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Children and Young People
as Citizens

PARTNERS FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

Learning from Experience



Save the Children

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as Citizens

PARTNERS FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

Learning from Experience

Claire O'Kane

Edited by: Judith Amtzis

The vision

Save the Children works for:

- a world which respects and values each child
- a world which listens to children and learns
- a world where all children have hope and opportunity

The mission

Save the Children fights for children's rights.

We deliver immediate and lasting improvements to children's lives worldwide.

First published in 2003

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Preface

"We worry what a child will become tomorrow, yet we forget he/she is someone today" (Stacia Staucher). The work of Save the Children is rooted in the principles enshrined in the Convention of the Right of the Child (CRC) and committed to support children claiming their rights. Save the Children in South and Central Asia has a vision for tomorrow grounded in the reality of today, we believe that "Children are not only the future but they are also the citizens of today" (Children's Forum, UN Special Session on Children, 2002)

Girls' and boys' active participation: their right to be heard, have influence on decisions that affect them and become partners in action are fundamental principles for Save the Children. As a consequence it was decided to look at examples of how children, from various backgrounds, in South and Central Asia have actually organised themselves and been able to influence their own daily living situation. This work carried out in 2001 and 2002 by Claire O'Kane on behalf of Save the Children, revealed an immense and impressive richness in what children have achieved.

This resulting set of publications compiles our learning from the study. It provides a wealth of examples of children's participation and citizenship in families, communities, schools, work places, local government bodies and other settings. It highlights the many diverse and creative ways in which children organise themselves, let their voices be heard and create change in their lives, appropriate to their different cultures and situations. These experiences of children are enriched with analysis, reflections and lessons learned that are important for all organisations working to promote children's participation and rights.

The publications indicate that it is easier to motivate children to raise their voices, to organise themselves and to claim their rights than it is for adults to listen with respect and respond constructively. There are clear messages about this major challenge and other ethical issues to be considered in promoting children's participation.

The publications are the collective work of a great many children and staff of partner organisations and Save the Children members in South and Central Asia. Thanks to all of you for your contributions and willingness to get involved in this work. You have made this documentation possible.

Our very special thanks go to Claire O’Kane for her hard work, commitment and dedication, and for her deep respect for the views and rights of children. Thanks also to a core group of Save the Children staff members, Asif Munier, Y.Bhavani, Chandrika Khatiwada, Prakash Koirala, Ranjan Pouldyal and Unni Rustad, who all made substantial and creative contributions. The publications were finalised and edited by Shikha Ghildyal, Ravi Karkara and Judith Amtzis. Our sincere thanks for your contributions and commitment to make this a living, working document.

These publications are dedicated to the children of South and Central Asia. We hope that they will open a great many eyes as to what children can accomplish and what support can help them to improve their lives now and in the future.

The Steering Committee

Save the Children South and Central Asia

(Eiichi Sadamatsu, Girish Godbole, Herluf G. Madsen, Linda Moffat, Ned Olney, Sultan Mahmud, and Valter Tinderholt)

Road Map for Readers

Imagine a scene... a group of girls, boys and young people of different ages sitting together; eyes bright, animated, as they discuss ideas and share their views on issues concerning them in their local communities. Working in creative ways they plan actions to raise awareness and gain adult support in taking action to further the realisation of their rights. **Consider the backdrop to the scene...** a Himalayan mountain village, a congested city, an isolated village in a desert area, a refugee camp, a village in the plains, a beach by the sea... in situations both of peace and of conflict.

In diverse settings across South and Central Asia children and young people are coming together as a positive force for social change. Empowered girls, boys and young people are raising their voices and bringing about positive changes for children and adults in their local and national communities.

Considering the scale of this region and the prevailing social norms that exclude children and young people from decision-making at all levels, these groups of empowered girls and boys may only represent a 'drop in the ocean'. However, these are significant drops, creating ripples of change at local, national and regional levels. In demonstrating their strengths, their unity, and their hope boys and girls are touching the lives of adults surrounding them, and in the process transforming relationships between adults and children. Recognition of the benefits of listening and responding to the views of children and young people is gaining momentum. Through their efforts boys and girls are breaking the silence that has for so long fostered their marginalisation. They are challenging all forms of discrimination, inequality, abuse and exploitation, and are providing powerful illustrations of their role as active citizens.

As a guardian of children's rights, Save the Children is actively supporting such efforts. Save the Children believes that children and young people are active citizens of both today and tomorrow. While taking their evolving capacity into consideration, girls and boys are recognised as human beings with rights to participate in decisions that affect their lives. Save the Children adopts a rights-based approach to development, developing programmes underpinned by the principles of children's rights and human rights. Children's participation is a principle of rights-based programming. Children are right holders who can play an active role in increasing fulfilment of their other rights to survival, protection and development.

Save the Children Alliance in South and Central Asia has focused on 'Children's Citizenship and Governance' (CCG) as a key niche area, recognising children and young people's role as active citizens as well as the benefits of rights-based approaches to development. All agencies concerned with development, good governance or social justice should include girls and boys as active partners in the development process. This publication, which consists of an Overview and three booklets, highlights the richness of experience and positive impacts from Save the Children's innovative work on children's participation and citizenship with NGO partners and Children's Organisations in the South and Central Asia region.

Booklet two in this three-part "Children and Young People as Citizens: Partners for Social Change" series goes on to share key insights that have been gained from programme experiences with child participation in the region. It includes an analysis (and illustrations) of what works in enabling meaningful children's participation and citizenship. The booklet focuses on a process approach, one that is required to create a culture of listening to children, and explores the process of engaging with children and young people in the community context. The need to support and strengthen the development of inclusive children's organisations is emphasised, as is the need to build bridges between adult decision-makers and children's representatives.

Some interesting lessons are revealed from a look at changing trends in Save the Children's work on children's participation work over time. The booklet includes a large section on responding to key challenges relating to conceptual understanding and mainstreaming of children's participation in programming. Various ethical issues are also explored, including the following: overburdening children, giving payments or incentives, raising expectations, minimising risk, children's consent and use of information made by children and young people, issues of inclusion, non-discrimination and fair representation.

This booklet also provides recommendations for furthering programme work on children's participation and citizenship. These recommendations, directed at all organisations and agencies engaged in development practice, promote a rights-based approach to development. Mainstream development agencies, donors, UN bodies and academia need to incorporate a focus on child rights and approaches that involve children and young people as social actors. Obstacles to fulfilling children's citizenship rights must be identified and strategies developed to overcome them. Advocacy work at all levels is crucial and the importance of ethical quality practice is reiterated.

Recommendations to promote the participation of girls and boys of different abilities at different ages include: adopting a life cycle approach; developing child-friendly information and tools; focusing on capacity building of children, young people and adults; and developing and strengthening children's organisations, networks and media initiatives. In building sustainable partnerships between adults and children and young people, effective analysis of governance structures and systems, and engaging with key adult decision-makers to share power are both important. It is also crucial to develop effective systems and tools for monitoring and evaluating the process and impacts of children's participation and citizenship initiatives. To enhance our advocacy efforts we must be able to measure and demonstrate success arising from children's active citizenship.

The appendices 6, 7, 8 and 9 include information regarding practical tools, materials and guidelines to carry children's citizenship work forward.

Acknowledgments

The information, experiences and insights shared in this report are the result of the efforts of a multitude of minds and hearts of children, young people and adults in diverse settings across South and Central Asia and beyond. Without mentioning all of their names (or organisations), I acknowledge each for their enthusiasm and commitment to working for children's rights and social change in very real ways in their local, national and global communities. The resilience, commitment, vision and positive actions of girls and boys living in marginalised communities across Asia continues to be my main source of inspiration for empowering work with children and young people as citizens.

In each Save the Children country office programme directors, staff and administrators have offered support, assisting me to meet with colleagues, with children and young people's groups, and with NGO partners to explore their experiences of children's participation and citizenship, the critical issues and their vision. In drawing the experiences and analysis together in this publication I thank every person who has taken time to bring about such experience and insight sharing.

For providing the opportunity to undertake regional work on children's citizenship and governance I would like to acknowledge the vision and commitment of each of the Steering Committee Members: Herluf Madsen, Peter Dixon, Martin Kelsey, Girish Godbole, Keith D Leslie, Sultan Mahmud, Dewan Sohrab, Mariko Tanaka, Valter Tinderholt, Linda Moffat. The commitment and support of the Alliance Co-ordinator Archana Tamang has also been energising throughout the process.

I want to particularly acknowledge the commitment and ongoing support of Herluf Madsen, Regional Representative of Save the Children Sweden in furthering Save the Children's regional work on Children's Citizenship and Governance, and in providing guidance and encouragement to me in my role as CCG project co-ordinator.

An initial draft of this report was significantly improved through the involvement of the regional working group on children's citizenship and governance including Shikha Ghildyal, Ravi Karkara, Ranjan Poudyal, Asif Munier, Y. Bhavani, Chandrika Khatiwada, Prakash Koirala and Unni Rustad¹. The professional efforts of the editor

¹ Who met together at a regional level to work on the document in April 2003.

Judith Amtzis, and the regional CCG group have all promoted a more reader-friendly production of this publication.

Ravi Karkara merits special thanks for his zeal and encouragement. Ravi has provided invaluable insights and personal support throughout my work on this project, and has played a key role in mobilising action on this publication. Shikha has also played a key role in enabling publication of this document in her role as the new CCG co-ordinator.

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I also want to acknowledge the significance of the ongoing support and encouragement of my family and friends in Wales.

Claire O'Kane

CCG Regional Project Co-ordinator, Save the Children (South and Central Asia)

January, 2003

Acronyms

AI	Appreciative Inquiry
AI	Appreciative Inquiry
CAR	Commissionerate of Afghan Refugees
CCDK	Children's Council for Development of Kargil
CCDL	Children's Council for Development of Ladakh
CCG	Children's Citizenship and Governance
CCVD	Children's Committee for Village Development
CCWB	Central Child Welfare Board
CDO	Chief District Officer
CEDAW	Convention on Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women
C-EMIS	Community Education Monitoring Information Systems
CERD	Convention on Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination
CGDC	Children Go For Development Committee
CPA	Centre for Performing Arts (Sri Lanka)
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CRP	Child Rights Programming
CWC	Concerned for Working Children
CYG	Children and Young People's Group
DCRC	Delhi Child Rights Club
DCWB	District Child Welfare Boards (Nepal)
DCWC	District Child Welfare Committees
ECD	Early Childhood Development
HRD	Human Resource Development
HREP	Human Rights Education Project
GMC	Global Movement for Children
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
IEC	Information Education, and Communication
KAISHAR	Knowledge and Attitude Improvement of Sexual Health for Adolescent's Responsibility
NGO	Non-government Organisation
NNSWA	Nepal National Social Welfare Association
NPA	National Plan of Action
NWFP	North West Frontier Province (Pakistan)
PLA	Participatory Learning and Action

PO	Programme Officer
PRA	Participatory Rural Appraisal
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Programme
SoVAA	Social Volunteer Against AIDS
SSoC	Special Session on Children
SWC	Social Welfare Cell
TfD	Theatre for Development
TOF	Training of Facilitators
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
VCDC	Village Children's Development Committee (Sri Lanka)
VDC	Village Development Committees (Nepal)
VEC	Village Education Committee
WBL	Working for Better Lives
YIP	Young India Project

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Learning from Experience and Recommendations: What Works? The Process, Responding to Challenges and Moving Towards Children's Participation and Citizenship

2.1 Introduction

Different countries and regions in each country are at different stages in developing and integrating strategies, methodologies and processes for children's participation and active citizenship. However, the main areas of Save the Children and their NGO partners' work in relation to children's participation and citizenship include:

- Enabling children's expression and support for child-to-child and adolescent to adolescent approaches
- Supporting the development and functioning of children's organisations
- Enabling children's participation in governance
- Creating opportunities and capacity for children as researchers, facilitators, trainers and media journalists
- Enabling children's participation in all areas of programming (of Save the Children and NGO partners' programmes)
- Enabling children's participation in the UN Special Session on Children (SSOC), Global Movement for Children (GMC) and National Plan of Action (NPA) processes

All these areas of child participation and citizenship work involve information sharing and capacity building of children and adults, as well as monitoring with a focus on quality issues. This booklet provides key data from the region about what works to enable meaningful participation and citizenship of children. It focuses on a process approach, which is required to create a culture of listening to children. The illustration in Section 2.2 ("Enabling a Meaningful Process of Children's Participation") presents an overall analysis of common elements that bring about a meaningful process of child participation. Elements of the experiential learning process for children and adults are discussed. In addition, the section includes important learning from noting changing trends in work on children's participation over time.

This booklet's examination of key challenges and ethical issues arising in participatory work with children and young people, as well as suggestions for overcoming them, focuses on three key areas: lack of conceptual understanding and acceptance; ethical issues; and mainstreaming children's participation in programming. Finally, the booklet outlines 18 key recommendations, based on Save the Children's experience in working with children's participation and citizenship, for moving towards greater inclusion.

2.2 What Works? A Process Approach Enabling Meaningful Children's Participation

- Creating a culture of listening to children*
- An experiential learning process with adults and children*
- Enabling a meaningful process*
- Adopting a life cycle approach*
- Working with children in the wider context*
- Capacity building of adults, young people and children*
- Access to Child friendly information*
- Use of creative, participatory methodology*
- Supporting the development of children's organisations*
- Ensuring a focus on ethics*
- Enabling non-discriminatory, inclusive processes*
- Creating access for children to meet adult decision-makers*
- Changing trends in children's participation work over time*

Creating a Culture of Listening to Children

We have learnt that significant efforts are needed to create a culture of listening and responding to the views of girls and boys. Promoting children's participation is a time-consuming process of empowering children and preparing adults. Taking children's participation seriously involves transforming the power relations between adults and children. It entails a long, gradual process of changing adult attitudes, behaviour, institutional practices, approaches, procedures and mechanisms as



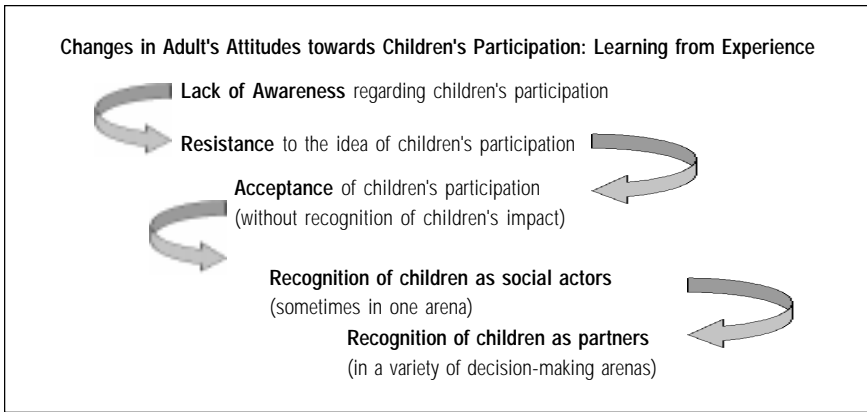
children's personhood² is recognised at different levels. When we have arrived at a clear vision of the positive impact of children's participation and citizenship, management support and resource investments are made that ensure commitment to a quality process of creating a culture of listening to children.

An Experiential Learning Process

Children and young people value opportunities to meet together and express themselves. Their confidence increases when they participate in decision-making processes that affect them. In the early phases of programmes to empower children, however, even adults associated with the project may not recognise children's potential or know how to facilitate their participation. Adults in the community may also initially resist the idea of children's participation and children's rights. Over time, however, as adults become aware through experience of children and young people's immense potential, they are more able to empower them and more willing to work with children as partners to fulfil their rights.

"In the first year there was less movement due to adults' doubt about what we could do and about what children could do. Through every opportunity we became more aware.... The Children's Sangha (union) as a vehicle has brought a little bit of change with regards to the perception of children. Adults are beginning to understand that they ought to see children differently. But the acceptance of children's rights remains to be seen." (NGO worker, India)

² Seeing children as social actors in their own right, with their own individual identities, thoughts and feelings.



Empowering processes make boys and girls more confident and articulate in discussing and addressing their issues.

"Before we had a Child Club I didn't have the confidence to express myself and even people in my family didn't expect me to have a view. However, since being a part of the club I feel like I am a human being with views to contribute and I feel confident in doing so."
 (Boy, member of Child Club, Nepal)

"Children gain a lot of confidence through exposure. A 15-year-old talked about AIDS to 150 adult union members – can you imagine? The adults were so appreciative that they clapped and clapped."
 (NGO worker, India)

Children and young people's collective efforts often go unrecognised by parents and other adults in the community in the early days, however, since adults generally have little expectation of children. In one Indian village, for example, where children from a children's union had cleaned the water tank and worked on bus transport issues, one mother stated: *"Adults generally do not bother about what they are doing"*. Her remark was confirmed by another group of parents who said: *"We don't really know what activities they have done. But if they do anything useful we'll support them."* Similarly, a Pakistani boy who was part of a children's committee commented: *"Adults have neither a positive nor negative view about our organisation; they just take it for granted"*.

