

# Child Participation in Safeguarding

A global conference on children  
and young people's participation  
in safeguarding

[Interactive summary](#)

## Acknowledgements

We would like to thank Porticus and the members of the organising committee for their support and contributions which made this event possible: Arigatou International, Hintalovon Foundation, Kids Alive International, SOS Children's Villages International, Terre des Hommes, Villages of Hope Africa and WePROTECT Global Alliance.

Thank you to all the speakers for their contributions and to all the participants for their commitment to continue to strengthen child safeguarding in their organisations around the world.

Between 6 – 8 September 2022, Keeping Children Safe (KCS) hosted an online global summit on Child Participation in Safeguarding.

With 52 speakers from almost 30 countries, where children and youth, as the protagonists, offered exceptional insight and perspectives on key issues around participation and safeguarding, the event was a fantastic opportunity for participants to expand their knowledge on the importance of child participation in safeguarding and how to implement this in their organisations. It also provided a unique opportunity for organisations to share best practices, it could be challenges, successful experiences and resources.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) not only includes the right for children to be protected from violence, it also includes that children have the right to have their opinions taken into account in matters that affect them, including on the development of child safeguarding measures. Organisations that do not consult with children to identify child abuse risks or when they are developing or evaluating safeguarding measures are not only failing as duty-bearers, they will inevitably have a less robust child safeguarding framework in place.

Most importantly, the summit offered children and young people from across the world an opportunity to put direct questions to practitioners and share their views and experiences of safeguarding.

The Child Participation in Safeguarding 2022 global summit was the first step in a three-year child participation programme developed by [Keeping Children Safe](#).

To produce this outcome document each speaker was asked to submit a summary of their presentation, covering the main points addressed and key takeaways, while panel summaries were produced by moderators or KCS staff. Keeping Children Safe does not endorse any of the statements made.

All organisations have the responsibility to protect children and while the majority do everything they can to keep them safe, too many still have critical gaps in child safeguarding – putting children at risk from harm. If you are concerned about children in your organisation, with our [expert-led online training](#) and support we will help you recognise the risks of child abuse, close child safeguarding gaps, and put children first in everything you do.

The complete Child Participation in Safeguarding summit is available online for free on-demand view! [↗](#)

Requires registration.

## Contents

Click on the items below to go straight to the content that interests you the most.

### 6 September 2022

- 10 [Video statement by the Special Representative of the Secretary General on Violence against Children](#)  
**Talk:** [United Nations](#)
- 11 [Why child and youth participation is critical to effective child safeguarding](#)  
**Talk:** [Keeping Children Safe](#)
- 12 [Children's rights to participate: the International Legal Framework](#)  
**Talk:** [University of Reading](#)
- 13 [A presentation by Child Rights Connect](#)  
**Talk:** [Child Rights Connect](#)
- 14 [Eurochild Children's Council](#)  
**Talk:** [Eurochild](#)
- 15 [Children on risk assessment: guidelines on informing and designing programmes from a child safeguarding approach](#)  
**Talk:** [Keeping Children Safe](#)
- 16 [Sharing power with young people](#)  
**Talk:** [KidsAlive](#)

- 17 [Children want to participate in child safeguarding](#)

**Talk:** [Villages of Hope Africa](#)

- 19 [The voices of youth: a talk about gender-based violence and child marriage](#)

**Panel:** [USAID Digital Youth Council](#), [Theirworld](#), [Keeping Children Safe](#)

- 22 [Safeguarding interventions for communities: perspectives from a digital native generation](#)

**Panel:** [USAID Digital Council](#), [Black Girls Dream Initiative](#)

- 25 [Live Q&A panels and other talks](#)

### 7 September 2022

- 28 [Ensuring child safeguarding through child participation](#)

**Talk:** [Social Work Institute](#)

- 29 [Teaching child rights through music, dance and creative media](#)

**Talk:** [Children at Risk Action Network \(CRANE\)](#)

- 30 [Creating safe environments in Healthcare Clowning through safeguarding](#)

**Talk:** [Red Noses Clowndoctors International](#)

# Contents

Click on the items below to go straight to the content that interests you the most.

|                  |   |    |   |
|------------------|---|----|---|
| 31               | <a href="#">A presentation by Divina Maloum</a><br><b>Talk:</b> Children for Peace  | 43 | <a href="#">Monitoring and Evaluation of safeguarding programmes involving children</a><br><b>Talk:</b> Keeping Children Safe   |
| 33               | <a href="#">The participation of children and young people in the Ombuds Project</a><br><b>Talk:</b> SOS Children's Villages Benin  | 44 | <a href="#">How to make a child safeguarding policy applicable, likeable and child-friendly? A case study from Hungary</a><br><b>Talk:</b> Hintalovon Foundation  |
| 35               | <a href="#">The role of faith communities in creating safe and empowering experiences for children</a><br><b>Panel:</b> Arigatou International, Global Network of Religions for Children (GNRC), End Poverty Initiative | 45 | <a href="#">Making an impact for children in Europe</a><br><b>Talk:</b> Terre des Hommes  |
| 37               | <a href="#">Live Q&amp;A panels and other talks</a>   | 46 | <a href="#">Child participation in safeguarding in European Football</a><br><b>Talk:</b> UEFA   |
| 8 September 2022 |   |    |   |
| 40               | <a href="#">How children can actively participate in resolving conflicts around the world: the case of Cameroon</a><br><b>Talk:</b> Students and Youth Empowerment Forum SYEF   | 48 | <a href="#">Child participation in safeguarding: the role of the state</a><br><b>Panel:</b> European Commission – DG CONNECT – Communications Network Content and Technology, The General Secretariat of the Minister of Interior of the United Arab Emirates, Keeping Children Safe                              |
| 41               | <a href="#">Smart Children Club</a><br><b>Talk:</b> Child Space Organization  | 51 | <a href="#">Authentically engaging youth for effective youth-adult partnership panel</a><br><b>Panel:</b> GARYSE Chafee Independent Living Program of the Georgia Division of Family and Children Services, The Metamorphosis Initiative, Georgia Peers Advocating for Change, Multi-Agency Alliance for Children |
| 42               | <a href="#">Children have unheard voices – Dare to listen</a><br><b>Talk:</b> Elgon Centre for Education  | 54 | <a href="#">Live Q&amp;A panels and other talks</a>   |





6 September 2022



# Video Statement by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children



**Najat Maalla M'jid**  
**United Nations**

*Special Representative of the Secretary-General  
on Violence Against Children*



Dear colleagues and friends

It is a great pleasure for me to contribute to this global summit on Child Participation in Safeguarding. Child participation is not an optional extra when it comes to child safeguarding. It is a must. Children have the right to be involved, to be informed and to have their say while staying safe, as enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).

One of the most important achievements of the Convention was reframing how we understand children's agency and their power. Children went from being passive recipients of services to individual rights-holders with a voice. The message of protection, participation and empowerment also cuts across the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, whose 17 interlinked goals echo the interdependent rights set out in the CRC.

But ensuring the involvement of children in the design, implementation and monitoring of child safeguarding policies is not just a question of guaranteeing children's rights. It also brings

other benefits, such as guaranteeing the quality, effectiveness and legitimacy of the process. Enabling and promoting the participation of children must include establishing what safety means to children, what they think adults should do to keep them safe, and what they think the role of peer support and child-led action should be. It must include educating and informing children about their rights. It must include providing safe, inclusive and empowering pathways for them to provide their input, as well as to make complaints and report concerns.

No doubt, many organisations have adopted this approach. But efforts overall are still not good enough. Child participation and involvement must be a continuous and cross-cutting feature of organisational child safeguarding. We need to institutionalise sound, child participation practice. We need to share good experiences and learn from each other. We need to ensure the children who are involved are representative of diverse backgrounds. Both online and offline, children are already acting through peer-to-peer and child-led initiatives to support each other, share information, raise awareness, and overcome the stigma and barriers that exist to reporting incidents of violence.

We must continue to empower children as part of the solution. They are the experts who know what works, what does not work and what needs to be done.

So, listen to them, involve them and empower them! Thank you.

# Why child and youth participation is critical to effective child safeguarding

**Sarah Blakemore**  
**Keeping Children Safe**  
CEO



I want to begin by thanking our organising committee, all our speakers and everyone who is attending the conference from around the world. I hope you find it interesting and valuable.

This event on child participation is our second ever online [thematic event](#). The first one was on child safeguarding and faith and we are looking forward to our next global conference on the same topic [in Spanish](#) in the coming months. We are also developing a conference on [child safeguarding in national child protection systems](#) early next year and I hope you will be able to join us then.

