GUIDE TO IMPLEMENT

Children's Solutions Lab
Call for applications 2022

ARIGATOU
INTERNATIONAL
All for Children

THE CHILDREN'S SOLUTIONS LAB AND THIS GUIDE

The Children's Solutions Lab (CLS) is a process initiated by Arigatou International in 2020 to support young people in taking action to address poverty affecting children in their communities through solutions based on education.

In 2022, Arigatou International will provide micro-grants (ranging from USD $500 to USD $ 2000) together with support and mentoring to five selected groups of children around the world to implement their solutions to tackle child poverty in their communities.

This Guide to Implement aims to help adults in supporting the children's groups during the implementation of their projects. The first section gives some important considerations for supporting child-led projects and working with children. The second section prompts reflections on child poverty and ethics education. The third section provides suggestions on how you can collect and document positive changes and tell your story.

SECTION 1: OUR APPROACH TO WORKING WITH CHILDREN
ENSURING THEIR SAFE AND MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION

In Arigatou International children are at the centre of all we do and how we do it. We work to ensure the creation of safe spaces and learning opportunities, free from any form of violence, where children can fully express themselves, participate, engage with people of different cultures and beliefs, and become actively engaged in our work and in their communities.

Arigatou International has great faith in children. Children and young people are deeply respected and valued partners in every Arigatou International initiative. We are strongly committed to listening to children with empathy and respect, and welcome their wisdom and recommendations, working side by side with them. We are committed to ensuring that every action taken in our work promotes children's dignity, their rights, and opportunity for them to freely pursue their full human potential.

We affirm children's human dignity by ensuring their protection and supporting them to develop fully physically, emotionally, cognitively, and spiritually. We support the creation of opportunities for them to be empowered to participate and take action, for their voices and opinions to be taken into account, to think critically, and to be encouraged to develop themselves in relation to others and to transform the world around them, embracing ethical values and building faith in that which people refer to as God, Ultimate Reality, Transcendence or Divine Presence.

Arigatou International's Approach to working with children is anchored in the view of children as individuals in their own. The following elements describe what permeates our approach to working with children to ensure their meaningful participation.

PRINCIPLES OF ADULT-CHILD ENGAGEMENT

Participation and Empowerment:
Ensuring that we deliver on children's right to participate on decisions that matter to them, and that we promote meaningful children's participation in our work with them. This means that we commit ourselves to ensure children's participation goes beyond manipulation, decoration and tokenism and are authentic attempts to ensure that children's voices are respected, listened to, and also that children are able to shape the initiatives they are part of. Our approach to working with children should be one of empowerment and facilitation, recognizing their inherent potential and providing the guidance and support to unleash their potential through diverse and continued opportunities that can help them develop their knowledge, skills, and attitudes.

Horizontal Relations: It must be underlined that in all our engagements with children, we should relate to children in a mutually respectful manner and do our best to keep a horizontal relationship with them. This means that we do not use power and authority over children but promote shared power that fosters children's sense of self-worth and self-knowledge, recognizing individual differences while respecting each other. We should be ready to learn from children as much as we contribute to their learning.

Role-Modelling: Positive role models can be an inspiration and source of learning for children to shape their own lives. It is important that we recognize how children look up to adults as role models, and ensure we strive to be positive role models of ethical values and in how we live together with people. It is important that as role models we also show vulnerability and share our authentic self rather than projecting a curated image.

Community: We understand there is a whole community eco-system that surrounds children, with different stakeholders working towards the wellbeing of children. It is important that we work with a spirit of collaboration with this community, including children, parents, families, caregivers, educators, social care workers, healthcare workers, law enforcement and other service providers, as is applicable to the context.

GUIDELINES TO ENSURE CHILDREN'S MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION

Children's participation in Arigatou International is based on our approach to working with children, as outlined before, as well as on the nine requirements for meaningful, safe, ethical, and inclusive participation of children established by the Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment No 12. This is summarised as:

– 1 –

Be Transparent and informative: Be transparent and honest with children about the expectations of their participation, roles, and responsibilities, as well as how their views and recommendations will be used. Provide them with complete information that is accessible, diversity-sensitive, and age-appropriate, about their right to express their views freely. Ensure that it is clear for them how decisions will be made and what influence they will have in the decision-making process. Provide sufficient and clear information about the activities so children can make informed decisions about their participation and involvement.