Yet, through their positive collective efforts, over time the status of children, their voices and their organisations are slowly, but gradually changing:

"In the beginning adults were not used to listening to clubs or sangha members. But since we started organising dramas on bonded labour and violence, and since we've been taking up issues, slowly the parents are starting to listen to us."

(Child sangha members, India)

In voicing their concerns respectfully, girls and boys demonstrate that listening to them need not diminish their respect for or attention to adults' views. Indeed children's participation often enhances communication and understanding between children and adults. Adults realise that children and young people have good suggestions to make about their lives and the development of their schools, communities and wider society.

"There was a tendency to neglect children, but now that we have started this process of involving them, children have motivated their parents and villagers. They have made lots of positive changes.... Children's Committees for Village Development can enable children to participate with adults in making the education system function.."

*(Executive Education Councillor, Local Government official,
Ladakh, India)*

Generally, such recognition occurs when children and young people collectively undertake concrete action initiatives that have positive and tangible impacts for adults, as well as for children in the village. This can be securing a new bus service, school teacher or drinking water facility. Adults then begin to recognise the benefits of children and young people as social actors undertaking collective initiatives. Children's participation in organisations, moreover, raises their status and has positive spin-offs in increasing their participation in family decision-making. Hart describes this process and its importance.

“Ultimately we need to reach the family as the primary setting for the development of children’s sense of social responsibility and competence to participate. The family is more difficult to reach in any direct way. Parents can best be influenced by seeing examples of their children’s competence.... Productive collaboration between young and old should be the core of any democratic society wishing to improve itself, while providing continuity between the past, present and future. (Hart, 1992, p.44³)”

“Earlier I was not allowed to leave my household. But since persuading my parents to let me participate in our union meetings I have taken part in regular meetings, action programmes and workshops. Now I leave the house often, my parents have seen the benefits of my participation and they also consult me on some family matters.”
(Girl, member of children’s union, India)

Adults thus begin supporting children’s organisations and see children and young people as potential partners in decision-making processes. However, the reality of adult structures and processes including children from diverse backgrounds is yet another milestone.

“Our tradition was not to invite children to village meetings, but nowadays they are coming more than adults. The children are receptive and understand the situation and take good decisions.... Our children are giving us good advice.”

*(Village elder, village with a Children’s Committee
in Ladakh, India)*

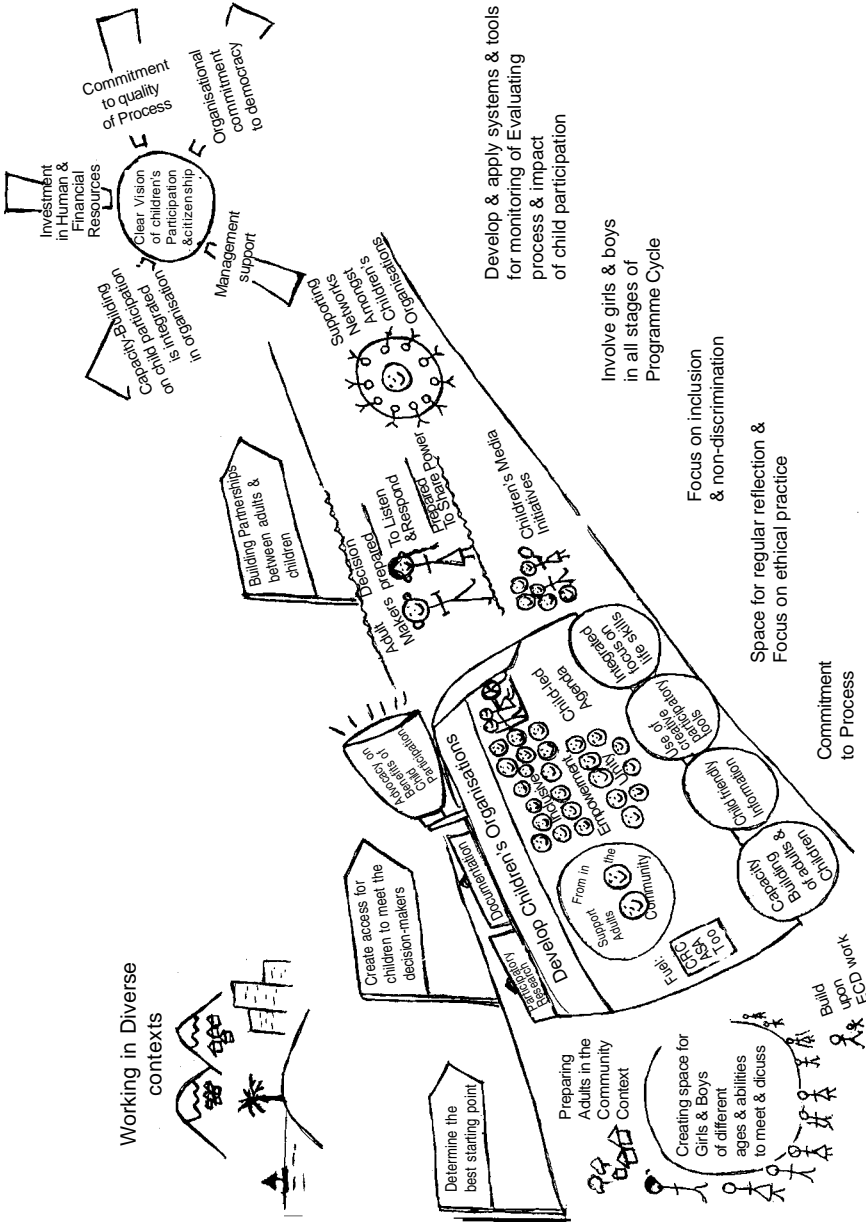
Enabling a Meaningful Process of Children’s Participation

The diagram below illustrates a range of key elements that are significant in bringing about a meaningful process of children’s participation. Some of these factors are elaborated further within this booklet.

³ Hart, R. (1992). Children’s Participation: From Tokenism to Citizenship. UNICEF Innocenti Essay No.4.

ILLUSTRATION:

Enabling a Meaningful Process of Children's Participation



Adopting a life cycle approach

Participation varies according to a child's evolving capacities. However, children can participate in different ways from the earliest ages. Competence comes through experience, and is not suddenly endowed at a certain age. Our earliest interactions establish our sense of who we are and the confidence and skills to express ourselves and negotiate our rights. Tiny day-to-day events lay the foundation for participation. Efforts to further realisation of children's rights, including their participation rights, require consideration of Early Childhood Development (ECD) programmes (see Arnold, 2002⁴). Building on work with children in the early years, a life cycle approach to children's participation can be explored, enabling girls and boys participation at different ages and abilities.

A life cycle approach encourages us to approach girls and boys at different ages, building upon their strengths and their abilities to participate. We need to understand what 'childhood' means for girls and boys in each particular context at different stages of the life cycle. What are girls and boys encouraged to do or not do? What active role can girls and boys play? Building upon children's evolving capacity, inclusive approaches to children's participation and citizenship can be encouraged.

Young people's transition to adulthood can also be supported, so that young men and women who have played an active role as children can continue to be active in their community as young adults. Inter-generational dialogue between adults and children of different ages can also be encouraged, thus promoting increased understanding and collaboration among the generations.



⁴ Arnold, C. (2002). Are younger children being sidelined in the Child Rights Movement? The importance of ECD programmes to Ensuring Children's Rights. Monitor, Vol.15, p.13-18.

The Life Cycle Approach to Child Participation with Focus on Inclusion⁵:

Individuals can encourage value for children's participation at all ages and abilities.

As 0-5 year olds boys and girls begin to explore the world around them and express their views through body language and physical expressions. With encouragement from adults, the foundations for participation can be laid in the early years.

Elderly people can encourage girls and boys to express their views. They can value non-discrimination and participation.

**Child Participation
And Inclusion**

As 6-12 year olds girls and boys can express their views and actively learn about the world through exploration, questioning and access to information. They are able to play an active role in identifying, analysing and solving issues affecting them. Girls and boys can play a key role as active citizens in challenging and overcoming all forms of discrimination and abuse.

Adults can be active citizens. They can also encourage girls and boys of different ages and abilities to express their views and to participate in decisions affecting them. Adults can encourage children from the earliest age to learn in active ways, to question and to share their views and ideas. Partnerships can be developed between adults and children.

As 13-18 year olds, young people can be active social actors and citizens, improving their local and national communities. They can work to overcome all forms of discrimination, abuse and exploitation. They can support child-led initiatives that include younger children and support partnerships with adults.

⁵ Adapted from Karkara, R. (2003) Children's Participation and Oppression, Save the Children presentation in SC meeting on corporal punishment, Cairo February 2003.

Working with Children in the Wider Context

Working with children in the wider context of their families, schools and communities is important. Girls and boys do not exist in isolation. They are members of families, schools/ work places and communities. Since the biggest barrier to children's participation in society is the attitude of adults, influential adults in children's lives must be prepared to value and support children's expression and participation. Children's parents, teachers, relatives, religious and community elders need to be engaged in dialogue concerning participatory processes with girls and boys. All obstacles to children's participation need to be identified and overcome.

*"There is a mentality that adults always think they are right.
Children are not encouraged to express their own thoughts."*

(Girl, Kyrgyzstan)

Capacity building of adults, young people and children

Skilled and sensitive facilitators are required to bring about empowering processes with children and young people and sustainable partnerships with adults in different contexts. Capacity building for facilitators (adults or children) on the following topics is advantageous: child rights, children's participation, citizenship, facilitation skills, use of participatory tools, ethics, participatory action research, good governance, life skills and advocacy. Core capacity building modules should be integrated for all programme staff in organisations seeking to empower children and young people.

Capacity building on child rights and participation for parents, teachers, religious leaders, local and national government officials will be necessary to develop sustainable mechanisms for children's empowerment and partnerships with adults. Adults need to be prepared to make space for girls and boys and to work with children and young people in respectful ways.

*"Parents and community leaders should be given some orientation
on child rights. They should be actively involved to create an
environment in which girls are allowed more mobility."*

(Girls, Bangladesh)

Children and young people also benefit from capacity building opportunities. Training in child rights, life skills, theatre for development, participatory action

research, how to conduct surveys and so on has further empowered girls and boys with the skills, knowledge and values to address issues affecting them. Likewise, skill training for children has been provided in a variety of media initiatives, including children's production of their own newspapers (or wall newspapers), radio and TV programmes. Children's involvement in media has heightened the status of their voices in the private and public arena.

Access to child-friendly information

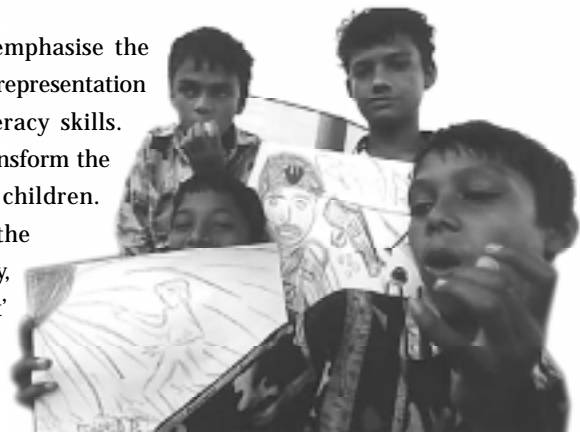
Access to information is a necessary ingredient for genuine participation. When girls and boys have access to child-friendly information on issues affecting them they are better able to make informed decisions. Significant efforts should be made to increase children's access to information on issues, policies, programmes and governance structures that impact on them.

Use of creative, participatory methodologies

Use of creative participatory tools and methods by facilitators has enhanced participatory processes with children and young people, enabling them to express themselves in creative and memorable ways. Participatory tools are useful in working with children of different ages and abilities. Younger children in particular have been found to communicate more through non-verbal or written media. Therefore, alternative forms of communication, such as play, activities, songs, drawing and stories should be utilised.

Participatory tools and creative methods used with and by children and young people include: puppets, role play, drama, theatre for development, visual PRA methods (e.g. mapping, time line, Venn diagram, diamond ranking etc), stories, visual picture cards and photos, movement ratings, mime, songs, dance, pictures, clay modelling, photos, video, rallies and circus performances.

Participatory tools and drama place emphasis on the power of visual impressions, and active representation of ideas. They do not depend on literacy skills. Furthermore, using such tools helps transform the power relations between adults and children. Children and young people can set the agenda and describe their own reality, rather than trying to give 'correct' or 'best'



answers. Children have expressed considerable interest in using participatory tools and drama to explore, analyse, plan and advocate on their issues. These tools can act as catalyst creating space for girls and boys to express their own views in an atmosphere of openness, honesty and trust.

Various myths about participatory methods exist, many of which have been challenged by Pretty et al.⁶ For example, while PRA is commonly criticised as a quick way of doing things, proper use of participatory approaches encourage dialogue, joint analysis and learning, processes which take time and may be complex. There is a danger of using PRA as a simple technique without recognising that important additional skills of communication, facilitation and conflict negotiation are needed. *'Participation does not simply imply the mechanical application of a 'technique' or method, but is instead part of a process of dialogue, action, analysis and change'*⁷ Attention to personal style and facilitation skills is essential. In particular, sensitive interviewing is crucial for the successful use of participatory research techniques. Facilitators (whether adults, young people or children) need to find ways of engaging with the child or young person to build a relationship where respect, openness and a genuine intent to listen is evident.

"The Theatre for Development (TfD) had tremendous impact. This gave us the confidence and courage to work with children on issues such as HIV and gave children the confidence to take up programmes concerning sensitive issues with adults. The TfD has also led to more joint programmes between the unions and the Child Clubs on issues affecting children."

(NGO adult, India)



⁶ Pretty et al. 1995, pp 68 – 70)

⁷ Ibid, p.54

Rights-based Theatre for Development with children, young people and adults⁸

Rights-based Theatre for Development with children, young people and adults together is always collectively creative and participatory. A TFD training workshop imparts two main kinds of skills:

Making and Performing Plays:

Skills in being able to work together, in being able to make wonderful plays together, performing them to large or small audiences, being able to spontaneously change them and make completely new plays together, even more wonderful.

Representation and Analysis:

Skills in being able to work out collectively the root causes of the widespread problems that affect children in a community, and especially children in very poor and marginalised communities. Then doing something about these problems.

PRA with Children in Sri Lanka⁹:

In 1995 Save the Children UK started to use participatory research methods to seek children's views of their lives and experiences to inform their programme developments. PRA tools proved effective in stimulating children's participation in the research and development process. For example, in one district, problem identification through PRA methods with children led to discussions about health practices and the problems caused by non-use of latrines. The children offered ideas on ways to promote the use of latrines, developed health messages to be conveyed through child-to-child methods, and used puppetry to raise awareness.

Children use Appreciative Inquiry to Improve their Slum Community, Nepal:

In late 1999 Save the Children UK and local partners in Nepal trained a group of 18 girls and boys aged 12-18 from four slum settlements of Pokhara Sub-metropolitan City in Appreciative Inquiry (AI) techniques. AI assumes that every living system has untapped, rich and inspiring accounts of the positive and seeks individual's dreams and positive stories as a powerful force for creating social change.

Through training in AI the children designed a study, prepared questionnaires and interviewed 166 children and 33 adults. Child respondents in particular were more comfortable to talk to child interviewers. The child inquirers confidence grew as they realised what they could do, and adults also recognised their capabilities. Due to the appreciative nature of the process, slum children and adults discovered hidden strengths for a better future for children. Most of the dreams related with good education, need for love and care by parents, and adults' recognition of children's potential.

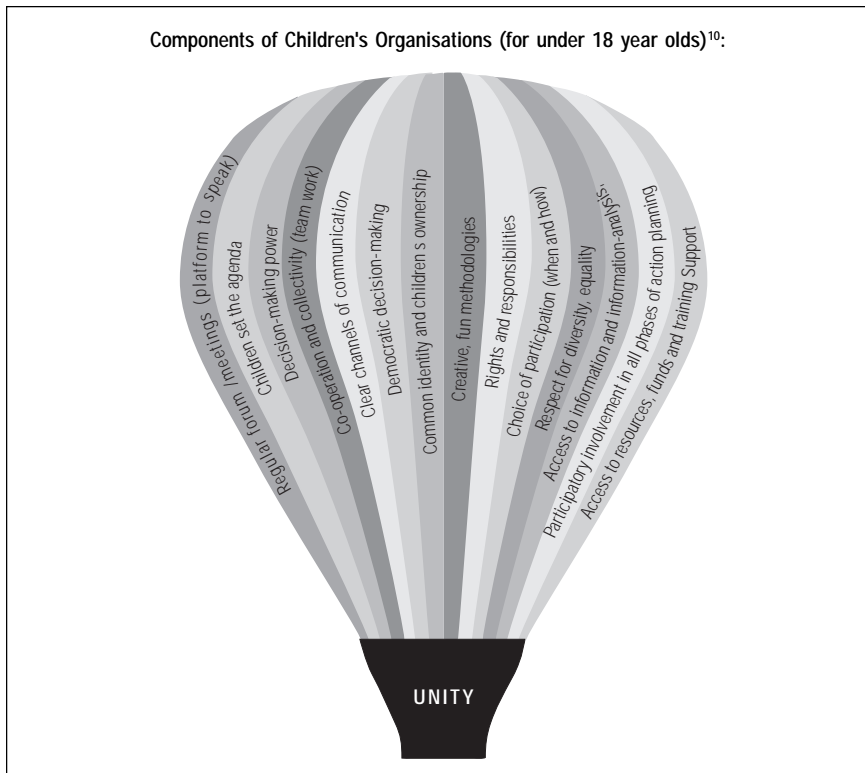
The children prepared a report on the study process and findings and presented it to the inquiry advisory committee, including: the District Development Committee Chairperson, Chief District Officer, and representatives from I/NGOs, UN agencies, and the police. Collectively the children and the advisory committee members were able to undertake concrete action based on the findings to improve their local communities.

