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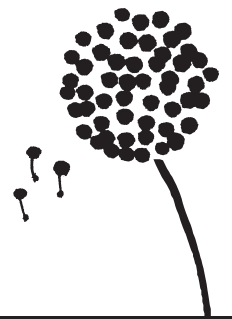
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Child participation





Child participation

by Paul Stephenson with Steve Gourley and Glenn Miles

Editor: Rachel Blackman

Design: Wingfinger

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Introduction

A definition of child participation is ‘children influencing issues affecting their lives, by speaking out or taking action in partnership with adults’. The energy behind child participation comes from:

- the growing emphasis on child rights
- good community development practice which enables people to address their own problems.

This book defines children as people between the ages of 0 and 18 years. The extent of child participation should depend on the age, experience and maturity of the child. A baby cannot be expected to make logical decisions, while a child of seven years old should not be expected to take on the burdens and responsibilities of an adult. However, all children should be involved and consulted in some way on matters that affect their lives. This book focuses on children between the ages of 6 and 18 years.

Children are people with dignity. Their views should be listened to and respected in the same way as those of adults. Their participation can enable development projects to meet the needs of all in the community. Children often want to participate but are not allowed to by adults. This may be due to cultural and social perceptions of children as lacking skills and being unable to express their thoughts. There is also a fear that children may become too independent and disrespectful of adults.

Child participation is not something that should be done only because it is the current fashion. This book shows that child participation is an essential part of good development practice. The involvement of children in development projects and community life can reveal new perspectives on problems, create more unity and trust within the community, and develop the skills of the next generation of community leaders and members. Child participation can provide the roots for sustainable development.

This book explores child participation and how it can be facilitated. It describes experiences of successful child participation, and shares ideas and tools that can help organisations in their work with children. These are described within a project cycle framework to help organisations to integrate child participation into their planning. It can be used alongside ROOTS 5: *Project Cycle Management*.

Glossary

This glossary explains the meaning of difficult words according to the way they are used in this book.

- advocate** to speak out about an issue to those in power
- baseline** data used as a reference with which future results or impact can be compared
- brainstorm** to state whatever immediately comes to mind about an issue
- child** a person between the ages of 0 and 18 years. In this book we focus on children between the ages of 6 and 18 years.
- coercion** the use of pressure to make people do things they do not want to do
- collaborate** to work together to achieve something
- council** a group of people who have been elected or appointed to advise or make decisions on behalf of others
- focus group** a small group of people who use their specialist knowledge or interest to discuss a particular topic
- hub** the central part of a wheel, which holds the spokes and is attached to the main part of a vehicle
- infrastructure** systems, services and facilities that are necessary for economic activity, such as roads, transport and schools
- lobby** to try to influence policy through direct contact with policy-makers
- logical framework** a table which gives a summary of project plans (objectives, indicators, evidence and assumptions)

- mural** a large picture painted directly onto a wall
- NGO** non-governmental organisation – an organisation that is managed independently of government
- panchayat** a village council in India
- parliament** an elected group of people with decision-making responsibilities, each of whom represents a particular region or group
- participation** the involvement of people in the decisions and processes that affect their lives, including sharing information, consulting, managing, making decisions and taking action
- PLA** Participatory Learning and Action
- pornography** films, magazines, photographs and other materials that are produced to cause sexual arousal
- questionnaire** a set of questions used to gather information for a survey
- rap** words spoken rhythmically over popular music
- spoke** supporting rods between the tyre and the hub of a wheel
- stakeholder** a person with an interest in, or a concern for, a project that an organisation carries out
- survey** a careful analysis of a situation or of people's views and opinions
- tokenism** making only a symbolic effort or making a limited response to achieve something
- trafficking** illegal trading
- UNCRC** United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

Introduction to child participation

1.1 A biblical view of children

In many cultures children are undervalued. However, God values children as much as adults. All human beings are made in his image.

BIBLE STUDY

God's view of children

- Read Genesis 1:26-27
 - *What do these verses say about the value of people in God's eyes?*
 - *Does he value children any differently from adults?*
 - *How do these verses encourage us to respect adults and children?*
- Read Deuteronomy 7:11-14
 - *What do these verses tell us about the way God values children?*
- Read Psalm 127 and Psalm 128
 - *What words are used to describe God's view of children in these Psalms? Discuss what these words mean.*
 - *Do we always view children as a blessing?*
- How are children viewed in our culture?
- In what practical ways can we encourage those around us to view children in the way that God views them?

