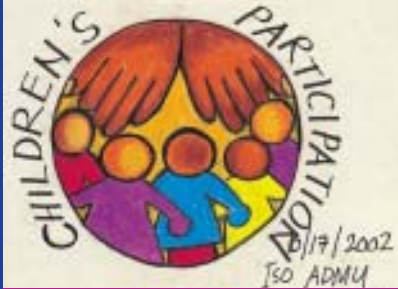




# Learning to Work Together



A handbook for managers on facilitating children's participation in actions to address child labour



RWG-CL



## **LEARNING TO WORK TOGETHER**

A handbook for managers on facilitating  
children's participation in actions  
to address child labour



Regional Working Group on Child Labour (RWG-CL)

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## FOREWORD

Child labour organisations in Asia identified three areas of capacity building need through a survey carried out by Regional Working Group on Child Labour (RWG-CL) in 1999 - communication, research and children's participation - which became the three main themes of the organisation's activities and publications. In 2000, RWG-CL carried out a rapid assessment of working children's participation in actions against the worst forms of child labour in Asia, which was published as *Working Children's Participation in Actions Against the Worst Forms of Child Labour* (2001). This was followed by a workshop on enhancing adults' facilitation of working children's participation. A clear message from both these activities was that the emphasis tends to be on developing the capacities of working children to participate, rather than on building the capacities of adults to facilitate their participation in actions to combat child labour. *Learning to Work Together* was conceived as one way of trying to redress the balance.

*Learning to work together* combines lessons learned by working children and adults who have participated in child labour programming, with insights from the increasing number of publications on the subject. The Handbook is not intended to be a definitive guide to the subject, but a first step for programme managers, based on early experiences in a rapidly expanding field. There is more to learn, and undoubtedly far more will be published. In the meantime, RWG-CL hopes that *Learning to Work Together* will serve as a useful reference and resource.

This Handbook is the result of collaboration with working children and programme managers in national and regional organisations that focus on child labour. As part of the drafting process for *Learning to Work Together*, two national consultation workshops were organised, one in Quezon City, Philippines, and another in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. In joint and separate sessions, working children and programme managers shared their insights and experiences, looking particularly at the meaning of children's participation as well as opportunities, methods, issues and challenges - particularly for working children - in actions to address the worst forms of child labour, including trafficking. A further workshop was held in Bangkok to discuss the groundbreaking draft prepared by Elizabeth P. Protacio-de Castro and colleagues from the Psychosocial Trauma and Human Rights Program, Center for Integrative and Development Studies, University of the Philippines.

RWG-CL has learned that children's participation begins by acknowledging children's capacities. Thus, RWG-CL is committed to fulfilling children's rights to participate through a gradual process of learning and adaptation, with children and adults working together. Learning to work together is designed as a self-study handbook for managers, to help them reflect on their own ideas and to assist them in planning participatory activities, projects and programmes. It is not a catalogue of games and activities that 'work' with children. Nor is it a set of plans and infallible shortcuts to successful children's participation. Learning to work together is a companion volume to previous RWG-CL resource publications on communication about child labour and participatory action research on the worst forms of child labour, including trafficking (*Child labour: Getting the Message Across*, 2001, and *Handbook for Action-oriented Research on the Worst Forms of Child Labour*, 2003).

Whether your programme already works closely with children on a daily basis or you are only now considering the first steps towards involving children, we hope that *Learning to Work Together* will provide you with ideas, information and inspiration.

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### ~~XXX~~ RWG-CL definition of child labour

The Regional Working Group on Child Labour (RWG-CL) works with a definition of child labour that is guided by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and focuses on the ILO Convention 182 on the worst forms of child labour.

RWG-CL makes a distinction between child work and child labour.

- Child work includes activities that are not harmful, which may contribute to the healthy development of a child;
- Child labour consists of all types of work, performed by children up to the age of 18 years, that is damaging to children's health or their physical, mental, intellectual, moral or social development, and interferes with their education.

Included in the worst forms of child labour are all forms of slavery and practices similar to slavery, such as trafficking of children, bonded labour, serfdom and recruitment for armed conflict. Also included are the use of children in prostitution, pornography and illicit activities, such as drug production and drug trafficking, and any work in hazardous conditions, identified at national level according to the criteria in ILO Recommendation 190.

### ~~XXX~~ RWG-CL Mission Statement

The Regional Working Group on Child Labour (RWG-CL):

- Aims to support actions against the exploitation of children through labour with special focus on the elimination of the worst forms of child labour as stated in the ILO Convention 182;
- Uses the UNCRC as the framework and guiding principle in all actions on child labour in Asia;
- Emphasizes prevention and addressing the root causes that contribute to the exploitation of children;
- Promotes and strengthens the participation of children in decision making and interventions that affect their lives;
- Is committed to supporting key actors, at national and regional levels, who aim to strengthen capacity and self-reliance among children and their families.



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## INTRODUCTION TO THIS HANDBOOK

Children's rights to participate are now widely recognised, but little understood. Global efforts to combat child labour have shown different levels of respect for children's rights, particularly with respect to 'participation'. At one end of the scale, organisations of child workers have been formed to protect and promote their own rights, providing some of the most inspiring current examples of children's participation. At the same time, outside the field of child labour, regional, national and local children's movements demonstrate how much children can do for themselves, with a little support from adults. At the other end of the scale, in Asia as elsewhere, child beggars, children in prostitution and children who have been trafficked are treated as criminals or threats to social order and public morals. Programmes to rescue them from hazardous situations may never ask their opinions about rehabilitation activities.

Between these extreme positions, a growing number of development organisations and governments are rising to the challenge; working together with children by finding meaningful ways to give children a voice, and an active role, in programmes that affect their lives. Some organisations have been doing this for many years, others are now taking the first steps towards children's participation. RWG-CL has found that although programme managers want to try to encourage child participation they are not sure what it means, or how to work in this way with children, especially with working children who may have little education and limited experiences of life. Although staff of programmes for working children may have heard that children 'have a right to participate' they tend to be unsure why they have this right, what the benefits might be and what skills may be needed when children 'participate' with adults.

The conviction underlying *Learning to Work Together* is that the main obstacles to children's participation are adult fears and uncertainties when confronted with the challenge to fulfill this right. In all societies, and certainly in Asia, traditional views of children are that they are dependent on adults and lack competence in making decisions. Thus the idea of children's participation confronts established ideas and practices.

In order to help programme managers work through these issues in their own terms, *Learning to Work Together* is divided into four chapters. The first provides answers to some basic questions about children's participation, including the human and children's rights foundation in international law. The following two chapters examine how children's participation can fit into a programme or project cycle, as well as some specific issues

in participatory child labour programming. Finally the Handbook discusses the question of how to create environments that will help children's participation develop, from adult-initiated activities and programmes to a right shared and enjoyed in all aspects of their lives by all children. Because some of the ideas may be new to the programme managers for whom the Handbook has been written, each chapter is summed up in a list of 'Learning Points' followed by questions to aid reflection. The Handbook incorporates the words of children about the main issues addressed, as well as stories from experiences of children's participation in Asia, which are included in boxes in the text, to show what children's participation can be like in practice. Nevertheless, children's participation is a process in which children and adults are indeed learning to work together, thus none of the boxes or quotations should be taken as model examples of children's participation. The Handbook ends with a list of easy-to-locate resources to support the development of successful programmes to combat child labour, in which children will participate with adults in all stages of the programme cycle.

Throughout the Handbook, the terms 'programme' and 'project' are used almost interchangeably to refer to planned interventions in which the same evolving processes for increasing participation of children may be used and the same principles followed. The term 'activity' is used to refer to an event in which children may be involved exceptionally, such as a workshop, a planning session, a press conference or a meeting. Once again, the same processes and principles should be applied, and the increasing involvement of children in activities may provide learning opportunities which are relevant to children's involvement in programme and project cycles – at the level of planning, implementation and evaluation. The aim should be for children's participation to be mainstreamed as far as possible into the entire operation of programmes to combat child labour, and ultimately into all organisational practices.

# CHAPTER 1

## FUNDAMENTAL QUESTIONS

*You ask me  
about my rights,  
I, as person  
have a right  
to live without  
the fear of harm.  
I, as child  
have the right  
to play in the park  
without the shadows of danger.*

*From a poem by Alison Siebritz, aged 16 years,  
Cape Town, South Africa*

This chapter answers four fundamental questions:

- What is children's participation?
- Why should children participate?
- Why should child workers participate?
- What are the rules?

## WHAT IS CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION?

*This project strives the most to make adults talk to children more gently and treat them in a better manner. Another important thing it does is in the field of advocacy. They meet with various political parties, the Government and other influential people, and they discuss our problems. Meetings between them and us, the children, are also arranged.*

*Child workers, editors of Bal Mazdoor ki Awaz  
(Child Worker's Voice wall newspaper),  
writing about the Butterflies project in India*

Children's experiences of childhood vary considerably between different families, communities, schools and other settings. In most Asian families and communities children's opportunities to participate are limited, and they are usually expected to follow what adults decide for them passively and obediently. Children are often not encouraged to think for themselves or to ask for information, much less to ask 'Why?' or even 'What is happening?'

To encourage children's participation means seeing children as human beings with dignity and rights and focussing on what they can do, rather than on what they cannot do. There are no essential logical steps, as is the case with research or advocacy, because participation means mainstreaming children's views and efforts in all activities, recognising that children are individuals capable of understanding, making decisions, and acting on them.

Nevertheless, there are two fundamental principles that apply to all genuine children's participation: first that children should have an opportunity to influence decisions that affect their lives, and secondly that they need information on which to base their opinions.

In addition, whenever children participate with adults the process should be:

- Voluntary: The right to participate implies the right to decide not to participate;
- Informed: Children should know the background, purpose, risks and possible outcomes of their participation, before they are asked if they wish to participate;

- Meaningful: Participation should have a purpose, and a realistic chance of achieving children's goals;
- In the best interests of the child: The benefits that a child can expect from participating in an activity should always be greater than the potential disadvantages and risks.

Beyond these basics, the form that children's participation takes depends on the circumstances in which it takes place, the task to be carried out, and the people (children and adults) involved.

### ***Participation empowers children***

Children's participation is closely linked to empowerment. A child who does not feel a sense of personal power cannot participate effectively; children who are not involved in decisions made about their lives feel powerless (Child Workers in Asia, 2001). By seeking children's input, and by being respectful, encouraging and supportive, adults can help children to feel confident about participating as well as about other aspects of their lives. Once they participate, children feel more competent and willing to participate in the future. They can also become more confident about resisting abuse and exploitation.

### ***Tomorrow's adults***

When they become adults at the age of 18 years, young citizens become fully responsible for their own decisions and actions, both legally and socially. Participation should prepare them for that responsibility, so that they can use it to benefit themselves, other people and their society. Children's participation should gradually give them knowledge and skills, so that they can be involved meaningfully in decisions made about their lives as well as take an active role in putting those decisions into practice. In this sense, children's participation means a gradual shift, from adults taking decisions for children, to children taking decisions for themselves.

One advantage of encouraging children to participate is that it enables them to work in a team with others, both children and adults, towards achieving personal or group goals. In the process of trying to solve problems and fulfill their plans, participating children recognise their strengths and limitations and find out how and when to seek

the support of others. Participation encourages them to see their responsibilities in a family, an organisation, a group, a community and the world. In the process of promoting their own rights, children learn to analyse the world beyond their personal situations. Participation is thus about growing up to become productive and responsible citizens.

### ***Why facilitate children's participation in programming?***

Programme managers and workers often express fears that involving children in planning and implementing programmes will lead to chaos. They imagine that children will want to play all the time rather than go to school, will have no discipline and misuse project equipment. Yet experience shows that, when they are responsible for project management alongside adults, children take their duties seriously, make and keep rules, and also contribute creative and workable ideas.

Even relatively limited involvement of children in taking responsibility for aspects of a programme can have wide benefits for everyone involved. Both children and adults gain confidence as they learn to work together. The most effective way to persuade adults of the value of participation is through experience. Showing families and community members what children can achieve will help to change attitudes and behaviours towards children at home, in schools and in community life. In the future, as participation leads to new generations of empowered, capable young adults, it could help families and communities to break out of the powerlessness of poverty and find new and effective solutions to old problems.

Experience has shown that programmes improve when children and adults share their different areas of expertise. Adults have technical and academic knowledge, and they may have experience of running programmes and projects. But children are the real experts on children; they know better than any outside observer the realities of their day-to-day lives. Involving children in planning means that programmes can respond to children's actual priorities and needs. Programme work becomes more relevant and focussed, and there is a greater chance that children will be committed to the process and its outcomes.



***When is participation 'real'?***

There is no single, agreed definition of children's participation, but it can be thought of in practical terms as ways of incorporating 'their specific needs and views into decision-making processes within the context of what is possible institutionally and culturally' (Johnson et al, 1998, xvii). Well-meaning projects and project workers sometimes claim that children are participating when, in fact, the decisions, plans and actions are those of adults. For programme work to be described as participation in the sense used in this Handbook, children must be respected and empowered, which means that their presence in activities must be more meaningful than wearing T-shirts or carrying banners printed with slogans, giving speeches and singing songs saying that they are 'the future'; all in words that are likely to have been written by adults. The forms such false participation may take are usually described as 'manipulation', 'tokenism' or 'decoration' (Hart, 1992):

- \* Manipulation: Adults consciously or unconsciously imply that the ideas they are promoting are actually those of children. They may write a speech for a child to read, or provide banners for demonstrations, or use children's words or drawings out of context, so that the original meaning is distorted;
- \* Decoration: Adults use children to promote a cause they do not fully understand, by wearing a T-shirt printed with a slogan, or handing out flowers and papers to delegates at a conference, singing a song or acting in a drama created by adults;
- \* Tokenism may result from the good intentions of adults who sincerely wish to involve children, but do not fully understand what this means. Typically they will chose a few articulate, but not representative, children, or a group they work with directly, and bring them to a conference to represent 'children' or 'working children'. The children are present, and possibly know what the conference is about, but they have little chance to participate meaningfully; they do not have time or information to formulate their own opinions; they may speak but adults neither listen to nor hear what they say; they have little or no choice about the subject or the style of communication. More importantly they have not been given the opportunity to consult with the group of children they are supposed to represent (Hart, 1997).

## Children's participation

### Involves

- Recognizing the value of children's knowledge and opinions;
- Sharing experiences and expertise with children;
- Learning from children;
- Finding ways to make it easy for children to make decisions and implement them;
- Helping children and adults to understand their rights and responsibilities;
- Sharing power with children;
- Working towards respect for the rights of younger citizens.

### Does not involve

- Suggesting to children what they should think or say;
- Thinking adults have nothing to learn;
- Devaluing adults' experience and expertise;
- Using children to do adults' work;
- No rights for adults and no duties for children;
- Handing over all power to children;
- Keeping things the way they are now.

## WHY SHOULD CHILDREN PARTICIPATE?

*The rights of children should be respected.  
Very young children should not have to work.  
Work should be physically appropriate for children.*

*From Statement of Fourth Regional Meeting of Working Children and Youth,  
Managua, Nicaragua, 1996*

Children's participation is no longer a pleasant idea for the future or a matter for negotiation - it is a right. Even though it is not part of traditional culture anywhere in the world, any more than it is in Asian societies, children's right to participate is a human right.

Current human rights law is based on the United Nations (UN) Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), itself rooted in over two centuries of ideas and legislation. The guiding principles are respect for human dignity, and the rights to life, freedom, equality and participation. As human beings, children are entitled to all these rights. This is emphasized in the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), which also clarifies the statements in the Universal Declaration and later human rights documents that children have special entitlements to provision and protection so that they can develop their human potential.

Thus children's right to participation is not new, but the CRC refines what this means. In the first place, children have a right to participate in decisions made on their behalf, progressively as their knowledge and understanding develops (Article 12). The CRC also makes provision for them to receive, or have access to, information to help them participate meaningfully, as well as education so that they are aware of their rights and can become responsible citizens (Articles 17 and 29). They also have the right to express their opinions in forms that may be easier for them than the spoken and written ways used by adults (Article 13). In addition, they have the right to form organisations to represent their own interests (Article 15: further details of this and other articles mentioned can be found in the final section of this Handbook).

Besides being a right, children's participation is now recognised as a practical necessity in programming. Policies and activities for children designed by adults, without taking children's views and experiences into account, frequently fail because they are irrelevant, unattractive or even harmful for children. Shared responsibility with children, and an equal interchange of views, helps to plan, implement and evaluate successful programmes.

## WHY SHOULD CHILD WORKERS PARTICIPATE?

*I have come to know about my rights:  
My rights to education, to protection, to health and play.  
Before I didn't even know I had rights.  
Now I have this information I can do something.*

*Indian boy rag-picker, aged 13,  
Source: O'Kane, 2000*

Child labour is an obstacle to children's development. The CRC makes provision for them to be protected from harmful work, especially from working when they are too young (Article 32). This is related to the labour standards of the International Labour Organisation (ILO), a UN specialist agency that has been working to abolish child labour since 1919. The ILO approach at first was to set a minimum age for entry to employment in various Conventions, which were later united in a single Convention (138) in 1973. But the CRC concern about the harm caused by child labour to children's overall development, as well as increasing information about the immense scale of child labour, stimulated considerable international debate throughout the 1990s, which culminated in a new ILO Convention (182) being adopted in 1999. This Convention defines the 'worst forms of child labour' and insists that all ratifying countries develop action plans to eliminate these forms, through consultation between governments, employers organisations and trade unions, 'taking into consideration the views of other concerned groups'. ILO Recommendation 190, which provides guidance on how to implement Convention 182, makes it clear that 'other concerned groups' includes working children. Thus working children not only have the right to form organisations to protect their interests under Article 15 of the CRC, they also must be consulted about actions to eliminate the worst forms of child labour under ILO Convention 182. They are recognised as being among the 'concerned groups' or 'stakeholders'. The most recent global report on child labour from the ILO recommends promoting 'new ways to ensure that the voices and perspectives of children, their parents and the communities in which they live and work are heard and taken into account when action to combat child labour is discussed, planned and implemented at all levels, from local to international' (ILO, 2002: See the final section of this Handbook for more detailed information about ILO labour standards on child labour).

This is a new and powerful approach. Until recently, few programmes working to address child labour recognised children as the primary stakeholders. Discussions about child labour were carried out by adults alone. Actions that aimed to help child labourers were planned, implemented and evaluated without asking children what they thought. The result was decisions that did not always have the best outcomes for child labourers; well-intentioned actions that sometimes had disastrous consequences for children. For example, campaigns to stop factories employing child labourers result in children losing their jobs and being forced to work in more hazardous conditions, such as in prostitution, in order to earn the money their families need for survival.

Although it is extremely difficult to provide accurate statistics, the ILO estimate is that nearly a quarter of the world's children above the age of four years are working; just over half in worst forms of child labour. Asia-Pacific is home to largest number, accounting for about 60% of all working children aged 5-14 years, which means that one child in five in the region is working.

### ***Children's participation in actions to address child labour***

Children's participation is particularly relevant to the worst forms of child labour, because child labourers are among the most disempowered members of any society; disadvantaged not only because of the work they do but also because their families and communities are usually excluded from power. They usually lack knowledge of, and access to, social protection and basic services. Through being able to access information about their rights and express their own views children can develop a sense of self-protection, empowering them to recognise and challenge violations of their rights. Moreover, adults can only act to protect a child when they know what is happening in the child's life, and to do this they need to listen to and respect what children say about their experiences. By acting as a group, with other working children, supported by adults and non-working children, child labourers are able to defend their own rights and at the same time develop greater self-esteem.

### ***Special considerations for children's participation in child labour programmes***

Including children's participation in programming is rarely simple, and requires patience, flexibility, creativity and often considerable work to build partnerships and gain support and acceptance with families, communities and the authorities. Participatory programming in this field is particularly challenging because of:

- Low education and skills development: Child labourers, and their families often have little or no formal education. They may have poor literacy and language skills, and no experience of making, or even looking at, drawings and maps. Adult facilitators need to be creative in finding appropriate methods to help such children express themselves, record research findings, receive information and perform other tasks;
- Lack of support networks: In Asia in particular, child workers may be far from home because of migration or trafficking. They may not be living with family members and can be excluded by the society in which they work, through ethnic or national status or inability to speak the local language. They may be illegal migrants, subject to arrest. Thus it will take longer to gain their trust and willingness to participate in a programme;
- Time and availability: Child labourers often work long hours and combine this with household chores and study, so they have little free time or energy for participating in programme work. Progress may be slow because participatory activities have to fit children's schedules. Parents of child labourers may think participation is a waste of valuable time and put obstacles in children's way;
- Sensitivity of child labour issues: Some worst forms of child labour, such as prostitution and bonded labour, involve activities that are illegal and considered immoral and shameful. Even if the type of work is legal for adults, children's employment or their working conditions may be illegal. Adults, especially employers, but also other community members and authorities, may not welcome programme work on these issues or with these children. This can make participatory (or any) action complicated and even dangerous. Thus, programme managers should take care that activities do not put children or staff at risk. Awareness raising and seeking partnerships with employers, police and legal services and others are long term strategies for dealing with this difficulty;
- Access to child labourers: Linked to the issues of sensitivity and time, it can be hard to make contact with children in the worst forms of child labour, usually because their employers restrict their freedom. It can be difficult for these children to overcome both practical obstacles and their own fears in order to participate in regular programme work, or even to share their experiences;

- Psychosocial impacts: The worst forms of child labour can cause psychological and emotional harm. Programme managers should ensure that they are able to deal with these effects, either within the programme or through referral to other competent organisations. Other children who have overcome similar injuries are often able to provide understanding support and can be encouraged to do so.