⁸ Save the Children UK OSCAR (2001). *Using Theatre for Development in Advocacy for Child Rights*. CD-Rom on Theatre for Development Training Manual.

⁹ Case Study adapted from Priya Coomaraswamy (1998). *Exploring Child Participation: The Sri Lanka Experience*. Stepping Forward: Children and Young People's Participation in the Development Process. Johnson, V. et al. (Eds). Intermediate Technology Publications.

Supporting the Development of Children's Organisations

The development of children's organisations is an interesting phenomenon in South and Central Asia. Children's organisations give girls and boys the opportunity to come together to share their experiences, access information, and analyse issues and power relations that affect them. Facilitating and strengthening children's organisations and networks has been identified as an effective strategy to help children and young people become active citizens by providing them the experience of democracy. In diverse settings across the region a variety of children's organisations (e.g. Clubs, Unions, Committees, Councils, Groups, Parliaments) have developed enabling children to unite collectively to work for the realisation of their rights. In their varied organisational forms children and youth have highlighted a range of child rights issues and injustices, and have made their parents, local communities, media, local and national government officials and institutions take notice of their views and become responsive to injustices in very powerful and transformative ways.



¹⁰ Components of Children's Organisations extracted from poster developed by children and adults in Butterflies Programme of Street and Working Children, Delhi, India.

From their experience of organising children, the Concerned for Working Children (CWC)¹¹ have emphasised that adults' role:

"would be to enable children to occupy and use decision-making spaces effectively to change structures and programmes to those that improve the quality of their lives and that of their communities. To do this, the children need to gain strength through collective action, own and use information and be able to access and utilise human and material resources. We need to prepare ourselves for this new role. We need to provide children with the knowledge and skills to organise themselves, access information and resources and understand structures, be they political, socio-cultural or economic."¹²



Enabling Non-Discriminatory, Inclusive Processes

While supporting children and young people to organise themselves and to access information and resources, we must also address the disparities of power among children and young people due to age, gender, caste, disability, religion, language etc. Considering additional discrimination faced by certain groups, such as girls, children with disabilities, or younger children, we must continuously endeavour to ensure that the participative processes and opportunities are inclusive and accessible so smaller voices can be heard.

"In Asian countries boys have more of a voice. However, I dream that it will be equal ... Girls and boys are both equal in their wisdom. But due to stereotypes the voices of men and male children are taken more seriously by the nation." (Girl, Kyrgyzstan)

¹¹ An NGO working in Karnataka, India.

¹² Nandana Reddy and Kavita Ratna (2002). A Journey in Children's Participation. The Concerned for Working Children, India.

¹³ By CWC, India.

"I have a school mate who is very rich and her mother has taught her that she is the best. She asks me 'How are you so ugly? Why are you so poor? Why do you have such legs?'"

(Girl with disability, Kyrgyzstan)

Children should be encouraged to celebrate differences among them, to challenge discrimination and to work together co-operatively and democratically, in a manner that transforms and challenges much of their existing experiences of exploitative relations.

"We need more children to be involved in our organisations to have good attitudes and not to discriminate against people... We should treat everyone in a way that they are equal. We need to be active not passive."

(Girls and boys from varied backgrounds, Kyrgyzstan)

Creating access for children to meet adult decision-makers

Children and young people need support from adults to facilitate their access to influential decision-makers at different levels, particularly government officials at local, district, national and regional levels. Children have traditionally been excluded from interacting with such decision-makers. When access is created for them to meet with adult decision-makers children and young people will begin to have an influence in creative ways to ensure action on address issues of importance to them.

"We need a process to enable us to reach the Government. We don't know how to reach them. At a local level we can have some sort of access through the help of NGOs, but we don't have access to those at a higher level... We need help to get access to the higher people."

*(Boy, elected member of District level Shishu Parishad
(Children's Council), Bangladesh)*

Ensuring a focus on ethics

The power imbalance between adults and children requires an ongoing focus on the ethical issues that arise when working in participatory ways with children and young people. A range of ethical issues are discussed in detail in section 2.3.

Facilitators should reflect continuously with a spirit of courageous inquiry on the work being done in the name of children’s participation. We need to learn from our mistakes, as well as from our achievements. We must be committed to ethical practice and to ensuring that we minimise any risks to children.

Changing trends in children’s participation work over time

Noting changes in the work of Save the Children and its partners reveals how much has been learnt from earlier experiences with children’s participation. Change over time is significant, for example, in the case of children and young people’s increased role in local governance.

Significant Changes in Children’s Participation Over Time: Reflections by Save the Children members (Japan, Norway, UK, US) and partners in Nepal¹⁴:

- There used to be child participation ‘projects’. → Now children’s participation is integral to programme policy and is encouraged at every stage of the programme cycle.
- Children’s participation was not considered important. → Now families and community members recognise children’s work and participation.
- Children’s potential was undermined. → Now recognition of children’s potential is increasing.
- Getting adult support for children’s participation was difficult. → Now it is easier.
- Village Development Committees (VDCs) and District Child Welfare Boards (DCWBs) were not interested in involving children in decision-making. → Now their members are more interested in providing space for child representatives in such structures.
- The lower level of girl’s participation in leadership position has now improved.
- Children are now involved in staff recruitment, for example of Save the Children UK.
- Children are organised and enhancing their own networking.
- Child Clubs can now legally register with VDCs.
- Child Clubs now have their own ‘club house/hut’ and have established their own libraries.
- Children are taking a lead role on social issues like equal access to education, early marriage and anti-trafficking.
- Children are communicating their issues through different media like street drama, wall magazines and child journalism.
- Children are more focused on ensuring that their Clubs and participation initiatives are inclusive to children with disabilities, younger children, both girls and boys.
- Collaborative efforts by different agencies to further opportunities for children’s participation are now increased. This includes NGOs, Consortia, INGOs, Government and media.

Historical Emergence of Children’s Organisations

The Bal Mazdoor Union (Child Workers Union) in Delhi and Bhima Sangha (a union of working children) in Karnataka (South India) established in 1990 represent some of the earliest examples of children’s collective organising in South Asia. The historical

¹⁴ From a CCG workshop for Save the Children and its partners in Nepal, February 2002.

emergence of working children and adolescents (NATs¹⁵) as a category has been documented (see Ennew, 1995; Cussianovich, 1995) in other regions of the world. Cussianovich (1995) encourages us to recognise the historical significance of working children's collectives, not only due to their increasing numbers, but because

[child workers and adolescents] lead us to fundamental questions about the explosion of poverty in the international economic order and the scandalous inequalities between and within the countries; because they raise questions about the model of development and about social and political value assigned to different social actors; because they invite us to rethink the culture of work and its role for building identity and dignity; because they force us to reconsider the concept of age as element besides gender, ethnicity and class.¹⁶ (Cussianovich, 1995, p.32).

The formation of a Children's Parliament in Tilonia (Rajasthan, India) and the formation of Child Clubs also have a decade long history in some countries, such as Nepal. Child Clubs emerged from various initiatives focusing on child-to-child teaching methods, health education work and environmental protection work. The Tilonia Children's Parliament began as an experiment for children to learn about the local democratic political system.

In Central Asia the organisation in 1999 of the 'Children's Citizenship and Environment Conference' in Karakalpakstan played a key role in mobilising processes and initiatives to further children's participation by Save the Children and their partners in Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. (See box on pg. 19)

While organisations were made scapegoats in the early 1990s for unionising working children, a change in discourse has occurred regarding children's rights to association. A range of children's associations now exist across the region, and slowly but surely the benefits of working with children as partners and institutionalising children's participation in local governance structures are being realised.

Struggle for Legal recognition of Children's Organisations

The struggle for legal recognition of children's organisations in Nepal and India has been interesting, with a decision of Nepal's Supreme Court in 2001 setting a historical precedent both nationally and globally. (See box on pg. 20)

¹⁵ NATs refers to *niños adolescentes trabajadores* - Spanish for child and adolescent workers, the term being initiated in Latin America where one of the first movements of working children started.

¹⁶ Cussianovich, A. (1995). 'Working Children and Adolescents: Culture, Image and Theory', in NATs Working Children and Adolescents International Review, February 1995, p. 32.

Changing roles of adults as children's organisations mature

As children and young people become more experienced and organised in leading their own participation initiatives, the role of supportive adults changes. Adults need to respect children's own choices and decisions. The balance between the adult organisations and the children's organisations is a constantly dynamic and changing one. Adults need to be willing to enter dialogue with children to determine what adult role would enable the most effective partnership.



Children's Citizenship and Environment Conference, Karakalpakstan, Central Asia

The Children's Citizenship and Environment Conference focused on children's response to the Aral Sea crisis, and brought together children and young people from six Central Asian republics. The Conference had been preceded by a series of training workshops for children from Children and Young People's Groups and adults from the six republics on child friendly participatory tools. The basic principle of the training was to enhance children's ownership of the environment in which they live and to increase their role as active citizens in protecting and preserving their local environment.

During the training sessions the children had the opportunity to learn about a range of participatory tools for exploring environmental issues, including: The Balloon - Cards exercise, snow balling method, mime, role-play, mapping, and time lines. Through these methods, they discussed environmental and other issues including health, education, disability, gender, domestic violence, child labour, children in detention, children in institutions and child soldiers. The children also formed co-ordinating groups in each country to ensure their participation in preparing for the conference. Furthermore, a co-ordinating committee of children representing each country were involved in meetings to bring together children's suggestions in making final conference preparations with the supportive adults.

Children and young people's groups (CYGs) at local levels held a wide variety of in-country preparation processes, with the children being able to conduct training for other children and adults. The child-to-child method was very effective, promoting understanding among children. However, some communication problems emerged between children from different social groups (e.g. children from town and village, from large city and small town). Thus, increased focus on communication skills training and issues of inclusion was required.

The Conference itself involved a mix of creative group presentations on environmental issues, field visits, plenary discussions, and group work moderated by children themselves. The children's active involvement in the conference preparations and local community level preparations, inspired and motivated them children to take forward their action ideas at various local, national and regional levels following the Conference. This furthered their role as active citizens. Adult NGOs and Save the Children also committed to supporting the further development of children's citizenship initiatives.

"The problems being discussed at the Conference touched upon not only my future but also the children's future of our region, "
(Boy, Kyrgyzstan)

Legal Recognition for Children's Organisations: Supreme Court Decisions

In August 2001 the Supreme Court of Nepal made a significant decision to grant Child Clubs the right to register their organisations, on the basis of Article 15, Right to Association of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The Jagriti Child Club of Nepal submitted a writ to the Supreme Court on 2055/10/4 (1998) demanding the registration of their organisation as per Article 15. This was the first such litigation in Nepal, although in 1993 a similar petition had been considered by India's Supreme Court on behalf of the Bal Mazdoor Union (Child Workers Union).

The Jagriti Child Club had initially submitted its request to register with the District Administration Office of Nawalparasi on 054/07/04 (1997). The Chief District Officer declined to register the Club on the ground that the members were under 18 years of age and therefore were legally not citizens. With the assistance of Child Workers in Nepal (CWIN), a local NGO, the Club Chairperson then filed a case on 054/10/04 (1997) against the Home Ministry, District Administration Office and the Chief District Officer on the grounds of Article 15.

After repeated hearings, the Court granted a positive verdict on 2058/5/25 (August 2001). Nepal's Treaty Act 2047 (1990), Clause 91, provides that any international treaty entered by Nepal must be applied as the law of the land. If any provision of the treaty contradicts existing law, the provisions of the treaty will prevail. Nepal had ratified the UN CRC on 14 September 1990, so the children were legally granted the right to establish their own organisation on the basis of CRC Article 15. The judgment passed disqualified the earlier decision of the District Administrative Office and the Home Ministry.

In India, the Bal Mazdoor Union had applied to the Registrar of Trade Unions for registration as a union. Its application was rejected on the grounds that Section 21 of the Trade Union Act of 1925 prohibited any person under 15 from either forming a union or becoming a member of one. Although the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act 1986 had recognised children engaged in various occupations as 'workers' and had recognised the basic right of any 'workers' to form a union for their own protection against exploitation, the Registrar was not persuaded to register the Union. Thus the Union filed a Writ petition in the Delhi High Court stating that Section 21 be struck down on the grounds of it being ultra vires to the Constitution. The petition was not accepted and was dismissed at the admission stage itself.

The Union then moved the Supreme Court via a Special Leave Petition, and on 15 November 1993, the Supreme Court admitted the petition on the strength of CRC Article 15, which recognises the right of children '*to freedom of association and to freedom of peaceful assembly*'. While the admission of the petition was itself significant, increasing national and international recognition of children's right to associate under Article 15, a positive ruling was not achieved.

The Rights and Responsibilities of Children and Adults

Extract from CWC’s Journey in Children’s Participation¹⁷ :

Concerned for Working Children have explored issues regarding the changing nature of adult-child relationships, roles and responsibilities in a recent publication which shares conceptual insights gained through their journey in children’s participation.

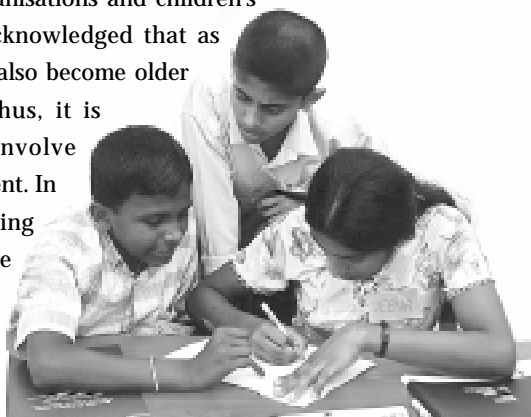
‘Children’s participation does not mean the abdication of adult responsibility. When children’s participation is low or nil, adult responsibility is also low or nil. There is no accountability by adults or children. However, as children’s participation increases, adult responsibility also increases in twice that proportion. It is a partnership that adults have to enter into with children, it involves adults sharing power with children, it means listening to and understanding really what children are saying and acting on the basis of a consensus. We need to prepare ourselves for this new role and we also need to provide children with the knowledge and skills to organise themselves, to access information and resources and to understand structures, be they political, socio-cultural or economic.

It is also important for adults to protect their arenas of participation, so that we do not usurp children’s spaces or manipulate them.

The rights and responsibilities of adults and children are not always equally balanced. At no point in one’s life are rights and responsibilities equal. Adding a right does not necessarily mean adding on a corresponding responsibility. A baby has all her rights, but practically no responsibilities. Similarly, senior citizens or mentally challenged individuals. Rights and responsibilities are determined by age and ability of the individual.’ (p.28)

Children growing older and ‘graduation’ strategies

When talking of children’s organisations and children’s movements it also must be acknowledged that as children gain experience, they also become older and move into adulthood. Thus, it is important to continuously involve younger children in the movement. In addition, pro-actively developing ‘graduation’ strategies to provide further opportunities for the ‘graduated’ young women and men to use their experience and expertise in ongoing social



¹⁷ See Report by Nandana Reddy and Kavita Ratna (2002). A Journey in Children’s Participation. Concerned for Working Children, India.

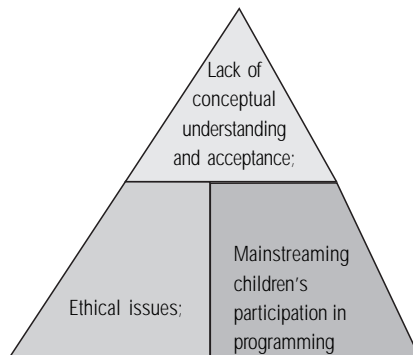
development work (e.g. in problem-solving, negotiating), to continue supporting the children's initiatives has been beneficial.

2.3 Responding to Key Challenges and Ethical Issues

Building upon and learning from the richness of experiences in children's participation, Save the Children and many of their key NGO partners are becoming increasingly concerned to ensure a focus on the quality of children's participation, including quality interfaces and partnerships between adults and children.

