

# UNICEF “Age Matters!” Focus Group Questions and Facilitator Guide

Due to time restrictions, each focus group will only focus on THREE themes, though all themes will be covered in each country at least 3 times:

			Work/ School	Marriage	Crime	Vote	Medical advice	Medical treatment
1	10-13 year olds	Mixed sex (boys & girls)	x		x	x		
2	10-13 year olds	Girls only		x			x	x
3	14-17 year olds	Mixed sex (boys & girls)			x	x	x	
4	14-17 year olds	Mixed sex (rural)	x	x				x
5	14-17 year olds	Girls only		x		x	x	
6	??-?? year olds	Vulnerable group	x		x			x

## Supplies

- Pens and markers in colour
- Flip chart paper (check if flip paper stands are available at locations, or use paper tape to put it on the wall)
- Post-it paper in colour
- Name tags/stickers
- Paper tape/bluetack (make sure that doesn't damage the wall)
- A4 paper
- 2 audio recording device (one to serve as a back-up) and batteries for them
- Watch (for keeping time)
- Water, tea, juices and light snacks
- Plastic cups
- Paper towels/napkins
- Garbage bag/can
- “Do not disturb, do not enter” sign to be placed on the door
- Printed out “Age Matters! Focus Group Discussions: Information Sheets (adolescents)”
- Small thank-you tokens of appreciation for the participants (ex. coloured pencils or notebooks)

## Preparation

- Come to the location of the focus group 30 min in advance to set everything up.
- Make sure the room is available.
- Set up chairs in circle.
- Set up refreshments and invite them to help themselves. Make sure there is garbage bag/can available.
- Prepare pre-written flip charts:
  - Ground rules (after you explain them, place them on the wall);
  - Reflection question for each theme (one flip chart per question);
  - Contact info on a separate flip chart to be visible all the times.
- Make sure you know where the toilets are, and the exits (in case of emergency).
- Make sure the recording equipment is working. Test it.
- Place the audio recorders inside the circle on small chairs/stands/boxes so they don't obstruct the view, but on 2 opposite sides, left and right from where you are sitting, so they can record both sides of the circle that could help in distinguishing voices in transcription and serve as a back up.

## Facilitator introduction (10 mins)

Time	Script	Instructions
Planned: 14:00- 14:10  '10	<p><i>Hello everyone! Thank you for being here today.</i></p> <p><i>My name is _____ and I will be leading the group today. We are doing a project with UNICEF, an international organisation that protects the rights of children around the world.</i></p>	<p>You can adjust the introduction to your needs and to the age/vulnerable group you are having focus group with.</p>
Actual time spent: [    ]	<p><i>Before we start, can you please give me your signed consent forms?</i></p> <p><i>We are doing a research study about young people. A research study is a way to learn more about something. We want to learn more about your ideas on how old you think a young person should be to do certain things in life, like visit a doctor, get married, or leave school to get a job, and similar questions. Your ideas will go into a report for UNICEF, to help them understand how to support young people to live better and healthier lives.</i></p> <p><i>You are being asked to join the study because you are young people who were randomly selected and we want to hear what you think.</i></p> <p><i>Since you are here, we assume that it is because you want to, but we just want to make sure you are happy to be here and don't feel pressured to take part in this discussion. So, if you do not wish to be here, please let us know, then you can leave and no one will hold that against you. But if you change your mind, you will not be able to come back.</i></p> <p><i>Today's activity will last maximum 60 minutes.</i></p>	<p>Make sure their participation is still voluntary and that they confirm their consent.</p> <p>Make sure they understand everything and that you answer all their questions.</p>