For those of you watching who are not familiar with our work, Keeping Children Safe is an independent global not for profit, focused solely on child safeguarding. We work with thousands of organisations of all types and sizes and in every region of the world. From community libraries, to schools, relief and development agencies, peacekeeping forces and militaries.

Our work is guided by our [International Child Safeguarding Standards](#) and our [independent committee of expert child safeguarding practitioners](#). Together with our trustees and

members we are absolutely committed to putting the best interests, and the voices of children and young people, at the heart of all that we do. And that is part of the reason for this conference

We believe that child and youth participation in safeguarding is absolutely critical for four main reasons.

First, under the UNCRC it is an absolute right for children and young people to be consulted on matters that impact them...and for us as duty bearers, it is our responsibility. Second, it makes our safeguarding measures more effective. If we do not listen carefully to children and young people and be sure to take their concerns seriously... when we develop projects and assess safeguarding risks, we will be missing vital safeguarding information. And third, children and young people can help us develop more effective and appropriate safeguarding frameworks including prevention to investigation and response. Finally, we know that organisational culture has a profound impact on safeguarding in organisations. Treating children and young people with dignity and respect and listening to their ideas and concerns is an essential part of building a safe organisational culture.

So, the aim of this conference is bring together practitioners and academics from around the world to talk more about how we can do this in our organisations as well as offer young people a platform to ask us about their concerns and share their ideas and feedback to us.

The materials and presentations will remain online as a resource for practitioners across the world.



# Children's rights to participate: the International Legal Framework



**Alison Bisset**

**University of Reading**

*Associate Professor in International Human Rights  
Law and Director of Enterprise at the School of Law*



This presentation examines child participation as a right under the [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989 \(UNCRC\)](#).

The presentation begins by considering the nature of the UNCRC, the rights protected within it and the obligations for States parties. It then moves to focus on Article 12 of the UNCRC, which is the key participation right under the Convention. Article 12 states that all children have the right to express their views freely in matters affecting them and that children must be provided with opportunities to be heard in any relevant judicial and administrative proceedings. The presentation discusses the guidance issued to states by the Committee on the Rights of the Child on what is required in relation to Article 12, and the relationship between Article 12 and the best interests of the child. The presentation also outlines some of the barriers to participation. It argues that while participation rights for children ought to be a priority for states, realising those rights can be challenging and require reconsideration of children's capacities and their place and prominence with society.

## Article 12

1. States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.

2. For this purpose, the child shall in particular be provided the opportunity to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting the child, either directly, or through a representative or an appropriate body, in a manner consistent with the procedural rules of national law.

# A presentation by Child Rights Connect



**Emma Grindulis**

**Child Rights Connect**

*Senior Child Empowerment and Safeguarding Officer*



Child Rights Connect is a global network of child rights organisations with 100 members worldwide, working to advance the implementation of the UNCRC and its Optional Protocols.

Child participation is a cross-cutting priority of the organisation which underpins not just programmatic activity but our decision-making and governance, including all our child safeguarding activities.

The presentation intended to put the focus on children's participation, civil and political rights, and to share how Child Rights Connect has been empowering children to participate in joint work on child safeguarding.

The key takeaways included:

- Child participation in the development of child-friendly child safeguarding documents is an empowering and awareness-raising process
- Child participation in risk assessment helps to ensure that children are aware of risks and how they are being mitigated, and can complement the assessment with their views

- Children appreciate peer-to-peer training on child safeguarding and learning from other children with examples on how to keep safe, how to avoid risk and what to do if a safeguarding incident or concern happens
- Child participation in training for adults (both for capacity-building and written resources) on child safeguarding is empowering for children and it can be more effective for the audience.



## Contributors

**Anna, Iva, Andre and Lana**

*Children members of the Eurochild Children's Council*

## Presenter

**Mieke Schuurman**

**Eurochild**

*Senior Policy Advisor – Children's Rights and Safeguarding*



Eurochild is a European network of organisations and individuals working with and for children in Europe. Through its long-term commitment to meaningfully involving children in its own work and activities, as well as in decision-making processes at European and national level, Eurochild has become a leader in child participation.

Our presentation shared the voices of children on why it is important to involve children in decisions around safeguarding and is opened by Mieke Schuurman, Eurochild's Senior Advisor on Child's Rights and Safeguarding. The presentation was led by four members of the Eurochild Children's Council, who talked about a range of issues they are passionate about.

The first speaker is Anna from Greece, who discussed the importance of engaging children who have experienced trauma about measures

that are essential for them to feel safe and comfortable. She pointed out that 'children are experts in their own experiences, and no adult or government official can know better than them what is best for their safety and stability'.

Iva, from Serbia, stressed the central role school plays in children's lives, making it essential that they feel safe, happy and heard there. Despite this, she pointed out that children often have no say in school decisions, including those related to safety. According to Iva, however, 'together, teachers and students can make a safe and comfortable environment for everyone'. To do this, there needs to be good communication and willingness from teachers to be open-minded.

Andre, from Malta, talked about children's right to safety and participation online and noted that, 'children should have a safe space available to discuss issues regarding their online safety'. He highlighted some of the risks children are exposed to online and calls for children to be included in discussions with decision-makers and to have a say regarding their data, what is shared, and how their data is processed and stored.

Finally, Lana from Croatia shared her experience on the children's council in the child-friendly city of Opatija. She shared how Opatija respects and upholds children's right to participate and how children and adults work together to implement changes that will improve the lives of children in the community. For Lana 'it is important to feel safe in your environment... [and] that children are well prepared and that [they can] help in making change'.

## Children on risk assessment: guidelines on informing and designing programmes from a child safeguarding approach

**Juan Diego Oquendo**

**Keeping Children Safe**

*Senior Child Safeguarding Adviser*



As key stakeholders, children should be enabled to identify specific risks that they may face while participating in programmes and have these addressed by designing or adapting the intervention, so it is safer for them. We as adults can think of different risks in programmes, but children – and other stakeholders – can give us a greater insight to what risks they might face while engaging in our interventions.

Guidelines on informing and designing programmes from a child safeguarding approach:

- Children should be aware of what harm is and the different types of harm.
- The program team needs to understand what types of harm are common in the context of the intervention.
- Carefully consider how the program team will engage discussions with children in culturally sensitive ways.
- Recognise that at the development stage of the intervention will unlikely identify all the potential risks.
- Children can participate in activities at times convenient to them.
- Children can participate in appropriate places.
- Children can travel safely to and from activities.

- Children are comfortable with their involvement in the intervention and the level of risk in doing so.

Dependent upon situation, and the outcome of risk assessments, there are safeguarding risks that children face generally in their community, from their participation in any programme that is designed to empower them, as well as risks from particular types of programmes. When considering programme interventions that are safe for children, we need to strike a balance between choosing interventions which maximise their potential and those that are safe. It is important not to routinely opt for a set of safer interventions that compromise children's potential.

Organisations need to recognise that at this stage it is unlikely that all potential risks will be identified. The strategies described at the implementation and monitoring stages will allow organisations to continuously assess risks once the programme is underway.

### Resources:

[Tools on risk assessment and mitigation](#)



## Sharing power with young people



**Rachel Davidson**

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*Executive Vice President, Global Ethics and Policy*

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**KidsAlive Guatemala**

*Social Worker*



The concept of sharing power can be challenging.

As leaders and professionals, we may sometimes think we know best, but we do not have all the answers. Additionally, the idea of relinquishing authority can be scary and change can be difficult. However, we have a valuable resource in the young people with whom we work because they have great insights and ideas.

Neither professionals nor young people should be expected to carry the burden of changing things for the better without the support of the other. While some decisions will still need to be made by those with positional authority, engaging young people in addressing and improving challenging situations can help guide and inform better decision making.

To effectively share power, we need to have an attitude of humility and openness to challenging our own biases and cultural norms as we empower young people. We also need to connect with young people genuinely and

respectfully as we listen to them and build trust with them. And we also need to admit when we make mistakes as an encouragement to others that it is safe for them to do the same.

When having meetings and making decisions, who fills the seats at your table?

### Case study of a young person

When an action plan was needed in relation to Monica's (age 20) future, it would have been much easier to take control and make the decisions for her. But that would be ignoring her voice and her rights, and make long-term, successful outcomes less likely. We were patient and made confidentiality clear as we built trust with her. We listened to and empowered her to identify healthy solutions. She responded positively, exhibited an increased sense of ownership and control, and set healthy boundaries and goals for herself.

Key takeaways:

- Challenging the concept that professionals know more than the young people
- Sharing power means that we are sharing perspectives, experiences and ideas; it helps everyone.
- When we share power with young people, it means engaging with them in a respectful and dignified manner.