– 2 –

Make participation voluntary: Make sure the children and their parents/legal guardians understand the purpose of their participation, voluntarily agree to engage in the activities by giving their informed consent and are aware that they are not forced to share about anything they do not feel comfortable about and have the right to withdraw at any stage of the process. When possible and appropriate, let them suggest how they want the session to be. As you conceptualize and prepare for the Children's Solutions Lab (CSL) sessions make sure to share all the relevant

information clearly to the child, and clarify any technical terms used questions or concerns. Respect the rhythm of each child, time, and way of communicating and participation, do not force a child to speak or engage but open the space as an invitation for those who wish to do so when they request or feel comfortable.

– 3 –

Be respectful: Ensure that children's views are treated with respect and children are provided with opportunities to initiate ideas and activities. Listen with empathy by being attentive and interested in what the child is saying with an open attitude, trying to understand from his or her point of view, experiences, and context. Encourage the child to fully express themself, free from interruption, criticism, or judgmental attitude, and with sensitivity to the emotions being expressed.

– 4 –

Make it Relevant: Make sure to always involve children in activities that are relevant for them and according to their evolving capacity. Encourage authentic voices by asking children to share their own ideas, opinions and concerns based on their experiences and on how they see,

live and imagine the world. Support and accompany the child during the process, making sure to never condition or write what and how they want to express their voices. Always create ample spaces and opportunities for each child to prepare in advance for their participation. Include children's ideas and opinions in the session design and seek their views on how they feel comfortable participating.

– 5 –

Ensure the engagement is child-friendly: Be curious and always create spaces and pose questions that are non-judgmental, that show genuine interest to know more about what the child is sharing. Use a language that is child friendly and at the same time empowering, according to the age and evolving capacities, and respectful of the social, cultural, gender, and religious background of the child. Make sure that children, boys and girls, and adults have balanced and interactive participation. Intentionally ensure the creation of opportunities for children to express themselves and contribute with ideas and recommendations. If needed, make sure to provide professional interpretation and access to information translated to a language the children feel familiar with.

– 6 –

Ensure Inclusion: Make sure to provide opportunities that are inclusive of children of diverse gender, abilities, socio-economic, ethnic, or religious backgrounds. Make sure that children have an equal chance to participate and that the activities, systems, and technical aids in place do not discriminate against children based on their age, abilities, gender, ethnicity, religion, nationality, or political views. Develop the sessions and activities considering the developmental stages of children of different ages.

– 7 –

Ensure adults are supported: Ensure that adults have the preparation, skills, and support to facilitate children's participation effectively. For adults, it is paramount that they learn to engage children in meaningful ways by using questions that help children open to dialogue, help them share their own ideas, and imagine situations and possibilities from different angles and points of view. Use questions such as "why, how, what" and avoid asking questions that entail the desired answer such as "Don't you think/agree that".

– 8 –

Make sure participation is safe and sensitive to risks: Always respect and uphold children's right to privacy and avoid questions that are sensitive or that may lead them to disclose information about their private life or that lead the child to share information related to where he or she lives, the school he or she attends, or their family. Make sure to use the online platforms in ways that protect them, and do not make them vulnerable to any risks. Take the necessary precautions to minimize the risk to children of violence, exploitation, or any other negative consequence of their participation.

– 9 –

Be accountable: Follow up the recommendations provided by children and ensure that commitments made to them are met. Ensure that children are informed as to how their views have been interpreted and used and provided with the opportunity to give feedback.

SECTION 2: CONTEXT SENSITIVITY AND ETHICAL ISSUES

Before implementing, it is good to check that the children's project is sensitive to the local context. Being sensitive to the context goes beyond the idea of minimizing the negative impacts and looks at how the context proactively contributes to the design and implementation of the children's project.

Implementing the project is also a wonderful opportunity to reflect further on the root causes of child poverty in communities – including social justice and ethics. We invite you to consider how you can empower children to reflect on such challenges they may face, from an ethical perspective.

Here are some questions to guide you and to promote reflections during the implementation of the children's project:

HOW CAN YOU MAKE SURE THAT THE INITIATIVE IS INCLUSIVE?

How is the project inclusive of the needs of different groups in society including ethnic, religious, socio-economic classes and gender groups?

WHAT ROOT CAUSES OF CHILD POVERTY DOES THE CHILD-LED PROJECT ADDRESS?

The underlying causes of child poverty include structural challenges in society, such as corruption, social and economic inequalities, discrimination, war and conflict, gender-based violence, and violence against children. The root causes of child poverty also stem from the human heart, and this includes greed, fear, ignorance, and hatred.

