



## GLOBAL PROTECTION CLUSTER 2020 GLOBAL PROTECTION FORUM EVENT REPORT OUTLINE

### Children's Voice: Maintaining and Adapting for Safe Child Participation during COVID-19

#### 1. Panel

- Moderator: Mark Canavera, Co-Director, Care and Protection of Children Learning Network
- Speakers:
  - Michael Copland, Global Child Protection Area of Responsibility (CP AoR) Coordinator
  - Joel Bergner, CEO and Co-Founder, Artolution
  - Vanessa Currie, Executive Director, International Institute for Child Rights and Development (IICRD)
  - Laura Wright, Director, Participatory Methodologies, IICRD
  - Helen Veitch, Consultant on Child Exploitation and Children's Participation, Children Unite
  - Kristen Hope, Research and Advocacy Advisor, Terre des Hommes
  - Konstantinos Papachristou, Founder, Teens4World
  - Lauren Bienkowski, Global Help Desk, CP AoR

#### 2. Objective/overview of the session

Organized by the CP AoR and the CPC Learning Network, this webinar presented different ways how children can be engaged as partners and leaders in child protection during the COVID-19 crisis. The new 'Children as Partners in Child Protection during COVID-19 Guide' was presented with the aim to assist humanitarian actors to maintain and strengthen children's meaningful participation in their work in response to the current COVID-19 pandemic and in preparedness planning. In addition, experiences on meaningfully engaging children were presented by Artolution and Terre des Hommes to encourage participants to include child participation in their programming.

#### 3. Summary of the discussion points

- Michael Copland, Global CP AoR Coordinator, highlighted in his opening remarks that benefits of child participation are numerous and include gaining a better understanding of the situation, gathering insights on how to design responses, getting feedback on the quality of the response, and ensuring accountability to children. Despite the availability of good examples from many countries and the availability of different ways to foster participation that are age and situation appropriate, child participation is often not an integral part of our regular work. Challenges highlighted by field practitioners include difficult contexts, fear of being tokenistic and doing harm. As we are potentially losing more contact with children who are facing heightened risk during COVID-19, we need to reexamine how to ensure participation during the pandemic.
- Joel Bergner, CEO and Co-Founder of Artolution, presented the NGO's programming and experience involving children, including during COVID-19. Artolution works with vulnerable young people by creating collaborative art. The programmes are led by local artists and young community leaders from different backgrounds. Throughout the creation of artworks, children and young people learn skills and explore different themes that are important to their lives while strengthening their resilience. Young people decide the topic of the artworks and



messages they want to convey and are given an opportunity to participate and contribute to their community. The NGO's approach to programming is that children's self-identity and narrative about their own life can determine their future. Conducting virtual workshops during COVID-19 has allowed to bring together young people and artists from different countries who have gone through similar challenges. During the workshops, youth learn about storytelling and the creation of characters as a way to explore fiction and real topics. Play and creativity allow to explore real topics that may be difficult for youth to talk about. Virtual reality art allows young people to learn about technology and connect in virtual spaces while promoting social inclusion.

- Vanessa Currie, Executive Director, Laura Wright, Director, Participatory Methodologies at IICRD, and Helen Veitch, Consultant on Child Exploitation and Children's Participation, presented the 'Moving Towards Children as Partners in Child Protection in COVID-19 Guide', which was developed with the CPC Learning Network and the CP AoR. The Guide provides practical guidance for humanitarian actors to strengthen children's meaningful participation during COVID-19 and in preparedness and planning. It includes a set of practical tips and tools for easy application with groups of children in various settings to safely and ethically engage with them during the pandemic and to promote intergenerational relationships. The participatory tools have been adapted for the COVID-19 context and can be adjusted for various ages, gender and disability. They include in-person socially distanced tools, online engagement, SMS surveys, radio call in shows, community poster boards, community art installations, and home-delivered packages. The speakers noted that for every participatory activity, the planning and follow up takes around double the time of the activity itself.

Key components for working with children as partners include creating safe environments, building meaningful relationships, supporting child-led actions, sharing resources and giving young people opportunities to be involved and take the lead. Art, play and creativity are a great way to form and solidify relationships. The Guide introduces the concept of child-centered safeguarding, where children play a role in their own safeguarding by being involved in preventing harm, understanding and responding to risks, safety planning and decision making. The speakers stressed that it is important to move forward together with children in intergenerational partnerships for opportunities of joint learning and collaborative action.

- Kristen Hope, Research, Advocacy and Participation Advisor at Terre des Hommes, and Konstantinos Papachristou, Founder of Teens4World, presented the #CovidUnder19 initiative, which seeks to understand children's views and experiences about life under COVID-19 while involving them in each step of the survey process. Young people were integrated in advisory and steering groups for the creation of the survey. The language of survey questions was then piloted with children to adhere to the ethical guidance of doing no harm. For the roll-out of the survey, young people managed social media channels and contributed to content development. Children are being trained in data analysis and advocacy through virtual camps to be able to participate in data interpretation and the design of advocacy messages. Children will also be contributing to the dissemination of results and participating in advocacy. The survey was accessible online and a facilitator's pack was developed for frontline practitioners to conduct the survey with hard-to-reach groups. The survey has gathered answers from over 26,000 young people and is the only global survey of children's experiences during the



pandemic designed and analysed with children. The large number of children was reached through partnerships with other stakeholders and social media.

