

# Facilitator's Guide

## The Voices of Children Documentary



### Preparing for a Screening

Even if you have already viewed the film, visit [worldforumfoundation.org/voices-of-children/learn-more](http://worldforumfoundation.org/voices-of-children/learn-more) for important background on the making of the documentary, our process for listening to children, core themes of the film, discussion questions and key references. This material is also covered in the *Viewer's Guide*, the last 5 pages of this document, which you may print as handouts to share with your audience. The film is 24 minutes. Schedule at least one hour for the film and discussion.



### Promoting the Film

Visit [bit.ly/voc-posters](http://bit.ly/voc-posters) to find several versions of our poster in different sizes, some with space at the bottom for you to add the date, time and location of your screening.

We have created a 4-minute video ([vimeo.com/290019244](http://vimeo.com/290019244)) to help you promote your screening and engage funders.

Consider collecting donations to help us continue our work: [worldforumfoundation.org/donate/#children](http://worldforumfoundation.org/donate/#children).

To inquire about engaging a speaker/facilitator from the Voices of Children team, please contact [info@worldforumfoundation.org](mailto:info@worldforumfoundation.org).

When sharing your event on social media, please include the link [worldforumfoundation.org/voices-of-children](http://worldforumfoundation.org/voices-of-children), and the hashtags #wfvoicesofchildren, #childrensrights and @worldforumfoundation

### Preparing to Play the Film

You may view or screen for free at [worldforumfoundation.org/voices-of-children](http://worldforumfoundation.org/voices-of-children) or [vimeo.com/287069485](http://vimeo.com/287069485). You have two ways to screen the film for others:

#### Online/Streaming, with Captions:



Use this option *only* if you know you'll have a strong, stable internet connection. Be sure to click the "CC" button in the toolbar along the bottom of the film to access captioning options and choose your language. Play the film in "Full Screen Mode" to hide menu bars.

#### Offline/Downloaded, with Subtitles:

Please fill out a short survey at [bit.ly/voc-screen](http://bit.ly/voc-screen) to access an online folder with high quality versions of the film subtitled in each language we have available. Download the version in the language of your choice.

### Before Your Event

Before your audience arrives, test the film using the same equipment and location where you will screen the film to insure it plays properly and captions are ON. Adjust the volume as needed. Make sure you can play the film in "Full Screen Mode." Review the script on the following page and adapt as needed. Have handouts ready, and if needed, put up posters to direct your audience to the screening location.

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#### During Your Event

*Share a version of this message before the film:*

Children are often thought of as future citizens of the world, not current citizens. Citizens have rights. Future citizens will have rights in the future, but not necessarily in the present.

Members of the World Forum Working Group on Children's Rights see children as current citizens of the world. As such, children have rights now. As active participants in our communities, their perspectives will inform our thinking about their rights. To better understand what these rights should be, we must "listen" to children.

In this documentary, filmed internationally, we meet young children from many communities and cultures. Behind their experiences lie messages, both universal and informed by context. This short film offers a glimpse into the extraordinary diversity of children. The children share their ideas, beliefs, hopes, challenges, and accomplishments through many forms of expression. We watch and listen as they work, talk, sing, dance, and play. They are telling us their understandings of their rights.

You will not see adults interpreting children's communications. This is unique, and intentional. We ask you to engage directly with the children in the film, developing your own understandings of their messages.



#### Show the Film (24 minutes)

*After the film, share a version of this message:*

*The Voices of Children* is meant to encourage conversation and action among educators, families, policymakers, students, and advocates.

Think of how you can incorporate your understanding of children's rights into your context and experiences with our youngest citizens. With fellow viewers, discuss what you see, feel, and understand about the children's messages. Explore action steps you can take to raise others' awareness of children's rights.

#### *Suggestions:*

- To provide background and promote conversations, distribute the [Viewer's Guide](#) – Background, Listening Process, Core Themes, Discussion Questions and Contact Information and References.
- Invite participants to document conversations and collect copies of each table's documentation
- Invite participants to share their feedback at [bit.ly/voc-feedback](https://bit.ly/voc-feedback) and continue the conversation on social media using the hashtags #wfvoicesofchildren, #childrensrights and @worldforumfoundation
- Give a brief tour of the web page at [worldforumfoundation.org/voices-of-children](https://worldforumfoundation.org/voices-of-children)

*After the discussion, conclude with a version of this message:*

The concept of children's rights is not universally held. We hope that your responses to *The Voices of Children* will help further the understanding of children as current citizens of our world, citizens who can co-create a more inclusive vision of their rights. Thank you for joining us on this journey!



## Viewer's Guide

# The Voices of Children Documentary



### Background

*The Voices of Children* (VoC) documentary project was initiated by the World Forum Foundation Working Group on Children's Rights, formed at the 2011 World Forum on Early Childhood Care and Education, in Hawaii, United States. The following year, in Moss, Norway, members of the Working Group's Voices of Children committee defined their primary goal: to articulate the rights of children worldwide, from the child's perspective, rather than from the viewpoint of the adult. One way to accomplish this unique goal was to create a video documentary capturing children's voices directly, without filtering them through adult interpretations. While inspired by and committed to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the VoC team views this document as adult-generated, legalistic, and couched in culturally-defined ideas about human rights.