God recognises that children are dependent and uses this to teach adults about the kingdom of God.

BIBLE STUDY

Jesus' attitude to children

- Read Matthew 18:1-6 and 19:13-15
- These verses show that Jesus had a positive attitude towards children. However, the point of these verses is even deeper.
- *What is the difference between children and adults in terms of dependency?*
 - *When we sin we turn away from God and want to go our own way. Why then do we need to become like children to enter God's kingdom?*
 - *What is Jesus' warning to those who misguide children?*

The Bible places the responsibility for the raising of children on the family. Ideally this should be within the immediate or extended family, but where this is not possible, the family of believers (church) should take on the responsibility (Exodus 22:22; James 1:27).

BIBLE STUDY

Holistic child development

■ Read Luke 2:40-52

These verses describe the way Jesus grew up and shows perfect human development from childhood to adulthood.

- *What does this passage say about Jesus' development: intellectually, physically, spiritually, socially?*
- *Do we always think of child development in these terms?*
- *What roles did adults play in Jesus' childhood?*

■ Read Matthew 21:14-16

- *What does this passage say about children's ability to recognise who Jesus is and to respond to him?*
- *Do we always see these abilities in children in our church?*

What can we do to encourage the development of children in our own families or communities?

The Bible teaches that relationships between adults and children should be loving, just and based on respect. Parents or guardians are urged to discipline children in their care. This allows children to explore their environment within a set of safe and healthy boundaries.

BIBLE STUDY

Nurturing children

There are many things we should consider when we seek to nurture children:

■ Read Deuteronomy 4:9-10; 6:5-7; Proverbs 4; 22:6; Ephesians 6:1-4

- *What is the benefit of teaching children about God's character, about what Jesus has done for us and how to live as the people of God?*

■ Read Hebrews 12:7-11; Proverbs 13:24, 29:15 and 29:17

- *Why does God discipline us as his children?*
- *What benefit does discipline have for our children?*
- *How can children be given discipline that nurtures rather than abuses them?*
- *What forms of discipline are used in our culture? Which of these do we think are appropriate and why?*

■ Read Colossians 3:21

- *How can we avoid discouraging children?*
- *In what ways can we encourage children?*
- *In what areas of their lives can we encourage them?*

In summary, children are a blessing from God. They should be nurtured in a protected environment, ideally within a family situation, to enable them to gain independence, to serve God and others and to reach their God-given potential.

1.2 Why child participation?

In order to encourage children to serve others, we need to ensure that they can participate in family, church and community life.

In addition to remembering the biblical basis for involving children, we should be aware of the legal and logical reasons for encouraging child participation:

- Under international law, children have the right to be consulted in all decisions concerning their lives. Most countries have signed up to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. According to Article 12 of the Convention, children must be asked to give their opinions about all matters affecting them, including in legal and administrative proceedings. This should take into account the 'age and maturity of the child'.
- Children know a lot about their own lives. Often, decisions are made about children's lives based on information provided only by adults. Yet adults cannot think, feel and see life as a child does. Adults often make assumptions about what information children are able, or not able, to provide. If adults do not listen to children, the decisions that they make for children may have a negative, rather than a positive, impact. Methods can be designed that make it easy for children to provide information. Information provided by children can be used alongside information provided by adults.

Children's natural environment for growth and well-being is the family. However, due to pressures on families around the world, many children grow up with one or no parent or in situations of abuse and neglect. This can result in children taking on responsibility to provide for their brothers and sisters, or being forced to live on the streets to avoid domestic violence and poverty. These children have to become independent earlier than other children. Participation in community life becomes particularly important for these children. They need to be able to make good decisions and protect themselves.

Development organisations have a role in ensuring that children are given an opportunity to participate. This might involve:

- empowering families to care for, and listen to, their children
- giving children an opportunity to participate in community life, such as helping them to set up a children's club or council
- involving children as stakeholders in all types of community development projects
- developing projects with children who may not have families to care for them
- enabling children to represent their concerns in conferences or consultations at local, regional and international levels.

