

Meaningful, Safe and Inclusive Child Participation in ASEAN

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Participation is about having the **opportunity** to express a view, influencing decision-making and achieving change.

Children's participation is **an informed and willing involvement** of all children, including the **most marginalised** and those of different ages and abilities, in any matter concerning them either directly or indirectly.

Why Meaningful Child Participation Matters in ASEAN?

- Children are **actors in their own development** and with their own rights, not passive recipients.
- Children have the **right to influence decisions that affect them**.
- Involving children **helps deliver better decisions for children** – more relevant and better informed responses, solutions and outcomes.
- It makes us **more accountable** – by recognising and acting on children's contributions.
- It means that our **advocacy asks are informed** by the real views and perspectives of children.
- Children benefit from participation – it **contributes to their skills, power, confidence, enjoyment**.

Learning Session Highlights on Meaningful Child Participation in ASEAN

Unpacking Children's Participation (Session 1) Open Forum

- Child participation under Articles 12, 13, and 14 remains poorly understood and needs continuous learning at all levels.
- Responsibility for implementation lies with everyone—governments, professionals, parents, tech-companies, and communities.
- Regional and national initiatives should always include children in discussions on all issues affecting them.
- Marginalized children (refugees, stateless, children with disabilities, victims) must be systematically included, not tokenized.
- Meaningful participation requires resources, safe and inclusive environments, and collective effort from governments, stakeholders, civil society and tech-companies.

Learning Session Highlights on Meaningful Child Participation in ASEAN

Milestones on Children's Participation in ASEAN (Session 2) Open Forum

- Inclusivity remains a challenge: marginalized children (refugees, stateless, children with disabilities, victims) must be systematically included with confidentiality and protection.
- Case management should integrate child participation at every step and use feedback to influence policy and programs.
- Sustained engagement—not one-off consultations—is critical; indicators and tools to measure success are needed (e.g., Indonesia's monitoring system).
- Structural gaps persist: need for inter-ministerial support, resources, and safeguards against tokenism and harmful traditional mindsets.
- Regional harmonization and accountability are key—AMS must ensure real representation, shared standards, and child-sensitive policies across all sectors.

Learning Session Highlights on Meaningful Child Participation in ASEAN

From Theory to Practice - Case Study Presentations (Session 3) Open Forum

- Balancing the right to participate with the right to play: make activities fun, consult children on schedules, and integrate peer-led approaches.
- Child safeguarding is essential: supportive adults, consent protocols, referral systems, and privacy measures (e.g., no faces shown).
- Preparing child advocates, especially survivors, requires long-term trust-building and phased capacity-building sessions.
- Inclusivity needs proactive outreach: targeted invitations to marginalized groups and accessible formats for children with disabilities.
- **Participation must lead to influence: follow-up advocacy with decision-makers and accountability from sectors like government and private companies.**

Learning Session Highlights on Meaningful Child Participation in ASEAN

From Theory to Practice - Case Study Presentations (Session 4) Open Forum

- Child participation spans consultative, collaborative, and child/youth-led approaches; current practice is moving toward collaborative with some child-led initiatives.
- Digital platforms already enable child-led voices, but formal systems struggle to absorb and act on these inputs, creating a gap.
- Regional opportunities exist through ASEAN Children's Forum and ICT Forum, plus consultations integrated into ACWC frameworks and work plans.
- Promoting participation at national and regional levels requires synergy between adults, children and youth, ensuring **inclusive, safe and meaningful** engagement rather than hierarchy.
- Collaborative participation is often most effective, but child-led initiatives remain empowering and should be supported alongside consultative models.

Indicative next steps and way forward

- **On the development of an ASEAN framework on meaningful child participation** - under the leadership of ACWC Indonesia, a programmatic initiative is to be proposed for inclusion in the ACWC Work Plan 2026-2030.
- To be undertaken in close collaboration with the **Senior Officials Meeting on Social Welfare and Development (SOMSWD)** and **other relevant ASEAN Sectoral Bodies**, and with the support of ASEAN partners.
- The development of the regional framework may run in the next 2 years ensuring **comprehensive consultation process with relevant stakeholders**, particularly with the **children and young people and their organisations**.
- To be submitted for **endorsement of ACWC and SOMSWD** and for **adoption of the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Social Welfare and Development (AMMSWD)**, for notation of the ASEAN Leaders during the ASEAN Summit.

- **“Governments and tech-companies have key roles to play in supporting children and parents in keeping children safe from harm online. Parental guidance also plays an important role in helping them to engage with digital technologies **safely and meaningfully**, and in ways that support the realisation of their rights”.**



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