The speakers stressed that child participation should be an effective, continuous process involving adults and children. Both sides should work together, and children should be given more opportunities to make their voices heard and be consulted in matters that affect them. COVID-19 is an opportunity to reflect on our partnerships with children and on how we can do better. Solutions include engaging children in communications, strengthening intergenerational partnerships and shifting power to children and young people.

- During the Q&A session, speakers stressed that the most important thing is to keep all participants safe. Two main solutions during COVID-19 are conducting activities outdoors with social distancing and using technology to meet virtually. The restrictions of COVID-19 are an opportunity for youth to learn new skills and use new tools. Providing Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and leveraging different actors who are in contact with children is an opportunity to promote hygiene practices to raise the level of sanitation for these children.
- On the question of how to keep children safe emotionally and mentally during the pandemic, speakers recommended to train staff in child safeguarding and psychosocial support and to put in place guidelines for staff to make sure that children feel safe. Speakers encouraged participants to not only think of physical safety, but also of relational safety. For many children, mental welfare is contingent on relational safety with key adults (not necessarily trained psychologists/counsellors) who build trusting, positive and stable relationships where children can receive help to get through difficult times. Building long term relationships takes time which is normally not factored into humanitarian budgets. If we want to shift power from adult-run programmes to shared initiatives, more time is required to work in partnership, but the outcome will be better and children's needs can be better addressed.
- Participants asked how to provide technology to children in vulnerable communities during COVID-19. Artolution's experience shows that technology is cheaper than usual programmes since technology is not as expensive as it may appear, and devices can be used across different programmes. The NGO identified specific people who had access to devices such as smartphones or tables, so all youth could take turns using the available devices. In case of lacking internet access, this cost can be included in the programme budget and data plans can be sent to devices. In cases of bad reception, modems can get better internet reception than phones.

#### 4. Key recommendations / follow up action

- Children can be involved safely and meaningfully, which may lead to better programmes and outcomes for children. For meaningful participation, children must have space, voice, audience and influence.



- Rights-based, ethical child participation in research and advocacy is possible, even during a global pandemic. It is an opportunity to start shifting power towards intergenerational partnerships.
- Putting partnerships with children and young people into practice requires integrating them into decision making, cultivating spaces for exchange and connection with other children, building children's skills and competencies to make them more resilient and empowered, supporting them in fulfilling their own ambitions, making them agents of change and ensuring that duty bearers are holding true on promises they have made in accordance with international law.
- The 'Moving Towards Children as Partners in Child Protection in COVID-19 Guide' will be launched in October or November 2020 and will be piloted in a few countries. A community of practice will be built to provide a space for exchanging and learning how to engage young people meaningfully during COVID-19. An annotated bibliography and a Dropbox folder with existing tools and relevant files will also be made available.
- The results of the #CovidUnder19 participatory research process will be disseminated in October and November 2020. All updates will be shared through the following social media channels :

[www.facebook.com/CovidUnder19](http://www.facebook.com/CovidUnder19)

[www.twitter.com/CovidUnder19](http://www.twitter.com/CovidUnder19)

[www.instagram.com/covidunder19](http://www.instagram.com/covidunder19)

## Annexes

### Annex 1: List of organizers and speakers

- Michael Copland, Coordinator, Global Child Protection Area of Responsibility (CP AoR), [mcopland@unicef.org](mailto:mcopland@unicef.org)
- Lauren Bienkowski, Global Help Desk, Global Child Protection Area of Responsibility (CP AoR), [lbienkowski@unicef.org](mailto:lbienkowski@unicef.org)
- Mark Canavera, Co-Director, Care and Protection of Children Learning Network, [mc3718@cumc.columbia.edu](mailto:mc3718@cumc.columbia.edu)
- Yana Mayevskaya, Senior Program Officer, Care and Protection of Children Learning Network, [ym2547@cumc.columbia.edu](mailto:ym2547@cumc.columbia.edu)
- Joel Bergner, CEO and Co-Founder, Artolution, [joel.bergner@artolution.org](mailto:joel.bergner@artolution.org)
- Vanessa Currie, Executive Director, International Institute for Child Rights and Development, [vanessa.currie@iicrd.org](mailto:vanessa.currie@iicrd.org)
- Laura Wright, Director, Participatory Methodologies, International Institute for Child Rights and Development, [laura.wright@iicrd.org](mailto:laura.wright@iicrd.org)
- Helen Veitch, Consultant on Child Exploitation and Children's Participation, Children Unite. [helen@childrenunite.org.uk](mailto:helen@childrenunite.org.uk)
- Kristen Hope, Research and Advocacy Advisor, Terre des Hommes, [kristen.hope@tdh.ch](mailto:kristen.hope@tdh.ch)
- Konstantinos Papachristou, Founder, Teens4World, [koteam9@gmail.com](mailto:koteam9@gmail.com)