Hart's (1992) 'Ladder of Participation' suggests that levels of children's participation differ (see Booklet 1 Appendix 3)¹⁸. Moreover, the quality of participation at each level may be more or less meaningful depending on the socio-cultural political context, the quality of facilitation, attention to issues of inclusion and democracy, and the degree of information shared to enable children and young people to make informed decisions. Children, young people and adults within the region have raised concerns about the quality of child participation and the priority need to engage children, young people and concerned adults in developing and applying quality standards for participation in different contexts.

This section includes discussion on three key areas:



¹⁸ Use of the ladder metaphor is debated. One reason is that the quality of participation may often be better at some of the lower levels rather than the higher levels. The linear nature of the ladder can thus make it a controversial tool for assessing the quality of meaningful participation processes.

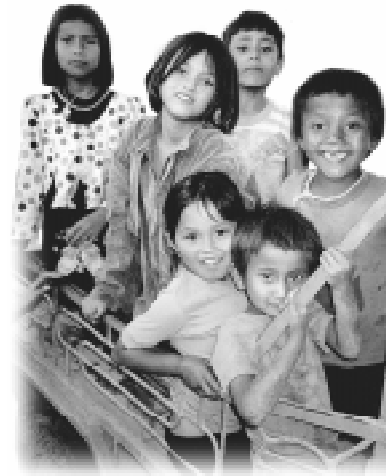
Issues raised under each of these headings are inter-related, while the headings provide a functional framework to present critical issues and suggestions to further quality practice.

Conceptual Understanding and Acceptance

Generally parents, teachers, community leaders, NGO workers, media, local or national government officials have little awareness of the concept of children’s participation. There is some concern that children’s participation is being ‘imposed’ by outsiders, or that it presents a challenge to existing values in the local culture. The environment can be hostile towards children’s efforts to speak up on issues affecting them. Adults may lack the capacity to facilitate effective participation processes. Children and young people’s views and suggestions may not be taken seriously. When children are encouraged to express themselves, they may get no response, or adverse reactions from adults.

An empowerment or rights-based ideology can also be challenging to organisations that have focused primarily on service-delivery or charity models in their work with marginalised children and communities. Also, in settings characterised by a broader context of human rights violation, where the status of women or marginalised communities is low and their participation lacking, the issue of whether children’s rights to participate can be spoken of in such settings is often raised.

However, as organisations gain understanding of the benefits of a rights-based approach, a willingness and commitment to change from a welfare-oriented to a rights-based approach often develops. Organisational barriers and resistance can be overcome. In the process adult organisations must gain conceptual clarity, understanding and acceptance of the child participation concept¹⁹. Internally, an organisation must be willing to work on democratic principles, to empower its own workforce and involve them in organisational decision-making. If adults are not empowered to participate in an organisation’s decision-making processes, or to challenge discrimination, they will have a difficult time working with children in empowering, non-discriminatory ways.



¹⁹ Full acceptance may develop over time through a learning process in which adults and children work together, with adults coming to recognise children’s immense potential and to share power.

To ensure quality children's participation organisations need to ensure that all of their programme staff and their partners have internalised the basic principles of children's participation and have the capacity to facilitate children's participation. Conceptual and skill training on children's participation (ideally within a broader child rights programming framework) with NGOs partners and other adult duty bearers (including parents, teachers and government officials) is needed.

"Parents and community leaders should be given some orientation on child rights. They should be actively involved to create an environment where-by girls are allowed more mobility."

(Girls, Bangladesh)

Ethical Issues

Although the past decade has witnessed 'a quiet revolution' in the way children are viewed (Van Bueren, 1996), clear disparities persist in the power and status of adults and children in almost all socio-cultural contexts, particularly for marginalised girls and boys. It is therefore essential to recognise and deal with the ethical dilemmas that arise in practice so children's participation can become genuine and sensitive.

Particular concerns arising in relation to adult's power and children's participation include the following: Are we over-burdening children? Are we raising their expectations? Are we being flexible and responsive to children's own agendas? Is it appropriate to give incentives or payment for children's involvement? (See Appendix 6 for a summary of arguments for and against 'Payments for Children's Participation'). Issues arise about consent and the use of information produced by children and young people. There are also concerns about inclusion, non-discrimination and fair representation. Adults' power may be enhanced by gender and other differentials. Thus, broader issues relating to children's evolving capacity and strategies for adults to ensure that children feel at ease and confident to express what matters to them must be addressed.



Over-burdening children

The lives of South and Central Asian girls and boys reflect large differences in local culture, geography, religion, gender, age and dis/ability. Marginalised children must often shoulder responsibilities in caring for family members (siblings, elderly grandparents and parents), undertaking household and/or agricultural duties, and/or earning an income to contribute for the family's livelihood. Many marginalised children in the region juggle school and work. Furthermore, children living separately from their families (e.g. street children, domestic workers or children separated due to conflict) have even greater responsibilities for looking after their own emotional, practical and economic needs.

Where children's lives are already characterised by attempts to balance study and work, therefore, adults often question whether we are further burdening them by encouraging participation in additional processes or events? Are we over-burdening children with responsibilities? Through engaging children in participation processes are we causing them to mature too quickly, to lose their innocence? Are we stealing their childhoods?

Gained or Lost Childhoods through their Participation? Children's Views

In May 2001 a regional Changemakers Event took place in Kathmandu, Nepal bringing together child representatives from across South Asia with Corporate Leaders and Government Ministers to explore issues concerning children and investments for children. During a workshop organised by the child representatives (the 'Changemakers') for the corporate leaders, one man raised the concern that the children were giving up their childhoods to participate in meetings to prepare and follow up to such a regional event. The responses of the young change makers were poignant:

"Today, we children are working at a young age. Children who work often don't get the opportunity to play and study. All over South Asia these children should be studying and getting the attention of their parents, but they are working. Many children like us work. Through participating in our organisations and activities like these we can gain your help and support."

(Amin, a 16 year old boy, works as a rag picker and has lived on the streets in India)

"Other children like ourselves are involved in these activities while we go to school and play with friends. We are working for children's rights, especially for those who are deprived. We gain much more pleasure than if we were playing. I really enjoy being involved in these activities."

(Ishara, a 15 year old girl, member of a Child Club from Sri Lanka)

The Changemakers felt that children can enjoy their childhoods in different ways and may need to balance education, work and play with other participation opportunities. The important thing was for children to have a choice to make decisions according to what was best for them.

Additional issues relating to children's use of time and their participation include the following: Should we request children and young people to work on a participation initiative if they will thereby miss school? If children are working to earn a living and miss work due to involvement in participation initiatives should they be compensated for their loss of earnings?

Are payments or incentives ever appropriate?

Broader ethical questions regarding payment and incentives for children's involvement in different kinds of participation initiatives are often raised. Is it ever appropriate to pay children for their participation or to provide non-monetary payments? Is the provision of incentives ever an appropriate strategy to encourage children's participation? (For more on this, see Appendix 6).

Payments for Children's Participation

Many ethical concerns are raised about providing payments to girls and boys for their participation. However, increasing numbers of children and young people are being invited to take on the roles of facilitators and resource persons in a variety of contexts. Ethical choices must therefore be made with all relevant factors taken into consideration.

Arguments for payment:

- In situations where adults would be paid for the equivalent work or involvement that is requested of children and young people, then arguably the young people's time and effort should be equally valued with equal payment.
- Payments show that children's time and role is valued and that their input will be taken seriously.
- Payments can enable marginalised children to continue their studies and/or to support themselves and/or their families.

Arguments against payment:

- Payments can be seen as manipulation, pressuring children and young people to participate on adult's terms rather than their own.
- Children may participate in something primarily for the payment, rather than out of genuine interest.
- Payments can create a sense of dependency and may set precedents that cannot be sustained in the future.
- Payments can lead to discontent among the wider group of children who were not given the opportunity to participate in a paid capacity.

Generally, many colleagues in the region felt that payments or provision of material incentives should be avoided. Rather, children and young people should choose to participate in processes that are meaningful to them, and their contributions should be valued and respected by all. All efforts should be made to ensure that participatory processes are enjoyable, safe and productive.

Raised expectations and lack of follow up

While encouraging children and young people to express their views, likes and dislikes and ideas for change, how can we ensure that we are not raising false expectations? Are girls and boys aware of the likely outcomes of their participation? Do we have a longer-term vision (and financial and institutional backing) to ensure follow-up support to children and young people on issues they raise? What will we do if children identify a need that does not match organisational strategy or priorities? What will we do if children and young people raise issues to concerned adult authorities and there is no appropriate response? Given that adult duty bearers at most levels are unaware and insensitive to children's rights, how can we empower children and young people without raising unrealistic expectations?

Unfortunately many, many examples could be given of girls, boys and young people sharing excellent ideas for change at local, national, regional and global meetings which are subsequently forgotten or ignored by agencies (including Save the Children).

Minimising Risk

We as adults are aware that when we support marginalised children to come together to plan action and advocacy efforts to address issues affecting them, the children may be placing themselves in situations of risk. For example, the children may be challenging the behaviour or inaction of more powerful groups, and may thereby risk placing themselves in situations of conflict. When leaving their homes to participate in external programmes or events, security and child protection issues require careful consideration for both girls and boys. Furthermore, when children or young people are representing their peers outside of their local communities, particularly in foreign lands, we must take care that they will be able to re-adjust to their situation on their return.



"Our parents don't trust us. They ask 'what are you going to do in your meetings? Maybe they are traffickers?' There is a valid reason for parents to be suspicious as children are trafficked. There should be some meetings with parents so they know what these meetings are about."

*(Girls and boys who were part of
Special Session meetings, Bangladesh)*

Dealing with sensitive issues: Building upon children's positive suggestions

A facilitator from a local NGO in Kabul, Afghanistan explained that while using the Children's Consultation Kit²⁰ she asked one boy about the kind of life he would like. He responded that his father had been killed beside his house, and he hoped to find a gun to kill the person who killed his father. The boy wanted revenge. The facilitator didn't know how best to respond to the boy. Other colleagues from Kabul working on the Save the Children US 'Children and Crisis' research explained that during the research²¹ they encouraged children to share their ideas about how they could positively deal with their fears and negative reactions. They suggested that the facilitator could look into children's existing coping mechanisms and the people in their lives who can help them. The Save the Children US team is seeking children's ideas to develop positive solutions and programmes to help their peers.

Minimising Risk

Save the Children UK's Child Protection Policy (CPP) (For summary text, see Appendix 5) is one endeavour to maximise children's protection. Monitoring mechanisms within all child-focused NGOs need to be established to ensure that organisation staff members are not putting girls or boys in any situations of risk or vulnerability to abuse or exploitation.

- The SCUUK 'Child Protection Policy' and practical application of 'child protection policy' should be shared with all Save the Children, partners and children's groups.
- Children and young people should be facilitated to explore child protection and risk issues and to develop safeguards to minimise risk.
- Adult and child facilitators should be trained in basic counselling skills and have knowledge of specialised counsellors to whom children who have been abused can be referred to.
- Girls and boys should be approached with a focus on their competency and strength, building upon their resilience.

Adults must also be prepared for the possibility that during participatory processes children may disclose issues of current abuse and risk situations that they are facing. While facilitating children's participation adults have a responsibility to respond sensitively to child protection and other critical issues that children and young people may raise (e.g. sexuality, aggression). At the same time they must minimise situations of risk that children and young people place themselves in through their protagonist efforts.

Children's Consent and Use of Information by Children and Young People

When participation projects are adult-initiated, have the adults provided clear information to children and young people regarding the intended objectives and scope? Are children given adequate information in reader-friendly formats (for

²⁰ The Children's Consultation Kit was developed by Save the Children and their partners in Pakistan and Afghanistan to gain children's views to feed into the UN Special Session on Children processes.

²¹ The Children and Crisis research is being undertaken by Save the Children US in Afghanistan to gain increased understanding of how children react to and cope with crisis. The findings will be used to develop more effective programmes with children who have been affected by crisis.

different abilities) so they can make informed choices about whether and to what degree they want to participate? Are children and young people given clear information regarding issues of anonymity and confidentiality? If children participate in developing or being part of any kind of resource development (e.g. book, video, drawings) is their agreement secured for use of that material by adults in whatever way? Are children and young people given periodic opportunities to opt out of participation initiatives?

Sharing Power: Informing Children and Enabling Choice in Participation

- Be responsive to children and young people's own ideas, initiatives and agenda and/or seek children's involvement from the earliest opportunity.
- At all stages enable sharing of clear reader and child-friendly information so that children, young people and adults can make informed choices about the reason for and the extent of their participation. Inform children of issues relating to anonymity and confidentiality.
- When publishing or printing any materials that may cause harm, ensure that children and young people are anonymous. This may involve more than just changing names, and requires sensitivity about identifying even the children's villages or the workshops or conferences they participated in.
- Enable children and adults to have a clear vision about why they are participating and secure the necessary support and resources from adults for the sustainable development of their initiatives.
- Ensure that children and young people's expectations about what is achievable are realistic. Help them develop prioritisation and planning skills to ensure realistic action planning, to identify obstacles they may face, and to plan strategies to overcome these obstacles.
- Encourage children and adults to discuss ethical issues, making efforts to address them (including agreement on minimum quality standards) from the outset.
- Guarantee that adult organisations are committed to support follow up activities, by children and adults, to any events that they plan with children and young people.
- Allow girls and boys to determine which times of the day and week most suit them for their participatory initiatives. Help children explore how to reduce the potential of 'over-burdening'.
- Minimise situations where children's participatory initiatives interfere with their study. Hold workshops, trainings and programmes on non-school days whenever possible. Situations inevitably arise when children have meaningful opportunities to participate in meetings during school times. In such a case make sure that children make their own choices, gain permission in advance from their parents and teachers, and ensure support for catching up on classes missed.
- Institutionalise a culture of children's participation in the adult organisations that will further the likelihood of responsiveness to the children's agenda.
- Develop advocacy strategies to convince donors to obtain the necessary budgets for long-term support to children's participatory processes and partnerships with adults.
- Create an enabling environment where girls and boys feel safe and confident in expressing their views through their own preferred medium of expression.
- Provide capacity building of adults on creative, participatory methodologies to enhance children's expression and communication.

Non-discrimination and inclusion

Many children, young people and adults raise non-discrimination and inclusion as critical issues for participation processes and events. Non-discrimination is a crucial principle in Child Rights Programming. CRP should actively address issues of discrimination and ensure a focus on the most marginalised.

Children's organisations and broader participatory processes enable children to play a significant and pro-active role in addressing discrimination. Furthermore, the status of girls (as equal to boys), of children with disabilities, working children and other marginalised groups (e.g. tribal children, street children, refugees) is rising due to their active participation and organisation.

Broad questions remain however about which children are actually included or active in children's groups and other participation initiatives? Are we inclusive? Do we really work with the most marginalised or excluded? For example, do all the children's groups include working children, school dropouts, children with disabilities, younger children, and children from lower castes, ethnic or tribal groups? Are the children involved being encouraged to reflect on who is included and excluded, who is vocal or shy, to analyse and understand why, and to be inclusive of all children?



In our participatory work with children how can we ensure that we are challenging, and not simply reinforcing, existing patterns of discrimination? Reviews of some participation initiatives have revealed that the most vocal, articulate or photogenic children tend to have more opportunities to participate or to represent their peers. Should this be the case? What efforts can be made so that the least visible and vocal children express themselves, and represent themselves to others?

Children and young people in the region discussed different strategies for increasing their organisations' membership and making them more inclusive. Adults should also support these efforts. For example, vocal children should play a larger role in encouraging less vocal members to become more active. Children have also discussed the need for all children to internalise beliefs in non-discrimination and to pro-actively make friendships with excluded children, encouraging them to join in their collective gatherings. Younger children have highlighted how their voices are marginalised and have expressed their interest in having more opportunities to participate in meetings, trainings and activities in order to gain more confidence to play a more active role. Children have further identified the need for clear dissemination strategies to be developed and implemented. Child representatives who have participated in trainings or external meetings should make sure that the information is effectively shared with all their members.

Children's commitment to non-discrimination and inclusion: examples

In 1995 children from the Child Club in Nepal's Jhapa district came up with an election procedure and guidelines to encourage representation from dalit children, girls and children with disabilities. Despite their initial efforts no dalit children were elected. They therefore held another election, which resulted in the election of a girl and a boy from the dalit community.

In 2002 a team of child reviewers in India were reviewing the processes of child participation and child organisation in clubs and sanghas²². Their recommendations for improvement included:

- Increased efforts to include children with disabilities
- Increased efforts to include child workers
- More efforts to breakdown caste discrimination, especially amongst adults.

In Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Bangladesh the active participation of girls has been an issue for some children's groups historically and at present. In other settings, such as Kyrgyzstan and Ladakh, more focus is now needed on enabling the active involvement of boys.

²² 'Sangha' is a union.

