



THE RIGHT TO BE HEARD AND PARTICIPATION OF UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN

IDENTIFICATION
RECEPTION
PROTECTION &

OF UNACCOMPANIED
CHILDREN

A TOOL TO SUPPORT THE COLLECTION OF CHILDREN'S VIEWS ON PROTECTION AND RECEPTION SERVICES



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CHAPTER I

THE RIGHT TO BE HEARD AND PARTICIPATION: AN OBLIGATION AND A NEED

Every year thousands of unaccompanied children travel to Europe in search of a new life. Reception conditions as well as access to the asylum and other protection procedures differ between countries and further progress is needed to ensure that unaccompanied children's rights are respected in EU Member States. A wide range of actors and issues are involved in responding to the situation of unaccompanied children arriving in Europe. The CONNECT project aims to contribute to ensuring proper implementation and application of EU obligations, in line with the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, by considering the roles and responsibilities of actors responding to the situation of these children and how they best work together.

THE CONNECT PROJECT

Save the Children Sweden together with UNHCR's Bureau for Europe, NI-DOS in the Netherlands, Coram Children's Legal Centre in the UK, Save the Children Italy, Don Calabria Institute, the Italian Ministry of Labour and Social Policies in Italy and the County Administration in Västra Götaland in Sweden, have received funding from the EU for a 12 month project, ending in September 2014. The project aims were to identify and promote good practices on reception and protection based on national mappings carried out in Italy, the Netherlands, Sweden and the UK. The CONNECT project have also produced a "Reference Document on Unaccompanied Children - a Compilation of Relevant EU Laws & Policies" that will support EU Members States and other actors in ensuring proper application of EU law and policy relating to unaccompanied children, in line with the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights and the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child.

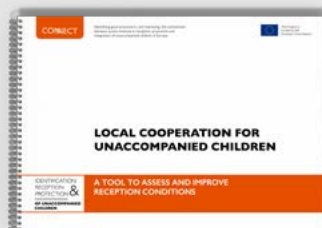
The project also produced a *comparative report* based on the country reports, which identifies common challenges across the four countries and national practices from one country that might inspire good practice across the region.

Each country have through pilot projects developed *practical tools* which can be used by actors across the EU Member States. These tools address specific aspects of how actors address the situation of these children and can be used separately or together as a toolkit.



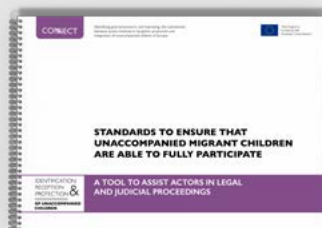
WHO'S RESPONSIBLE?

A Tool to Strengthen Cooperation between Actors Involved in the Protection System for Unaccompanied Migrant Children (Italy)



LOCAL COOPERATION FOR UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN

A Tool to Assess and Improve Reception Conditions (Sweden)



STANDARDS TO ENSURE THAT UNACCOMPANIED MIGRANT CHILDREN ARE ABLE TO FULLY PARTICIPATE

A Tool to Assist Actors in Legal and Judicial Proceedings (the UK)



THE RIGHT TO BE HEARD AND PARTICIPATION OF UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN

A Tool to Support the Collection of Children's Views on Protection and Reception Services (The NL)



WORKING WITH THE UNACCOMPANIED CHILD

A Tool for Guardians and Other Actors Working for the Best Interest of the Child (the NL)

In developing the tools we have tried to ensure that the tools are:

- based on a child rights perspective and relevant EU obligations,
- directed towards strengthening the capacity of actors to engage in the situation of children and, to the extent possible, support better inter-agency work,
- relevant, practical and effective and
- inspirational and transferable to other contexts.

BACKGROUND AND REASONING

The United Nations' Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN CRC) of 20 November 1989 sets out norms and standards for the protection and promotion of children's rights, including the child's right to be heard:

- “1. States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.
2. For this purpose the child shall in particular be provided the opportunity to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting the child, either directly, or through a representative or an appropriate body, in a manner consistent with the procedural rules of national law.”

Article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child

The implementation of the UN CRC is monitored by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. The Committee issues authoritative interpretative guidance on provisions of the UN CRC, one of these being General Comment No. 12 (2009) on the right of the child to be heard:

- “The overall objective of the general comment is to support States parties in the effective implementation of Article 12. It addresses the fact that Article 12 of the Convention establishes the right of every child to freely express her or his views, in all matters affecting her or him, and the subsequent right for those views to be given due weight, according to the child's age and maturity. This right imposes a clear legal obligation on States parties to recognise this right and ensure its implementation by listening to the views of the child and according them due weight. This obligation requires that States parties, with respect to their particular judicial system, either directly guarantee this right, or adopt or revise laws so that this right can be fully enjoyed by the child.”

The right of the child to be heard is an individual right, but also a collective right for groups of children. In practice, this means that the individual child has a right to be heard in all matters affecting them, but also that States and other actors have a responsibility to listen to groups of children and their experiences, for example, when planning services such as reception for unaccompanied children.

Furthermore, General Comment No. 5 (2003) clearly asks States to take action on involving and consulting (groups of) children and link subsequent action to their views:

- “Article 12: the child's right to express his or her views freely in “all matters affecting the child”, those views being given due weight. This principle, which highlights the role of the child as an active participant in the promotion, protection and monitoring of his or her rights, applies equally to all measures adopted by States to implement the Convention.

