Summary of the webinar

On May 29th the Child Hub held a webinar: "We are speaking – are you ready to hear us?" The challenges of involving children meaningfully in protection interventions and policies". The webinar brought together both experts in child participation and also those willing to explore more in this area of work.

The first presenter, Ms. Berina Ceribašić, spoke about standards for meaningful participation and "NAŠA DJECA"’s efforts to promote children participation.

Save the Children supported "NAŠA DJECA’s" steps in promoting children participation for over 10 years. Based on different experiences and contexts from around the world, they've developed very useful guidelines – practice standards in children participation that were presented.

Standards represent minimum expectations of the ways in which staff working with and for children should behave and operate. Each standard is accompanied by a set of criteria that can be used as indicators to see whether the standard is being met. Standards should be adapted to fit local conditions, social, economic, cultural and other practices, as well as the age and maturity of children.

7 standards:
1. An ethical approach: transparency, honesty and accountability.
2. Children's participation is relevant and voluntary.
3. Ensuring a child-friendly, enabling environment.
4. Equality of opportunity.
5. Effective and confident staff.
6. Participation promotes the safety and protection of children.
7. Ensuring follow-up and evaluation.

Berina Ceribašić is a sociologist, executive director of NGO - "NAŠA DJECA" ("Our Children") in Bosnia and Herzegovina, coordinator of NGO Network - "Stronger Voice for Children", volunteer and most-recently, a mom.

The project is funded by the EU, the Oak Foundation and the Austrian Development Cooperation.
Ms. Berina Ceribašić has also discussed difficulties that "NAŠA DJECA" and the network, "Stronger Voice for Children", has experienced when working with children. She has presented lessons learnt, examples of good practice and achieved results of children. “Our mission is to find a fine line between overburdening and over protective approach in our work with children”, she concluded.

Learning points:

1. Mind the ladders of participation (manipulation, decoration, participation for show, tasks assigning, consulting and informing, joint decisions, initiaive and leadership).
3. There is no subject that concern children, and on which they can’t give their input.

Afterwards, Ms. Valbona Carcani from Terre des hommes Delegation in Albania presented the experience of forming consultation groups of children on the move, the practical side of working with children and their experience of leading groups of children and getting them involved.

Ms. Valbona Carcani shared her experience of facilitating the Children Consultation Board (CCB), a group of children, brought together in the framework of Mario project. The CCB intends to involve children in a number of child protection processes, including advocacy events, and developing social skills, form group identity and coherence, etc.

The presentation has also created space for the participants to discuss challenges of facilitating a group of children, such as group age, timeframes, children skipping sessions, diversity of personalities, how to deal with non-participation, challenging members and demotivation.

The presentation was followed by illustrations of concrete work that children have done, as well as some learning points and tips.

Valbona Carcani, a psychologist, has worked for many years in the non-profit sector, involved with vulnerable and disadvantaged groups. Valbona facilitated Children Consultation Groups in the framework of Tdh Mario Project – Children on the move.

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Practical tips:

- Try to overcome age, number, time and absences challenges;
- Follow children's rhythm, be flexible;
- Have realistic expectations;
- Treat children individually;
- Use creativity: games, exercises, competitions, theatre, case discussions, tests;
- Try to understand the motivation behind challenging behavior;
- Use appraisal and behavior reinforcement;
- Use structure, rules and peer pressure;
- Involve children in facilitation;
- Use repetition and involve children into learning.

Feedback on the webinar from the participants:

“Thank you for both presentations, it has been insightful!”

“Great concrete examples!”

“I learned quite many interesting things, thanks!”

“The presentations and practices were very interesting!”

“Thanks I enjoyed... It was very nice being a part”

“It was a very nice experience and can’t wait to participate again”

“I hope we use child hub forum for our exchange of tips in the future”

“Looking forward to the next webinar on “Working with families who do not see the problem”

A number of polls were conducted during the webinar, please see the results of some of them below:

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The discussion of the webinar and child participation in general, can be continued on the following forum: http://childhub.org/child-protection-forum-topic/challenges-involving-meaningfully-protection-interventions-and-policy

The recording of the webinar and the presentations can be found on the following webinar page: http://childhub.org/child-protection-webinars/we-are-speaking-are-you-ready-hear-us-challenges-involving-children

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