



Webinar: Children in evaluation – full Q&A

Mallika Samaranayake and Sonal Zaveri

Question	Question to	Answers
How do you ensure that girls' and boys' voices are equally expressed and listened to?	Both	To ensure that girls' and boys' voices are equally expressed and listened to, it is essential to sample appropriately. One useful method is to have separate groups for boys and girls. This is an effective technique because in certain contexts, the environment is not favourable towards girls. At the conclusion of the exercise, girls and boys can also present their views to each other.
In South Asia, adults tend to ignore children's action and not take them seriously. Given this situation, how do you ensure that children's work related to evaluation are taken seriously by adults or other stakeholders?	Both	This situation is not particular to South Asia, as adults globally tend to disregard the views of children. Preparation of adults is key to any evaluation involving children. Prior to the evaluation, the decision-makers and other adults must be oriented and prepared to understand and accept the opinions of children. Our attitude and behavior towards children enables adults in the children's environment to observe how we respect children's voices. Evaluators or program managers send powerful messages about valuing children when they share evaluation findings with children, seek their opinion and include their comments in the feedback.
In the example of the child who suggested a change in the position of the pavilion, how was the context created so the child felt brave enough to express him/herself?	Mallika	The skill of the facilitator is extremely important in making children feel comfortable. The mapping tool used in this case also lends itself well to participation, irrespective of age.
How do you ensure all children feel able to say what they really think, rather than trying to give what they think might be the "right" answer?	Both	The exercise must begin with the assurance there is no "right" answer. It is also helpful to ask open-ended questions.
Do you have any advice on how children can participate in evaluation for Early Childhood Development Projects i.e. from age of 1-6 years old?	Both	Children can take part in evaluations as early as age 3, from the time that they can understand verbal instructions. They can answer very simple questions, such as ranking questions and likes or dislikes. Children of ages 1-3 can be observed. For young children, it is essential to select appropriate tools and appropriate questions, and to have an effective facilitator. The sessions must also be short as children's attention span is short.

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Does Sonal involve children younger than 9 years old in evaluation? If not, why not?	Sonal	Yes, she does. You can involve children from the age of 3, but methods and tools vary. Ranking and direct questions are suitable for children aged approximately 3-11 years old. After this, one can start using Why questions as well, which are a bit more analytical in nature. Please refer to Question 5 for further information on methods.
Could you please comment on child protection in the context of developing countries. Particularly in vetting staff in places where police background checks etc. are not available	Both	Many societies in developing countries have traditional built-in systems of protection, where the family and community is responsible for the well-being of all children. When orienting the staff of various organisations, it must be ensured that they understand the protection measures that already exist in the home and the community.
What are the pros and cons of having a trusted adult present (e.g. As might be the case in a legal setting)?	Both	Cons: A child may feel intimidated and not want to open up with an adult present, even if they are well-known and trusted. Pros: There is assurance that the interviewer will not harass the child or ask questions that are not culturally appropriate. The trusted adult can be a balance/check. Having a trusted adult present could make the environment more enabling.
How important is triangulations that involve adults / family members of the children?	Sonal	Triangulation involving other children, adults and family members are very important. Adults are always involved in interventions regarding children to some extent, and it is good to understand their point of view as well.
Do you have any examples of how adults not listening to children can negatively influence child participation in evaluations?	Sonal	Adults not listening to children would negate the entire exercise of evaluations involving children. Facilitator skills that allow children to express themselves are essential and non-negotiable and adults must listen to childrens' opinions, respect their thoughts and feelings, and provide them the space to express themselves.
How do you manage different 'ability' levels among children. e.g. their ability to articulate or draw, just as there may be differences among and between adults?	Both	It is important to understand that tools used for evaluation are not skill assessments, but a medium for expression. The evaluator must select a medium that the children are comfortable with. For example, with differently abled children, you may have to use tools that are suitable for the blind and different ones for those who have difficulty hearing.
Literacy is often an important pre existing skill for child led evaluations. Ranking can also be useful where literacy is low. However are there examples	Both	Rather than categorising methods into separate world-views, it is important to understand the context and environment in which the child lives, and to develop methods and tools that are aligned to the skills of the evaluator.

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of cross cultural child led evaluations where there are competing world views (western and indigenous) can be both captured in child led evaluations?		
How have evaluators working with children especially using participatory processes, responded to questions around rigour? especially when workshop based processes are used to assess something like learning outcomes etc	Both	Participatory processes can also be rigorous. The tool used by the evaluator must be well-tested, with a protocol and standards for use. Regarding the measurement of learning outcomes, it would be advisable to use triangulation and a combination of methods. Additionally, the evaluator may wish to work with children individually or in focus groups.
Have you used Quality Circles in your work?	Mallika	Yes, quality circles are recognised as a useful tool for M&E. Mallika has used quality circles in the school example -across different age groups / grades. Quality circles are also used for following up progress based on checklists / standards. They can be used in different context – Eg: in children’s clubs.
Do you have any experience in including children with a disability in your work?	Both	Mallika has interacted with a mentally challenged child, who was able to express himself better through drawing than through talking. Sonal has worked with children with cerebral palsy, and has been able to adapt tools for them. It must be emphasised that all children are able to participate provided the questions are direct, easy and adapted. Additionally, all children require attention, care and appreciation to encourage them to express themselves.
Do you think that it is good to involve the children at all stages of the project, or just in the M&E?	Mallika	It is important to involve children in all stages of the project. If they are involved in needs identification, prioritizing and planning – it is highly likely that the M&E will fall in place naturally.