*Opening Government decision-making processes to children is a positive challenge which the Committee finds States are increasingly responding to. Given that few States, as yet, have reduced the voting age below 18, there is all the more reason to ensure respect for the views of unenfranchised children in Government and Parliament. If consultation is to be meaningful, documents as well as processes need to be made accessible. **But appearing to “listen” to children is relatively unchallenging; giving due weight to their views requires real change. Listening to children should not be seen as an end in itself, but rather as a means by which States make their interactions with children and their actions on behalf of children ever more sensitive to the implementation of children's rights.***

One-off or regular events like Children's Parliaments can be stimulating and raise general awareness, but Article 12 requires consistent and ongoing arrangements. Involvement of, and consultation with, children must also avoid being tokenistic and aim to ascertain representative

*views. The emphasis on “matters that affect them” in Article 12 (1) implies the inclusion of the views of particular groups of children on particular issues, for example, children who have experience of the juvenile justice system on proposals for law reform in that area, or adopted children and children in adoptive families on adoption law and policy. **It is important that Governments develop a direct relationship with children, not simply one mediated through non-governmental organisations (NGOs) or human rights institutions.** In the early years of the Convention, NGOs had played a notable role in pioneering participatory approaches with children, but it is in the interests of both Governments and children to have appropriate direct contact.*

GENERAL COMMENT No. 5 (2003) General measures of implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (Arts. 4, 42 and 44, para. 6)

However, participation is rather the exception than the rule in European systems for unaccompanied children. This is, firstly, the result of the responsibility for the target group often being decentralised to various agencies throughout the country, so structured feedback collection is not carried out by one, single responsible actor. A second reason is the fact that the target group itself is not easily approachable because of language difficulties, cultural barriers and frequent movements. Therefore, the collection of feedback is more difficult than for other groups of children, for instance, in regular youth care.

At the same time, it is very important for those people working with the children to involve them properly and gain insight into their circumstances, wellbeing, need for support, current situation, and future plans. Firstly, because it enables them to work on the relationship with the child and make an effective support plan and, secondly, it provides them with recommendations for general improvements in the care being given to the children.

SPECIFIC ASPECTS IN THE SUPPORT OF UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN

To understand the target group, it is necessary to explain that support to unaccompanied children is different from that given to other children in youth care and is largely influenced by their background and the situation they are in.

Issues that have to be taken into account concerning providing support and planning feedback:

- ❶ There may be cultural differences as a result of coming from a larger family culture instead of an individual-focused culture. Many unaccompanied children are not focused on individual development but wish to, and have to, fulfil the expectations of their families. The transition to a culture in which individual development is seen as important may be difficult for them. A democratic principle like participation and giving your opinion to somebody you are supposed to show respect to may be seen as bad behaviour;
- ❷ The contrast of their former situation with the prosperity in Europe is often considerable. Unaccompanied children can be focused on basic needs in their direct care environment, such as a place to stay, availability of food, and safety, rather than other topics;
- ❸ Being an unaccompanied child requires one to be under 18 and alone; whilst it is clear that the family often plays a role from a distance in their life, it is difficult to openly involve the family in supporting the unaccompanied child;

- ❹ Many unaccompanied children are often in an uncertain situation waiting for a residence permit and may have psychological problems as they experience trauma, loss, negative travel experiences and sorrow about family that stayed behind. Status determination procedures when not conducted in a child-sensitive manner may also have a negative effect on the emotional wellbeing of the child. Destructive and suicidal behaviour are frequent problems;
- ❺ Many unaccompanied children have been sent with an expectation or order (from the family) that the whole family will benefit from the money they will send back home, or to succeed and build a better future for themselves in Europe;
- ❻ Many unaccompanied children do not reach their original goal when they enter Europe as they were caught on their way travelling to another country of destination, have to return under the Dublin Regulation to the country where they first entered Europe, or have to return to their country of origin once they turn 18;
- ❼ Safety risks such as trafficking, abuse arising after end of legal stay and having to return are circumstances that need to be considered. Quite a few children go missing from care.

These specific characteristics of children that come from poor or war-torn countries clarify that working with them requires specific expertise, awareness and a constant search for connection. This also counts for organising participation and feedback as will be shown below.

ORGANISING PARTICIPATION AND FEEDBACK FROM UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN

As working with unaccompanied children means working in a dynamic arena (the target group having the specific characteristics mentioned above; numbers and backgrounds of those arriving being uncertain; partners having different goals, tasks and policies on both national and European level), it is a challenge to fulfil legal obligations in an effective way and support the unaccompanied children concerned to ensure their best possible development and independence. The interests of the child being of the utmost importance in this context, it is important to gain insight into the children's wishes and needs concerning the care being provided to them and the realisation of their rights in society in general.

Taking into account the dynamic environment mentioned above, specifically the characteristics of the target group, the experience is that existing forms of client participation used in the youth care system do not work in the case of unaccompanied children.

For this reason, a set of methods has been developed by Nidos (the Dutch guardianship institution responsible for unaccompanied children in the Netherlands), that can be used for receiving feedback from unaccompanied children. They enable organisations working with these children to measure to what extent the development goals that are being pursued (for example, being self-supporting at 18 in a methodology for guardianship) are being met. Do the children and young people become sufficiently independent? How about their wellbeing? Are they satisfied with the quality of their life and the support being offered to them? Will they be able to manage their own affairs/life once they turn 18 and build up their life without notable help from adults, in the host country or in their country of origin? These are questions that are being addressed in the tool.

In the Netherlands, the insights gained are used by the guardians on a regular basis (yearly) to improve the care given to the target group. Over the past few

years, this has resulted in better insight into what the children think about the daily care and support they receive from their guardians.

“F. Data collection and analysis and development of indicators

50. The Committee emphasises that, in many cases, only children themselves are in a position to indicate whether their rights are being fully recognised and realised. Interviewing children and using children as researchers (with appropriate safeguards) is likely to be an important way of finding out, for example, to what extent their civil rights, including the crucial right set out in Article 12, to have their views heard and given due consideration, are respected within the family, in schools and so on.

