

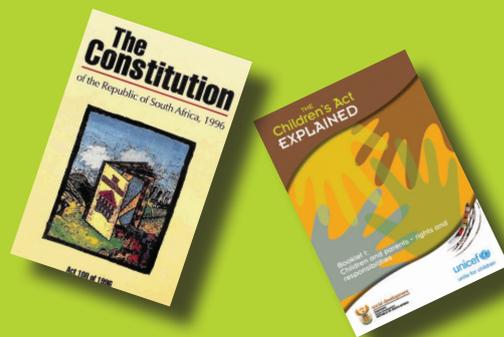
Monitoring participation in child protection – research summary



Know your rights!

Children have the right to **protection** from violence and abuse. They also have a **right** to **participate** in all decisions that affect them.

These rights are protected by international law and our Constitution, the highest law in South Africa. The government has put in place laws and programmes to protect young people.



The United Nations **Convention on the Rights of the Child** says that children must have a voice in shaping national and regional laws, policies, and programs governing their welfare. Children's participation can ensure that policies and programs reflect and respond appropriately and respectfully to children's needs, ultimately benefiting the lives of children and their families. But does this happen in reality? The International and Canadian Child Rights Partnership (ICCRP) did **research** to find out. This guide tells you what they did and what they found out.

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* Key words

Look on the back page to find out what the words in pink mean.

The research: where we worked

We worked in four countries: Brazil, Canada, China and South Africa



In South Africa we looked at the Isibindi Youth Forums in the Eastern Cape. We wanted to know if the adults who run the programmes listen to young people. We were also interested in whether anyone checks if young people feel they have a say.

Involving young people in the research team

At the beginning of the project the research team invited young people aged from 12 to 24 years to become part of child and youth advisory committees (CYAC). Our CYAC members play an important role in guiding the research. They do many things, they:

- ▶ talk to the researchers about what questions to ask and what activities to use;
- ▶ help choose and design materials for the young people;
- ▶ facilitate meetings;
- ▶ give their views on the **data** collected;
- ▶ work on reports and more.

We have committees in Brazil, South Africa, and Canada, and an international group with representatives from all four countries including China!

Rules for doing research:

- Ask permission before we start
- Everyone has a fair say
- Ensure no harm
- Duty to report if someone has been abused
- Keep you informed of what we find

A group of people called the Human Research **Ethics** Committee checks that we keep to the rules.

Case studies

Brazil: Focusing on young people's participation on the Children's Rights Council of Volta Redonda, state of Rio de Janeiro (CEDCA-Rio).

China: Examining Right to Play China's child protection program that aims to build and strengthen an effective and replicable child protection system in China.

Ontario, Canada: Addressing the question of how to involve young people in the development of college curricula for Child and Youth Care practitioners.

New Brunswick, Canada: Monitoring the engagement of young people in the Youth Voice Committee. This committee was created to support the New Brunswick provincial strategy called "Keeping Children and Youth Safe from Harm in New Brunswick".

The research: what we did

Guided by our CYACs, we used a variety of research methods:

Literature review

We read books, articles and reports to find out how people working with children understand the relationship between children's participation and their protection. We also wanted to know if they are monitoring children's participation in child protection services. The research team read articles written from 2005 to 2017. Most of this literature was in English but some was in Portuguese and Spanish.

Interviews with adults

We interviewed people from around the world including 10 people from South Africa. These people are experts in child protection, children's rights, and children's participation. Some of them work in government, others in universities, but most were from organisations working with children.

Focus groups with adults. In South Africa our **focus group** was with child and youth care workers (CYCWs) in the Eastern Cape. The CYCWs gave examples of the methods they use to give effect to children's right to participation even when they are working with elders with strong traditional views.

We had two **participatory meetings** in every country. At the first meeting, children and adults discussed quotes from the interviews and the literature review. For example:

Protection requirements should be determined by adults.

The South African group strongly disagreed saying:

Protection should not only be determined by adults only, it must be a two-way street.

The second **participatory meeting** focused on the results and on creating new ideas and recommendations on monitoring child participation in their protection.

And in South Africa, we also rewrote the goals of the Isibindi Youth Forums in youth-friendly language.



Workshops with children and youth

Before starting the workshops, we had to ensure that young people understood what the research was about and get their permission to use the things they said. Activities included understanding the rights to participation and protection, the key concepts of monitoring and evaluation, and the rules governing research.