## WHAT ARE THE RULES?

*I like [an adult] who helps me think and get answers for myself.*

*Nine year old, Zimbabwe  
UNESCO 1996; Source: O’Kane, 2000*

The rules for adults working with children are all based on the principles of human rights: respect, dignity, equality and protection from harm.

### **Mutual respect**

Children’s participation should take place in an atmosphere of mutual respect. All participating children should know and feel that their contributions are valued and their comments are listened to, regardless of age, disability, gender, ethnic group or poverty. Adults should be respectful towards children, and children should be encouraged to be respectful towards each other as well as towards adults; respect should be practiced equally, reflecting each individual’s dignity, value and rights as a human being. This is a different meaning of ‘respect’ from traditional Asian respect for age, strength, social status, wealth or religious and political authority. Respect in the human rights sense is the reverse of this, requiring a conscious decision not to use power or authority, so that everyone can participate as equals. Adults must be careful that their words and behaviour enhance children’s self-esteem. This can take time and self-reflection. In addition, adults have to learn to be open to change in response to constructive criticism of their behaviour from both other programme staff and children.

Adults can show respect for children by:

- Asking for their opinions and permission: making sure tone of voice, body language and choice of words do not make a child feel obliged to give a particular answer;
- Listening to what children say: allowing children time and space to reflect and talk; considering their views and responding constructively; making sure children know they can disagree without negative consequences; not interrupting when children speak, and not allowing other children or adults to interrupt;



- Explaining decisions and actions: showing children why their suggestion might not be practical, and why another course of action might be more successful or appropriate;
- Acknowledging all forms of expression: children have their own forms of expression, and varying levels of communication skills. Programme staff should accept the way children express themselves, create conditions in which they can feel most comfortable and focusing on what children try to communicate rather than how they do it;
- Negotiating appropriate dress and behaviour: adults who dress formally may intimidate children who are dressed in old and torn clothes and it may make them feel inferior. On the other hand, adults who clearly take little care over their dress, behaviour and appearance can also make children feel they are not respected. This issue can be discussed with children and standards agreed. Children sometimes complain that teachers, programme staff and others show disrespect by carrying on distracting conversations with each other as if the children were not present, falling asleep or even arriving drunk. This kind of behaviour is as unacceptable with children as it is with adults;
- Equality of treatment: children often receive second-class treatment in conferences and similar events compared to the adult participants, in terms of accommodation, transportation, food and other facilities. The children may in fact prefer more informal arrangements than the adults, and might feel bored or intimidated in environments designed to please adult tastes and needs. However, if the children are not offered choices, they may feel they are not as valued as the adults. Of course, adults can also change their ways to be more informal and inclusive of children.

### ***Access to information***

Children cannot take effective decisions or plan appropriate activities without accurate, full and up-to-date information that they can understand. Adults supporting children's participation must ensure that the children have all the relevant information about the topic, through explanation in writing or some other appropriate form. Texts, tape recordings, visual media, posters, and presentations in children's meetings are all possible alternative ways to present information to children.

Adults can help children to develop the skills they will need to gather their own information. Adults can also help children to access sources of information in libraries, through interviews with officials and by access to the Internet. Finding information should be followed by developing the skills of analysis, including judging the quality of information from different sources. Organisations have a responsibility to help children share information and ideas with other children, even those in other countries, for example through their participation in regional or international meetings or through the Internet. Most of all, working children in programmes can help to reach out to other working children with information about their rights.

### ***Informed consent***

To ensure that children's participation is voluntary, they should give their informed consent before any participatory activity starts. This entails providing answers to five key questions:

- Why are they being asked to participate?
- What is expected of them in terms of commitments, time and other inputs?
- What are the possible outcomes of their participation - positive and negative?
- How can children be empowered to take decisions be influenced by other actors, in the programme and beyond?
- What kinds of material, financial and human support can children expect from the organisation or its partners, now and in the future?

Even after they have given their consent, children always have the right to change their minds and withdraw from an activity or programme. It should be clear that any benefits or assistance provided - such as counselling, transport or protection - will still be available, even if they decide to stop participating.

Consent does not always have to be given formally as long as children are genuinely free to decide to take part or withdraw. Nevertheless, for some activities, formal consent is required, for example if there is a chance, however small, that the activity will put them at risk; if it involves travel away from home; if children's writings, drawings or

photographs may be shared inside or outside the project. In research, it is common practice to ask participants to sign consent forms as written records of their consent. If children are unable to read or understand a consent form, other ways of recording their consent must be found.

Programme managers are responsible for ensuring that any journalists, researchers or others who meet the children through their programme respect the same rules about children's consent and their right to withdraw.

It is often (but not always) desirable also to seek approval for children's participation from significant adults. If parents, teachers and community leaders feel they are being ignored, or refuse consent, they can make it difficult for children to participate. As is the case with children's consent, adults' consent should be based on full, accurate information.

### ***Confidentiality***

The record of a meeting of children and young people held by the international non-governmental organisation ECPAT in 1999, to discuss actions children and young people can take against the sexual exploitation of children, reports that 'Confidentiality was a paramount issue for young people. This was especially true for those who participated without the knowledge of their parents' (ECPAT, 1999). All children have the right to privacy about any information that they may reveal during the course of a programme or activity - a right that must be respected both by adults and by other children. This is particularly important for child labourers, because their ability to participate, their livelihood, their dignity and even their safety may depend on them being able to keep their involvement in a programme, as well as personal information, hidden from parents, employers or traffickers.

Information provided by children should only be shared with other people with clear consent, including about how and with whom it is shared. Consent to share a child's information, photographs, writings and drawings with one colleague does not imply that the child also gives consent for the information to be shared with a wider group of people, such as other colleagues, journalists or community members.

Adults should advise children about ways their identity can be concealed, for example by obscuring their faces in photographs or by changing names of people and places.

Yet it is not always easy to protect confidentiality, particularly in research with a relatively small group of children or in a small community. Even if names and personal information are changed before the findings are shared, it may not be difficult for others in the community to guess who the information comes from or relates to. Children and adults should decide together how (and if) the information should be shared.

All rules have exceptions. The rules of confidentiality can be overruled by the adult duty to protect children - but not without considerable discussion and agreement between colleagues. If children's work or lifestyle puts them in immediate danger it may sometimes be necessary to take action for their protection without first informing them, or even against their wishes. Project staff in frequent contact with children should be trained to recognise signs of abuse, whether inflicted by others or by the child (such as self-harm or drug use). Members of staff could also be trained to offer at least preliminary counselling, and programme managers must establish mechanisms for considering whether a child should be immediately removed from a situation, if police should be involved, and under what circumstances a child's decision against intervention should be overruled. Children have the right to be involved in decisions made on their behalf about their future or their involvement in any legal proceedings.

### ***Protecting children***

Managers are responsible for ensuring that children are protected from physical, psychological, emotional, developmental and moral harm while they are participating in programmes. Child labourers are particularly vulnerable human beings, which means that this responsibility must be a prime consideration in planning and implementation.

Prevention is better than cure, so it is also wise to think ahead and establish links with police, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), local government and lawyers that could help. They may need awareness-raising and capacity building on children's participation, children's rights, and how to work with traumatised children. The most effective partners for this kind of sensitisation are children, who can provide far better evidence about their own lives than adults would ever be able to offer. Participation of this kind can be integral to rehabilitation and reintegration processes, helping to rebuild self-esteem and equip children to protect themselves in the future so that they do not quickly fall back into exploitative situations. Some rescued children may be eager to participate in awareness-raising and advocacy, or in direct action to protect other children in the same situation. However, others may wish to forget about their

experiences and not discuss them with anyone. Such decisions must be respected.

Children in the worst forms of child labour, and any child who has suffered abuse or trauma, may be living with deeply rooted emotional and psychological wounds. Even if they appear to be strong at first, aspects of being involved in a supportive, participatory project can expose these wounds, and may cause further harm if not dealt with sensitively. Working with children who have been rescued from abusive and exploitative situations requires sensitivity, experience and skills, for which programme managers may need to seek professional input or support. They should identify partners who can provide professional psychosocial support for children, making sure that the people involved also work with participatory approaches and share the programme's children's rights principles.

The responsibility to protect children also extends to potential risks within the programme. Staff must take all possible precautions to protect children from physical, sexual and emotional abuse by programme staff at all levels:

- Recruitment procedures for staff and volunteers should include checks on police records where available, as well as making sure candidates have not been dismissed from, or encouraged to leave, previous programmes because of suspicions or accusations of abuse. Children who might have encountered the person before could (or should) be consulted in the recruitment process;
- Staff contact with children must be routinely monitored and supervised by managers and other colleagues - no one is above suspicion;
- A complaints procedure for children must be established and maintained, so that children know how to go about making a complaint about the behaviour of staff, volunteers or other children, and to know that their complaint will be listened to and dealt with respectfully and efficiently.

Finally, children may put themselves or their education at risk by participating in a programme, unless there is agreement about how much time and work they can reasonably be expected contribute. Staff will need to be sensitive to individual children's situations in order to notice any potential problems relating to their participation. If there is concern that a planned or ongoing activity is unsafe or detrimental for some or all of the children, it should be discussed with the children.

### ***Equal rights to participate***

One fundamental principle of human and children's rights is that all individuals have equal rights, 'irrespective of the child's or his or her parent's or legal guardian's race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status' (CRC Article 2). Nevertheless, both children and adults may be guilty of discrimination against certain individuals or groups of people, implicitly or explicitly. Ideas about and prejudices towards other people should be challenged constructively so that all children in the programme can participate on an equal basis. Managers should lead by example, taking positive steps to ensure that girls, young children, children with disabilities and others are all consulted and respected. The ethical and practical aspects of overcoming discrimination should be discussed with children early on, and should be incorporated into shared rules about acceptable behaviour.

Although programmes should aim to eliminate all forms of discrimination, it may sometimes be more appropriate if different groups of children carry out some activities separately - for example because of their different ages, abilities or interests, because of discrimination that is so strong it would make working together impossible, or through agreement between programme staff, parents, community members or other stakeholders.

The most common grounds for exclusion and discrimination can all be challenged through programme practice:

- Age nearly always creates its own hierarchy among children, and adults may underline this by thinking that younger children cannot participate. It is important that all age groups have the chance to participate. Younger children often have different concerns to those of the older children - not least because certain types of work are associated with specific age groups. Although older, more skilled children may appear to be more suited to carry out some types of activity, such as advocacy or analyzing research data, this should not lead to exclusion of younger children. Methods and means of communication should be appropriate to ensure that no children are excluded because of their age;

- **Gender and sexuality:** Asian girls are almost always expected to maintain different standards of behaviour and morality to boys, and usually have less power and freedom, so it may take them longer to develop confidence and skills to participate. Families might make it more difficult for daughters to participate in programme work because they give them more duties in the home than are given to sons, or they may be reluctant to let daughters out of the house in the company of adults or boys who are strangers. However, it is often possible to negotiate with parents (or other responsible adults) in order to agree conditions under which they will allow girls to participate. On the other hand, boys can also suffer because of gender discrimination, especially by being expected to work away from home or in hazardous occupations. Sexually exploited boys are often overlooked by programmes, because the emphasis is so firmly on the sexual exploitation of girls. Children with different sexual orientations are often discriminated against by other children and by adults. If children are old enough to recognise different sexualities, they are also old enough to learn that this should never be a basis for discrimination. Adults should be careful not to encourage this kind of discrimination, even by making jokes that they might think are inoffensive;
- **Disabilities:** Children should not be excluded from participating because of any disability; creative ways of including them must be found. They need to be able to access the place where the activities will take place, safely and easily. Children with communication difficulties need to be included in debates, information-sharing and decisions. Games and other activities, especially so-called 'energizers', should not exclude children with mobility or communication problems;
- **Social status:** Working children tend to come from less-advantaged, less-empowered groups in society. Poor children, especially street children, can encounter considerable discrimination or may be stigmatized because of the type of work they do, as in the case of rag-pickers or children in prostitution. Within programmes, managers and other staff should not treat children differently, or expect less ability from them, because of their social status. All too often the children who participate at conferences representing working children are from more privileged backgrounds. Participatory programmes should aim to empower the disadvantaged, rather than reinforce existing inequalities in society;

- Membership of another ethnic, religious or language group: Asia is characterized by ethnic and linguistic diversity, and people are increasingly on the move in search of a better life. Trafficking and migration - illegal and legal, within countries and across borders - are bringing children who are particularly vulnerable to hazardous, exploitative labour to cities and some rural areas. These children are often those who most urgently need help, and yet they can be difficult to work with, unless programme staff are sensitive to cultural and linguistic differences and have the necessary skills, knowledge and experience. Special efforts will have to be made to reach illegal migrants and children engaged in illegal activities. These children may be unwilling to participate because they fear being exposed to the authorities. As always, the most important consideration must be the best interests of the child and the safety of both children and staff.

### ***Avoiding dependency***

Participating children should not become too dependent on the organisation or the programme, economically or emotionally, nor should adults become emotionally dependent on the children they work with. Participation should help children to be stronger, to stand up for themselves and to support each other, in all aspects of their lives, not only while they are with the programme.

Programme plans should include considering what will happen when children are no longer children, or when certain goals have been achieved.

In the first place it is not helpful for children to be represented by young people who have passed the age of 18 years, although this often occurs especially in international meetings. One option is for young people to form a separate organisation to represent the interests of youth, using the participatory and decision-making skills they have learned through their participation as children. The experience of young 'graduates' from programmes using child participation can be supportive to children, but should not be an obstacle to their participation.

The second consideration is what might happen to children who are too old for a programme, who have no family or other support networks. Children in programmes often express anxiety about this. They should be prepared through participating in planning their future along with other children.



***Payment for participation***

There are differing views about whether children should be paid for their participation. Some believe all children should participate as (unpaid) volunteers on principle. Others think that it constitutes a kind of work and therefore children should be paid, especially if they lose income by taking part in the programme. This is a matter for programme policy, to be discussed and decided between children and adults. One option is a daily allowance for children who contribute to the programme. Another is to offer non-financial benefits, such as education or skills training. If outsiders offer to pay for children's attendance, for example in a meeting, it may be best for any payment to be made to the programme as a whole, rather than to individual children.

***A supportive atmosphere***

The atmosphere in which children participate should be friendly and relaxed. This will encourage children to participate and help overcome their shyness or fear; making them feel comfortable to choose their own ways of working and expressing themselves.

The layout of the space where participation is taking place can have a strong effect on the quality of participation. Everyone (including adults) sitting in a circle on the floor, allows more freedom of movement and is more democratic than rows of desks, with an adult sitting in front like a teacher. Sitting on the floor is normal and acceptable in most of Asia, but children may feel that this emphasizes their status as children and prefer to sit in chairs or at a circle of desks.

Children may not be fully convinced at first that their participation is worthwhile, so games and recreational activities may be necessary alongside the serious work. But games should not take too much time, nor be allowed to trivialise issues and discussions. It is not the case that children will not participate without play and fun - some may even resent the waste of their time. Progress towards joint goals should provide sufficient motivation. If it does not, this is a strong indication that something is wrong with the plan or the way it is being implemented.

Children should be able to choose which adults (if any) should be present during activities. Parents and teachers may wish to be present to support their children, but the children might feel unable to participate freely when they are there. Sometimes, children will work better together without any adults (including programme staff and facilitators).

### ***Appropriate methods***

All activities and methods used with children should be appropriate to the children's age and capacities. It is an important part of adults' responsibility to find ways to involve all children, especially children for whom it might otherwise be particularly difficult to participate because they lack literacy or other skills, or have disabilities. Methods should be found that, as far as possible, balance out power relations and relative advantages and disadvantages, among the children and between children and adults.

Reading reports of participatory activities and talking to colleagues about their methods often provide useful ideas for working with children. But it is important to be creative and adaptable, making sure that methods are culturally appropriate, rather than following exact written instructions. Children can collaborate in designing methods, for example tools for collecting research data, perhaps making them more fun, more relevant and easier to use.

### ***Selecting which children participate***

In some participatory activities, it may only be possible to involve a limited number of children. As far as possible, it should be children themselves who decide which of them will participate. The principles should be the same as those of representative democracy, through which citizens elect leaders to represent their interests, who report back to those who have chosen them.

Before any selection process starts, adults should provide the children with full information about the activity or programme, and tell them what will be expected from the children who take part. Based on this, the children can identify some criteria for selection and create a shortlist of candidates who meet those criteria and would be willing to participate. The children can then take a vote on these candidates if necessary.

Some children will probably be selected more often than others. While it is important to respect the children's choice, it does not exclude other children from opportunities to benefit from experiences and skills-training. Children should be encouraged to give a variety of children a range of opportunities, and be ready to provide additional support so that less-experienced children, or children whose circumstances make participation more difficult, can be involved. Children who participate in special activities or programmes must report back to other children on their experiences and what they have learned.

When a diverse group of children participates in activities together, they may learn from each other about new skills and knowledge and about respecting differences. However, for practical (and, sometimes, cultural) reasons, it is sometimes a good idea to work separately with distinct groups of children, using different methods and activities. Such groups might bring together children with similar characteristics, such as age, gender, ethnicity, language or interests.

### **Language**

When children come from different countries, ethnic groups or regions, language can become a significant power issue and this may have a negative impact on the quality of their participation. Social status and language abilities can be closely linked, because the language spoken or the way it is used provides information about social status. An educated child may have had more opportunity to learn the national language or an international language such as English.

Programmes tend to take place in the dominant national language, or the language of the region. But there is no reason why more than one language should not be used and differences respected. Steps should be taken to ensure children are not disadvantaged or excluded because of their language skills. Visual, creative communication methods can take some of the emphasis off words, but at some point they will need to be explained. Interpreters should be sensitised about children's rights and children's participation so that they respect the children and are careful to translate everything children say and the way that they say it, rather than summarizing or correcting. Facilitators should take care that discussions and activities do not go too fast for the interpreter and child to keep up. Children using interpreters must feel free to stop or slow down the process, to ask questions and give their opinions. Other children should develop skills of listening and patience.

Children may wish to use participation as an opportunity to practise a language they are learning. In this case facilitators must be - and must encourage other children to be - patient, encouraging and helpful, and ensure that less able speakers are not excluded.

### **Celebrate**

Achievements as well as plans should be enjoyed. The completion of a participatory activity should be marked with a celebration of a job well done, of what has been learned, or success, big or small, whether this is the end of a successful planning session,

a well-attended community workshop, or a year-long programme. Celebrations need not be extravagant but should be occasions for children and adults to have fun, relax, and congratulate each other.

### ***Follow-up***

Children often complain that, once a participatory activity is over, they hear nothing more about it. If children have helped to achieve something, they should be informed about it, and about what happens as a result, even if their contribution was small. Children should always be sent materials such as outcome reports and written declarations from meetings and processes they have participated in - preferably presented in a form that they can understand easily.

It is also natural that some children may want to put their new knowledge and skills into practice by setting up their own programmes or forming their own organisations. Programme managers should be ready to discuss their plans and, if their organisation cannot provide the necessary support, help children to find others who can.

**Learning Points****Participation:**

- Takes time;
  - But does not waste time;
  - Is a learning process;
  - Is an opportunity for personal growth.
- Children's participation is not an activity, but a way of doing other activities;
  - A single participatory activity is not 'participation' - children's participation should be mainstreamed into all areas of life;
  - Children's participation is shaped by the context, by the task to be performed, and by the children and adults involved;
  - Children's participation should always be voluntary, informed, meaningful and in the best interests of the child;
  - Children's participation should empower children, especially those who are disadvantaged;
  - Children's participation should help them to develop the knowledge, attitudes and skills they need to realize their potential and become responsible, active citizens;
  - Children's participation can help them to protect themselves from harm and exploitation;
  - Projects and programmes on child labour can become more relevant, with a greater chance of achieving their overall objectives if they consult and involve children;
  - Children should not be manipulated to promote an adult agenda through decoration or tokenism;

- Care should be taken to ensure that the atmosphere in which children participate is relaxed, friendly and democratic;
- Relations between children and adults should always be respectful;
- Participation should aim to include the largest possible number of children;
- Methods and activities should be used that are appropriate to the capabilities, needs and interests of children;
- Children, rather than adults, should decide which children take on responsibilities or participate in outside activities;
- Managers must ensure that activities do not put children and staff at risk;
- Participation can be an integral part of the rehabilitation and reintegration of children in the worst forms of child labour;
- After a programme or activity finishes, celebrate with the children;
- Be sure to inform children about any developments related to their involvement;
- Discuss any follow-up children wish to plan, and help them to access the necessary support.

## REFLECTIONS CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION IS A LEARNING PROCESS FOR ADULTS

The quality of children's participation depends on the attitudes of the adults involved. Everyone has been a child, and everyone has deep-rooted beliefs about children in general, and about children at different ages, from different backgrounds and in different types of work. Adults involved in facilitating children's participation should be constantly examining their own attitudes and eliminating their prejudices about children and the contributions they can make.

Below are some questions you could ask yourself, to reflect on your own attitudes to children and their participation and to assess how children are currently involved in your programming. They can be used for study alone or as the basis for discussion and workshops with colleagues. Do not attempt to cover all the questions in one session.

### ***Childhood***

#### **What different words for 'child' or different types of children do you use?**

- Do you have different terms for children according to age?
- Do you have different terms for children according to gender?
- Do you have different terms for children according to ability?
- Do you have different terms for children according to events in their lives?
- Do you have different terms for children according to the responsibilities they undertake?
- Do you have different terms for children according to behaviour?

#### **Think about common sayings, proverbs and stories about children. Write down as many as you can:**

- What do they 'say' about attitudes to children, and about the relationship between adults and children?
- Which do you agree with? Why (or why not)?