All children should be given the opportunity to participate, but some children are often excluded due to their gender, physical disability or ethnic group. For example, girls should be given as much opportunity to participate as boys.

1.3 **Examining participation**

In order to involve children in the planning and implementation of projects and in community life, we need to examine ourselves and our roles in relation to children. We should ensure a balance between the type and quality of participation that occurs. Children should be involved in a way that respects and supports their roles as decision-makers. This is not an easy task. We will first look at the appropriate type of participation for different aspects of our work with children. We will then look at the 'Wheel of participation', which helps us to think about the elements needed for effective, good quality child participation.

TYPES OF PARTICIPATION

There are many different types of participation. The diagram below shows what these are. Tokenism is the lowest level of participation, where children are involved in some way, but not very meaningfully. The fifth type of participation is the most genuine participation by children, where they take a leading role. This means they have clearly defined decision-making powers within an agreed structure, such as a children's club. It does not mean that they are in charge and in a position to ignore advice from adults which is in their best interests.

It may take time for children to feel comfortable at a higher level of participation. Some may not want to take on this responsibility and agree to let adults take the lead at different times. We may decide to work at different levels of participation for different activities. However, it is important that staff and children work together to bring change.

5 TAKING A LEADING ROLE 'Action by'

CHILD-INITIATED AND DIRECTED Children set the agenda and are active politically.

4 COLLABORATION AND PARTNERSHIP 'Action with'

ADULT-INITIATED, SHARED DECISIONS WITH CHILDREN Adults have the initial idea, but children are involved in every step of the planning and implementation.

CHILD-INITIATED, SHARED DECISIONS WITH ADULTS Children and their organisations invite adults to collaborate with them. Roles are defined together.

JOINTLY INITIATED BY CHILDREN AND ADULTS Children and adults work in partnership to agree, and work together towards, common goals.

3 CONSULTATION 'Action with / by'

CHILDREN ARE CONSULTED AND INFORMED The project is designed and run by adults, but they use the suggestions and concerns of the children. Children are informed so that they can make good decisions.

2 INFORMING 'Action for'

CHILDREN ARE GIVEN A TASK AND TOLD WHAT IS REQUIRED OF THEM Children are informed of, and in agreement about, actions that affect them. They might be able to choose to carry out the task.

1 COERCION 'Action on'

MANIPULATION Children do or say what adults want them to, but have no real understanding of the issues. Alternatively children may be asked what they think, and adults then use some of the ideas without telling the children what influence they have had on the final decision.

DECORATION Children take part in an event, such as singing or dancing, but have no influence over how it is organised.

TOKENISM Children are asked their opinions but have little choice about the way that they can express those views or the range of ideas they can express.

Reflection

- Think of examples we have seen of child participation at each of these levels.
- What could have been done differently to enable children to participate more fully?

THE WHEEL OF PARTICIPATION

The Wheel of participation helps to ensure that children's participation is effective. A wheel is constructed from supportive spokes attached to a hub. The spoke must be balanced and keep the wheel perfectly round if it is to roll smoothly. The Wheel of participation consists of three 'spokes': the principles of opportunity, responsibility and support. Each of these spokes is necessary to support children in the process of participation as the diagram below shows. The hub represents respect, which forms the basis of the three principles.

If respect, opportunity, responsibility and support are not always provided to children, their participation will be unbalanced and slowed down, just as a broken spoke or a flat tyre will affect the movement of a bicycle. When children are given respect, opportunity,

responsibility and support, they will be able to participate in a way that increases their capacity and effectiveness in decision-making. This in turn will enable them to participate meaningfully.

The Wheel of participation



The hub and spokes of the Wheel of participation are described below. It can be useful to prayerfully reflect on the principles. Then think about practical ways in which they can be applied to specific work with children.

Give children respect

Respect is essential because it provides support for the three principles or spokes that complete the Wheel of participation. If there is no respect it becomes difficult for the three principles to be put into action. Respect can be shown by listening to what children say, asking for opinions, explaining decisions and actions, and giving all children equal treatment regardless of their ability, language and skills.

It is often difficult for people who consider themselves 'professionals' or 'experts' to ask children for ideas or solutions. This may be because of negative attitudes and experiences and is a major obstacle for organisations wishing to facilitate child participation. To overcome this obstacle and grow in respect for children, we must look for, and appreciate, their strengths and successes.