GENERAL COMMENT No. 5 (2003) General measures of implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (Arts. 4, 42 and 44, para. 6)

In this way, for instance, it has become clear that the children experienced problems in getting support from too many different guardians, which resulted in a lack of confidence. Integrating this insight in internal policy, the number of guardians that children receive has decreased considerably over the last few years.

Another example is the fact that the children stressed their preference for reception in small-scale reception services such as foster care and small living units. Moreover, the combination with other types of feedback showed children living in small-scale or family settings were doing considerably better. The benefits of these forms of reception have been confirmed over and over, which has resulted in a different way of thinking about reception of unaccompanied children in the Netherlands.

To make all of the instruments and insights gained/lessons learnt from them transferrable, they are included and described in this tool. The most important features are the processes for each instrument, their purpose and potential users, lessons learned through their use, their (return on) investments/resources and the conclusions that can be drawn from the feedback on all of the instruments together. In this way, they can be replicated, adapted, or used as inspiration in other countries.

CHAPTER 2

DUTCH EXAMPLES OF FEEDBACK INSTRUMENTS, THEIR USE AND LESSONS LEARNED

INTRODUCTION

Since 2009, academic research through semi-structured interviews supplemented by international questionnaires on wellbeing, students interviewing children as semi-peers, group discussion methodologies such as the World Café, evaluation sheets and cultural sensitivity interview training for guardians have been used in the Netherlands.

All of the instruments are being used on an annual basis and have gradually been developed, expanded and refined. Their outcomes are incorporated into policy changes aimed at increasing opportunities for the target group and achieving their best interests.

The different instruments are described below and can be used by guardians, social workers, daily caretakers or any other professionals working with unaccompanied children.

Instrument	Main purpose	Actor	Benefits/challenges
Academic research through semi-structured interviews and additional questionnaires	Picturing the development towards self-dependence of unaccompanied children	Researchers within universities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Provides organisations with independent, objective recommendations on an academic level, which are very usable for advocacy and policy-making purposes. ➤ Needs little time investment from organisations. ➤ Expensive due to use of professional researchers.
Students interviewing children as semi-peers	<p>Get insights into the issues in the relationship with the guardian that are important for unaccompanied children</p> <p>Gain practical feedback on the ways professionals working with unaccompanied children can improve their work</p> <p>Get insight into the relationships that unaccompanied children have with the professionals working with them</p>	University students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Provides organisations with independent, objective recommendations on an academic level, which are very usable for advocacy and policy-making purposes. ➤ As their semi-peers, the students generate trust with the children which leads to informal and open conversations that provided a lot of confidential information. ➤ Expensive due to use of university. ➤ Needs little time investment from organisations.
Group discussion methodology: the World Café	Highlight participants' wishes concerning the issues that are being addressed and make recommendations for their care	Organisation employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Easy, accessible, very interactive and inexpensive method of engaging with the target group. ➤ Organising can be rather labourious. ➤ Also enables participants to get to know each other, share issues and exchange information and experiences in their fields of interest.
Evaluation sheet	Provides information on the opinions of children (satisfaction or dissatisfaction and what should have been done in case of dissatisfaction) on different issues concerning counselling and reception	Organisation employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Easy and inexpensive way of gaining feedback from the target group.
Cultural sensitivity interview training	Aims to prevent socially desirable answers and increase the value of the information gained in order to adjust the care provided to the care needed	Organisation employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Rather expensive and requires a considerable investment of time from those being trained as it takes 4 days of training and having an additional 4 interviews of 75 minutes. ➤ Using this interviewing technique helps the children to formulate their feelings and opinions very often during the interview. ➤ More efficient, pleasant and useful interviews with the children.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR USE AND FURTHER IMPROVEMENTS

As already mentioned, feedback from unaccompanied children is rather difficult to capture with language difficulties, cultural barriers and frequent movements being important reasons for this.

The different ways to engage, previously discussed, have been developed to suit the clients and the professionals working with them. They are still being improved, with the results aiming to make them easily applicable for both children and professionals, and also increase the number of children using them.

The instruments provide helpful indications of how unaccompanied children develop, if they are satisfied with the quality of their reception experience and the care being offered, and if there are indications to implement changes in policy.

The main advantages of the instruments used are that they:

- offer very practical feedback
- are useful for those working with the clients on a daily basis
- are useful for changing policy

A mix of internal and external instruments and combining their results and recommendations in one overview has proved to be successful in the Netherlands.

ACADEMIC RESEARCH THROUGH SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

PROCESS

In 2009, the European Fundamental Rights Agency launched a project to advise the European Commission on the development of a common European policy in regard to unaccompanied child asylum seekers. The Dutch contribution resulted in the report, 'Separated asylum seeking children in EU member States: an examination of living conditions, provisions and decision-making procedures in the Netherlands through child-centred participatory research', that has been the starting point for annual academic research completed by the University of Groningen (RUG). Since then, the research method has been improved and refined.

In each research, around thirty children, all under guardianship and recruited from across the Netherlands, are asked about their wellbeing and their experiences covering different aspects of life. The children have different ages, different genders, come from different countries and live in different forms of reception all over the Netherlands.

Specific about this research is the way the researchers conduct the conversations with the children: the child-centred conversations are designed in such a way that the children can speak in confidence about their life in the Netherlands. It gives them a platform from which to express their own vision on different issues that are of importance to them and that determine the quality of their lived experience in Dutch society. The conversations are recorded and transcribed, which the researchers from RUG then analyse and write a report on their findings and recommendations.

