

Appendix 1. How can we capitalize on information and communication technologies in relation to child rights education?

Overview: the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in the digital era

While past generations of children have accessed information and expressed themselves through traditional media, such as radio and written publications, the digital era brings new opportunities of information access and means of expression that are directly relevant for child rights education (CRE). Rights such as the right to be heard and taken seriously (Article 12), the right to freedom of expression (Article 13), the right to assembly (Article 15) and the right to access information (Article 17) can all be exercised in the digital sphere. These rights recognize the potential of digital technologies to amplify freedom of expression and expand access to information.

This raises important issues in relation to CRE:

- equity of access to information and communication technologies (ICT);
- how to manage the balance between promoting children's autonomy in relation to ICT use and ensuring that they are adequately protected from harm;
- how to make the most of ICT to maximize the impact and cost-effectiveness of CRE initiatives;
- how to make CRE messages stand out in a context of 'information overload' and competing messages targeted at children;
- how to support 'online activism' (as part of learning for rights) with 'off-line engagement' with, and support for, children that is long-term and sustainable.

Managing the protection/autonomy balance

Digital technologies come with risks that children themselves, their caregivers, communities, professionals, the private sector and state duty-bearers need to recognize, assess and minimize as much as possible. This must be done in a way that respects the balance between protecting children on the one hand while respecting and building their capacity to make age-appropriate autonomous decisions on the other.

UNICEF concept note: Digital Citizenship and Safety for Adolescents and Young People

Digital Citizenship is a novel concept that builds a culture of responsibility online and teaches adolescents and young people online the ability to judge, navigate, create and analyse a range of media content and services while operating a system of selection, control and protection. Currently active in eight countries (and three continents), the project started 2 years ago in collaboration with Harvard University.

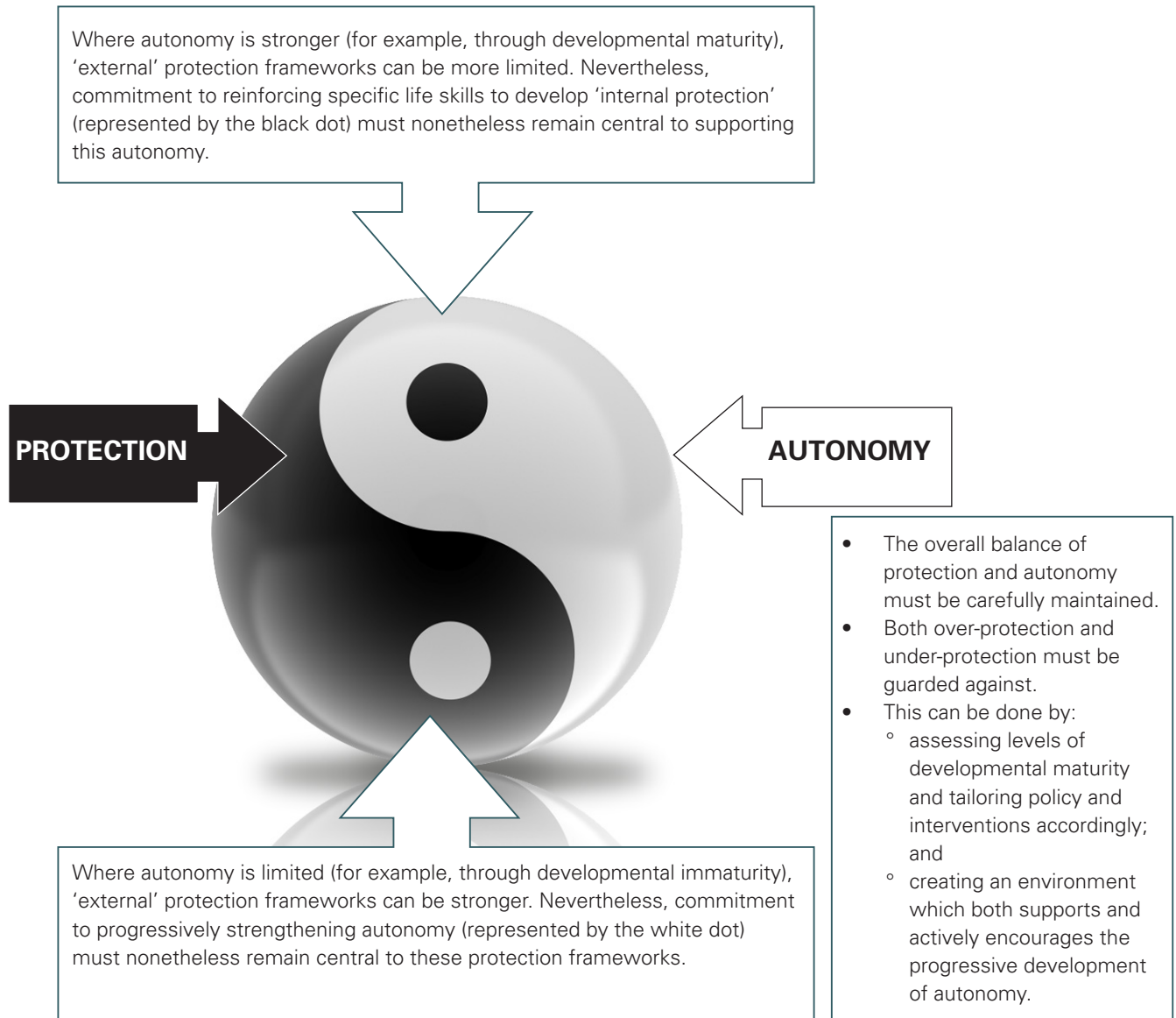
The key results of the project are twofold: a) adolescents and young people are educated about their rights and ICT's opportunities, and protected from ICT's risks through the concept of digital citizenship using diverse communication channels and/or inclusion in school curricula; b) through advocacy work, policy-makers are provided with evidence-based policy recommendations to maximize ICT's opportunities and minimize ICT's risks.