“There are girls and boys who are members of the CCVDs, but the girls do more work... For example in our last meeting 15 girls and 7 boys attended the meeting.... The boys have less interest. They prefer to play cricket, football or volleyball.”

(Girl, CCVD members, India)

Increased attention to younger children’s participation (6-13 year olds) will improve the sustainability of children’s groups. As older members leave for work, army, marriage, or as they turn 18, the active functioning of the group will not be threatened.

“Our views are not really heard.... We need bigger tongues... we should build our confidence... we should say whatever comes to us... and we also we should be given training.”

(Views of younger children (6-10 years olds), CCVDs, India)

In addition children have been keen to increase the involvement of children with disabilities, non-school going children and children affected by HIV in their organisations. Some organisations of working children’s are also considering the inclusion of non-working children to address common issues that affect them.

Fair Representation

“When we are invited to send a child representative to any workshop or event we should be able to elect the child who is most affected by that issue. The environment should make that child feel safe and comfortable to speak and share his or her experiences and views, even if he or she has never participated in such a meeting before.”

(Boy, member of Child Brigade, Bangladesh)

Children and adults have also raised concerns regarding issues of representation. In many contexts there have been questions about the repeated participation of the ‘same’ children in consultations, events or processes at different levels (local,

national, regional, international). How can mechanisms be developed to ensure fair and meaningful election processes among children and young people? We must avoid certain children and young people becoming a 'new elite', over-exposed and no longer representative of their peers. In addition we must beware of a lack of democracy resulting in certain children or young people being given opportunities for wider exposure.

Concerns regarding the children's representation in the Special Session Process in Bangladesh

During a review of in-country processes relating to children's participation in the Special Session process some of Save the Children's key facilitators felt that their ethical concerns had been compromised in a situation where the time-frame was limited. Due to time limitations they decided to work with a core group of children from Save the Children Alliance's NGO partners, rather than reach out to children who were not engaged with NGO programmes. The very identification of the Alliance core children as a starting point raised concerns about creating a sub-set of 'same faces' from the NGO children. There were further ethical questions regarding the possible creation of 'false democracy' among the children.

In addition, the different NGOs had varying levels of understanding and practice of children's participation. The Alliance facilitators tried their best to enable and ensure quality and active participation from all children by applying creative methodologies. Over time their collective efforts resulted in all the children in the core group (including girls, boys, working children, children with disabilities) becoming vocal. A genuine sense of 'collective ownership' was created along with an awareness of the global aspect of the exercise and how the children's own issues were relevant to the Special Session.

While children and young people in the core group were therefore confident and empowered to play a positive role in mobilising their peers, concerns remained significant about their effectiveness in sharing information and involving other children and young people in the Special Session process. There were also concerns regarding the varied levels of support and encouragement (often limited) the NGO partners gave to the core children.

In reviewing the process the Alliance recognised the need for a common understanding of participation, with agreement on common principles and minimum standards. Issues of representation need to be explored and the risks associated with children's participation in different settings assessed. There must be an inclusive approach. Furthermore, greater involvement of NGO management in the planning process would provide child representatives with greater support and encouragement to mobilise, inform and engage more children, parents and community members in the development process.

Broader concerns of representation, inclusion and democracy are raised when reflecting on the structure of children's organisations, capacity building strategies with children and young people, and election processes. What organisational structures and processes are most conducive to democratic, fair and inclusive

developments by children and young people? Are we helping children develop organisational structures that further democratic processes, or are we introducing organisational structures from the adult world, structures that are often hierarchical? In providing leadership training what values are we trying to promote? If we believe in democracy and inclusion shouldn't we focus on communication and assertiveness training for all children, and perhaps on inclusive facilitation for some children, rather than on leadership skills? In democratic initiatives how many leaders are beneficial to the cause?

Enabling Inclusion, Non-Discrimination and Fair Representation

- Encourage adults and children to reflect upon and analyse which children and young people are part of participatory initiatives and which are most active? Are any groups of children excluded or marginalised? If so, why? How can they be more effectively included?
- Engage with key influential adults, including parents, teachers, religious leaders, and employers to gain support for the participation of the most marginalised children: girls, children with disabilities, domestic child workers, girls or boys affected by HIV, displaced children.
- Provide children and adults with tools to enhance their values, knowledge and skills for inclusion and non-discrimination in their processes and organisational structures.
- Mainstream gender, disability and non-discrimination analysis, awareness and action tools in all areas of programming.
- Enable and support children and young people to develop fair, election processes that promote the maximum numbers of girls and boys gaining opportunities for representation on issues affecting them and their peers.
- Focus on capacity building for communication, negotiation, assertiveness and inclusive facilitation for all children, rather than on leadership training for a few.
- Create increased opportunities for the most marginalised girls and boys to participate, to recognise their strengths, develop their confidence and skills so that they may provide positive roles to others.
- Support advocacy initiatives at local, national and regional levels that challenge discrimination and promote the creation of non-discriminatory laws and policies.

“In Afghan culture children generally don't have the chance to express their opinions. Therefore, obtaining a community's acceptance and support for the idea of children's participation requires a step-by-step approach. Often it is easier to start by getting children involved in some kind of practical project, like craft groups in the IDP camps. Once the children or youth have come together you can then enable them to discuss their issues and work together to find solutions - they can be involved in decision-making processes. However, girls' involvement faces additional barriers. Girls' participation in activities

outside of their homes goes against Afghan culture. Many discussions with parents, elders and community leaders about the purpose of the craft groups and the likely outcomes were required before they were started. This enabled the girls' participation." (Save the Children worker, Afghanistan)

"To overcome discrimination we children can build our future. We should develop programmes for adults and children to change attitudes and enable children to realise themselves. We should also explore the role of the State. The State should provide equal opportunities for all children."

(Girls and boys, Kyrgyzstan)

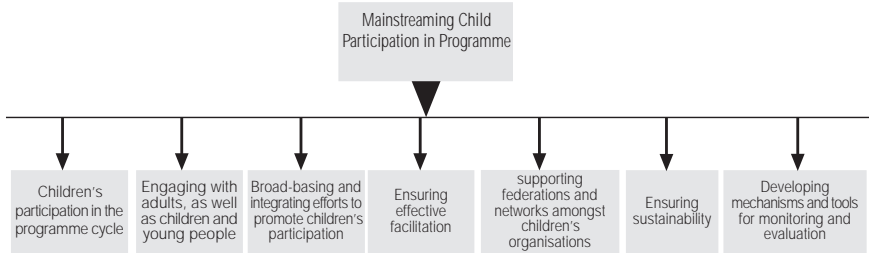
Experiential games to explore power and exclusion

Experiential games can be powerful tools to use with children and adults to help them experience patterns of exclusion or marginalisation, and to encourage reflection and action for positive change based on their learning. A range of games explores discrimination, exclusion and power. The 'bindi game', status games, power analysis and the diversity line game are all shared in 'A Resource Guide for Children, Citizenship and Governance', produced by Save the Children South and Central Asia²³.



²³ A Resource Guide for Children, Citizenship and Governance by Save the Children South and Central Asia is available from SC OSCAR, Kuponole, Nepal.

2.4 Mainstreaming Child Participation in Programming



Systematic efforts are needed to guarantee that children's participation becomes cross-cutting and is mainstreamed in all stages and areas of programming. Promotion of children's right to participate, their rights to expression, information, association, should be a goal in all sectoral work. Children's rights are clearly indivisible. Thus stronger linkages between sectoral work is required to enhance fulfilment of children's rights.

Children's participation in the programme cycle

Children's participation in all stages of the programme cycle promotes programme developments based on girls' and boys' best interests in particular contexts. In planning programmes and policies for children the diversity among children's life experiences must be recognised. Responding to girls and boys within their local community contexts is crucial.

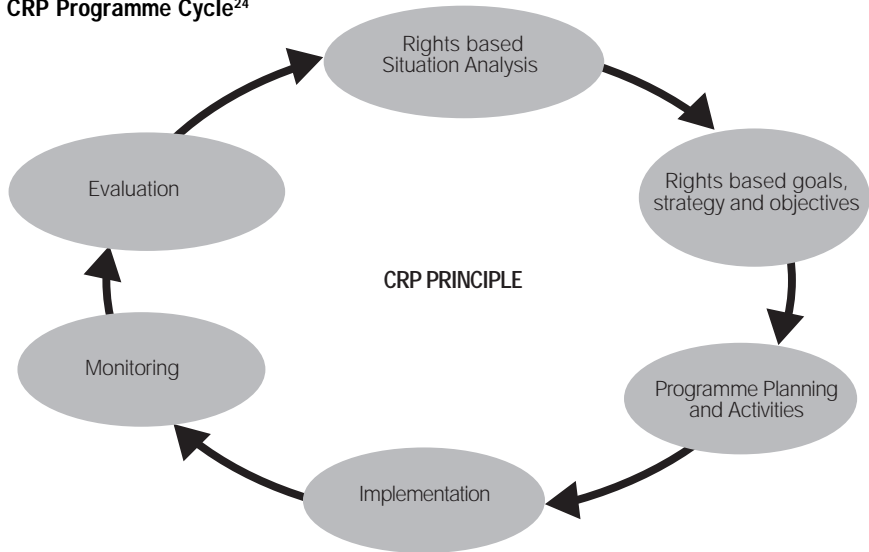
"It is one thing to seek children's views before developing a policy or programme, but the issue of whether the children's views are properly incorporated is important. Children should be involved to monitor if things are going right."

(Boy, member of Child Brigade, Bangladesh)



The past decade has seen increasing efforts both to consult children and young people in developing programmes and policies that affect them and to identify their views, experiences and ideas through participatory research. However, sustained efforts to involve children and young people in inclusive ways in all stages of programming remain limited and largely experimental. Nevertheless, within organisations like Save the Children and many of their NGO partners increasing efforts are being made to involve children and young people in all stages of the programme cycle.

CRP Programme Cycle²⁴



The programme cycle or spiral (which involves learning and change at every stage) is generally used as a systematic way for development workers to do the following:

- think about what they are trying to achieve before they start,
- develop the most effective plan of action to reach their goals,
- ensure that effectiveness is monitored, and
- take action to address any problems that may arise along the way.

For children and young people to be involved in all stages of programming, a mechanism is needed to give them a voice in assessment, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Few programmes currently engage children in all aspects of the programme cycle. More attention has been given to involving children in initial

²⁴ CRP Tools for Programmer, Draft Tool Kit Save the Children, South and Central Asia, (2003).

assessments and less of involving them in design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Programme tools to enhance the participation of girls and boys during all programme stages should be developed and applied in all sectors (e.g. education, child labour, social protection, HIV etc.)

Engaging with adults, as well as children and young people

Experience from across the region highlights the importance of building meaningful partnerships between adults and children to increase children and young people's participation in decision-making processes that affect them, and to give them greater influence over decisions. Thus, while children need to be empowered, adults must also be engaged in the process, so they can come to recognise children and young people as key partners in decision-making processes.

Broad-basing and integrating efforts to promote children's participation

Broad-basing and integrating efforts to promote genuine children's participation requires the creation of more effective and skilled child and adult facilitators. It also depends upon the further development of participatory tools and child friendly information, and support for networking among existing and developing children's groups and organisations. Moreover, when supporting the development of children's organisations, an integral focus on life skills, including a focus on communication, assertion, negotiation, cooperation and conflict-resolution strategies enhances quality developments.

Ensuring effective facilitation

Visits to some children's committees and clubs in the region reveals that creating space for children to come together may not in itself be sufficient to empower them to address their issues. At least initially good facilitation (by other empowered children, young people or by adults) is significant to enable children to recognise their individual and collective potential, and to identify, analyse and act upon issues affecting them in strategic ways.

In addition to effective facilitation to enhance participation and help strengthen their organisations, children have also requested increased training for themselves in a variety of areas: child rights



(CRC); communication and negotiation; understanding the local governance system (e.g. Panchayati Raj system, District decision-making structures, roles and responsibilities); organisational development; drama and Theatre for Development; production of wallpapers or newspapers; video film production; and drawing.

Wherever possible, training programmes for children should be organised during school holidays so more children can participate. Holding training workshops in children's own villages, rather than in a central location, also enable more children to participate. In situations where few children are given an opportunity to participate in more centralised training opportunities, clear dissemination strategies should be agreed upon by children at the local level.

**Empowering children to address issues affecting them:
good facilitation is needed, space may not be enough**

Children involved in child labour were supported by a local NGO to come together in Child Clubs in Northern India. In urban settings girls and boys met once a week and spent time playing together. While the local organisation succeeded in organising children for fun and games, they found it harder to facilitate a process for children to discuss and address issues affecting them. During a meeting²⁵ with girl and boy members of these Clubs the children expressed great interest in transforming their 'Khel (play) Clubs' into Clubs that would help them take concerted action on their rights. The girls and boys had excellent ideas about the action they could take to address issues affecting them, such as early marriage, choice in opportunities for study and work, prevention of child labour in the glass industry. They said: *"First we need unity among children. We can make an organisation to help us make something of our lives... We can stop children working in factories."*

Similarly, in Pakistan a local NGO supported children affected by labour in the carpet industry to form their own Children's Committees. Boys in one village had been meeting together for over a year. The boys collected savings, organised visits to new areas and played games, but did not discuss issues affecting children in their village during their meetings. However, when the boys were asked²⁶ for suggestions to improve their village, they had several. These included having more plantations, sending more children to schools and having more skill training for adults. They then made several concrete suggestions for working together to solve the problem of there being no teacher for the girls school. These were: motivating their own parents to send their daughters to school, *'to be able to read and write, rather than just carrying water on their heads'*; meeting with the village head to get his support to talk to the local magistrate; gaining support of teachers from the boys' school; and requesting the local organisation to talk to the education department on their behalf since they felt, *'The public representative will not talk to us because we are children.'*

Children need to be encouraged to feel they can make a difference, and they need to be empowered to actually make a difference. At least at the initial stages effective facilitation can play a crucial role in empowering children to be active citizens.

²⁵ A meeting of the CCG project co-ordinator with the Child Club members and local NGO staff.

²⁶ During a meeting with the CCG project co-ordinator

Capacity building of adults and efforts to increase the structural space for children's participation are also required. Opportunities for children's participation in school management to enhance a healthy school environment, child-friendly teachers and alternative discipline procedures, as well as opportunities for children's participation in local governance need to be increased. Furthermore, efforts to involve children in development planning and policy developments at district, state and national levels on issues concerning them need to continue. Partnerships between media and children's groups can also be strengthened to further coverage and advocacy on issues affecting children and children's role as social actors.

Supporting Federations and Networking among Children's groups/ organisations

Children and young people from existing children's groups have shared interesting ideas about linkages with other children's organisations at local, district, state and national levels. Interest has been expressed in developing networks for learning and collaborative action and for advocacy on common child rights issues, developing at local through to district, national and regional levels. Children and young people who were part of children's media initiatives were also keen to develop their own networks.

*"Children should organise themselves and then link up at each level."
(Child, member of a children's organisation, India)*

"We would like to meet other children from other countries who have their media groups, so we can learn more from each other regarding our TV, radio and newspaper programmes."

(Children from Tajikistan)

The children and young people were keen to learn more about other children's organisations in their country and the region to enhance mutual learning and collaboration. Their ideas regarding mechanisms for exchange of information and experiences included: sharing photos, films/videos, letters, child produced newspapers, radio programmes or through email and/or websites (in English). They also wanted opportunities to meet together.

"We could have a get together with all child representatives in one place, so that we can share experiences and learn from each other."

(Children from Pakistan)

The kinds of information children were interested in gathering from other children's organisations included: organisational structures and how other children run their meetings as well as the issues they are trying to address. They want to learn about other groups' activities and action plans. They are interested in the types of problems children face and what methods they have used to solve them. They are also curious about their local culture (dress, food, geography) and the games other children play.

In some countries efforts have begun to increase learning exchanges, federations and networking among existing children's groups and organisations. Such federations can foster learning and strengthen children's voice for collective advocacy and engagement with officials at higher levels. For example, in Orissa (India) SOVA supported a federation of Bal Sanghas which is now strong and has established good linkages with the government. Similarly, in Ladakh and Kashmir the Children's Council for Development of Ladakh (CCDL) and the Children's Council for Development of Kargil (CCDK) have been developed. In Nepal the Consortium of Child Clubs also supports district and national level networking among Child Clubs.

"Our federation increases our bargaining power."

(Tribal girl, member of children's organisation, Orissa, India)

Developing and strengthening children's networks promotes children and young people to learn from each other, to develop a common agenda and to have a stronger voice for advocating on key priority issues affecting them. Collectively, children and young people can also identify the kind of support and partnership that they want with NGO partners and Save the Children. Organisationally, we need to be ready to be responsive to children's own agenda.

Ensuring Sustainability

Sustainability is integral to discussions concerning quality, mainstreaming and the impact of our development efforts. In relation to Save the Children's participation work, several national programmes are currently focused on strengthening and consolidating existing processes to ensure their sustainability. Considering how labour and time-intensive quality participation initiatives are proving to be, questions about the sustainability of our efforts are growing. Given the limitations of human and financial resources within development organisations, strategic efforts are required to further institutionalise participatory processes and children's participation in governance structures, in communities, schools, local and national governance.