In every country we asked children and young people what they understood about participation and what kinds of things make them feel protected. The researchers, helped by CYAC members in some countries, used arts and play-based activities to assess:

- ▶ how children and youth are involved,
- ▶ how often they participate,
- ▶ whether they feel heard, and
- ▶ if their participation meets the nine requirements for meaningful participation.



What we found out about participation a

Children’s participation describes “ongoing processes, which include information-sharing and dialogue between children and adults based on mutual respect, and in which children can learn how their views and those of adults are taken into account and shape the outcome of such processes.”¹

Conditions for meaningful participation²



Talking to children helps organisations like NACCW provide programmes and services that truly meet children’s needs. Participation also helps children and young people develop the knowledge, skills and confidence to act and solve problems in their homes and their communities. There are different ways that participation can be structured:

Consultation means that young people were consulted and asked their views, but adults made the decisions or designed the programme.

Collaboration means that young people worked with adults to design a programme.

Youth-led, youth-initiated or youth-managed means that youth themselves started, managed or led the process (this may also have been with adult support).



Remember that all three levels of engagement are valid and can be appropriate depending on the goals of your activity, the age and capacity of the children and youth involved and the context in which it takes place.

The United Nations says that child participation should meet nine basic requirements. We asked the local CYAC members to translate them into youth-friendly language.¹ These requirements can be used to plan, monitor or evaluate the quality of children’s participation processes.

Requirement	Translation
1. Transparent and informative	Clear and understandable
2. Voluntary	Doing it because you want to
3. Respectful	Everyone is equal
4. Relevant	Suitable
5. Child-friendly	Smile, connect with children, use pictures
6. Inclusive	Include everyone who wants to be involved
7. Supported by training	Give advice, support and assistance
8. Safe and sensitive to risk	Respect cultures, don’t judge, be safe and wise
9. Accountable	Responsible, answer for actions, explain

and protection

What the people said in South Africa

Adults see children's participation as developmental, helping children grow:

... "it prepares them for adult life."

Whilst children and young people emphasised being respected and involved in decision-making:

"Children should be allowed to voice their opinion about their protection measures, they should be included in decision-making of the family and they should not be left out."

Children have a right to **protection** from all forms of violence, but not everyone agrees what we mean by protection. It means different things in different parts of the world. Some countries focus on protecting children from abuse and neglect in the home. Other countries try to protect children from all forms of abuse, neglect and exploitation everywhere and have programmes targeting child marriage; child labour; children living on the streets; victims of war; and orphans of HIV/AIDS.

Participation in Protection

The rights to protection and participation carry equal weight and depend on one another. In practice, the right to protection is often seen as more important than the right to participation.

Protection is often used as an excuse for not including children's views, because adults typically think that children cannot protect themselves, and that adults know best.

Children in need of protection are not just victims, and it is important that professionals also recognise children's strengths and encourage them to participate and share their views, or as one child said:

"don't talk to the happy, normal children only."