### ***Children's participation***

#### **Think of your childhood:**

- What activities were you allowed to participate in, and at what ages?
- What activities were you prevented from participating in?
- Would it have been different if you were a different gender?
- How did adults encourage, or discourage your participation?
- At the time, did you feel that your opinions were valued?

#### **Think about some occasions in your childhood when you were:**

- Proud of what you achieved on your own or with other children;
- Disappointed with the outcomes of activities you initiated yourself or with other children;
- Frustrated because adults decided for you;
  - Did you understand their decision?
  - Was it the right decision?
  - How did you feel?
  - How did adults react?
  - At that time, did you understand their decision?

### ***Types of knowledge***

People gain knowledge through education and reading books ('academic knowledge'). They also gain knowledge through their experiences in life ('experiential knowledge'). Children's participation requires adults to recognise the value of children's experiential knowledge.

#### **What are the advantages and disadvantages of academic and experiential knowledge?**

- Think of a real child labourer you know:
  - What can academic knowledge tell you about him/her?
  - What could the child's parents or teachers tell you?
  - What could only the child tell you?



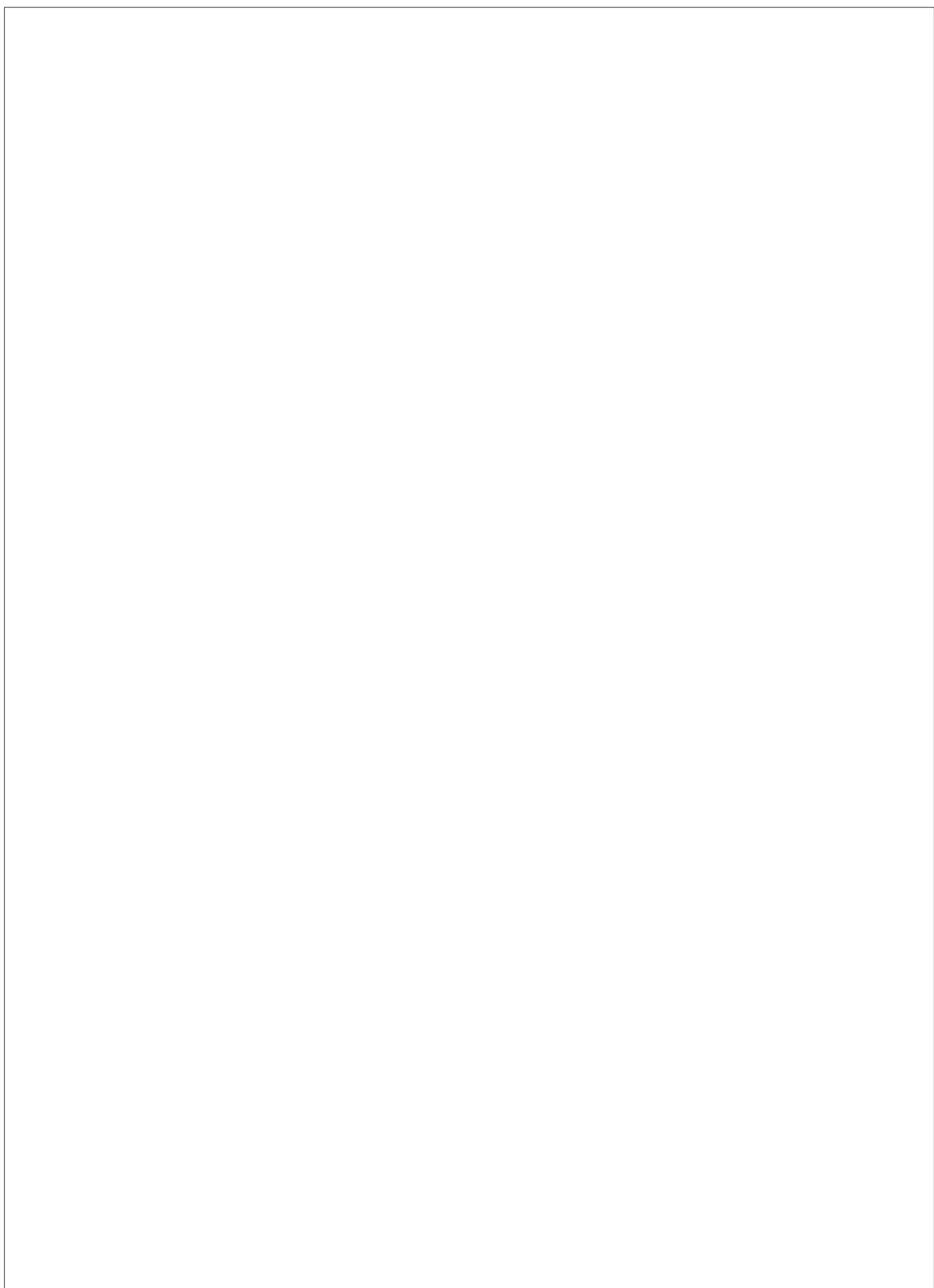
**Think of a specific child in your programme:**

What are this child's responsibilities and role(s)?

What kinds of decisions can this child take?

What kinds of decisions about this child are typically made by adults?

How could the programme benefit if this child had a more active or influential role in the programme?



## CHAPTER 2

# CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION IN PROGRAMMING

*If other NGOs try to lure us by giving free food and clothes,  
they hurt our self-respect, as they consider us beggars.*

*Indian street children,  
Source: O'Kane, 2000*

This chapter examines ways of incorporating children's participation into the cycle of a child labour programme. Some processes described allow (or even require) children to be involved throughout the cycle. However, this is not always possible or appropriate in all programmes, or with all children. When participatory work with children begins, it may be wise to involve children in one activity at a time, or at only one stage of the cycle. Nevertheless, for logical reasons, this chapter follows the full cycle of programming, beginning with making contact with children and their communities, and continuing by describing planning, implementation and monitoring.

## MAKING CONTACT

*Most people - I am not saying all,  
But most people listen to adults differently, I think...  
And just say 'Oh well she is only a child - who cares?*

*Ten year old girl, Children and decision-making study,  
Source: Johnson et al 1998*

Participatory activities involving child labourers require working closely with children who are at best disadvantaged, at worst trapped in extremely hazardous, exploitative situations, and often deliberately hidden from public view. It is relatively easy to make contact with wealthier, non-working children – through their schools or clubs, for example. Establishing working relationships with child labourers usually involves extra effort and care.

### ***Making contact with the community***

Any organisation that intends to work on child labour issues at the community level needs the cooperation of some adults in the community - enough to guarantee the safety of programme staff, children and any community members who become involved.

Although most programmes will already have contacts in communities, programme staff may not have direct contact with children or only have contact with certain groups of adults. In communities where children have been trafficked, or where employers live alongside children and their families, adults may be particularly nervous of allowing staff access to working children. Community members may also be nervous of cooperating because they fear that there will be reprisals from employers, local government or other powerful local figures. They can even view unfamiliar programme staff with suspicion as potential traffickers or abductors. Programme staff need to take these concerns seriously, try to understand them and address them in their daily work (Box 1).

One of the best ways to gain trust in the community is to form partnerships in the existing structures of power and respect. Some people may have official authority, but little respect or support in the community. Others may have no official status but they

### **1. Getting to know a community**

To understand child labour issues in communities it is useful to create maps with different groups, showing not only local landmarks and features but also where different activities take place, especially the places where child labourers work, play and meet. There are several methods of doing this, including some ways that are appropriate for people who are not accustomed to using maps.

Staff members can walk around the community with children or adults, in groups or as individuals, pointing out various features of importance, which the programme staff can record on a map as they move around. The advantages of this are that the local guide often adds useful comments and descriptions, and the staff member is seen by many community members. The disadvantage in some communities is that the activity can attract unwanted attention and curiosity, and may raise suspicion and hostility.

Maps can be made by individuals or groups using objects to represent houses, landmarks, workplaces and other buildings. Programme staff can later record this three dimensional map on paper.

In order to benefit from different perspectives on a community, as well as to get to know different groups, it is worth collecting several maps and comparing them in order to have an overview of the complexities of community life. Groups might include:

- Children (working and non-working);
- Youth;
- Adult men;
- Adult women;
- Trade unions;
- Teachers;
- Health care professionals;
- Social welfare professionals;
- Religious leaders.

Rather than simply asking for 'a map', guiding questions should be used to focus the activity on child work:

- Where do children work?
- Where do working children spend their time?
- Do girls and boys go to different places?
- What do working children do?
- Who else goes to these places?
- Where do people/children go in the rainy/dry/cold seasons?
- Where do children/working children go outside school time (holidays, weekends, evenings)?
- Where do children go for help?
- Where do people/children go for health care?

*Contributed during workshop for the Handbook  
by members of the Psychosocial Trauma and Human Rights Program,  
Center for Integrative and Development Studies, University of the Philippines*

may be widely respected. It may take time to discover who are the real community leaders who influence opinions and who can call the community together. Once the programme has their approval, it will be easier to meet other community members and gain their confidence.

### **Making contact with children**

Once the programme has gained acceptance in the community, it is time to try and make contact with children, if this has not already been achieved. Many methods are possible

- Through adults who have the trust of child workers: Ask community leaders or other partners who are trusted by children to call them to an initial meeting, at which programme staff and managers can introduce themselves and explain why they are there, gather some initial information and schedule the next meeting or activity (Box 2). In addition to more formal community leaders, meetings can include community members to whom children frequently turn to for help, such as teachers or health workers. But care and sensitivity are needed - too much involvement with unpopular or inappropriate people could close doors, and may even put children, staff or adult collaborators at risk;

## 2. Meeting children and young people

With a little creativity, a Save the Children UK project in Myanmar made contact with children in the community and overcame some unexpected difficulties.

Our team went to one village in Northern Shan State, with the aim of meeting local children and young people. We learned that, if we wished to hold gatherings with people in the community, we should get permission from the village leader. We explained that we wanted to talk about reproductive health with children and young people. The village leader gave permission and informed us that he would make arrangements for people to attend.

As it turned out, although we had said we wanted to meet with 'adolescents', a whole range of people came to the first meeting, including children, young people, adults of all ages, both male and female. A few people tended to dominate discussions. Children, young people and adults from marginalized groups did not voice their concerns.

The project coordinator suggested to the village leader that, as there was such a large group, we would split up. Older people stayed and discussed issues with her, and adolescents met elsewhere with other project staff. From the point of view of high-profile adults, the 'real' meeting was the adults' meeting, attended by the project coordinator. We found that, when children and young people were gathered together away from authority figures, they opened up. They felt safe enough to contribute to discussions and share their views.

This strategy was used for the first few visits to the village. After a while, these meetings were no longer a novelty and adults tended not to come along.

*Adapted from Aye and Maher 2003*

- Through other organisations with programmes or activities for child workers: Children in the community may already meet regularly through associations such as religious schools, young volunteers, informal clubs, and development projects, which could be good starting points for meeting children. Some preliminary enquiries may be necessary to ensure that these organisations' beliefs or activities do not compromise the project's principles or risk potential partnerships with other community members;

- By spending time in the community, observing and socializing with child workers: Programme staff can observe children's routines, talking to people who come into contact with them, such as food vendors or street educators, and initiating informal contact with a few children. Thus staff meet children in their own environment, an approach often used with street children or other children who do not have strong community links;
- Through other children (Box 3): Another popular approach is to ask current or former child workers for help in reaching others. They will know the best ways to contact children and may be able to talk to them without arousing the suspicions of employers. This can be useful for hidden groups of child workers, such as domestic servants. Once relations have been established with a few children, they may be able to help you contact more, usually by telling their friends about the programme and inviting them to the next arranged meeting or activity. By choosing the right activities and topics, it should be possible to ensure that the children the programme wishes to work with are motivated to keep coming, while the others lose interest;

### ***Building relationships with children***

Child labourers, and those at risk of child labour, may have had unpleasant experiences with adults - including some who have offered to 'help'. It is unreasonable to expect them to trust adults in the programme immediately, and share their experiences. Some children may never overcome their fear. It will take time, to establish trust, but this is essential as a basis for participatory programming, so the time is worth spending. Staff should not try to shorten the process by bringing gifts or making extravagant promises that they will not be able to keep. Sincerely treating children with respect is the only way to establish children's genuine trust and confidence.

The first meetings with children should be as informal as possible, perhaps even joining in their daily activities. In Asian cultures, eating is a social activity through which bonds are formed or strengthened. Street educators (social workers who work with street children) spend time with them on the streets, joining them in their work or games, or sitting with them chatting. When children are working in a more formal setting, it might be possible to visit their workplaces during children's break times (if they have any) or



### 3. 'Slum books'

Bidlisiw is an NGO in Cebu, Philippines, which targets working street children. In order to reach more of these children, Bidlisiw used 'slum books', which are notebooks children use to record answers to questions asked by their friends, such as:

- What are your name, contact details, aliases?
- Where are you studying?
- What's your favourite subject?
- What's your least-favourite subject?
- Who are you best friends?
- What is the name of your gang?
- Where do you hang out?
- Who is your favourite actor/actress, singer, pop group, song?
- What are your interests and hobbies?
- What is love?
- Do you have a boy/girlfriend?
- How long have you been together?

Child researchers distributed the 'slum books' among working children they knew, and the working children circulated them among their friends, who enjoyed filling them in. Children with literacy problems asked their friends to help. When the researchers finally gathered the books back, they had new contacts among working children. For ethical reasons, it is important that all children who fill in these books are informed of their purpose and what will be done with the information. Of course, 'slum books' would not be the most appropriate name in some settings and with some children, but the method remains the same whatever the book is called.

*Adapted from Protacio-de Castro et al 2002*

at the end of their shift, although such meetings should not put children in danger from employers or place a strain on their energies. During these meetings, staff can ask about children's lives and problems, showing that they are genuinely interested and willing to listen. If children have a problem that is relatively easy for programme staff to solve, doing so can help to demonstrate that they are genuinely able to help children.

From their first contact with children and in every subsequent encounter, staff and managers should follow all the other principles of participation described in Chapter 1. It is important for children to be convinced that these principles apply all the time, not only during isolated programme activities.

## PLANNING WITH CHILDREN

*Those who will live in the house should plan the house.*

*Udaya Prasad (13 years) from Sri Lanka  
Second meeting of the CWA South Asian Task Force on Children's Participation,  
Bangalore, India, November 2002*

Once contact is made, the logical stages in this stage of participatory programme planning are:

- Reaching a common understanding of children's participation;
- Identifying the main problems that the programme could address;
- Defining aims and objectives: Identifying what changes would help to alleviate these problems, and setting relevant, realistic objectives related to these changes;
- Identifying actions to address the problems and meet the objectives.
- Designing monitoring and evaluation methods to measure progress against these objectives;
- Identifying constraints on programme success.

The most important strategic decisions of any programme are made during the planning phase: about its overall direction, objectives and methods. Child labour interventions should have children involved from the start, to ensure that strategic decisions are based on accurate information and real understanding of children's lives, problems and aspirations. By being involved in preparation, planning and design, children can learn a lot about their own situations, gain confidence and develop useful new skills. Children are also more likely to feel committed to a programme if they feel it is theirs. If children's participation only starts during implementation of the programme, they will be working to fulfill an adult-created, and possibly irrelevant, plan.

Experience around the world has demonstrated that, with support from adults, children can be partners in the entire process of preparation, planning and design for activities and programmes - as well as implementation, monitoring and evaluation. It may not be appropriate or practical for a programme to be completely designed by children, but staff should try to involve children in identifying problems and objectives as well as the best methods and approaches to use.

### ***Reaching a common understanding of children's participation***

Before any participatory activity with children starts, it is important for children and adults involved to discuss children's participation and agree on a definition in the context of the programme or activity. This definition should be recorded so that it can be referred to, and perhaps adjusted, later. Having agreed upon this definition, children and adults need to discuss the roles, responsibilities and expectations of everyone involved. This should be detailed, so that everyone has a clear understanding of their own roles and responsibilities, and what they can expect from others.

### ***Identifying problems***

The process of identifying problems is often called a 'situation analysis' and describes what is known and what is being done, as well as the resources available. A situation analysis should be based on quality, relevant data from a variety of sources. Much of the data will come from traditional adult sources - government statistics, health and legal experts, as well as research and reports about earlier programmes. It is essential to include a wide variety of views from children who are involved, their families and communities. The only way to obtain this kind of information is to talk to the children themselves.

Ideally, the sources for a situation analysis should include participatory research carried out with or by children in the target group. At a minimum, this can provide more accurate and relevant data on children and their situations. It can also be the first stage of participatory planning. Children's participation can bring a new level of insight and relevance to child labour research (Box 4). Nobody knows better than children about the realities of their lives; nobody is in a better position to reach significant numbers of their peers; and nobody has a clearer idea of what they consider important, what worries them, and what their priorities are.

#### 4. The advantages of child participation in research

ActionAid researchers used participatory approaches in research with children in rural areas of Nepal, as well as in the African countries of The Gambia and Kenya. They concluded that this was extremely helpful for programmers.

The research project was conceived to explore the roles of children in households and communities. Central to this was a study of their work burdens and how these vary with changing physical and social environments. Through the process of the research, there was a gradual realization that understanding what children think and do is fundamental to improving children's quality of life and to alleviating poverty...

It has too often been assumed that children will not know or do not have the capacity to participate in a process of consultation and planning. However, as we have seen from the research their perspectives about their lives and work are important to understand. Their work is often vital to the livelihood strategies within households, although often invisible and not fully acknowledged. In advocating the involvement of children in this way, we are not talking about acting upon everything that children say or demand; we need to consider children's perspectives alongside other perspectives within and outside the household and in the context of power relations in their society.

*Source Johnson et al 1995*

For most adult researchers, participatory research with children involves attitudes and skills that may be different from those with which they are familiar. A substantial amount of time should be allowed for capacity building of adult participants in the research. In the latest models of 'participatory action-oriented research' on child labour, adults aim to be facilitators and advisors for research about topics identified by children, and largely carried out by children. This may not be possible at first, as is the case with all participatory processes, and children's roles vary, but they can participate in every stage of the research process, even data analysis and report writing, if supported by adults (RWG-CL, 2003).

### 5. Children's research is empowering

Prema was elected to the *makkala panchayat*, or children's local council, in her village and she later became the *panchayat* president. She was a member of Bhima Sangha, the organisation of working children linked to the NGO The Concerned for Working Children (CWC). Bhima Sanga members decided that they needed more information about the causes of child labour and the resources available in their communities if they were to influence local government to take corrective action and achieve the aim of 'child labour free villages'. They decided to carry out a household-level survey in 12,000 households and asked CWC for help to design this research. Prema supervised the survey in her cluster of villages.

Prema was also chosen to present the survey findings to the local adult *panchayat*, and argue the case for recommendations and demands from the results of the children's research. Prema's moment of glory came when her former teacher stood up in a *panchayat* meeting and honoured her. Although he had previously decided that she was a poor student, he was amazed at her capacity to handle the complexity of the survey as well as at her presentation skills. He apologized for what he had said when she was in school and praised her intelligence and leadership qualities.

*Adapted from The Concerned for Working Children website ([www.workingchildren.org](http://www.workingchildren.org))*

A situation analysis for a programme that intends to involve children's participation should include research on factors that will influence the participation: social attitudes towards children, local concepts of childhood and child development, and children's status and responsibilities in various spheres and among different groups. Special consideration should be given to gender, ethnicity, language, class, disability and attitudes to children in particular forms of work.

Children can (indeed should) be involved in organising data that have been collected and drawing conclusions. Both children and adults can learn from each other if they collaborate in this process (Box 5). Children can help adults to see cause-and-effect relationships, and cast new light on the reliability of the different data sources. At the same time, adults help children to analyse their own situations in a new way, and to see them in a wider context. This can also teach them about the hidden risks and longer-term impacts of their current work, their future plans and their parents' work.

**Define objectives**

Child labour programmes have a far greater chance of success when their aims, objectives and methods are understood and supported by the children involved. The best way to ensure this is to involve children in defining both problems and solutions (Box 6).

**6. Adults' objectives or children's objectives?**

Child Brigade, a street children's organisation in Dhaka, Bangladesh, supported by Save the Children Sweden, learned through experience the importance of including children in setting objectives. Although the Child Brigade has a children-centred philosophy, the first 'participatory' activity the children were involved in was actually planned by adults. The children were accustomed to making a living by collecting rubbish on an informal basis. The adult planners in Child Brigade thought it would give the activity more dignity and meaning if the children's daily activity became a more formal 'waste-management' programme, with the children going from door to door collecting rubbish, sorting it into different types of waste and disposing of it appropriately. As they found out, the children did not agree.

The waste-management programme had never been the children's initiative, but always an outside agenda. For the environmentally-aware adult development professionals in Save the Children Sweden, the waste management programme seemed a logical, and far more desirable, development of the rubbish collecting activities in which the children were already engaged. The children saw things quite differently. In the first place they felt ashamed and faced humiliation from families and neighbours for doing what they saw as low caste, sweepers' work, which is stigmatised in Bangladesh society. Secondly, for the children, the experience of work and the rhythm of life it involved defined the task, rather than any objective to be achieved. Seen this way, ordered door to door collection, together with sorting and disposal of waste, was completely different from their previous free, wandering gathering of rubbish, which could be done at their own pace, when and where they chose. Independence is one of the chief joys of street-working children. It is a measure of their commitment to Child Brigade that they were willing to compromise this to such a great extent. ...

The close of the waste management programme marked a major shift for Child Brigade, in which it re-claimed and re-centred its basic aims and vision of self-development and street networking.