As the children's group implements the CSL project, you might find that they will encounter these related issues. How can the project be sensitive to these issues? How can you prepare and support children as they encounter these challenges?

WHAT ARE THE OPPORTUNITIES FOR INTERFAITH LEARNING?

Are there any opportunities for the project to promote interfaith learning, either as part of the implementation process or as part of the CSL preparatory sessions? This means allowing children from different faiths or different traditions to come together and learn from one another while working together on their project.

WHAT ETHICAL ISSUES MIGHT CHILDREN FACE AND HOW CAN THEY REFLECT ON THEM AS THEY IMPLEMENT THE PROJECT?

How can you create space and opportunities for ethical reflections for the children involved? In what ways can you support the children to consider the dynamics inside their group as they work together and relate to one another, and as they experience working with other groups and the wider community?

Children's Solutions Lab implementation in India, 2021

SECTION 3: MONITORING POSITIVE CHANGES AND SHARING YOUR STORY

As the children's group implements the project they have designed, it is important to collect and monitor the positive changes the experience might bring and how to document and share their story in a respectful, accurate and sensitive way.

This documentation process will contribute to the monitoring of the Children's Solution Lab (CSL) as a whole – what technically would be termed as "lessons learned, good practices and recommendations".

The stories should be focused on the CSL participants by responding to these questions:
- What are you learning (did you learn)? How are you growing?
- How is your community changing/ What has changed in your community?

HOW TO SUPPORT CHILDREN IN TELLING THEIR CSL STORY:

Your CSL 2022 story can have 3 parts, accompanying each stage of the CSL:

1. Preparation:

Here, the children and their community will tell the story of how they developed their solution and submitted their CSL project, how they gathered, the initial reflections they had and how they came to select this solution/project to implement.

2. Interaction:

This is the story of the actual implementation of the solution the children selected to tackle child poverty. Here, children and their community are invited to tell us about the experience of implementing the project, the challenges they faced and the outcomes of the experience. This captures any positive changes as they happen, during the implementation of the project.

3. Closing:

After the children have carried out their CSL project, they and their community will tell us about their overall experience and their learnings.

The children and their community can create their stories using various formats, according to what is available and always following safeguarding guidelines to respect children's dignity and protect their safety. The stories can include:

- **Writing:** Such as a CSL journal, blog posts, short essays, poems, activity reports, articles, etc.
- **Photos:** Like a photo book, social media photo posts, and other such images of the event or activity.
- **Audio:** Recording of voice messages, speaking on radio or podcasts
- **Video:** videos on phone, getting local TV coverage, creating a short video story of the process

Once the stories are ready, the CSL participants are then invited to share these stories with:

- Their local community, including other children, faith actors, schools and civil society actors, and media actors, business, and government leaders.
- Arigatou International offices.
- Partnering organisations.

Arigatou International might also disseminate the stories gathered. Arigatou International might share them through websites, social media, and other reporting channels. Please make sure to collect consent forms from children and their legal guardians before documenting any story and make sure to always follow or Safeguarding Policy and Code of Conduct.

GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR STORY CREATION

You can use the following questions to help you create your story:

CSL STORY CREATION STAGE	GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR THE CHILDREN	GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR THE COMMUNITY
1. Preparation Stage	• How was the CSL preparation and application for you? • What motivated you to take part in CSL? • What did you like about it? • Did you experience any challenges?	• How was the CSL preparation process for you/ your organization? • What made you/your organization want to support the CSL? • What kind of challenges do you think the group experienced during this stage?
2. Interaction Stage	• How was the event/activity for you? • What did you find enjoyable? • Did you find anything difficult? • What did you learn from the other children you are working with?	• In what specific ways did you/ your organization support the children to implement their selected CSL project? • Were you able to bring in other people to support the CSL – for example, other volunteers from your community, local leaders, etc.
3. Closing Stage	• How was the entire CSL experience for you? • What were some of your most memorable moments? • How did the children in your community respond to your CSL project? • If you could change one thing about CSL, what would it be? • Is there anything else you would like to suggest? •	• How have you / your organization benefited from supporting this CSL process? • What positive changes or gains have you observed for both the children implementing the CSL, and the children they are working with / serving? • Do you have any recommendations for Arigatou International for continuing this process, or conducting a similar CSL process in the future?

You are welcome to share with us all the stories you have collected. No matter how long, short, complex, or simple they are, we will be happy to receive them and to replicate them for other people around the world to feel inspired by your work and the work of the children you support. Contact us at:

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