reconsider their research approaches and assumptions, their methodologies and methods, and the new knowledge created.

The paper uses three case studies to highlight the benefits the authors have encountered as well as those identified by children and young people themselves.

Save the Children. (2008). *A kit of tools for participatory research and evaluation with children, young people and adults: A compilation of tools used during a thematic evaluation and documentation on children's participation in armed conflict, post conflict and peace building*. Save the Children Norway.

The tools in this kit aim to assist researchers to conduct formative dialogue research, a form of participatory and reflective research and evaluation that promotes the use of dialogue, reflection and critical thinking, over a period of time, among children, young people, parents, teachers, community members, researchers, NGO partner staff, and other key stakeholders (e.g., government officials and the media).

It includes exercises developed for use with children and young people to explore their experiences, and ideas that can be adapted for use in other sensitive situations. For each tool, the objectives are explained, alongside the time and materials needed, key steps to be taken and facilitator's notes. The tools were assessed by children and young people, and there is a section in which users have made comments on the usefulness, or otherwise, of the tools. Appendix 2 includes ice-breakers and energisers that can be used in any situation.

Optional exercise

Gather colleagues or collaborators and discuss the following reflection questions in relation to a piece of research you are planning, or a hypothetical piece of research you might like to conduct.

Use information from throughout this section to inform your discussion.

- What is needed to create a supportive and enabling environment?
- How will children's views be respected and taken seriously?
- What measures are in place to ensure that children understand and see the results of their participation?
- Which of the three approaches might you use during each stage of the research? *Consider the reasons why and what resources and time are needed. If you are discussing an actual piece of research, define and document your reasoning clearly to help with reflection and learning for your next project.*
- How will you work with children to explore which approach they most want to see supported during each stage of the research?
- How will you set up realistic expectations and ensure that children understand the opportunities and the limitations of the approach they are involved in?
- How will you ensure that children's contributions, and their value in the research, receive due recognition?

Section three:
How to keep research ethical

In the previous section of this pack, we started to explore how the theory of children's participatory research can be put into practice. We looked at how good quality participation is defined, and examined the basics of three models for this kind of research.

In this section, we explore a topic that fundamentally underpins whatever kind of participatory research you conduct: ethics. Researchers have to navigate complex ethical dilemmas when conducting research into violence against children. But when children themselves are involved in the research, there is even more to consider.

While exploring this section, it is worth bearing in mind that the concept of **consent** underpins various ethical questions. What defines informed and continuous consent, and how best to secure it when working with children, is explored in greater depth in the next section.

Similarly, **managing risk** and **preventing harm** to both children and researchers are, of course, critical ethical issues. These are explored in more depth in sections six and seven.

Here, we cover the following topics:

- Some basic principles to support ethical research with children
- Why reflection and reflexivity throughout the research process are important
- How you can navigate the ethical approval process

This section includes the following materials:

- An introduction to a key resource on ethics in research and its accompanying website (5 minute read)
- A practical, expert guide to taking research through the ethical review process (5 minute read)
- Expert insights on ethical review process and ethical research during COVID-19 (3 minute reads)
- A reading list on ethics in research (a selection of shorter reads)

You could skip this section if: You are well-versed in ethical research involving children and very experienced in steering children's participatory research through ethical review.

Key resource: ERIC website

The International Ethical Research Involving Children (ERIC) website contains a collection of evidence-informed resources to assist researchers and the research community to understand, plan and conduct ethical research involving children. The site was started as a joint project between UNICEF's Office of Research, Innocenti; the Childwatch International Research Network; the Centre for Children and Young People at Southern Cross University, Australia; and the Children's Issues Centre at the University of Otago, New Zealand.

ERIC emerged out of a recognised need to connect researchers with research stakeholders who are committed to research approaches that promote, rather than diminish, the dignity, rights and wellbeing of children. Since 2010, the core team has engaged hundreds of highly respected members of the international research community, eminent practitioners, and children and young people to ensure that the resource reflects the latest developments in theory and practice.

A useful starting point is the *International Charter for Ethical Research with Children*, reproduced in full on the following page. The Charter gives a concise summary of the most important ethical principles and additional concerns that should be considered when working with children. Take your time to read it through and consider how it might apply to your work.

As you do, however, keep in mind that ethics is not simply a 'checklist'. Ethical challenges and dilemmas can, and do, arise at all stages of the research process. It is critical that a process of regular reflection is incorporated in the design of research. This theme is explored in some of the reading listed later in this chapter and in the themed resource list.

INTERNATIONAL CHARTER FOR ETHICAL RESEARCH INVOLVING CHILDREN

As a research community working with children, we are committed to undertaking and supporting high quality ethical research that is respectful of children's human dignity, rights and well-being. The following seven commitments guide our work:

ETHICS IN RESEARCH INVOLVING CHILDREN IS EVERYONE'S RESPONSIBILITY

We, the research community, including all who participate in undertaking, commissioning, funding and reviewing research, are responsible for ensuring that the highest ethical standards are met in all research involving children, regardless of research approach, focus or context.

RESPECTING THE DIGNITY OF CHILDREN IS CORE TO ETHICAL RESEARCH

Ethical research is conducted with integrity and is respectful of children, their views and their cultures. Involving children respectfully requires that researchers recognise children's status and evolving capacities and value their diverse contributions.

RESEARCH INVOLVING CHILDREN MUST BE JUST AND EQUITABLE

Children involved in research are entitled to justice. This requires that all children are treated equally, the benefits and burdens of participating are distributed fairly, children are not unfairly excluded and that barriers to involvement based on discrimination are challenged.

ETHICAL RESEARCH BENEFITS CHILDREN

Researchers must ensure that research maximizes benefits to children, individually and/or as a social group. The researcher bears primary responsibility for considering whether the research should be undertaken and for assessing whether research will benefit children, during, and as a consequence of, the research process.

CHILDREN SHOULD NEVER BE HARMED BY THEIR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH

Researchers must work to prevent any potential risks of harm and assess whether the need to involve the individual child is justified.

RESEARCH MUST ALWAYS OBTAIN CHILDREN'S INFORMED AND ONGOING CONSENT

Children's consent must always be sought, alongside parental consent and any other requirements that are necessary for the research to proceed ethically. Consent needs to be based on a balanced and fair understanding of what is involved throughout and after the research process. Indications of children's dissent or withdrawal must always be respected.

ETHICAL RESEARCH REQUIRES ONGOING REFLECTION

Undertaking research involving children is important. Ethical research demands that researchers continually reflect on their practice, well beyond any formal ethical review requirements. This requires ongoing attention to the assumptions, values, beliefs and practices that influence the research process and impact on children.

Figure 1. International Charter for Ethical Research involving Children
Source: childethics.com/charter/

The Charter provides a good summary of the basic concepts and the ERIC website provides a repository of information and resources to assist researchers in putting them into practice.

These include:

- Evidence-based guidance on key ethical issues (harms and benefits; informed consent; privacy and confidentiality; payment and compensation)
- A wide range of real-life case studies, which provide examples of ethical issues encountered by researchers working with children and young people and reflections on the ethical decisions they made
- A 'Getting Started' section of structured questions to encourage reflexive engagement with ethical considerations throughout the research process, from conceptualising the research focus through to its post-dissemination impact
- An online resources library that is regularly updated

The following passage summarises ERIC's view of ethics as going beyond simple **compliance** to informing all aspects of the research process in a deep way:

> *ERIC assumes that ethics is much more than procedural compliance with a prescribed set of rules or code of conduct that can deliver good or safe research in any given context. […] The ERIC approach recognises the many ways in which researchers' own knowledge, beliefs, assumptions, values, attitudes and experience intersect with ethical decision-making. As such, ERIC requires critical reflection; cross-cultural, inter-sectoral and cross-disciplinary dialogue; context-specific problem-solving; and international collaboration, learning and engagement. In order to safeguard and promote the rights, dignity and wellbeing of children in and through research, ERIC calls on researchers and the research community to be open, reflexive and collaborative in their ethical decision-making, and to be mindful of the relational aspects of research ethics. The ERIC approach is underpinned by the core ethical principles of respect, benefit and justice.* (Graham, et al., 2013, p.11)

The ERIC web portal is carefully designed to support decision-making about complex ethical and methodological issues that can arise throughout the research process. Advice is shared by experts working with children and young people in a diverse range of contexts through the case studies and an expert blog. There is a regular newsletter that visitors to the site can subscribe to and associated ERIC social media channels where you can post questions and engage in conversation with others working in research with children and young people (see ERIC on Instagram and LinkedIn).

Both ERIC and the 2016 International Ethical Guidelines for Health-related Research Involving Humans by the Council for International Organizations of Medical Sciences (CIOMS) include recommendations that are key to ensuring the respectful treatment of children and the protection of their rights and well-being in violence-related research.

How the ethical review process works

Often national legal regulations require researchers to apply for ethical approval from research ethics committees and institutional review boards or ethical review boards prior to starting research.

These bodies review the ethical acceptability of all research involving people conducted within their jurisdiction or under their auspices. In some cases, an institutional review board will decide whether a child is capable of providing consent, depending on their age, maturity and psychological state.

Reviews should be mandatory for all research involving children, however, there are some contexts in which ethical review boards or ethical frameworks for research may not exist. In cases where a local or national review board is not available, it would be an advisable good practice to set up an external advisory board of qualified local experts and stakeholders to provide ethical guidance to the research team.

Expert insight: How to navigate an ethical review process

Helen Beckett, Director of the International Centre: Researching Child Sexual Exploitation, Violence and Trafficking, provides practical guidance on taking a project through ethical review.

Observing ethics is a critical part of research, and ethics review processes have an important role to play in guarding against unethical research. However, navigating such a review process when researching violence against children can be incredibly challenging, particularly when wanting to involve children and young people in the research. Ethical review bodies can vary considerably in their understanding of what constitutes legitimate and ethical research in this field, and in their openness to considering the potential benefits of such research, alongside the potential risks.

While there is no ‘one size fits all’ approach to navigating these challenges, in my experience (of seeking ethical approval for sexual violence research with children and young people, and being a member of a number of different ethical review bodies within the United Kingdom) I have observed a number of factors that appear to strengthen ethical applications in my field, and may be transferable to other contexts and disciplines. These factors include:

- **Demonstrate in your application that you have already taken steps to check that your research is ethical, appropriate and justified.** Discuss your planned approach with others and actively encourage their critique and challenge. Where safe and feasible, include the perspectives of those affected by, and/or working with, the issues you are researching, as well as those of other researchers. Learn from the ethical protocols of other studies that have explored similar issues or adopted similar approaches.

- **Familiarise yourself with the composition, requirements and approach of the particular review panel, and tailor your application accordingly** (while remaining true to your ethical principles). Find out what ethical guidelines they adhere to. If possible, identify other studies that have previously been approved, and see what you can learn from these. If your application is likely to raise issues that the panel are unfamiliar with or have previously not approved, it can be helpful to cite other similar studies to show precedence for such an approach and demonstrate how you have learnt from such studies.

- **Remember that your application may be reviewed by those who do not know your field or methodological approach**, so it is important to avoid presumed knowledge or assume that they will understand the rationale for your study. Locate your study within the field and explain why it is justified and required, what it will contribute and what the potential negatives are of it not taking place. Justify your research design, and explain why you have decided that this is the most appropriate approach and the ethical considerations that underpinned this decision.

- **As well as demonstrating the merits of your study, assure the panel that you are the right person/team to be doing the work**, and that you have the appropriate skills, experience, capacity for reflexivity and support. When the work is being undertaken by a team, it is particularly important to clearly describe who will be doing which elements, their suitability for the task, and the support and oversight that will be provided to them.

- **Be honest about the ethical challenges associated with the work, rather than hoping that by not mentioning them the panel will not think of them.** Demonstrating that you have actively thought about potential ethical challenges and how you can mitigate or manage these – and that you recognise the potential for unforeseen risks and have processes in place to respond to these – instils confidence in your ability to manage real life ethical challenges in the field.

- **Be realistic about what you can and cannot do**. You cannot, for example, guarantee that participants will not come to any harm as a result of participating in your study, as there are too many things that could influence this that are beyond your control. What you can – and should – demonstrate is that you have done all you can to assess and minimise the risk of harm and ensure that appropriate structures are in place and will be utilised should such harm occur. It is also helpful to demonstrate that you are not only considering how to avoid risk, but are also considering the steps you can take to maximise the potential positive impact of participants' engagement, building in, for example, opportunities for choice and control, two critical factors denied to children experiencing violence.

- **Avoid use of standardised text** (such as 'I will ensure voluntary informed consent') without explaining what this actually means in the context of your study and how you will address it. The reviewer needs to be assured that you not only know what the expected principles and standards are, but that you understand what these mean and are able to apply them to your study in a meaningful way.

- Finally, on a practical note, **ensure that you review your drafted application thoroughly**. Check that you have answered all elements of the questions asked; considered all elements of the research across all questions; and submitted the correct supporting documentation; and that there are no inconsistencies between what is written in these and the main body of the application. Such mistakes are common and can unnecessarily delay the progress of an application through the review process.

Optional exercise

Gather a group of colleagues or collaborators. Pick a research project you are working on, and discuss the answers to these questions in that context:

- Have all possible avenues for submitting the project to an ethical review board been attempted?
- If academic review boards are not an option, is it possible to submit to an institutionally based ethical review board?
- If an institutionally-based ethical review board is not an option for your project, can community review boards or other citizen-based processes of oversight be used to better reflect what members of the community consider an acceptable exposure to risk and desirable benefits and values?

Expert insight: Ethical research during COVID-19

Gabrielle Berman, Senior Advisor – Ethics in Evidence Generation, UNICEF Innocenti, explains some of the unique ethical challenges facing researchers during the pandemic.

Ethical conduct in research or any form of evidence generation requires researchers to uphold the rights of those involved and those who may be impacted by the research. Such research necessitates clear strategies to mitigate potential harm and to pursue positive outcomes for children and their communities.

The COVID-19 pandemic has, and will continue to have, profound short and long-term impacts on children. These effects are diverse, complex and contextual. The pandemic will magnify existing challenges and pose new ones in relation to both initiating and continuing research on violence against children. The risks include:

- Greater and possibly prolonged exposure to violence in the home, including physical, sexual and verbal abuse, and ongoing and repeated exposure to risky behaviours such as drug taking
- Exposure to the social, economic and health-related anxieties and adverse experiences of carers and guardians
- Social, economic and psychological impacts and effects that may continue long after many of the restrictions are removed, as the medium to long-term social and economic impacts are felt
- Severe limitations on children's privacy
- Lack of access to psychosocial support services and other supportive networks

This emergency requires researchers to actively reflect on the political, social, environmental and economic contexts in which children are residing. Researchers should be mindful, and explicitly take into account, the differences in the environments and resources of various communities and cohorts within their areas of geographical focus.

Hence, preparation for data collection, analysis and communication during COVID-19 requires deep contextual reflection and appropriate consideration as to whether research should proceed. The value and benefits, urgency, and risks of the research should be explicitly considered and weighed, while determining whether or not to undertake the evidence generation. If it is determined that the research can proceed, then clear strategies should be devised to mitigate potential harm.

In reflecting on ethical issues and strategies it should be clear that these will differ during the emergency phase of the pandemic when restrictions apply and containment measures are in place, compared to when the pandemic has been contained and policy measures, including lockdowns, have been lifted (post-emergency phase). Planning should, therefore, explicitly reflect on the stage of the pandemic, noting that these may not be unique events, but that cycling in and out of the emergency phase may occur and that different sites for research may concurrently experience different phases.

There are a range of resources pertaining to research with children in emergencies and humanitarian crises and using digital technologies, as well as new dedicated resources, these include:

Berman, G. (2020). *Ethical considerations for evidence generation involving children on the COVID-19 pandemic*. Innocenti Discussion Papers No. 2020-01. Florence: UNICEF Office of Research-Innocenti.

Berman, G., Powell, J., & Garcia Herranz, M. (2018). *Ethical considerations when using social media for evidence generation*. Innocenti Discussion Papers No. 2018-01. Florence: UNICEF Office of Research-Innocenti.

Bhatia, A., Peterman, A., & Guedes, A. (2020). *Remote data collection on violence against children during COVID-19: A conversation with experts on research priorities, measurement and ethics (Part 2)*. Florence: UNICEF Office of Research-Innocenti.

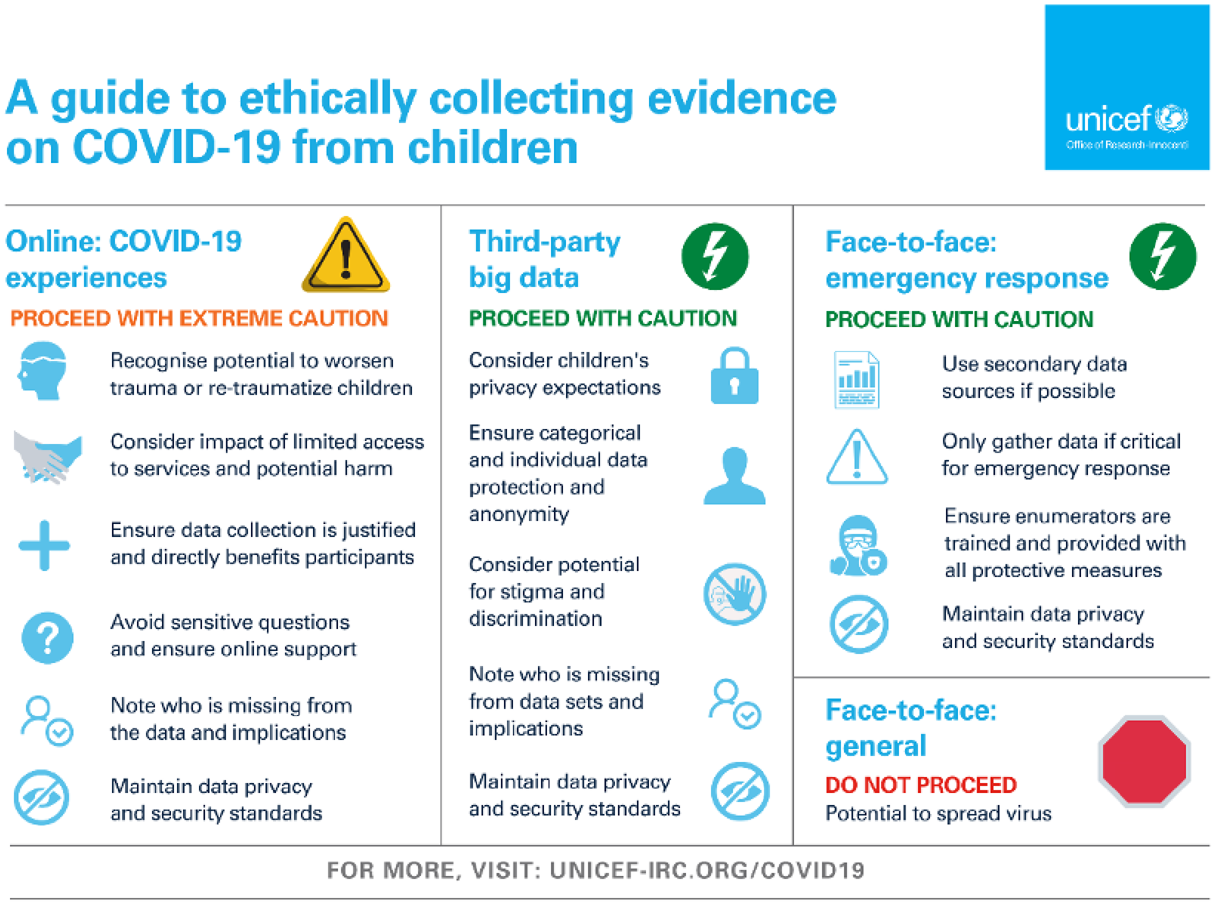
Jones, N., Gebeyehu, Y., & Gezahegne, K., et al. (2020). *Exploring adolescents' experiences and priorities in Ethiopia under Covid-19*. Policy Brief. London: Gender and Adolescence: Global Evidence (GAGE)/Overseas Development Institute (ODI).