*Source: Adapted from White 2001*

Before becoming involved in setting objectives, children should have the opportunity to familiarize themselves with the results of the situation analysis (especially if they were not involved in carrying it out), and to discuss these with each other. This may be time-consuming, particularly if there is much information to absorb (for example in a programme at national or regional level). Adults may need to facilitate discussions among children in workshops, taking care that information is presented to children in a way that is suited to their age, experience and abilities, avoiding complicated or technical language. The process should not be shortened by omitting information – even if it seems too complicated or inappropriate for children, it may be important to their understanding.

Children's participation at this stage of planning and design should take place in a workshop – a day should be long enough in most cases, although working children may not be able to spare a whole day, in which case they may want to choose a few representatives from among themselves to participate (after a full discussion of the situation analysis and what children want from the programme), or to spread the process over several shorter sessions. Programme staff and managers should share their experience and knowledge with children during this stage, to ensure that the objectives and activities children identify are realistic, and to alert children to potential obstacles that they may not foresee, as well as to objectives they may not envisage.

One important objective, or set of objectives, concerns participation itself and should be based on the common understanding of participation already decided between children and adults. In addition to an overall participation goal, which children and adults wish to reach with respect to their relationships and ways of working with each other, each stage of the programme should have some objectives such as 'By the time the situation analysis is completed, children will have learned to collect and analyse data', or 'Once the project plan is complete, children will be holding, and keeping records of, their own meetings', or 'Before programme implementation begins, adults will be skilled in reporting back to children in ways children can understand easily'. Working children should be able to help identify objectives for this, once they are able to recognise and discuss the relationships that have previously impeded their interactions with parents, employers and project staff.



### ***Planning action***

Planning should be a collaboration not only between programme staff and children, but between all partners and stakeholders. Depending on the situation, it is probably better initially to hold separate planning workshops with working children and with adult stakeholders, so that individual children will not feel intimidated by the adults. However, before the programme/project plan is finalized, it is necessary for the different groups' problems, objectives and suggestions to be shared and discussed, in order to resolve any conflicts or contradictions between them. Different groups of children and adults should retain ownership of, and varying degrees of responsibility for, their own sets of objectives, indicators and activities.

### ***The programme document***

The results of situation analysis and the plan of action should be recorded in a document, which may be called a programme or project document, or a strategy or action plan. Whatever the name, it should have four parts:

- Where are we now? (Situation analysis);
- Where do we want to go? (Aims and objectives);
- How are we going to get there? (Details of implementation - what will be done, by whom, where, when, how and how much it will cost);
- How well are we succeeding? (Plans for monitoring and evaluation).

Unless it is the intention that children will implement and manage the programme themselves, it may not be necessary to involve them in the process of drafting this document. It will probably need to be in a form suitable for donors or senior managers to read. But children should be involved in the process in ways agreed between children and adults, and appropriate to children's skills and skill development. Adults must find ways of reporting back to children and receiving their comments on the document, and should prepare a final document that is easy for children to understand and agree to ('children-friendly'), as well as making copies for them to keep. Documents that children find easy to understand may include cartoons, easy words, extra explanations, and should not be so simplified that they are superficial, or only contain 'good news' and empty promises. Children should also have a copy of the plan that is shared with donors and senior managers - even if they cannot read it. A copy of the programme document shared with children should be attached to the adult document - it may serve to sensitise donors and senior management about children's participation.

Reviewing a draft programme document is not a good point to introduce children into the planning and preparation process. It is too late at this stage for them to suggest radical changes that would better reflect their views and priorities. As they will be aware that the plan has been made by adults, Asian children are likely to feel it disrespectful to disagree with it or to cause adults inconvenience and extra work by suggesting changes.

### **Limitations**

When programme managers are planning programmes and activities that will involve children's participation, particularly working children's participation, they need to be sensitive to other aspects of children's lives that may need more urgent responses. Children cannot be expected to take decisions and plan activities throughout the programme's lifetime if they are hungry, ill, exhausted, frightened or abused. Staff should be alert and ready to provide support.

The time element cannot be sufficiently emphasized. Any activity or programme involving children's participation always takes longer than it would if they were not participating. Children need time to learn about the topics and processes involved. It is essential that they have time to access, think about and discuss relevant information, as well as to turn to adults for further clarification. There are no short cuts and it is wise to be adaptable and adjust timetables and schedules when necessary. The long term reward is better programmes and enhanced skills. Children's participation is a learning process: for programme staff, for children and for any other adults involved - including donors and senior management. Children and adults need to learn to work together - even if they have prior experience of participatory processes.

The timing and location of participatory activities should make them as accessible as possible to the greatest number of children. This may entail resources to provide transport, food and protection for children. Work, household chores and study may put limitations on the times that working children are free to participate, so schedules should take this into account. It may also be necessary to provide food and drink, washing facilities and a place to rest and relax – some children will be dirty and exhausted coming straight from work, they may be under-nourished or have missed meals in order to participate. Other commitments may affect children's availability to participate; or they may change their minds about participation, perhaps due to pressure from other children, adults or the attractions of other programmes; so it is necessary to some extent to expect - and leave space in the plan for - the unexpected.

### ***Awareness-raising and training***

Children's participation can be a difficult concept for people to accept, especially in cultures where age, respect and status are closely linked. It may be more difficult when children who participate belong to a group that is treated with mistrust or contempt, such as street children, children in prostitution, some ethnic minorities, beggars and children of low caste or class. To overcome these difficulties, programme managers should plan to provide sensitisation and awareness raising and, eventually, skills training on child rights, child labour and children's participation – not only for programme staff, but potentially for all partners and all adult stakeholders. This kind of awareness-raising may be needed to obtain the consent and cooperation of parents, community leaders, local government and employers for participatory work to take place.

This is also true outside the local context. At national and regional levels awareness raising and skills training for media and opinion leaders may help to create a helpful, enabling environment for children's participation by supporting programme philosophy and actions.

### ***Donors***

Programmes are dependent on the funds they receive and not all donors are sensitive to children's participation, or they may be aware of children's right to participate but think this should be limited to taking part in activities, rather than defining objectives and planning programmes. Donors have their own philosophies, objectives and requirements, and there are fashions in the activities they fund. Thus funding may be available for specific issues, such as HIV/AIDS or trafficking, which children may not identify as a priority (Box 6). The result is that programmes that rely funds from donors may be obliged, at least at first, to reflect these policies and preferences.

Nevertheless, this does not mean accepting funds and changing plans accordingly. A more appropriate long-term strategy is to adjust plans to fit reduced resources rather than to change programme philosophy. Demonstrating what can be achieved with less money, and showing that objectives are worthwhile, may attract donor funding in the long run. In the mean time, building donor capacity about children's participation could become a new objective of the programme. In addition, children should be informed about what they can realistically expect from donors. Above all, programme managers should be open and honest with children about how a source of funding is likely to restrict their freedom in planning and implementation, through information about

potential donors' priorities and preference. Children should not be encouraged to make plans believing they will get donor support, when it is clear that they will not. In addition, children should be consulted about decisions to accept or reject funds if a donor's conditions or requirements will affect programme plans.

## IMPLEMENTATION

*Our voice is stronger when we are all together.*

*Street boys in Indian project  
Source: O'Kane, 2000*

Once plans are made they have to be put into practice, or 'implemented'. Implementation is not a rigid process of following planning documents to reach objectives, but an ongoing learning process for children and adults. Even agreed rules for participation can be reviewed and adjusted to reflect changing circumstances and the developing capabilities of both children and adults. Children and adults should meet regularly to share their observations and experiences, to identify and solve problems, adjust plans and monitor progress towards objectives. Managers should make time to pay frequent visits to places where the programme takes place, to meet children, and observe the ways children and adults interact.

### ***Establishing rules of behaviour***

Every programme needs a set of 'ground rules' to guide implementation, which should be identified and agreed by staff, children and other stakeholders. Most organisations already have their own rules, and these should be shared with children. Individuals may have their own principles or needs, which they would like to see in the rules of behaviour (for example related to their religious beliefs). Some issues that could be covered by the rules are:

- Respect for, and how to deal with, rules and principles that organisations and individuals bring with them, for example related to their religious belief or culture;
- No discrimination;
- Respecting confidentiality;
- Attending meetings, and being on time;
- Processes for resolving unexpected problems and disputes, particularly between children and adults;

- Unacceptable behaviours (including issues such as sexual or physical abuse, drug-taking, drunkenness and stealing);
- Complaints procedures.

The rules should include defining who will be responsible for enforcement. Everyone should have an equal right to make complaints or reports when somebody breaks the rules, and systems should be established for doing this. The rules must be followed as strictly by adults as by children; if an adult breaks the rules, children must be able to see that appropriate action is taken. Systems for making complaints and suggestions, as well as for conflict resolution may require someone outside the programme to be appointed to make final judgements if problems cannot be solved internally. Box 7 shows how the Bangladesh street children's organisation Child Brigade dealt with a case of bullying, illustrating that the democratic principles underlying participation promote good citizenship.

Rules and mechanisms should be agreed with children for giving feedback and making complaints about sensitive issues. Mechanisms could include a (locked) box in a place where it is not too easy to see, for posting anonymous or confidential notes that can be opened by a members of staff or a child or children who have been agreed to have responsibility for dealing (confidentially) with these messages. Rules of behaviour should also cover how such complaints are handled and investigated, and who they can, or cannot, be discussed with. Children must be aware of, and confident about, the degree of support and protection they can expect if do make complaints. Staff should be careful about how complaints are recorded in progress reports, remembering that they represent opportunities to learn lessons rather than respond negatively to criticism.

Adults often expect children to suggest lenient rules that are likely to lead to chaos. But in practice, children's rule may be strict. Most children fully understand and support necessary rules and discipline, and will make constructive suggestions if they are convinced about the project's objectives and benefits, and their own role in realizing them. They are also more likely to follow rules, and put pressure on others to follow them, if they have been involved in drafting them.

## 7. Conflict resolution in the Child Brigade

Child Brigade, the only direct project of Save the Children Sweden in Bangladesh, is an organisation of street children in Dhaka, owned and run by the children themselves. One adult from Save the Children Sweden is attached to the project as facilitator/ animator and two others assist as volunteers. This story shows how the one of the adults helped children deal with a major breach of the Brigade's rules of behaviour. This is an illustration of what children's participation in a project can mean in practice.

The meeting begins ordinarily enough. Mainly the younger boys are present, so Bhaiya, the adult who works with them, asks them about why they joined the group, what they have done before, what they like and dislike about being in Child Brigade. Then it comes out. 'What we dislike', one of them says, 'Is when the older boys beat us'. This is a shock, because a ban on beatings is one of the strictest rules of Child Brigade. So we ask what he means, and the story of the previous day tumbles out.

It happened at the end of the meeting. As often, they felt like messing about when the work was finished, so as they came outside a game started, hiding each other's shoes. Most of the shoes were soon found, but Salauddin's were still missing. Salauddin raged; they couldn't just have disappeared! At last Ashraf and Nuru, two of the younger boys, admitted they had seen Kamal hide Salauddin's shoes in the drain. Salauddin was furious, and so was Kamal. Losing his temper completely, Kamal attacked the younger boys and yelled that Child Brigade was finished, he would tell everyone what rubbish it was, he would see that it was destroyed.

As the story ends, everyone falls silent. Then Bhaiya speaks: 'This is something serious, what are we going to do about it, how will we sort it out? We can't just let it go, or Kamal might go on and beat someone else again another time. How do they generally deal with it, when one of the members breaks one of their rules?' The answer comes readily: they hold a *bichar*, a hearing amongst themselves to decide the rights and wrongs of the case and determine punishment. Ashraf is visibly upset. It is already bad enough, and he doesn't want Kamal to get into any more trouble because of him. 'If I did wrong and my elder brother beat me', Ashraf explains, 'Would I call for a *bichar*?'

The group talks over what they should do. Kamal isn't there, so they cannot hold a proper *bichar*. But they could do a mock one, with someone standing in for Kamal, as a way of talking through the options and working out what should be done. What kind of punishment could they use? One would be to give Kamal a beating, such a beating that would pay back in one go all the beatings that he has given. But beating is against their rules. So what are the alternatives? Expel Kamal from the group, or end his training course? Mahbub suggests: 'Kamal could forfeit half of his earnings from poster pasting for this month'.

Who will act as Kamal in the mock *bichar*? Sumon, one of the newer members, stands up. He was there, he saw everything that happened, he is confident that he can act Kamal's part.

Salauddin has been quiet, distancing himself from the process, so Bhaiya asks him directly: Is a *bichar* needed?

Salauddin's answer is equivocal: It is needed and not needed. And then he goes on to explain: 'Kamal,' he says, '*Mar kheyee boro hoyecche* (he has grown up being beaten)'.

Bhaiya takes this up. He asks the group: 'Do we need to know what Kamal has been through if we are to judge what he has done?' So they talk about Kamal.

As they talk, Kamal and Shapan enter. For a moment or two it is awkward. They clearly sense, or were expecting, what is going on, because they walk deliberately straight through into the back room to eat some bread they have brought. For a moment all is quiet, then Bhaiya reviews the story of the morning again. 'The point that matters is that their rules were broken. It is not about revenge or to show Kamal up in a bad light. Part of making rules is about writing them down so that everyone will remember'. Nazrul chips in, 'But more important is that people really take them to heart.'

As Kamal and Shapan join the group, Bhaiya shifts direction. 'The greatest issue of all,' he says, 'Is trust'. He knows a game to explore this, would they like to play? Everyone agrees. They all stand up and Bhaiya explains. Two people are to stand opposite each other, three or four paces apart, with one person in the middle between them. The two at the sides are gently to push the other one between them, rocking him from one to the other. The boys form groups of three and begin



to play, but they are all messing about, pushing too roughly, giggling. Bhaiya is concerned that someone might get hurt, that the younger ones are not strong enough to support each other's weight, that someone could fall hard onto the concrete floor. So it ends up with just one group, the bigger ones, Bhaiya and Shapan at either end and Kamal in the middle. Kamal surrenders himself to it completely, letting them rock him from one side to the other, a stiff, inert figure, given over to their hands. Everyone watches in silence, arrested.

When they finish, still standing in front of everyone, Bhaiya asks Kamal, 'Were you anxious that we might drop you?'

Kamal: No.

Bhaiya: But you know what happened yesterday, and that, hearing about it, of everyone here I was the most angry, of everyone here I was most strongly against you?

Kamal: But even so, I know you wouldn't do anything to hurt me.

Bhaiya: Would you have the same confidence with everyone here?

Kamal: No. Maybe three or four of them might let me fall.

Others in the group chip in: 'Because they are small and couldn't bear your weight?'

Kamal: No.

Bhaiya: If I had asked the same question a few days ago, would you have given me the same answer?

Kamal: No. A few days ago I would have had confidence in everyone.

Bhaiya: So it is about what happened yesterday?

Kamal: Yes.

Bhaiya: Then we should sit and sort it out together.

They talk a bit and Kamal breaks down. He had had a row with his mother and she still wouldn't let him back in the house. When the incident happened, he had been three days on the streets, without hot food or shelter. Bhaiya gives Mosnu money to go and buy hot food, and Kamal eats.

As they talk more, it becomes more complex. Because Kamal had been away from the group on a training course, he wasn't in touch with what was going on. They were holding a training session and doing a role play of what happens in the field when the local children are being disruptive. All of them were joining in, enjoying

acting up, even the volunteers. When Kamal came in, part of the way through, he was disgusted at what he saw. What did they think they were doing? Was this any way to conduct training? Sumon was trying to talk to them and no-one was listening to anything he said! He got furious, feeling that they were wrecking Child Brigade, and everything he thought it stood for.

When Kamal returns to the group, Bhaiya sets out the options for punishment. Kamal himself had suggested that he should forfeit all his poster pasting money this month. Mahbub thinks he should lose half. Another boy thinks he should just lose one quarter, as he needs money so badly. Mosnu suggests that he should get the full money, but have to do extra work. All of them are happy with whichever of these suggestions Kamal chooses.

Kamal takes Mosnu's option and makes a pledge: he will neither beat anyone again nor allow any beating to happen.

At last the tension lifts, and we all come out into the daylight with lighter hearts.

*Source: Adapted from White, 2001*

Rules of behaviour should be followed consistently throughout the programme, although they should be reviewed periodically. Any additions or changes to the rules should be formally discussed and agreed by children and adults together. All new staff and children joining the programme should be told about the rules of behaviour, and about how and why they were drawn up. Copies of the rules of behaviour should be available to everyone, and one copy should be posted somewhere where it is easily visible at all times. If there are any illiterate children in the programme, the rules should be frequently read out and discussed, and it might be worth making a version of the rules using cartoons.

### ***Maintaining communication and interaction***

Throughout implementation of a programme, children and adults should be regularly sharing their ideas and experiences. Probably the best way to do this is through regular

meetings between programme staff and children. In a programme based at community level, these meetings could take place as often as weekly, depending on children's availability. The larger the programme or project, the wider the geographical spread and the greater the travel time between the base and implementation sites, the less frequent full programme meetings are bound to be. This means that regular meetings are needed wherever the programme takes place in order to report back adequately to the base.

During meetings, children and adults can discuss what progress they have made, achievements and challenges they have encountered, concerns they have, proposed changes to rules of behaviour, working definition of children's participation, or other relevant issues. It is also important to keep children up to date with news from the programme base and organisation, as well as on wider child labour issues that might interest them (such as changes in government policy and legislation, or forthcoming conferences and events children might wish to participate in). Such reports are further opportunities for adults to improve their skills in children-friendly communication.

Meetings will also give managers a chance to observe the ways that children, staff and other adults interact (not forgetting support staff, such as secretaries, cooks and drivers). The participatory processes used in the project will serve as models for participation in the wider world, which makes it essential that they are being absorbed, understood - and exemplified - by adults. Programme managers should look for examples of children speaking confidently and adults listening to them, focusing on group dynamics and individual behaviour. Special attention may need to be paid to children who do not contribute or to adults who do not listen to children. Managers should note such cases and make plans to deal with them individually later, without singling them out for public criticism. Sharing such problems with both adult staff and children in a non-threatening manner can enhance both understanding of participation processes and participation itself.

The children who attend these meetings might be a small 'core' group that the other children have agreed can act as their representatives, or the meetings might be open to all. This can be discussed and agreed in the rules of behaviour. Records should be kept of these meetings and other discussions with children, so that they can be used for monitoring.

### ***Capacity building for adults***

Participatory programming is an opportunity for personal growth and change, particularly for adults. Organisations should maintain a broad process of capacity building on children's participation, aimed to change ideas and practices through sharing experiences and networking, inside the organisation and with other stakeholders.

Changing attitudes and internalizing children's participation will not happen overnight. Staff, partners and children will need time to practise their skills, share doubts and experiences and adjust their approaches and methods. Opportunities should be created for people who have received training (children and adults) to share what they have learned. Regular staff meetings, where any emerging issues can be addressed, are also important.

The capacity-building emphasis should be on improving the overall quality of children's participation in the programme, not only the capacities of individuals. This means following basic principles, enlarging the extent of children's involvement, creating an environment that supports and promotes children's participation, and focusing on integrating children's participation in all aspects of work rather than in single, independent activities. The first step must be for adults to understand and accept children's participation.

Capacity building should focus mainly on adults, because they play such an important role in facilitating (or obstructing) children's participation. Even when they are convinced about the value of children's participation, adults need support and assistance to enhance their skills in communication, facilitation and methods for working with (rather than for) children.

Some programmes involve certain children taking on traditionally adult roles in relation to other children - for example in raising awareness about child labour issues and children's rights, as counsellors or as facilitators in children's meetings. Children doing this kind of work should receive the same support as adults in capacity building, checking quality and providing opportunities to share experiences. It should not be taken for granted that they will automatically find these jobs easy and do them well. When they first become involved in programme activities, children will usually have learned to model their behaviour on that of adults and may initially tend to act in non-participatory ways when they are given responsibility.

### ***Capacity building for children***

Children learn about participation through practice. However, various types of capacity building activities can be provided to children during implementation as part of their empowerment and to help them to carry out specific activities, which might include:

- \* Cultural-communication skills: To increase children's confidence, particularly if they are school 'failures' or have had limited education, workshops on alternative cultural-communication skills such as playing music, drawing, drama, dance or traditional arts;
- \* Communication skills: These include listening skills, asking questions, negotiation and persuasion, which should be useful in a number of settings, including advocacy. This kind of training may be linked with journalism training or training on cultural-communication skills;
- \* Leadership, workshop/meeting facilitation and counselling: These are roles that some or all children may be interested in playing within the programme;
- \* Children's rights: Adults have a duty to inform children of their rights. Rights trainings can also help to address issues such as discrimination, if this is a problem in the programme.

One important question is which children receive this kind of training. Children should have some influence over this, including criteria used in selection, and preferably in the actual selection of individuals. Managers should explain the skills children can expect to learn through training, how they will be able to use new skills for the benefit of others, and that they have a responsibility to pass on what they have learned.

### ***Consider children's needs as well as their rights***

Participation in itself does not solve all children's problems. It may help them deal with challenges but services are also required to ensure their survival, development and protection from harm. For working children who are mobile or homeless, transit homes or shelters may serve as a safe refuge and a convenient base for meetings and other activities. Extra coaching may be needed for children who have dropped out, miss school because of work or have never been enrolled. Others may need access to a

counsellor or legal assistance. Staff, managers - and children - may need to talk to children's parents, employers and teachers, to negotiate on behalf of children so that they can solve problems or to ensure their continued participation.

Support systems should be discussed with children - particularly their own roles. Children should know what services are available to them. It will be valuable for them to learn when and how to access support, how they can help each other and when to seek adult help. A general principle is that, wherever possible, adults should respect and build on children's existing support networks and not try to replace them with programme activities or staff.