Give children opportunity

Children should be given **opportunities** to use their God-given ability to respond to issues affecting them. One of the biggest obstacles to the application of this principle is the attitude of some adults towards children.

Children can be given opportunities to participate in various stages of the project cycle. For example:

- **PROJECT IDENTIFICATION** Involve children in conducting needs assessments of their situation
- **PROJECT DESIGN** Gather ideas and information from children about responses to problems

- **IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION** Support children as they participate in project activities, monitor and review their progress and assess their impact
- **CELEBRATING SUCCESS AND LEARNING LESSONS** Allow children to reflect on, and record, what can be learned from the project.

At each of these stages, children can be given the opportunity to share their views and actively participate. The type of participation could differ. For example, it could move between **consultation** and **collaboration** as needed, and as appropriate for their age, experience and abilities. Children could direct their own needs assessments at the Project Identification stage. At the Project Design stage, adults could consult children for ideas on possible activities and responses.

In all cases, child-friendly methods should be used. For example, the use of creative arts such as drawings, photographs and role plays are very effective in allowing children to share their ideas and opinions about issues affecting them in a fun, non-threatening way. Section 4 looks at the project cycle and child-friendly methods in more detail.

Give children responsibility

If children are given **responsibility**, they will gradually become empowered as decision-makers. Allowing children to make decisions and to share in the consequences helps their growth and experience in influencing or directing project activities or community action. It is crucial for the growth and well-being of children that they learn how to respond actively to issues affecting their lives, both on their own and with other children.

The types and levels of decision-making and accountability should be realistic and appropriate for the children's age and maturity, increasing over time as the children grow older and gain experience. Children should fully understand the consequences of their decisions. They should agree their responsibilities with adults before the project or activity begins.

Give children support

The third principle needed to ensure effective child participation is **support**. When children are respected enough to be given the **opportunity** to influence or direct activities and **responsibility** to make decisions, they must be **supported** if they are to be successful.

Participation is a process that takes time and confidence for children to learn about and join in with. As a result they must be supported in various ways. This may be especially true for children who lack maturity or experience, who have physical or learning disabilities or who are facing serious emotional difficulties.

Most children will need several types of support. These usually include providing new or additional information, skills and material or financial resources. Children cannot take informed decisions without up-to-date information presented in ways that they can understand. Books, tape recordings and posters can be used to present information to children. Children themselves can play an active role in collecting information.

It is important to meet emotional needs as well. Adults should provide children with comfort, encouragement and praise in order to develop a sense of pride and achievement. The atmosphere in which children participate should be friendly and relaxed. This enables those who are shy or fearful to find ways of expressing themselves.

What children’s participation does and does not involve

Despite the rewards of involving children in project planning, it is not an easy solution to designing successful projects. In 2002, working children and programme managers in Asia came together to define what had been learned about child participation in their region. The following table is a useful summary of what they jointly agreed regarding children’s participation.

Taken from Regional Working Group on Child Labour (2003)

CHILD PARTICIPATION	
INVOLVES	DOES NOT INVOLVE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • recognising the value of children’s knowledge and contributions • sharing experience 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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • suggesting to children what they should think or say • thinking adults have nothing to learn • devaluing adult’s experience and expertise • using children to do adults’ work • no rights for adults and no responsibilities for children • handing over all power to children • keeping things the way they are now.

Reflection

- Do we agree with the statements about what child participation does and does not involve?
- How often do we put the positive statements into practice in our work?
- Are there additional statements that we could add?

Preparing for participation

Children and adults need to be prepared emotionally and socially to fully accept and support child participation. This is because the usual cultural beliefs and expectations concerning the roles of children and adults can be challenged when children are given opportunities to participate. Often, adults have had personal experiences which shape their views and behaviour towards children. It is crucial to exchange harmful attitudes for positive new ideas about what is possible and appropriate for children to do and say.

A number of steps need to be taken before encouraging child participation in our communities and projects. This preparation involves ourselves as adults, the community, the children themselves and our organisation.