## Children want to participate in child safeguarding



Contributors

**Gloria, Liness, Blessings, Duncan, Mike and Gift**

*Children participants of the Villages of Hope Africa Dialogue on Child Safeguarding Policy*

Presenter

**Sergio Bersaglio**

**Villages of Hope Africa**

*Executive Director*



VOH Africa (Villages of Hope Africa Society) has provided holistic care for vulnerable children since 1999. VOH Africa takes child safeguarding very seriously. All VOH children receive child safeguarding training and are informed that the VOH centres have a child safeguarding policy in place.

For this presentation, we wanted to hear from the children about their knowledge, experience and participation in the VOH child safeguarding policy. Their responses to the questions helped us understand what is working and how we can improve our safeguarding policy and approach.

We used the Keeping Children Safe self-audit tool kit to kick-start the conversation. The children completed the self-audit twice. The second audit included some explanation and the option of 'I don't know' was given to the children.

The second audit showed us that the children are aware that there is a policy in place, but they lack in-depth knowledge of the policy. We provided the children with the policy when completing the audit for the second time. They found the policy challenging to understand. They talked about the need to develop creative and child-friendly versions. They thought this would benefit both the children and the adult staff. The children said that black-and-white documents are just too boring from their perspective.

We also heard that even though they may not know the details of the policy, they still feel safe at the centres. A safe environment helps the children learn better and builds their confidence as they know they are protected even if they speak up regarding any concerns they may have.

Key takeaways:

- Children should be included in the development and implementation of the safeguarding policy.
- A child-friendly version of the child safeguarding policy that is age appropriate must be developed. The child-friendly version of the policy and self-audit tool kit should include the following: poster with diagrams, animated videos, using colour and diagrams in the written policy.
- Children's councils play an important role in child safeguarding. The councils create a safe place for children to discuss and report concerns to leadership.

## Panel: The voices of youth: a talk about gender-based violence and child marriage



### Panelists

- Martin Ponce**, USAID Digital Youth Council, Member from Bolivia
- Sandra Kachitsa Phiri**, [Theirworld](#), Global Youth Ambassador
- Solomon Adewole**, USAID Digital Youth Council, Member from Nigeria

### Moderator

**Zhiyi Wang**, [Keeping Children Safe](#), Volunteer

In this panel, youth voices from Bolivia, Malawi and Nigeria will discussed the realities of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and child marriage on younger females from underserved communities and ethnic minorities. They reflected on how youth can gain leverage on partnerships to end these vices affecting young females.

#### Martin Ponce – Gender-based violence from a Latin American perspective:

Every case of GBV can cause significant long-term damage and the victim can face physical, reproductive, and psychological problems. The Covid-19 pandemic has had a lot of negative impact, one of the major ones in Latin America has been the growth in GBV, described as a ‘silent pandemic’. Domestic violence rose between 30-50%. There are three big blind spots:

1. Violence against women: although we talk more openly about GBV during conflict, domestic violence is still wrongly considered a private issue.
2. Girls Education: lots of work has been done to improve universal access to education but we are failing to see that poor vulnerable girls are being left behind.

3. Women need more jobs: although women’s education is improving, this does not necessarily translate to opportunities.

It is important to promote participation and technology to allow youth to understand their rights and influence the policy process. It is equally important to tailor work to the local context and utilise international corporation.

#### Sandra Kachitsa Phiri – Child marriage in the case of Malawi:

According to UNICEF a child is defined as a human being under the age of 18, who depends on others. If you push someone like this into marriage, they will be dependent on their husband which makes them extremely vulnerable.

Child marriage can cause significant medical problems from pregnancies and children are ill-equipped to raise other children. Malawi has 42% of girls married before the age of 18 and 9% before 15, which is driven by poverty and religious traditions.

There are several possible solutions to this:

1. Education through child awareness campaigns in person and online, educating parents and communities.
2. Laws and legislation, while essential are not enough on its own if not accompanied by education.
3. Creating a safe environment for people to receive training and financial support.
4. Empowering girls through education so they can become financially independent and not be forced by circumstance to marry.



5. Improving access to courts as many rural citizens cannot reach or access courts to report or respond to abuse. Infrastructure that enables magistrates to access these villages is needed.

**Solomon Adewhole – Child marriage in the case of Nigeria:**

In northern Nigeria, 78% of girls get married before the age of 18 and 48% of women aged 20-24 were married at the age of 18. One of the main causes of this is religion and tradition, particularly in north Nigeria where a sect of Muslims and Christians support this practice. A clear example of this is when a girl becomes pregnant, the family will force her to marry to prevent shame. A second major cause is the poor economic situation, which has been amplified by the pandemic, as parents try to limit the financial burden of their children. Thirdly, customary laws and states laws have contradictions that negate the federal laws designed to prevent child marriage. A lack of enforcement of these laws is a major challenge and law enforcement often take no actions as they share these common beliefs, which often results in victim blaming.

There are a number of interventions that could help prevent this:

- 1. Enforcement of laws: if laws exist, we must enforce them.
- 2. Lobbying policy makers: where laws are contradictory or do not exist, advocacy groups must lobby for timely and effective change.
- 3. The use of technology: this allows for efficient and effective reporting.

Q&A

How do we qualify child marriage if it happens with the consent of the child involved?

**SA (Solomon Adewhole):** It is important to know that even if a child gives their consent, they are not in a position to make the decision or give consent to getting married. Some communities believe that a child becomes an adult at puberty, but it is important to remember a child is still a child. This is why law enforcement is so important.

How can children participate in promoting awareness raising?

**SKP (Sandra Kachitsa Phiri):** The use of social media platforms allow youth to post their experiences and views online and participate.

**SA:** We cannot talk about child marriage without highlighting the economic factors behind child marriage. Social media can be limited because there are many women that do not have access to the internet. The gender digital gap in Nigeria is extremely wide and parents will ban their children from using digital devices to control what their children consume. It is equally important to do our work offline, so we reach the most vulnerable people. Methods that could work include: door-to-door outreach, organising campaigns, speaking with community leaders and speaking with faith leaders.

How can laws specifically help with preventing child marriage?

**SKP:** If there are significant punishments for violating the law and we make sure this is enforced, this acts as a real deterrent that prevents child marriage. At the same time, we must educate the population to know and understand the law.

**SA:** Advocacy without policy is completely ineffective but most individuals are not in a position to create policy and their main from of agency and impact is through advocacy. Learning from individuals that have gone through the issue we are trying to tackle is key for effective policy.

Can technology still be helpful when the most vulnerable do not have access to it? What is the best way of implementing technology?

**SKP:** Technology definitely comes with challenges of connectivity. Recently, we launched a mobile application that doesn't require internet connection or a smartphone. You can just dial a code on a regular phone, and you will receive information on laws, causes and steps to take when dealing with child marriage.

**SA:** Empowering women is key to ensure that previous cycles do not repeat themselves. Limited financial independence leading to limited access to technology is a core factor in child marriage.

What are immediate actions that can be taken to help those engaged in child marriages?

**SKP:** Creating a safe environment, for women in child marriages to feel safe to come for education and financial support, that will give them the independence they need to leave a marriage. Vocational training and practical skills are key for providing this independence.

**SA:** Many child marriages result in child parents who have an increased burden and fear of losing their partner's support. Setting up shelters is capital intensive but an effective method for providing alternative support systems. These shelters should include rehabilitation, education, and training and financial support.

Do you have suggestions for how children can participate?

**SKP:** Children should join youth clubs where they can share their views and ideas on child protection. These arenas are also useful for peer-to-peer training.

**SA:** The first way to get involved is investigate organisations that are working on preventing child marriages and see how we can get involved. Secondly, the youth should try and use storytelling to engage other children. Thirdly, there should be a youth parliament where they have a direct route of engagement with government officials, community leaders and religious organisations.

# Panel: Safeguarding interventions for communities: perspectives from a digital native generation

## Panelists

**Nicholas Kamanzi**, USAID Digital Youth Council, Member from Rwanda

**Karimot Odebode**, [Black Girls Dream Initiative](#), Founder

**Ian Makamara**, USAID Digital Youth Council, Member from Kenya

In this panel, youth leaders from around the world will discuss the key safeguarding aspects of community interventions, necessary to ensure that everyone is safe in the process.

**Nicholas Kamanzi – Monitoring in communities, reporting, and pathways to justice in the African context:**

Safeguarding should involve both children and parents as children’s ability to make decisions reduces the feeling of hopelessness and lack of agency. Currently between 5%-50% of children suffer from maltreatment, with regional rates for physical abuse being up to 65%.