### ***Sustaining children's interest***

Some children may be enthusiastic when they start their involvement in a programme, but then lose interest over time. It may be inevitable that some will choose to stop participating but, if too many do so, it is an indication that the programme is not succeeding, probably because the objectives or methods are not appropriate.

Programme managers should try to find out why children have stopped participating. It may be a concern that can be addressed within the programme, before other children begin to drop out. Factors that discourage children's involvement include:

- \* Abusive or bullying members of staff or children;
- \* Activities that are not interesting for children;
- \* Children feeling they are listened to but not heard;
- \* Children being excluded from activities;
- \* A lack of interest in the programme's objectives;
- \* Frustration that children's contributions are not valued.

## MONITORING AND EVALUATION

*We do not like staff  
Who manhandle us,  
Who mete out too hard punishment, especially physical punishment  
Who demand heavy work from us  
Who demand that children feel indebted to them for the services rendered  
Who are not loving or affectionate enough  
Who give attention only when we do something wrong  
Who do not appreciate what we can do.*

*Street children in a Manila conference, 1989  
Source: Ennew, 2000*

Monitoring and evaluation answer the question 'How well are we succeeding?' They should be part of a programme strategy, and include children. Monitoring shows what is happening as the work progresses. This helps identify problem areas and make changes to deal with them. Monitoring begins with the situation analysis, which provides 'baseline data' against which progress can be measured by means of 'indicators', which are regular means of checking on aspects of the programme, such as how many children attend meetings, the quality of their participation, the number of capacity-building sessions and their outcome. Indicators measure:

Input: The resources used - money, equipment, people;  
Process: How the resources are used;  
Output: Immediate results;  
Outcome: Long term impact.

Unfortunately, the indicators most frequently used in programmes are those for input and output, with the latter frequently used in an evaluation that is used as an 'exit' procedure to close down a programme. Yet the first three questions should be seen as the basis of the programme cycle, with monitoring and evaluation taking place at all stages and to inform and modify programme plans (RWG-CL, 2001).

Like monitoring, evaluation can use indicators. The two activities are similar. But whereas monitoring keeps track of activities and gives feedback at the time things are happening, evaluation is more likely to take place at the end of an activity or strategy plan. Evaluation will take monitoring results into account but asks further questions about the operation of the whole activity:

- \* What worked?
- \* What didn't work?
- \* What would we do differently next time?

Thus, participatory monitoring, should take place continuously throughout implementation, providing information about what is going well and not so well, what aspects of the plan might need to be changed, and what steps might be taken to ensure that it is still possible to meet the programme objectives. Regular meetings with children are perhaps the most important informal monitoring mechanism. These are opportunities for children to raise any issues related to the implementation, their own participation, or other aspects of their lives (which could give indications of external factors influencing implementation or impact of the intervention). Meetings should also be held separately with other stakeholders.

Minor changes to planned activities are not likely to cause much disagreement; it may be possible to discuss and approve them within regular meetings with children. For major changes, such as modifying or altering objectives, approaches or activities, it will be necessary to schedule 're-planning' workshops for children and adults to discuss and agree upon new directions, which may have to be shared with managers, donors and other stakeholders, so that children's proposals will not be discounted or overruled without them having a chance to explain or defend them.

Participatory monitoring and evaluation allows a continuous process of feedback, adjustment and refinement to go on throughout implementation of a programme. Unexpected problems and opportunities can be identified and responded to quickly, so that children and other stakeholders become more committed to the programme rather than losing interest in it. Participating in monitoring and evaluation provides children with new skills and insights. Creativity and flexibility should be used in evaluations carried out by children, using the principles and tools of participatory research. Children should be encouraged to make their own reports and records of activities they organise and/or participate in. This can provide valuable information and insights to complement



written reports prepared by adults. Because this will take time and skills that all children may not have, they might need to choose which of them should do it, and managers may have to provide training and support.

Programme staff and children should collaborate in participatory monitoring and evaluation. Managers should visit implementation sites regularly, field staff should send progress reports. External evaluators may be engaged by donors, but there is no reason why evaluations should not be participatory - indeed this should be agreed with donors before funding is accepted, with children also having input to defining the scope, methods and timing of the evaluation, as well as their roles and responsibilities. External evaluators must be familiar with the principles and methods of children's participation. The methods of data gathering should be appropriate for children and implemented in a way that allows genuine participation. As with any participatory activity, data gathering must not put children at risk. Children's perspectives have an added value, resulting in more relevant, meaningful evaluations. Evaluation reports (in children-friendly form) should be shared and discussed, to reach common understandings and common recommendations for further action.

### ***Monitoring and evaluating children's participation in a programme***

Much of what is claimed about the benefits and shortcomings of children's participation is based on anecdotal evidence and assumptions. Monitoring and evaluation of the process and impact of children's participation must be taken seriously.

The indicators used to monitor and evaluate children's participation depend on the agreed definition of participation, and the participation objectives defined for the programme at that time. There are no objective external measurements of participation. A programme's objectives depend on where it begins and what it hopes to achieve, which may include building children's skills and confidence, increasing the level of children's participation in home, work or community life, or improving adults' facilitation skills. These factors can be measured through comparing the situation when a programme begins, in which, for example, only 10 percent of children say they feel confident about giving their opinion to staff members, with the situation at the end of the programme cycle, by which time 80 percent of children might feel confident about this. Vague objectives, such as 'increasing children's participation' cannot be measured (Penna Firme et al, 1989).

It is possible to gather quantitative data on participation in the programme - for example how often different types of activity were held with children and how many children participated. But more important is the quality of the participation, which depends on the dynamics of interactions among children and between children and adults. Facilitators, staff and managers will be able to observe these dynamics in meetings and activities. Adults such as teachers, family members and outreach workers can observe in other settings. Children should also be encouraged to monitor and comment on their own opportunities to participate outside the project.

Questions to ask children regularly as part of monitoring and evaluation include:

- \* Do they feel they are listened to?
- \* Are there some processes or activities they would have liked to participate in but were not given the chance?
- \* Are they in agreement with the outcomes of actions and decisions?
- \* If their suggestions or requests were not followed, were the reasons explained to them by the adults, and do they understand those reasons?

Among the questions that could be asked about the wider impacts of children's participation on their lives are:

- \* Are they participating more in family and community life?
- \* Do they feel more self-confident?
- \* Have parents' and adult community members' attitudes and behaviours become more respectful towards and supportive of children?

It is not necessary to look for dramatic examples of children's participation in family and community life; if parents involve children in planning meals or allow them some choice in their household chores, this may reflect significant progress.

It is also important to establish how children's participation has contributed to the success (or failure) of the programme. Although it is hard to know exactly what would have happened if children had not participated, it should be possible to compare the outcomes of other interventions working with comparable target groups in similar settings, to achieve similar objectives. If children's participation was incorporated in the programme after implementation had already started, a simple before/after comparison could be informative, taking into account the influence of any external factors that could have aided or limited the programme's success.

### ***Documenting working children's participation***

It is difficult to describe the ways children and adults interact. Anecdotes or stories can help outsiders to grasp what participation really means in the context of a particular programme, and can be excellent tools for advocacy and publicity, not just for the organisation but for children's participation in general. Children can be excellent storytellers, so they should be included in the process of choosing, writing and telling stories about programme experiences.

Yet, documentation of children's participation overwhelmingly records 'good' experiences through adults using anecdotes without permission or input from children. There is an urgent need for information about 'how to do' participation, as well as for stories of lessons learned through programme or activity failure. Detailed information about how children's participation can be facilitated (including how not to do it) is essential - and requires far more than lists of games and energizers, or of children's demands. Transparent and detailed records of programme cycles, beginning with criteria for participation and ending with evaluation, must be kept not only for future programmes within an organisation but also for sharing with others.

Different media can be used to share experiences with different audiences and for different purposes. Sometimes, the focus is on the processes - for example to pass on lessons learned or a model that another programme might be able to copy. For other purposes, outcomes may be more important - to celebrate children's achievements, present a report of participatory research or use experiences for advocacy. Children are an important potential audience for documentation of participatory programmes and activities, so versions should be produced in clear, non-technical language, with illustrations when necessary.

### *Learning Points*

**Participation:**

- Takes time;
  - But does not waste time;
  - Is a learning process;
  - Is an opportunity for personal growth.
- 
- Children's participation in planning a programme can make sure it is relevant and responsive from the beginning;
  - Participatory research is an empowering process, helping children and communities to reflect on their situations and values;
  - Children are the best source of information about their day-to-day lives and motivations;
  - Children can actively participate in all stages of situation analysis;
  - Working definitions of children's participation should be explored and agreed between children, staff and other stakeholders;
  - Indicators and mechanisms for participatory monitoring should be established at the planning stage.
  - It takes time to gain the trust of a community, but this may be necessary before work with children can begin;
  - Sensitive, creative ways must be found to establish good relations with a community;
  - Partners who can genuinely help a programme will be people who are trusted by a community;
  - Meeting and building relationships with children takes time, and cannot be rushed;

- Children should be treated with respect at all time, following the principles of participation;
- Rules of behaviour covering all aspects of the interaction of adults and participating children should be agreed at the start of programme implementation, regularly reviewed and enforced throughout implementation;
- Managers and staff should maintain a constant dialogue with children through regular meetings;
- Children should participate in making any changes to the plan or how it is implemented;
- 'Learning by doing' for children and adults may need to be complemented by training;
- Individual children should receive help with any difficulties in their lives either directly from the programme or through partners;
- Plans must be flexible to accommodate working children's participation;
- Awareness-raising and other capacity building should be provided for staff and partners.
- Donors should understand the importance of children's participation and be willing to support it.
- Processes and impacts of working children's participation need to be monitored and evaluated;
- Monitoring tools should be used with children (and families/communities) not covered by the intervention to establish the real impacts of children's participation in the programme and of unrelated external factors;
- Better documentation of children's participation in child labour interventions will help to build on experience, and assist in advocacy for the intervention and for children's participation in general.

## REFLECTIONS CAN CHILDREN CONTRIBUTE TO PROGRAMMING?

### ***How could children participate in your work?***

Have you ever tried to involve children's participation in your activities?

Do you think of this as a success or a failure?

What went well?

What value did children's participation add?

What did not work so well?

Why was that?

Did you follow rules for participation in Chapter 1?

Did you and children ever discuss their rights?

Did you and children respect each other?

How did you show respect?

What would you do differently next time?

### ***Who are the children you work with?***

If you have trouble answering the following questions, your first activity could be participatory research, focus group discussions or a workshop to find the answers. In addition to asking children, you should try to talk to people who have direct contact with children, including programme staff and staff in other organisations.

What do you know about the children you might invite to participate?

Ages (do they have birth certificates)?

Proportions of boys and girls?

Type of work (hours, tasks, income, conditions)?

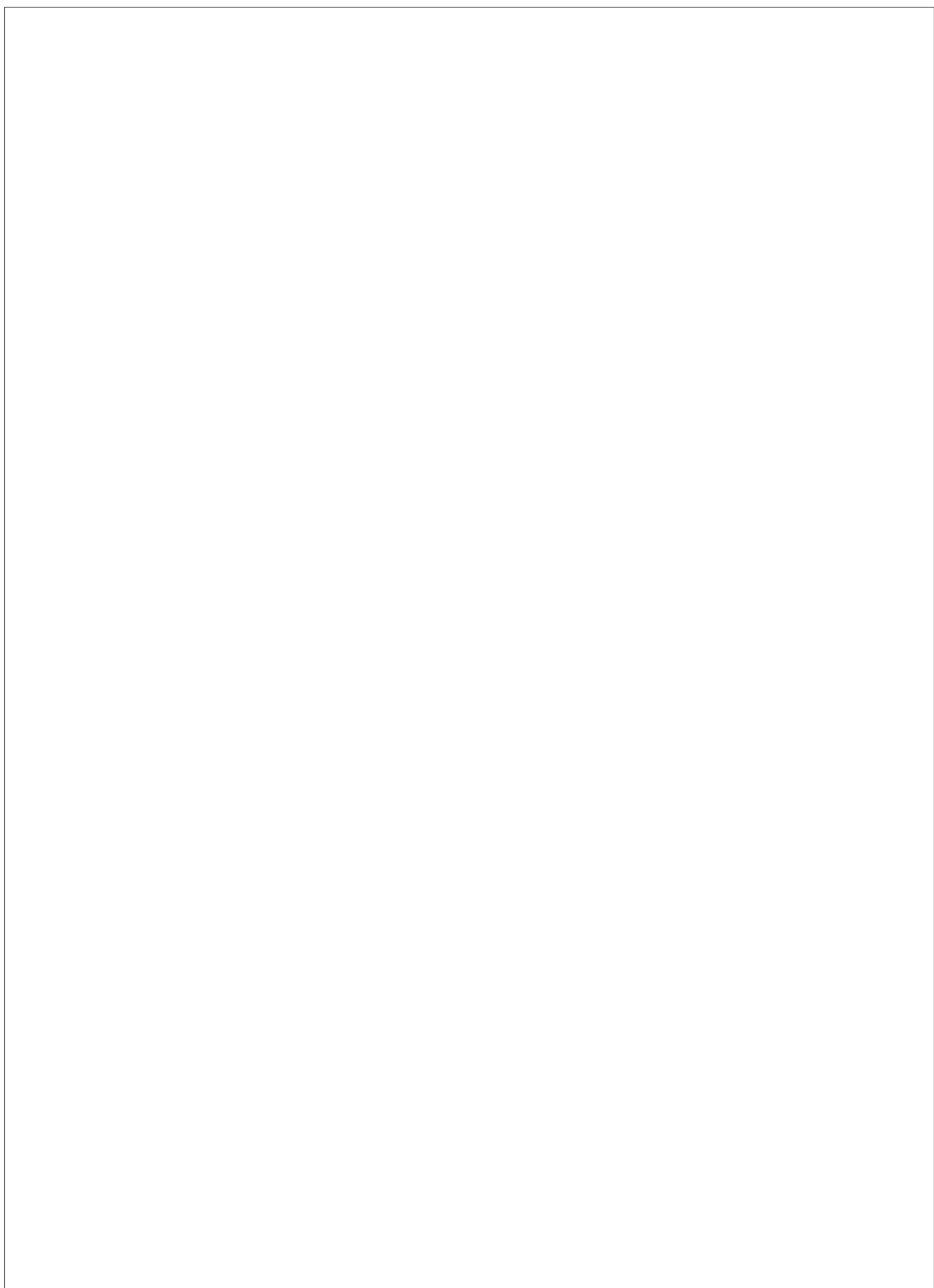
Religion?

Ethnicity?

Where they were born?

Who they live with?

Where they live (including type of housing)?  
Schooling?  
Abilities?  
Why they work?  
What do they like or dislike about their work?  
What is important to them?  
What changes they would like to see in their lives?  
What do they know about the programme?  
What changes they would like made in the programme?  
What opportunities and constraints do they have that might affect how they get involved with your activities:  
    Time?  
    Freedom of movement?  
    Mobility?  
    Other interests and responsibilities?  
    Participation in other programmes?  
    Personal safety?  
    Attitudes of their families, communities, friends and/or employers?





## CHAPTER 3

# WORKING TOGETHER WITH CHILDREN

*We are the children of the streets  
Children whose hearts are pure  
by coming together, by being together  
We get the inspiration to achieve.  
Society has rejected us  
that we too are humans, we shall but prove  
Bootpolishing, ragpicking are not dirty occupations  
This is our service to society.  
Do not look at us from afar  
Come close to us  
We are not what you think we are  
Accept us.*

*Ravi Pednekar  
Youth for Unity and Voluntary Action (YUVA).  
Poems by Street Children (1992, Mumbai, YUVA)*

This chapter looks at a range of issues related to putting children's participation into practice by examining various types of programme activities related to child labour: child-to-child approaches; communication and participation in meetings. The chapter closes by describing organisations of working children.

## CHILD-TO-CHILD

*We shall help the youngest to organise  
In order to refuse the hardest work!  
We will also protect them if they are beaten up badly  
As we have already done.*

*Serge Luca, aged 17 years  
African Movement of Working Children and Youth*

'Child-to-Child' is both the name of an organisation and a term loosely used to refer to ways of working that are based on that organisation's experience. The history of the Child-to-Child Trust began through observation that peer-education (children teaching children of the same age and background) could be used as an approach in health education, through the direct involvement of children in the process of planning and implementation in preparing and delivering health messages to younger children, children their own age, their families and their communities. Although the messages can and have been ways of transmitting adult messages, the philosophy is that children are agents of change, and the child-to-child approach has now been used in programmes as varied as schooling, youth groups, pre-school education and child labour programmes as well as health education.

The six step approach of the Child-to-Child Trust follows the same programming cycle described in this Handbook:

- Identifying and understanding a local issue;
- Finding out more about it;
- Discussing what has been found out and planning action;
- Taking action;
- Evaluation (discussing results).

Child-to-child approaches can be particularly useful for child labour programming because children involved in the worst forms of child labour are often hard to reach or 'invisible', especially for adult programme staff. Children from the community or those who have been in similar situations of exploitation may be in touch with these child labourers and can reach out to them. Children can generally build relationships of trust and friendship with their peers more easily than adults, because they are the same age,

talk the same language and have the same background.

A selected group of children directly attached to the programme can raise the awareness of other children, provide services or access to services, or simply encourage them to join the programme. Child-to-child approaches may involve children as facilitators (or 'leaders') to help other working children to discuss issues of concern, to help them form their own organisations or to assist them in dealing with difficulties; as researchers, conducting research with the other children; as peer educators, educating other children on specific topics such as children's rights, labour law or how to cope with challenges related to work or the family; or as outreach workers, providing counselling or other assistance to working children who do not have the confidence or freedom to go to an office or centre for this assistance. After receiving the necessary training, children go out into the community to work with their peers, mostly in informal settings (Box 8). In some cases, these children operate with a relative degree of autonomy, organising and running activities with their peers and then periodically reporting back to the programme.

#### **8. A child-to-child outreach programme**

Members of SUMAPI, an organisation of child domestic workers and former child domestic workers in the Philippines, together with the staff of an NGO called Visayan Forum Foundation, conduct Sunday outreach activities with child domestic workers in public parks, where most of them spend their one day off in the week. When a SUMAPI peer educator makes contact with a child domestic worker, she records basic information on a standard form, and then follows up with the child by (employer's) telephone or in a letter. Over time, the SUMAPI peer educator tries to develop a relationship of trust with the new child, so that problems and even information about abuse are confided. The SUMAPI peer educator then makes a report on the case to Visayan Forum for further action.

*Source: Contributed to the Manila Workshop by Visayan Forum*

### ***Limitations of child-to-child approaches***

While child-to-child approaches have obvious advantages, programmes may not give sufficient thought to the rules of participation described in Chapter 1:

- A child-to-child approach is not automatically children's participation in the way it is understood in this Handbook. The relatively small group of children involved in implementing the activity - peer educators, child outreach workers and so on - will probably participate intensely, as well as learning new technical and social skills. However, the focus should be on the way they interact with the children they reach, which may not be participatory. In addition, even implementing children may have had only limited opportunities for real participation - they may not have been involved in planning the activity, or devising the messages they carry to other children;
- It is common for organisations planning child-to-child activities to assume that children will naturally be better than adults at the tasks involved. However, the same considerations and qualifications that would be required for adults apply to children: they need to have skills in communication and facilitation, and they need to use appropriate methods. Their skills and experience also determine the quality of the participation of the targeted children.
- Organisations should be ready to provide adequate capacity building and continuing support to child-to-child activities. Children will need proper training on the issues to be addressed, on communication, on facilitation and on other relevant skills or knowledges. Like adults, the children involved should have frequent opportunities to share their experiences and improve their skills, in an ongoing capacity building process throughout implementation. Children's work with other children should be monitored frequently, particularly during early stages of the work, so that programme staff can provide additional support as needed and gain insight into the quality of interactions between the implementing children and other children. Targeted children should participate in this monitoring, as well as in other aspects of the programme.

The children who are involved as peer educators in these activities should be carefully selected in a way that is transparent and democratic, and includes other children. If children are not allowed to select which of them are trained to become facilitators or 'leaders', child-to-child becomes leadership imposed by adults.

Parents of children involved in child-to-child activities need to be fully informed about the roles and responsibilities of their children. Other relevant adults in the community also need to be informed. For example, peer educators working with other street children risk being arrested if the police are not informed.

Programme managers are responsible for protecting both the children implementing a child-to-child activity and the children they reach. The implementing children should be fully informed about protection issues relating to their work with other children. On the other hand, monitoring of their work should include making sure they do not abuse the other children.

There is a danger that child-to-child programmes exploit the children implementing them. Their involvement should be for their own benefit as well as the benefit of the children they reach; it should never be treated as a cheap and easy alternative to employing paid adults. Children's involvement must always be voluntary, and they should be able to decide their own workload. Managers should make sure the children's responsibilities are appropriate to their abilities and their other commitments such as work, study and family. Peer education and outreach work can be particularly stressful; appropriate, accessible emotional support systems should be established in a place that should be easily accessible to the peer educators at all times.

## COMMUNICATION ABOUT CHILD LABOUR

*...newspapers often say a lot about violations and terrible things  
and the way they do this is dangerous.  
They take the whole story and tell it all  
even including the name of the child  
and that is really ugly.*

*Report of Honduran children to a legal inquiry  
on drafting a new Children's Code, 1993,  
Source: Ennew, 2000*

Communication consists of 'designing and sending messages about a topic such as child labour in order to influence people's attitudes, behaviour and actions' (RWG-CL, 2002, which provides further resources for the topics in this section). Some communication in the area of child labour programming is principally aimed at disseminating information - to children, to other organisations, to the general public - but most has a more specific purpose. Awareness raising tries to bring an issue to public notice ultimately leading to a change of attitudes and behaviour. Advocacy aims to influence the people who have the power to make changes happen and is often concerned with policies and legislation. The same principles and methods apply to all communication, whether in homes, communities, schools or workplaces. Participation in communication can be fulfilling and empowering for children, as well as teaching them useful technical and social skills.