Prepare adults

Adults wishing to facilitate child participation must learn to recognise every child's capacity to develop themselves and their world. They must also overcome their fears of giving increased opportunity, responsibility and influence to children – roles which have traditionally been held only by adults. This can take time. Ways to help adults prepare for participation are:

Address negative attitudes

Recognise and address any negative thoughts about, or views of, children, which may affect what adults expect of them. Be especially aware of commonly held negative views. For example, 'Children don't know anything' or 'Street children are rude and dishonest.' As these views can become part of our culture, they are often held by individuals at sub-conscious, emotional levels. They can therefore be difficult to uncover. Spend time in honest reflection to identify any negative views. Think about how they might affect work with children and how those views might be exchanged with more accurate and positive ones. It can be helpful to think about what it was like to be a child and how adults responded to us, both positively and negatively.

Appreciate the individual

Negative experiences with children in the past can significantly affect adult attitudes to, and interactions with, children in the present. For example, perhaps experiences with children have resulted in disappointment or resentment. Each child is unique and deserves the chance to be seen as an individual without being compared with another. Do not allow previous experiences with children to affect how a new child or group of children are viewed or treated.

Focus on strengths

Perhaps the best way for an adult to prepare for child participation is to develop a deep respect and appreciation for the many talents, gifts and contributions of children. This can be very difficult for people who are used to directing and disciplining children, and who, as a result, may focus on faults and weaknesses. Looking for, and acknowledging, the creativity, resourcefulness and achievements of children in their daily lives will increase trust and confidence in their ability to cope with additional involvement and

responsibility. Adults who concentrate on strengths and accomplishments allow and support children to participate more fully

Reflection

- What negative attitudes do I have towards children?
- What is the source of these attitudes?
- What are the consequences of these attitudes?
- How can I address these attitudes?
- What practical steps could I take?
- What strengths do I see in individual children I know?
- How can I support them to develop their strengths?

Prepare the children

Participation requires children to share their ideas, opinions and feelings openly and honestly. We need to create an environment in which they feel safe and confident to do this before they can take action. Some ways of doing this are:

Develop positive relationships

Positive, trusting relationships between children and adults are important for genuine participation. They encourage open communication and supportive partnerships.

Spend time developing positive relationships with children, beginning with fun games and activities that allow opportunities for light-hearted interaction. This creates shared memories that can help to strengthen future relationships. Allow space for meaningful conversations that will allow children and adults to get to know each other on a more personal level. Look for common interests and experiences that will encourage bonding.

Ideas for activities that help build relationships

- Team sports such as football, volleyball or frisbee.
- Short trips to museums, tourist sites and other fun places.
- Group games, such as:

DELIVERING MAIL The group sits in a circle. All the chairs should be occupied and one person stands in the middle. The person in the middle says, 'I am delivering mail to everyone who has...' Then they name a characteristic, such as long hair, glasses or blue trousers. Anyone who has that characteristic must stand up and run to a different seat, while the person in the middle also tries to find a seat. The person left without a seat becomes the person who delivers mail and the game starts again.

REPORTERS In pairs, the children give their names and other information about themselves to their partner. For example, what they had for breakfast, their favourite animal, food and so on. After two or three minutes everyone comes back together and reports what they found out about their partner to the group. This game can be used to introduce new people. Children can also be given a question to answer during their discussion to introduce an issue which will be discussed later in a session.

Promote understanding

Children cannot respond meaningfully to social issues unless they are first given the opportunity to learn about, and understand, them. Ignorance is a barrier to participation, while knowledge can result in good participation. Take time to inform children of the issues affecting their lives by organising workshops or other learning events. Allow children to reflect on, and respond to, the information presented by sharing their views with each other in small groups, and later with adults. Peer education (child-to-child) is also an effective way for children to receive and exchange information and views with one another and become interested in social issues.

Gain agreement

Ideally children should set the agenda. However, as we start to encourage child participation it is crucial to gain children's support and commitment. Without their agreement, children can feel as if they are being manipulated or even deceived. If we gain their agreement, children will be more committed to participating, especially in the long term. Inform children of their roles before beginning an activity. Recognise that vulnerable children will often be giving up time and income-generating opportunities in order to participate. Be aware of this and ensure that their participation can fit around their work activities. If possible, ask them how they want to be involved and help them plan their own roles. Make clear what children and adults are expecting of the project and each other and ensure these expectations are realistic and agreed to by everyone.