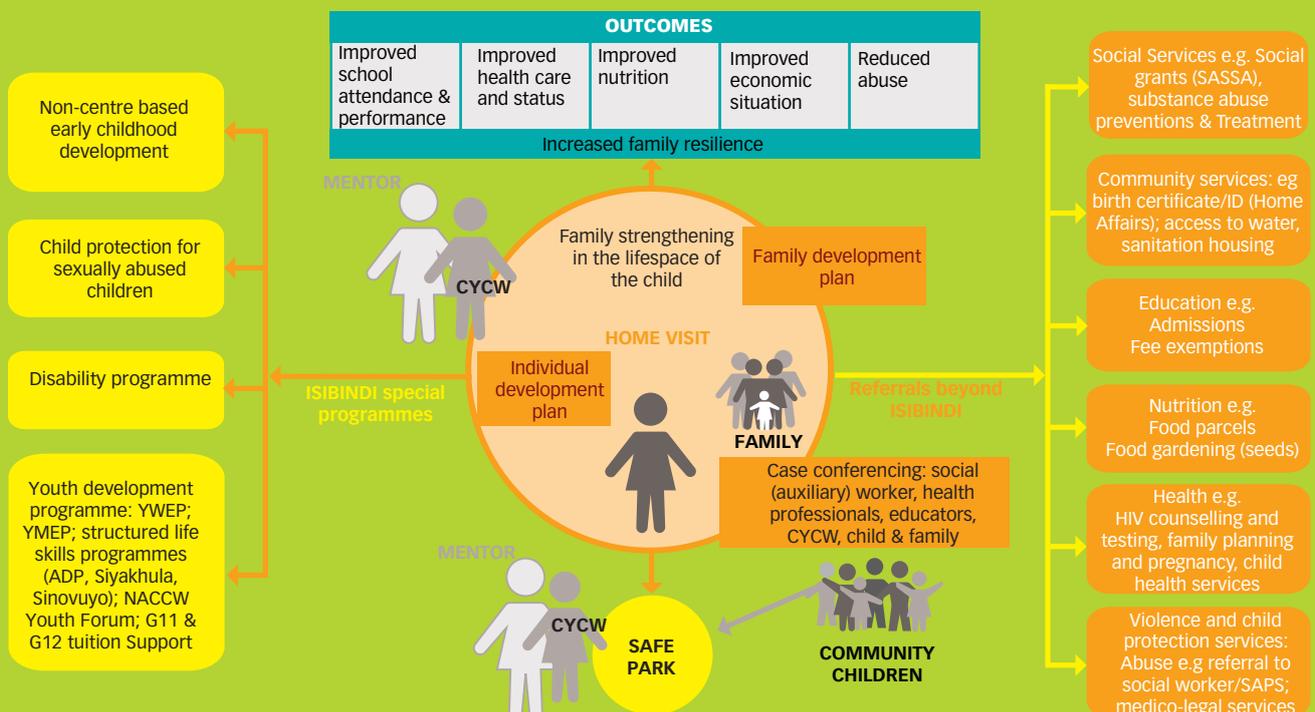
Isibindi: an example of holistic child protection in South Africa³

Isibindi is a community-based child and youth care service that responds holistically to the needs of children, youth and families.

The programme serves communities with high rates of unemployment and poverty, where lots of people have HIV and AIDS, and there are many orphans and vulnerable children.

Safe Parks are a key part of the Isibindi model. They provide a space where children, adolescents and youth receiving Isibindi programmes as well as other children and youth in the community can come together in a safe space.

There are 14 Safe Parks in the Eastern Cape. All implement youth-friendly practice standards and have a youth forum.



What is monitoring and evaluation?

Talking about what happens around the world the literature said:

“Typical monitoring focuses on the number of children involved, not quality & impact of service, which requires child participation.”⁴

We found the same in South Africa. The child and youth care workers take registers to monitor the number of youth coming to the Youth Forums, and do short evaluations after each activity, but there is no routine evaluation of the quality of the program or its impact:

“In our country, most of the time they focus on quantity not quality and impacts of service.”

And they recognised that monitoring participation in protection is hard:

“Monitoring is important but difficult to practice in relation to children’s participation in their protection.”

Monitoring participation in protection

The literature recognises that monitoring and evaluation are needed to improve children’s participation in child protection, yet there are very few examples of this in practice. The literature review also identified the need to improve education and training for professionals like child and youth care workers and social workers, strengthen laws and policies, and monitor and evaluate current practice.

However, we cannot monitor child protection services without children’s meaningful participation.

Monitoring participation in South Africa

The South African group’s experience echoed findings from across the world that traditionally children are ignored:

“Children’s views are not taken into account, this is because, for example, in our culture (Xhosa culture), adults expect us to only listen to them and not have a say in whatever they plan to do.”

Fortunately, they also gave powerful examples of how Isibindi is helping overcome cultural barriers:

“In the Eastern Cape we have a project called Sinovuyo (Teen and Parent Programme), where children and parents get to talk about issues relating to children’s views.”

Isibindi goal: Give youth a voice in the planning of activities and programs for the Safe Parks and their communities

Type of youth involvement in different Isibindi youth forum activities

To evaluate if Isibindi is meeting this goal we asked the youth what activities they are involved in and at what level here is what they said:

	Youth not involved	Youth consulted	Collaboration youth and CYCWs	Youth led, initiated or managed	
Identifying priorities	13%	21%	39%	26%	100%
Drafting year plan	31%	18%	37%	14%	100%
Organising events	8%	36%	25%	31%	100%
Camp/review meeting	21%	18%	31%	29%	100%

Recommendations: how to monitor child participation in child protection

Have a clear vision

To evaluate something, you need to know what you are trying to achieve and have a plan of how to get to your goal.

