



PARTNERSHIPS WITH CHILDREN AS CORE TO PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOAL

Read on for an illustrative example of how partnering with children is critical to the full realisation of the Sustainable Development Goals

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Partnerships with children are core to realising the SDGs

SDG16.7 is an often overlooked, critical driver of SDG17. Our global efforts must equate to real changes to improve the lives of all children, with specific focus on delivering these global goals for those who need it most. Key to delivering for all is ensuring decision-making is representative of the population, participatory and accessible to all, and responsive to deliver real change.

At the onset of COVID-19, child rights defenders grappled with discovering and understanding the impact the global pandemic would have on children's lives, and how best to support children facing the greatest adversity. Equally, children and young people sought to communicate to the world how they were experiencing the pandemic, in times of restricted connection with the outside world.

And so, partnerships undertaken remotely in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic have become essential, in order to:

1. Hear and share the voices of children and young people, and to discover and share what is happening on the ground.
2. Inform emerging policy and practice to continually support children's rights and wellbeing.
3. Rise to emerging challenges, and to respond to these challenges and new and innovative ways.

We now know that the COVID-19 pandemic hit those facing the greatest adversity first, and hardest. In addition, children, especially those already facing the greatest adversity, now face the long-term consequences of COVID.



For those children who are in detention, in alternative care, in migration –especially those who are unaccompanied– and those living in poverty, this pandemic and related measures of confinement have likely had an even greater impact.

Indications are that the provision of basic needs, social and emotional wellbeing, violence against children, and other injustices have all worsened in the COVID era, and face further regression given the imminent economic consequences of the pandemic (for more info: <https://data.unicef.org/covid-19-and-children/>)

Strengthening the means of implementation and revitalising global partnerships will underpin our collective sustainable development (SDG 17).

In establishing SDG 17, the world was in agreement that the SDGs can only be realised with strong global partnerships and cooperation. Partnership is the key to global solidarity and in the light of COVID-19, to a cohesive and ultimately effective response to COVID recovery.

Ensuring responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels (SDG16.7) is an essential ingredient to the successful global partnerships we seek (SDG 17).

And whilst these local, regional, and international partnerships may be key, it is the quality of inclusive, participatory and meaningful decision-making, for all, that will be even more critical than ever as we seek sustainable solutions to complex inequalities and emergencies that COVID-19 has revealed to us.

Rights-based, participatory decision-making with children.

This meaningful global decision-making is especially relevant when it comes to children. Partnerships with children will be core to delivering Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development, as they inherit these challenges into adulthood.

It is particularly important to ensure that such partnerships uphold a rights-based approach in line with Article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and further specified in the nine basic requirements for child participation as set out in [General Comment 12](#) of the Committee on the Rights of the Child². In the Covid-context which has exacerbated existing inequalities, particular efforts should be made to include children from more marginalised backgrounds and groups. Alongside the principles of GC12, the [Lundy model for child participation](#) provides further guidance for implementing rights-based participation across four areas : space; voice; audience and influence.

Developing and maintaining these partnerships remotely during the COVID-19 era is even more challenging. One multi-layered set of partnerships illustrated below offers a picture of how SDG 16.7 (inclusive decision-making) can contribute to stronger SDG 17 (partnerships):

The COVID 4P Log app for Children’s Wellbeing

The COVID 4P Log is a smartphone app project, led by the Institute for Inspiring Children’s Futures at the University of Strathclyde, to gather real-time insights into the successes, challenges, innovations and learning of practitioners and policymakers. The questions were specifically about their experiences as they set out to support children through protection, provision, participation and prevention, during the pandemic. Phase 1 of the study collected 3300+ real-time responses from practitioners and policymakers, in over 20 countries and across 5 continents, across 8 weeks of questions, in late 2020. The **COVID 4P Log** was a collaborative process, developed in close partnership with 17 international key partner organisations³ –including DCI– while also engaging with children, and with 13 in-country dissemination partners. These rich multi-stakeholder partnerships are a great example of the key elements called for in SDG 17, aiming to deliver capacity-building, and policy and institutional coherence.



Findings from the study, and more information on the COVID 4P Log app project are available here: <https://inspiringchildrensfutures.org/covid>.



The #COVIDUnder19 initiative:

To find out how children around the world experience the pandemic, the #CovidUnder19 initiative was launched by Terre des hommes to bring together a group of children, the UN, academics and around 30 civil society organisations, including DCI, to develop an international survey.

“Children engaged as peer researchers to contribute to the data analysis and their insights, views and involvement are reflected in the findings”

Queen’s University Belfast led the design and analysis of the survey, involving children and partners as part of the innovative approach to child rights-based research developed at the Centre for Children’s Rights. More than 26,000 children and young people aged 8 to 17, from 137 countries, participated in the Life under Coronavirus survey, making it the largest global child-participatory research and advocacy process during the pandemic. Children engaged as peer researchers to contribute to the data analysis and their insights, views and involvement are reflected in the findings.

The results of the survey were published in December 2020, available in an [‘everyone-friendly’ format in four languages](#).

The #COVIDUnder19 initiative led to collaboration amongst a number of organisations to foster meaningful inclusion of children in the work which follows the results of the survey – through activities like Virtual Skillz Camps and collaborative workstreams with partner organisations.

The COVID 4P Log and #COVIDUnder19 Feedback Loop

The collaboration of our teams at the COVID 4P Log app and the #COVIDUnder19 initiative is an illustrative example of engaging through global collaborations for the delivery of the SDG 17, with inclusive, participatory and meaningful decision-making –SDG 16.7– at its core.