Reflection

- What games have we used with children that helped to build relationships?
- Can we think of any that we could start to use?
- What planning might be needed?
- What activities could we do with children that will allow conversations to take place?
- What creative ways can we think of to share information with children?
- How might these methods need to be different from those we use with adults?

Prepare the wider community

Culture and tradition can provide barriers to child participation. Children often provide childcare, labour and income in many households, but find it hard to share their views.

Schools and churches may provide children with opportunities to participate in clubs, youth groups and other activities. However, these are usually designed *for* children rather than *with* them.

Effective ways to raise awareness in the community about the value of children's participation include:

- Sharing the results of research undertaken by children with the community leaders
- Inviting community leaders, parents, teachers, church leaders and other members of the community to an official opening or presentation made by the children for something that they have achieved together

- Adults and children doing Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) activities together.

The case study below shows that the children had some concerns that were different to those of the adults. The children focused on specific issues that affected their daily lives, such as their ability to study and the lack of a meeting place. The exercise challenged the

CASE STUDY

Stephenson (1998a)

Adults and children in a village in South India came together to discuss issues facing children in their community. The village members divided into three groups: men, women and children. Each group was asked to answer three questions and record the answers on a large sheet of paper. A literate member of the group wrote down comments.

The questions were:

- What do children contribute to the village?
- What problems do children have?
- Why do they have these problems?

The answers from the groups were written on a large sheet of paper. The results are summarised in the table below.

Questions	Men's answers	Women's answers	Children's answers
What do children contribute to the village?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Shramadan</i>* • Tree planting • Beekeeping • Construction of the community centre 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Shramadan</i> • Entertainment • Learn signature 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Shramadan</i> • Support to orphans • Beekeeping • Children's daily activities • Pray for rain
What problems do children have?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poverty • Illiteracy • Infrequent transport • Too many children • Bad health • Broken water pump 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poverty • Lack of school materials • Infrequent transport • Too many children • Bad health • Broken water pump 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hard to get to school • No playground • Infrequent transport • Low voltage lights – difficult to study at night • Bad health • Carrying water • No place to meet
Why do they have these problems?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partial employment • No family planning • No 'voice' for the village • No government response • Poor sanitation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partial employment • No family planning • No 'voice' for the village • No government response 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Road not maintained • Village will not give land for playground • No resources

* *Shramadan* means a collective village self-help activity

adults: ‘Now we know what the children need,’ one man commented at the end of the session. ‘We have more awareness about children’s problems. It’s good to include them so we know.’

Reflection

- What traditions and cultural views might be barriers to child participation in our communities?
- In what ways can we raise awareness about the need for child participation in our communities?

Prepare our organisation

If we want children to participate more in the communities in which we work and the projects we carry out, we may need to make changes within our organisation to ensure that our structures and staff support child participation.

Child protection

The organisation should have a child protection policy in place before members of staff work with children. Ideally all members of staff who have contact with children during the course of their work should attend training about child protection. Guidelines for good practice have been developed by Tearfund and are given in the Appendix.

Staff training

In addition to child protection training, members of staff should be trained in how to communicate, and work in participatory ways, with children. This book contains many ideas that could be shared with members of staff in a workshop setting.

Decision-making and organisational structure

By involving children, we will challenge the way the organisation makes decisions and manages its work. Decide how child participation will affect the way that the organisation makes policies, does advocacy work, recruits staff and reviews programmes. Children’s involvement in all these issues will ensure that the organisation becomes one that works with, rather than for, children.

Reflection

- Do we have a child protection policy? If not, where can we get information and help to write one?
- What key issues should training in child protection address?
- Should we consider providing training for our staff about how to work with children? Do we know someone who could provide this training? What key issues should the training address?
- To what extent do children participate in decision-making in our organisation? How can we provide opportunities for them to participate more in the work of our organisation? What barriers might need to be broken down?

Preparation checklist

Prepare adults

- Recognise and address any negative attitudes towards children
- Recognise each child as an individual
- Recognise children's strengths as well as weaknesses

Prepare the children

- Develop positive relationships with children
- Promote understanding by informing children of social issues
- Agree with children their roles and expectations for their involvement

Prepare the wider community

- Raise awareness about the benefits of child participation
- Enable children to present their ideas and activities at a church service or other community gatherings

Prepare our organisation

- Child protection policy and training
- Train staff in how to communicate with children
- Think about how child participation will affect the way the organisation works

Reflection

- What are the key issues to be aware of when preparing for children's participation?
- Why is it so important to prepare carefully if children are to participate effectively?