In South Africa, we found that most young people (77%) did not understand the Isibindi goals as they are currently written.

We asked young people why they come to the youth forum. Their answers showed that the goals align with their hopes. But they just didn't understand the complex language. At the second participatory meeting, the researchers and young people collaborated to come up with new youth-friendly goals using what young people had said during the fieldwork. Here is an example of what they recommended:

Original wording - Youth experience themselves as capable change agents within their organisations and within the NACCW.

New wording - Isibindi helps youth to feel that they are powerful and can make a difference in their communities.

Challenge/priority area	High	Medium	Low
Substance abuse			●
Gender-based violence			
Teenage pregnancy		●	
HIV and AIDS			
Abuse (sexual, physical, emotional, other)			
Other <i>lack of electricity</i>	●		

Identify specific goals

If you want to make a difference in your community start by discussing the main challenges in your area and vote for your top priorities.

Or you could identify changes you want to make to the Isibindi programme.

- ▶ Set goals to overcome the top challenges e.g. getting electricity in our community.
- ▶ Once the goals are clear, youth and staff should plan the activities they will do to achieve their goals.
- ▶ These activities should be included in the year plan.

Monitoring

Throughout the year check that you are taking steps towards your goal, continue to count how many young people are involved in each activity, and start asking what's working well?

Evaluation

At the end of the year organise a meeting to evaluate the programme. Look back at the plan and the footsteps. Use the nine principles to evaluate the quality. Key questions to ask:

- ▶ Did you do what you said you would do?
- ▶ Who led the activities?
- ▶ Did you respect the nine principles of participation?
- ▶ Did taking part in these activities help the youth to grow?
- ▶ Were the youth able to influence what happens in the community or the programme?



What is the International and Canadian Child Rights Partnership?

The International and Canadian Child Rights Partnership (ICCRP) is a partnership that involves universities and research institutes; international and national non-governmental organizations (NGOs) including NACCW; and human rights institutions like the South African Human Rights Commission. As a partnership, we aim to answer the question of how children's participation in international and Canadian child protection programs and policies can be monitored. We have team members and partners in Brazil, Canada, China, South Africa, and the United Kingdom. Of course, our research team is not complete without the young people involved in our Child and Youth Advisory Committees. We have committees in Brazil, South Africa, Canada and China, and an international group with representatives from all four countries!



RIGHT TOPLAY



Conseil de recherches en sciences humaines du Canada



This report was written by Lucy Jamieson with input from the CYAC

* Key words

Child: a person under 18 years – in all countries across the world.

Data are facts or information about something or people.

Ethics: Rules for doing research so that researchers do not harm the people involved

Evaluation: to determine the level, value, or worth of; appraise. Teachers give tests to evaluate what their students have learned.

Focus group: a conversation about the topic involving a group of people.

Interview: a formal conversation that follows a list of questions with one person to learn about their understandings of the topic.

Literature review reading books, magazines, articles and webpages that relate to a specific topic.

Monitoring: to check the progress or quality of something over a period of time. E.g. keeping a register to monitor attendance at school.

Participatory meeting: these meetings involved play-based activities to gather data and engage with children, youth and adults at the same time.

Participation: means sharing information, talking with and listening to children in a way that is respectful, and taking what they say seriously.

Protection: is about preventing and responding to violence, exploitation and abuse against children

Research: careful study of something to find out information about it.

Rights: things that every child should have or be able to do. For example, the right to education. These rights are protected by our Constitution, the highest law in the land.

Youth: according to the African Youth Charter is someone between the ages of 15 and 35. But in some countries it is 15 to 25.



References: ● UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment, No. 12 (2009) The right of the child to be heard, para. 3. ● Lundy, L. (2007). 'Voice' is not enough: conceptualising Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. *British Educational Research Journal*, 33(6), 927-942. ● NACCW (2017) Annual Report 2016/2017, Cape Town. ● Sammon, E., Godwin, M., Rumble, L., Nolan, A., Matsika, A. B., & Mayanga, N. (2015). Make the promise true: A monitoring and evaluation framework for measuring quality in child protection service delivery in Zimbabwe. *Child Indicators Research*, 8(3), 623-640.