Child abuse and neglect are often never brought to the attention of policy makers, whilst the consequences affect youth throughout their life and has significant societal effects. There are many ways to monitor abuse but in order to have accurate information we must identify and close the gaps. Rwanda has done this through:

1. Child maltreatment surveillance systems use representatives from the communities to launch surveys that can be comparable across countries.
2. The establishment of Rwanda’s new sex offender’s registry allows for the monitoring of dangerous individuals.

3. New technology is being used in remote areas with poor access to internet. Unstructured Supplementary Service Data (USSD) are applications that allow for real time information from communities.

**Karimot Odebode – Reporting in communities, pathways to justice and skills for a safe attitude online:**

The internet is very important for sharing information, but despite the positive aspects we must be aware of the negative ones. Reporting is fundamental, so when we see something, we must say something and documenting this is vital. Once we have documented and reported the incident, blocking is a very useful online tool to prevent further harm. Abuse online has a very real effect offline through depression, anxiety and grooming.

**Ian Makamara – Gaps in the system, data collection, and how governments fund projects:**

Key gaps include:

1. Who is and isn’t a child online: To what extent should the internet be limited for children and how we verify age.
2. What is the appropriate age for children to have access to certain elements of the internet: We sometimes do not notice changes such as what used to be considered PG13 and what now is. These changes are integrated into our everyday lives and so often go unnoticed, which remains a challenge for designing policy.
3. We know that many companies are fundamentally profit driven and therefore are not prioritising real checks for preventing access by children. Many organisations still do not protect data.

# Panel: Safeguarding interventions for communities: perspectives from a digital native generation

Examples of steps forward include:

1. The types of policies and funds allocated to children: from the perspective of Kenya, 2021 saw the launch of a [Child Protection Programme](#) based on the EU’s.
2. The enforcement of data protection and child protection laws: this week, Instagram shut down an account associated to child trafficking and are being sued in Ireland for \$400 million dollars for failure to protect children’s data.

Governments must continue to involve youth in these discussions to help create solutions.

## Q&A

**What are the main challenges to effective protection children online in your context?**

**KO (Karimot Odebode):** Perpetrators are aware that when it comes to online abuse, the law is still weak and legal processes take a long time. Children must know when they are being abused and how to report it, whilst perpetrators must know there will be repercussions. We highlight all of this through education of local communities and encouraging parents to educate their children.

**NK (Nicholas Kamanzi):** One of the key challenges is the lack of safe skills online. Schools should be playing a crucial role in this as well as children. The best way to respond to this challenge is to train educators.

**IM (Ian Makamara):** We need to integrate children more into the online safeguarding process. In many contexts children are interacting with the internet with no knowledge of it, which significantly increases their vulnerability.

**How can harmful practices be overcome, such as those blocking information, so that children can speak up without fear?**

**KO:** We must promote good practices and educate communities on why we must not continue bad practices. Shutting a child down and preventing them from expressing their views to you is a form of abuse.

**How can USSD support child participation?**

**NK:** USSD applications can be very useful in remote areas, particularly in rural Rwanda where access to the internet is a challenge. These applications are being built to allow text messages to be sent in a shorter period and significantly improve reporting.

**IM:** USSD codes can also provide simpler and easily documented ways of making reports. This makes the data much more useful and impactful when working with policy makers.



How much say does a child get over their data in the care system?

**NK:** Children’s control over their data often depends on country contexts.

**IM:** Children in general do not have control over the management and use of their data, and policy is formulated to prevent the use of children’s data from the outset. The [Kenyan General Data Protection Regulation \(GDPR\)](#) considers any data about a child as protected, but this does leave an absence of consent.

Apart from document, report, and block, is there a policy that protects children online and how are children involved?

**NK:** There have been a lot of policies but many have not been effective. In Rwanda, 50% of the population are unaware of many laws and policies on the issue.

**IM:** Different countries have their own type of legislation that protects children online. In Kenya, we have a [Children Act, 2022](#) and GDPR. In Africa, data protection laws are growing rapidly across the region and will include specific reference to children.

**KO:** Policy is often geographically based and not implemented. In Nigeria, we have a policy that allows reporting of online harassment to the authorities.

The way to get children involved is through making them aware of their rights online, through schools, at home and in religious places.

Live Q&A panels and other talks

- [Empowering children and young people’s voices](#)  
Kim Creamer, *Y Australia*
- [Participation and protection: the Lundy Model in practice](#)  
Laura Lundy, *Centre for Children’s Rights, Queen’s University, Belfast and University College Cork*
- [Live Q&A](#)  
Alison Bisset, *University of Reading*  
Sarah Blakemore, *Keeping Children Safe*  
Kim Creamer, *Y Australia*  
Emma Grindulis, *Child Rights Connect*
- [Live Q&A](#)  
Laura Lundy, *Centre for Children’s Rights, Queen’s University, Belfast and University College Cork*  
Mieke Schuurman, *EuroChild*
- [Live Q&A](#)  
Sergio Bersaglio, *Villages of Hope Africa*  
Rachel Davidson, *KidsAlive International*  
Kate Fisher, *KidsAlive Guatemala*  
Juan Diego Oquendo, *Keeping Children Safe*





7 September 2022



## Ensuring child safeguarding through child participation



### Contributors

#### Alija Chaudhary

Ajali Child Club

Child participant and President

#### Balkumari Chaudhary

Kailari Village Council

Assistance Women Development Supervisor

#### Kamala Chaudhary and Santoshi Dagaura

Shree Janachetana Women's saving and credit cooperative

### Presenters

#### Namaraj Silwal

Social Work Institute

Director

#### Shalik Ram Dangol

Social Work Institute

Training Head



The Social Work Institute (SWI) was established in 1987 to train youths in social work to serve their community, implementing several programs and projects. Our working areas cover five provinces out of seven provinces in Nepal. The main programmes include Training, Integrated Community Development Projects, and Network and Advocacy. Some training packages are accredited by Council for Technical Education

and Vocational Training (CTEVT), a national autonomous apex body of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET). Training for Child Protection Workers and Social Work training are some long-term training packages accredited by government.

The process we followed to develop the training curriculum of child protection workers is research to assess the need, review the existing child welfare policies, service and their attitude for care and protection of vulnerable children and their families; course design; piloting; revision; finalising and getting approval from CTEVT. The trainees who got child protection workers training form SWI are working in rural areas of Nepal.

They are involved in social mapping, creation of child clubs, advocacy on child rights, networking, raising awareness on child protection and lobbying with local and national level's governmental bodies to prioritise child protection, participation and allocating budget. Municipal level administrative bodies are also supporting and providing spaces to the children for their activities. Despite their remarkable contribution to ensure child safeguarding and participation, as mentioned in the presentation, there are still some challenges: lack of parental and local governmental support, lack of budget, scattered village settlement to gather children to form child clubs, difficulties in conducting regular monthly meetings and lack of enough human resources.

Producing more child protection workers and prioritising the agendas of children in national and policy level along with budget allocation will promote child safeguarding and participation.

## Teaching child rights through music, dance and creative media



### Lawrence Kizito

Children at Risk Action Network (CRANE)

Media and Communications Officer



CRANE wants children to be able to speak out about issues that affect their lives. However, it is not the norm in Uganda for children to be given a voice in issues that affect their lives. This then means that they are more fearful about speaking up when something is not right and this allows the abuse of children's rights to go unchecked.

CRANE is enabling children to use dance, music, photography and videography to observe and share their opinions and views and to be able to voice their rights as citizens and the obligations of adults and government in meeting those rights. By giving them new methods of communicating, they are able to educate adults, and create conversations that enable communities to arrive at collective standards that favour child protection and wellbeing.

CRANE has helped children to set up Advocacy Clubs in different network member organisations. A small group of children are trained to identify existing platforms that they can use to speak up about issues affecting children in their communities. They are also taught how to lead their own peers and how to run an Advocacy Club in their school or local community organisation.

This helps the children to develop life-skills such as decision making, working in teams, self-confidence and self-esteem.

The key takeaways included:

- Children have reached the police, community leaders and parents through this approach and say that there is an attitude change towards their perception on child rights. The creative methods have helped children to actively participate in the plight of ensuring their rights are upheld.
- Children have had the opportunity to verbally talk about their rights to different audiences using the different media platforms like the children's parliaments. As a result, children now know that their voice matters as they have directly experienced their right to participation. Children can no longer be silenced in their communities and when a safeguarding issue arises, they know to whom and where to report.