National Network to End Domestic Violence. (2020). *Technology safety: Using technology to communicate with survivors during a public health crisis*. National Network to End Domestic Violence, Safety Net Project.

ODI has created a live repository that brings together resources on collecting remote data.

Samuels, F. (2020). *Tips for collecting primary data in a COVID-19 era*. Overseas Development Institute (ODI) Toolkit, June 2020.

World Health Organization (WHO) & United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women). (2020). *Violence against women and girls – Data collection during COVID-19*. Joint Programme on Violence Against Women Data, WHO and UN Women.



A guide to ethically collecting evidence on COVID-19 from children

unicef
Office of Research-Innocenti

Online: COVID-19 experiences
PROCEED WITH EXTREME CAUTION
- Recognise potential to worsen trauma or re-traumatize children
- Consider impact of limited access to services and potential harm
- Ensure data collection is justified and directly benefits participants
- Avoid sensitive questions and ensure online support
- Note who is missing from the data and implications
- Maintain data privacy and security standards

Third-party big data
PROCEED WITH CAUTION
- Consider children's privacy expectations
- Ensure categorical and individual data protection and anonymity
- Consider potential for stigma and discrimination
- Note who is missing from data sets and implications
- Maintain data privacy and security standards

Face-to-face: emergency response
PROCEED WITH CAUTION
- Use secondary data sources if possible
- Only gather data if critical for emergency response
- Ensure enumerators are trained and provided with all protective measures
- Maintain data privacy and security standards

Face-to-face: general
DO NOT PROCEED
Potential to spread virus

FOR MORE, VISIT: UNICEF-IRC.ORG/COVID19

Figure 2. A guide to ethically collecting evidence on COVID-19 from children (during emergency phase)

Source: Berman, G. (2020). *Ethical considerations for evidence generation involving children on the COVID-19 pandemic*. Innocenti Discussion Papers no. 2020-01. Florence: UNICEF Office of Research-Innocenti.

A guide to ethically collecting evidence on COVID-19 from children (post-emergency)

unicef Office of Research-Innocenti

Organisational Responsibilites

Avoid tokenism

Vet and train staff working with children and trauma

Use protection protocols: protect children from trauma; refer those needing support; protect staff; complaint mechanisms

Consider implications of mandatory reporting of abuse

Power Relations

Between children in different experiences

Between data collectors, researchers, and children

Perceptions of children, childhood, and family relationships

Privacy

Consider context-appropriate privacy

Ensure data confidentiality and security

Actions

Use child-appropriate methods

Consider children's safety and wellbeing

Engage with children to understand priorities, risks, benefits

Consent

Determine if consent from guardian is required and process if guardian absent

Ensure consent reflects the child's competencies

Compensation

Reflect on whether payment is appropriate

Consider opportunity costs of participation

Ensure equity in compensation

"Give back" to participants in some way

Communicating Results

Reflect on potential for stigma

Feedback into communities

Use research for change

Articulate limitations and whether they are representative

FOR MORE, VISIT: UNICEF-IRC.ORG/COVID19

Figure 3. A guide to ethically collecting evidence on COVID-19 from children (during post emergency phase)

Source: Berman, G. (2020). *Ethical considerations for evidence generation involving children on the COVID-19 pandemic*. Innocenti Discussion Papers no. 2020-01. Florence: UNICEF Office of Research-Innocenti.

Reading list: Ethics in children's participatory research

Use the materials in this reading list to explore in greater depth the ethical questions and concepts underpinning research with children, and to get more practical guidance on how to make sure your research is fully ethical at every stage.

Berman, G., Hart, J., O'Mathúna, D., Mattellone, E., Potts, A., O'Kane, C., … & Tanner, T. (2016). *What we know about ethical research involving children in humanitarian settings: An overview of principles, the literature and case studies*. Florence: UNICEF Office of Research-Innocenti.

This working paper identifies and explores the issues that should be considered when undertaking ethical research involving children in humanitarian settings. Universal (i.e., relevant to all research involving children) and specific ethical issues that may arise when involving children in research in humanitarian settings are examined.

The key findings of this overview highlight that many of the ethical issues that are present in other settings remain relevant and applicable in humanitarian settings. These include: an institution's capacity to appropriately and respectfully engage children in research, understanding power relations, securing informed consent and assent, ascertaining harms and benefits, maintaining privacy and confidentiality, and ensuring the appropriate communication of findings.

ECPAT International. (2019). *Guidelines for ethical research on sexual exploitation involving children*. Bangkok: ECPAT International.

When research seeks to generate knowledge and evidence about sexual abuse, exploitation, trafficking, and similar issues involving children, there is a unique set of additional sensitivities. At the heart of these is the need to balance the benefits with the potential – and sometimes significant – risk of harm. For example, retelling or reliving experiences of sexual abuse and exploitation for research projects can be highly distressing, and even traumatic, for survivors. These guidelines set out four steps to be followed in research design and implementation, and establish a series of 'ethical tasks' that should be undertaken when investigating child sexual abuse, exploitation, and trafficking.

Powell, M. A., Graham, A., McArthur, M., Moore, T., Chalmers, J., & Taplin, S. (2020). Children's participation in research on sensitive topics: Addressing concerns of decision-makers. *Children's Geographies*, 18(3), 325–338.

This paper explores the factors that influence the decision-making of key stakeholder groups, including human research ethics committees, parents and organisational representatives.

Building on the kind of objective, rational reasoning that underpins much ethical decision-making, the findings, from interviews with 42 participants across the stakeholder groups, draw attention to influential issues grounded in their perceptions of the institution and researchers undertaking the research; the project itself; and children's characteristics and contexts.

Collectively, such issues point to the critically important role of mutually respectful relationships between researchers and stakeholders as the basis for designing and implementing ethical research that pays close attention to stakeholder concerns.

Powell, M. A., Graham, A., & Truscott, J. (2016). Ethical research involving children: facilitating reflexive engagement. *Qualitative Research Journal*, 16(2), 197–208.

Reflexivity is an important feature of ethical practice. This paper explores how reflexive engagement can be stimulated within ethical decision-making processes, with the aim of generating professional dialogue and improved practice in qualitative research involving children.

The paper outlines a conceptual approach linking the 'Three Rs' – reflexivity, rights and relationship – for navigating the ethical tensions that characterise decision-making in research involving children.

UNICEF. (2015). *UNICEF procedure for ethical standards in research, evaluation, data collection and analysis*. CF/PD/DRP/2015-001, 1 April 2015, Division of Data, Research and Policy, UNICEF.

This UN procedural document is designed to establish minimum and binding standards for ethical research, evaluation, and data collection and analysis processes conducted by UNICEF and its partners globally to ensure effective processes and accountability for the ethical oversight of these processes.

The document covers the principles of research (respect, beneficence, and justice) and outlines procedures relating to consent, privacy and confidentiality; payment and compensation; roles and responsibilities; risk management; and how to determine which review mechanism to use.

Section four:
Understanding and obtaining consent

In the last section, we took a broad look at the question of ethics in children's participatory research, and how to ensure an ethical approach throughout the research process.

In this section, we focus on a crucial aspect of research ethics: the question of **consent**. That means fully understanding children's **autonom**y, the notion of **capacity**, and the difference between consent and **assent**.

We cover the following topics:

- What consent and assent look like, and the difference between them
- Some practical methods researchers can use to obtain consent from children

This section includes the following materials:

- A Q&A on the legal framework around capacity to consent, including a case study on passive consent (3 minute read)
- A case study on passive consent (3 minute read)
- A short explainer on the difference between consent and assent (2 minute read)
- An explainer on other key concepts around consent, including a case study on obtaining non-written consent (5 minute read)
- A practical guide to obtaining consent in a child-friendly manner (4 minute read)
- A reading list on consent and related concepts (a selection of longer reads)

You could skip this section if: You have extensive experience navigating the legal framework around consent in different contexts, and are well-versed in new methods for obtaining consent from children, such as visually-informed consent.

Capacity to consent and the law — Q&A

Why is knowing the law around capacity to consent important?
Children have a right to participate in all decisions that affect them, but as in other aspects of life, that does not necessarily mean that they have the legal capacity to make autonomous decisions when it comes to research.

Satisfying legal and customary obligations, without constraining children's choice, is complex and requires constant reflection and review. Deciding who gives consent and how is dependent on a variety of factors. Local laws and customs may establish a framework, but researchers need to recognise the unique circumstances of each child and the community they live in.

What will the relevant law look like?
Legislation varies from country to country. Therefore, it is essential to **check the local laws regarding consent to research**. The requirements can vary according to the nature of the research, the age of the children and young people involved, any special needs the children may have, and so on.

The law may **specify set criteria** or provide for a **test to determine capacity**. The legal provisions also vary in terms of who may give consent when the child lacks legal capacity: in some cases an adult caregiver may consent; in others the consent of one or both parents or legal guardians may be required; while in some cases you may need ministerial approval before approaching children and their families.

In some countries ethical codes explain **permissible exceptions** or detail the **parental substitutes** who may give consent (e.g., South African National Health Research Ethics Council, 2015). However, not all contexts have such a rich ethical roadmap.

Is the law all that's important?
No; even where children lack legal capacity to consent they should **always be given the information necessary for them to choose** whether or not to participate in a study – especially when dealing with sensitive subjects such as violence. The South African government distinguishes between the 'legal decision', which rests with the parents or guardians, and the 'factual choice' to participate, which belongs to the child.

What limitations are there on parental consent?
Especially when researching violence against children, the principle of **parents acting in the best interests of the child cannot be assumed**.

Depending on the study topic, collecting parental consent may be inappropriate or impractical, for example, when working with street children or orphans. If the perpetrator or victim of violence is the child's legal guardian, participation may be obstructed either by a perpetrator not acknowledging the violence as such, or by a victim or other adult wanting to protect the child from such issues.

Here it is useful to view the child as a socially-competent actor and able to provide their own consent. The team conducting the national prevalence study on sexual violence in South Africa used different methods of collecting consent: for their household survey they used traditional active consent and for school-based surveys they employed **passive consent**.

Case study: UBS Optimus Study South Africa – How passive consent overcame issues with parental consent in South Africa

The Optimus Study South Africa sought to make children feel free to disclose abuse in the school environment. This case study was written by Cathy Ward, Lillian Artz, and Patrick Burton.

The Optimus Study South Africa was a nationally representative study of South African children aged 15–17. It established, for the first time, how many South African children had ever experienced physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse or neglect. It also unveiled the correlates of these types of abuse – things that might be causally related to abuse, such as caregiver substance misuse, and things that may be consequences, such as adolescent depression.

There were two samples: a household sample (because many South African children leave school at the age of 15) and a school sample (because we thought children would be more open about experiences of abuse when they were not around their families). In fact, we expected that in a number of cases, their caregivers or members of their families would be the perpetrators.

In our household sample, we interviewed young people at home. In this case, obtaining consent from a caregiver (parent or guardian) was essential, as we were going to enter their home to interview their child. For this sample, we followed the traditional approach of 'active' consent: parents gave us informed consent to ask their child if s/he would like to be interviewed by our study team.

However, as we were hoping that children would feel freer to disclose abuse in the school environment, away from their caregivers, in our school sample we took the route of 'passive' consent. Caregivers were not asked to sign a form to give informed consent for their children to be invited to participate in the study; rather, children were sent home with a note asking their caregivers to sign the form if they did NOT want their child to participate. This meant that caregivers were notified about the study, but that, if we did not receive a signed form declining permission to participated, we assumed that the caregiver had agreed that their child could participate.

To ensure that we were ethical in using this approach, we drew on two principles. First, that the best interests of the child should always be foremost in our work. We were clear that it was in the best interests of children to be able to disclose abuse, free of fear of repercussions from the abuser if the abuser was a caregiver. Second, we drew on the fact that school principals stand in *loco parentis* for children while they are at school, a legal provision that indicates that in some circumstances principals may need to act as if they were the child's parent. We then approached two school principals and school governing bodies in two communities to assess if they were comfortable with this approach. They were, and this demonstrated to the relevant institutional review board that children's parents and caregivers understood why we were taking this approach and deemed it acceptable.

Consent vs assent — Understanding the difference

Consent requires full comprehension of the process, risks and benefits and the express choice to participate. Most countries have laws that specify the age of consent and who can consent on behalf of children if they lack the capacity to give consent because they are too young or lack comprehension. You must always obtain informed consent from either the child, if he or she has capacity, or a legally recognised authority such as a parent or legal guardian.

Assent is a simple expression of willingness or refusal to participate; it does not require full comprehension of the research and is often used with younger children. Where the child lacks the capacity (legally or cognitively) the researcher should still seek permission from the child.

Alderson and Morrow (2011) suggest that relying on assent could mean that some children are not fully informed before starting a study, while others may not verbalise their refusal and, thus are included against their will.

Judging whether an individual child has the capacity to give informed consent for the purposes of research is tricky and a subject of debate (Graham, et al., 2013; Hein et al., 2015; Oulton et al., 2016; Powell et al., 2020). However, Powell, Fitzgerald, Taylor & Graham (2012) argue that when provided with appropriate information and involved in creatively adapted processes, young children and children with learning difficulties are able to provide informed consent.

Table 3 summarises the difference between informed consent and assent.

Table 3. Informed consent vs assent

Informed consent	Assent
Informed consent is an essential practice in conducting research. In providing informed consent, a child provides a voluntary, explicit act of permission to agree to the research initiative. To fully consent, a child needs to have a clear understanding of all facts, comprehend the information provided and not be coerced by circumstances or persons involved in the research. Where a child lacks legal capacity to consent you must obtain consent from the person or authority with legal capacity and assent from the child.	Assent relies on the existence of the right to dissent – i.e., that a child can object to taking part. Assent is a child's agreement to participate in research when they may not fully understand all aspects of the research process. The concept of assent recognises the emerging developmental capacity of children, even when they may not be fully capable of providing informed consent.

Consent — Other important concepts

Voluntary participation
In research on violence against children, ensuring children's consent is freely given is particularly relevant. Underlying power structures and dynamics may leave children feeling obliged to comply, and the dynamics of violence against children may amplify power dynamics and leave children feeling disempowered. When parents have given consent, children may feel compelled to participate. Children should never be coerced into expressing their views against their wishes and they should be informed that they can cease involvement at any stage.

Also see Section two of this pack and the UNCRC Committee's nine basic requirements, which include the requirement that participation be 'voluntary'.

Ongoing consent
Informed consent is not a once-off agreement, but a continuing process that should be revisited frequently, as ethical challenges arise or circumstances change. One way of navigating this is by asking children at the beginning of each different research method/phase if they would like to participate and reminding them that they can withdraw at any time.

In participatory processes, consent should focus on a continuous dialogue, in which researchers work in partnership with children, thus ensuring a more informed, voluntary and robust process (Kustatscher, 2014).

Information required for consent and assent
If children are to give valid consent or assent to their involvement in an activity, they need to fully understand:

- What the research initiative is about
- What their own involvement would entail
- What the potential impact on their lives might be
- Who else is giving consent
- How the information they share will be used and by whom

Also see Section two of this pack and the UNCRC Committee's nine basic requirements, which include that participation be 'transparent and informative'.

Table 4 contains extracts from a child-friendly assent form used in Save the Children's Parenting Without Violence programme; it demonstrates how to meet these requirements.

Table 4. Sample wording from Save the Children's child-friendly assent form
Save the Children is interested in learning about parenting/caregiving practices in [*researcher to insert details based on nature of data collection activity and include the name of community/site of data collection*]. In order to do this, we are interested in talking to children from this community who can tell us what it's like.
If you agree, we would like to ask you some questions about your experience of parenting/caregiving practices [*update this section based on the nature of data collection activity*]... ... Someone from our team will write down what you tell us so that we can remember, although your name will not be written down along with what you say. We will also not talk to anyone outside of the study team about what you tell us. The only exception to this is if you tell us that either you or someone else may be unsafe or at risk of harm, in which case we may need to respond.
If you agree to participate based on what we have talked about today, please understand that your participation is voluntary, which means that it is up to you to decide if you want to take part. You also have

the right to stop taking part in any activity at any time and there will be no penalties or loss of benefits based on this decision. You are able to decide not to take part in this study at all, or to only take part in certain activities, depending on what you feel comfortable with.
Waivers are not accepted. Parental consent/permission must also be obtained in addition to child assent forms.
We cannot and do not guarantee that you will receive any personal benefits from this study. You will not receive any form of payment for participation. If you choose not to participate in this study, there will be no consequence at all.

Source: Adapted from Save the Children. (2018c). *Parenting without violence common approach*. Unpublished document, Save the Children.

Obtaining consent without using written methods

Flexible ways to provide information and signify consent are essential for children, and adults, who are not able or unwilling to use written methods. In some contexts, signing consent forms may be problematic:

> *Consent usually involves the participant providing a written signature or thumb print, but sometimes a verbal agreement is made. […] Signing consent forms can be problematic and/or intimidating for those who are not physically able to, and for populations who are not literate or are particularly vulnerable. For example, undocumented migrants may prefer not to sign documents. In some cultural contexts, written consent may be highly problematic, if written practices are different or hold other meanings, for example, related to deception, domination or abuse. This may create distress for people if they are required to sign something they do not understand well. In situations where children or parents do not provide written consent it is important to have a planned process and witnesses (or means of auditing) that can verify a proper process was followed and can confirm that the child appears to have given their consent freely.* (Graham et al., 2013, p. 60)

Case study: How South African researchers obtained non-written consent

The Children's National Development Plan Initiative, South Africa, managed to reach out to children under Covid-19 lockdown. This case study was written by Christina Nomdo.

What was the initiative?