To supplement the interviews, the RUG uses the *Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire* (SDQ), a questionnaire to get insight into social-emotional functioning and possible problem behaviour of the child, the *Stressful Life Events Checklist* (SLE), and *Reactions of Adolescents on Traumatic Stress Questionnaire* (RATS). All three questionnaires are completed by the child and used to determine if they have gone through a traumatic experience and what has been their reaction to this. Finally, the RUG researcher fills out a *Best Interest of the Child Questionnaire* (BIC-Q, Kalverboer and Zijlstra, 2006) that analyses the quality of the upbringing environment of a child.

STRENGTH AND DIFFICULTIES QUESTIONNAIRE (SDQ)

The Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire (Goodman, 1997) gives insight into social- emotional functioning and possible behavioural problems and is filled out by the child prior to the interview. The 25 questions of the SDQ are based on the DSM (the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders) classifications that appear the most frequently in children. The questions refer to five sub-scales:

- hyperactivity/lack of attention
- emotional problems
- problems with peers
- behaviour problems
- pro-social behavior

Each scale consists of five questions, the first four sub-scales together make the total problem score. The questions are answered using a three-point-scale with the answer categories 'not true', 'a bit true' and 'definitely true'. The total score range is seen as normal, borderline or abnormal.



The SDQ is freely available online in about 80 languages and can also be scored there. It has not been validated for unaccompanied children. <http://www.sdqinfo.org>

STRESSFUL LIFE EVENTS CHECKLIST (SLE) AND REACTIONS OF ADOLESCENTS ON TRAUMATIC STRESS QUESTIONNAIRE (RATS)

The SLE and RATS have been developed for refugee children (Bean, Eurelings-Bontekoe, Derluyn and Spinhoven, 2004). The lists have to be filled out to see if a child has had a traumatic experience and which (stress) reactions it had as a reaction to the traumatic experience(s). Having experienced a stressful event is the first criterion that has to be met according to the DSM-IV to be able to speak of Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome (PTSS). The SLE and RATS are completed by the child after the interview.

The SLE consists of 12 'yes/no' questions that are used to register the number and type of stressful events. It also has an open question where the child can describe another stressful event that was not mentioned in the other 12 questions.

The RATS consists of 22 items with the following possible answers: none, little, many, very many. The questions correspond with three categories of PTSS symptoms: intrusion, avoidance, and hyper-arousal. The items are scored on a four-point Likert scale: none=1, a little=2, many=3, very many=4. The child can indicate to what extent it experiences a certain symptom. For every child, a total score is calculated in addition to partial-scores of the three categories of intrusion, avoidance, and hyper-arousal. The scores are calculated on the basis of the Dutch research on unaccompanied child asylum seekers that has led to the final realisation of the SLE and the RATS.

The SLE and RATS have been validated for unaccompanied children in the Netherlands, together with a third instrument called HSCL-37A, which is not being used for the research by RUG.



The instruments are available via the Dutch organisation, Stichting Centrum '45 (<http://www.centrum45.nl/nl>), see instructions in ANNEX I.

BEST INTEREST OF THE CHILD QUESTIONNAIRE (BIC-Q)

The Best Interest of the Child Questionnaire (BIC-Q, Kalverboer and Zijlstra, 2006) analyses the quality of the upbringing environment of a child. It analyses 14 conditions for quality of the upbringing environment: adequate physical care, safe immediate physical environment, affective climate, supporting flexible parenting structure, adequate examples set by parents, interest in the child, continuity and stability in the child's environment and prospects for the future, safe wider physical environment, respect, social network, education, contact with peers and friends, adequate examples set by the community and stability in life circumstances/prospects for the future.

Research from the University of Groningen in 2012 (Zijlstra 2012) stated that the BIC-Q model is evidence-based due to the fact that it connects the already distinguished environment conditions (social-ecological model, Bronfenbrenner) and the legal aspect concerning the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).



More information on the pedagogic diagnostic assessments carried out by the Study Centre for Children, Migration and Law of the University of Groningen, in which the BIC-Q is used, can be found at: <http://goo.gl/5ke5lo>

PURPOSE AND POTENTIAL USERS

The current research aims at picturing the development towards self-dependence of unaccompanied children - the way they think about their own functioning, the way they think about the environment they grow up in, and the way they think about the support they receive during their process of gaining independence and self-reliance. It can be used by guardians, social workers, daily caretakers or any other professionals working with the target group.

LESSONS LEARNED

Most of the children experience their life in the Netherlands in a positive way. Although most have some difficulties and challenges and are facing pressures such as an uncertain outlook after 18 years of age and obtaining a residence permit, they almost all have a concrete perspective for the future and many of them feel well.

A limitation of the research is that the annual test sample is too small to be able to draw conclusions for the whole population of unaccompanied children in the Netherlands. Therefore, findings concerning the relation between reception form and social-emotional problems should be considered with caution.

The research, however, does show that children being accommodated within families experience the least problems and the highest quality of life. The interview that is used might be difficult for children who do not yet speak the language of the host country sufficiently well. As it can take them some effort to understand the questions and as the interview is rather long, the answers to the last items may be not fitting or even completed. For this reason using interpreters is advisable.

In order to receive reliable information, it is important not to engage children living in the same location, as diversity is important to be able to generalise results. Interviewing by independent researchers seems to be preferable with

the threshold for children to tell their story likely to be lower in such cases. Topics including the support received from the daily caregiver or a judgement of the guardian's work can be brought to the attention of the interviewer without any restrictions or reservations or fear of reprisals.

The questionnaires have highlighted that children who live on a campus are, in general, less positive about their life than those who live in another form of reception. The SDQ shows repeatedly that they carry their problems along with them and are less positive about their health and mental wellbeing than others. From the BIC-Q, it can be concluded that those living on a campus in the long-term run the risk of irreparable developmental damage as a result of the absence of the conditions of 'continuity in upbringing and nursing/future perspective', and 'stability in life circumstances/future perspective'. This corresponds to findings in other scientific studies.