# Creating safe environments in Healthcare Clowning through safeguarding



**Nicole Villgrattner**

**Red Noses Clowndoctors International**  
*Organisational Development and Designated Safeguarding Officer*



Red Noses International (RNI) brings humour and laughter to people in need of joy to foster the overall well-being of its target group. In doing so, RNI seeks to create safe environments for children and vulnerable persons to enjoy the highest quality and professional art of healthcare clowning in all programmes and countries where Red Noses is present.

The implementation of safeguarding in 11 RNI organisations worldwide was implemented in different phases. The preparation phase of 'communication and creating awareness' was crucial. Following the preparation phase, the policy was written and the safeguarding teams in the countries were appointed. Other implementation actions then followed: the risk assessments and mapping of local contexts in every country, the policy translation in nine languages, an in-depth training for the designated safeguarding officers and staff, the signing of the policy, and finally conducting the final evaluation of the implementation.

Three tools were supportive throughout the implementation process:

1. A tailor-made online post-training quiz which participants take after the safeguarding training.

2. A checklist for selecting pictures: based on the Guidelines for Communication and Media and the Guidelines for the Use of Images, where concrete questions are stated. If one question is answered 'yes', the picture cannot be published and needs to be deleted.

3. A monthly online Jour Fixe: this regular meeting for local safeguarding officers in the 11 countries serves as a platform to empower them through peer-exchange with peers on different topics.

## Key learning from this process:

- Good preparation is essential, a communication strategy needs to be in place and finally, giving the process; the time it needs. The next implementation phase will focus on the involvement of children in creating a child friendly version of the policy and posters.
- To keep children safe means to listen to them, and to not only involve them, but also to create a safe space, give the time to talk and to participate in the process.

# A presentation by Divina Maloum



**Divina Maloum**

**Children for Peace (C4P)**  
*Coordinator of Children for Peace and KidsRights International Children's Peace Prize Laureate*



The socio-political context in Africa is characterised by an escalation of violence and insecurity perpetrated by terrorist groups that have been imposing a heavy toll on several African countries, including Cameroon, for several decades. The challenges faced by girls are also directly linked to gender equality, traditional, religious and structural barriers, including sexual stereotypes, early marriage, gender-based violence, unequal access to education, health, power /leadership and resources (technology, water, energy) which disadvantages and discriminates most girls living in rural and conflict affected areas.

This continues to challenge girls' participation and inclusion, limiting their ability to ascend to leadership positions.

Today, there is increasingly a dynamic and vibrant culture of girls' activism and a spectrum of group and leadership structures, from girls and young women-led groups to others established by adults where girls and young women play varying leadership and decision-making roles.

Such is the case of Children for Peace (C4P), a girl-led movement, created by Divina Maloum,

a 18-year-old girl, working with religious and traditional leaders; refugees and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) children, street children, orphans, students, governments and local authorities mobilising them in community-based peace-building and gender equity activities; engaging them against identity-based differences, to find and implement inclusive approaches to dealing with conflicts and girls-related issues in communities.

As a result of the work of C4P:

- Over 50,000 girls trained /mentored and 5.000,000 people sensitised on violent extremism, disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration, migration and human rights (focusing on children, girls and women rights, gender equality), illicit proliferation of small arms and light weapons.
- Over 5,000 girls and children have been fruitfully, directly engaged in related topics through local, nation and continent-wide activities and through 80 gender-environment peace clubs (led by girls).

In order to support girls and to ensure they are at the forefront of driving change, stakeholders should champion

1. Research, scientific work, reporting and sex-disaggregated data on women's /girls' inclusion, participation, leadership, activism (acknowledging, girls and young women from poorer backgrounds, minority groups, and those with a disability who are all less likely to be involved) to improve the monitoring of the progress towards gender equality and child participation.



- 2. Effective win-win partnerships, networks and mentorship collaborations with and for girls to increase the number of girls empowered and boost their ability to gain more leadership positions.
- 3. That girls, including those in rural and affected areas by war, have equal access to services, and thrive in education, work, governance and leadership fields free from early marriage, social, cultural, structural or financial barriers, and the stigma and obstacles they face around health
- 4. Easy and simplified financial and administrative procedures to enable girls' access to financial and natural resources in their path in leadership and decision-making.
- 5. Gender-sensitive budgeting to facilitate targeted governments spending toward services that help girls reach their fullest potential.
- 6. The internalisation of UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; United Nations Security Council Resolutions (UNSCR) 1325 and 2250 (women, young people, peace and security).

# The participation of children and young people in the Ombuds Project



**Sylvain Bavi**  
**SOS Children's Villages Benin**  
*National Alternative Care Coordinator*

**Wilfried Lissa**  
SOS Children's Villages Benin  
*National Child Safeguarding Coordinator*



SOS Children's Villages wanted to strengthen its child safeguarding system through the mediator project. In Benin, children and young people, aged 10-18 actively participated in the process of recruiting the national ombudsman.

The process began with an information workshop for children and young people. This involved meeting children by age group in our three programs to inform them of the idea of setting up a mediator approach, in consultation with the children. Children willing to participate in the process were registered for consultation.

The consultation workshop clarified some concepts and aimed to identify obstacles and advantages for reporting, to collect from the children the desired profile of mediator, the preferred means of children and young people to communicate with the mediator (in the event of a concern or a complaint) as well as the desire and level of involvement in the process.

The data collected was compiled and submitted to the children for validation. The work was carried out using materials and templates from the Proteknon association. Children and young people also participated in the recruitment of the mediator. They organised a recruitment pool and received candidates for interviews. But, upstream, they were trained on how recruitment takes place and how to choose a candidate in complete impartiality.

Key takeaways included:

- The participation of children and young people made it possible to draw up the job description and the recruitment notice for the mediator.
- The key to the success of the whole process is the information sharing session carried out before the actual consultation.
- Fun activities and the methodologies adopted have helped the children to better participate and carry out the actions.
- Good child participation involves informing and training the child.
- Empowering young people to take the lead in certain activities makes it easier for adults to work on addressing children's concerns.
- And mentorship collaborations, with and for girls, to increase the number of girls empowered and boost their ability to gain more leadership position.

## Panel: The role of faith communities in creating safe and empowering experiences for children



- María José Ananias**, [Global Network of Religions for Children \(GNRC\)](#), *Coordinator for Latin America and the Caribbean Region*
- Vera Leal**, [Arigatou International](#), *Head of Programs and Global Safeguarding Advisor*
- Eleonora Mura**, Arigatou International, *Coordinator Partnerships and Resource Mobilisation*
- Dorcas Kiplagat**, Global Network of Religions for Children (GNRC), *Coordinator and Regional Safeguarding Focal Point*
- Hesha Lucknie Perera**, [End Child Poverty Initiative](#), *Manager End Child Poverty Knowledge Center and Regional Safeguarding Focal Point*

The discussion focused on how grassroots faith communities support and empower children through child safeguarding policies. Featuring stories from Africa, Asia and Latin America highlighting how communities with the support of Arigatou International create safe spaces, experiences and opportunities for children to be empowered to participate, and to take action in their communities, while keeping them safe and affirming their dignity.

- Arigatou’s work with children is guided by five key principles:
- Affirm their dignity
  - Empower them to take action
  - Ensure their protection
  - Support their active and meaningful participation
  - Support their full development.

- Additionally, Arigatou’s approach to working with children to ensure their safe and meaningful participation is based on the nine basic requirements for the effective and ethical participation of children (UN Convention of the Rights of the Child General Comment No 12):
1. Transparent and informed
  2. Voluntary
  3. Respectful
  4. Relevant
  5. Child friendly
  6. Inclusive
  7. Supported by trained adults
  8. Safe and risk sensitive
  9. Accountable.

At Arigatou International, the promotion of participation and responsible decision-making is strongly linked with strengthening the self-esteem of children and adolescents. Being aware of their rights protects them in the future, the exercise or practice of an active and significant participation, promotes that they can do it in any circumstance, which is the best opportunity for protection for themselves. The decision-making experience makes them responsible for their decisions and the related consequences, for example, the decision to use social networks and how to be protected in them. This is why, in addition to child safeguarding Arigatou International promotes meaningful participation as part of safeguarding.

The panel explored how Arigatou promotes these principles and the Safeguarding Policy and Code of Conduct, for example by organising



training workshops on the safeguarding policy for the members of the Global Network of Religions for Children (GNRC). The GNRC was created by Arigatou in 2000 and brings together grassroots faith groups from 57 countries.

The panel showcased concrete examples like ensuring that GNRC members use the parental consent letter for the participation of children and adolescents in any activities or programs and are careful of the use of photographs in social media that protect children's identity.