In April 2020, South Africa's National Planning Commission agreed to extend their Children's National Development Plan (NDP) to include a project called 'Reaching out to children in lockdown'. The aim of this project was to establish and highlight children's views regarding their experiences, feelings and activities living under COVID-19 restrictions.

The sample only included children receiving services from child protection organisations (the Early Learning Resource Unit, World Vision, Ntataise, and National Association of Child and Youth Care Workers). The project was guided by Commissioner Christina Nomdo. She connected with the Children's NDP provincial representatives who agreed to act as co-researchers. The project was supported by the National Planning Commission Secretariat in partnership with child rights, data analysis and evaluation experts.

How did the team obtain consent for research?

The team developed an electronic information sheet and consent form for use through WhatsApp. Messages were sent to parents who had to complete personal details, agree to participate and obtain assent from their own children. Some of the interviews were conducted by child rights practitioners, but most were conducted by parents and caregivers using questions sent via WhatsApp. The children spoke in their home language and parents recorded the interview on their phones. About one hundred and sixty voice notes were sent through WhatsApp, and children also sent drawings and letters. The interviews were transcribed and translated into English later.

In addition, inputs were collected from a small sample of parents and the representatives of the supporting organisations about their experiences of engaging with children during the lockdown. Many of the parents volunteered for the research because they had previously engaged with their children about COVID, but others expressed astonishment at how much their children knew and commented on how the research had started conversations and deepened their connection with their children.

The Children's NDP is an initiative of the second National Planning Commission, appointed by the President of South Africa from 2015 to 2020. The Commission recognises that children are important stakeholders in the visioning and implementation of the NDP. The Children's NDP initiative conducted workshops with children in all nine provinces in South Africa during 2017 and 2018. The process report and analysis of findings from the children's workshops, informed the review of the NDP.

Obtaining consent in practice: A guide to child-friendly approaches

So if you are seeking children's informed consent to research, how do you go about obtaining it in a way that works for them?

In order to consent to participation, children should fully understand the research activities that they are being asked to take part in. That means having a good grasp of the risks and benefits involved. Children need information to be provided in ways that are appropriate for their age, stage of development, and cultural context.

INSPIRE

The INSPIRE technical package recommends reflecting on the following question before obtaining assent or informed consent of children (UNICEF, 2018, p. 9):

- Is the language in the consent form (written form or oral script to provide the information to children, and for children to express their assent) appropriate for the age of children being recruited?
- Are assent documents sufficiently explicit about the voluntariness of the child's participation, ensuring that decisions are not made based on fear of disappointing others or fear of putting their own well-being at risk?
- Have measures been taken to confirm that children are informed of, and have understood the, voluntary nature of their participation and their right to withdraw at any time without consequences?
- Have investigators considered whether they should request a waiver to parental permission?
- Has the child been asked if s/he would like a relative, trusted friend or another person not involved in the study present during the interview (if that approach has passed ethical review)?
- If compensation is provided, has the community been consulted about its appropriateness?

Obtaining visually informed consent

Many researchers are using technology to assist with the process of informing participants about studies and even capturing consent. Ruiz-Casares & Thompson (2016) worked with children aged 8–12, who discussed written consent forms then translated the concepts into photos used to develop forms.

Similarly, the International and Canadian Child Rights Partnership (ICCRP) team (see case study in Section two, p. 25) made a series of short videos with their child and youth advisory committees to assist children and young people to understand the UNCRC's nine basic requirements of participation, different types of participation and key concepts of evaluation. These videos were made by children and young people for their peers in local languages and youth dialect (Collins et al., 2020). The adoption of participatory visual methodologies within the informed consent process results in practices that are more age and culturally appropriate and that reflect local values, customs.

In other studies researchers have replaced the paper-based informed consent procedure and used film to record consent and collect data. Lie & Witteveen (2017) describe a three-stage process: (1) becoming acquainted when nothing is recorded, (2) filming the information exchange between the researcher and the interviewee, and (3) requesting a second statement on consent after the interview is finished (post-interview repeated consent).

Reading list: Consent in participatory research

Use the materials in this list to explore in greater depth some of the concepts we have discussed in this section, such as issues to do with parental consent, or to get further practical guidance on obtaining consent from children.

Coyne, I. (2010). Research with children and young people: The issue of parental (proxy) consent. *Children & Society*, 24(3), 227–237.

This article examines the potential problems with the requirement of parental consent, substantiated by examples from healthcare and social research studies. These examples illustrate how the parental consent requirement, instead of promoting high ethical standards, may result, in some instances, of children's rights and ethical considerations being ignored or receiving cursory attention.

The 'blanket' requirement of parental consent for all research involving children under the age of 18 years needs to be challenged, as it fails to recognise children's capacities and accord them with due respect as persons in their own right. Flexible ethical guidelines should be developed that are cognisant of children's competence in contemporary society and at the same time protect children from inappropriate research and procedures.

Oulton, K., Gibson, F., Sell, D., Williams, A., Pratt, L., & Wray, J. (2016). Assent for children's participation in research: Why it matters and making it meaningful**.** *Child: Care, Health and Development*, 42(4), 588–597.

This paper focuses on practical ways of supporting researchers to work in partnership with children. It aims to help guide researchers through the process of deciding how and when to obtain assent from a child.

The authors drew on the results of an online survey, published evidence and their knowledge as experienced researchers to develop a model of individualised assent. They argue that four domains should be considered in order for assent to be meaningful and individualised: child-related factors, family dynamics, study design and complexity, and researcher and organisational factors.

Ruiz-Casares, M., & Thompson, J. (2016). Obtaining meaningful informed consent: Preliminary results of a study to develop visual informed consent forms with children. *Children's Geographies*, 14(1), 35–45.

This article describes a pilot study with children aged 8–12 years to explore children's understanding of informed consent and the potential of participatory visual methods for improving the consent process. The preliminary results of the study indicate that simplified written consent forms generated boredom, disengagement, and/or anxiety for some children, whereas adopting participatory visual methods improved the process.

Santelli, J., Haerizadeh, S., & McGovern, T. (2017). *Inclusion with protection: Obtaining informed consent when conducting research with adolescents*. Florence: UNICEF Office of Research-Innocenti.

This UN brief provides a broad introduction to research ethics as they apply to adolescents and reflects on ethical considerations to simultaneously promote the inclusion of adolescents in research and protection from research-related risks. It builds on the concepts of evolving capacities and best interests, as enunciated in the UNCRC, and sets out principles and approaches to the common challenges in conducting research with adolescents. Topics covered include:

- The evolution in social thinking about adolescents' human rights and legal protections
- Ethical principles and ethical guidelines for research
- Current scientific understanding about adolescents' decisional capacity and their capability to provide informed consent
- What to do when parents or guardians are not able to act in the best interests of the adolescent
- Some observations about diversity among adolescents

Thackray, L. (2018). Anonymity, confidentiality and informed consent: Exploring ethical quandaries and dilemmas in research with and about disabled children's childhoods. In K. Runswick-Cole, T. Curran, & K. Liddiard (eds), *The Palgrave Handbook of Disabled Children's Childhood Studies* (pp. 299-313). London, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.

The ethics of research with disabled children apply to all children, but research with some more vulnerable children may need additional thought on the part of the researcher. This chapter explores some of the challenges and ongoing implications of research undertaken with children and young people with disabilities. It covers questions such as: What does informed consent mean in research with disabled children? How does this differ from assent? How can we avoid excluding children from research on the grounds of lack of competency?

Optional exercise

Gather colleagues or collaborators and discuss the following questions in the context of a current, past or hypothetical research project:

- What information do children need to enable them to consider giving their consent? How can you make sure that children understand the goals and purposes of the research initiative, as well as the potential risks and benefits involved?
- How do children perceive me? Have the children I have worked with, or am set to work with, understood the voluntary nature of their participation and do they feel comfortable to withdraw at any time without consequences?
- Ethical challenges and dilemmas can and do arise at any stage of the research process. Is there a designated person that the child (and/or parents) can go to if s/he has any questions or concerns (now and in the future)?

Section five:

Making research equitable

In the last section we covered important concepts underpinning good research ethics: informed consent, how to obtain it, and its intersection with the law.

In this section we look in detail at additional ethical and human rights obligation to ensure **equity** and **non-discrimination** in research.

We cover the following topics:

- The tools and resources that are available to guide equity and non-discrimination in children's participatory research
- Examples of resources and research that have succeeded in including the voices of children who are often not included

This section includes the following materials:

- A basic introduction to making research equitable, including a case study (10 minute read)
- A set of practical tools for engaging different marginalised or at-risk groups (10 minute read)
- A reading list that looks at equity-related issues in more depth (a selection of longer reads)

Equitable research — The basics

Equity refers to fairness or justice in the way that children are treated. In research we want to ensure that all children have an opportunity to participate without discrimination, bias or favouritism.

Our efforts must take into account the reasons why some children may be excluded from research, including:

- **Identity:** A child's identity refers to the particular subgroup or subgroups in society to which they ascribe or are assigned. Where that group or population is marginalised or excluded, the risk of being left behind increases. Children may be discriminated against based on a number of identified or perceived identity traits, such as disability status, ethnicity, gender/gender identity, religion, and sexual orientation, among other things.

- **Risky environments:** Children may also be left behind or missing in research when they are vulnerable to risks related to their environment such as violence; conflict; displacement; and environmental, economic or health shocks, such as pandemics. These groups of children may be more vulnerable or harder to reach (see Table 5 on p. 52 for resources for at risk groups).

- **Economic status:** If, for example, a child's household lacks the opportunities and capabilities to earn an adequate income, or education, they may end up missing from research. These children may be left open to vulnerability and inequity if denied social and economic opportunities, human security, quality public services, or protective laws and policies.

- **Geography:** Geographical limitations may affect research design, digital access, who is targeted and how, and the ability to include certain groups of children in research. In addition, researchers may be entering the process from a different cultural context and should be aware of their own biases in conducting research (Gregory & Ruby, 2011).

Case study: Reaching out to care-experienced young people

A project from the Children's Institute at University of Cape Town and Queens University Belfast explored ethics in using social media for research. This case study was written by Mandi MacDonald.

How did the exploration of digital ethics come about?
The Children's Institute at University of Cape Town and Queens University Belfast were evaluating the SAYes formal mentoring project for young people living in and leaving alternative care in Cape Town. This project was interrupted when the COVID-19 pandemic started. In March 2020, the South African government, like many countries, introduced restrictions on movement and meeting others to curb the spread of the disease. This meant that young people could no longer meet up with their mentors or take part in face-to-face research interviews. SAYes responded by continuing their mentoring programme using mobile phones and digital social media – introducing a form of e-mentoring. We had interviewed care leavers about their experiences of mentoring and now wanted to find out their views on the benefits and challenges of e-mentoring.

Conducting research online is a pragmatic solution to the pandemic restrictions, but, as with many aspects of service provision and social life, it can reinforce digital inequalities. There is an obvious risk that only those young people who have access to digital resources can participate in research, and the voices of those in poorer or poorly networked circumstances (the digitally disadvantaged) do not get heard. To have our research skewed in this way undermines its validity, and it is also unjust. Few of the care leavers we wanted to interview had mobile phones capable of making video calls, and even among those who did, none had WiFi in their homes and the high cost of mobile data was prohibitive. Overcoming this, and ensuring equal access to research participation, meant additional research costs and investing in equipping young people to engage digitally.

What did SAYes do to overcome these gaps?
SAYes purchased smartphones for each young person so that they could continue to engage with their mentors. We also purchased mobile phone airtime (data) so that they could engage in video calls with researchers. We had to give more than was needed in recognition of the fact that young people were likely to want to use their data for more than the interview and to offset the boredom and social isolation of lockdown.

Having invested in digital equipment, the young people needed to be enabled to use it effectively. SAYes staff offered guidance to help young people manage their data use, to find the best network signal in their area and to use social media platforms. As few young people in care in South Africa have regular access to the Internet, they had not been taught strategies for staying safe online. Recognising the potential risks involved with being unfamiliar with the online world, SAYes worked quickly to develop safeguarding guidance from international literature, although more work is needed to make this applicable to the South African context.

How did digital outreach raise issues of consent?
To ensure that young people could give informed consent to participate in our study we had originally developed written and visual information, translated into three languages. Because of the restrictions on movement and decreased postal service due to the pandemic, and as few young people had access to email, we were unable to give these leaflets to participants in our online research. Instead we had to give full information verbally and allow time for young people to digest this and ask questions. We were concerned that young people might not be able to reflect on, or retain, this information as effectively as they could with written leaflets. We decided, therefore, that our online interviews would only be with young people who had previously participated in face-to-face interviews

in the earlier phase of our project. This did, of course, reduce the pool of potential participants involved in e-mentoring.

Finding ways to ensure that young people are fully informed before consenting to participate in online research will be a challenge going forward. In our original study, we obtained written consent as a requirement of our ethical approval. For the online interviews, the ethics committee approved verbal consent, which was audio recorded, transcribed and retained as a written record.

What issues affecting care-experienced young people did researchers have to be aware of?
Most young people in alternative care will have experienced significant childhood adversity. As a result, mental health difficulties are prevalent among care-experienced youth, and this was reflected among our participants. Social isolation and limited support networks are further issues for care leavers. We were aware that these emotional and social challenges were likely to be intensified by the experience of the coronavirus lockdown.

Therefore, it was particularly important for us to safeguard the well-being of participants and to have plans in place to support them should they become distressed during or after the research interview. Online interviews present distinct challenges for ensuring participant welfare, as visual cues and body language are more difficult to read online, compared to in-person, interactions. The researchers needed to be especially alert so that they could identify if participants were becoming upset. It was also especially important that young people had access to support after the research interview.

How did SAYes work with partner organisations?
Usually, it is ethical practice not to tell the organisations that helped recruit participants which young people did or did not take part. In this case, however, it was more ethical to ensure that SAYes did know who was participating and when, so that support could be offered by staff and mentors if needed. We also decided to interview young people who we knew had active current engagement with a mentor.

Our experience of navigating the ethical challenges of online research with care-experienced youth has highlighted the importance of working closely with a partner that is able to support and enable participation. The young people we interviewed were already involved with SAYes mentoring, and our effective working relationships with the staff team had been built up over time. As a result, the participants trusted SAYes, which in turn trusted the research team, allowing for a collaborative approach.

Leaving no child behind: Practical tips and tools for at-risk groups

In Table 5, we identify some key resources for groups of children, or children living under particular conditions, who may be either at high risk of violence or high risk of exclusion from research.

This selection of key resources has been identified to highlight the key ethical considerations, operational principles and some dilemmas of conducting violence against children research with children to ensure that no-one is left behind.

Optional exercise

Gather a group of colleagues or collaborators. Pick a recent research project or projects you have worked on and discuss the answers to these questions in that context. Use information from throughout this section to inform your discussion.

- Have you mapped out the most marginalised, vulnerable or excluded groups of children in your area of research?
- Have you adapted your methodologies to ensure that different groups of children can effectively participate, for example: girls, children with disabilities, etc.?
- How do we develop research plans that respect and support the right of every child to be heard?
- Are parents, other adults, and community and stakeholder groups encouraged to allow the inclusive involvement of children in the research initiative?
- Are children encouraged to address discrimination through their participation?
- Could additional measures have been taken to ensure your research is as inclusive as possible?

Table 5. Resources for at-risk groups

Reasons children may be left behind	Key issues in violence against children research	Key resources
Age (younger children)	Examples of young children being engaged as co-researchers are rare, as young children are often dismissed as lacking capacity or being too vulnerable. Although there are limits to what young children can and will want to do in research studies, the adoption of supportive strategies can assist children to engage in a meaningful way.	**Researching with young children resources:** Coates, E., & Coates, A. (2006). Young children talking and drawing. *International Journal of Early Years Education,* 14(3), 221–241. Ebrahim, H. B. (2010). Situated ethics: Possibilities for young children as research participants in the South African context. *Early Child Development and Care* ,180(3), 289–298. Lundy, L., McEvoy, L., & Byrne, B. (2011). Working with young children as co-researchers: An approach informed by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. *Early Education and Development*, 22(5), 714–736.
Alternative care	Children in alternative care or without residential settings can be hard to invite to participate in research. It may be difficult to negotiate consent with those with parental responsibility and to ensure that children consent/assent in their own right.	**Children in alternative care resources:** Jones, J., & Myers, J. (1997). The future detection and prevention of institutional abuse: Giving children a chance to participate in research. *Early Child Development and Care*, 133(1), 115–125. Lushey, C. J., & Munro, E. R. (2015). Participatory peer research methodology: An effective method for obtaining young people's perspectives on transitions from care to adulthood? *Qualitative Social Work,* 14(4), 522–537. Warming, H. (2006). "How can you know? You're not a foster child": Dilemmas and possibilities of giving voice to children in foster care. *Children, Youth and Environments*, 16(2), 28–50.