(RETURN ON) INVESTMENTS/RESOURCES

This way of client participation/gathering children's views is a rather expensive one because of the use of professional researchers, but it has several advantages over other methods. Firstly, it needs little time investment from the organisation using it, apart from recruiting the children that are willing to be interviewed. Secondly, and most importantly, it provides an organisation with independent, objective recommendations on an academic level, which makes it very useful for advocacy and policy-making purposes.

STUDENTS INTERVIEWING CHILDREN AS SEMI-PEERS

PROCESS

For this instrument, students from HU University of Applied Sciences in Utrecht have carried out semi-structured interviews with children who are willing to co-operate in the research. They are recruited by guardians (not their own) and rewarded for their participation with a gift coupon. The method used offers them the possibility to determine what they would like to say about the functioning of their guardian and the fact that the participating children remain anonymous supports this. The interviews are loosely structured by an item list (Annex II) that has been improved and refined over the years. A panel, consisting of two staff members and a manager of Nidos, is available to advise the students and the researchers throughout the project. The results of the interview are analysed and used by the researchers to write a report on their findings and recommendations.

PURPOSE AND POTENTIAL USERS

This instrument has been developed in order to gain insight into the issues in the relationship with the guardian that are important for the unaccompanied children. The way the research is carried out allows the researchers to give practical feedback on how guardians can improve their work. It can also be used to review the relationships that unaccompanied children have with their daily caregivers, social workers or any other professionals working with the target group.

LESSONS LEARNED

The use of this instrument has led to a number of recommendations, including:

- ➔ The need to explain the asylum process and the role of the guardian clearly to the child when they first enter the Netherlands;
- ➔ The need to ensure that asking for help is as easy and accessible as possible;
- ➔ The need to change the guardian as little as possible.

The fact that several issues are asked yearly has given an insight into, for instance, how many different guardians children have and what impact this has had on them. The information has led to a change of policy which emphasises the replacing of the guardian as little as possible.

The use of student interviewers has proved to be very valuable. As their semi-peers, the students generated trust with the children and this led to informal and open conversations that provided a lot of confidential information.

(RETURN ON) INVESTMENTS/RESOURCES

Like the research from the University of Groningen previously mentioned, this way of client participation is also rather expensive compared to instruments that an organisation can implement/employ itself. However, it has the same advantages of needing little time investment from the organisation (apart from enlisting children that are willing to be interviewed and from the panel giving advice, where needed) and providing an organisation with independent, objective recommendations from a reputable university.

GROUP DISCUSSION METHODOLOGY: THE WORLD CAFÉ

PROCESS

This flexible method for hosting large group dialogues has been developed in the United States and consists of a dialogue about issues that matter to the participants. The issues to be addressed during the World Café are chosen by the participants themselves in a planning meeting prior to the World Café itself.

World Cafés were organised in the Netherlands to seek the improvement of policy on behalf of unaccompanied children living in small-scale reception units (issues addressed were friends and family, support, spare time, school, future and living circumstances), and on turning 18 years old (issues addressed were what growing up means to the children, what sounds like fun and what could be difficult about turning 18, what do you need to be prepared for when turning 18 and what is most important in this context).

World Cafés for host families, and the unaccompanied children living with them, have resulted in a focus on the role that family/parents of the children play in daily life in host families, the consequences of turning 18 (issues like working, welfare, student grants and finding independent housing), and how to deal with issues such as pocket money and spare time.

For the World Café itself, a café-like setting is created with tables covered with a tablecloth, paper and pens. Accommodation can be a café, community centre, or even a large room in the office. The participants are welcomed by a host, who introduces the World Café process, sets the context, shares the Café etiquette, and puts everyone at ease. The process begins with the first of three or more 20-minute rounds of conversation on a question raised by the table leader for the group seated around a table. At the end of the 20 minutes, a new

question is raised. After the different rounds, all participants are invited to share insights or reflections from their conversations with the rest of the group.



Free guides that cover the basics of the World Café process in English, Dutch, French, German, Hungarian, Italian, Portuguese, Slovak, Somali, Russian, Chinese and Spanish are available at <http://www.theworldcafe.com/tools.html>

PURPOSE AND POTENTIAL USERS

A World Café highlights the wishes that participants have about issues that are addressed with it and by which they are or may be affected. World Cafés and similar meetings offer the opportunity to talk to unaccompanied children and the host families about their experiences with those responsible for them, address points of particular interest, and make recommendations to improve their care. A World Café also enables participants to get to know each other, share issues (for example, regarding reception and living in families), and exchange information and experiences in their fields of interest.

The instrument is useful for guardians, daily caretakers, social workers, or any other person or organisation working with unaccompanied children.

LESSONS LEARNED

The World Café has proved to be an easy, accessible and very interactive method of engaging with unaccompanied children or other clients/respondents, such as host families. Children reported feeling heard, and participating host parents also found it useful and educational to share experiences among one another.

Inviting participants in a very intensive and active manner seems to be very important. Besides sending invitation letters, people can be invited during house calls and contacting everyone who promises to be there shortly before

the actual World Café has also proved to be important. Even after all the efforts made to invite the participants, the threshold for coming turned out to be rather high. Note also that people have a tendency to arrive rather late, which makes leaving room for an informal chat before the start of the World Café itself very useful.

As the first World Café with host families was well received and the outcomes were satisfying, some of the following ones were organised in the same way. This meant that they were not preceded by a planning meeting but had the same agenda where the same issues were addressed. This worked out very well; it took less time to organise the World Café, the organisers became more proficient, and it resulted in more responses to the same questions.