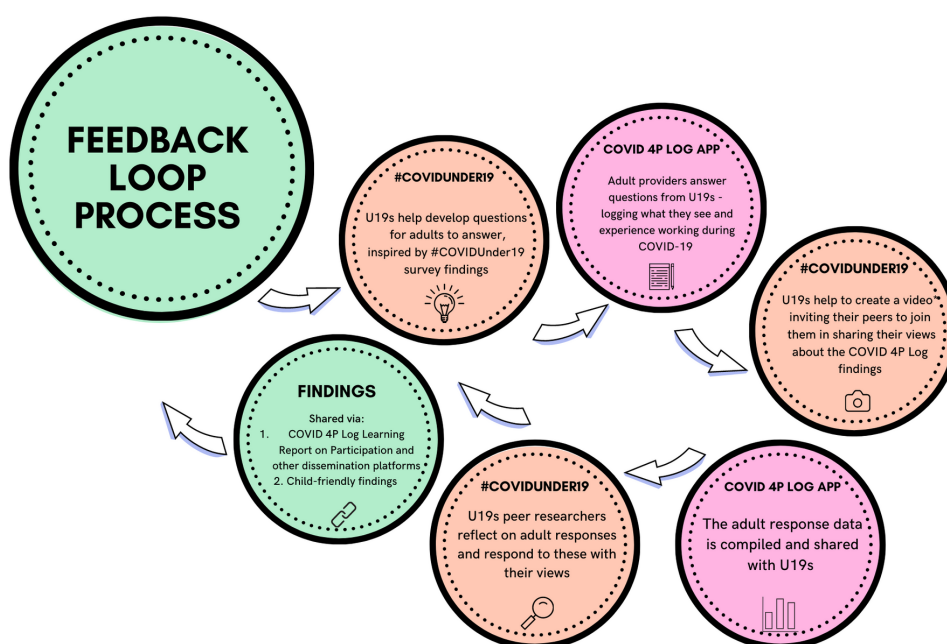




The **feedback loop process** imagery below describes the process being undertaken by the COVID 4P Log and #COVIDUnder19 teams.

Children involved with the #COVIDUnder19 project ('U19s') helped to develop questions for adults to answer in the COVID 4P Log app, inspired by the *Life Under Coronavirus* survey.

The adult responses to these questions were then analysed by the COVID 4P Log research team and by U19s, in order to contribute to learning and understanding about children's experiences of the pandemic, and about children's views of adults' experiences. These will be communicated in the coming months through events, publications and user-friendly findings. For the #COVIDUnder19 video about the COVID 4P Log App, please see: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3u1_0LpRA7A



Reflections and Implications

The different stages of the feedback loop between the COVID 4P Log and #CovidUnder19 illustrate the different phases of operationalising children's right to express their views and to have their views given due weight as per Article 12.

The Lundy model provides a useful framework for conceptualising the various phases of the feedback loop, namely:

- **Space** : The Life Under Coronavirus survey provided a safe, inclusive framework for children to express their views.

- **Voice**: In workshops around the COVID 4P Log, children have been given different options to express their views : in the form of a blog piece, in the form of a video, or in the form of the Learning Report.

- **Audience** : The results of the Life Under Coronavirus survey were used as a basis for children and adults to formulate questions that were disseminated to professionals via the COVID 4P Log.

- **Influence**: Children participate in analysing the results of the COVID 4P Log and shaping recommendations for improving professional practice in the learning reports.



Critical to our preliminary success in creating a participatory process was the development of a 'feedback loop' where children - as rights-holders - significantly contributed to our understandings of how children experience the pandemic and aided in the development of emerging policy and practice.

While we, as adult providers, are responsible for facilitating children's perspectives being better understood and implemented, the cyclical process of this project was so crucial in order to uphold children's right to be heard by duty bearers, namely, frontline professionals working with children. Prioritising partnerships and voices from all stakeholders coming together, with children at the very core, became the critical driver of a successful, participatory process. In order to fulfil SDG17, we must recognise that children facing adversity are among the furthest behind.



Therefore, children must contribute to, and be prioritised in, our global response to COVID.

The collaboration between #COVIDUnder19 and the COVID 4P Log app project provides grounds for reflection about improving practice in child-led advocacy and facilitating adult support for children's wellbeing and human rights, even in the midst of a global pandemic.

The feedback loop between the COVID 4P log and #CovidUnder19 highlights the cyclical, iterative nature of rights-based child participation across the four elements of the Lundy model.

Accordingly, the feedback loop may provide the foundations for a new prototype for operationalising rights-based participation and accountability towards children in a context of crisis, underpinned by ongoing learning.

¹The Institute for Inspiring Children's Futures www.inspiringchildrensfutures.org is a partnership initiative at the University of Strathclyde, Scotland, with a collective vision of ensuring that children and young people have what they need to reach their full potential, particularly those who face adversity.

²The nine basic principles are : Transparent and informative; respectful; voluntary; relevant; inclusive; supported by training; child-friendly; safe and sensitive to risk; and accountable.

³African Child Policy Forum, African Partnership to End Violence against Children, Barnafid Swedish National Centre on Violence Against Children, Child Rights Coalition Asia, Child Rights Connect, CYC-Net, DCI, European Social Network, FICE, Global Social Service Workforce Alliance, Observatory of Children's Human Rights Scotland, National Child Welfare Workforce Institute, OECD, Pathfinders for Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies, REPSSI, Terre des hommes, Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children.