	<p><i>If anyone needs to use toilets, they are [...]</i></p> <p><i>Do you have any questions or concerns before we begin?</i></p>	
	<p><i>Before we start, we have some ground rules (written on a flip chart paper):</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>We should answer honestly and freely. Try not to answer questions based on what you think others would like to hear.</i></li> <li>- <i>There are no right or wrong answers. No-one will be judged by anything they say.</i></li> <li>- <i>Everyone should have the chance to speak, so let's agree that if you want to say something, please raise your hand and wait your turn. We will not speak at the same time as others, but wait for our turn.</i></li> <li>- <i>We will respect each other, and each other's ideas. We won't judge you, and we won't judge each other.</i></li> <li>- <i>This room is a safe space. We must feel safe to speak. If anyone feels hurt or disrespected, they should feel able to say so. Anyone breaking these rules can be asked to leave.</i></li> <li>- <i>We are all here "voluntarily" – meaning that you are here because you want to be, and no one is forcing you. If you want to leave the group at any time, you can. But this means you cannot re-join the group.</i></li> <li>- <i>Anything said in this room is "confidential". That means there will be no way for someone outside of this room to know what you discuss here. We will take notes and record our conversation on tape, but we will not include any names when we make our report.</i></li> <li>- <i>We all agree to keep everything said in this room confidential. We will not talk about what is discussed here, or what others in the group share, with people outside of this room. This means not sharing what others have said with your friends, teachers, or parents.</i></li> <li>- <i>The only time we might break this confidentiality is if you share something that tells us there is some danger to you or others. In this case, we will refer you to someone or someplace where you can get help.</i></li> <li>- <i>When we finish the report for the whole project, you can find it online at <a href="http://www.agemattersnow.org">www.agemattersnow.org</a> in the beginning of 2018 in English and in other languages to follow.</i></li> <li>- <i>If you have any questions, you can email us at <a href="mailto:agematters@youthpolicy.org">agematters@youthpolicy.org</a>. You should have an info sheet that explains the project. If not, we have more here.</i></li> </ul> <p><i>Do you understand?</i></p> <p><i>Do you wish to add some rules? Does everybody agree?</i></p>	<p>Prepare these ground rules on the flip chart using at least 2 alternating colours for each rule. After you explain them, place them on the wall.</p> <p>Simplify these rules as necessary when you write them, but make sure to explain them fully.</p> <p>Read each rule aloud, just in case some participants have trouble reading or seeing.</p> <p>Make sure the rules are not written in a manner that sounds bossy. It is better to phrase them to be more positive as inclusive statements rather than instructions.</p> <p>Ask them if they would like to add some rules.</p> <p>Have them confirm that they all agree.</p>

*Icebreaker (5 mins)*

Time	Script	Instructions
<p>Planned: 14:10- 14:15</p> <p>'5</p> <p>Actual time spent: [   ]</p>	<p>Let's start with an icebreaker so that we can get to know each other.</p> <p>Let's go around the circle and introduce our name, age, and our favourite movie or TV show.</p> <p>I'll start. [name, age, favourite movie/TV show]</p> <p>Now, the person next to me has to introduce me to the group by repeating my name, my age, and my favourite movie/TV show. Then they can introduce themselves.</p> <p>We will go around in the circle until everyone introduces themselves.</p> <p>When we're done, let's write our names on a nametag and put it on our shirt. This will help us remember each other's names, and make it easier to talk to each other.</p> <p>This will just be for today in this room. Afterwards, when we write the report, we won't use anyone's names.</p>	<p>This is an example of an icebreaker, but feel free to use your own. Just make sure that the icebreaker has them share their name and age, for the tape recorder.</p> <p>Provide them with nametags, colour pens/markers with coloured post it. Have paper tape ready in case nametags or post-it notes do not stick to their clothes.</p> <p>Explain that their names will be used only here in the discussion, but when we analyse the data it will be made anonymous.</p> <p>Make sure you can read their nametags, as you should try use it almost every time when you invite them to speak. Have in mind that it will be difficult for transcribers to distinguish their voices, so use their names as often as possible. Later, when you will be checking the transcription/translation, you will replace all their real names to made-up names (we will provide more instructions on this later).</p>

## Questions (45 mins)

(Note to Facilitator: not all questions need to be asked *exactly* as written, as long as the same idea is explored. Ensure that all selected domains are covered and keep an eye on the time for each domain. The language should be adjusted for the younger adolescents and for vulnerable groups)

### General questions (10 mins)

Time	Script	Instructions
Planned: 14:15- 14:25  '10  Actual time spent: [ ]	<p>We want to start by talking about at what age do you and other young people your age feel capable enough to do different things.</p> <p>Do you think young people your age – think of you and your friends – are capable enough to... (raise your hand):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “stay home alone for several hours during the day.” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Why yes? Why no?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• “decide how to spend my own pocket money.” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Why yes? Why no?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• “decide which websites to visit online.” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Why yes? Why no?</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>Great work! Now we’re going to explore some other ideas deeper...</p>	<p>Emphasise to think about <u>their own age group</u>. Ask them to raise their hands, and then ask a few of them why they think ‘yes’ and a few of them why they think ‘no’.</p> <p>Remember to always call them by their name, for transcription &amp; data analysis purposes.</p> <p>“Capable”: able enough. It is not about being mature enough, but rather do they think they can do it or not at that particular age.</p> <p>Short and quick. This is just to start the conversation, to make them think and talk about what they and their peers can do at certain age.</p> <p>Here are example sub questions. Do not lead towards certain answers, but try to stimulate conversation and thinking:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- You said yes, you think young people your age can stay home alone. What do you need to be able to do this? For ex. Do you need to know the emergency numbers (police, fire department, hospital)? Are your parents giving you any instructions?</li> <li>- Can we think of a situation when a young person your age shouldn’t stay home alone? (ex. overnight) Shouldn’t decide how to spend their own money? (ex. large amounts) Shouldn’t decide which websites to visit? (ex. violent, adult websites)</li> </ul>