Organising a World Café can be rather labourious but this is certainly worth the effort for a group of 25-50 people. As this number of participants will not always be reached, organising meetings in a slightly different way might be worthwhile considering, such as a host parent contact afternoon or a special meeting for host parents on risks and support for children in their use of social media. It might help to organise these kinds of meetings in co-operation with local youth care authorities.

To make children participating feel more at ease, starting with making a collage can help. By sticking images from magazines on a large piece of paper and drawing or writing their own experiences next to it and asking them to share or clarify their collage afterwards, they can be invited to express their feelings about something.

(RETURN ON) INVESTMENTS/RESOURCES

The World Café is not an expensive instrument, but as already mentioned, organising a World Café can be rather labourious. Using the same World Café agenda several times throughout the country, as described, requires less time investment and reduces the costs.

EVALUATION SHEET

PROCESS

All of the children that turn 18 years old, the age that guardianship ends, are asked by their guardian to fill in an evaluation sheet (Annex III). The sheet consists of 30 statements to which they answer whether they disagree, partly disagree, are neutral, partly agree, or agree. Most of the time, guardians ask the children to fill it in during the exit interview they have with them just before the end of guardianship. It is also sent to them by post, but this has proved to be less effective because they often do not return it.

PURPOSE AND POTENTIAL USERS

The evaluation sheet gives information on the opinions of children on the functioning of their guardian, the goals they achieved, accommodation, social networks, education, spare time and the future. It also gives space to indicate satisfaction or dissatisfaction and what should have been done in case of dissatisfaction. It can be used by guardians, social workers, daily caretakers, and other professionals working with this target group to inform future policy or actions.

LESSONS LEARNED

The evaluation sheet is being used for all unaccompanied children in the Netherlands, however, the children that live in host families complete it more often than those living in other forms of accommodation. Data from 2012 show that 92% of clients who were no longer in the care of their guardian upon turning 18 years old were satisfied with the care provided to them, for example, in accessing education and suitable accommodation and in building up their own network.

(RETURN ON) INVESTMENTS/RESOURCES

This is an easy and inexpensive way of gaining feedback from the target group. Developing the evaluation sheet has to be done only once; it does, however, take some effort to provide the child with it and ensure that it is completed and returned to the organisation. In the Netherlands, the Quality Manager of Nidos is responsible for analysing the results and for sharing them with the management in order to integrate them into existing policy. This is done at the end of each year.

CULTURAL SENSITIVITY INTERVIEW TRAINING

PROCESS

As working with unaccompanied children has proved to demand a more unique and different focus than talking to other children, 13 Dutch guardians have been trained in special interview techniques during a pilot project organised by Nidos in 2012-2013.

Points of particular interest highlighted by the professionals were questions including:

- How to handle questions on case history if it is known that unaccompanied children often do not feel free to tell the truth about it?
- How to ask questions if it is suspected that a child has a secret?
- Can you interview a child if it is suspected that a child is traumatised, and is it sensible?
- When to stop or continue interviewing?
- How to handle the overly reserved and polite behaviour of unaccompanied children towards adults and the fact that they are not used to being asked about their feelings, opinions, and advice?
- How to ask for feedback from someone who has a grateful attitude?
- How to work with language and language issues, and how to work with interpreters?

The interview technique aims to prevent socially desirable answers and increase the value of the information gained in order to adjust the care provided to the care needed. Through open interviews with trained professionals, the frame of reference of the focus group is explored and insights into the experi-

ences, opinions and advice of the focus group are gained by means of an item list. Themes include topics such as living conditions, support, background and culture, family, school and work, spare time, future, safety, privacy, health, complaints, confidentiality and need for information.

During the training, the professionals learn to ask supplementary questions to probe for further information from the unaccompanied child, such as:

- ‘What do you mean with...?’
- ‘When do you feel happy?’(experience)
- ‘What do you think of...?’(opinion)
- ‘What does a good guardian do? (advice)

PURPOSE AND POTENTIAL USERS

This new way of interviewing and listening aims to help those working with unaccompanied children, such as guardians, social workers, daily caretakers, and other professionals, to become more capable of discovering and meeting their needs.

LESSONS LEARNED

Using this interview technique allows the children to formulate their feelings and opinions very often during the interview. A good practice has proved to be asking them about alternatives and imaginary situations (‘what would you have done if...?’), and asking them about the views of family members (‘what would your grandmother advise you if you would ask her?’).

The guardians were able to apply their newly gained interview skills immediately in their work. Almost all of the participants in the training reported having more efficient, pleasant and useful interviews with the children already after the first of the four days of training. This has resulted in training

more guardians in the technique, starting with those who work at the location where unaccompanied children are accommodated when they first enter the Netherlands.

(RETURN ON) INVESTMENTS/RESOURCES

This instrument requires a considerable investment of time from those being trained as it takes four days of training and also having an additional four interviews of 75 minutes duration. All participants thought this to be worthwhile though, as they are able to use the skills gained immediately in their daily work.

CHAPTER 3

INTERNATIONAL EXAMPLES

BELGIUM

WHAT DO YOU THINK PROJECT

In 2004, UNICEF Belgium published a report on the ideas and recommendations of over 150 unaccompanied children on their situation in Belgium. They were all involved in a project called ‘What Do You Think’. This project addressed the Committee on the Rights of the Child, but also aimed at activating policy makers in Belgium to continue working on children’s rights. In 2009, UNICEF concluded, together with 15 unaccompanied children, that the results and recommendations of 2004 still matched the current reality.