Another example of enforcing safeguarding at the local level includes that each organisation needs to nominate a person as a focal point for safeguarding, in charge of supervising participation and receiving any complaints that may arise.

All the activities of the GNRC network are organised by local Interfaith Committees and Arigatou Works with these committees to promote child safeguarding and participation. It is within these committees that there are safe spaces for children's active and meaningful participation. This has led to the creation of permanent intergenerational working groups, and some countries like Peru and Ecuador have Councils for Children and Adolescents. In these councils, children can develop projects led by them, where they choose the themes and how they want to manage the initiatives.

Sometimes the work of the committees has led to policy changes in the countries contributing to strengthen safeguarding.

Some examples:

- GNRC Peru developed internal protocols to support faith communities that do not have one in writing, to promote measures such as, for example, the conditions of their participation in open spaces or with visibility from outside, doors always open, more than one adult in the company of children and adolescents, for childcare, but also for religious leaders and institutions.
- GNRC Guatemala has developed important workshops on cybercare for religious leaders and for adolescents. At GNRC Mexico, extensive work is done to prevent sexual abuse. At GNRC Uruguay, they work on good treatment for children, adolescents and families.
- GNRC Pakistan's work on Policy changes has been realised as a result of significant advocacy interventions in the country. Working with other partners, Pakistan lobbied the Government of Punjab to develop a Child Protection Policy that Asia Report 51, mandates that all children be safe, secure and protected. They also contributed to the National Commission on the Rights of Children Act, 2017 an independent national commission to oversee and monitor the enforcement of children's rights in Pakistan.

## Live Q&A panels and other talks

- Ethical Issues in research and programming with young adolescents  
**Robert Wm. Blum**, *Johns Hopkins Urban Health Institute, Department of Population, Family and Reproductive Health*
- Live Q&A  
**Januka Khatiwada**, *Social Work Institute*  
**Lawrence Kizito**, *Children at Risk Action Network (CRANE)*  
**Shalik Ram Dangol**, *Social Work Institute*  
**Nicole Villgrattner**, *Red Nosed Clowndoctors International*
- Live Q&A  
**Sylvain Bavi**, *SOS Children's Villages Benin*  
**Wilfried Lissa**, *SOS Children's Villages Benin*  
**Divina Maloum**, *Children for Peace*





8 September 2022



# How children can actively participate in resolving conflicts around the world: the case of Cameroon

**Lawong Yaah**  
**Students and Youths Empowerment Forum SYEF**  
Programs coordinator



could be mobilised effectively by connecting them with wider peace-building objectives such as bridges between divided communities and ensuring a viable process of reconciliation. Children can share ideas and experiences to foster peace. Children can actively participate in drafting policies or measures in resolving conflicts and can be decision makers.

Key takeaways include:

- Peace Education for children should be part of school curriculums so as to ensure active participation of children in resolving conflicts.
- Humanitarian response for children should be highly considered.
- Children should be considered as stakeholders and consultants in conflicts affected areas.
- Arts, sports, music for children should be highly encouraged as a medium to ensuring the active participation of children in peace-building processes.

Cameroon was declared the third most peaceful Country in Sub-Saharan-Africa four consecutive times between the years 2001 – 2006, following annual reports from the Global Peace index. However, this became a nightmare when the English-speaking regions started facing aspects of violence. The spark of it was enhanced by the lawyers and teachers strike which started in late October 2016.

The Anglophone crisis has caused over 900,000 Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and 60,000 refugees with over 30% being children. Since children are highly affected, they can be equally highly involved in resolving conflicts and in the realisation of sustainable peace. A press release by UNICEF in 2019, states that: more than 855,000 children remain out of school in the Anglophone Regions.

Children have been affected the most in the conflict. While they are not parties to the conflict nor combatants, their fundamental rights to shelter, security, health care, food, education, family love amongst others have been affected. However, through arts, culture, tourism, sports and education, the innovativeness and creativeness of young people in these areas

# Smart Children Club



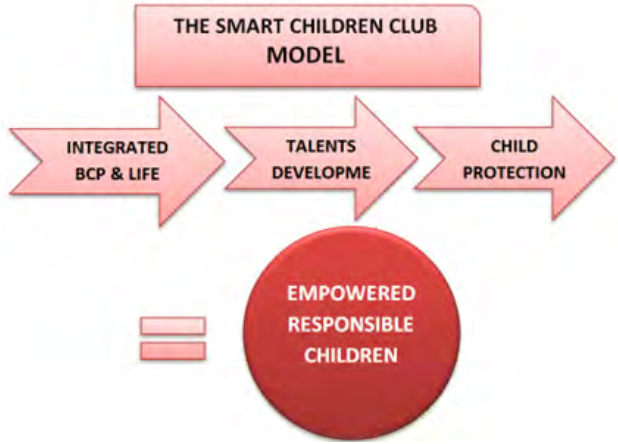
**Chrispine Ochieng Okello**  
**Child Space Organization**  
Founder and Executive Director

Creating safe spaces for children and training them to amplify their voices on matters and decisions that affect them. **The Smart Children Club advocates against Child Abuse.**

What works for us:

- The teachers programme – since the teachers spend more time with the children in schools, part of our work is to build their capacities to ensure they too understand how to guide and support the children.
- Parents are also periodically trained on various needs aspects in line with child development.

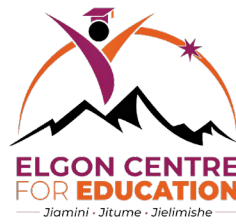
## Our safeguarding model



Key takeaways include:

- Making safeguarding an exciting daily routine that allows children to understand their roles in safeguarding as well as individuals, Smart Children Club, organisations and the community at large. This makes safeguarding seamless and acceptable by all the stakeholders, thus enhancing sustainable safeguarding work that appreciates every child while reducing discrimination and stigma against the children resulting in reasonable child safety, self-acceptance and self-confidence empowered children.
- **Empower children.** Every child must be trained to be confident.

## Children have unheard voices Dare to listen



**Abdulkarim Taraja**  
**Elgon Centre for Education**  
*Founder and CEO*



Children around the world are in a more precarious position than at any other time in the recent history owing to the world dynamic spanning from wars, territorial conflicts and the internet. While it was thought that 21st century inventions and technology dynamics might create a safer world for everyone including children, instead it offered many challenges.

While it is a matter of debate on how technology and access of internet of things have affected not just children but humanity in general, the truth is it has its own share of cons. From cybersecurity, cyberbullying, sexual abuse images, screen addictions as well as erosion of social bonding. All this notwithstanding, internet access has seen the world prosper and develop sophisticatedly.

Children are very sensitive to what goes on in their environment and will be able to behave close to how the environment treats them as they grow. A family that is engaged in drug abuse has a huge effect on growth and psychological safety of the child. Any small issue disturbing a child is big and should not be wished away. Sometimes children do not know or fear how to tell someone what they are experiencing. Some suffer silently even if they know someone who can offer support, whether it is a parent or a teacher.

Having an active listening and open communication between children and caregivers determines how children open-up in case of any danger. Children who are close to parents and socially interact without definitive boundaries are more open to share information than a child raised in harshly one-way communication.

Children are very productive when they are involved in what they want to pursue with fun. Breaks in between busy academic sessions to have fun with other children and be children is a great form to allow the children synthesise and refresh their minds. This also gives them opportunity to attempt hard things and progressively succeed in tackling them. This was a case I learnt from students from Teach for India who used fun and art to create safe spaces for children who eventually loved school and improved academic performances.

## Monitoring and Evaluation of safeguarding programmes involving children

**Stefan Yordanov**  
**Keeping Children Safe**  
*Senior Child Safeguarding Programme Manager*



Child Participation is a very broad concept encompassing a wide range of activities. It is important to collaborate with children to monitor and evaluate the impact of your programmes because it tells you what changes have taken place and why they have happened, but it also allows you to make changes while the programme is still running to enable you to make it more effective.

Evaluations should look at whether or not we are achieving the programme objectives. They require bringing together all available information. This process must also involve children, since they are often in the best position to judge whether the programme has been effective or not. They are also well placed to provide information on any unintended positive or negative impacts of the programme.

Young people can play a part in:

- Identifying what should be evaluated
- Being consulted in drawing up the framework
- Being consulted as part of the process
- Being trained as researchers to undertake evaluations
- Being consulted on the findings
- Analysing information

- Identifying any unintended positive or negative outcomes from the programme
- Developing strategies for monitoring action and improvements in the realisation of rights.