## Work (10 mins)

Time	Script	Instructions
Planned: 14:25- 14:35  '10  Actual time spent: [    ]	<p>Do you think young people <u>your age</u> should be able to start working full time?</p> <p>Keep in mind that this means that you no longer can go to school.</p> <p>Why yes? Why no?</p>	<p><b>Reflection</b></p> <p>This is introductory statement to make them think about the age that some young people might leave school to work.</p> <p>There are two concepts here: leaving school (end of mandatory schooling age) and working (age at which they can start working).</p> <p>“Working” means full-time work, which takes up all their week days and does not allow for time to go to school. Participants might want to talk about part-time work – working while going to school at the same time – but here we are talking about a young person’s decision to leave school entirely so that they can work instead.</p> <p>Ask a few of them to express their opinion. Remember to always call them by their name, for transcription &amp; data analysis purposes.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Why do you think some young people might want to do this? (Leave school completely to go to work instead)</li> <li>- Do you think that this is a good idea? Why yes, why no?</li> <li>- Are there some <b>cases</b> when this is ok?</li> <li>- If you think it is not ok for young people your age to leave school completely and go to work, - <b>at what age is it ok for this to happen?</b> What is it <b>about this particular age</b> that it makes it ok?</li> </ul>	<p><b>Probing questions</b></p> <p>With these sub questions we want them to think about why some young people leave school (other than that it is boring, etc), and under what conditions it would be ok for them to do so.</p> <p>We also want them to think about the <b>ideal</b> age that a young person should be able to do this. (if any) This is not asking them what they think the <i>legal</i> age is (which will be revealed next).</p>

	<p><b>DID YOU KNOW:</b></p> <p>In your country, by law, young people can start working full time at [age].</p>		<p><b>Reveal</b></p> <p><i>[Monitor for any changes in attitudes/opinions, and ask those participants to elaborate.]</i></p> <p><i>[Make sure everyone speaks in the end.]</i></p>																										
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## Marriage (10 mins)

Time	Script	Instructions
Planned: 14:35- 14:45  '10  Actual time spent: [    ]	<p>Do you think young people <u>your age</u> should be allowed to get married?</p> <p>Why yes? Why no?</p>	<p><b>Reflection</b></p> <p>This is introductory statement to make them think about when young people should be allowed to get married.</p> <p>Be sure that the conversation is about when a young person should be <i>allowed</i> to get married, not the age at which they “can” get married.</p> <p>In general, being “allowed” can involve conversations about when its “appropriate” (by culture, family, or physically, emotionally)</p> <p>Make the clarification that it doesn’t matter if <i>they</i> want to get married – just if any young person their age should be allowed to get married.</p> <p>Here we are talking about marriage in general – not yet about marriage with parental consent (that comes later)</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How does someone decide when they are ready to get married?</li> <li>- If it is not ok for young people your age to get married, - <b>at what age is it ok for this to happen?</b> What is it <b>about this age</b> that it makes it ok?</li> <li>- What if you could get married at a younger age, if your parents said it was ok. What do you think? Is this ok?</li> </ul>	<p><b>Probing questions</b></p> <p>With these sub-questions, we want them to think about the reasons why a young person might want to wait until their older to get married, or to get married sooner.</p> <p>Also introducing the idea of parents being able to give consent to their children to get married earlier, and if this is good or not.</p> <p>We also want them to think about the <b>ideal</b> age that a young person should be able to do this (if any). This is not asking them what they think the <i>legal</i> age is (which will be revealed next).</p>



	<p><b>DID YOU KNOW:</b></p> <p>In your country, by law, young people can get marriage at [age] <b>without</b> the consent of their parents, and at [age] <b>with</b> the consent of their parents.</p>	<p><b>Reveal</b></p> <p><i>[Monitor for any changes in attitudes/opinions, and ask those participants to elaborate.]</i></p> <p><i>[Make sure everyone speaks in the end.]</i></p>
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## Criminal responsibility (10 mins)