The project has three outputs:

1. **data collection:** an exploratory paper presenting findings on digital landscape of a country based on secondary data, a workshop to validate the findings from exploratory research, quantitative and qualitative data collection (if gaps identified in the exploratory research findings) – quantitative surveys and qualitative focus groups among adolescents and young people to be conducted on key questions such as their access, use and risks while using ICT, in order to further understand findings from exploratory research and quantitative surveys;

2. **campaign mobilization:** a communication strategy developed to include digital awareness and participation as a priority in the country – part of the communication strategy is to engage the local youth in the production of rights-focused digital content, and based on the research findings, UNICEF to strategize with local networks on the most effective way to disseminate the produced content, taking into consideration the digital realities of the targeted youth;
3. **policy advocacy:** policy-makers provided with evidence-based policy recommendations – advocacy among local governmental actors engaged in youth-related use of ICT, which will be organized through workshops, seminars and conferences to introduce the concept of Digital Citizenship and discuss other innovative ways of dealing with ICT and its safety concerns.

Maintaining the protection-autonomy balance¹



In relation to online safety, see also:

- Lansdown, Gerison, *Child Safety Online: Global challenges and strategies – Technical report*, UNICEF Innocenti Publications, 2012, <www.unicef-irc.org/publications/652>, accessed 19 July 2013.
- As part of a European Union-funded project, UNICEF Slovakia, in partnership with the non-governmental organization (NGO) 'eSlovensko', has produced a series of short animated films, translated into many European languages, to raise awareness of online protection risks at <www.sheepalive.eu>. The website links to a reporting 'hotline'.

¹ Diagram taken from Lansdown, Gerison and Marie Wernham, *Understanding Young People's Right to Decide: Are protection and autonomy opposing concepts?*, International Planned Parenthood Federation, London, 2011, p. 11.