It is important in evaluations to draw the links between the activities that have been conducted and the changes that have occurred so that we can build a picture of which activities lead to which types of change. Please consider the following:

- Children should be given clear feedback on the impact of their involvement.
- Children should be consulted about their satisfaction with participation.
- Results need to be fed back on accessible and child-friendly ways.
- Mistakes made should be acknowledged and commitments should be given to make the necessary changes

Involving children and young people in the process of monitoring and evaluation will make us more accountable to the people we are working with and for – children, parents, local communities, donors and partners.

For evaluation and impact assessment to be useful to the programme, they should not be the end points of programmes and should be seen as points along the way.





## How to make a child safeguarding policy applicable, likeable and child-friendly? A case study from Hungary



**Anna Boukydis**

**Hintalovon Foundation**

*Child Volunteer*

**Barbara Németh**

**Hintalovon Foundation**

*Programme Manager*



Hintalovon Foundation is a Budapest-based child rights organisation, aiming to make Hungary a better place for children. We work closely with our children's rights ambassadors, organise special child advisory boards and sometimes engage with occasional child volunteers, too. The Foundation's Child Safeguarding Policy (CSP) ensures that the participation of children is safe and meaningful. As our Child Participation Program has evolved, we have encountered several situations that have challenged both our CSP and our practice.

Our CSP uses an integrated approach and protects children from exploitative, manipulative, tokenistic forms of child participation. A dedicated chapter addresses how we engage, inform child volunteers, organise activities, and communicate with and about them. It also guides how we conduct research with children and our complaints mechanism. We developed its child-friendly versions and online quizzes with an implementation focus, and we also discuss it in person, which is time-consuming but an irreplaceably valuable process.

Speaking up as children publicly and volunteering at human rights organisations is not welcomed by many, even by schools. Our CSP makes sure that we conduct case-based risk assessment, take preventive measures and organise specific training, if needed.

In our approach, children's safety relies on the empowerment of the whole community, including children. 'I've realised that it is the community that makes the CSP effective. No matter how well-written the document is, if there are no people ready to bring it to life, committed to its values. The children are also a part of this community, so their input about the policy is also encouraged and taken into consideration.' – said Anna, our child volunteer.

Key takeaways:

- Using a holistic approach, our CSP sets out measures to meet the criteria of ethical and meaningful child participation.
- Our comprehensive, living and transforming CSP is a guarantee for children and their parents, but it also makes our colleagues feel secure.
- Our CSP has a strong educational power beyond our cooperation with children.

## Making an impact for children in Europe



**Alketa Lasku**

**Terre des Hommes**

*Regional Child Protection and Safeguarding Adviser for Europe*



Terre des Hommes (TdH) is the leading Swiss organisation for children's aid in almost 40 countries across the world. In Europe, TdH has delegations in Hungary, Greece, Albania, Kosovo, Romania, Moldova and Ukraine and present through partners, in 12 other countries. TdH works towards the full realisation of children's rights, protecting children who are victims or are at risk of abuse, those affected by migration, or in contact with the law.

**What is meaningful participation for TdH?**

Both a principle and a right, TdH wants to ensure that children are supported to exercise their right to participation. At individual level: in decisions that affect their lives such as case management. At collective level: in development of services for children. A formal commitment in the Global and European Strategy.

Child and Youth Advisory Boards (CABs) as a model of meaningful participation:

- CABs are composed of 4-15 young people aged 14 to 25 who are interested in the specific topic, are victims /survivors and have been affected by migration, in conflict with the law.

- CAB members actively provide input into research, development of training materials, awareness raising campaigns and policy work within projects.
- CABs serve as a platform for young people to share their experiences and learn from each other, to influence practice and promote child rights among national and regional forums.

**What is child safeguarding for TdH?**

Preventative – to reduce the likelihood of a child being harmed.

Responsive – taking actions to make sure that where concerns are raised or situations of suspected harm or abuse are identified, appropriate action is taken both to ensure the child is assisted and to prevent similar situations occurring again (if possible).

TdH policy framework includes Global Code of Conduct, Child Safeguarding Policy, Policy on the Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, Directive on Staff Misconduct in the Workplace

# Child participation in safeguarding in European Football



## Iris Hugo-Bouvier

### UEFA

Football and Social Responsibility Coordinator

– Child and Youth Protection

## Alketa Lasku

### Terre des Hommes

Regional Child Protection and Safeguarding Adviser for Europe



Child and youth protection is one of 11 policies that contributes to the implementation of UEFA's Football Sustainability Strategy 2030 – Strength through Unity. UEFA aims to provide a safe and empowering environment for children and youth to play football and advocates respect for child rights (children and youth – that is, under 18-years-old).

Children have the right to freely express their views and participate in decisions that affect their lives (Art 12 and 13 of the Convention of the Rights of the Child).

It is acknowledged that child and youth participation is essential in safeguarding because children know best the challenges and opportunities they face. They are excellent resources to provide recommendations on what needs to be improved.

There are two levels of participation within safeguarding and football:

- At an individual level – when a child or young person is involved in protection processes, such as if they disclose abuse.
- At the group level – children and young people should be given the opportunity to participate in various ways, such as decisions about policies and procedures, from design through to engagement with the implementation and management and review.

Participation is not one 'thing'. There are many ways to involve children and young people. Participation is an ongoing process and has different dimensions. Examples of child participation in the safeguarding journey:

- Designing /developing code of conduct for players
- Creating awareness raising materials for other players
- Children providing awareness raising sessions to other children
- Peer support programmes – 'first response'
- Consultation and engagement on policy development – for example, overnight stays
- Recruitment of staff and volunteers
- Review of coaching
- Review of safeguarding procedures – from consultations through to engagement in whole process.

For professionals working with children and youth who want to learn more about child and youth participation in football [visit our website](#).

# Roundtable panels



## Panel: Child participation in safeguarding: the role of the state



### Panelists

**June Lowery-Kingstone, [BetterNet4EU](#)**  
European Commission – DG CONNECT  
– Communications Network, Content and Technology, *Head of the Accessibility, Multilingualism and Safer Internet Unit*

**Abdulrahman Ahmed, [The General Secretariat of the Minister of Interior of the United Arab Emirates](#)**, *Deputy Director General*

### Moderator

**Bill Harris**, *Keeping Children Safe, Child Safeguarding Network Manager*

The aim of the panel is to share information about national efforts and initiatives focused on promoting and advancing child participation in safeguarding initiatives and policy development at local, regional and national levels, and to provide a platform for young people to engage with decision-makers, discuss, advocate, and explore avenues for youth participation in national strategies.

**JLK (June Lowery-Kingstone):** The European Union (EU) has seen positive actions and developments over the last few years, reaching a changing point in systematically involving children.

In March 2021, the Commission adopted the first comprehensive strategy on the rights of the child. It was developed with children, as the views and suggestions of over 10,000 children were gathered by UNICEF. Children were actively involved in creating four, child-

friendly versions of the strategy. They created a ten-page, a four-page and an easy-to-read version for adults and children with disabilities. Although not revolutionary this was all a big step and milestone for the EU. It reflects the obligations under the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights where 'all actions concerning children whether taken by public or private institutions, the best interest of the child must be a primary consideration, inspired by UNCRC Article 12. The current commission has a direct portfolio of equality for the first time, which includes age.

Digital rights for children: the EU strategy for a better internet for children, 2012 was updated in May 2022 as 'a digital decade for children and youth: The new European strategy for a Better Internet for Kids (BIK+)'.

Youth ambassadors, it is a win-win! Young people get life skills, make friends and gain confidence. Whilst policy makers get timely, relevant and well-informed input from the generation directly impacted by digital transformation.

**AA (Abdulrahman Ahmed):** The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has taking big strides in the last few years, particularly by creating a new set of laws.

One of the main laws is now children have the right to participate and be heard in anything that will impact them. The UAE have implemented a national strategy for protecting children online since 2015 and all their strategies are victim centred. There is a multisectoral team that implements the strategy and are required to include children. A key area of focus has been

## Panel: Child participation in safeguarding: the role of the state

awareness raising, children are the number one defence in protecting children and they need knowledge and support. Initiatives for child participation include:

1. The cybersecurity ambassadors: youth who are trained in giving peer to peer training, with over 1,000 child ambassadors.
2. An app, established for reporting, now uses child focus groups for development.
3. The Emirati children's parliament.

### New legislation in the UAE

- 2016: Wadeema's Law (Federal Act No 3): Protects children from different forms of negligence, exploitation and physical and psychological abuse.
- 2017: The National Strategy for Motherhood and Childhood. 2017-2021.
- 2018: the UAE accepts the Universal Periodic Review recommendation to ban all corporal punishment.