Time	Script	Instructions
Planned: 14:45- 14:55  '10  Actual time spent: [    ]	Imagine a young person <u>your age</u> broke the law.  Do you think they are too young to be punished by the court (and possibly go to jail)? Why yes, why no?	<p><b>Reflection</b></p> <p>This is introductory statement get them to imagine the types of consequences that a young person their age could face if they committed a crime.</p> <p>Try to make them think about consequences independently of the type of crime.</p> <p>In general, the conversation should be about if young people are ever too young to go to jail.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What punishments are suitable/appropriate for your ages?</li> <li>- Can you think of times when they should/shouldn't be punished?</li> <li>- Does it depend on the crime? I.e. young person being punished or not (ex. vandalism, breaking into a house to steal money, hurting someone so badly they need to go to a hospital, murder)</li> <li>- If people your age are too young to go to jail, <b>at what age is this ok for this to happen?</b> What is it <b>about this age</b> that it makes it ok?</li> </ul>	<p><b>Probing questions</b></p> <p>With these sub-questions, we want them to think about different circumstances when young people commit crimes, and how punishments should maybe be different.</p> <p>We also want them to think about the different ages that might be appropriate for different punishments (if any). This is not asking them what they think the <i>legal age</i> is (which will be revealed next).</p> <p>These are some possible punishments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- No punishment</li> <li>- Education and counselling to help them understand that what they did was wrong</li> <li>- Community service (doing unpaid work ex. cleaning the school yard, helping at elderly care home)</li> <li>- Charged and punished by the courts (can include going to jail)</li> </ul>

	<p><b>DID YOU KNOW:</b></p> <p>In your country, by law, young people under the age of [age] will not be punished by the courts – regardless of the crime.</p>	<p><b>Reveal</b></p> <p><i>[Monitor for any changes in attitudes/opinions, and ask those participants to elaborate.]</i></p> <p><i>[Make sure everyone speaks in the end.]</i></p>																												
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## Medical advice (10 mins)

Time	Script	Instructions																											
Planned: 14:xx- 14:xx '10 Actual time spent: [    ]	Do you think young people <u>your age</u> should be able to speak to a doctor without their parents being present, if they wanted to?  Why yes? Why no?	<b>Reflection</b>  This is introductory statement to make them think about if a young person should be able to speak to a doctor independently of their parents.																											
	- Why do you think they might want to do this? <b>- What medical issues do you think a young person would not want to talk about in front of their parents?</b> - If it is not ok for young people your age to speak to a doctor by themselves, <b>at what age is it ok for this to happen?</b> What is it <b>about <u>this</u> age</b> that it makes it ok?	<b>Probing questions</b>  With these sub-questions, we want them to reflect on the difference circumstances under which a young person might want to speak to a doctor by themselves.  We also want them to think about the <b>ideal</b> age that a young person should be able to do this (if any). This is not asking them what they think the <i>legal</i> age is (which will be revealed next).																											
	<b>DID YOU KNOW:</b>  In your country, by law, young people under the age of [age] are not allowed to speak to a doctor without their parents present.	<b>Reveal</b>  <i>[Monitor for any changes in attitudes/opinions, and ask those participants to elaborate.]</i>  <i>[Make sure everyone speaks in the end.]</i>																											
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## Medical treatment (10 mins)

Time	Script	Instructions
Planned: 14:xx- 14:xx '10 Actual time spent: [    ]	<p>Do you think young people <u>your age</u> should be able to make their own decisions about their medical treatments, without their parents?</p> <p><i>Medical treatments</i> can include having a surgery, anaesthesia, or medicine that a doctor gives you.</p> <p><i>Decisions</i> can include saying yes or no to treatments. It can also mean asking the doctor for treatments, without their parents knowing.</p> <p>Why yes? Why no?</p>	<p><b>Reflection</b></p> <p>This it is not about them disagreeing with their doctors or the state or parents, but about having informed consent – having enough information and deciding on their own what happens to their bodies.</p> <p>Decisions are about giving informed consent for treatments, and it can also mean seeking treatments independently of their parents.</p> <p>Basically, the conversation should be around the idea: when should young people be treated as adults when it comes to complex medical decisions?</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Why do you think giving consent (the ability to say yes or no) might be important?</li> <li>- What are some cases you can think of why a young person might say no to a treatment?</li> <li>- Can you think of treatments that a young person might need, that they don't want their parents to know about?</li> <li>- If it is not ok for young people your age to make their own decisions about medical treatments, <b>at what age is it ok for this to happen?</b> What is it <b>about this age</b> that it makes it ok?</li> <li>- What if a young person <i>wants</i> a medical treatment, but their parents don't want them to have it. Should they be able to ask for it from a doctor themselves?</li> </ul>	<p><b>Probing questions</b></p> <p>With these sub-questions, we want them to think about the various circumstances when young people might want to make a medical decision that is different from their parents, or without their parent's involvement.</p> <p>We also want them to think about the <b>ideal</b> age that a young person should be able to do this (if any). This is not asking them what they think the <i>legal</i> age is (which will be revealed next).</p>

