



# Bringing Children's Voices into Parliament

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# Why Children inside of Parliament?

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- What is democracy?
- What do we mean by representation?
- Who or what gets represented?
- How do children's voices, interests, concerns fare?

# The challenge of representing children in Parliament

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- Children do not vote
- Children do not contribute \$\$\$
- Children vary in age, ability, preference, etc.
- Children do not form a clear electoral constituency
- Most societies do not accord children a space for expression in the political sphere
- How do we know what children think or prefer or would want?
- Do politicians have incentives to listen to children?

# Benefits of bringing children's voices or perspectives into Parliament

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## **Improved Outcomes for ALL**

- More democratic and representative
- Longer term perspective
- Improved legislative outcomes
- Promotes civic education and citizenship

# The Convention on the Rights of the Child

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## Children's Political Rights

- Article 12 – right to participation in all matters affecting the child
- Article 13 – freedom of expression
- Article 15 – freedom of association and assembly

# Mechanisms for bringing children into Parliament

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- Parliamentary Committees (Standing and Ad Hoc)
- Plenary Discussions
- Parliamentary Caucuses
- Party Groups
- Budget Process
- Children's Ombudsperson (Norway as great example)

## Bringing Parliamentarians to children

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- National or subnational consultations
- Constituency relations
- Field visits to institutions that host children
- Information and communication technology and social media

# Guiding Principles

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- Sustainability
- Participation is NOT substitution
- Risk of politicization
- Equity
- Protection and security
- Accountability
- Selection



## Making Parliament receptive to children

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- Partnerships with relevant NGOs, youth clubs, UNICEF, and other relevant stakeholders
- Access to child-relevant research and data
- Student visits to parliament
- Children's parliaments

# Thank You!

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