### Children from around the world submitted questions for the panellists:

#### How are you preventing children from digital harm?

**JLK:** The EU has three main tools:

1. Laws: General Data Protection Regulation states children's personal data must be protected in a special way; we must know when children are online. A new law, the Digital Services Regulation, puts a horizontal obligation on anyone offering digital services.

2. Coordination: best practice sharing
3. Funding: A safer internet centre in all countries that go into classrooms and educate.

**AA:** The UAE have a children safety online unit and ministries work under the national strategy. Everyone needs to work with tech companies and make sure they have more skin in the game. The UAE have robust strategies and frameworks but still need to work internationally with all countries to access databases. The Ministry of interior with United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI) is doing a project for Artificial Intelligence (AI) in law enforcement to fight online exploitation.

#### Child friendly versions of policy procedures and laws are needed, but what can be done to make them available?

**JLK:** The EU works hard to produce child friendly versions. They have produced a guide showing the methodology behind this, based on the work of Laura Lundy. They have at least two formal texts in child-friendly versions and their portal for children shares resources in different languages.

**AA:** The UAE does a lot of content, videos, interviews, lectures. Children are often visual learners and enjoy being included and seeing other children. Expert child content creators are used to deliver their materials.

Some of our parents and teachers physically torture us as a way of correction, is this correct? If not, how can you help us?

**JLK:** In the EU there are cultural differences. Most member states have banned corporal punishment but four still have not. Even if it is in law, enforcing it requires awareness raising, campaigns and support for children.

**AA:** Physical abuse is illegal. All protection laws say this. Torture is an extreme version of this, even though we do protect against all versions of abuse. Ways of reporting include: an app, email, a 24 /7 hotline and a website. It is important to know there are other ways to discipline a child and we need to spread awareness.

Questions from attendees:  
The role of evaluation of research. Do you have good practices?

**JLK:** CORE is a project which creates a knowledge database of this research. More needs to be done and the EU does not run lots of projects on it.

**Bill Harris:** Research conducted by academic institutions and academics is really useful for this.

The EU commission drives these efforts from a European Perspective. What role does the Arab League play?

**JLK:** We work with a lot of international organisations, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the UN, G7 and G20. It is so important to know it's an international problem where abuse can be shared globally.

**AA:** We do work with them on the model national response, running workshops to share our experience. We brought in Ian Drennan to speak to the League and we spread awareness to gulf countries. The UAE is part of We Protect Global Alliance and Virtual Global Task force along with the EU.

Is there any overarching key message you want to pass on?

**JLK:** Child participation is the best way to keep on track. It is children's rights and not just a nice to have thing. It can only be positive in my experience.

**AA:** We need to work together, especially with children who need to be involved throughout the whole process. Organisations see a case as a number, but for the child it is their whole life. Federally, locally, internationally, we need to work together and include children in the equation.

Panel: Authentically engaging youth for effective youth-adult partnership panel



Panelists

**Candis L. Jones**, GA RYSE Independent Living Program by [Georgia Department of Human Services – Division of Family and Children Services \(DFCS\)](#), *Director*

**Hope Canada**, [The Metamorphosis Initiative \(TMI\)](#), *Founder and CEO*

**Rain Eskew**, Georgia Peers Advocating for Change (GPAC), *President*

Moderator

**Sarah Bess Hudson**, [Multi-Agency Alliance for Children \(MAAC\)](#), *Youth Engagement Administrator*

The aim of the panel is to hear from young people and the professionals who have partnered to effectuate policy and practice improvements, to learn about cultivating healthy youth /adult partnerships to create culture and supports to authentically engage young people with lived experience in foster care. The panel was structured like a conversation.

Conversation

The partnership between the initiatives and programmes is a unique and powerful machine for change. When we reflect together what were some of the strategies to establish partnerships?

**Candis L. Jones:** Strategies were missing a piece, the voice of those they impacted. We created a group of young people to work with us and Georgia Empowerment. The first stage was to meet with young people through workshops to see if they wanted this and what it would look like.

**Rain Eskew:** The relationship between GPAC and the division is unique. GPAC grew exponentially through one main factor, being invited to the table. Directly and not through a middleman.

**Hope Canada:** One thing TMI emphasised is, is this going to be helpful? Youth in care gave feedback saying they would want it. It was important to utilise agencies that had already done work, including Empowerment.

When preparing to engage with global partners, a critical component is trust. It is so foundational in relationships, to have humility, be vulnerable, create power together and accountability. What has it taken to achieve this?

**RE (Rain Eskew):** Trust came from the sense of openness, the willingness to listen. To make real change we must hear from those who have recent experience. We also need to change our strategies as time moves. The continued flow of communication and ideas to help develop trust.

**CLJ (Candis L. Jones):** Young people seeing us do what we said we were going to do. Being there, being transparent with information and data, ensuring that they understand and asking for feedback. One must understand that children have different levels of development and interacting with children requires different approaches.

**HC (Hope Canada):** Our partnership began from the idea of educating youth. When we started it sounded great but being a part of the implementation sold it for us. TMI was allowed by DFCS to develop a strategic plan.

Once relationships are established. What are examples of what is possible from these relationships?

**CLJ:** Connecting all the adult support leads working with young leader groups was key. By working as a collective it is not an *Us vs Them*, it is just an *Us*. Not one group can do it alone, we need to work together as it's a mammoth task. We have meetings that allow for our partnering agencies to present data, reach out for support, and share what they're doing and the youth now present a segment.

**RE:** GPAC was able to work with Empowerment and speak at the Annual Progress and Services Report (APSR) meeting discussing youth in care with complex needs. We were given the ability to meet with leaders and policy makers, share our concerns, and hopes for the future and opened an avenue for communication with a whole range of people. Being able to say our thoughts and feelings is invaluable too.

**HC:** TMI can truly appreciate that we were given an equal seat from the start. We have implemented parent cafés for youth with children, enabling them to network, share experiences and look for resources. We also do parent-to-parent training.

How do we continue to grow these examples into sustainable systems and embedded change? What are practices or policies that have been changed?

**RE:** GPAC, Empowerment, and MAAC launched bill 107 giving youth from foster care the ability to get tuition for free. We completed this in the infancy of our organisation and it shows how working together can result in great things. Children in foster care should have the same right to education.

**HC:** One thing that was uplifting when creating the standard operating procedure was that it would not just work for TMI but for any organisation.

**CLJ:** I am a strong believe in having credible messengers, someone who can provide from the lens of experience. Peer-to-peer training or outreach fosters trust and allows young people, who often don't trust agencies, to accept the resources and support. Policy highlights include crafting the very first substitute and supportive decision-making policy in collaboration with youth with disability. We conducted a needs assessment by developing the tool that allowed children to be part of the development and not just critiquing.

Learning from the field and lessons from the road. What do we want to leave the community with today?

**CLJ:** It is important for those that are going to work with young people to understand adolescent brain development and the impact of trauma on this. One must understand the limbic system, what an overload is and how it effects young people processing information. Trauma conjecture can lead to victims mixing in what happened to them with their perception of what happens. The Jim Casey Youth Initiative in 2011, had a brief titled the 'adolescent brain' about understanding youth transition from foster care. It is important to get leadership buy-in from the very top, making it a requirement for youth and families to be included.

**HC:** There is still a lot of work to be done. There still needs to be new strategies and policies and as time and people change there needs to be openness.

**Sarah Bess Hudson:** Whether cultural or systemic, experience and life creates humility and respect, which leads to community which leads to change.

Q&A

Did you experience challenges with getting leadership buy in and how did you overcome that?

**CLJ:** It wasn't a hard sell but we had to be strategic. The harder sell is to staff who aren't used to engaging with youth in this way and valuing youth experience. They now truly see TMI as a partner and not just youth and once we got support from the staff it was full throttle.

**HC:** TMI's relationship has really strengthened over time and learned how to be more impactful whilst also not overstretching our resources.



# Live Q&A panels and other talks

- Live Q&A  
**Chrispine Ochieng Okello**, *Child Space Organisation*  
**Abdulkarim Taraja**, *Elgon Centre for Education*  
**Lawong Yaah**, *Students and Youths Empowerment Forum SYEF*  
**Stefan Yordanov**, *Keeping Children Safe*
  
- Live Q&A  
**Anna Boukydis**, *Hitalovon Foundation*  
**Iris Hugo-Bouvier**, *UEFA*  
**Alketa Lasku**, *Terre des Hommes*  
**Barbara Németh**, *Hitalovon Foundation*

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# Keeping Children Safe

Setting tough international  
child safeguarding standards

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