For more information:

<http://www.unicef.be/nl/project-belgium/what-do-you-think>

CONSULTATION ON EDUCATION

Within the framework of the debates around the post-2015 agenda, on 30 April 2013, UNICEF Belgium organised a consultation with unaccompanied children on their challenges in education in their country of origin. They were asked how they think about education, what their experiences with education were in their country of origin, and what they would do to get all of them to attend school. All statements were collected in a video message and a report with recommendations. The video has been shown during the Side Event around ‘Education Cannot Wait: Call to Action’ on the 23 September 2013 in New York.



For more information:

<http://goo.gl/zuQBEn>

GROUP DISCUSSION UNDER GUIDANCE OF AN INTERCULTURAL MEDIATOR

Minor-Ndako, one of the organisations responsible for reception in Belgium, has positive experience with the use of group discussion under the guidance of an intercultural mediator between young people and their daily caretakers/ the management. In order to solve tensions and improve the atmosphere in the group, focus is on the search for ways to support the young people and to motivate them to solve or avoid conflict.

Used metaphor: At the top of the road, the sun shines. The further you go down, the more it rains and the more people do not understand each other and have arguments. At the bottom, in the valley, there is war. But you can climb back up. This is quite a climb, a process that takes some time. When you experience misfortune you don't have to go down to the valley again. What are the do's and don'ts to get out of conflict?

SWEDEN

SEF – SVERIGES ENSAMKOMMANDES FÖRENING (SWEDISH ASSOCIATION FOR UNACCOMPANIED MINORS)

SEF was started as part of the project, Prata med oss, inte om oss (Talk with us, not about us). SEF is the first charity in Sweden that is both directed towards and run by unaccompanied children and young people. So far, SEF is running in Stockholm, Umeå and Malmö, and has a total of 200 members. The vision is that the charity will grow to become a national organisation with local groups in many more cities.

To a large degree, it is up to each local group to decide what they want to focus their time on; amongst other things, it is about organising activities, offering mentoring for unaccompanied children/young people, monitoring issues that have to do with unaccompanied children/young people, and lecturing for other organisations and the authorities. There are several political issues that are important to SEF, for example, the treatment of unaccompanied refugees in their asylum seeking process and issues concerning the Dublin Regulation. SEF is active on Facebook.



For more information:
<http://www.hejsverige.nu>

IRELAND

EASTER CAMP ON HUMAN RIGHTS

In March 2013, a group of 27 young people consisting of separated children, aged-out minors, children with families living in Direct Provision, and Irish students took part in an Easter Camp on Human Rights hosted by the Irish Refugee Council and UNICEF Ireland. The camp provided time to think about creative models of advocacy and took up four separate projects relating to issues of equality, integration, education, and resilience.



The outputs are available at:
<http://goo.gl/IRVLqe>

UNITED KINGDOM

In Autumn 2012, focus groups were organised by Refugee Council and Scottish Refugee Council on how the forms used by the UK Border Agency during asylum procedure can be improved.

BRIGHTER FUTURES LONDON

Brighter Futures London is a self-advocacy group of active young asylum seekers and refugees with roots in a variety of countries and continents, including West, Central and East Africa - from Togo to the Democratic Republic of Congo and Somalia, to countries in South Central Asia such as Kurdistan and Afghanistan. We are young leaders - united by a passion and commitment to improve the quality of life for other young asylum seekers and refugees. We are your future politicians and doctors, singers and models,

engineers and artists, accountants and footballers. We are young people who are the same as any other young people in the UK and around the world.

We meet every week and work together as a group to fight for our rights as young asylum seekers and refugees. We challenge the media and campaign to get our voices heard and change policy. We raise awareness about our experiences and the obstacles we go through. We conduct research and speak at conferences, produce exhibitions and speak on the radio, and develop our leadership skills through training - and we also have fun!

We want to share our experiences of being young asylum seekers and refugees in the UK to improve the opportunities and experiences of other young people faced with the same obstacles we have had to overcome. We want our human rights to be acknowledged. We want to make a difference to our lives and to the lives of other young asylum seekers and refugees. We want to have our voices heard. We want people to understand - why we come to the UK and what life is like for us here. We want to express ourselves without fear. We want to share our energy, vibrancy and culture.

We want to be recognised for what we contribute and what more we can give if the barriers are removed. We want to have the same opportunities as any other young person living in the UK. We want to have relationships built on trust and not on disbelief. We want to be seen as children and young people first rather than being defined by our immigration status. We want a brighter future.



For more information:
<http://www.brighterfutureslondon.co.uk>

ANNEXES

ANNEX I: STICHTING CENTRUM '45, SCREENING INSTRUMENTS FOR UNACCOMPANIED ASYLUM SEEKING CHILDREN

The national and longitudinal research project “Alleenstaande Minderjarige Asielzoekers en de GGZ” (Unaccompanied Refugee Children and Dutch Mental Health Care Services) (2001-2004), was conducted among unaccompanied refugee children living in the Netherlands and their guardians, teachers, and among professional mental healthcare providers. The goal of the project was to determine the level of psychological distress of unaccompanied refugee children, their need for mental healthcare, the availability of mental healthcare for this group and, finally, the association between all of these factors. The results of the research project give insight into the way accessibility of professional mental healthcare can be improved for unaccompanied refugee children. A secondary aim of this research project was to validate and standardise the screening instruments for this population group.

The instruments that have been used in the research project assess general wellbeing, number of experienced stressful (traumatic) life events, post traumatic stress reactions, adaptation difficulties and expectations concerning the future. Finally, the need of mental healthcare of these young people as well as their experience with mental healthcare was assessed.

The instruments are suited for making a quick inventory of symptoms experienced by refugee adolescents. The screening instrument can be used by psychologists, psychiatrists, school psychologists, school doctors, etc. who are experienced in the assessment of wellbeing of adolescents. Academics with experience in using standardised diagnostic techniques may also use this instrument. The instrument may also be used in a research setting and for the monitoring of symptoms during a specified period of time. Follow-up care should be arranged prior to the administration of the instrument. The integrity of the adolescents must be protected at all times.