Conflict	Conflict-affected children are highly vulnerable to violence, especially as they are often forced to move. Conducting research in conflict settings is challenging. However, qualitative approaches can allow children to tell their story, deal with the psychological effects of their past, reclaim and integrate their memories, and restore their identities.	**Conflict-affected children resources:** Blanchet-Cohen, N. (2014). Researching violence with conflict-affected young people: Context and process. *Child Indicators Research*, 7(3), 517–535. Save the Children. (2008). *A kit of tools for participatory research and evaluation with children, young people and adults: A compilation of tools used during a thematic evaluation and documentation on children's participation in armed conflict, post conflict and peace building*. Save the Children Norway.
Disability	Estimates of risk indicate that children with disabilities are three to four times more likely to be victims of violence. The type of disability may also affect the prevalence and risk of violence. For instance, Jones et al. (2012) found that children with mental or intellectual disabilities were 4.6 times more likely to be victims of sexual violence than their non-disabled peers. Assumptions may be made about the (lack of) capacity of children with disabilities to participate in research. Research methodologies may not be suitable for the communication preferences of children with disabilities. Ensuring that recruitment methods maximise the participation of children of all abilities is essential.	**Disability resources:** Ajodhia-Andrews, A. (2016). Reflexively conducting research with ethnically diverse children with disabilities. *The Qualitative Report*, 21(2), 252–287. Kyegombe, N., Banks, L. M., Kelly, S., Kuper, H., & Devries, K. M. (2019). How to conduct good quality research on violence against children with disabilities: Key ethical, measurement, and research principles. *BMC Public Health*, 19(1), 1133. Plan International. (2016). *Guidelines for consulting with children and young people with disabilities*. Plan International, United Kingdom. Thackray, L. (2018). Anonymity, confidentiality and informed consent: Exploring ethical quandaries and dilemmas in research with and about disabled children's childhoods. In K. Runswick-Cole, T. Curran, & K. Liddiard (eds), *The Palgrave Handbook of Disabled Children's Childhood Studies* (pp. 299–313). London, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.
Gender	Gender is a critical dimension of violence. Patriarchy and unequal power dynamics play a critical role in violence against children. While in most settings, women and girls are disproportionately the victims of sexual violence, research on sexual violence shows that boys are also extremely vulnerable, especially in conflict	**Gender resources:** Åkerström, J., & Brunnberg, E. (2013). Young people as partners in research: Experiences from an interactive research circle with adolescent girls. *Qualitative Research*, 13(5), 528–545. McLean, L., & Modi, A. T. (2016). 'Empowerment' of adolescent girls and young women in Kinshasa: Research about girls, by girls. *Gender & Development*, 24(3), 475–491.

	settings. Their exclusion from assistance and support (Chynoweth, Freccero, & Touquet, 2017; Kiss et al., 2020), and near absence from judicial recourse, makes it difficult to identify male survivors, so they are often excluded from research studies.	McCleary-Sills, J., Douglas, Z., Mabala, R., & Weiss, E. (2011). *Meet them where they are: Participatory action research with adolescent girls*. Washington, DC: International Center for Research on Women.
Humanitarian or disaster setting	Children affected by shocks are also difficult to reach, as is ensuring that their voices are heard. Participatory research efforts are increasingly bringing their experiences to the attention of programme and policy/decision makers. Research plays a key role in a better, more nuanced and gendered understanding of the experiences and specific vulnerabilities of children affected by the impact and consequences of shocks and fragility and in developing informed interventions to address the issues they face.	**Research in humanitarian/emergency settings resources:** Berman, G., Hart, J., O'Mathúna, D., Mattellone, E., Potts, A., O'Kane, C., … & Tanner, T. (2016). *What we know about ethical research involving children in humanitarian settings: An overview of principles, the literature and case studies*. Florence: UNICEF Office of Research-Innocenti. Save the Children. (2019). *Joint participatory child protection assessment with Rohingya adolescents*. Save the Children. World Health Organization. (2007). *WHO ethical and safety recommendations for researching, documenting and monitoring sexual violence in emergencies*. Geneva: WHO.
Migration and displacement	The status of migrating and displaced children heightens their vulnerability to violence. In addition, research may jeopardise their status or the status of those they care for. Ensuring confidentiality is a key issue in such research.	**Refugees and migrant resources:** Block, K., Warr, D., Gibbs, L., & Riggs, E. (2012). Addressing ethical and methodological challenges in research with refugee-background young people: Reflections from the field. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 26(1), 69–87.
Living conditions and circumstances	Street connected children may face specific challenges related to access to information, consent, literacy, trust and cultural issues. It is important to build open and trusting relationships and be adaptable/flexible with methodologies. Conducting violence against children research with children in urban slums poses challenges related to access to children. The high-density	**Street connected child resources:** BabyLaw Okoli, R. C. (2014). Ethical issues and dilemmas in doing research with itinerant street vending children and young people: Experiences from Nigeria. *Qualitative Social Work*, 14(4), 538–553. Bennett, J., Van Blerk, L., Bray-Watkins, S., Bretherton, K., Chitsiku, S., Gbeglo, S., … & Shand, W. (2016). *Growing up on the streets: Knowledge exchange training pack*. StreetInvest. Coser, L. R., Tozer, K., Van Borek, N., Tzemis, D., Taylor, D., Saewyc, E., & Buxton, J. A. (2014).

	population may make the disclosure of sensitive topics difficult for fear of being overheard.	Finding a voice: Participatory research with street-involved youth in the youth injection prevention project. *Health Promotion Practice*, 15(5), 732–738. Umurungi, J.-P., Mitchell, C., Gervais, M., Ubalijoro, E., & Kabarenzi, V. (2008). Photovoice as a methodological tool to address HIV and AIDS and gender violence amongst girls on the street in Rwanda. *Journal of Psychology in Africa*, 18(3), 413–419. **Urban slum resources:** McIntyre, A. (2000). Constructing meaning about violence, school, and community: Participatory action research with urban youth. *The Urban Review*, 32(2), 123–154. Youth Partnership Project South Asia, Sami, S., & Mahmud, I. (2010). *Youth-led survey on the commercial exploitation of vulnerable children & youth in Dhaka slums areas*. Mohammadpur, Dhaka: Aparajeyo-Bangladesh and ECPAT.
Sexual exploitation	Children's participation in research on commercial sexual exploitation faces similar barriers to the other areas highlighted in this table. The right of child survivors of commercial sexual exploitation to be heard must be carefully considered, while also being aware of the potential to do harm and the risk of re-victimisation. Commercial sexual exploitation may be a taboo or stigmatising topic in certain cultures and contexts. Researchers need to consider imbalances of power, the sensitive use of vocabulary, the research team's ability to deal with the subject matter and their ability to communicate with children. Issues of consent, confidentiality and privacy need to be crystal clear and there must be protocols in place. Researchers need to consider what they can or will do if situations of actual or risk of harm arise.	**Commercial sexual exploitation resources:** Brown, K. (2006). Participation and young people involved in prostitution. *Child Abuse Review*, 15(5), 294–312. Feinstein, C., & O'Kane, C. (2009). *Children's and adolescents' participation and protection from sexual abuse and exploitation*. Florence: UNICEF Office of Research-Innocenti. Warrington, C. (2016) *Young person-centred approaches in child sexual exploitation (CSE) – promoting participation and building self-efficacy*. Dartington, UK: Research in Practice. Youth Partnership Project South Asia & Bhattacharya, I. (2010). *Vulnerability of children living in the red light areas of Kolkata, India. A youth-led study*. Kolkata: Sanlaap. Youth Partnership Project South Asia, Sami, S., & Mahmud, I. (2010). *Youth-led survey on the commercial exploitation of vulnerable children & youth in Dhaka slums areas*. Mohammadpur, Dhaka: Aparajeyo-Bangladesh and ECPAT.

Sexual violence	Despite evidence of benefits, there are significant barriers to children's participation in research on sexual violence. These include concerns over managing risk and preventing trauma, lack of confidence on the part of researchers, lack of knowledge of safe and creative participatory methods, and misperceptions about children's capacity to handle sensitive topics.	**Sexual violence resources:** Bayer, A. M., Cabrera, L. Z., Gilman, R. H., Hindin, M. J., & Tsui, A. O. (2010). Adolescents can know best: Using concept mapping to identify factors and pathways driving adolescent sexuality in Lima, Peru. *Social Science & Medicine*, 70(12), 2085–2095. Bovarnick, S., Peace, D., Warrington, C., & Pearce, J. (2018). *Being heard: Promoting children and young people's involvement in participatory research on sexual violence: Findings from an international scoping review*. University of Bedfordshire. Pearce, J. (2012). *Challenging sexual violence in Europe: Using participatory methods with children*. University of Bedfordshire. Wallace-Henry, C. (2015). Unveiling child sexual abuse through participatory action research. *Social and Economic Studies*, 64(1), 13–36.
Social exclusion and general	Conducting research with children with limited access to technology has multiple challenges. Recruitment methods may be dependent on community mobilisers and networks.	**Socially excluded children resources:** Conolly, A. (2008). Challenges of generating qualitative data with socially excluded young people. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 11(3), 201–214. Curtis, K., Roberts, H., Copperman, J., Downie, A., & Liabo, K. (2004). 'How come I don't get asked no questions?' Researching 'hard to reach' children and teenagers. *Child & Family Social Work*, 9 (2), 167–75. Ellard-Gray, A., Jeffrey, N. K., Choubak, M., & Crann, S. E. (2015). Finding the hidden participant: Solutions for Recruiting hidden, hard-to-reach, and vulnerable populations. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 14(5), 1609406915621420.

Reading list: Equitable research

Use the materials in this list for practical guidance on how to make research more equitable.

Kyegombe, N., Banks, L. M., Kelly, S., Kuper, H., & Devries, K. M. (2019). How to conduct good quality research on violence against children with disabilities: Key ethical, measurement, and research principles. *BMC Public Health,* 19(1), 1133.

This paper provides guidance on how to conduct good quality, ethical, and inclusive research on violence against children with disabilities, particularly in low-income settings. Careful consideration must be given to the design of survey tools. Qualitative and participatory research methods also offer important opportunities to explore children's subjective understanding and experiences of violence.

Challenges also exist around the measurement of disability. Disability may be measured by asking directly about disability, through self-reported functioning, or the presence of impairments or health conditions. These approaches have strengths and limitations; they should build on what children are able to do and include appropriate adaptations for specific impairments when necessary.

Key methodological gaps remain – how to include children with severe communication challenges in research; how to respond in instances of weak child protection systems; how to design sampling procedures that adequately represent children with disabilities in large-scale violence surveys; and how best to ask about violence safely in large-scale surveys and monitoring data. This paper further advocates for the dissemination of research results in inclusive and accessible formats.

BabyLaw Okoli, R. C. (2015). Ethical issues and dilemmas in doing research with itinerant street vending children and young people: Experiences from Nigeria. *Qualitative Social Work,* 14(4), 538–553.

This paper discusses the realities of conducting research with itinerant street vending children and young people who have never taken part in a research project. It explores five key ethical issues that arose during the study: recruitment and participation; access and consent; compensation; confidentiality; and safety and protection. It also reflects on the dilemmas involved with researching and relating to such a highly mobile group within a chaotic, yet organised, market environment.

The paper concludes that doing ethical research with children and young people in the developing world is fraught with issues and dilemmas that cannot be resolved by adopting 'Western' ethical research frameworks and constructions, which do not reflect the lived realities of non-Western children. Instead, researchers should constantly negotiate and renegotiate the boundaries of inequalities, moral values, cultural beliefs and practices, and specific contexts within which the majority of children live and grow.

ECPAT International. (2019). *Guidelines for ethical research on sexual exploitation involving children.* Bangkok: ECPAT International.

When research seeks to generate knowledge and evidence about sexual abuse, exploitation, trafficking, and similar issues involving children, there is a unique set of additional sensitivities. At the heart of these is the need to balance the benefits with the potential – and sometimes significant – risk of harm. For example, retelling or reliving experiences of sexual abuse and exploitation for research projects can be highly distressing, and even traumatic, for survivors. These guidelines set out four steps to be followed in research design and implementation, and establish a series of 'ethical tasks' that should be undertaken when investigating child sexual abuse, exploitation, and trafficking.

Section six:
Managing risk and protecting children

As well as an overall summary of ethics issues, in the last two sections we have focused on two specific aspects of ethical research: consent and equity.

In this section, we focus on a third: **how to protect the children who researchers work with from harm**. This will be followed in Section seven by material on protecting the researchers themselves.

We cover the following topics:

- How researchers can maximise children's participation without compromising their safety or putting them at risk
- The concepts of **do no harm**, **risk assessment** and **risk mitigation** in research
- The risks of **not involving children** in research

This section includes the following materials:

- An explainer on the basic concepts behind managing risk (4 minute read)
- A case study on minimising the risks around disclosure (3 minute read)
- A case study example of an effective risk assessment and mitigation process (5 minute read)
- A reading list going deeper into the topic (a selection of longer reads)

Research and risk — How to 'do no harm'

All research involves a basic calculation of the benefits – which should be clear and should outweigh the risks. In addition, Article 3.1 of the UNCRC states that the best interests of the child must be a primary consideration in all actions concerning children.

These are simple enough statements, but what do they mean in practice?
As a starting point, research should not actively harm the children and young people involved in it – or indeed others in society. This is known as the **principle of nonmaleficence**. In other words, like doctors, researchers should 'do no harm'.

That means focusing on both **risk assessment** and **risk mitigation** to ensure that children and young people do not face harm as a result of their participation in research. Well-being concerns should be recognised, children should be safe, and follow-up support should be provided when necessary. Risks should always be minimised and children and young people should never be put at unnecessary risk.

Evidence shows that the best practice is to identify means of managing/mitigating risk, alongside conducting risk assessments and putting protocols in place. This requires consideration of the local/national socio-cultural, religious and political contexts in which children are encountered. Setting up local advisory networks, as well as knowledge and support systems, can help identify mitigation strategies. Where possible, you must seek out opportunities to work with children to understand the risks and benefits of a research initiative –some risks may be better known or understood by children themselves. Children can also bring a unique perspective into risk analysis and mitigation plans.

If you understand this topic well and want to get straight to exploring practical examples of risk mitigation, proceed to the case study on Ukraine on p. 62 later in this Section.

There are multiple sources of risk to children during a research initiative. Here are some key issues relating to risk assessment and mitigation that anyone engaging in participatory research should be aware of.

Confidentiality and privacy
When conducting research on violence against children and implementing the 'do no harm' principle, there will be risks to a child's confidentiality and privacy. Research teams are responsible for confidentiality. But ensuring confidentiality can sometimes conflict with a researcher's duty to protect children – and the former does not override the latter. For example, if a child alerts a researcher to ongoing abuse, he or she may have to break the child's confidence to connect the child with support services, but care must be taken to prevent the information being spread unnecessarily.

Privacy is imperative in research with children who have experienced abuse and violence in order to protect children from potential stigma and/or reprisals from an abusive parent or adult (Baker, 2005). In some circumstances it might be ethically inappropriate to collect data from/with children, for instance, if the children may face retaliatory violence, when skilled interviewers are unavailable or when follow up support services are not available.

Compensation
There is a further ethical dilemma when recruiting children as researchers as to whether or not children should be paid for their involvement in research, and, if so, what form such payment should take (Graham et al., 2013).

Some argue that compensation increases the risks to children, or may be coercive. In contexts, where children and families live in poverty, it is important to review how it may change the power dynamics within the family if a child is in receipt of money. Payment could also fuel tension and resentment from others in the community against participants who gain some material benefit from their involvement in research (Clacherty & Donald, 2007; Hart & Tyrer, 2006). Even offering food and refreshments can sway the decision whether or not to participate in a study (Morrow, 2013). Any decision on payment and how this will be communicated to the child and their community should be made prior to the research project starting, and plans should be put in place to mitigate any potential negative effects.

Disclosure of violence, abuse or neglect
During the data collection and analysis phases of violence against children research initiatives, children may disclose harm that they have suffered. It is the role of the lead researcher to ensure that adequate reporting and referral pathways are in place, so that if harm is disclosed, those collecting data in the field and those monitoring the data have adequate information to provide support or follow up with the child if needed (Cater & Øverlien, 2014).

In some places, referral to formal services may not exist, for example, in rural areas in developing countries. However, protocols can be established in any context, even though the availability of services may differ. The World Health Organization (2007) guidelines suggest that when conducting research on violence fieldworkers should be trained to refer interviewees requesting assistance to available local services and sources of support. Where few resources exist, it may be necessary for the study to create short-term support mechanisms (Ruiz-Casares, 2012).

Case study: Minimising risks surrounding disclosure in Tanzania

The Together for Girls partnership in Tanzania found ingenious, practical ways to keep children safe.

The Together for Girls partnership in Tanzania recruited and trained same-sex interviewers to ensure that boys could be interviewed by men and girls by women. Only girls or only boys were interviewed in each site to reduce the risk of interviewing both the survivor and the perpetrator of the same incident.

Ahead of the survey, providers of support services were identified for those who disclosed experiencing violence. Due to the sparse availability of post-violence care providers, a hotline was established and a cadre of social workers made available at the national level to link to data collection locations. For some respondents, this meant that disclosing violence during the survey was also the first time they were able access care. These ethical practices, building on WHO and UNICEF guidance, have become a standard of the Violence Against Children and Youth Surveys (VACS) process across countries.

More lessons from the Together for Girls partnership in Tanzania can be found at this link.

Distress caused by participating in or conducting research
In conducting research on violence against children, researchers must be well trained to cope with sensitive topics. Children need skilled support to be available to help them deal with any distress they may feel in cases where they have disclosed information about harmful, abusive, exploitative or negative experiences (whether from their past or present experiences) (Robson, 2001). Standardising requirements to report maltreatment through ethical review committees, or producing clear child safeguarding policies in the research protocol, can help mitigate these risks (ECPAT International, 2019; Morris, Hegarty, & Humphreys, 2012).

Regular supervision mechanisms should be in place for all researchers (adults, young people and children) to ensure that they are dealing appropriately with any stress or distress arising from their involvement in the research or evaluation processes. Some authors make recommendations for debriefing after the research process, including a post-interview informal group discussion of positive experiences, acknowledging to the child that there have been some sensitive questions asked, and providing information about how to get further support (Grundlingh, Knight, Naker, & Devries, 2017; Van der Merwe & Hunt, 2019).

Violent retribution or punishment for taking part in research
Ethical guidelines for research on domestic violence from the World Health Organization (2001, & 2007; see also Ellsberg & Heise, 2005) refer to the risk of retaliation against research participants from perpetrators of abuse and violence. In their guidance, WHO mentions that the mere act of participating in a survey may provoke further violence. Similarly, without adequate training for partners, reporting cases to local child services may result in harmful practices such as naming children publicly as ‘abused’, exposing them to retaliatory treatment from perpetrators who come to know of the child’s disclosure (Devries, Child, Elbourne, Naker, & Heise, 2015). Researchers should minimise this risk by ensuring the confidentiality of the interview.

Peer-to-peer research
In scenarios where children are actively reaching out to their peers or wider communities for data and evidence, there are several dilemmas and risks to children’s safety and protection that need to be taken into account. These include:

- How to ensure that young researchers maintain confidentiality when they gain access to information they would not otherwise have about people in their community.
- How to ensure that young researchers apply a high standard to ensuring the truly voluntary participation of their peers.
- The risk of researchers being exposed to distressing information or feeling unsafe after hearing the stories of other people.
- The time investment required for research could have a negative impact on other aspects of the child’s life (e.g., responsibilities at home, school or work).
- To mitigate and address these risks, child researchers must be provided with support and training. Adult facilitators, together with children, must also reflect on how the research initiative may affect children before the research commences (Spriggs & Gillam, 2019).

The risk of not engaging children in research
So far, in this section we have focused on measuring and mitigating the risks related to involving children in research. However, it is also crucial, to consider the risks of not supporting children's participation. Participation is a human rights obligation and a way of fulfilling other rights – a notion that can be lost in some research initiatives.

We need to consider if we believe that children's participation can support the realisation of other rights – and if fear, inaction or refusal to support participation rights can cause harm or lead to rights violations?

Optional exercise

Gather a group of colleagues or collaborators. Pick a recent research project or projects you have worked on and, using Table 6 in the case study below for guidance (p. 63), answer these questions:

- How did we identify the risks to children posed by the project or research?
- How did we plan to mitigate those risks?
- Did we encounter risks that we had not planned for?
- What could we do in future to protect children?

Case study: Risk assessment and mitigation in research on the Ukrainian conflict

This case study, written by Philippa Hill (Humanitarian Evidence, Effectiveness and Accountability Adviser, Save the Children), identifies a best practice methodology to ensure child safety during a research initiative. In this instance, the cost of resources for children's participation was factored into the research design to ensure child safety and well-being.

What was the research initiative?
Since 2014, an armed conflict has been ongoing in eastern Ukraine. An estimated 5.2 million people are affected by the conflict. Following a literature review, Save the Children identified a gap in the evidence about the gendered impact of the conflict on boys and girls of different ages.