Coalescing around this idea was an international group of educators, social scientists, and filmmakers. The central question posed for *The Voices of Children* video documentary project was: "If we listen to children's thoughts and closely observe their actions, what can we learn of their views about the world, including their rights and the rights of others?"

Over time, the mechanics of gathering video material for the documentary, as well as the many cultural considerations involved in the project defined themselves, evolved, and consolidated. Eventually, a team of videographers and early childhood experts was in place, and filming began. Considerations about bridging cultural differences among the project team members themselves, and among the video team and the children and adults at each site, were explored at length and in depth.

The team members used their extensive international associations to contact many venues that work with children and received material from some of these "partner" venues. Yet to tighten the narrative focus of the documentary, these contributions were set aside for later use. The video documentary team made agreements with eight venues in five countries, and secured funding to visit each site (Bahia & Ceará, Brazil; Bangalore & Mumbai, India; Boulder, United States; Mount Elgon & Nairobi, Kenya; Singapore, Singapore). The final video product is a collaborative venture by the World Forum Foundation, with Avante-Educação e Mobilização Social (Brazil), COMOVA (Brazil), Child@Street 11 (Singapore), and Boulder Journey School (United States).

The over 2,000 video clips that were brought back from around the world were edited by a small pedagogical team down to the approximately 200 that were considered for the finished work. While

reviewing the entire body of clips, the team created a list of ten consistent threads. The clips recommended for the video were cross-referenced with one or more of these threads. These threads are shared in an abbreviated format later in this handout organized under three core themes: (1) Relationships, (2) Spaces, and (3) Agency. Clip selection was made in the United States in consultation with our international team. Post-production editing, sequencing, and titling were accomplished in Brazil, again in consultation with our team.



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# The Voices of Children Documentary

### Our Listening Process



*The Voices of Children* video documentary team's extensive experience with children from their own cultures informed their ideas on approaching children for the documentary. This was blended with their understandings of developmental universalities among children worldwide. Discussions among documentary team members about their own differences assisted in developing harmonious intercultural working relationships amongst themselves.

Carefully developed methods for working with children and adults were used in all of the filming locations. Workshops and dialogues on children's rights among adults were followed by discussions on using the final video as an advocacy tool. Key adults, acting as cultural-translators, were identified to collaborate with the video team in each site. Videos of the children, called "listening sessions" (not interviews), were played back to the adults at each site for their reflection on the meanings of the children's messages. These reflective sessions were also recorded for later release in "making of" multimedia materials.

Asking children to open up to an international team of strangers with hi-tech video gear is not an easy proposition. Yet the film shows this feat was accomplished. In each venue, the team spent a day or two participating in the children's activities, observing them, and creating bonds. During this time the recording equipment was shared with the children to create a comfort level for the listening sessions. Children were also given access to digital cameras and Go-Pro cameras in order to film their environment, their peers and teachers, and the VoC team at work. These images also gave the team entry points into the children's perspectives. Team members also accompanied some children with their family members into their homes and surrounding environments, such as the market, garden, and park.



Talking was not the only vehicle for recording children's messages to us. The team also recorded music and drawings, as these are among the many voices children use to tell us their thoughts. The team arranged sufficient room for movement and materials for representations to ensure that children could communicate the depth of their thoughts.

For those parts of the listening sessions that involved talking, the team developed a pool of potential questions – broad jumping off points – to guide the children towards addressing what they considered to be their rights. But for the most part, the team formed conversation prompts in response to the children's words or representations, and through daily dialogue with community adults.

Children were generally not asked directly about "rights." The goal wasn't to document their knowledge or understanding of the word or concept of "rights." Rather, they were asked to talk about subjects important to them, about their relationships, feelings, and environments, and about what they wanted changed in the world and how those changes could be made. When a child's meaning wasn't clear to team members, they asked for clarification. And, finally, children's many pathways to expressing themselves, varying culturally, were honored.

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# The Voices of Children Documentary

### Core Themes



**The following 10 threads, organized under 3 core themes, emerged during the team's analysis of all the film clips collected during the course of the project.**

#### Relationships:

1. The children expressed love, empathy, friendship, care for living things. They have a desire for the world to be equitable, fair and just. They consider the rights of all people, not just themselves.
2. The children recognize their right to think together with peers and to have different perspectives. They have a natural curiosity about the world and about human beings.
3. The children expressed the value of play, and their desire for adults to play and laugh more.

#### Spaces:

1. The children expressed their desire for freedom by being outdoors, connecting with nature, dancing, climbing, running through spaces in their schools. They use their senses to explore the world. They are also sensitive to limitations imposed on their freedoms.
2. The children want to have protected spaces. They created enclosed, or protected spaces in order to feel safe. The children are concerned about violence and safety.