	<p><b>DID YOU KNOW:</b></p> <p>In your country, by law, young people under the age of [age] are not allowed to make their own decisions about medical treatments.</p>		<p><b>Reveal</b></p> <p><i>[Monitor for any changes in attitudes/opinions, and ask those participants to elaborate.]</i></p> <p><i>[Make sure everyone speaks in the end.]</i></p>																										
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## Voting (10 mins)

Time	Script	Instructions																								
Planned: 14:xx- 14:xx  '10  Actual time spent: [   ]	<p>Do you think a young person <u>your age</u> should be able to vote?</p> <p><i>Voting</i> means in an election, for example, to choose your country's president or prime minister.</p> <p>Why yes? Why no?</p>	<p><b>Reflection</b></p> <p>This is introductory statement to make them think about if a young person their age should have a voice in the politics of their country.</p>																								
	<p>- Why would a young person want to vote?</p> <p>- What kinds of issues do you think a young person cares about?</p> <p>- If it is not ok for young people your age vote, <b>at what <u>age</u> is it ok for this to happen?</b> What is it <b>about <u>this age</u></b> that it makes it ok?</p>	<p><b>Probing questions</b></p> <p>With these sub-questions, we want them to think about the reasons that a young person might want to vote, and the types of issues that might matter to young people.</p> <p>We also want them to think about the <b>ideal</b> age that a young person should be able to do this (if any). This is not asking them what they think the <i>legal</i> age is (which will be revealed next).</p>																								
	<p><b>DID YOU KNOW:</b></p> <p>In your country, by law, young people under the age of [age] are not allowed to vote.</p>	<p><b>Reveal</b></p> <p><i>[Monitor for any changes in attitudes/opinions, and ask those participants to elaborate.]</i></p> <p><i>[Make sure everyone speaks in the end.]</i></p>																								
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### Facilitator conclusion (5 mins)

Time	Script	Instructions
Planned: 14:55- 15:00  '5  Actual time spent: [    ]	<p>That is the end of the activity! Thank you everyone for your honest thoughts and ideas. You did a great job.</p> <p>Some of the main things we talked about were...</p> <p>Before we finish, are there any last questions?</p> <p><i>To say thank you, we have a small gift for you (ex. coloured pencils or notebook).</i></p> <p>Remember that from early 2018 you can visit <a href="http://www.agemattersnow.org">www.agemattersnow.org</a> to see the final report in English, and other languages soon after.</p> <p><i>If you have any questions, you can email us at <a href="mailto:agematters@youthpolicy.org">agematters@youthpolicy.org</a>.</i></p>	<p>If discussion on some topics goes over time, there is a small time buffer here, but in general the entire focus group should not last for more than an hour.</p> <p>You can summarise the discussion, or ask them to voice their opinions on some issues that were left unsaid. But do not reopen discussion.</p> <p>Make sure the gifts are available close by for everyone and that everyone gets it.</p> <p>Write the thank you note and contacts on the flipchart.</p>



# UNICEF “Age Matters!”

## Focus Group Discussion Reflection Report Template for Local Facilitators

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Dear Facilitator, after each focus group discussion please jot down a quick reflection note immediately, and then write a full reflection report within 24h and definitely before the next focus group. The report should not be longer than one page.

Please reflect on the group dynamics, what is the most striking observation you have from the discussion, what have you learned, what are the main conclusions, key points from discussion, what was something new and unexpected they said, what was the most interesting/uninteresting question for them, what was the most controversial issue, what they agreed with the most and for what issues they could not reach consensus. Were there any non-verbal cues from participants that can add meaning to what they said?

After thinking about the discussion, do you have any big ideas, hunches or thoughts for a new concept that will be helpful in later analysis?