An emphasis on accountability is very clear in rights-based approaches. Children and adults have rights, and duty bearers at a range of levels have responsibilities to fulfil children's rights. Adults with responsibilities can be held accountable. Duty bearers at different levels need to be informed of their responsibilities and supported to overcome obstacles so they can carry out their responsibilities to fulfil children's rights. Thus, organisations may find it strategic to identify ways of working in partnership with the State to strengthen local, sub-national and national governance structures and mechanisms. In furthering efforts towards social justice and good government, the work of child rights-based agencies involves building new partnerships with government, corporate sector, academia, media and civil society organisations, including children's organisations. An understanding of children's participation and children's rights needs to be mainstreamed in all government, UN, development and academic agencies.

Developing Mechanisms and Tools for Monitoring and Evaluation

In terms of children's participation a key challenge facing organisations is how best to effectively monitor and evaluate the process and impact of children's participation, association and citizenship initiatives. With increased focus on transparency and accountability in our programming, we need to be able to demonstrate results relating to our objectives for children's participation. To enhance advocacy efforts, impact assessments are required to demonstrate the benefits of children and young people's participation in different settings.

The participation concept is hard to quantify. Indicators, tools and systems must be developed so we can measure qualitative and quantitative changes in behaviour



and attitude, as well as changes in systems brought about through children and young people's participation. An initial assessment or baseline is required at the start, in order to identify impact later as well as to identify how girls' and boys' participation changes over time.

In supporting the development of children's organisations regular monitoring has been recognised as crucial to its sustainable development, particularly during the first year. However, such monitoring (particularly when supporting several children's groups in inaccessible areas) can be very time consuming and labour intensive. Thus, user-friendly community based participatory systems for monitoring and evaluation are required. Such systems can be used by children, young people and community members to enhance and build upon the learnings and impact gained over time.

Twelve Key Gaps in Research, Monitoring and Evaluation²⁷

- What are the links between children's participation and socially responsible democratic citizenship?
- What is the implication for organisations when they support children's participation and citizenship, when they take children as partners?
- How does participation change adult-child relationships? Child-Child relationships? Local and national cultures of childhood?
- What is the long-term impact of children and young people's participation in public decision-making?
- What are long-term impacts at individual and societal levels of their participation in child-led organisations and movements?
- How best can a culture of inclusive participation be established across an organisation or within an area or community?
- What is the cost-benefit analysis of different participation approaches and methods?
- How have institutions changed to enable children to feel comfortable and safe taking risks in the face of the new dynamics that emerge from participatory processes?
- What are the traditional and changing socio-cultural norms and values (attitudes and behaviour, institutional practices, approaches, procedures, and mechanisms) in the cultural, institutional, political and legal arenas that facilitate and inhibit the fulfilment of children and young people's participation and citizenship rights?
- What are parents' views about young people's participation in decision-making?
- What has been the impact of children and young people's participation in the media?
- Customary practices and religious teaching in this region focuses on duty, explicitly stating the duties of the children and young people towards their parents, elders, siblings and communities. Does the children's rights approach de-emphasise young people's duties and lead to a negative social impact?

²⁷ Adapted from J. Theis, Rights –based Monitoring and Evaluation- a discussion Paper. Save the Children, February 2003 (Draft).

Postcard monitoring: a community-based monitoring tool that could be piloted by children, young people and adults at local levels

Children's groups/ organisations could be given a set of three stamped postcards for every three-month period. Each card could have a symbol, a drawing or text to illustrate its purpose:

- card 1 the group should describe its most significant success in relation to their action plan);
- card 2 the group should describe the most significant challenge it has faced and any attempts to overcome it;
- card 3 the group should write their action plan ideas for the next three months.

These three postcards could be posted regularly to the NGO supporting the children's initiative. The NGO could analyse the cards from different children's groups and document the important outcomes and learnings. This mechanism would encourage the children to take responsibility for monitoring their own group, while at the same time permitting both local and wider scale documentation of activities and processes. The implementing agencies would be receiving regular information from children in a cost-effective non-labour intensive way. This 'postcard monitoring scheme' could be piloted in a few areas to see how it works. Ongoing visits by project staff would still be necessary, but the postcards would be complementing any existing monitoring approaches.

Efforts to enhance mainstreaming of sustainable children's participation in programming²⁸:

- Develop clear strategies for children's participation (as a significant component of Child Rights Programming) at national and local levels.
- Support capacity building of adult duty bearers and their structures at different levels, as well as capacity building to enhance girls' and boys' negotiation, communication and conflict-resolution skills (integrate a life skills approach in work with children).
- Increasing advocacy efforts to mainstream children's participation in other development, academic, governmental, UN and donor agencies could have far-reaching impact.
- Actively promote strategies to support networking among children's organisations and children's media initiatives at different levels (local, district, state, national).
- Undertake advocacy based on impact assessments to demonstrate the benefits of scaling up and institutionalising work on children's participation (in schools, local governance, policy developments etc).
- Enable children to develop and mobilise resources within the community, rather than relying on external resources and aid.
- Advocate with local government officials to include funds for children's groups/ organisations within their administrative budget.
- Secure funds that children's organisations can directly apply for in support of their own action programmes.
- Until sustainability is ensured, advocacy efforts at Organisation HQ and country levels are required to increase budget allocations for child participation developments.

²⁸ In addition to those shown in section 2.2 Illustration “Enabling a Meaningful Process of Children's Participation.”

Monitoring and evaluation of children's participation process and impact:

- Develop better monitoring tools and systems to enhance monitoring and evaluation of children's participation and association initiatives (process and impact), with a focus on quality.
- Develop non-intrusive, sensitive guidance and child-friendly tools for monitoring and evaluation by children's groups, community-based organisations (CBOs) and NGOs.
- Encourage increased documentation of process and outcome learnings by children, young people and adults involved in participatory initiatives.

2.5 Conclusion

Working in partnership with children and young people, organisations need to ensure an ongoing commitment to work towards a vision of children and young people's citizenship. The commitment must be translated into human and financial resources, and practical actions at a range of organisational and societal levels.

Through their raised awareness and organisation children and young people can work with adults to play a role in challenging injustices and transforming society. The freedom to organise is fundamental to the framework of human rights. It is at the heart of civil society efforts to promote good civic governance and social justice. In working towards a culture of good governance, development practitioners can play a key role by working with marginalised children, young people and adults in integrated and empowering ways, building upon their individual and collective strengths, and promoting values such as democracy, justice non-discrimination, critical awareness and solidarity through action.

Drawing upon existing guidance materials and working with children, young people and adults in varied local contexts and situations to develop minimum quality standards for meaningful participation and partnerships, we can further creative, innovative efforts towards the creation of a more democratic civilised society in which the rights of all human beings are respected.



2.6 Recommendations to Move Towards a Vision of Children's Participation and Citizenship

18 Key Recommendations to Move Towards a Vision of Children's Citizenship

- Adopt a rights-based approach to development. The CRC and other Human Rights principles and mechanisms can be used as tools to empower children and young people as citizens to hold duty-bearers accountable for the realisation of children's rights.
- Identify obstacles (cultural, institutional, political, legal) to fulfilling children's citizenship rights and develop strategies to overcome them.
- Advocate for children and young people's active participation in families, schools, communities, local governance, policies, and programmes in all decisions that affect them.
- Work with children in the wider context engaging key adults.
- Bring a child-focused approach to development agencies, UN bodies, the corporate sector and academia.
- Mainstream analysis on gender, disability, non-discrimination and power in development work and collect disaggregated information concerning children and adults.
- Maintain a clear focus on ethical practice and creation of opportunities for meaningful, inclusive participation of girls and boys as active citizens.
- Develop and apply minimum quality standards on children's participation and partnerships with adults.
- Build upon early child development work and adopt a life cycle approach enabling girls and boys participation at different ages and abilities.
- Develop and disseminate child-friendly information, tools and materials.
- Develop and strengthen children and young people's own organisations.
- Develop and strengthen networks amongst children's organisations at different levels.
- Develop and support children's media initiatives.
- Review organisational policies, programmes and human resource development (HRD) to ensure space and capacity to further children's participation.
- Ensure capacity building on child rights, children's participation and citizenship for adults, children and young people at different levels (integral to training on rights-based approaches).
- Undertake analysis of governance structures and systems (formal and informal actors, roles, responsibilities, resources, budgets) that impact on child rights issues affecting girls and boys.
- Build sustainable partnerships between adults and children (and young people) at different levels to enable children's participation in governance.
- Develop effective systems and tools for documenting, monitoring and evaluating the process and impact of children's participation and citizenship initiatives.

1. Adopt a rights-based approach to development, using the CRC and other Human Rights principles and mechanisms as tools to empower children and young people as citizens and to hold duty bearers accountable towards the realisation of children's rights.

In working towards a vision where children and young people are recognised as citizens, the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) can be used as a powerful tool by children, young people, NGOs, other civil society groups, the media and governments. A rights-based approach to development ensures a focus on working with the most marginalised, furthers empowerment of children and young people as citizens, and enhances accountability of duty bearers. (See Booklet 1, section 1, Box "Applying a Rights-Based Approach to Programming").

When children and young people are enabled to engage with duty bearers in meaningful ways, they can play both a pro-active and preventative role in fulfilling their rights to survival, development, protection and participation. Furthermore, through their active participation children and young people will also be contributing to the establishment of a more democratic, civilised and equitable society.

A rights-based approach encourages efforts to inform and involve children and young people in all stages of the programme cycle, while also promoting realisation of children's participation rights in different settings (e.g. family, school, local community, local governance, CRC reporting, policy development). Furthermore, reflection on other key human and child right principles (e.g. best interests, non-discrimination) helps to ensure a quality focus on meaningful participation.

Obstacles preventing duty bearers from fulfilling children's rights (at different levels) need to be identified, as do opportunities to overcome such obstacles. In addition, access between right holders and key duty bearers must be created, so that children and young people²⁹ as right holders can assert their rights and hold duty bearers accountable.

Greater efforts are needed by the State, the media and civil society groups to raise awareness of citizens' rights and responsibilities, particularly in relation to children's rights. Article 42 of the CRC requires State Parties to take all appropriate and active measures to make the principles and provisions of the Convention widely known to adults and children.

²⁹ As well as other supportive adults and civil society groups.

2. Identify obstacles (cultural, institutional, political, legal) to fulfilling children’s citizenship rights and develop strategies to overcome them.

Although innovative efforts across the region are highlighting children’s immense potential and the positive impact of their active participation, efforts to engage children and young people as citizens and as social actors remain the exception, rather than the norm. Thus, the existing cultural, institutional, political and legal obstacles to fulfilling children’s citizenship rights should not be underestimated.

At present social and cultural norms in South and Central Asia exclude girls and boys from decision-making processes in families, schools, communities, courts, programme and policy developments. Children and young people continue to be socialised as passive recipients who should listen to their parents, teachers and elders and do what they say. Children, particularly girls and children with disabilities, do not learn to express their views or to question adults. In most contexts children and young people are not seen as citizens or full members of society.

The challenge of changing socio-cultural norms and values to create societies in which children and young people are recognised and treated as active citizens will require genuine commitment by organisations for a number of years. Taking children’s participation seriously involves a transformation in power relations between adults and children, and an ongoing process to change adult attitudes and behaviour, institutional practices, approaches, procedures, and mechanisms.

In each setting the obstacles (cultural, institutional, political, legal) preventing fulfilment of children’s citizenship rights need to be identified, and strategies to overcome them developed and implemented.

3. Advocate for children and young people’s active participation in families, schools, communities, local governance, policies, and programmes in all decisions that affect them.

Strategic advocacy is needed at all levels to further opportunities for children and young people’s role as active participants in decision-making processes. Advocacy for children’s right to access information and to participate in families, schools, communities, local governance, policies, and programmes needs to be furthered. Recognising existing gaps, increased research and programming to further children’s participation in families, schools and institutions is required. Through empowering strategies, development organisations, civil society groups, UN agencies,

governments and the media can play a key role in furthering the realisation of children's citizenship rights.

Recommendations developed during the 'Children and Citizenship regional study in South Asia' in 1999 (see Appendix 8) were aimed at five key stakeholders: individuals, organisations, INGOs, governments and UN agencies and inter-governmental bodies. They focused on the need for advocacy on children's citizenship rights, and emphasised the need for adults to recognise children as full members of society and to encourage children's active participation in decision-making processes at all levels.

The CRC can be used as a tool for advocacy. The Convention asserts children's participation rights and outlines States' responsibilities to fulfil children's rights. The CRC reporting process provides an opportunity for children, young people and civil society groups to engage in monitoring the progress of implementing children's rights and advocating for improvements. Following submission of the State Reports to the CRC Committee³⁰ and any alternative reports by the non-government sector, the Committee makes concluding observations to the State Governments regarding their achievements, principle subjects of concern and recommendations from the committee. Civil society groups, including children's organisations, can use these concluding observations to further advocacy efforts towards the fulfilment of children's participation rights.

Concerns regarding the lack of fulfilment of children's participation rights (Articles 12-15), enabling children to have a fair hearing in families, schools, communities and in the juvenile justice system have been noted in the CRC Committee's concluding observations to every State in the South and Central Asia region. The Committee's recommendations to States throughout South and Central Asia have included encouragement to the State Party *'to promote and facilitate children's participation and respect for their views in decisions affecting them, especially in the family, at school, and in the judicial and administrative procedures, in light of Articles 12, 13 and 15 of the Convention'*³¹.

³⁰ Initially two years after ratification of the UNCRC and then every five years.

³¹ E.g. Concluding Observations to Bangladesh by the CRC Committee in June 1997.

**Extracts from the Concluding Observations by the CRC Committee to India,
January 2000**

In the light of Article 12, the Committee notes that the views of the child are accorded insufficient importance, especially within the family, the school, care institutions, the courts and the juvenile justice system.

The Committee encourages the State party to promote and facilitate within the family, the school, care institutions, the courts and the juvenile justice system respect for the views of children and their participation in all matters affecting them, in accordance with article 12 of the Convention. In this regard, the Committee recommends that the State party develop skills-training programmes in community settings for teachers, social workers and local officials in assisting children to make and express their informed decisions and to have their views taken into consideration.

The outcome document of the UN Special Session on Children, ‘A World Fit for Children’ can also be used as a tool for advocacy efforts towards recognising children and young people as citizens with an active role to play in society (see Appendix 9). The Special Session set a precedent for involving children and young people in international and national policy developments. The outcome document clearly describes their role as active participants.

Ongoing advocacy is needed as well to encourage key adult decision-makers to support genuine opportunities for children and young people’s meaningful participation in developing and monitoring the implementation of National Plans of Action (NPAs) by States, as well as the CRC reporting process.

In consultation with children and young people, Save the Children has developed guidance materials for governments and civil society groups to support children and young people’s participation in the NPA process (see Appendix 7). These guidelines can be adapted to support and advocate for children’s and young people’s participation in other policy and programme developments.

4. Work with children in the wider context engaging key adults.

Working with girls and boys in the wider context of their families/ alternative care setting, schools, communities, work place is crucial. Girls and boys do not exist in isolation. They are members of families, schools, work places and communities. Furthermore, the social, cultural, religious, economic and political context that a girl or boy lives in has an impact upon their opportunities to express themselves, to

actively participate, as well as broader life choices. Since the biggest barrier to children's participation in society is the attitude of adults, influential adults in boys and girl's lives must be prepared to value and support children's expression and participation. Children's parents, teachers, relatives, religious and community elders, and employers need to be engaged in dialogue concerning participatory processes with girls and boys. Adults should be encouraged to recognise the benefits of listening to girls and boys within families, schools, communities and broader societal settings.

Wherever, possible participatory processes at community level can be inclusive of men and women of all ages, encouraging a value for participation, equity and democracy amongst all age groups from the youngest to the oldest. Adults can be encouraged to give space for boys and girls to express themselves, to learn first hand that such opportunities enhances, rather than diminishes children's respect for adults.

Resistance to children and young people's participation is often compounded by social and cultural barriers towards girls, children with disabilities, younger children, children who are HIV positive, and children from specific ethnic or low income groups. Encouraging a focus on inclusion and non-discrimination amongst adults and children will enhance effective and meaningful processes.

5. Bring a child-focused approach to development agencies, UN bodies, the corporate sector and academia.

Existing child-focused agencies need to become effective advocates developing new partnerships with adult-focused development agencies, donors, UN bodies, the corporate sector and academic institutions. They need to work towards mainstreaming child-focused development that emphasises child rights and approaches that involve children and young people as citizens and social actors. A children's agenda needs to be included in mainstream development debates concerning poverty, exclusion, good governance and social justice.

Academia in each nation can also serve to advance local understanding and knowledge of concepts relating to children's agency, the social construction of childhood, children's rights, citizenship, non-discrimination and good governance. Academic engagement in monitoring and evaluation of rights-based programming will enhance practice developments and advocacy on children's citizenship rights.