#### Agency:

1. The children want their voices to be heard. They were serious, thoughtful, and articulate when asked to express their thoughts. They were empowered by the camera, both when they used it and when they revisited the gathered footage.
2. The children play significant roles within their schools, homes and local communities (cooking/serving food, tilling ground, caring for babies). They are aware of money, resources and their families' work. They recognize their right to know what is happening in their family, their neighborhood and school, the world.
3. The children are concerned about the environment (garbage, pollution) and have a desire to be surrounded by beauty.
4. The children care about their physical environment and want it to be responsive to their needs. They make changes and adaptations to the environment when they deem necessary (creating photographs for their classrooms).
5. The children do not shy away from risks, challenges, problems. They see themselves as competent and resilient. They have ideas and can teach others. They are not afraid to dream big. They are experts at divergent thinking and can focus on goals.





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# The Voices of Children Documentary

### Discussion Questions



Do you think about children's rights any differently now than you did before seeing *The Voices of Children* documentary? If so, what are your newly forming ideas on children's rights?

*Note: In some of the discussion questions below, the term "listening session" refers to the process during which the adult is eliciting children's thoughts on their rights. It is not strictly a formal interview, although questions and follow-along questions might be part of the listening session. Participation in play may be another. We call these times "listening sessions" because they reflect the importance of the messages the children are offering us.*

In the video, we see a child whose parents tell him not to run. His message to us is clear; he wants to run. When he has the freedom to run outdoors he is open, natural, spontaneous, and joyful. We see another child climbing a tree, expressing sadness about children who can't climb trees. Adults have a responsibility to protect children from harm, but what if some of these protections are not truly necessary? What if they limit the child's right to explore, discover, and participate?

- What are some of the tensions between protection and participation?
- Learning from the film, what might some of these tensions be from the child's point of view?
- What are the child's rights in making decisions about the protection-participation continuum?

How can we learn from children what they believe their rights should be? We define authentic responses as what the child would like to do if she had the freedom to do as she wished. This is in contrast to answers in which the child assumes her behavior should conform to the adult-imposed restrictions she lives with daily.

- What can we do and say to convey to the child that we are interested in her world of possibilities, which may not be the world of her daily life?

We see a young boy passionately advocating for a playground that works both for him and for babies. This extraordinary level of compassion and abstract thinking about children's rights was accessed because the child knew that the interviewer respected his ideas.

- How would you convey respect for a child's ideas during a listening session?

We all have biases. Yet because they are connected to the way we think of the world, we often don't see them in ourselves.

- What steps can we take to better understand our own biases regarding children?
- How might this awareness affect our listening sessions with children?
- How might this awareness affect our relationships with children in general?

At what point could the interview and listening session actually become intrusive? Many children would communicate discomfort with the listening session through words or behaviors. Others, wanting to please the interviewer, might try and hide discomfort.

- How could you be sensitive to the possibility that your questioning is becoming uncomfortable to the child, even when minimal indications are present?
- If you saw signs of discomfort, how would you react?
- If the interactions are not verbal, what signs of discomfort on the part of the children could tell you that they are experiencing discomfort with the interactions?



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# The Voices of Children Documentary



Your thoughts and feedback are appreciated! Please visit [bit.ly/voc-feedback](http://bit.ly/voc-feedback)

### References and Contact Information

Additional links, materials and resources, including how to support this project, view the film and host your own screening, can be found at: [worldforumfoundation.org/voices-of-children](http://worldforumfoundation.org/voices-of-children)

Or contact us at [info@worldforumfoundation.org](mailto:info@worldforumfoundation.org) for more information. Be sure to include your name, organization, city and country, so we can direct your request to the correct team member.

### References

Fowler, A., Tertell, E., Flynn-Rambo, T., & Peterson, J. (2016). Supporting children's understanding and articulation of rights: Helping children find their voice. *Childhood Education*, 92(3), 184-188.

Nimmo, J., Marcilio, A., Fowler, A., Goyal, V. (2018). Voices of children: Intercultural collaborations in understanding and documenting the meaning of children's rights through dialogue and video. In S.Madrid, M.J.Moran, R.Brookshire, & M.Buchanan, (Eds.). *Collaborative cross-cultural research methodologies in diverse early care and education contexts*. New York, NY: Routledge.

### The Voices of Children Documentary Team

*We especially recognize Ellen Hall who passed away a year following the premiere of the film, and who was (and remains) the vision and driving force behind our work from its inception.*



(L to R) Ellen Hall, Executive Producer (United States), Gustavo Amora, Director (Brazil), Angela Fowler, Producer (United States), Vashima Goyal, Executive Producer (India, Singapore), Sam Hall, Producer (United States), Ana Oliva Marcilio, Producer (Brazil), Maria Thereza Marcilio, Producer (Brazil) and John Nimmo, Executive Producer (Australia, United States)

*When citing the film, please use this format:*

Hall, E., Amora, G., Fowler, A., Goyal, V., Hall, S., Marcilio, A., Marcilio, M.T., Nimmo, J. (Producers) & Amora, G. (Director). (2017). *The Voices of Children* [Motion Picture]. Brazil: COMOVA.



Learn more at [worldforumfoundation.org/voices-of-children](http://worldforumfoundation.org/voices-of-children)