Communication is one of the few programme activities in which working children have been visible for a long time, although this does not imply participation in the sense used in this Handbook. Videos and photographs of child labourers are still used to shock and provoke public outrage or donations but, without children's permission, they rob them of their dignity and even put them at risk. Adults have made children wear T-shirts, carry banners, sing songs, make speeches and chant slogans, delivering messages for adults, without the chance to consider whether they agreed with the ideas. Paintings and stories used for children to share their feelings about traumatic experiences have been published in advertisements and books, without children's permission or knowledge.

### ***Children's participation in awareness-raising and advocacy***

Child labour programmes nearly always have a strong awareness-raising and public education component, targetting other child labourers and/or their families and communities. Working children's involvement can make awareness raising on child rights and child labour issues particularly persuasive. Because it is done by children, this awareness-raising also highlights children's capacity as participants in community life.

Children with experience of child labour can design advocacy activities and messages that are relevant to local realities, about the audience's common experiences. Because they have known the hardships of child labour themselves, it is harder for adults to dismiss children's communication efforts as ill-informed (although this still happens).

Messages should be delivered in different ways to different audiences, using the media most frequently used, trusted and enjoyed - such as newspapers, friends in the market, radio, and television. Community dramas or other performances may be rare events these days, but if they are entertaining and well thought out, they can be persuasive media. Busy government officials may never have had a meeting with children, but they might still respond positively to a simple, clear message, in children's own words.

Programmes should only involve children in communicating messages that children understand and want to communicate. Adults should help children to devise their own messages - including how to present them in messages that are short, clear and memorable. If adults want to involve children in their own information campaigns, they must explain their reasons and allow children to discuss their attitudes to the messages in depth.

#### ***Person-to-person***

Child-to-child is only one form of person-to-person communication. Direct communication between people who already know and trust each other is probably the most effective way of getting a message across and affecting the way people think and act (Box 9).

### **9. Children organise a local campaign**

In April 2002, more than 50 children in Takeo province, Cambodia, organised the first community campaign against child trafficking in their province. The children went from house to house explaining the purpose of the campaign and inviting people to participate in a half-day information and education programme. Over 4,000 people took part in the half-day programme, where local government officials acknowledged the problem of trafficking and pledged to prevent the exploitation of the province's children by traffickers.

*Source: Child Workers in Asia, 'Promoting Working Children's Participation, NGO Cooperation, and Grassroots Actions, in Responding to the Child Labour Problem in Asia: CWA 2002 Report to SC Sweden - Southeast Asia', 2002 (unpublished interagency report)*

### **Drama**

Theatre and other performing arts are often successful in raising community awareness on child labour issues. They are enjoyable, safe ways to introduce and explore issues people might feel nervous about discussing directly, or to make visible situations people cannot, or would rather not, see. Drama engages the audience's emotions, demands attention and also provides children with a chance to demonstrate their abilities. Traditional forms of drama, dance and puppetry gain acceptance in communities, can easily be performed in different settings and do not require expensive, modern technology (Box 10).

The opportunities created by these performances should not be wasted. They should be used to stimulate discussions with an audience about the issues raised. Journalists and others who have influence over people's opinions should be invited to attend. Video recordings of performances can be used in advocacy and in wider awareness raising.



### **10. A wise king's justice: Children use traditional communication to make local government accountable**

Children in 25 villages of four districts of Karnataka province wanted to address several issues with the local officials and their *panchayats* (village councils), but had little success. So they decided to take these issues up at the *taluk* (sub-village) level. They did not want to meet officials in their offices and hand over petitions, which would only be thrown into the waste basket, or to be confrontational and provoke antagonism, so they decided to devise another scheme. Some of them had learned *yekshaghana*, a traditional form of dance-drama specific to Karnataka province, and they decided to use this.

They dressed up in *yekshaghana* costumes depicting a king and queen and their court of ministers - including of course a court jester - and went from village to village, collecting petitions from children and adults alike. The appropriate 'minister' would put these petitions in the sack, which each of them carried. The tour ended with a public performance at a large playground in Kundapura town. All the real government officials had been specially invited, and the highlight was the *yekshaghana*.

The playground was packed and the officials had seated themselves in the front row. During the *yekshaghana*, the King talked about justice and how well he had ruled over the land. The Queen talked about all the things she had done for women and children. Then they began to hold court. One by one, the ministers stepped forward to state their business. Petitions collected during the tour were read out, with humorous comments from the court jester.

The King asked each minister who was responsible for the problems in the petitions. The minister named one of the officials sitting in the front row of the audience, who was then summoned to the stage by the King. By this time, the audience was cheering and repeating the King's calls and it was difficult for the officials to refuse. Because it was a drama, no one was sure how real it was. Each official who came up on the stage, was asked to explain how the problem had come about. At first they tried to evade the questions by passing them off with irrelevant remarks, but the court jester would remind them of their obligations and recommend that the King order punishment - 'twenty lashes' or 'off with his head!' By this time, the audience was demanding responsible replies, and the officials had to make firm commitments, before being pardoned by the King and allowed to leave the stage. By the end of the play, all the officials had made some commitments, witnessed by the audience.

Thanks to this *yekshaghana*, the children were able to follow up on all the issues in the petitions, and several were successfully addressed: public distribution outlets were shifted to more convenient locations, several villages were connected to electricity, footbridges and day-care centres were built, drinking water and teachers for schools were supplied. The children were able to maintain good relationships with the officials. Subsequently, the children decided to formalize this interaction with government, and *makkala panchayats* (children's village councils) were established.

Source: Adapted from CWC web page: [www.workingchildren.org](http://www.workingchildren.org)

### **Visual methods**

Paintings, drawings and other visual media are widely used in participatory research, planning, advocacy and awareness raising. Children's informed consent should be obtained, not only for how and where their art is used, but also whether or not they wish to be acknowledged by name as the artists.

### **Mass media**

Mass media include newspapers, radio and television. In parts of Asia, radio is the most common source of information on news and social events for remote rural communities and marginalised urban communities. Children can play important roles in broadcasts, as reporters, commentators and presenters (Box 11).

#### **11. A children's radio initiative in Indonesia**

Radio Anak Kampung Bantar Gebang (Children's community radio of Bantar Gebang) is a children's community radio initiative of the NGO 'Homeless World Foundation'. Based in Bantar Gebang, the site of Indonesia's biggest rubbish tip, the radio station is owned and run by child scavengers, with help from social workers and professional radio producers, who provided training on radio production and management. The broadcasts seek to entertain and educate children who have few opportunities in life. Through the children's involvement, the initiative hopes to help young scavengers improve their communication skills, be more critical and outspoken, increase their self-esteem, and develop towards their fullest potential.

Source: Contributed during the Handbook workshop in the Philippines

### ***Newsletters and 'wall newspapers'***

Newsletters and other publications produced by NGOs and government organisations often seek contributions from children, which can provide good opportunities for raising child labour issues.

Some organisations of street and working children have established their own 'wall newspapers' - one-page bulletins that can be posted on walls around a community for other children or members of the public to read, as well as being distributed to libraries, universities, NGOs and others. Wall newspapers help to disseminate children's views, and news about events, child workers and human rights.

### ***The Internet***

Although access to the Internet is still limited among child labourers, their families and communities, its potential should not be ignored and programmes can provide access through their own computer resources, or through introducing children to the use of the Internet in internet cafes.

The Internet is enabling greater and swifter levels of collaboration and communication between child activists and campaigners, including working children.

Almost all information on the Internet is in English but, if adults (or children with the right skills and access to computers) are prepared to assist, it should be possible for child labourers to use the Internet as a source of information, to exchange information and views with other children around the world, and even to create their own website.

### ***Communication strategies***

Successful communication campaigns do not happen by chance but are the result of planning using the same principles as the programme planning cycle described in this Handbook. RWG-CL's manual *Child Labour: Getting the Message Across* provides guidance on how to design and implement communication strategies with children's participation.

## CHILD DELEGATES TO MEETINGS

*Concerning the Conferences that are being organised,  
we demand participation on an equal footing...  
We are prepared to discuss with ministers,  
But they do not represent us.*

*From Kundapur Declaration,  
First International Meeting of Working Children 1996  
Source: Miljeteig, 2000*

As awareness about children's participation grows, children are increasingly being asked to participate in national and international meetings, including conferences, summits, workshops and other gatherings that take place at regional, national or international level. This is undoubtedly a positive development, and children have been able to make some important contributions. However, there is still room for improvement in the way children are asked to participate in these meetings.

One of the questions most frequently raised about children's participation in these meetings has been whether the child delegates truly represent the opinions and interests of the children on whose behalf they are supposed to be attending. This is an important issue, and these doubts are frequently justified. For example, child labourers are often 'represented' in these meetings by well-educated, middle-class children who have never worked and have had little contact with child labourers; or by children who are asked to attend simply so they can talk about their unfortunate experiences as child labourers; or by articulate, well-behaved children who become regulars on the meeting circuit; or by former working children who are well over 18 years of age.

### **Make an early start**

To allow the greatest possible number of working children to contribute to the final message taken to the meeting, they will need to know in advance about the purpose of the meeting, and the topics that will be discussed, ideally months beforehand. This information should be disseminated in ways children can understand through channels that will reach them, for example mass media, children's 'wall newspapers', child-to-child programmes, so that children outside the programme can register and discuss their views, through local meetings, radio phone-ins, workshops, outreach, participatory

research or whatever is appropriate. The decision to participate in a meeting must always be taken by children - never by adults. When adults discuss with children the possibility of attending a meeting they should give realistic guidance - providing information about all the opportunities and risks - rather than manipulating children's positive decision to attend.

### ***Selection of delegates***

Children should choose who will represent them in a meeting, which may entail a long process of group meetings taking place initially at village or community level, if groups have not already elected leaders and delegates as part of learning democratic ways of participating. The purpose of national and international meetings must be discussed and children should decide on the messages they wish their delegates to communicate. If organizers of international meetings will only allow one or two child delegates to attend, the result may be several stages in the selection process, so that a few children from different organisations and areas are chosen by their peers to attend regional or national workshops in which they discuss the issues further and choose a few representatives from among themselves, until the correct number of participants has been selected. In this way, the views of all children will have been heard and common positions reached to be taken to the meeting. If international organisers demand one or two child 'representatives' at short notice it is probably wiser to refuse.

Box 12 shows the criteria some children's representatives in the East Asia Pacific region identified for selecting child delegates to the UN General Assembly Special Session on Children (UNGASS).

## 12. Who should represent us?

Who can legitimately speak on behalf of the world's (working) children? The following is a list of criteria for selecting child participants in the UN General Assembly Special Session on Children. It was drawn up by participants in the East Asia Pacific Children and Young People's Regional Forum II, held in Vientiane, Lao PDR, in 2001:

- He/She should be selected by children themselves;
- He/She should represent children from the rural and urban areas;
- He/She must be under 18;
- There should be no discrimination based on nationality and regional location;
- He/She should have the ability to articulate the children's perspective/opinions, needs, problems, etc;
- There should be no discrimination in terms of gender, economic background, ethnicity, education, and language;
- Special consideration should be given to children with disability;
- He/She must possess a strong awareness and understanding of children's issues and CRC;
- He/She demonstrates leadership qualities as well as capacity to lead;
- He/She has experienced and fully participated in previous children's events in the community/country. He/She has actively participated and/or led in national activities;
- He/She understands and appreciates the issues of children in her/his own community;
- He/She has the ability to lead and implement activities in the country after the UNGASS meeting (or other regional and international children's events);
- He/She is aware of her/his responsibility as a youth/child leader. He/She is energetic and able to encourage other children/youth;
- He/She respects others and listens to others;
- He/She is active and brave. He/She is brave enough to stand up and express ideas with adults;
- He/She is open, flexible, and appreciates other cultures.

Using these criteria, the children and young participants suggested a pyramid voting/selection scheme, starting from the local/community level, to the provincial level, and to the regional level where the provincial children-delegates will select their national delegate(s) to the international level. However, this did not occur.

*Closing Speech of the East Asia Pacific Children and Young People's Regional Forum II*  
[www.crin.org/docs/resources/publications/Alliance\\_EAPClosing.pdf](http://www.crin.org/docs/resources/publications/Alliance_EAPClosing.pdf)

***Involve children in planning for meetings***

The larger the meeting, the more important the outcome (and adults involved), the greater the chance that significant decisions will have been made beforehand. Children should have a chance to influence the agenda, discussion topics, participants, and preparation of any 'draft resolutions'. Otherwise, their contributions will probably not be incorporated into the meeting's real outcomes, and will instead be confined to a little-noticed 'children's statement'. In the first stages of participation this may be better than nothing, provided that it is not combined with disrespectful demands that children should perform songs and dramas (except in the unlikely event that adult delegates also perform in this way).

Adult participants in meetings usually need preparation and sensitisation to help them hear what children say, as well as how to behave (by not surrounding them and taking photographs rather than listening for example). Programmes can prepare a simple leaflet explaining that children's participation is a right, as well as the processes for selecting delegates, and some of the main points that children wish to place on the agenda.

***Feedback***

A vital part of the role of delegate is reporting back on meetings to the children represented. Adults should support this process by translation where necessary, including explaining meeting documents, assisting with written reports and dissemination.

***How children participate in meetings***

There are several ways in which children participate in adult-led meetings, each having advantages and disadvantages in different situations. Children should be involved in deciding which method or methods are used:

- Spoken or recorded testimonies: Child workers relate their personal stories and experiences, and may be asked questions afterwards;
- Prepared presentations and materials, such as art exhibitions, dramas, or statements from individuals or groups of children;

- Children's declarations and statements from other meetings, such as parallel forums;
- Panels: As a fixed part of a meeting session, a group of children answer questions from the other participants, which may focus on presentations they have made earlier;
- Full participation: Children participate in the meeting on an equal footing with adults, perhaps as part of national/sub-national or sectoral delegations, or independently, as representatives of their own children's organisations.

Although some of these forms have more potential to be participatory than others, much depends on how they are used and whether they are the children's choice. Adults who accompany children to meetings must be prepared to help children negotiate with meeting organisers, and to deal with disappointment when they do not succeed in achieving their aims. Children should have the best possible information on which to base their decisions and discussions.

National and international meetings often attract considerable media coverage. Steps should be taken to ensure that this coverage is respectful to children and that their privacy and dignity are not compromised. Programme managers and staff must protect children from intrusive journalism, ensure their health, comfort and safety, and never leave them alone in hotels or with strangers, while they go out to enjoy themselves.

### ***International meetings***

In recent years, children's involvement in international meetings and policy processes has begun to develop towards meaningful participation. Whereas it was common a few years ago for children to be present at international forums only as decoration, they are now invited to hold their own international forums, and even to participate as part of government delegations or in their own right. Some children have accompanied government and NGO representatives to meetings with the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

Working children from all over the world became involved in global campaigning for the adoption of ILO Convention 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour. The Global March Against Child Labour campaign, which began officially in the Philippines, brought



children from around the world into dialogue with international policy-makers in Geneva. Asian children have participated in:

- International Child Labour Conference in Oslo, 1997 (through a children's forum prior to the meeting organised by the Save the Children Alliance);
- Regional Consultation Against the Most Intolerable Forms of Child Labour, Bangkok, 1997 (together with a children's forum before the consultation);
- The World Congress Against the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in 1996 and the follow-up congress in Yokohama in 2001 (including a regional children's consultation before the Yokohama congress);
- The 5th East Asia-Pacific Ministerial Meeting on Children in Beijing 2001 (children presented 10 issues that they felt needed the urgent attention of international policy-makers at this meeting);
- The UN General Assembly Special Session on Children in May 2002: economic poverty, public services, health, HIV/AIDS, education, birth registration and nationality, child abuse, child sexual exploitation, child labour, media, and child participation;
- Meetings of the International Movement of Working Children, which resulted in Declarations of the views and demands of working children from organisations of child workers around the world (Kudapur Declaration 1996; Dakar Declaration 1998, see Miljeteig, 2000).

## ORGANISATIONS OF CHILD WORKERS

*Through my involvement in Bhima Sangha, I know that I have changed a lot. I have learned about working children from different areas and the situations in which they live and work. I have learned how to get along well with other children and the importance of building relationships with them. I have had opportunities to be a resource person for several children's and women's programmes - and I have gained a lot from this experience. I have also earned respect as an individual and as a member of an organisation.*

*Uchengamma, aged 14 years,  
President Makkala Panchayat and the State Committee of Bhima Sangha,  
organisation of child workers, 2002*

Children have a right to form their own organisations to represent their own interests (CRC Article 15). Working children's organisations in Asia and elsewhere have been operating for many years, some since before the CRC was drafted. According to some people, these represent the pinnacle of current children's participation. Children's organisation plan and manage their own programmes and choose their own membership. Their structures and practices embody the principles of child rights, and they are fertile environments for their members to learn to become good citizens who respect democratic principles and human rights. The organizations are outspoken, visible and influential.

These organisations are important because children cannot join adult trade unions, although the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions now has a campaign for young workers (15 to 18 years of age) as well as a campaign to end child labour. Trade unions in general are willing to work towards the abolition of child labour, often because it is believed that working children cause adult unemployment. But they do not recognise children under the minimum age for employment (15 years under ILO Convention 138) as 'workers' and are thus reluctant to meet, recognise or work with them. It is thus not helpful to refer to 'children's trade unions' and better to say 'organisations of working children', although this too can cause problems.

Organisations of working children have an identity (including a name) and a definite sense of membership, structures for decision-making, and elected leaders with extra responsibility and decision-making power. They also have sets of guiding beliefs and principles, and most have detailed sets of rules. Some have hundreds, even thousands,

of members, and several have combined to form an International Movement of Working Children.

The organisations have come into existence for different reasons, but almost always with the support and encouragement of an adult organisation, usually an NGO. Sometimes the adult organisation's motives are purely practical: it is easier to manage resources, whether human, financial or time, with a single group rather than two hundred individuals. Also, it is easier to work with organised children because these children know the organisation's philosophy, programmes and staff; are easier to contact; and it is easier to get their parents' permission. But in most cases, adults have simply recognised that children can better protect their own interests by organising themselves - as well as having the right to do so.

The adult organisations that support children's organisations provide space, technical support, training, guidance and resources to support actions and decisions taken freely by children. Adult organisations are particularly useful for helping children's organisations obtain legal status, and for facilitating attendance at international meetings.

### ***What organizations of child workers offer children***

Membership of a children's organisation can be an empowering and educational experience for working children. Some children's organisations operate similarly to unions and have helped individuals resolve disputes and problems in the workplace, as well as in the family and the community. Because they are run by children and are not linked to any traditional hierarchy, even children from the most socially disadvantaged backgrounds can reach positions of responsibility through their commitment and ability (Box 13).

Organisations run by and for children provide opportunities for children of all ages to learn life skills by taking on responsibilities for programme planning, counselling and budget management. Children learn the rights and duties of citizenship through practical experiences:

Children's organisations have proven to be excellent settings for learning participatory skills and practising non discrimination. ... Clubs and other types of children's organisations are ... offering the opportunity for children to learn about rights in the only effective way - by practising them' (Hart and Lansdown, 2002).

### **13. Child Labour Club**

One of the earliest children's organisations in Asia, now over two decades old, is the Child Labour Club in Thailand, supported by the NGO 'Foundation for Child Development'. The Club organises leisure and self-development activities as well as services for working children.

Foundation for Child Development began by approaching children working in factories and informing them of Club activities and services. The children passed on the information to their friends and started joining Club activities at weekends. This developed into a child-to-child approach to organising and running the Club. Child volunteers are the main route for reaching new members, arranging weekly factory visits, and organising mobile outreach activities (providing healthcare services, recreation activities, a library service, skills training, and non-formal education) in meeting places popular with working children, such as parks and shopping malls.

Foundation for Child Development reports that forming the Child Labour Club has enabled adults to learn more about working children's conditions as well as their thoughts, feelings and needs, which in turn helped the development of the organisation's own programme on child labour.

*Source: Contributed to the Handbook by Foundation for Child Development*

**Learning Points****Participation:**

- Takes time;
  - But does not waste time;
  - Is a learning process;
  - Is an opportunity for personal growth.
- 
- Child-to-child approaches can be effective ways to make contact with children who are otherwise hard to reach;
  - Child-to-child approaches do not always involve children's participation;
  - The children involved in implementing child-to-child activities need technical and moral support;
  - The quality of interaction and involvement between implementing children and targeted children in child-to-child activities should be monitored;
  - Children reached through child-to-child activities should be included as participants in monitoring and evaluation;
  - Programme managers must make sure child-to-child approaches do not become exploitative or put children at risk;
  - Children should only be involved in communicating messages that they understand and with which they are in agreement;
  - Adults should help children to prepare their own messages and to design their own communication strategies;
  - Children can and do participate meaningfully in meetings, including at international level;

- Information about meetings and the topics to be discussed should be disseminated to children in a children-friendly form as early as possible;
- Child labourers who are representatives to meetings should be bearing messages from as many child labourers as possible, and should be selected by child labourers through a transparent, democratic process;
- Organisations of working children sometimes represent thousands of working children and can have strong influence in policy-making and child protection;
- Children's organisations can be excellent environments for children to learn life skills through practical experience;
- Children's organisations are usually supported by an adult organisation;
- Adults need to learn how to behave with respect towards child delegates to meetings, in order to facilitate their most effective involvement.