Children's experiences are different to those of adults, and factors such as gender and age contribute to the varied experiences of children themselves. Save the Children believes that children are the experts on their own lives and, as such, are capable of articulating their own experiences, needs and solutions. Therefore, this assessment consulted with boys and girls aged 3–17 years, as well as adults, in order to better understand how conflict is shaping the lives of children in eastern Ukraine.

How did the initiative support children's safety?
Given the sensitivity of the topic, including the high possibility of coming across issues relating to violence against children during the assessment, several steps were taken to make the assessment ethical and safe for children. These included conducting a risk assessment for the research. This assessment identified the likelihood and severity of different types of risk, and suggested mitigation steps to keep children safe.

Some examples of the risks and mitigation steps are outlined in Table 6.

Table 6. Risk and mitigation steps

Risk	Mitigation steps
Children or caregivers becoming **distressed** during data collection, due to the nature of the topics	The tools and questions were designed to encourage children and adults to talk about the experiences of children in general, rather than forcing them to recount their own experiences. Save the Children Ukraine has links to service providers that would be able to provide follow up support if required. A referral protocol (building on Save the Children Ukraine's systems) to enable people to be linked to appropriate follow-up support was developed specifically for the assessment. Researchers were trained to recognise signs of distress, abuse or anything else warranting referral. Data collection only took place in locations where Save the Children had active programming, so participants could be referred to programmes or partners if needed. Researchers remained in the location for at least 15 minutes after the end of the discussions in case any participant wished to speak to them in private.
Participants and researchers being **physically harmed** as a result of conflict (IEDs, shelling etc.)	Save the Children Ukraine's safety and security procedures were followed at all times, including observing curfews and exclusion zones. Communities were consulted to identify safe locations for data collection. The international lead analyst had completed a hostile environment security training.
Children **missing school** and adults missing work to participate	It was unavoidable that children missed a short period of school for the assessment. To minimise the negative impact, the duration of the workshops was limited, and the workshops were designed in a way that had some learning and development benefits for children. The duration of adult group discussions was kept to a minimum to minimise the negative effects on income generation.
Sensitive or personal data not adequately protected	Care was taken not to elicit detailed personal stories during data collection, instead seeking data about the general situation. Participants' names were not written on the same form as their data and informed consent forms were kept separate. Participants' names were never transferred to the lead researcher. Hard copy data was kept with the assessment team or in a locked location at all times. Hard copy data was destroyed once transcribed into a soft copy. Soft copy data was kept on password protected computers and shared using a secure organisational email. Soft copy data was deleted six months after the report was finalised. Care was taken not to attach the names of children or caregivers to their responses at any point. No names were included in the final report, unless specifically approved by that person (in the case of staff from UN agencies, NGOs or local authorities). In the final report no specific locations (only districts) were referenced. No pictures were taken during the assessment. All pictures included in the report were from other Save the Children activities (noted in the report), and informed consent for their use was obtained.

The referral protocol discussed in Table 6 was informed by the draft inter-agency Standard Operating Procedures for Child Protection Referrals in Ukraine and a service mapping conducted by Save the Children Ukraine Country Office. The referral protocol identified specific disclosures or concerns that could be identified as signs of concern (such as children experiencing severe physical violence in the last week), the required response to such disclosures and concerns, and the timeframe.

Both the risk assessment and referral protocol were reviewed during the training of the research team, which was comprised of Save the Children and partner staff, with adjustments and additions being made based on their knowledge of the local context. The assessment also benefited from submission to Save the Children United Kingdom's independent Research and Evaluation Ethics Committee, where two experienced researchers reviewed the methodology. Through the combined expertise of the lead researcher, national and partner staff, and the Ethics Committee, a strong **assessment approach** was developed that helped keep child and adult participants safe, while collecting compelling data about their experiences.

For more details see resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/library/listen-us-girls-and-boys-gendered-experiences-conflict-eastern-ukraine.

Reading and resources list: Reducing risk and the 'do no harm' principle

Use the reading and resources in this list to guide you through the work of minimising risk and preventing harm in practice.

Our Voices web portal

This web portal helps researchers to involve children and young people affected by sexual violence in research, policy and practice. Our Voices is a programme of work to strengthen participatory practice with children and young people affected by sexual violence. The programme is coordinated by the International Centre: Researching Child Sexual Exploitation, Violence and Trafficking at the University of Bedfordshire.

Bovarnick, S., Peace, D., Warrington, C., & Pearce, J. (2018). *Being heard: Promoting children and young people's involvement in participatory research on sexual violence: Findings from an international scoping review*. University of Bedfordshire.

The Being Heard report focuses on promoting children and young people's voices in sexual violence research. It discusses a range of ethical and practical challenges to involving vulnerable children and young people in participatory research on sensitive issues. While some relate to children and young people's age-specific vulnerabilities, many of the issues discussed in the report highlight the complexities of undertaking participatory research more generally.

Bradbury-Jones, C. (2014). *Children as co-researchers: The need for protection*. Dunedin: Dunedin Academic Press.

This book is aimed at researchers intending to engage or employ children as co-researchers or primary researchers. The author adopts a pragmatic approach and proposes a range of practical solutions to overcome the protection issues that are inherent in participatory research. Among the key issues discussed are assessing children's competence; ensuring sufficient preparation; balancing insider/outsider perspectives; the need for appropriate remuneration; overcoming power differentials between children and adults; and the safeguarding of children working as co-researchers. The book presents the challenges through a series of case studies and provokes reflection through exercises and discussion points. Chapter 7 of the book focuses on protection and ethics.

Child Protection Monitoring and Evaluation Reference Group (CP MERG). (2012). *Ethical principles, dilemmas, and risks in collecting data on violence against children: A review of available literature*. New York, NY: UNICEF.

This literature review provides empirical support to guide recommendations for ethical research practice and decision-making in collecting data on violence against children (VAC). The review examines documentation that is of specific relevance to research ethics in collecting data on violence against children. It includes ethics guidelines, codes, protocols and practice-related documentation, as well as research-based publications. It includes a review of ethical guidelines and literature on child protection. It also provides guidance on dealing with the risk of discomfort, distress, or trauma to child research participants during data collection and the risk to child participants from others learning of their research involvement.

ECPAT International. (2019). *Guidelines for ethical research on sexual exploitation involving children*. Bangkok: ECPAT International.

When research seeks to generate knowledge and evidence about sexual abuse, exploitation, trafficking, and similar issues involving children, there is a unique set of additional sensitivities. At the heart of these is the need to balance the benefits with the potential – and sometimes significant – risk of harm. For example, retelling or reliving experiences of sexual abuse and exploitation for research projects can be highly distressing, and even traumatic, for survivors. These guidelines set out four steps to be followed in research design and implementation, and establish a series of 'ethical tasks' that should be undertaken when investigating child sexual abuse, exploitation, and trafficking.

Graham, A., Powell, M. A., Anderson, D., Fitzgerald, R., & Taylor, N. J. (2013). *Ethical research involving children*. Florence: UNICEF Office of Research-Innocenti.

This guide to ethical research involving children (ERIC) contains a comprehensive section on harms and benefits (see Ethical guidance: harms and benefits). It prompts researchers to justify why the research is necessary and gives detailed guidance on how to assess and mitigate harm. Importantly, it addresses how harm may occur after participating in research and considers the different aspects of designing safe and inclusive research from sampling through to fieldwork and follow-up. In additional, it contains a series of case study that demonstrate how to protect children in a range of contexts (see Case Studies – Harms and Benefits) (also see the 'Reading list' on p. 37, Section three of this resource pack).

Warrington, C., & Larkins, C. (2019). Special Issue: Children's participation in safeguarding: Ethical and practical considerations. *Journal of Children's Services*, 14(3).

This special issue includes articles that explore how children have been involved in research activities in recent international child protection research and what kinds of ethical and methodological decisions are made by researchers regarding children's participation. The content captures a range of approaches and perspectives to research and practice with diverse groups of children and young people. This includes those known to have been subject to various forms of oppression or marginalisation, such as: care-experienced/'looked after' children, disabled children, children subject to violence and abuse, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender plus (LGBT)+ youth, and broader cohorts of children accessed through mainstream schools and youth provision.

Morris, A., Hegarty, K., & Humphreys, C. (2012). Ethical and safe: Research with children about domestic violence. *Research Ethics*, 8(2), 125–139.

The authors of this article highlight ethical concerns and practical solutions using examples from domestic violence, family law and child abuse research with children. Ethical planning is explored according to methodologies, context and whether or not the violence has been named. Also discussed are consent procedures, confidentiality and the development of protocols for disclosure, distress, safety and risk assessment, which support ethical and safe research with children.

Optional exercise

Gather colleagues or collaborators and discuss the following questions in the context of a current, former or hypothetical research project:

- Do the benefits of the research outweigh the risks – have you measured whether the potential risk of harm associated with the research is greater than the benefits that may emerge?
- Are there children whose particular circumstances place them at high risk? If yes, who are they and why, and is it possible to mitigate these risks?
- What support and training will we provide for child researchers? Have we made provisions (time and funding) to provide this support and training?
- Are the costs of ensuring child protection and well-being factored into the research design?
- Are the proper reporting and referral protocols in place, have all those involved in the research initiative (staff, consultants, enumerators, etc.) been trained on these procedures, and are they clear on when and how to report and refer?
- Has the research team received training on how to respond appropriately to participant distress and support children who become distressed or who disclose sensitive information?

Section seven:
Preserving researchers' safety

In the last section we covered how to protect children during research – how researchers can avoid causing harm, identify potential risks to children, and work to mitigate such risks.

In this section, we look at another set of people who can experience harm: the adult research team. This includes fieldworkers, facilitators and anyone who has to listen to, or read, recordings of interviews, such as transcribers, interpreters or anyone coding and analysing the data. We do not cover general information on conducting research in unsafe, conflict-affected or difficult environments, but focus on the distinct difficulties in conducting research on violence against children. Research on violence against children can be stressful and, in some cases, causes secondary trauma, compassion fatigue or burnout. Working to prevent this is crucial in ethical research.

We cover the following topics:

- Direct risks to researchers
- An introduction to secondary trauma, compassion fatigue, and burnout
- Materials on how research can be designed to preserve researcher safety

This section includes the following materials:

- A short explainer on some of the risks that researchers face (6 minute read)
- A reading list on preserving researcher safety (a selection of longer reads)

Direct risks to researchers explained

Often research into violence against children takes place in difficult and complex settings. The process of uncovering details about violence can be difficult and upsetting, and can challenge existing power dynamics and structures within a community.

Research teams have an ethical obligation to monitor harm or threats of harm that may occur during or after a study and determine which resulted from participation in the research. No data is worth placing children, families or researchers at risk. Particularly in humanitarian contexts, the risk of gathering this information, versus the risk of not providing the information to those who might use it, needs to be considered.

Physical or sexual harm
Research team members may be at increased risk of actual physical or sexual violence. These risks should be assessed before conducting fieldwork and a detailed protocol developed for avoiding danger. The protocol should include plans for the frequent monitoring of the safety of fieldworkers by the lead investigator or fieldwork manager. The precautions to be taken might include developing possible exit strategies or establishing processes for calling for help, if needed (Jewkes, Dartnall, & Sikweyiya, 2012).

Relationships with children
The politics, power dynamics and relationships between data collectors and children's communities may lead to power imbalances if not managed adequately. Humanitarian settings may exacerbate this power differential.

Researchers' actions and their professional relationships with children are critical to mitigate power differentials. Establishing rapport is crucial to the success of an interview, but adults need to take care to not become too close to participants so that they can retain the filtering and distilling functions that are necessary for a researcher when conveying the stories of participants.

Frequent meetings, the study of sensitive or emotive topics, and the immersion of the researcher in the research setting creates opportunities for personal interactions. The boundaries between the researcher and the group of people being studied can easily become ‘blurred’. For children it is especially important to outline and keep strong, healthy boundaries in relationships. These effects can be mitigated by:

- Considering strategies for emotional distancing if the research topic or participants are likely to lead to emotional ‘work’ or ‘blurred’ boundaries on the part of the researcher.
- Planning, prior to interviews, the level of rapport and self-disclosure, as well as strategies to end the research relationship after the project.
- Training on how to recognise, establish and keep appropriate professional boundaries with children.
- Always applying and abiding by child safeguarding measures, including no one-to-one contact with children.

Data protection

Perceived and actual privacy and confidentiality violations can impact on children, and result in the erosion of trust among children and their communities. Data must be protected to ensure trust between researchers and their subjects.

In particular, protecting confidentiality is key to ensuring trust, this includes maintaining the security of data files and documents. In surveys when there is no intention to revisit the respondent, personal identifiers should not be collected. If revisits are necessary for other reasons (and informed consent is obtained), it is important to store personal information separately from the rest of the data before storage. All data should be stored in locked files, or password encrypted files and deleted after an agreed period of time (see Section eight of this resource pack for further details). Researchers can limit harm by:

- Ensuring that identifying quotes are removed from any report
- Considering the potential for stigma and subsequent discrimination, alongside strategies such as increased aggregation of results

Risk of secondary trauma, compassion fatigue, and burnout explained

Secondary trauma describes the emotional duress that results when an individual hears about the traumatic experiences of others. It can affect any member of the research team – fieldworkers, researchers or those entering data. The American Counseling Association (2010) described it as the emotional residue of exposure to the pain, fear, and terror that children have endured as a result of experiencing or witnessing violence.

Members of the research team experiencing secondary trauma may begin to have some trauma related reactions, such as: developing negative ideas about people and the world, or worrying about their own safety and the safety of their family/friends. Here are some signs of trauma:

- Experiencing distressing memories, flashbacks or dreams of the distressing event
- Avoiding people, places or reminders linked to the event
- Experiencing negative changes in mood and thinking, feeling detached from others, feeling guilt, shame, fear or horror, or feeling negative about one’s self and the world
- Disrupted sleep, difficulty concentrating, irritability, anger, panic, nervousness, being easily scared or startled, or self-destructive behaviour such as driving too fast or drinking too much

Compassion fatigue is defined as an overexposure to suffering and pain that can cause personal stress and a reduced ability to be empathetic. Those experiencing compassion fatigue find it hard to feel care and concern for others. Researchers can struggle with compassion fatigue when they work directly with multiple child abuse victims and are very empathic or caring. If they have lots of contact with victims of trauma and easily feel for others and their pain, this kind of stress can lead to negative changes in the way they feel and behave.

Burnout occurs when someone experiences low satisfaction at work, feels exhausted and lacks motivation. Burnout can lead to physical and mental illness if not dealt with. However, the effects can be mitigated by changing the way that the sufferer works. For example, they could map out roles and responsibilities with their team and explore how to keep good boundaries and best share the workload.

Recommendations:

- Ethics applications should include provision for the proper care of researchers and a safety protocol.
- Training and regular supervision should be part of violence against children research practice.
- The principal researcher should monitor the safety and well-being of the whole research team.
- Invite a trauma counsellor to do a debriefing for researchers.
- Budget for longer fieldwork time to ensure that data collection targets can be met while allowing time for interviewers to reflect on their experiences and share any challenges that they may be experiencing.
- In contexts where trauma levels are high, fieldworkers should be offered a debriefing by an appropriately trained professional.
- Try to do other positive activities outside of work or integrate mindfulness or fun team building activities into the work plan.

Reading list: Researcher safety and well-being

These materials go into the threats to researcher safety in more depth, and should be used both to understand the psychological background to these risks and for practical guidance on how to mitigate these risks.

Beckett, H. (Producer). (2019, 31 December). Researcher welfare: Researching sexual violence against children. PowerPoint Presentation, Sexual Violence Research Initiative (SVRI).

This short presentation outlines the key challenges to researchers' mental health and well-being and sets out some simple things that researchers can do to protect themselves when conducting sensitive research.

Coles, J., & Mudaly, N. (2010). Staying safe: Strategies for qualitative child abuse researchers. *Child Abuse Review*, 19(1), 56–69.

This paper reviews the literature on sensitive interview-based research and child abuse research. The theoretical underpinnings of researcher trauma are outlined and challenges identified and related to child abuse research using researcher reflections from the authors' interview-based research with children who have been abused and young mothers who were sexually abused in childhood. Strategies and recommendations are developed to minimise child abuse researcher trauma.

Dickson-Swift, V., James, E., & Liamputtong, P. (2008). *Undertaking sensitive research in the health and social sciences: Managing boundaries, emotions and risks*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

This book provides detailed tools for researchers to use when conducting research into sensitive topics. Chapter 4 discusses the implications of poor boundary management for researchers and outlines some strategies that might be useful to researchers when managing these boundaries.

Sexual Violence Research Initiative. (2015). *Guidelines for the prevention and management of vicarious trauma among researchers of sexual and intimate partner violence*. Sexual Violence Research Initiative. Pretoria: South Africa.

These guidelines make recommendations for preventing and responding to trauma to researchers and staff conducting research on sexual and intimate partner violence. They describe vicarious trauma in the context of undertaking research on sexual and intimate partner violence; discuss its impact; and consider organisational, project and individual factors that mitigate the potential adverse consequences of doing this type of research. They also provide recommendations for ethics boards and researchers to ensure that researcher well-being is considered and interventions to prevent and address vicarious trauma are incorporated into research protocols.

The Sexual Violence Research Initiative website includes a section on researcher trauma and safety: svri.org/research-methods/researcher-trauma-and-safety.

Van der Merwe, A., & Hunt, X. (2019). Secondary trauma among trauma researchers: Lessons from the field. *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy,* 11(1), 10–18.

This study looks at the effects of participant trauma on trauma researchers. It finds that the experiences of fieldworkers in this study often mirror the syndromes found among 'flooded' therapists, suggesting that it is the listening, and not so much the purpose for which one is listening, that can result in trauma-by-proxy.

The authors recommend that studies should provide for the proper care of trauma researchers, who may, without support, develop symptoms of secondary traumatic stress. Care includes training and regular supervision, and in contexts where trauma levels are high, as in South Africa, fieldworkers and researchers should be debriefed by an appropriately trained professional.

Optional exercise

Consider alone or by discussing in a group how the following questions relate to your research work:

- Can you use a journal tool to document your reactions to the content of violence issues children are discussing with you? What have you learnt about yourself and your reactions to the subject matter?
- Have you considered the need for debriefing at the conclusion of research procedures? If needed, how will these be established?
- Do you have support and supervisory relationships in place (for example, with experienced researchers, relevant local groups, local child protection experts, local experts in the field of research)?

Section eight:
A step-by-step guide to participatory research

In the previous sections we covered what children's participatory research is, the basics of how to define it in practice, as well as a range of ethical issues, from consent to managing risk.

In this section, we look in detail at what participation looks like at each stage of a research project. There are benefits to involving children and young people in a research project, however, there are also challenges and barriers. Some challenges are generic to children's participation, others are unique to research generally or to specific stages. All participatory research with children needs to have sufficient time and resources, and adults should have appropriate training (also see UNCRC basic requirement #7).