6. Mainstream analysis on gender, disability, discrimination and power in development work and collect disaggregated information or data concerning children and adults.

Non-discrimination based on a belief in the inherent dignity and equality of all people is a key principle of rights-based programming. Families, communities and societies include different members, with different roles, relations, power and interests. To overcome discrimination, difference and existing obstacles leading to discrimination must be analysed and understood. Without pro-active efforts to understand difference and to tackle discrimination programmes tend to increase discrimination against the less visible, less vocal and less powerful. Thus, discrimination analysis, gender analysis, disability analysis and power analysis need to be mainstreamed in all development programmes to ensure non-discriminatory practice and inclusion of the most excluded.

During situational analysis, monitoring the process or evaluating impact, disaggregated quantitative and qualitative data should be collected according to gender, age, ethnicity, religion, dis/ability, and other socio-economic factors. All agencies involved in development work should be encouraged to develop child sensitive indicators, so they can understand the various ways development initiatives impact upon the lives of girls and boys of different ages, women and men in different settings.

In their Concluding Observations to State Parties in South and Central Asia the CRC Committee has repeatedly raised concerns about the lack of an effective mechanism to collect and analyse disaggregated data for all persons under 18 years on all areas covered by the Convention. The lack of effective information gathering systems leads to discrimination, with the groups of marginalised children being neglected in policies and excluded from various programmes at micro and macro levels.

In furthering participatory work with children and young people, we must ensure that children and young people are empowered to challenge existing patterns of discrimination, rather than reinforcing them. Efforts to enable the least visible, least vocal girls and boys to have opportunities to express themselves and to represent their peers are crucial. Some resource materials have been developed to assist children and young people to develop skills, knowledge and values to explore power relations and to develop their children's organisations in an inclusive, democratic manner.

"MIRRORS OF OURSELVES: Tools for Self Reflection of Democratic Child and Youth Groups"³²

This video was made during the Child Club Study in Nepal in 1999. It shares participatory tools (e.g. mapping, preference ranking, Venn diagrams) that the children themselves can use to explore patterns of inclusion and exclusion, organisation structure and roles (formal and informal), as well as to explore the range of activities the children's groups are organising and which different members (girls, boys, different ages) prefer

7. Maintain a clear focus on ethical practice and creation of opportunities for meaningful, inclusive participation of girls and boys as active citizens.

Considering the power imbalance between adults and children, a focus on ethical practice is essential to avoid tokenism and manipulative practice when empowering girls and boys as active citizens. Commitment to key principles and opportunities for regular reflection can enhance ethical practice (see Appendix 7). In scaling up work on children's participation and citizenship, the adoption of key principles for good practice is proving to be more useful and relevant than the application of 'good models' or 'blue-prints' for practice. A commitment to process, a belief in children's personhood and democracy, a willingness for adults to work in partnership with children and young people, and a value for diversity and inclusion are essential.

Special efforts to be inclusive, involving the most marginalised children are required, often necessitating creative strategies and communication tools. For example, sensitising key adults in children's lives and using creative communication tools may enhance the involvement of children with disabilities, and younger children in participatory initiatives.

Girls, boys and young people must be empowered to develop their own participatory (and partnership) initiatives that suit their own cultural, socio-economic, political and geographical contexts. Furthermore, adults must be prepared and enabled to support children's participation and to develop mechanisms that recognise and involve girls and boys as key partners in the development process. To ensure sustainable developments we need to engage with key adults (e.g. parents, teachers, government officials, civil society groups) and guarantee that space for children's participation becomes institutionalised in existing governance structures, e.g. schools, local government, national government, mainstream media and so on.

³² Available from Save the Children Norway, Nepal.

Strategies for follow up to consultations and meetings with children and young people must be developed. These could include for example, systems to monitor the implementation of commitments made by adult duty bearers. Without established mechanisms to follow-up and monitor action commitments, children and young people's recommendations and suggestions tend to remain on paper, forgotten or ignored.

8. Develop and apply minimum quality standards on children's participation and partnerships with adults.

To enhance ethical quality practice, children and young people's groups in each context should go through a collaborative process with adults to develop their own minimum quality standards on children's participation and partnership with adults. Ethical decisions are context specific. In the process of developing quality standards children, young people and adults could usefully explore concepts relating to childhood, power, ethics and child rights. Systems to apply and monitor the quality standards also need to be developed.

9. Build upon early child development work and adopt a life cycle approach enabling girls and boys participation at different ages and abilities.

Child rearing practices and young children's development play a critical role influencing people's abilities and skills to express themselves and to negotiate for their rights in later life. In furthering work on children's citizenship, the importance of work with families and children in the early years must be recognised. Efforts to build families' and communities' sense of engagement with children and children's rights must be encouraged from the earliest possible age. The youngest infants can communicate with adults in different ways, expressing their likes and their dislikes. Encouraging children's expression and choice in the early years lays the foundation for their participation in later life.

Adopting a life cycle approach³³ maximises opportunities for girls' and boys' active participation at different ages and with different abilities, taking their evolving capacity into consideration. Such an approach permits greater focus on work with young children and those in the middle years, between 6 and 12. This would overcome the current tendency of much child participation work to focus on children aged 12 and older. 'Graduation strategies' encouraging young women and men to continue to play an active role in local and national development initiatives should also be prepared.

³³ See section 2.2, Diagram: "The Life Cycle Approach to Child Participation with Focus on Inclusion".

Moreover, a life cycle approach enhances special efforts to be inclusive to all girls and boys, and to children with disabilities. Quality processes are required to provide democratic, inclusive opportunities for girls' and boys' participation as active citizens in diverse settings.

10. Develop and disseminate child friendly information, tools and materials.

Access to information is often a pre-requisite for meaningful participation in decision-making processes, whether for children, young people or adults. At all levels efforts are needed to increase children and young people's access to information on issues, policies and governance systems that affect their lives at local, district, national, regional and international levels. The development of child-friendly information in local languages on key policy and programme documents affecting children and young people facilitates their participation.

Support for children and young people's own media initiatives can also promote communication, information sharing and awareness-raising. Through their own wall newspapers, radio programmes, videos or television shows children and young people can present information and issues affecting them in creative ways to their peer group, as well as to adults.

Practitioners across the region have emphasised the importance of child-friendly tools and materials to promote the participation of girls and boys of different ages and abilities in different stages of programming and in different societal settings. Creative participatory tools including PRA, theatre for development (TfD), appreciative inquiry, puppets, visuals, and role-play promote children's communication and expression, and build their confidence. Such tools are also conducive to exploring power relations affecting children and developing strategies to overcome resistance. Children and young people on their own often choose creative communication tools to present issues and engage adults in dialogue.

Ongoing efforts to develop and disseminate child-friendly information, tools and materials will promote children's active participation in a range of settings.

11. Develop and strengthen children and young people's own organisations.

Facilitating the development and strengthening of children's organisations and children's own networks is an effective strategy. Children and young people can unite to explore issues affecting them, gain experience of democracy, increase their negotiating power base through their collective strength, and undertake action as active citizens.

Girls, boys and young people in a range of settings (e.g. in communities, schools and so on) should be encouraged and supported to develop their own organisations run on child-friendly inclusive principles. Involving adults (parents, teachers, community elders, local government officials) in the preparatory processes ensures their support for children's organisations.

A range of capacity building materials and workshops on children's participation, developing and supporting children's participation should be developed for adults, children and young people. This will further a broad-based integrated strategy for developing children's organisations.

The Guiding Principles for Facilitating Children's Organisations

Guiding Principles for Facilitating Children's Organisations were developed by resource people³⁴ and focal persons attending regional Save the Children Alliance strategy meetings on children's citizenship and governance in July 2000 (See Appendix 4 for full details).

The Guiding Principles include guidance under ten key themes:

- **Foundations for Sustainability:** The important early building blocks that should enable a children's organisation to grow and be productive for a long time.
- **Children's own Agenda:** What children prioritise for action or advocacy.
- **Peer Facilitation:** How children help each other in participation.
- **Blocks/Barriers:** Blocks and barriers to facilitating children's participation.
- **Risks:** Risks that may occur in facilitating children's organisations.
- **Cultural factors:** Cultural factors that facilitators may need to be aware of.
- **Scaling Up of a Children's Organisation:** Scaling up externally can mean sharing learning experiences with other children and adults to start new children's organisations. Internally, scaling up can involve a children's organisation becoming more effective in influencing adult fora through establishing institutional linkages.
- **What works best:** What we need to be aware of in facilitating children's organisations.
- **Age:** Enabling opportunities for different age.

An integral focus on life skills (e.g. communication, negotiation, assertiveness, conflict-resolution) in all empowering work with children and young people fosters sustainable development of children's organisations and partnerships with adults. Furthermore, a focus on communication and negotiation skills for all, rather than a focus on leadership training for a few (generally the most visible, articulate) will enhance more democratic and inclusive efforts.

³⁴ Resource people from Butterflies, CWC, Tilonia (India), TRDP (Pakistan) and colleagues from Save the Children (Nepal, Bangladesh, S.C.Asia region).

12. Develop and strengthen networks amongst children's organisations.

Networks among children's groups, organisations and media initiatives should be pro-actively supported. Networks help children and young people learn from each other's experiences, and increase the power base for advocacy on common agenda issues. Networks established on democratic and inclusive principles also permit fair and accountable mechanisms for children and young people to elect their own representatives to participate in policy and programme initiatives at sub-national, national, regional and global levels.

13. Develop and strengthen children and young people's media initiatives.

Greater efforts are required to develop and strengthen children and young people's media initiatives. Children's participation in the media raises the status of children's voices in society. It also increases information dissemination and raises awareness among different age groups. Through the media of radio, TV, newspapers and drama girls and boys can bring out their views and spread awareness and information sharing to broader sectors of the population. Children and young people's involvement in media initiatives enhances their communication, analysis, team working, and presentation skills.

The range of child-friendly media partnerships between children's organisations and media professions at local, state, national (and regional levels) should be built upon. This will foster information sharing, reporting on child rights issues and recognition of children and young people's role as social actors. Media professionals should be engaged to act as mentors for child journalists, while also creating access for child journalists' writings, broadcasts and shows in mainstream newspapers, radio or TV programmes. Children and adult organisations can also play a significant role in monitoring the type of reports made by journalists on child rights issues. They can develop strategies to encourage sensitive reporting which respects child rights, encourage use of Codes of Ethics, and promoting children as social actors in the media.



14. Review organisational policies, programmes and human resource development (HRD) to ensure space and capacity to further children's participation.

Developing opportunities for children's and young people's democratic participation in organisations and in society may necessitate a review (or audit) of adult organisational structures, decision-making processes, attitudes, policies and laws. Such a review could indicate processes and mechanisms that need to be altered or established to guarantee that women and men, as well as children and young people, have equal opportunities to participate in matters affecting them. The review can also determine what organisational changes are necessary to ensure that the policies, programmes and HRD procedures are child-friendly, non-discriminatory and inclusive.

In broad-basing and mainstreaming efforts to promote meaningful opportunities for children's active citizenship there is a need to ensure that all core staff are trained in child rights and participation. A larger resource pool of effective, skilled child and adult facilitators needs to be created.

15. Ensure capacity building on child rights, children's participation and citizenship for adults, children and young people at different levels (integral to training on rights-based approaches).

Capacity building programmes on children's participation and citizenship are needed for key adults (facilitators and duty-bearers) and children and young people at different levels. To ensure broad-based efforts, capacity building on children's participation and citizenship should be incorporated in mainstream capacity building programmes of rights-based approaches for development organisations, government and UN agencies, and academic institutions.

Core modules on child rights, children's participation and citizenship (theory, principles and practice tools) providing the basic foundations for enabling girls' and boys' active participation should be included as part of an induction package for all organisational staff. Effective facilitation skills are crucial to promote the sustainable development of children's organisations and to empower children and young people to participate in governance structures, particularly at the outset.

Building an "Ideal Facilitator" DESIGN according to the images described!

In Pakistan adults from Save the Children and their partners created an 'ideal facilitator' for working with children in participatory and empowering ways. Visual images were used to indicate the qualities, attitudes, knowledge and skills needed.

- Wearing a CRC and CRP (Child Rights Programming) cap: as they have good knowledge of child rights and child rights programming
- A big brain: Intelligent and good knowledge
- Light bulb: Bright ideas
- Magnifying glass eyes: for good observation and analysis
- One BIG ear: for sincere listening and acting on what they hear (only one ear, so that it does not go 'in one ear and out of the other!')
- A big smile: Very friendly
- A small tongue: they talk less, but enable all girls and boys to speak
- Cartoon balloon: speaks in child's language
- Equal sign (=): they treat everyone equally
- A BIG heart: they love children and have children in their heart.
- Equal (=) sign in their heart: as they believe that everyone is equal
- CRC and CRP in their heart: they firmly believe in the principles of child rights
- A basket 'tool box': The basket of innovative tools helps children communicate in creative ways, e.g. games, role-play, drawing, art, story-telling, singing, poetry, PLA.
- A watch: the facilitator needs to be punctual when working with children
- Carrying a balloon and a flower, and kicking a football: the facilitator needs to be playful, encouraging and child-friendly.
- Music: to be child-friendly and help children feel free to communicate however they are most comfortable.

In Afghanistan the participants created an "ideal facilitator" with similar characteristics, although their facilitator was half female and half male, as ideally in their cultural context they felt it would be best to have female facilitators for working with the girls, and male facilitators for working with the boys.

Save the Children has organised training programmes for child and adult facilitators on children's citizenship and governance.³⁵ These workshops have endowed adult and child facilitators who are working for the marginalised sections of Asian societies with the values, knowledge and skills to convince adult decision-makers of the need to respond to the views of children and young people. The training instilled human rights values and the confidence and skills of children to advocate for their rights through creative, participatory methodology.

³⁵ For example, in November/December 2000 a 10 day regional workshop on 'Training of Facilitators on Children's Citizenship and Governance' was organized in Delhi by Save the Children, bringing together over 70 children, young people (representatives of children's organisations) and adults from eight countries across South and Central Asia.

Training Components for Facilitators of Children's Citizenship and Governance

The CD Resource Guide for Children, Citizenship and Governance developed by Save the Children³⁶ includes a series of participatory and experiential learning tools to enhance children and young people's skills, knowledge and attitudes as active citizens in their societies. Experiential methodologies encourage reflection and build upon people's own experiences, leading to attitudinal and behavioural change, in addition to new knowledge.

The resource guide is organised into themes which relate to the concept and practice of children's citizenship (including children's role as active citizens in governance) including:

- **Appreciating Diverse Childhoods:** Activities to enable understanding of the diversity of childhoods (e.g. differences in childhoods among girls/boys, rural/urban, rich/poor, street child/ school going child, or children with disabilities).
- **Power Relations:** Activities to unravel power dynamics between adults and children, rich and poor, females and males, or among different people from different castes, religions, regions, ethnicity or work.
- **Children's Rights and Responsibilities:** Activities to explore children's rights and responsibilities and how to translate them into action.
- **Children's Participation:** Activities to explore and promote children's participation.
- **Active Citizenship:** Information to further understanding of children's citizenship rights and activities to promote active citizenship.
- **Participation in Governance:** Activities to promote opportunities for children's active participation in the decision-making of governing bodies at local, regional, national and international levels.
- **Life Skills:** Activities on a range of basic life skills including trust, assertiveness, communication and negotiation ('win win' strategies).
- **Organisational skills:** Activities that foster exploration and action to improve organisational skills like team building, visioning, target setting and being organised.
- **Facilitation Skills:** Activities from these important theme areas can be linked together to design workshops to meet participant learning needs.

Capacity building in rights-based approaches should also encompass training in strategic planning, advocacy, non-discrimination, good governance, monitoring and evaluation.

16. Undertake analysis of governance structures and systems (formal and informal actors, roles, responsibilities, resources, budgets) that impact on child rights issues affecting girls and boys.

While encouraging children and young people to explore and express their views on child right issues that affect them, they should also be supported to identify the

³⁶ A Resource Guide for Children, Citizenship and Governance. Save the Children CD (South and Central Asia). Compiled by Ravi Karkara during a secondment to Save the Children UK OSCAR, with contributions from many other colleagues (adults and young people) in the region.

appropriate duty-bearers who are responsible for addressing violations and for taking action towards fulfilling their rights. Effective analysis of governance systems and structures (informal and formal) that impact on the fulfilment of children's rights is required. Analysis to determine specific actor's roles and responsibilities, allocated resources (including budgets) and decision-making processes at local, district, national, regional and global levels should be carried out and the information gathered and clearly explained to children and young people.

Methods for mapping the situation of children's rights and tools for analysing and monitoring measures taken by governments, provincial and local authorities, public institutions (including schools), and families need to be developed. In addition, child-focused agencies should identify and analyse decentralisation processes in relation to how they affect the rights of different groups of girls and boys. This knowledge can enhance advocacy and partnership developments to make provincial and local governments more effective in implementing children's rights and enhancing children's participation in decision-making.