## REFLECTIONS HOW CAN CHILDREN CONTRIBUTE TO PROGRAMMING?

### *Creating Opportunities*

How could you involve children more actively in your programmes and activities?

What important decisions that affect children are/will be made in your programme?

How could you involve children in them?

What processes would it be useful for children to participate in?

What level or type of participation are you and the children ready for:

Single activities like workshops, participation in meetings, or campaigns?

Involving children throughout a programme or project cycle from the planning stage onwards?

Helping children to create their own organisation?

Supporting children's projects, programmes and activities?

Where could the participation take place?

What would you need to provide?

How could you maximize the benefits of the participation:

For your organisation?

For the participating children?

For other children?

For other adults?

Which staff and partners would benefit from sensitisation or training on children's rights and children's participation?

What other changes should you make to facilitate children's participation?

Changing ways of communication in the organisation?

Changing office layout?

Making special spaces for children to meet?

Training children to use equipment usually reserved for adults?

When did you last see a child in your office?

If children are interested, do you let them see how you work, and meet the staff?

How often do you visit field projects and attend meetings?

How many children in your programme do you know (and recognise) by name?



## CHAPTER 4

# MAKING PARTICIPATION POSSIBLE

*Adults who are aware of the importance of children's participation should educate children and other adults. They should encourage children and other adults. They should encourage children to learn and should create opportunities for them to participate.*

*Uchengamma, aged 14 years,  
President Makkala Panchayat and the State Committee of Bhima Sangha,  
organisation of child workers, 2002*

This chapter explores ways of supporting children's participation through organizational and societal change. Children often say that the attitudes of adults have been barriers to their full participation in a programme. Those adults may be programme staff or others involved directly in the activities, including support staff such as drivers, cooks and administrators, who were rude or disrespectful to children, did not give them the support they needed or failed to value their contribution. They could also be parents or employers whose attitudes or demands made participating more difficult or officials who ignored requests or suggestions because they were made by children.

Even in the most vocal and influential children's organisations, children's participation relies on the support of adults, who control the institutions and processes, information and other resources through which meaningful children's participation can take place.

The overall aim of participatory programming with children is to contribute towards creating 'enabling environments' for children's participation - environments that support and promote their participation. This means persuading adults to share their power, to recognise their duty to listen to children, as well as to protect them and help them to develop to their full potential. Creating environments in which working children can participate is an adult responsibility.

## ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE

*The right to information is very important,  
as we need information to know about things  
so that we can change things.*

*Indian boy rag-picker, aged 12  
Source: O'Kane, 2000*

'Organizations aiming to help working children are almost always adult structures, run by adults for adults, creating partnerships with other adult organisations and usually choosing adults (such as teachers, parents) as the targets of their programmes. Although they may now promote children's participation, it is relatively rare for those organisations to open up their own structures in order that their planning and programming reflect the priorities identified by children themselves' (Hart and Lansdown, 2002). Yet the expressed demand of child labour organisations to RWG-CL for this Handbook, and their involvement in workshops to develop it, is an indication of willingness to change in order to include children's participation in organisational structures and practices.

How much organisations can and will change depends on their philosophy, aims and methods. Smaller, local NGOs, working at the grassroots level may be able to change radically, to involve children in every activity and in the running of the organisation itself. Larger, international organisations may be more limited in how much and how fast they can change, especially in their core programmes. However, they may still be able to make subtle change in how they make decisions, how they deliver services, and above all how they behave with children.

### ***Changes in work habits***

The key to organisational change is the decision to rethink the relationship between children and the organisational staff, methods, language, structures and space, so that children are recognised as partners rather than passive beneficiaries:

- Participation in programming is a right, not a gift;
- Creative ways should be found to promote working children's participation;
- Children's participation should be a normal feature of all appropriate activities and programmes;
- Children's participation is a process of organizational learning, which should be documented, followed-up and reviewed by both children and staff, so that it can be continuously improved.

Children should be informed about organisational activities and plans; they have a right to know what is being done on their behalf as well as about developments in the area of child labour. If they know what is happening, they can decide when and how they wish to participate. Children must also be included as an audience for organisational reports and publications, which means routinely producing children-friendly versions (adults also might prefer versions that are easier to read). Some working children may be illiterate, or not fully literate, so they will need information to be communicated using methods that do not use written words. Other children may need translations into their mother tongue. Creative use of public meetings, radio broadcasts, and dissemination through organisations used to working with particular ethnic groups or types of workers, may help to bring the information to a large number and wide range of children.

Some organisations appoint a member of staff to be responsible for promoting children's participation. This job generally involves overseeing sensitisation on children's participation and training for staff and partners, as well as technical support and monitoring.

### ***Organisational capacity building***

Training in new knowledge, skills and attitudes to uphold working children's participation can be invaluable for staff and partners. Training courses need not be extravagant or expensive - they can even take place in offices or at the project site.

Learning is a continuous process. Staff and managers should have opportunities periodically to review their experiences and share skills and information. Regular training can also keep ideas and approaches fresh.

### ***Space for children***

When organisations have regular contact with children, they should be provided with a space in your organisation where they can 'be themselves'. In adult spaces or offices, children tend to be uncomfortable and ill at ease. Their space could be as uncomplicated as a table under a tree, provided that there is adequate shelter from sun, wind and rain.

## SOCIETAL CHANGE

*We are fighting every day against hazardous work  
and against exploitation of child work.  
We are also fighting for the improvement of life and  
working conditions of all children in the world.*

*From Dakar Declaration  
of the Movements of Working Children and Youth of Africa,  
Latin America and Asia, March 1998 - Miljeteig, 2000*

The prevalence of the worst forms of child labour in Asia should never suggest that children are not prized, loved and protected. Most children in Asia are able to grow up in the close care of an extended family, which includes not only their parents but aunts, uncles, cousins, neighbours and friends. They may participate in household work and, often, in earning money for the family; but adults make decisions for them, in what they perceive to be the child's and family's best interests - even if that decision results in them working in one of the worst forms of child labour. Children's autonomy and their capacity to guarantee their own rights, are under-developed.

However, culture should also be viewed as a source of opportunities. Traditional forms of art and entertainment can put the unfamiliar message of child rights in a familiar setting. There are passages in Buddhist, Christian, Hindu and Islamic teachings that are consistent with the rights of children. Traditional sayings and stories might provide good stimuli for discussions on child labour and children's participation.

Asian cultures are changing fast through exposure to new influences, particularly through closer contact with the mainstream cultures of their own (or neighbouring) countries or through global means of communication. Television and radio are presenting people with new ideas, new models of thought and behaviour. People's beliefs about childhood are being challenged. Alternative versions of the roles and capabilities of boys and girls are being envisaged.

Children's participation in development programmes is a starting point for promoting children's participation in all aspects of their lives. Even children who participate directly in programmes will have limited opportunities to use these skills at home, at school and in the community, without greater acceptance of children's participation among adults such as parents, teachers, employers and policy makers.

Organisations need to look beyond their immediate objectives, and find ways for children's participation in their programmes to influence attitudes in the wider society, so that children's participation is not only accepted but normal.

### **Families**

In families, children learn their first lessons about participation, and non-participation, and they may need to be encouraged to reflect on this. If they ask questions, do they receive answers or are they ignored? Do they join in family discussions, or are they expected to be quiet and accept what adults (and, by extension, anyone with more power) decide? As members of their family's class, religious or ethnic group, how much influence do they have in society?

Most child labourers work to support their families. In some families, this contribution earns them respect and influence in family decisions - working children may be more empowered in families than wealthier, non-working children in school. More often, in Asian families, working children have all the responsibilities of work, but none of the privileges of participation, which is especially true of girls, whose contributions in the home often go unrecognised because they do not produce an income.

Working children who have participated in programmes often report that their parents do not understand about children's rights and that this has been a major barrier to further participation. As they grow in confidence and become more outspoken because of their participation in a programme, children have found that their parents become less tolerant and try to stop them from participating. It is therefore important for programmes to try and work with children's families or other caregivers (unless children forbid this). Not only will this facilitate children's participation in the current programme, but families may also encourage children to participate more actively in their households.

When organisations have direct access to parents, a number of approaches have been found useful:

- Structured, community-based group sessions for families, discussing issues such as children's rights, gender discrimination, child abuse, and child development; in particular that missing school by going to work limits children's opportunities in later life. Group sessions have the advantage of reaching a relatively large number of parents in a short time. The disadvantage of structured group sessions is that

the majority of the participants are usually mothers. In parts of Asia, fathers consider child-rearing to be a woman's task, but still insist on making important decisions about and for their children. In order to reach fathers, managers could approach local organisations of men. Fathers may need to be convinced that the sessions are relevant to them;

- Home visits: Staff, or other children from the programme, can pay home visits to parents and raise their awareness of children's rights and children's participation. They should also discuss benefits of the child's involvement in activities. The visits should be informal, so that parents feel comfortable asking questions, but they should not be unannounced or uninvited. Home visits take up staff time, but can be effective, especially because the child may be able to take part in the discussions;
- Creating opportunities for parents to observe participation for themselves: inviting parents to visit the project or programme to observe children's activities, and even involving them in the activities, can help to convince them that the activities are worthwhile and beneficial for their children;
- Sharing children's achievements: programme managers, staff or children can present what children have been doing and its outcomes (including drawings, essays, research) with parents, either when visiting the parents at home or in events organised within communities. Benefits for children and ways parents can support them can be highlighted. Open days and exhibitions celebrate children's achievements.

Working with families can be challenging. The families may be abusive; parents may simply not want to listen. They may be particularly unwilling to change their attitudes about appropriate gender roles (which could have uncomfortable implications for family dynamics). For families of children in the worst forms of child labour, survival may be an overwhelming priority, and they may feel they simply have no choice: their children must earn income now. Attempts to change the families' attitudes should be integrated with interventions to reduce their poverty.

## **Communities**

Institutions that are important in children's lives are found at community level: schools, religious institutions, health services, local government, people's organisations, unions, NGOs, and places where children spend time for work or play. Communities can be significant partners in promoting working children's participation and protecting their rights, apply moral pressure on families that force children into the worst forms of child labour, or offer support so that this is no longer an option. Communities can influence employers of child labour to improve working conditions. Some community leaders may be able to access official help from government agencies on labour standards, law enforcement and social welfare for poor families.

Work with communities has helped participatory child labour programmes to understand the importance of promoting children's participation in all aspects of their lives. This includes working with local government or other local leaders to ensure children's participation is considered in a community's development planning (Box 14).

### **14. Children develop their own local government**

In Karnataka province, southern India, the NGO The Concerned for Working Children (CWC) supports a number of children's organisations and structures.

CWC is now working in four rural districts (eight *panchayats* or village councils) and two urban centres of Karnataka, in each of which CWC has enabled the formation of a task force at the village and/or ward level, consisting of representatives of working children and their communities, government representatives and employers. Children make maps of villages/wards and present the problems they face to the task force, and together they find the solutions.

Children are empowered to participate at the local level through the *makkala panchayat* (children's village council), which parallels the *panchayat* local government system, but is by, for and of working children. *Makkala panchayat* currently exist in South Kanara, Sirsi and Bellary districts of Karnataka. The electorate consists of all working children (6-18 years old) in the village, with representation for all children. Office bearers include the President, Vice President and Members (all 12-18 years old). All young children in the village (0-6 years old) are registered by the *makkala panchayat*, which provides valuable data on the status of all children in the village.



*Makkala panchayats* have impacts on changes in the mainstream (adult) political system. They have succeeded in implementing child-centred micro-planning with working children as equal partners in development; and assured the participation of girls and minorities and the marginalized. This experiment is sustainable because children are being empowered and prepared to participate in the official *panchayat* when they reach adulthood. These children are likely to become the elected members of *panchayats* in the future and will have a vested interest in maintaining the system.

*Adapted from The Concerned for Working Children website [www.workingchild.org](http://www.workingchild.org)*

### ***Child labourers in communities***

Child labourers have varied status in communities, which affects the approaches that can be used. Sometimes, child labourers and their families are valued community members; in other cases, children and their families are treated as virtual outsiders, including children from a lower caste or class, impoverished migrants, trafficked children, children working in illegal activities, as well as children who make people in the community feel ashamed or angry, such as child beggars and scavengers, child prostitutes, and demobilized child soldiers. If the communities recognise a need for action at all, they may be thinking in terms of eradicating the problem, rather than about children's development and rights.

In cities, or around rural enterprises employing unskilled workers, such as plantations or construction sites, migrant workers form their own communities in slums and shanty towns. Whether or not they are bound together by a strong communal spirit, these communities are often isolated from the surrounding 'host' community, which does little more than tolerate them, despite often benefitting from their cheap labour. Thus work with migrant child workers may require three different communities to be taken into account: the community of origin, the immediate community of other migrant workers, and the larger 'host' community.

### ***Raising awareness in communities***

Awareness raising in a community should cover child labour, child rights and especially the right to participation, which benefits all local children. Community-based awareness raising campaigns have the advantage over national campaigns in that they can directly address the local people's concerns. Involving children or community members in documenting and reporting cases of children in the worst forms of labour and trafficking can alert them to the problems and make them more vigilant in future.

Raising awareness in communities can take many forms:

- Activities and discussions with local leaders and government officials, in which children's rights and associated issues can be addressed, eventually forming child rights committees;
- Children's own community awareness raising campaigns, which not only highlight issues of concern but give community members experience of children's participation;
- Local level communication through drama, community radio broadcasts, brochures, 'wall newspapers' and comic books. Children can participate in the development of the materials and their distribution;
- Presentations to existing people's organisations, such as mothers' clubs, religious associations and cooperatives, including discussions on children's rights during regular meetings;
- Focus group discussions with teachers (focus group discussions are facilitated discussions in small groups on targeted topics);
- Organised public dialogues between children and adults, for exchanging views and opinions about implementing children's rights in homes, schools and community (Box 15);
- Networking between the programme and institutions in the community, so that they can work together and complement each other's efforts in working for the best interest of children (Box 16).

### **15. Children and adults act together in communities**

As communities become aware of the rights of working children, they will begin to create opportunities through which children can participate. They may initiate efforts to prevent, monitor and act on child exploitation or trafficking.

In Cebu, Philippines, Bidlisiw, an NGO working with children in the fish drying and packaging industry, organised communities with the help of children and raised people's awareness about the rights of children. Bidlisiw convinced a parents' organisation that its members should report cases of child abuse and be vigilant for the symptoms of abuse. The local government now makes plans with both Bidlisiw and the children.

*Source: Contributed to the Handbook during the workshop in the Philippines*

### ***Schools and non-formal education projects***

Several programmes have recognised the potential of education as a way of preventing child labour and giving children a better chance of finding decent work throughout their lives, by providing them with literacy and other skills. Several national curricula in Asia now include child labour as a topic, so that children are sensitized to the consequences of working or the dangers of trafficking. At the same time, interactive participatory classroom methods (sometimes called 'joyful' or 'active' learning), which build children's confidence and capacities for information seeking and analysis, have been explored in pilot projects. In addition, many organisations have begun to develop the idea of the 'children-friendly' or 'children seeking' school, which prevents drop out. One obstacle is that poorly-trained or rigid teachers are reluctant to change the way they teach or their behaviour towards their pupils. Yet teachers can be powerful partners in preventing child labour, and ways should be found to raise their awareness about child labour and help them to learn and use participatory approaches.

## 16. Children build their own school

Kaliyamma is now 23 years old. The members of Namma Sabha (organisation of working youth) have selected her as a village-level activist. She now works in Belve *panchayat* (village council). She has been a member of Bhima Sangha (organisation of working children) for six years and has helped to strengthen and build the Bhima Sangha in Belve.

Kaliyamma studied up to 9th standard, when she had her first menstruation and her family asked her to take a month off from school. This caused her to drop out of school and begin work rolling beedis (cigarettes). But that work gave Kaliyamma dizziness and backache. So she started work in a cashew nut factory. Soon she became a member of Bhima Sangha. In 1996 she attended a large conference of Bhima Sangha in Bangalore, where working children from different parts of the country gathered together. Her family had not been keen that she participate, but Prabhakar, a field activist from The Concerned for Working Children, convinced her parents to allow her to travel to Bangalore.

When Kaliyamma returned from Bangalore she was determined to make the Bhima Sangha in Belve strong. There were only five members at that time, but she was soon able to make it a 20-member chapter. Then the members learnt about how to conduct surveys and carried out a survey of working children in Belve.

The children used to meet once a week as Bhima Sangha. Soon they wanted to meet on a daily basis. But there was no place for the meetings. When they asked the local *panchayat* to provide a site that could serve as both meeting place and education centre, the *panchayat* said it had no land to offer. If the Bhima Sangha could find some land, the *panchayat* could give them a grant to construct the building. The Sangha members decided to use a small plot of land owned by the Forestry Department; they erected a thatched roof and started to meet there. They were able to use this until the monsoons, when the roof collapsed. The Forestry Department would not let them rebuild the shed and threatened them.

Bhima Sangha members then called a meeting of the *panchayat* and other elders in the community, asking for a grant to put up the building. Since the *panchayat* could only spare a small amount of money, much of the work had to be done at low cost.

The Sangha members were determined to have their school and meeting place. They persuaded a mason to work for them free of charge. The members of Bhima Sangha and their parents decided to work in the evenings (up to midnight) as their contribution. They also found a carpenter, who agreed to work for a low rate of pay, but he needed assistants. One of the Sangha members offered to act as his assistant to build the roof. Soon the building was completed. Kaliyamma remembers how the Sangha members used to bring oil lamps from their own houses so that they could work in the school.

When Kaliyamma dropped out of her first school, her family members and the others in the village used to think of her as good-for-nothing. Now, because of Bhima Sangha, Kaliyamma has a lot of recognition. She brought her father to Namma Bhoomi (working children's regional resource centre). She also took her father to meetings under the pretext that she was scared to go alone. He saw how Kaliyamma participated and how other children respected her. He gradually began to let her participate more. By the time Bhima Sangha began working on the school building, he had started giving considerable support to their work.

Now Kaliyamma is confident about her ability to take on responsibilities. She has been able to participate in various places and gain experience. As a result she has also begun to write stories, plays and poems for children.

*Source: Adapted from CWC web page [www.workingchild.org](http://www.workingchild.org)*

### **Employers**

Although it is easy to view the employers of child labourers as immoral exploiters, they can sometimes be useful partners. Cooperating with employers, even if it might be difficult, may provide an opportunity to improve the situation of working children. Some employers treat children who work for them as members of their own families, allowing or even supporting, their studies; they may not be aware that the children's working conditions are illegal or a violation of rights; or at least they may feel (often correctly) that they are providing income that children and their families need to survive. Employers are probably not aware of the rights of children, labour laws and labour standards. These can be discussed with employers without confrontation. They can be encouraged to improve working conditions, for example by creating recreational space and opportunities for children at or near the workplace, allowing (or supporting) children's

study, explaining decisions and working conditions to children and seeking their views. Organisations might also give support to children to help them negotiate better pay and conditions with their employers.

To build employers' trust rather than raising their suspicions and antagonism, they can be invited to a meeting with other people they know (such as a cooperative, parents' group or community council) at which children's rights will be discussed. A follow-up visit can be made to employers to ask what they thought of the meeting and begin to build their understanding.

It is critical to remember that some employers who may act in a friendly way to adults may punish child employees. They may accuse children of reporting them to authorities, make threats, dismiss them, increase their working hours, reduce their wages or physically punish them. Programme staff should discuss and agree with children their intention to talk to their employers, which should include warning them of potential dangers. If staff do talk to the employers and they react negatively, then the programme must be ready to provide protection and support.

In most countries, child labour is typically found in the informal economy, in small businesses using low technology. Even so, they may belong to some associations or organisations which could be approached with awareness-raising or sensitisation activities.

### ***Trade unions***

Trade union policy is that children under the age of 15 years should not be working, and often they consider adult unemployment to be a result of child labour. Thus, trade unions are allies for the abolition of child labour, but will probably not support actions to improve working conditions for children or recognise children as fellow workers. Advocacy efforts (involving working children) may mobilise trade unions, and the most effective approach will be to work with them in the participation of young workers, aged 15 to 18 years, with whom many trade unions are already carrying out their own awareness raising and action programmes.

### ***Mass media***

Television, radio, newspapers and magazines are major forces in any society, educating people and shaping their opinions. Mass media can reach millions of people, even in

remote areas. Because of this, they also have a strong influence on individual decision-makers, including those in government. NGOs, governments, international organisations and children themselves use the mass media to raise awareness and call for action against child labour. The mass media can do a lot to promote the cause of children's participation and to draw attention to child labour issues.

Nevertheless, journalists and editors for news and current affairs programmes, need to be sensitised about children's rights, children's participation in the context of child labour and ethical issues in stories about children. In partnership with other child labour or child rights agencies, media sensitisation workshops can be organised to explore:

- Ethical issues in reporting on child labour (particularly confidentiality and protecting children's safety);
- Asking working children for comments on issues that concern them;
- Viewing children as capable people who take action, rather than as passive victims or criminals;
- Focussing on positive stories where working children have made a difference to their own lives;
- How to deal sensitively with working children;
- Keeping in contact with children's organisations.

### ***Government and local authorities***

Efforts to support and protect child labourers need to be complemented with laws, policies and institutions that provide firm legal foundations for their participation. Children can participate in advocacy campaigns targetting individual officials (for example in ministries of labour) and policy makers. Programme managers could also consider bringing children to meetings with officials, or inviting them to visit participatory projects and see children in action (Box 17). One of the hardest tasks may be persuading the visitors to be informal, non-judgmental and respectful with children.

In the longer term, programmes should keep officials up to date with progress and notable achievements, and try to persuade them to involve working children in decision-making, or at least open a dialogue with them (Box 18).