We cover the following topics:

- Guidance for researchers on how to overcome challenges or potential barriers to participation
- Critical resources to support the researcher in each stage of participatory research with children

This section includes the following materials:

- A series of six short explainers providing step-by-step guidance into conducting participatory research (each about a 5 minute read) and links to valuable resources (a selection of longer reads)
- Case studies on including children in each phase of the research process (5 minute reads)
- Expert insight into engaging children in decision-making forums (7 minute read)

The diagram in Figure 4 summarises the research process:

Step one

Design and conceptualisation
- Identify questions and objectives
- Decide on roles and responsibilities
- Select or develop the methods and tools to use
- Assess risks and develop a plan to keep participants and researchers safe

Step two

Ethical review
- Experts check that the study is necessary, safe and uses appropriate tools

Step three

Recruitment and consent
- Train the fieldworkers
- Give prospective participants information about the study
- Collect informed consent

Step four

Data collection
- Use participatory methodologies to collect information
- Remind participants that they can chose to be involved or withdraw at anytime
- Check that the data is good quality and is entered correctly

Step five

Analysis
- Identify themes and patterns in the data
- Discuss preliminary findings with stakeholders

Step six

Dissemination and advocacy
- Share findings with participants, and other stakeholders

Figure 4. Steps in the research process

Step one: Design and conceptualisation

The design and conceptualisation phase of research typically involves writing funding proposals, establishing governance structures, writing a research protocol and selecting tools. However, from the earliest phase of the research, safety and risk management must also be considered. As discussed in Section six (p. 58), even when there will be no collection of personal data, violence against children is a sensitive topic and has the potential to cause distress and even harm.

There are two possible approaches to ensure safety. One way is to rely on safeguarding policies and limit the involvement of children to non-harmful activities that exclude personal reflections. The alternative is to do a multi-stage ethics application (see Step two), where the first application is for the involvement of children in the design phase, and subsequent applications review the protocol, tools and any adaptations to the research project (Collins et al., 2020). At all times, children and young people should have access to psychosocial support.

At the design and conceptualisation stage it is also critical to ensure that there is adequate funding for children's participation throughout the project and that timelines respect children's pace and accommodate their availability.

Children and young people have insights into local contexts, as well as important perspectives, all of which should determine research questions. They add value when framing the problem, setting research questions that are age appropriate, and selecting tools for data collection and analysis (Adelaine, 2016; Bovarnick, Peace, Warrington, & Pearce, 2018; Porter, 2016). Involving children and young people at the design stage will ensure that the researchers focus on the most pertinent questions and use the most suitable tools. This will ultimately improve the quality of data and ensure that the research is relevant (Bovarnick et al., 2018).

It is rare for grant-making bodies to provide funding if seed funding for conceptualisation is limited or without a detailed proposal. Fortunately, there are ways of safely involving children that are inexpensive. Working with existing forums or children's organisations can provide access to staff who have specialist participatory or therapeutic skills to provide support for children, allowing the research team to focus on the content. However, these organisations may struggle to dedicate time to research due to their own capacity constraints and need to focus on service delivery. There should be no expectation that such groups should be representative, but this limitation should be acknowledged.

It is also possible to establish an advisory committee (of children and adults) at this stage – typically these bodies will provide insights throughout the whole process (Arunkumar et al., 2018; Collins et al., 2020; Lewis et al., 2008; McCarry, 2012). At the start of the study, children and young people may be unfamiliar with research processes and care must be taken to avoid power imbalances and ensure that participants have an opportunity to influence decisions (Bradbury-Jones & Taylor, 2015). The International and Canadian Child Rights Partnership (ICCRP) team (see case study in Section two, p. 25) appointed a child to flag complex words and jargon and recorded these terms and their meanings in a glossary of research terms.

Where the timelines or the funding constraints are too tight to ensure meaningful participation, researchers should consider building in a review with children and young people prior to conducting fieldwork.

Table 7 lays out a range of resources useful for the design phase of a participatory research project.

Table 7. Resources for the design and conceptualisation phase of participatory research

Barriers to participation	Overcoming barriers	Resources
Need for ethical approval before working with children	Use a two-stage ethics application with expedited review for limited participation in governance and design processes.	Adelaine, A. (2016). *Participatory inquiry in practice [PIP]: NGO accountability, action research and urban youth in Kampala*. De Montfort University. Boyden, J., & Ennew, J. (1997). *Children in focus: A manual for participatory research with children*. Save the Children Sweden. Martin, L. (2013). Sampling and sex trading: Lessons on research design from the street. *Action Research*, 11(3), 220–235. Porter, G. (2016). Reflections on co-investigation through peer research with young people and older people in sub-Saharan Africa. *Qualitative Research*, 16(3), 293–304. Stuart, K., Maynard, L., & Rouncefield, C. (2015). *Evaluation practice for projects with young people: A guide to creative research*. London: Sage Publications.
Time constraints	Establish an advisory committee.	
Lack of funding	Work with established groups that have support and use social media and virtual platforms.	
Power imbalances between adult and child researchers	Use the UNCRC's nine basic requirements as a checklist to plan for the inclusive, safe and meaningful in-volvement of children. Ensure that materials are available in child-friendly language. Plan 'preparatory sessions' with only children to ensure they understand key terms and processes, prior to their participation in full adult/child team meetings. Prepare all adult team members to ensure they create a welcoming and respectful environment for children; ensure adult researchers understand participatory methodologies and child rights. Together with adults and children: set up 'ground rules' and 'terminology/acronym watch dogs'. Ensure that children understand their roles and responsibilities (e.g., through terms of reference), as well as the names, titles and roles of all	

	other members of the research/ advisory team. Support fun and interactive ‘team building’, get to know you and icebreaker exercises early on and throughout the process. Invite children to lead some of these sessions.	

Step two: Ethical review

The principal researcher is ultimately responsible for ensuring the safety of child researchers and subjects. However, children and young people can provide rich insights in discussions about the risks of the study to potential participants and ways of protecting children (Bovarnick et al., 2018). The potential benefits include minimising risks to participants, ensuring that materials are accessible and attractive to the target group, and that consent is fully informed and meaningful (Graham et al., 2013).

Table 8 sets out a range of resources useful for the ethical review phase of a participatory research project.

Table 8. Resources for the ethical review phase of participatory research

Barriers to participation	Overcoming barriers	Resources
Power imbalances between adult and child researchers	See Table 7 on design and conceptualisation.	Bradbury-Jones, C., & Taylor, J. (2015). Engaging with children as co-researchers: Challenges, counter-challenges and solutions. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology,* 18(2), 161–173. Bovarnick, S., Peace, D., Warrington, C., & Pearce, J. (2018). *Being heard: Promoting children and young people’s involvement in participatory research on sexual violence: Findings from an international scoping review*. University of Bedfordshire. Graham, A., Powell, M. A., Anderson, D., Fitzgerald, R., & Taylor, N. J. (2013). *Ethical research involving children*. Florence: UNICEF Office of Research-Innocenti. Houghton, C. (2015). Young people’s perspectives on participatory ethics: Agency, power and impact in domestic abuse research and policy-making. *Child Abuse Review*, 24(4), 235–248.
Children do not understand ethics processes and jargon	Appoint children to flag complex words and jargon – use existing glossaries. Encourage adults to ‘call out’ complex language or the use of acronyms.	
Assumptions about children’s lack of capacity	Invest time and support capacity building with children to ensure that they feel confident and have the skills they need to engage effectively. Address negative adult behaviours/attitudes at an early stage; create a respectful and enabling environment.	

Step three: Recruitment and consent

Children and young people are better placed than adults to identify how, where and when to engage with other children. For example, whether it is better to recruit children at school, at home or in alternate locations. Young researchers may help identify and gain access to marginalised communities – especially transient and vulnerable populations such as street children, out of school children and illiterate children (Bennett et al., 2016).

During the recruitment phase, consent comes to the fore. One of the fundamental principles behind consent is voluntary participation, but consent is a process and requires reappraisal. Good fieldworkers are sensitive to verbal and non-verbal cues and know when to stop and check that the participant is happy to continue.

Table 9 sets out a range of resources useful for the recruitment phase of a participatory research project.

Table 9. Resources for the recruitment phase of participatory research

Barriers to participation	Overcoming barriers	Resources
Children do not report their experiences of violence and remain hidden from services	Use pre-screening surveys to identify participants.	Collings, S., Grace, R., & Llewellyn, G. (2016). Negotiating with gatekeepers in research with disadvantaged children: A case study of children of mothers with intellectual disability. *Children & Society*, 30(6), 499–509. Ellard-Gray, A., Jeffrey, N. K., Choubak, M., & Crann, S. E. (2015). Finding the hidden participant: Solutions for recruiting hidden, hard-to-reach, and vulnerable populations. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 14(5). McCleary-Sills, J., Douglas, Z., Mabala, R., & Weiss, E. (2011). *Meet them where they are: Participatory action research with adolescent girls*. Washington, DC: International Center for Research on Women. Van Blerk L., Shand W., & Shanahan P. (2016). Street children as researchers: Critical reflections on a participatory methodological process in the "Growing Up on the Streets" research project in Africa. In: R. Evans, L. Holt, & T. Skelton (eds) *Methodological Approaches. Geographies of Children and Young People*, Vol 2. Singapore: Springer Singapore.
Children on the streets or out of school can be hard to reach	Peer researchers can identify times and places to connect with marginalised youth.	
Adults act as gatekeepers and exclude children	Ask older adolescents for consent or use passive consent (see case on UBS Optimus Study p. 41, Section four).	
Voluntary participation is a process	Give participants regular opportunities to opt out of the research, skip questions or avoid activities that they do not wish to participate in. Consider the cultural context and adult/child power imbalances. Are children in a position to ever say 'no' to an adult? Adapt methodologies accordingly.	

Step four: Data collection

When researchers obtain data from children themselves it increases the possibility of presenting a picture that is free of adult interpretations. Children and young people have the capacity to produce high-quality data when conducting interviews and surveys, and to engage in creative forms of arts-based and audio-visual data collection.

However, involving children and young people in data collection needs careful reflection. Using peer researchers can remove barriers and facilitate access to information that children and young people would be reluctant to share with adult fieldworkers. It can also help challenge the silence surrounding violence, but it can raise ethical concerns about confidentiality, anonymity and safety.

Adult researchers can be seen as ‘outsiders’ due to their age, privilege and perceived distinctions in their level of knowledge. This may create power imbalances and make children and young people less willing to disclose information (Kilpatrick, McCartan, McAlister, & McKeown, 2007). Children and young people in marginalised groups may be especially difficult to find and even more reluctant to engage (Van Blerk, Shand, & Shanahan, 2016). In such situations child researchers can overcome inter-generational and cultural barriers, build rapport and obtain responses from their peers in a way that is not possible for adults (Bradbury-Jones & Taylor, 2015; Cheney, 2018).

Table 10 sets out a range of resources useful for the data collection phase of a participatory research project.

Table 10. Resources for the data collection phase of participatory research

Barriers to participation	Overcoming barriers	Resources
Risk of re-traumatisation or distress	Link participants to professional services and helplines.	Tisdall, K., & Cuevas-Parra, P. (2019). *Child-led research: From participating in research to leading it*. World Vision International. Esterhuizen, L. (2012a). *Child led data collection: A guide for young people to learn how to do research and create positive change*. Stockholm: Save the Children Sweden. Esterhuizen, L. (2012b). *Child-led data collection: Experiences, findings and lessons learnt*. Stockholm: Save the Children Sweden. Kilpatrick, R., McCartan, C., McAlister, S., & McKeown, P. (2007). ‘If I am brutally honest, research has never appealed to me …’ The problems and successes of a peer research project. *Educational Action Research*, 15(3), 351–369. Robson, E. (2001). Interviews worth the tears? Exploring dilemmas of research with young carers in Zimbabwe. *Ethics, Place & Environment*, 4(2), 135–142. Ruiz-Casares, M. (2013). Knowledge without harm? When follow-up services are not readily available. In K. Te Riele & R. Brooks (eds), *Negotiating Ethical Challenges in Youth Research* (pp. 84–95). New York, NY: Routledge Press.
Risk of secondary trauma	Identify local services.	
Lack of professional psychological services	Create a healing space and access to social support networks, e.g., community-based organisation (or faith-based organisations).	
Risk of violence and retaliation	Limit disclosure of the purpose of the research.	
Data collection methods need to be age-appropriate	Conduct cognitive testing, piloting or review by child and youth advisory committees (CYACs).	
Distrust of adults and research processes	Allow time to practice skills; use technology.	

Case study: How an app helped enable girl-led research around the world

Technology Enabled Girl Ambassadors (TEGA) is a girl-operated digital research tool. This case study was written by Lucy Powell.

TEGA is a mobile based, peer-to-peer research app used by some of the world's leading development organisations to provide safer, faster, more scalable and authentic research.

Girls are often left out of research using traditional methodologies and their voices not properly incorporated, or even heard. Findings can reflect the view of the girl's father, mother, or teacher – basically anyone but her and her true authentic voice. While working in Northern Nigeria in 2014, the Girl Effect team were struggling to obtain honest, candid insights to inform their work, as traditional research methodologies were not revealing the true picture of girls' lives. As a result, they developed TEGA.

TEGA is a girl-operated digital research tool that allows girls to collect real-time insights into the lives of their peers. Designed to ensure that girls' voices are incorporated into programmes that affect them, girls aged 18–24 are empowered and trained using a bespoke mobile app to become Market Research Society (MRS) qualified researchers and ambassadors.

Ambassadors based in Africa, Asia and America collect real-time insights into the lives of their peers, which are instantly available for analysis. This unique approach unlocks the open and honest conversations that occur between girls and women that might otherwise be lost or not included when data is collected in traditional ways. The ambassadors conduct formative research, test content to ensure relevance to target audiences, and conduct monitoring and evaluation to inform the work of Girl Effect as well as the work and programming of a number of external partners.

The ambassadors conduct interviews using the TEGA app, through which they receive the surveys, collect data in the form of audio/video, and can access safety and information features. Technology enables the TEGAs to sync their phones with limited data; video and audio files are split into millions of pieces sent through the web then put back together in our data hub before being analysed by TEGA's in-house research team. TEGA uses technology that can operate in places with poor network connections across multiple languages.

By leveraging the power of technology, TEGA ensures that girls are heard and their voices and opinions counted in a way that wasn't possible before. For more information visit the Girl Effect website.

Step five: Analysis

Children and young people may interpret results differently or identify issues that might be missed by adults. They are experts on matters affecting them and may place different emphasis on the importance of findings – and their familiarity with relevant frames of reference ensures that research messages resonate with other children and young people. Engaging with the data increases children and young people's understanding of the issues and has the potential to enhance the credibility of findings.

Table 11 sets out a range of resources useful for the analysis phase of a participatory research project.

Table 11. Resources for the analysis phase of participatory research

Barriers to participation	Overcoming barriers	Resources
Peer researchers may identify participants from primary data	Restrict access to anonymised data or preliminary findings.	Coad, J., & Evans, R. (2008). Reflections on practical approaches to involving children and young people in the data analysis process. *Children & Society*, 22(1), 41-52. O'Kane, C. (2013). *Children's participation in the analysis, planning and design of programmes. A guide for Save the Children staff*. Save the Children. UNICEF. (2015). *UNICEF procedure for ethical standards in re-search, evaluation, data collection and analysis*. CF/PD/DRP/2015-001, 1 April 2015, Division of Data, Research and Policy, UNICEF. Upadhyay, J. (2006). *Child and youth participation resource guide*. UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Regional Office. Ngutuku, E., & Okwany, A. (2017). Youth as researchers: Navigating generational power issues in adolescent sexuality and reproductive health research. *Childhood in Africa*, 4(1), 70-82.
Lack of knowledge and skill in interpreting data	Mentor children and provide training on data analysis.	
Low education/ literacy rates	Use visual materials, video, or facilitated methodologies to examine key themes or small chunks of data.	
Lack of neutrality and normalisation of experiences of violence	Larger groups help eliminate bias. Start with reflection sessions to identify biases. Familiarise your team with the literature.	

Step six: Dissemination and advocacy

There are numerous ways of involving children in the dissemination of research findings through the development of key messages. These include:

- Designing materials and research outputs (including child-friendly versions)
- Presenting at conferences and child/youth events
- Campaigning for change.

As a result, the findings become more relevant to the day-to-day lives of children and the changes they want to see in their communities. Advocacy is one more mechanism to realise the right to be heard and to influence decisions-making processes, and, hence, it needs to be supported as a human rights obligation.

Table 12 sets out a range of resources useful for the dissemination and advocacy phase of a participatory research project.

Table 12. Resources for the dissemination and advocacy phase of participatory research

Barriers to participation	Overcoming barriers	Resources
Children seen as too young to advocate	There are numerous examples of successful child advocacy – children should not be perceived as powerless.	Evans, R. (2017). Critical reflections on participatory dissemination: Coproducing research messages with young people. In R. Evans & L. Holt (eds), *Methodological Approaches* (pp. 67–96). Singapore: Springer Singapore. Sexual Violence Research Initiative (SVRI). (2018). *Being heard: Engaging young people at SVRI Forum toolkit*. Pretoria: South Africa. Tisdall, E. K. M., & Cuevas-Parra, P. (2019). *Children's participation in ending child marriage: Exploring child activism in Bangladesh*. Uxbridge: World Vision International. Van Blerk, L., & Ansell, N. (2007). Participatory feedback and dissemination with and for children: Reflections from research with young migrants in southern Africa. *Children's Geographies*, 5(3), 313–324. Wright, L. H. V. (2017). Creating space for children and young people's engagement in international conferences. *The International Journal of Human Rights*, 21(1), 47–58.
May increase retaliatory violence or risk of abuse	Ensure that risks are assessed, mitigated and addressed Involve children in defining and mitigating risks. Work with adults, communities and governments to create a supportive and enabling environment for child advocates.	
Conferences designed and timed to attract adults	Educate and build the capacity of conference organisers to respect children's civil rights and freedoms. Involve young people in conference committees. Seek out some of the extensive guidance available for how to support child participation in conferences and meetings.	
Children and young people are intimated by presenting at conferences or in public forums	Ensure that there is budget for advocacy or bursaries for conference participation. Offer training and capacity building for young people on opportunities for engagement (pre-conference/workshop, training on how parliaments or public processes work). Prepare adults and ensure that they understand children's rights and how to support participatory processes.	

Case study: Engaging young people at a major global conference

Youth researchers helped develop standards and a toolkit for engaging young people in research and events on sexual violence. This case study was written by Elizabeth Dartnall.

What was the project?
Every two years, the Sexual Violence Research Initiative (SVRI) hosts the leading global event in the world on sexual and intimate partner violence – the SVRI Forum.