Advocacy work with the concerned duty bearers will be required to build bridges between children and young people and the concerned adults, particularly government officials. Adults need to be prepared to listen to girls and boys and to take their concerns seriously.

17. Build sustainable partnerships between adults and children (and young people) at different levels to enable children's participation in governance.

In transforming children's role from passive recipients to active citizens, adults must be willing to develop partnerships with children and young people. Partnerships connote relationships based on mutual trust, equality and good communication. The development of sustainable partnerships between adults and children at a range of levels should be supported.

Children's participation in governance (at different levels) is a way of ensuring space for children and young people in decision-making structures. This will bring about more sustainable opportunities for children and young people to raise their concerns, monitor progress and hold duty bearers accountable.

If adults are willing to create space in governance structures for children and young people's representatives, children and young people can elect their own representatives to raise their concerns, issues and suggestions. Alternative strategies promoting the active participation of larger numbers of girls and boys can also be pursued. Opportunities for 'rotational representation' in adult fora and/or for wider representation of groups of children and young people to present their concerns and promote dialogue with adults should be explored.

Groups of children and young people could for example engage with adult representatives through creative methods, such as theatre for development or presentation of their visual analysis (e.g. PRA visuals). Moreover, rather than expecting children and young people to send a few representatives to adult-centred meetings, key adults (duty bearers, officials) could be invited to attend children's regular meetings or events. A balance should be created between adults coming to children's meetings, and space being created for children and young people to participate in adult's meetings.

Additional strategies to increase the participatory role of children and young people as citizens in governance are required. Some were mentioned in Chapter One. For example, both children and adults require capacity building efforts to increase their advocacy skills, as well as the skills needed to build effective alliances and collaborative partnerships (especially those that cut across power differences). Citizens from children's organisations, community organisations and NGOs previously excluded from decision-making in government need to learn skills of advocacy and effective policy influence, as well as how to guard against co-optation. Correspondingly, government officials and existing power holders require new skills to develop appropriate mechanisms for involving new stakeholders in policy formation and decision-making.

Greater efforts to analyse macro and micro economic issues (in addition to laws, policies and governance systems) affecting children will also promote efforts towards good governance in children's best interests. Increased allocation of budgets towards children's services and more accountable use of the funds at local, district and national levels will positively impact on children. Thus, efforts to develop participatory mechanisms for children, young people and other groups of civil society to influence and monitor local and national budget allocations are worth pursuing.

Advocacy for genuine decentralisation will also provide opportunities for government officials to engage with citizens (men, women, young people, boys and girls) in more participatory ways to promote their participation in monitoring child rights violations and effective action, enhancing accountability.

18. Develop effective systems and tools for documenting, monitoring and evaluating the process and impact of children's participation and citizenship initiatives.

A key challenge facing many organisations is how best to effectively monitor and evaluate the process and impact of children's participation, association and citizenship initiatives. The concept of participation and active citizenship and its impact in practice can be hard to measure. Indicators, tools and systems need to be developed to provide qualitative and quantitative measures of changes in behaviour and attitude, as well as changes in systems brought about through children and young people's active participation. An initial assessment or baseline is required at the start, in order to identify impact, as well as the changing nature of girls' and boys' active participation and adult's engagement with girls and boys over time.

Effective systems and tools for documenting, monitoring and evaluating the process and impact of children's participation and citizenship initiatives are needed. Practitioners should be encouraged to document key processes and outcomes, including good and bad practice and analysis of key lessons learned, which can be built upon. Monitoring and evaluation of processes and impacts is essential to good development practice, fostering quality developments and providing more effective advocacy work on children's citizenship rights. Also, an increased focus on transparency and accountability in rights based programming will lead to the demonstration of positive impacts from children's citizenship work.

User-friendly, community based participatory systems for monitoring and evaluation should be developed for children, young people and community members to use to enhance and build upon what they learn and the impacts achieved over time.

New forms of monitoring and evaluation are required to explore the impact of children and young people's participation in governance at different levels, particularly in relation to decentralisation and devolution of central government

responsibilities and authority to lower levels of government. Such monitoring (especially when effectively documented) will enable organisational learning (learning from strengths and weaknesses), sharing of experiences and sustainable developments.

Recent developments in relation to rights based monitoring systems and tools (see Theis, 2003) and systems to monitor citizenship participation (see McGuigan, 2003³⁷) can be adapted to ensure effective monitoring and evaluation systems for children's citizenship.

³⁷ McGuigan, C. (2003) *Advocacy Impact Assessment: A Literature Review*. Save the Children UK.

Appendix 6

Should Child Activists be Paid?

Extract From Report on Child Brigade³⁸

NO:	YES:
<p>Child rights organisations should not be seen to be approving the employment of child labour.</p>	<p>Children are working in development organisations. Employment in factories in Bangladesh is legal at 14 years and above.</p>
<p>Payment of salary would make children into employees answerable and accountable to those who pay them.</p>	<p>Issues of accountability and authority relate to the culture of an organisation, not the pay structure alone.</p>
<p>Paying some children and not others would introduce tensions, and pay could undermine the children's status within their peer group.</p>	<p>The system should be determined by the children, with absolute transparency over who is paid what and why.</p>
<p>The spirit of children's present commitment as volunteers would be undermined by working for a wage.</p>	<p>Adults can be committed and paid, to demand that children work without pay is exploitative.</p>
<p>If children are paid it should be task specific, not a salary given on a full time basis.</p>	<p>If children who need a full-time wage cannot earn this as activists they will have to leave for exploitative, less fulfilling and less useful work outside.</p>
<p>Children need to learn how to make an income in the open market, as this is their long-term future.</p>	<p>a) Experience as child activists equips them for work as adult employees of development agencies.</p>
	<p>b) The labour market is diverse and unstable. Better a few years in good work for a decent wage than none.</p>

³⁸ Sarah White (2001) Child Brigade: An Organisation of Street Working Children in Bangladesh. Save the Children Sweden and University of Bath, UK

Appendix 7

Guiding Principles for Good Practice in Children’s Participation and Citizenship³⁹

Guiding Principles for Good Practice in Children’s Participation and Citizenship

- **Children’s Personhood and their Rights as a Human Being**

This involves a fundamental belief in children’s personhood, the individual identity of each girl and boy in her or his own right, with her or his own thoughts and feelings. All children, as human beings, have the right to express their views and to participate in decisions affecting them to the extent of their evolving capacity). Building upon children’s resilience and individual strength enhances their role as active citizens in their local and wider communities.

- **Process of Democratic Involvement**

Participation is part of a democratic process of ongoing dialogue, action, analysis and change. Facilitators should thus seek to involve all participants, particularly children, in meaningful democratic ways from the outset and throughout each stage of the agenda setting, information gathering, analysis, action planning, implementation, training, materials production, monitoring, evaluation and documentation. All efforts should recognise and build upon children and adults’ experiences, capacities and abilities to participate in democratic ways.

- **Anti-discrimination and Evolving Capacity**

Taking their evolving capacity into consideration, a life cycle approach to children’s participation could be explored. Focusing on inter-generational communication can enhance participation opportunities for girls and boys at all ages. A range of creative approaches could be developed to reach children in different situations, particularly those who face additional discrimination, exclusion and marginalisation such as children with disabilities, girls, children from particular ethnic groups, and street children. Gender, disability and discrimination analysis, awareness and action tools should be mainstreamed in all areas of programming.

- **Fairness**

Children and young people want and deserve to be treated fairly, with equality and respect. Each situation should be approached with an open mind and non-judgmentally. For this, we must be aware of our own value systems. Clear reasons should be given for why certain things can or cannot happen.

- **Information**

Children and young people’s access to information should be increased on all issues, policies and systems that affect them. The information should be clear, honest and creatively presented in child and reader friendly ways. All participants should be informed about the process and outcomes of any participatory process as it develops. Involving children and young people in the design and production of information relevant to any participation initiative may enhance the information-sharing. This also furthers opportunities for children’s participation in the media.

³⁹ Written by Claire OKane

- **Choice of Participation**

Choice of participation is a central concept regarding consent and genuine participation. Children, young people and adults have their own needs, interests and opinions. Adequate explanations should be given so everyone can decide whether they want to participate, for how long and how.

- **Awareness and Transparency**

All development work involves intervention into children's lives. We must be aware of the implications of our presence. The results of change may not be immediately beneficial or comfortable, even if longer-term outcomes are liberating. The degree of participation is often determined by institutional, social, political and geographical contexts. Honesty and transparency about what is going on is critically important at all stages. Transparency concerns the problematic area of 'expectations' in regard to participatory work with children. Practitioners need to be clear about what is being offered to avoid raising false expectations.

- **Focus on Child's Agenda**

Children and young people are social actors in their own right. Continual efforts are required to create opportunities for them to express themselves, and for their agenda to be taken seriously in a range of settings.

- **Preparation and Support**

Children, young people and adults need preparation and support to enhance their participation in decision-making. Adults require preparation to share power with children and to take them seriously. Support structures, networks, training and materials that create an atmosphere conducive to children and adult participation in decision-making must be developed.

- **Creative Communication**

A range of creative techniques and participatory activities including drawing, drama, role-play, circus, songs could be developed and used to involve children in meaningful and interesting ways and to enhance communication between children and adults. 'Serious fun' is a useful slogan. Similar efforts could be made to share and feedback information creatively.

- **Power Relations**

Attention must be given to power relations between adults and children and between different groups in society. Girls, boys, youth and adults should be encouraged to explore concepts of childhood, participation and power. They should be facilitated to reflect on power relations, understand power dynamics and develop processes, strategies and structures to empower the marginalised and allow the power holders to share power in meaningful and equitable ways.

- **Win-Win approaches (communication and negotiation)**

Integrate a focus on life skills into all work with children and young people, enabling them to develop communication, assertiveness, negotiation and conflict-resolution skills. This will empower them to influence adults and develop meaningful partnerships. 'Win-win' approaches effectively transform power relations between adults and children in positive ways, enabling working partnerships between adults and children.

- **Reflection and Experiential Learning**

Much learning arises from people's experience. Creating space for regular reflection by adults and children on work being promoted in the name of children's participation will lead to analysis and application of lessons learnt. Ethical issues will also be addressed and a focus on quality maintained. Open, reflective, and responsive approaches help break down power relations between adults and children, as well as within, and between organisations.

- **Flexibility**

Flexibility and self-criticism allow for openness to change. Participation requires a commitment to flexibility and adaptability, to working with individual and contextual circumstances. New approaches may be required depending on setting, culture, language, ethnicity, ability, and available resources.

- **Sustainability**

Child participation in decision-making is a dynamic process that requires an ongoing investment in time, support and resources from people in the children's lives. Supportive mechanisms and strategies to institutionalise children's participation in existing governance structures in schools, local communities, NGOs, and local and national governance must be developed.

- **Partnership**

The creation of partnerships between children and adults, within and between organisations, is needed to promote positive change. When involving children, active support from adults in their lives enhances the likelihood of participation. Good partnership and trust between different parties helps institutionalise sustainable space for children's participation in decision-making and governance. Capacity building of adults and strengthening local governance structures can also improve adults' skills and confidence in partnership, as their ability to respond effectively to the issues children and young people raise will grow. Partnerships facilitate communication, negotiation, shared decision-making, action and accountability. They also provide a stronger power base from which to challenge existing inequalities.

Appendix 8

Recommendations from the 'Children and Citizenship: Regional Study in South Asia', Save the Children, 1999⁴⁰

Towards the Future': Recommendations from the 'Children and Citizenship Regional Study' in South Asia, 1999

Recommendations for the realization of children's citizenship rights were aimed at five key stakeholders, namely: individuals, organizations, INGOs, governments and UN agencies and inter-governmental bodies.

Individuals:

1. Consider children as full members of the society and give them space to express their views and opinions when decisions are made on matters related to them.
2. Teachers, principals and others in the school community should encourage children to express their views on matters related to their lives and provide them space to take responsibility on activities in school.
3. Community workers, social mobilisers and development professionals should also consider children in their target groups as an important category and create space for them to be actively involved with the development activities.
4. Journalists should promote the concept that children are an active social category who can contribute immensely to its development. They should provide space for children's issues in their journals and media programmes.

Organisations working for children:

5. Children should be given full membership and be able to participate in the decision-making bodies of projects and organizations. Mechanisms should be established to enable continuous consultation with children.
6. Constructive advocacy and lobbying to: change the existing laws and procedures which deny children's citizenship rights; create structures at all levels from grassroots to State, which provide space for children to represent and express their views and exercise their citizenship rights.
7. Increase public awareness of children's citizenship rights
8. Promote programmes to activate children's participation in the community life and develop those towards empowering children in decision-making.
9. Programmes to enhance children's access to necessary information to make sound decisions.
10. Develop skills needed for the realization of children's citizenship rights among the staff members and stakeholders.

⁴⁰ See Glenfrey de Mel (2000) *Children and Citizenship: Regional Study in South Asia*. Save the Children UK OSCAR.

INGOs working for children:

11. At country level, develop networks and advocate for children's citizenship rights.
12. At regional and global level, create wider forums to discuss children's citizenship rights and promote international solidarity for the realization of those rights.

Governments:

13. Introduce legislative provisions to involve children in political decision-making processes of the country, especially in areas where children have a direct impact.
14. Encourage the policy makers and the authorities in government to facilitate the flow of children's perspectives in to the decision-making bodies.
15. Establish necessary structures to facilitate children's opinions in to decision making and listen to their problems, issues and grievances.

UN Agencies and inter-governmental bodies:

16. All UN Agencies should initiate children's consultative committees to be consulted when they discuss and make decisions on issues which relate to children.
17. The Committee on the Rights of the Child should give serious attention to the realization of children's citizenship rights.
18. Inter-governmental organizations should take possible steps to enhance their understanding of children's citizenship rights.

Appendix 9

Extracts from 'A World Fit for Children'

Extracts from 'A World Fit for Children' (Outcome Document) of the UN Special Session on Children endorsing recognition of children and young people's role as active citizens:

In the declaration shared at the outset of 'A World Fit for Children' the Heads of State and Government and representatives of States participating in the United Nations General Assembly Special Session on Children, reaffirm their commitment to the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and reaffirm their obligation to take action to promote and protect the rights of each child - every human being below the age of 18 years including adolescents. Whilst acknowledging the UNCRC their determination to respect the dignity and to secure the well-being of all children is declared. Furthermore, they stress their commitment *'to create a world fit for children in which sustainable human development, taking into account the best interests of the child, is founded on principles of democracy, equality, non-discrimination, peace and social justice and the universality, indivisibility, interdependence and interrelatedness of all human rights, including the right to development.'* (p.11)

The outcome document includes a global 'Plan of Action' to create a world fit for children in which *'all children get the best possible start in life and have access to a quality basic education, including primary education that is compulsory and available free to all, and in which all children, including adolescents, have ample opportunity to develop their individual capacities in a safe and supportive environment. We will promote the physical, psychological, spiritual, social, emotional, cognitive and cultural development of children as a matter of national and global priorities.'* (p.14)

Whilst emphasising the role of the family as a basic unit of society in ensuring children's protection and development, measures to build and strengthen children's own abilities to protect themselves are also mentioned. The importance of access to information is also acknowledged. The active participation of girls and boys, including children with disabilities in all spheres of society is encouraged. Furthermore, the changing role of men and boys in society is acknowledged. An emphasis is placed on developing national goals for children which include targets for reducing disparities, in particular those which arise from discrimination on the basis of race, between girls and boys, rural and urban children, wealthy and poor children and those with and without disabilities.

In order to implement the present Plan of Action, the Heads of State and Government have declared a commitment to strengthen partnerships with a range of actors to advance our common cause - the well-being of children and the promotion and protection of their rights. The list of actors includes: children, including adolescents; Parents, families, legal guardians and other caregivers; Local governments and authorities; Parliamentarians or members of legislatures; Non-governmental organizations and community-based organizations; The private sector and corporate entities; Religious, spiritual, cultural and indigenous leaders; The mass media; Regional and international organizations; and people who work directly with children. All have a role to play in developing a child friendly society, and the active role of children and young people is clearly acknowledged:

'Children, including adolescents, must be enabled to exercise their right to express their views freely, according to their evolving capacity, and build self-esteem, acquire knowledge and skills, such as those for conflict resolution, decision-making and communication, to meet the challenges of life. The right of children, including adolescents, to express themselves freely must be respected and promoted and their views taken into account in all matters affecting them, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child. The energy and creativity of children and young people must be nurtured so that they can actively take part in shaping their environment, their societies and the world they will inherit. Disadvantaged and marginalized children, including adolescents in particular, need special attention and support to access basic services, build self-esteem and to prepare them to take responsibility for their own lives. We will strive to develop and implement programmes to promote meaningful participation by children, including adolescents, in decision-making processes, including in families and schools and at the local and national levels.' (p.17)



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