### ***Towards a more democratic future***

There is a long journey ahead towards full, equal participation of children in society. Children's participation in programmes to address child labour is one step on the road, which will show people the true value and capabilities of some of the most disadvantaged and ignored members of society and, by the same process, will help these children to improve their lives and gain the opportunity of a better future.

#### **17. Children participate in development planning in Vietnam**

As part of its Child Friendly Districts initiative in Vietnam, Save the Children Sweden helped the Committee of Population, Family and Children (CPFC) of Ho Chi Minh City District 4 to consult children about planning for the initiative in that District. Although CPFC were initially surprised by the idea, Save the Children managed to persuade them to experiment.

Save the Children provided training in participation, including how to consult children, for adult facilitators from the CPFC, who were staff responsible for working with children at ward (sub-district) level. Children aged 7-18 years attending ward-level recreational activities organised by CPFC were invited to participate in preliminary discussions on issues to raise with District 4 policy makers. Child representatives from each ward then attended a one-and-a-half-day session in which the children shared their wards' ideas with each other and then entered into discussions with the policy makers.

The policy makers were surprised and impressed with the children's abilities. They decided to base planning of the first year of the Child Friendly Districts initiative in District 4 on addressing the main problems the children had identified, and to continue to consult children and promote children's participation in future CPFC activities.

*Source: Contributed to the consultation workshop in Ho-Chi-Minh City*



### **18. How can civil society support children's participation?**

Civil society groups - such as parents, community associations, non-governmental organisations - can play an important supporting role:

- Access to information for children;
- Access to resources (including money, places to meet and computers);
- Training in skills such as facilitation, advocacy and negotiation;
- Opportunities to share information and approaches with other groups of children and young people;

The children and young people in a Save the Children Canada consultation about children's participation in national planning had a variety of ideas about the kind of civil society support that would be useful, including:

- Moral and financial support to stay involved;
- Persuading governments that children and young people's involvement is practical and worthwhile;
- Training children to facilitate the maximum participation of children and young people in the planning process, for example by giving children and young people access to new skills and knowledge to improve their effectiveness in consultations;
- Training adults in government to overcome their resistance to children and young people's involvement and to give them the confidence and skills to encourage children's involvement;
- Support to capacity-building with child-led and youth-led organisations;
- Acting as an intermediary and facilitator between government and children and young people;
- Supporting children's participation in research to produce evidence to support children's advocacy;

- Producing children friendly versions of key documents;
- Working with children and young people to follow up on government promises and hold governments accountable;
- Organising meetings to share information and consult with children and young people.

*Source: Save the Children Canada, 2002*

### *Learning Points*

#### **Participation:**

- Takes time;
  - But does not waste time;
  - Is a learning process;
  - Is an opportunity for personal growth.
- Creating opportunities for more active, and more frequent, children's participation in programmes requires some changes within organisations - in terms of attitudes, working practices or even structures;
  - Several Asian organisations (see resource list) provide sensitisation and training programmes on working with children;
  - Organisations working directly with children should create a space where they can relax and talk away from adults;
  - Activities should seek to promote working children's participation beyond the scope of programmes and projects;
  - Families and communities should be targeted with sensitisation and awareness raising activities;
  - Creating opportunities for adults to see children's participation and children's achievements is often the best way of persuading them of the benefits;
  - Employers and trade unions could become useful allies;
  - Mass media can help to change attitudes towards child labour and children's participation throughout society, but journalists need awareness raising about children's rights, especially informed consent;
  - The support of officials and policy makers creates a stronger legal and institutional basis for children's participation in planning.

## REFLECTIONS ARE ALL CHILDREN'S OPINIONS HEARD?

Children and young people were asked, by Save the Children Canada, how governments and others could ensure that all children are able to play a full part in developing National Plans of Action for children and against child labour (NPA). In particular, they were asked about how to make sure that younger children, girls and children from marginalized groups were included in the process.

Would your answers to this question be the same as those children and young people recommended? What else might you suggest?

### ***To include younger children (under 12 years of age):***

- Ensure that younger children are given the same consideration as older children when planning the involvement of children and young people in the process;
- Involve younger children in setting the rules for children's and young people's participation in any consultation or decision making processes;
- Organise 'fun' activities and methods such as a play, puppet show, video, drawing competition or children's newspaper;
- Provide support from older children to explain, inform and encourage younger children to work on this;
- Encourage parents to be actively involved in the NPA process themselves and to work together with their younger children to consider the issues and develop a response;
- Use a story or brief video to explain what the NPA is and ask children questions afterwards;

- Organise special workshops and education in primary schools;
- Involve younger children in the activities of older children;
- Spread information about the NPA.

***To include girls as well as boys:***

- Provide adult facilitators of consultations or other NPA processes with awareness and understanding of gender issues;
- Make programmes and activities equally interesting for both girls and boys;
- Encourage all children and young people involved in the NPA process to make a formal commitment to ensuring non-discrimination on grounds of gender;
- Elect both girls and boys as child delegates
- Ensure that equal numbers of girls and boys are invited to any meeting or consultation;
- Refer to the CRC as the basis for ensuring equality between girls and boys.

***To include children from marginalized groups and children with different disabilities:***

- Adult facilitators need to understand and respond appropriately to the special needs of these children and young people;
- Materials should be provided in all national languages and in formats which enable all children to be involved (for example audio tapes, large print, Braille);

- Children from these groups should be asked what they need in order to be fully involved in the NPA process and additional care and funding should be sought to support their involvement;
- Meeting spaces and other arrangements must be accessible to all children;
- NGOs with special experiences in working with ethnic minorities or children with disabilities should be asked to contribute their expertise, and perhaps their resources;
- Children with disabilities can be linked with more able young people who can support their participation;
- These children and their opinions must be represented in organisations of children and young people.

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## GLOSSARY OF TERMS AND ACRONYMS

In this Handbook the following meanings are applied to terms and acronyms used:

Activity	Event in which children may be involved explicitly, such as a workshop, a planning session, press conference or meeting.
Advocacy	Stimulating policy makers to act to change laws and/or implement them.
Aim	The proposed endpoint or achievement of a strategy or programme.
Awareness raising	Communication activities designed to bring an issue to public attention or concern.
Bhima Sangha	Bhima Sangha is an organisation of working children based in Bangalore, India and supported by the NGO The Concerned for Working Children.
Butterflies	NGO for street and working children, including organisation of child workers (India).
Capacity building	Training that builds on the existing skills, experiences and abilities of participants rather than assuming that the trainee knows nothing and requires ideas and skills to be imposed.
Child	Human being less than 18 years of age.
Child-to-Child	Either the organisation Child-to-Child Trust, or the peer-education approach in general.
Child labour	See RWG-CL definition on page opposite the table of contents.
Children-centred	Concentrating on children and on their best interests, in the context of families, communities and wider society; including their views and opinions.

Children-friendly	Applied to schools, cities and organisational spaces, such as offices, 'children-friendly' means reorganisation of space, equipment, practices and behaviour so that children feel comfortable and empowered; applied to reports, documents and publications, means that the form of presentation and language make the content accessible to children and easy for them to understand.
Communication	Designing and sending messages in order to influence people's attitudes, behaviour and actions.
Convention 138	ILO Convention on Minimum Age for Employment (1973).
Convention 182	ILO Convention on the Worst Forms of Child Labour (1999).
CRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989).
CWA	Child Workers in Asia.
CWC	The Concerned for Working Children.
Dakar Declaration	Declaration from a meeting of the International Movement of Working Children, 1998 (see Miljeteig, 2000).
Data	Information collected by research.
ECPAT	ECPAT was the original acronym for End Child Prostitution in Asian Tourism. ECPAT is now referred to as ECPAT International and has global scope for combating the commercial sexual exploitation of children.
Evaluation	Systematic assessment of progress and achievement, measured against agreed criteria.
Facilitate/facilitator	Facilitate means 'make easy to achieve'; a facilitator is someone who helps people to achieve goals, usually in workshops of capacity building processes.

Kundapur Declaration	Declaration made at the First Meeting of the International Movement of Working Children in Kundapur, India (1996). See Miljeteig 2000.
ILO	International Labour Organisation/Office.
Implementation	Process of putting a plan, law or strategy into action.
Informed consent	Consent to participate in an activity, programme or other process, that is freely given in full knowledge of the aims, processes and consequences.
International Movement of Working Children	See Miljeteig, 2000.
Mass media	Channels/means of communication that reach large audiences.
Medium (Plural, media)	Channel or means through which a message reaches an audience.
Monitoring	Organised process of checking inputs, processes, outputs and outcomes against plans, which takes place routinely throughout the operation of the plan.
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation; organisation that operates within civil society rather than state structures.
Objective	Specific purpose within an overall aim or goal.
Organisation	Recognised and established, sustainable institution or group with set aims and objectives.
Panchayat	Traditional village council in India.
Participation	Involvement in decision-making and planning, within activities, projects and programmes.

Peer	Person (child) of same age, characteristics and status.
Plan	Organised, logical process for deciding on aims and the strategies for achieving them, within available resources and a set period of time.
Programme	Planned intervention in which processes for increased children's participation are used.
Project	See Programme.
Recommendation 190	ILO guidelines for implementation of Convention 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour (1999).
Research	Purposeful, scientific information gathering.
RWG-CL	Regional Working Group on Child Labour.
Sangha	Organisation or group (India).
Strategy	A structured plan for reaching specific objectives.
Trafficking	Recruitment and/or transport of people for labour exploitation by means of violence, threat, deception, or debt.
UN	United Nations.
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Social and Cultural Organisation.
Wall newspaper	Means of communicating news or ideas through posters fixed to walls in public places.
Worst forms of child labour	Forms of child work defined as child labour to be targeted for elimination in ILO Convention 182 (1999) Article 3 (see ILO Convention 182).

## RESOURCE LIST

### **Books and documents**

Most of these books can be purchased online through sites such as [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) though some are out of print and may have to be purchased secondhand through a site such as [www.abebooks.com](http://www.abebooks.com). Some books and reports can be downloaded free from the Internet.

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## JOURNALS

### *CRIN Newsletter*

Published every four months by the Child Rights Information Network (CRIN). Features articles dealing with a range of children's rights issues, including participation. *CRIN Newsletter* No. 16, October 2002 focussed on 'Children and Young People's Participation'. Back issues of the Newsletter can be downloaded free from the CRIN website: [www.crin.org](http://www.crin.org)

### *Child Workers in Asia Newsletter*

Published every three months by Child Workers in Asia (CWA). Features articles on child labour initiatives in Asia submitted by organisations and individuals connected to the CWA network.

Some recent issues of the Newsletter are still available free by writing to CWA. All recent issues can also be downloaded free from the CWA website: [www.CWA.tnet.co.th](http://www.CWA.tnet.co.th)

### *PLA Notes (Notes on Participatory Learning and Action)*

Published every four months by the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED). Two special editions of PLA Notes have focused on children's participation: PLA Notes 42, October 2001, 'Children's Participation - Evaluating Effectiveness', and PLA Notes 25, February 1996, 'Children's Participation'. Other issues frequently contain useful and informative articles on children's participation. Free subscriptions to PLA Notes are available for organisations and individuals based in Southeast Asia.

Back issues of PLA Notes can be ordered from:

EarthPrint Ltd, Orders Department

PO Box 119, Stevenage

Hertfordshire SG1 4TP

United Kingdom

Email: [orders@earthprint.co.uk](mailto:orders@earthprint.co.uk)

Copies cost US\$ 18.00 each (plus postage cost)



**Publications of the Regional Working Group on Child Labour**

<b>Title:</b>	<b>Fax orders to:</b>	<b>Download pdf file from:</b>
<i>Child labour: 'Getting the message across'</i>	<b>English</b> version: Currently out of print	<a href="http://www.seapa.net">www.seapa.net</a>
<i>A manual to strengthen the production and use of information about child labour in Asia</i>	<b>Vietnamese</b> version: Save the Children Sweden Southeast Asia ++ 844-823-2394	N/A
ISBN 974-87846-7-3	For <b>Bahasa Indonesia</b> version: UNICEF Jakarta ++ 62-21- 571-1326	N/A
<i>Handbook for action-oriented research on the worst forms of child labour, including trafficking in children</i>	ILO-IPEC TICW ++ 662-288-3063	<a href="http://www.seapa.net">www.seapa.net</a>
ISBN 974-90865-2-x		

### ***Useful Websites***

Child Rights Information Network (CRIN): [www.crin.org](http://www.crin.org)

Child-to-Child Trust: [www.child-to-child.org](http://www.child-to-child.org)

Childwatch International: [www.childwatch.uio.no](http://www.childwatch.uio.no)

Child Protection in the Philippines: [www.childprotection.org.ph](http://www.childprotection.org.ph)

Child Workers in Asia (CWA): [www.cwa.tnet.co.th](http://www.cwa.tnet.co.th)

ECPAT International: [www.ecpat.net](http://www.ecpat.net)

Global March Against Child Labour: [www.globalmarch.org](http://www.globalmarch.org)

International Labour Organisation (ILO): [www.ilo.org](http://www.ilo.org)

International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC):

[www.ilo.org/public/english/standards/ipec/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/public/english/standards/ipec/index.htm)

ILO Project to Combat Trafficking in Children and Women in the Mekong Sub-Region:

[www.ilo.org/asia/child/trafficking](http://www.ilo.org/asia/child/trafficking)

Save the Children Southeast and East Asia and Pacific Region: [www.seapa.net](http://www.seapa.net)

Save the Children Sweden: [www.rb.se](http://www.rb.se)

Save the Children UK: [www.savethechildren.org.uk](http://www.savethechildren.org.uk)

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF): [www.unicef.org](http://www.unicef.org)

UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre: [www.unicef-icdc.org](http://www.unicef-icdc.org)

World Vision International: [www.wvi.org](http://www.wvi.org)

Publications on participation can be accessed through the International Institute for Environment and Development resource centre: [www.iied.org/resource/index.html](http://www.iied.org/resource/index.html)

## INTERNATIONAL LEGAL DOCUMENTS

### Articles in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child relevant to children's participation in programmes

The main articles of the CRC relating to children's participation in programmes to combat child labour are often called 'The opinion of the child' (Article 12), 'Freedom of expression' (Article 13), and 'Freedom of assembly' (Article 15). Article 12 is regarded as one of the guiding principles of the CRC, the other three being the right not to be discriminated against (Article 2), the right to have the best interests of a child taken into consideration in any decisions or actions on his or her behalf (Article 3) and the right to survival and development (Article 6).

In the texts of articles given in full below, the term 'States Parties' refers to states that have ratified the CRC - meaning that it is now part of national law. All Asian countries are 'States Parties' to the CRC.

#### 'The opinion of the child'

##### Article 12

- 1) States parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.
- 2) For this purpose the child shall in particular be provided the opportunity to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting the child, either directly, or through a representative or an appropriate body, in a manner consistent with the procedural rules of national law.

#### 'Freedom of expression'

##### Article 13

- 1) The child shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of the child's choice.
- 2) The exercise of this right may be subject to certain restriction, but these shall only be such as are provided by law and are necessary:
  - a) For respect of the rights and reputations of others; or
  - b) For the protection of national security or of public order (*ordre public*), or of public health and morals.

## **'Freedom of assembly'**

### **Article 15**

- 1) States Parties recognise the rights of the child to freedom of association and freedom of peaceful assembly.
- 2) No restrictions may be placed on the exercise of these rights other than those imposed in conformity with the law and which are necessary in a democratic society in the interests of national security or public safety, public order (*ordre public*), the protection of public health or morals or the protection of the rights and freedoms of others.

These three articles are supported by two more, which provide the right to information (which is the basis of making good decisions), and to developing the skills for responsible citizenship.

## **'Access to information'**

### **Article 17**

States Parties recognise the important function performed by the mass media and shall ensure that the child has access to information and material from a diversity of national and international sources, especially those aimed at the promotion of his or her social, spiritual and moral well-being and physical and mental health. To this end, States Parties shall:

- a) Encourage the mass media to disseminate information and material of social and cultural benefit to the child and in accordance with the spirit of article 29;
- b) Encourage international cooperation in the production, exchange and dissemination of such information and material from a diversity of cultural, national and international sources;
- c) Encourage the production and dissemination of children's books;
- d) Encourage the mass media to have particular regard to the linguistic needs of the child who belongs to a minority group or is indigenous;
- e) Encourage the development of appropriate guidelines for the protection of the child from information and material injurious to his or her well-being, bearing in mind the provisions of articles 13 and 18.

## **'Aims of education'**

### **Article 29**

- 1) States Parties agree that the education of the child shall be directed to:
  - a) The development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential;
  - b) The development of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and for the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations;
  - c) The development of respect for the child's parents, his or her own cultural identity, language and values, for the national values of the country in which the child is living, the country from which he or she may originate, and for civilizations different from his or her own;
  - d) The preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin;
  - e) The development of respect for the natural environment.
- 2) No part of the present article or article 28 [on access to education] shall be construed so as to interfere with the liberty of individuals and bodies to establish educational institutions, subject always to the observance of the principles set forth in paragraph 1 of the present article and to the requirements that the education given in such institutions shall conform to such minimum standards as may be laid down by the State.

Participation is also explicitly mentioned elsewhere in the CRC, with respect to the rights of children with disabilities to participate activity in the community (Article 23) and all children's right to participate in cultural and artistic life (Article 31).

### **International law and labour standards relevant to children's participation in programmes to combat the worst forms of child labour, including trafficking**

The CRC protects children against economic exploitation in Article 32, and against sexual exploitation in Article 34, but does not mention child labour as such. There are also two 'Optional Protocols' to the CRC (additional legislation passed later, which states have the option to ratify) about sexual exploitation and child soldiers. Under Article 32, States Parties are obliged to set a minimum age for starting work.

## Article 32 CRC

- 1) States Parties recognise the right of a child to be protected from economic exploitation and from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child's education, or to be harmful to the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development.
- 2) States Parties shall take legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to ensure the implementation of the present article. To this end, and having regard to the relevant provisions of other international instruments, States Parties shall in particular:
  - a) Provide for a minimum age or minimum ages for admission to employment;
  - b) Provide for appropriate regulation of the hours and conditions of employment;
  - c) Provide for appropriate penalties or other sanctions to ensure the effective enforcement of the present article.

The main international legal standard for setting the minimum age at which children can enter employment is ILO Convention 138 (1973), which consolidated previous ILO labour standards on child labour. This sets a general minimum age of 15 years, and is fairly widely ratified. But it makes no mention of children's participation.

International attempts to define the 'hazards' referred to in CRC Article 32 led to the adoption of ILO Convention 182 in 1999. This is widely ratified - very few countries in Asia have not at least signed Convention 182, which defines the worst forms of child labour, in Article 3, as:

- (a) all forms of slavery or practices similar to slavery, such as the sale and trafficking of children, debt bondage and serfdom and forced or compulsory labour, including forced or compulsory recruitment of children for use in armed conflict;
- (b) the use, procuring or offering of a child for prostitution, for the production of pornography or for pornographic performances;
- (c) the use, procuring or offering of a child for illicit activities, in particular for the production and trafficking of drugs as defined in the relevant international treaties;
- (d) work which, by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out, is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children.

One of the most interesting aspects of C182 is the combination of specific forms of child labour - under (a), (b) and (c), often referred to as 'unconditional worst forms' - and the less-specific criteria contained in (d), which refer to the likely impacts on child development. For this last group, every country must identify such types of child labour practices existing within its borders.

Convention 182 Article 6 refers to the obligation to design plans of action for the elimination of the worst forms of child labour, designing and implementing them 'in consultation with relevant government institutions and employers' and workers' organisations, taking into consideration the views of other concerned groups as appropriate', which could be interpreted to include the views of children as a 'concerned group'. Although Recommendation 190, which provides guidance about the implementation of Convention 182 is not a legal instrument, it does explicitly mention the participation of working children:

2. The programmes of action referred to in Article 6 of the Convention should be designed and implemented as a matter of urgency, in consultation with relevant government institutions and employers' and workers' organisations, taking into consideration the views of the children directly affected by the worst forms of child labour, their families and, as appropriate, other concerned groups committed to the aims of the Convention and this Recommendation; [and]

(e) informing, sensitising and mobilizing public opinion and concerned groups, including children and their families.

The full texts of these and other international human rights instruments are available on the Internet.

The following documents can be downloaded free from [www.unhcr.ch](http://www.unhcr.ch):

- UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)
- Optional Protocol to the CRC on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflicts
- Optional Protocol to the CRC on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography
- UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially women and children, supplementing the UN Convention against Transnational Crime.

The following documents can be downloaded free from [www.ilolex.ch](http://www.ilolex.ch):

- ILO Convention 138
- ILO Convention 182
- ILO Recommendation 190







*Learning to Work Together* is a handbook for programme managers who wish to build the capacities of adults to facilitate working children's participation in actions to combat child labour. It combines lessons learned by working children and adults who have participated in child labour programming, with insights from the increasing number of publications on the subject. The handbook is not intended to be a definitive guide to the subject, but a first step, based on early experiences in a rapidly expanding field, which should serve as a useful reference and resource. Whether a programme already works closely with children on a daily basis or is considering moving towards involving children, *Learning to Work Together* will provide ideas, information and inspiration.

Established in June 1998, the Regional Working Group on Child Labour (RWG-CL) is a joint effort of the International Save the Children Alliance represented by Save the Children Sweden, Regional Office for Southeast Asia, Hanoi • Child Workers in Asia (CWA) • World Vision International, Asia and the Pacific Region and the World Vision Foundation of Thailand • the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC) of the International Labour Organization (ILO), Sub Regional Office for Southeast Asia • the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) East Asia and the Pacific Regional Office and the Thailand Office.



World Vision