Thanks to a grant from the Oak Foundation, SVRI, in partnership with the International Centre, University of Bedfordshire, launched the Being Heard Project in 2017. SVRI brought 10 youth researchers aged 18–24 years and 5 NGO facilitators to the SVRI Forum 2017 to explore the ethical and meaningful engagement of young people in research and events on sexual violence.

The youth researchers, along with SVRI and partners, developed minimum standards and a toolkit for engaging young people in meaningful and ethical ways at SVRI Forums.

These standards were:

MINIMUM STANDARDS FOR YOUTH PARTICIPATION AT SVRI FORUM

1. Young people have equal opportunity to attend and participate in conferences
2. Young people's engagement is positive and ethical
3. The diversity of young people is recognised
4. Young people's well-being is protected
5. There is accountability to young people
6. The Forum promotes inter-generational openness and is youth-friendly
7. Staff have effective skills, knowledge and capacity for working with youth

Figure 5. Minimum standards for youth participation at SVRI Forum

How did we develop the standards?
Multiple participatory approaches were used at different stages of the project. The steps taken to develop this toolkit included:

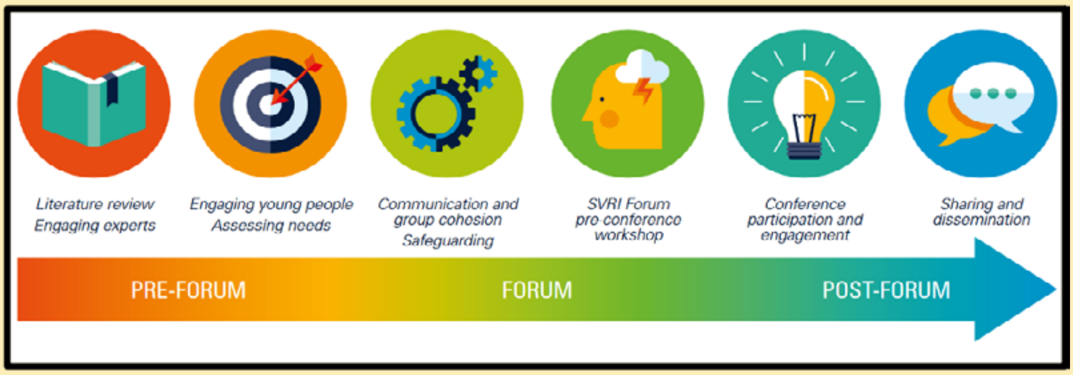


Figure 6. Steps taken to develop toolkit

What resources did the project produce?
This project produced the following resources:

- The Engaging Youth at SVRI Forum Toolkit: This includes a set of principles to guide youth engagement at SVRI Forums, a set of measurable minimum standards for engaging young people before, during and after SVRI Forums, and a safeguarding tool for minimising harm when engaging young people and others at SVRI Forums.
- A literature review on engaging young people in research on sexual violence
- A video series on youth participation at SVRI Forum 2017: Engaging Youth and Minimum Standards

What were some successful examples of youth engagement at the forum?

- **Young people were involved in conference planning** via pre-conference meetings and workshops.
- The use of **participatory activities** created an enabling environment for youth engagement, including a graffiti workshop, a story-telling workshop, and performances by young participants during the closing plenary.
- Developing a **fair and transparent selection process** and **providing bursaries** to enabled young people from different geographical locations, diverse backgrounds, and different genders, abilities and sexual orientations to be involved.
- Developing **safeguarding procedures** created a feeling of safety at the conference.
- Having **youth-focused activities** and **bridging the divide between academics and non-academics** promoted a welcoming environment and opportunities for young people and older adults to interact in mutually respectful ways.
- A **critiquing booth**, created by young people, provided a space where they could give guidance to interested delegates on how to promote youth participation in research on sexual violence.
- Engaging **skilled and qualified staff** who are committed to youth participation, such as a youth participation consultant, ensured that staff directly engaging with youth had the necessary values, skills and capacity to work effectively with young people.

How did the project help young people to communicate their experiences?

Communication tools were developed before and during the Forum to give young people an opportunity to communicate their experiences and the outcomes of their involvement in the conference. When developing communications tools for youth, it is important to ensure that:

- Young people's views are respected and taken seriously (i.e., that there is a supportive and enabling environment)
- Decision-making processes are informed by young people
- Young people understand and see the results of their participation

Expert insight: Evidence-based advocacy to end violence against children

Mr Nahar, MSi – Deputy Ministry of Women Empowerment and Child Protection, explains how Save the Children Indonesia and his government have collaborated to involve children in decision-making forums and strengthen the child protection system.

Sexual violence against children is an issue of particular concern to the Government of Indonesia. Children become vulnerable to sexual violence because they are often positioned as powerless and lack knowledge about danger and self-protection. Sexual violence against children is an iceberg phenomenon, mostly hidden with only a small number of reported cases visible. However, the results of the National Survey on Life Experience of Children and Adolescents in 2018 shows that 2 out of 3 children aged 13–17 years in Indonesia have experienced physical, emotional or sexual violence, which not only occurs in person, but also through indirect contact on digital platforms.

Various efforts have been made by the Indonesian Government to address this problem, including the formulation of policies and the provision of appropriate and integrated services involving all parties (parents and the family environment, the community, as well as local and central governments). In the National Medium-Term Development Plan for 2020–2024, one of the development agendas is to improve the quality of human resources and strengthen the efforts to prevent and respond to various acts of violence, exploitation including child labour and neglect. This commitment demonstrates the seriousness of the Government of Indonesia of ensuring that all children have their rights fulfilled and receive protection from all forms of violence, discrimination, and other maltreatment. Save the Children and the Ministry of Women Empowerment and Child Protection are working together to strengthen the child protection system by building the capacity of service providers to implement the community based child protection model. In several areas they have linked this mechanism to integrated services centres.

What role did children play?
Integrated community-based child protection strategies span a continuum from prevention and early detection, to the management of cases of abuse. Children play a role in this as pioneers and reporters. Children have been supported to report cases of violence and be champions of children's rights. For example, children are appointed as ambassadors for non-violent schools to help reveal the problem of child abuse in the education environment. This form of expression also means that children can critique existing policies related to the prevention and response to violence against children. Children involved in these efforts have a high-level platform to channel their views at the national and international levels. Their efforts are also formally appreciated by the government and are considered in the development of regulations at national and sub-national levels.

How have children's voices shaped policy?
Children provided input during the development of the Ministerial Decree adopted in 2019 on the implementation of Child Forums at the national, provincial, district and village levels. Each Community-based Child Protection Committee includes representatives of the Child Forums to accommodate children's voices into any decision-making process. The role of the Committee is to provide positive parenting training and detect and refer cases. Save the Children has built the capacity of Child Forums to participate and use evidence-based advocacy in a meaningful way. Child Forums are now part of village development plan processes and have been involved in campaigns with civil society organisations to end child marriage.

Section nine:
Working with children in large-scale studies

In the last section we took a closer look at how working with children might be achieved during each phase of a research project. But many of the examples we have drawn on so far have been small-scale projects, as most participatory research with children tends to be.

Yet tracking violence on a global and national level or testing prevention interventions for scaling up requires large-scale studies. Embedding children's perspectives in efforts to monitor the effectiveness of these strategies is essential, as only children can tell us if their lived experience of violence has changed.

In this section, we explore the challenges and opportunities that spring from involving children in large-scale projects. Although less common, there are examples of children's participation in different types of large-scale studies.

We cover the following topics:

- Global goals and the INSPIRE strategies
- Tools to help researchers select a study design and participatory approach
- Suggestions for involving children in large-scale studies
- Resources highlighting best practices for including children in this kind of work

This section includes the following materials:

- A brief note on the importance of large-scale studies in the violence against children field (1 minute read)
- An expert insight into the lessons learnt from the UN Study on Violence against Children (5 minute read)
- Tools and recommendations for involving children in large-scale studies (6 minute read)
- A key resource on strategies for ending violence against children (10 minute read)
- A reading list on involving children in large-scale studies (a selection of longer reads)

Why measuring global goals requires large-scale studies

In 2015, world leaders made a commitment to end all forms of violence against children by 2030 as part of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). To measure our progress towards achieving these goals, we need large-scale studies on the prevalence of violence against children and the effect of our efforts to eliminate violence.

The Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children was established to coordinate global efforts to end violence against children and create peaceful societies by 2030. The End Violence Partnership seeks to create a platform for collaboration and joint learning to implement a range of measures to reduce all forms of violence against children.

At the same time as End Violence was established, WHO launched INSPIRE, a set of seven evidence-based strategies for countries and communities working to eliminate violence against children. It was created by 10 agencies with a long history of child protection work, but without a dedicated child participation component. INSPIRE serves as a technical package and guidebook for implementing effective, comprehensive programming and comes with a set of indicators to measure progress.

For us to understand the efficacy of these measures we need to consult with children about what to measure and how. The best known example of involving children in international studies is the UN Study on Violence against Children.

Expert insight: How children were involved in a global study on violence against children

Alana Kapell and Clare Feinstein share their reflections on child participation in the UN Study on Violence against Children.

How were children involved in the UN Study on Violence against Children?
In 2003, the UN initiated its global Study on Violence against Children. The study represented the first global attempt to document the reality of violence against children. The team organising this process recognised that to truly comprehend such violence they would have to find ways to safely engage children and understand their perspectives.

From 2004 to 2006, several thousand people, including children and young people, contributed to the UN Study during numerous community, national and global initiatives and consultations, including nine regional consultations. Children made clear recommendations about the ways in which violence affects them and the actions required to end and prevent all forms of violence against children. Their experiences were heard and considered, their recommendations were reflected in the UN Study's final report, and their ongoing participation continues to inform efforts to end violence against children.

What did children do?
Children and young people took on many different roles during the UN Study process – as advisors, documenters, advocates, respondents, researchers, and facilitators, as well as active participants during national, regional and global consultations. Children made clear recommendations about how they thought violence could be stopped at each level of the process. They also demonstrated their knowledge and experiences by sharing examples of the work they were supporting at the community and national levels to end violence.

What were the key success factors?

- **Partnering with community-level child groups, structures/organisations or projects:** The team made the deliberate choice to reach out and partner with children who were already taking action to end violence. By doing this, we were able to ensure that the opportunities provided by the UN Study were relevant to children and could potentially enhance their ongoing efforts. This approach also allowed us to explore more collaborative/child-led ways of working and to develop a long-term strategy whereby the findings and follow up processes linked to the UN Study could be taken forward by children at the community level (i.e., local to global and back to local).

- **Building the capacity of adults:** Too often we focus only on supporting children to build the skills and knowledge required to participate in research. Working with adults, however, is also key to success. Training was provided to decision makers and key people involved in the UN Study on the importance of children's participation and how to support their views. Efforts were also made to ensure that the adults in the children's communities (e.g., parents, carers, teachers, community elders, leaders) understood the process and were supportive of the children's participation.

- **Child-led selection and nominations:** As much as possible, children decided who would represent them in key processes, high-level meetings and events. A peer-led selection process supported more inclusive representation; safer engagement, collaboration with and support among children; and more sustainable outcomes and follow up processes.

- **Dedicated resources and expertise:** Dedicated funding and child participation expertise helped our efforts immensely. The 'translation' of resources (e.g., into local languages, child-friendly, accessible materials) was always a top priority and a dedication coordinator/expert on participation helped ensure a quality process. During one meeting we needed three levels of translation for one child: English to local language to sign language!

- **Commitment to safety and protection:** Child safeguarding procedures were built into every process involving children. Child safeguarding committees were established with procedures for risk assessments, incident reporting and protecting children from harm.

What were the main achievements related to children's participation?
Children's participation and the UN Study are incontrovertibly linked, and it is evident that, as a result, children's participation has been further institutionalised within UN processes. Many actions were taken by governments, UN agencies, civil society and child-led organisations to support the ongoing participation of children in all efforts to prevent and eliminate violence. Regional and national processes (established during the UN Study) still exist today as a means of supporting children's participation in the follow-up to the UN Study and to end violence.

Our evaluation and documentation during the UN Study helped to shape and define a seminal tool for defining quality child participation – the nine basic requirements (see Section two, p. 14).

The UN Study resulted in a set of 12 overarching recommendations that outline broad actions that all States must take to prevent and respond to violence against children, including:

Recommendation #7: Ensure the participation of children

I recommend that States actively engage with children and respect their views in all aspects of prevention, response and monitoring of violence against them, taking into account article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Children's organisations and child-led initiatives to address violence, guided by the best interests of the child, should be supported and encouraged. (Pinheiro, 2006, p. 20)

In all regions of the world, children continue to engage in advocacy efforts to increase awareness, action and understanding about violence against children. We are witnessing more initiatives that help to build the capacity of children to effectively engage with decision makers and support dialogue and action within their communities. Crucially, we see, with increasing frequency, that children are no longer being viewed as the mere subjects of adult-led research, but innovative methodologies have been developed to meaningfully partner with children in data collection and research, including methodologies for child-led processes.

For more information see: Feinstein, C. (2008). *Progress or progression: Reviewing children's participation in the UN Study on Violence against Children, 2003–2006*. Stockholm: Save the Children Sweden.

Tools to help researchers select a study design and participatory approach

The End Violence Methods Menu provides guidance to national leaders and stakeholders who are looking to measure the prevalence of violence against children, including physical, sexual and emotional violence. The Menu presents the existing quantitative tools (school-based, home-based and community surveys) to measure the prevalence of violence against children and related factors included in the INSPIRE indicators.

Note, the scope for child participation in national surveys and large-scale quantitative research is limited as these surveys are designed to be implemented using internationally comparable instruments and require complex management.

Two possible approaches to designing studies and participatory research are presented below: the first is to adopt a consultative approach by involving children and young people in an advisory committee. The second is to design complementary participatory research in which children are included in the design of a set of child-centred indicators.

Key resource: INSPIRE: Seven strategies for ending violence against children — Technical Package

INSPIRE provides seven strategies for ending violence against children. It is an evidence-based technical package to support countries in their efforts to prevent and respond to violence against children aged 0–17 years. The package includes: the core document describing what the INSPIRE strategies and interventions are; an implementation handbook that provides details on how to implement the interventions; and a set of INSPIRE indicators to measure the reduction of violence.

Figure 7. INSPIRE Technical Package

The advisory approach

Even if using a standardised survey, a child and youth advisory committee could meaningfully advise on recruitment strategies, participant information, and consent procedures. Children could be included in the interpretation of findings and dissemination and advocacy, especially when fulfilling the ethical commitment of sharing findings with the subjects of the research (see case study on ICCRP in Section two, p. 25). Once established, the committee gains expertise and knowledge that can be used in multiple studies over a period of time.

Oliveras, Cluver, Bernays, and Armstrong (2018) reflect on over a decade of working with their Teen Advisory Group on a variety of HIV studies including randomised control trials. These youth have advised on multiple co-designed research questions, questionnaires, and researcher training programmes, as well as the dissemination of the results of research studies. Every year, the team organises a weekend camp for 20–30 adolescents, youth and their younger siblings. These camps included activities to engage youth with planning, enacting, and disseminating the results of research studies interspersed with fun activities and a range of sports and games, to maintain energy and excitement. Preparatory workshops help children know more about violence against children, develop their confidence and skills to enable them to express ideas, and prepare for the consultations with adults (Feinstein, 2014). Online platforms can be used to include members in multiple countries, where sessions should include research-focused activities, fun, and learning opportunities for the participants (Collins et al., 2020).

Complementary child-centred indicators or qualitative insights

Work in the Philippines highlighted that children have different perspectives on how to measure the success of violence prevention initiatives and what works (Third et al., 2020). The team developed and piloted a set of child-centred indicators to complement the INSPIRE core indicators, bringing a child-centred lens to monitoring and reporting efforts. They conducted a series of 14 participatory workshops with children and adults to creatively explore children's experiences and perceptions of violence, map their aspirations for change, construct strategies for addressing violence in their communities, and develop child-centred indicators to measure the effectiveness of violence reduction initiatives. In addition to creating a child-centred monitoring tool, the team reported that the process supported the effective localisation of WHO's INSPIRE strategies.

Children have also been involved in the adaptation of survey tools in the Children's Worlds International Survey on Children's Well-Being (isciweb.org). The study team engaged children in an extended process to adapt and evaluate the survey questions (Savahl et al., 2019). Interestingly, the questions proposed by the children had the highest response rates. The same team (Benninger & Savahl, 2017b) also describe how they used the Delphi technique – small group discussions with a panel of experts – with a group of 10 children aged 10–12 years who were considered to be the experts on their own lives, with valuable knowledge and a deep insight, understanding, and experience of being a young person in their communities. The children had participated in all stages of the larger child participation research project, which provided them with substantial in-depth knowledge with regard to the subjective experiences of other children within their respective communities. This technique could be used to solicit data to complement the quantitative data.

Recommendations on how to include children in large-scale studies

As explored throughout this pack, the nine basic requirements (see Section two, Table 1, p. 14) are a key tool for define quality participation in any research effort. Their guidance is equally applicable in large-scale studies.

There are several additional recommendations to guide large-scale studies:

- From the onset, it is vital to **recognise and support children as social actors and partners** and prioritise their participation.
- **Hire dedicated staff and child participation experts** responsible for the meaningful inclusion of children. Budget for and employ a **children's participation coordinator/expert**.
- Ensure that there is **sufficient funding** to cover children's participation including travel to international events, translators/interpreters and dedicated facilitators.
- Manage the project with **enough time** to consult with multiple stakeholders and support capacity building efforts.
- Have **dedicated spaces or preparatory workshops** to help children understand the research process and formulate their responses.
- Ensure that children are **invited to all of the decision-making forums** and that their participation is fully funded.
- Where there are tiered consultations (i.e., national, regional and international) or selection processes, children should be able **to nominate and select their representatives** (i.e., peer-to-peer selection processes).
- Children should have an **equal say**, i.e., they should be full delegates in intergenerational forums, especially when they are under-represented.

Reading list: Involving children in large-scale studies

These materials go into the practicalities of involving children in large-scale studies in more detail.

Ben-Arieh, A., Casas, F., Rees, G., & Bradshaw, J. (2019, 31 December). Children's worlds: The International Survey of Children's Well-Being. PowerPoint Presentation. PowerPoint Presentation. International Society for Child Indicators (ISCI).

This short presentation outlines the history of the International Survey of Children's Well-Being, a multi-country study that collected data from over 90,000 kids aged 8, 10 and 12 from 21 countries.

Collins, T. M., Jamieson, L., Wright, L. H. V., Rizzini, I., Mayhew, A., Narang, J., . . . & Ruiz-Casares, M. (2020). Involving child and youth advisors in academic research about child participation: The Child and Youth Advisory Committees of the International and Canadian Child Rights Partnership. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 109, 104569.

This article explores the role and contributions of Child and Youth Advisory Committees (CYACs) in the research process. It discusses the establishment of CYACs and how they supported a three-year multi-country research project addressing children's rights to participation and protection, as well as the monitoring of this connection internationally in several countries in the Global South and North: Brazil, Canada, China and South Africa.