It was necessary to make modifications to existing instruments to make them both 'adolescent friendly' and 'multicultural'. Instead of using only words for the rating scale, use has been made of coloured circles that increase in size. The items have been composed using the 'Vocabulary List for 12 to 15 year olds' (Projectbureau OVB Rotterdam, 1992), to make the questionnaires suitable for the reading level of this population. The items have been kept as short as possible and have been written on a primary level of reading. All language versions are bilingual, the foreign language in the first column and English in the second column. Adolescents have the opportunity to read and answer the questions in their native language.

REGISTRATION

It is important that only trained professionals use these instruments to assess the wellbeing of the young people to protect the integrity of the young people. For this reason, we ask everyone who would like to use the instruments to register. We will try and complete your registration as soon as possible. You will receive an e-mail from us when you have been registered that will contain your user name and password so you will be able to log in to open the questionnaires and user's manual (in the available languages) in Adobe Acrobat Reader (*.pdf) format.

CONTACT

You can contact Mr. R. Bouter, e-mail r.bouter@centrum45.nl with questions about the screening instruments.

ANNEX II: ITEM LIST

'STUDENTS INTERVIEWING CHILDREN AS SEMI-PEERS'

PERSONAL DATA

- Gender
- Age
- Country of origin
- Year of arrival in the Netherlands
- Starting date guardianship in the Netherlands
- Status (residence permit)
- Length of stay in the Netherlands
- Kind of reception
- Education
- Religion

TYPE OF CONTACT WITH GUARDIAN

- Since when, with this person?
- Male or female?
- Age?
- Location?
- Amount of guardians altogether?

CONVERSATION WITH GUARDIAN

- Frequency of contact
- Function of guardian (friend, professional, parent)
- Subjects of conversation
- Satisfaction
- Wishes with regard to conversation

TRUST

- At ease with guardian
- Fulfilment of promises by guardian
- Confidential information
- Share secrets with guardian
- Ability to share problems

EXPECTATIONS

- Own ideas/expectations about guardian before the contact
- Own ideas about first contact
- What did you expect?
- What do you expect now?
- Information about guardianship and function of guardian
- Information on tasks of guardian

SUPPORT

- Practical support
- Material support
- Emotional support

IMPROVEMENTS FOR GUARDIAN

- Improvements?
- Elements that you miss?
- What would you improve if you were a guardian yourself?

LANGUAGE

- Use of interpreter?
- Obstacles caused by language - which way?
- Can everything be said or does language cause problems?

CULTURE

- Differences in culture?
- What is the importance of the cultural background of the guardian?
- What contacts do you have: same or other than your own culture?
- Experiences with Dutch culture? Positive, negative, examples

RELIGION

- Religion
- Role of religion in daily life
- Support from guardian to find a church/mosque

NETWORK CONTACTS

- Conversations with guardian about family/friends/acquaintances
- Getting in touch with family members in the Netherlands or elsewhere
- Keeping in touch with family members
- Support in building social network: country of origin, the Netherlands, future
- Current social network
- Own expectations and view on social network: now and in the future
- Relation with adults or caretakers who are part of the network
- Use of social media

ACTIVITIES DURING THE DAY

- School and other chores/tasks
- Free time: work, volunteer work, courses, sports
- Useful activities during the day

GROWING UP

- What is your definition of being self-dependent?
- Being self-dependent in the Netherlands - support from guardian or other adults
- Social skills - support from guardian, others
- Making choices, do you succeed? Support from guardian
- Education, career choice, possibilities in country of origin
- Plan of action
- Preparing conversations with organisations

RECEPTION

- Number of places of residency
- Kind of accommodation (experiences/most convenient one)
- Current place of residency - feeling of safety
- Social network at place of residency
- Self-dependent

SPECIAL FOR CHILDREN IN HOST FAMILIES

- Issues raised/coming up in conversations with guardian?
- Do conversations with your guardian take place in presence of host parents?
- Can you speak freely with your guardian?

FUTURE PERSPECTIVE

- What do you think you will be doing in 5 years time and what do you need to achieve this?
- Can you discuss the future with your guardian and how do you experience this?
- Availability of social network at 18
- Rights and duties at 18
- Support at 18
- Finding a place to live

ANNEX III: EVALUATION SHEET - END OF GUARDIANSHIP (TO BE FILLED IN BY CHILD)

Open questions

What did you appreciate about the guardianship institution?
.....

What did you miss at the guardianship institution?
.....

What else do you want to write down?
.....

Name of child:

Date of birth:

Internal relation number:

Name of guardian:

Date of filling in:

Under guardianship: –

Description	Scale				
My guardian had time for me					
My guardian listened to me					
My guardian was available					
I am satisfied with the co-operation with my guardian					
My guardian helped me with my problems					
My guardian advised me					
I received help when I needed it					
My guardian fulfilled his/her promises					
I know what guardianship means					
I knew what I was good at					
I knew what I still had to learn					
My guardian helped me with what I had to learn					
I'm satisfied with the support offered by my guardian					
I know what I need to be able to live on my own					

Description	Scale				
My guardian helped me with my circumstances of living					
I've got friends around me					
My guardian encouraged me in establishing a circle of friends					
My guardian supported my education					
My guardian encouraged me in going to school					
I know what to do with my free time					
My guardian advised me to do something in my free time					
My procedure is clear to me					
My guardian was available for questions about my procedure					
My guardian informed me about my procedure					
I know where to ask questions about my procedure					
The support offered was useful to me					
I know what my goals for the future are					
I know how to approach my goals for the future					