Using ICT to maximize impact and cost-effectiveness of CRE

The use of Internet, blogs, chatrooms, platforms, webinars, social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, interactive whiteboards, smartphones and mobile phones is increasingly common in relation to CRE. When considering such initiatives, however, it is essential to start at the level of children themselves, working in collaboration with children, rather than imposing ICT initiatives on them. Further research is needed on the impact and effectiveness of ICT initiatives in relation to CRE. This includes further exploration of the extent to which 'online activism' needs to still be supported by 'off-line engagement' with children (in other words, ongoing face-to-face communication and support). ICT initiatives specific to CRE include the following.

- **Twitter:** UNICEF New Zealand's youth programme has a Twitter account linked with one of the main news stations in the country. In order to systematize the organization's dissemination of Twitter messages, the U.S. Fund for UNICEF has developed a calendar for outgoing messages channeled through just one 'TeachUNICEF' account for which the entire team is responsible.
- **Social networking:** the Korean Committee for UNICEF proactively makes use of social networking sites. They report widespread distribution but have identified the need for the initiative to be made more systematic, with greater participation and initiation by children themselves.
- **Resources:** educators and children can capitalize on video and audio media made available in online resource centres and via YouTube.
- **Online discussion groups** for educators, children and young people such as:
 - Voices of Youth Connect (formerly known as Connecting Classrooms): <<http://voicesofyouth.org/connect>>;
 - iEARN (International Education and Resource Network) – a platform to share education resources and projects: <www.earn.org>;
 - TakingITGlobal – provides support in creating online platforms and offers online courses: <www.tigweb.org>;
 - ePals – a safe email forum to connect children around the world: <www.epals.org>.
- **Mobile, smartphone and tablet technology:** this can be used for social networking on CRE issues, research and advocacy – for example, electronic data capture and online voting in surveys. CRE apps can be made available for smart phones and tablet computers. UNICEF France has developed an iPhone app: <<https://itunes.apple.com/fr/app/unicef-france/id388461026?mt=8>>.
- **'Digital drums':** these rugged solar-powered kiosks feature computers built into recycled oil drums. The drum's computers are preloaded with dynamic multimedia content on health, education, employment training and other services: <www.unicefusa.org/news/releases/unicefs-digital-drum-chosen.html>.
- **Current events and campaigns:** linking up-to-date child rights United Nations and NGO initiatives to CRE school curricula (for example, subject-specific email 'alerts' for teachers and students regarding emerging campaigns).

Project example: UNICEF Netherlands Digital Platform: <www.unicefenjij.nu> Following requests for more information on child rights from teachers, UNICEF Netherlands set up the platform aimed at 10–12 year olds, on which it publishes current news items and exercises that can be used in classrooms. The aim is to get three new messages published per week. Teachers are asked to use the beginning of the school day to raise the issues. Students can then take action by working on the educational activities around current events related to children's rights. The platform links to a branded Hyves page (a Dutch social media platform for children under the age of 16, accessible only outside school hours). There has been positive anecdotal feedback so far on the first phase of this project.

- **Interactive whiteboards:** in place of traditional blackboards or whiteboards, these consist of a large interactive display connected to a computer. A projector projects the computer's desktop onto the board's surface where teachers and children control the computer using a pen, finger, stylus or other device.

Project example: UNICEF France – Promethean Interactive Whiteboards

(<www.unicef.fr/content/actualite-humanitaire-unicef/nouveaux-contenus-pedagogiques-interactifs-2010-11-04>)

UNICEF France, in partnership with Promethean (one of the main producers of interactive whiteboards), has developed a series of modules on children's rights for interactive whiteboards (downloadable from the Promethean website and pre-installed on new interactive whiteboards). This partnership was initiated in 2010 and aims to bring the CRC to the classroom through a range of different topics. The partnership was set up with no cost to the French National Committee, although it requires a substantial amount of human resources and time. UNICEF France suggested the topics and Promethean identified teachers to develop the modules. An active community of practice for teachers exists on the Promethean website. The interactive whiteboards encourage active participation of students and the visual and audio resources lend themselves well to different ways of learning. Although no formal monitoring and evaluation of the partnership or tools has yet been carried out, teachers have given positive feedback on using these modules and are appreciative of the innovative methodology. At one point the UNICEF modules were one of the most popular downloads from the Promethean site.