

# Data Governance Fit for Children



**Organization:** Multilateral

**Data Type:** Data for SDG monitoring, Cross-cutting

**Region:** Global

**Timeline:** 3 years

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## **Sponsoring Organization:**

UNICEF

## **Supporting Organization(s):**

The GovLab; DevelopMetrics; Highway Child

## **Objective:**

UNICEF is committed to **uplift children's rights, bolster humanitarian data preparedness and strengthen country data systems** by further engaging with youth to **co-develop responsible technologies, national systems and policies** that align with their rights and interests. This inclusive approach **empowers children and young people to directly influence the systems and practices** affecting them; as well as **stakeholders managing their data**, such as governments and tech companies, through a **social license to operate**.

There might also be situations in which data may result in adverse human rights impacts, while also saving lives. **Embedding data governance fit for children in all deployed systems will strengthen humanitarian preparedness** as the responsible systems previously introduced can be maintained during emergencies and integrated by governments whose national systems were disrupted. This work therefore also provides an opportunity for **applied country data system strengthening** that reflects the children's needs, and institutionalises responsible practices by design.

## **Description:**

Across the globe, today's children and young people are facing a historic confluence of crises – from protracted conflicts to disease outbreaks and entrenched droughts. To bolster vital services provided to children amid disruption of national systems, humanitarian and development organizations are increasingly leveraging data technologies, including artificial intelligence (AI). While practitioners may have well-intended purposes, the systems used are often designed with (consenting) adults in mind, without a focus on children's unique needs. In a humanitarian context, the consequences can be singularly dire, as data can put children at immediate risk. This holds true for “big data”, “small data”, personal data and otherwise sensitive data. Appropriate responsible data mechanisms and child-centered approaches are essential to ensure children and young people's rights are not eroded by the use of data technologies, but instead uplifted by them – especially in higher vulnerability contexts such as humanitarian crises.

UNICEF's Data governance Fit for Children Programme and the Responsible Data for Children (RD4C) initiative propose a project to advance current practices around the use of data for and about children before, during, and after humanitarian crises; and to meaningfully engage youth on questions around how their data is used, particularly through data technologies like AI, to obtain a social license for stakeholders to operate and manage their data.

*The project vision will be achieved through the following six objectives:*

1. **Selecting humanitarian contexts:** *Through UNICEF's Country Offices (COs), select a few diverse contexts across regions that have undergone humanitarian crises and/or are prone to new ones.*
2. **Understanding current practices around the use of youth's data and technology:** *Lead comparative research into selected contexts to understand what and how data about children is handled by actors in humanitarian contexts.*
3. **Engaging youth on questions about their data:** *Use the lessons learned from this analysis and tap into COs' presence to convene youth gatherings in which youth co-create data self-determination-enhancing frameworks and offer input into the kinds of activities and systems that would be aligned with their expectations.*
4. **Synthesizing youth's insights into a practical guidance:** *Use the inputs from the engagements to develop recommendations that can allow stakeholders handling children's data from those contexts to understand and address the expressed needs and expectations.*
5. **Disseminating insights and influencing policy development:** *These insights will subsequently be shared through a forum with relevant stakeholders (including Governments) in those contexts to identify tangible next steps to integrate them into policies and systems (including national systems).*
6. **Developing a prototype:** *Together with a tech company, develop a prototype tool that integrates the insights and preferences into a specialised model that can be deployed in selected and similar contexts.*

Through an online platform and additional virtual meetings, the team will seek to sustain an ongoing conversation with youth participants to ensure they have a voice as the work develops into material for policymakers and tech companies. Participants will have the ability to further reflect on the analysis of their remarks and indicate if there are any further additions or revisions they would like to see made. The team may also use the platform to provide surveys, particularly to seek their perspectives and evaluation of the progress made by stakeholders towards aligning with their preferences. The team will also monitor which recommendations have been embedded in government and other stakeholders' frameworks, policies, guidance and systems; and will advocate for the adoption of the specialised model where needed. The practical guidance and the prototype tool will be accompanied by papers, policy reports, workshop summaries, and other material to raise awareness on youth preferences and keep stakeholders accountable of the progress in their contexts.