Laws, S., & Mann, G. (2004). *So you want to involve children in research? A toolkit supporting children's meaningful and ethical participation in research relating to violence against children*. Stockholm: Save the Children Sweden.

Save the Children produced this toolkit to encourage meaningful and ethical participation by children in work around violence against children, and particularly in the UN Study on Violence Against Children.

The toolkit draws on case studies from around the world to put forward ideas on how children can be involved in primary and secondary research. Among the strengths of this toolkit is its practical approach and commitment to including children at all stages of the Secretary-General's study.

Oliveras, C., Cluver, L., Bernays, S., & Armstrong, A. (2018). Nothing about us without RIGHTS – Meaningful engagement of children and youth: From research prioritization to clinical trials, implementation science, and policy**.** *Journal of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndromes* (1999), 78 Suppl 1(1), S27–S31.

This article presents six basic requirements for the meaningful engagement of youth in guiding research and policy. These requirements were co-developed by the children and young people living with or affected by HIV who worked with researchers in Southern Africa. They called these requirements RIGHTS, meaning that participation should be: resourced, impactful, genuine, harmless, teen friendly, and skills building. The group worked together for over a decade and applied their principles in clinical trials, observational studies, implementation science, service delivery, and policy development.

Savahl, S., Adams, S., Benninger, E., Florence, M., Jackson, K., Manuel, D., . . . & Isobell, D. (2019). Researching children's subjective well-being in South Africa: Considerations for method, theory, and social policy. In I. Eloff (ed.), *Handbook of Quality of Life in African Societies* (pp. 407–430). Cham: Springer International Publishing.

This chapter explores the importance of researching children's subjective perceptions of well-being. It considers the current methods of engaging with children about their subjective perceptions of various aspects of their lives, outlines the status of theoretical advancement, and importantly, considers the implications for social policy. The authors advocate for a focus on participatory methodologies and argue for increased investment in research using these methodologies. Finally, they recommend that an effective child indicator system should include a consideration of subjective well-being and follow a 'rights based' approach.

Third, A., Lala, G., Collin, P., De los Reyes, P., & Hemady, C. (2020). *Child-centred indicators for violence prevention: Summary report on a Living Lab in the City of Valenzuela, Philippines*. Sydney: Western Sydney University.

This report describes the Living Lab process used in Valenzuela, the Philippines. It summarises the key findings of workshop held with children, presents the critical issues and a preliminary list of indicators co-developed with child and adult stakeholders, and reflects on the strengths and limitations of the Living Lab process in promoting better, more inclusive violence prevention and response.

Optional exercise

Consider alone or discuss in a group how the following relates to your research work:

- Is children's participation fully funded? Are children able to participate equitably in all decision-making processes?
- Have you considered the need to protect children from harm and support them with issues arising from the study or in their own lives? If needed, how will children access support?
- Have you reviewed each of the nine basic requirements and incorporated them into you planning processes?
- What provisions have been made to ensure that children can communicate in their own language? Are the translators child-friendly?
- Do you have a plan to build the capacity of adult stakeholders at local, national and international levels and to ensure that they respect children and young people?
- What skills or knowledge will children and young people learn from being part of this process?
- How will you ensure that children and young people's participation is impactful?

Section ten:
Child-friendly resources

Up until now, we have covered a range of issues relating to the design and execution of research with children, primarily focusing on resources aimed at the people designing and planning research.

In this section, we consider a different primary audience: children who are taking part in research. Our original intention when setting out to develop this resource was to create a section 'for children'. But while a few of these resources do exist, our review uncovered a notable lack of tools specifically for children.

We cover the following topics:

- A few resources designed specifically for children
- Key resources that support child-friendly processes, methodologies and information sharing

This section includes the following materials:

- A series of resource list relating to different kinds of materials (each a selection of longer reads)
- A case study on using the Participatory Photography Assessment Tool (P-PAT) (7 minute read)

If children and young people are to participate meaningfully in research, they need to have access to information and opportunities to gain skills and learn about research, and they need to receive support through fun and interactive methodologies.

Resource list: 'How to' guides on working with children

The resources in this section focus on how to work with children when conducting research.

Child led data collection: A guide for young people to learn how to do research and create positive change

This manual was developed by Save the Children to support young people, adults and organisations to better understand child led data collection (CLDC) and the important role young people have in collecting information about their lives and telling others about their realities.

Young people can use this manual to understand data collection and learn step-by-step how to do it. Adults or civil society organisations can use the manual to support young people and help guide them as they work on CLDC.

The manual (which is available in English and Arabic) takes the reader through a series of simple steps, training activities and the resources needed to get started with CLDC. The methodology is child friendly and produces qualitative and quantitative evidence. Policies and programmes can then use this evidence to focus on the needs that children themselves have expressed and reported in detail.

Participatory action research – A 'how to' guide for use with adolescents in humanitarian contexts

Save the Children based this 'how to' guide on lessons learnt while implementing a project using participatory action research with adolescents affected by the Syria crisis in Egypt and Lebanon. The report provides an overview of participatory action research – what it is and how it can be applied in work with adolescents and youth in humanitarian contexts.

It identifies the lessons learnt from the implementation of the Young Voices survey and highlights key recommendations for building the capacity of young researchers to design and conduct research, analyse data, and conduct outreach and advocacy based on the findings.

Children and young people-led research methodology – An easy guide for young researchers

This World Vision guide supports children and young people, aged 12–18 years, to conduct their own research projects to end violence against children or on other topics. The guide includes learnings and feedback from young researchers from Bangladesh, Lebanon and Jordan.

It’s time to talk! – Children’s views on children’s work – Toolkit

This research toolkit has been developed to support agencies in organising and implementing child-friendly consultations with children and young people aged 5–17 years who have experience of child labour, whether paid or unpaid, including chores to help their parents or other caregivers. This research toolkit includes:

- Background information about the purpose of the consultations with children, the research questions and proposed relevant consultation tools
- Guidance for organising consultation teams and for applying basic requirements for the effective and ethical participation of children
- Optional consultation plans
- Detailed descriptions for each of the main consultation activities
- Annexes with games and energisers, and other useful resources

Searching together: Formative dialogue research made easy

In this child-friendly publication, you can read about the formative dialogue research method. The publication is the result of a collective process to understand the method and includes examples from children and young people in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Guatemala, Nepal and Uganda.

Operations manual on children’s participation in consultations

This manual serves as a guide for NGOs and other stakeholders who intend to involve children in consultation meetings and workshops. It contains specific steps and procedures to ensure that consultation processes are ethical and meaningful for children. Section two of this manual shares guidance on how to develop child-friendly materials.

Youth research slam

This guide provides a model for engaging experiential youth in community-based research. McCreary’s Youth Research Academy (YRA) is a group of youth aged 16–24 years with government care experience who are involved in research projects aimed at improving the lives of youth in and from care. YRA members learn community-based research skills and conduct community-based research projects of interest to youth in care and the organisations that serve them.

Resource list: Child-friendly methodologies

The resources in this section focus on specific tools and methodologies, backed by evidence, that you can use during research with children.

A toolkit for monitoring and evaluating children's participation

This toolkit (which consists of six booklets) provides a conceptual framework for measuring children's participation, together with guidance on how to undertake monitoring and evaluation and practical tools that can help you gather the information you need. It can be used by organisations working directly with children, by child-led and youth-led organisations, and by governments that are committed to fulfilling their obligation to respect children's right to participate.

Booklet 5 provides a range of tools that you can use with different stakeholders, especially children and young people, to gather and analyse information. It introduces some core monitoring and evaluation tools such as interviews, focus group discussions, observation, surveys, and stories of most significant change.

Booklet 6, which is compiled by the African Movement of Working Children and Youth in Nigeria, is divided into three parts:

- Part 1 – Children and young people's experiences of piloting the tools
- Part 2 – Children and young people's advice to facilitators
- Part 3 – A guide for children and young people: what you should expect from adults when they work with you

A kit of tools: For participatory research and evaluation with children, young people and adults

This resource is the result of a two-year thematic evaluation and documentation of children's participation in armed conflict, post conflict and peace building undertaken by Save the Children Norway from 2006 to 2008 in four countries: Bosnia-Herzegovina, Guatemala, Nepal and Uganda.

The main aims were to improve Save the Children Norway's work on children's participation, strengthen existing and future projects and policies, promote the rights of children affected by armed conflict, and ensure that children's rights were prioritised in peace building by making children's documentation of their experiences and contributions a part of their nation's history.

Growing up on the streets: Knowledge exchange training pack

This training pack aims to prepare street children and youth to recognise the value of their own experiences and the importance of their position as experts on their own lives, with the ability to act as spokespeople for themselves and their peers. By developing skills to collate this collective experience and share it with others – including policymakers, service providers and other stakeholders – the aim is for street children and youth to be more directly involved in informing and shaping the decisions that affect their lives.

This open source training pack is free to download and use with the appropriate attribution. However, please note that the pack is intended to be used by those who already have expertise in training and working with street children and youth. Organisations requiring help or support in using this material are invited to contact StreetInvest at info@streetinvest.org. Further information about Growing up on the Streets, including briefing papers outlining the project's research principles and methodology, can be found at: streetinvest.org/resource/growing-up-on-the-streets/.

U-Report

U-Report is an instant messaging engagement tool run by UNICEF in over 40 countries. Through different mobile and/or Internet-based channels, UNICEF and partners send opinion polls to children and adolescents on diverse issues. Responses are collected in real time, and automatically aggregated and published on a website.

Resource list: Including children in advocacy and campaigning

While there may be a lack of resources for children related to research, there are numerous guides and tools that support children's efforts to create change by advocating and campaigning for their rights. These tools can be shared with children during the early stages of a research initiative and will support them in defining the purpose of their project, their intended audience and the change they themselves want to see.

Youth Advocacy Guide

The Youth Advocacy Guide seeks to help youth tackle the problems they see in their communities. The guide was co-created with young Africans of varying ages, with different lived experiences, and a passion for change. It aims to empower young people with skills to bring about positive change in their lives and communities. The guide describes the processes of fact-finding, planning, engaging with policy, building momentum, and making individual lifestyle choices. It is available in English, French and Portuguese. For more information see: voicesofyouth.org/tools-resources.

One step beyond: Advocacy handbook for children and young people

This Advocacy Handbook for children and young people was created by Save the Children's Global Task Group on Violence against Children. It can be used by anyone (expert or beginner) who wants to take action and create positive change. The handbook is also designed for adults who want to support children and young people in their advocacy work and who want to improve their own advocacy projects.

Campaign Planner for Children

This resource by Save the Children helps you to apply a child-centred approach to campaign planning, in which children have the tools, resources and confidence to develop and implement their own effective campaigns in safe and meaningful ways.

Guide to Girl-Centered Advocacy

Published by Let Girls Lead, this guide to girl-centred advocacy contains a full capacity-building curriculum that engages girls and their allies in strategic advocacy to improve girls' lives around the world. Let Girls Lead emphasises integrated social justice values, a human rights framework, and a gender-focused lens.

Comprised of 15 chapters, the guide contains in-depth information about a girl-centred advocacy project. Accompanying the guide are PowerPoints and videos to guide implementation and provide examples (digital stories) of the need for advocacy in society.

Case study: Using the Participatory Photography Assessment Tool (P-PAT)

The Participatory Photography Assessment Tool (P-PAT) is a cost-effective, developmentally appropriate, and context-sensitive visual method, developed to facilitate the participation of young children in protection research. This case study was written by Mónica Ruiz-Casares

What is P-PAT?

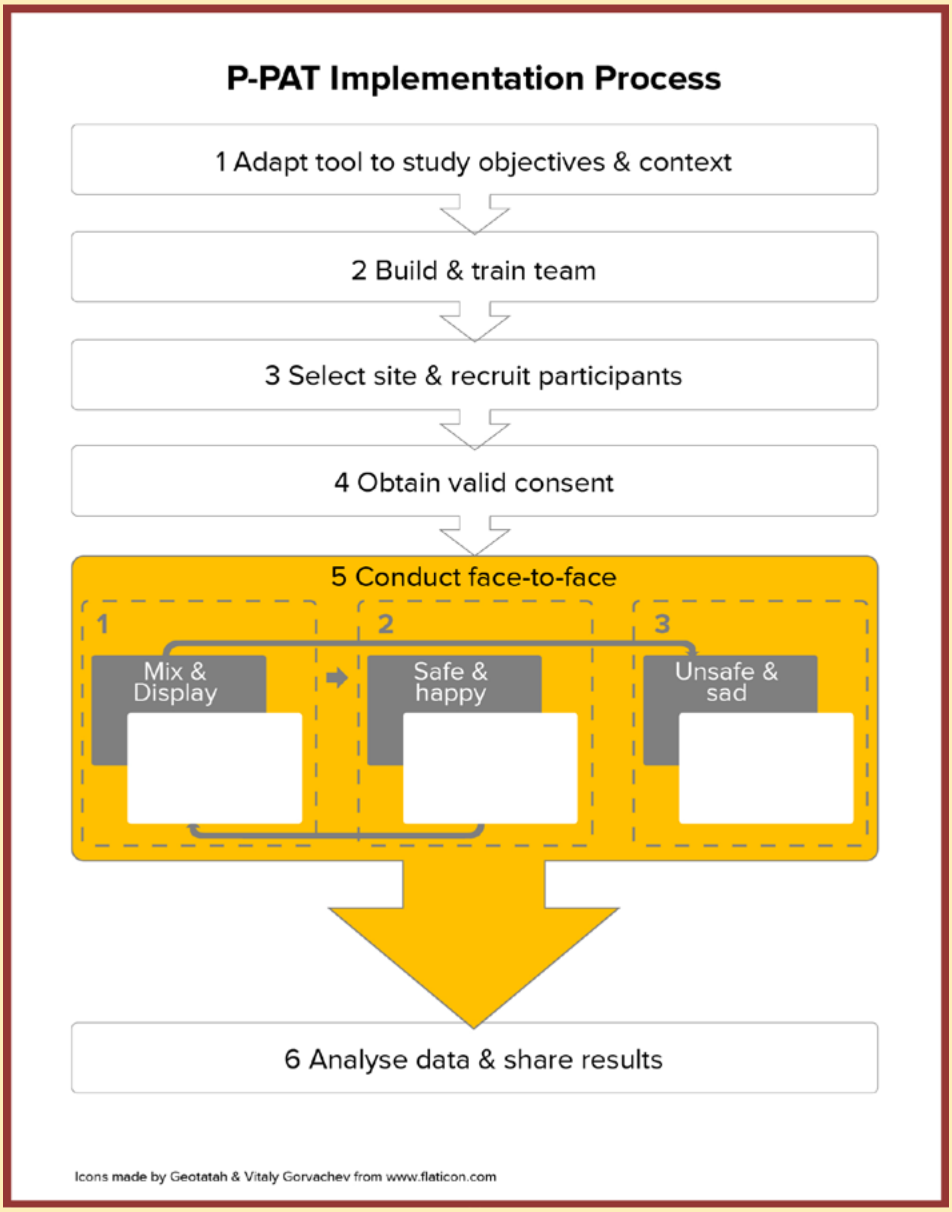
P-PAT uses a set of 60+ photographs or drawings (including some duplicates) representing both supportive and non-supportive objects and situations relevant to the study. These images can be obtained from existing repositories or developed by the research team. Involving children and young people in the initial selection of images can enhance the method and ensure that the selection of images is appropriate to the local cultural and context.

How do you use P-PAT?

Figure 8 outlines the steps needed to adapt and use P-PAT, with special attention to the face-to-face data collection stage. The whole set of images is displayed on a flat surface (e.g., table or mat) and each child is asked to select one image that represents safety. Then, sitting in a circle, each child is invited to describe their image and explain why s/he selected it; all participants are asked whether the situation represented in that image occurs in their community. After all children have had the chance to participate, all photographs are displayed again and children asked to select one image that represents risk. Crucial to P-PAT is the use of the full set of images to explore both feelings of safety and risk. It is important for facilitators and note-takers not to show surprise and apply judgment about right/wrong answers, but rather to listen carefully to children.

What is the value of using P-PAT?

Research using P-PAT in Liberia and Laos (Ruiz-Casares et al., 2013; Ruiz-Casares, 2016) shows that some images prompted heated debate. These discussions generated new information that resulted in a more nuanced analysis of the data, in which researchers questioned their own assumptions as well as prevailing adult-centric interpretations.



Icons made by Geotatah & Vitaly Gorvachev from www.flaticon.com

Figure 8. Steps in the Implementation of P-PAT

Acronyms

CLDC	child led data collection
CYAC	Child and Youth Advisory Committee
ECPAT	End Child Prostitution and Trafficking
ERIC	Ethical Research Involving Children
ICCRP	International and Canadian Child Rights Partnership
NDP	National Development Plan
NGO	non-government organisation
PAR	participatory action research
P-PAT	Participatory Photography Assessment Tool
SVRI	Sexual Violence Research Initiative
TEGA	Technology Enabled Girl Ambassadors
UN	United Nations
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
VAC	violence against children
WHO	World Health Organization

Resources by theme

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Technical notes

Internet search strategy

The search strategy aimed to find both academic and grey literature. The databases searched included: EBSCO: Academic Search Premier, EBSCO: Africa-Wide Information, EBSCO: CINAHL Complete, EBSCO: Health Source [nursing/academic], EBSCO: Humanities International, EBSCO: Masterfile, EBSCO: SOC Index, EBSCO: CINAHL, Google, Google Scholar, PubMed and SCOPUS.

Primary search terms: child participation in research on violence against children, child participation, research, violence against children, violence prevention, tool, child researchers, child and youth advisory committees, and child participatory research.

Full list of keywords: child participation in research on violence against children tool, child participation research violence against children, child researchers, child and youth advisory committees for violence against children, child participatory research violence against children, violence against children, children on the street, violence against children orphans, violence against children child marriage, participatory research violence orphans and vulnerable children, child involvement in analysis violence research, child involvement in analysis violence against children, and participatory research violence against children.

Additionally, the team searched organisational databases including academic institutions, international non-governmental organisations, networks and UN agencies. The following have a rich repository that researchers may find useful:

Child Rights International Network – home.crin.org

ECPAT International – www.ecpat.org/resources

Ethical Research Involving Children – childethics.com/

Our Voices – www.our-voices.org.uk/

Participatory Methods – www.participatorymethods.org/

Save the Children – resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/

Sexual Violence Research Initiative – www.svri.org/documents/svri-resources

Call for evidence

Experts in the field were invited to identify examples of best practice and resources for inclusion. Resources were selected for inclusion if they addressed violence against children and utilised child-participatory research methods or address only one of these issues but contain information that is applicable to participatory research on violence against children. Additionally, toolkits that addressed these topics were also included.

End Violence Against Children

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children's institute
child rights in focus
Research • Advocacy • Education

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