Integrating children's participation into community life

The key to sustainable child participation is the creation of structures that empower children within their families and communities. The types of structures will depend on the context in which the children live and the type of participation used.

Several options are presented here:

CHILDREN'S CLUBS are a way of enabling children and the organisation working with them to explore approaches to participation. Children's clubs provide a safe place for children to learn, play, and carry out activities that benefit their communities. The interests of the children should direct the club's activities. Clubs fit well within a community development approach.

CHILDREN'S MOVEMENTS AND NETWORKS provide children with the opportunity to organise, plan and carry out actions to meet their needs and concerns.

CHILDREN'S COUNCILS try to influence decision-making at the community level.

CHILDREN'S PARLIAMENTS provide opportunities for children's voices to be heard at state or national level.

CHILDREN'S CLUBS

Children's clubs have become a popular way to encourage participation. They provide children with a safe place to express themselves. Examples of children's clubs can be found in Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Malawi and many other countries. These clubs have been successful, not only among poor rural and urban children, but also with street-working children. The clubs are easy to set up and enable children to experiment with joint decision-making, planning, action and leadership.

CASE STUDY
CHISOMO, Malawi.
 A children’s club –
 not a club for
 children

Living Waters Church set up Chisomo, a children’s club, in 1998. Children in Malawi generally have little status or influence on decisions affecting them. Until Chisomo started, no government policy addressed the needs of street children.

Children living and working on the streets of Blantyre established the club’s identity. From the start, its identity was based on building relationships of trust with children and their families and working with them to address their own problems, guided by the power and wisdom of God. The children designed the logo and named the club themselves, saying, *‘This has been the best day of our lives. Truly it is the grace of God.’* (Chisomo means ‘grace’.)

Maintaining good participation is a challenge. The club aims to keep a level of participation in which staff and children work together to bring change. This is sometimes initiated by adults and sometimes by children. There is a danger that the level of participation might slip to one of mere consultation where staff design the programmes and then consult the children. Chisomo would then become a club *for* children rather than a club *owned by* children. The children would start to think of the club as there to provide for them and their dependency would increase.

CHISOMO VALUES

- Put children first
- Long-term change
- Relationships of trust
- Excellence
- Participation
- Justice
- Acceptance and love
- God’s involvement



Photo: Jim Loring

The struggle to maintain an identity based on genuine child participation does not end. It depends on a constant return to the club’s underlying values.

Other examples

- The Child Brigade in Bangladesh is a very active group of street-working children that is organised and led by the children themselves. They have developed their own literacy materials to help other children like them to learn to read and write. They also help children who have been arrested or harassed by the police.
- In war-affected eastern Sri Lanka, a children’s club developed in a small community trapped between the armed resistance movement and the government forces. It developed slowly in order to be sensitive to the local culture. The club has been responsible for bringing friends back into school, expanding the school building, and involving government in providing access to education.
- Save the Children Norway is working with more than 400 community-based children’s clubs in different parts of Nepal. The clubs are involved in raising social issues affecting children’s lives and in advocacy work to bring in social changes through a child-to-child approach. Save the Children Norway is also working with the Hatemalo Child Club in advocacy work at the national level. It raises issues based on the experiences and views of the children’s clubs at the grassroots level. The Hatemalo Child Club’s media group is involved in raising issues concerning children for public debate through radio broadcasts in central and other regions of Nepal. It also raises general public awareness using posters and street drama.

Reflection

- What children's clubs do we know of in our country?
- List the benefits of children's clubs.
- How can we ensure that children's clubs are *owned by* and not just *for* children?

CHILDREN'S MOVEMENTS AND NETWORKS

Children's movements and networks provide a space for children from clubs or other organised groups to come together at a local, national or international level. The movement or network often has a specific goal or thematic focus. For example, working children might want to raise awareness about their rights, or children might want to campaign for peace. A movement or network usually requires joint facilitation and collaboration among the organisations working with these children.

CASE STUDY

The Children's Network (Red de Niños) of Colombia

The Children's Network of Colombia has brought together children affected by the conflict and violence in that country. Children from different regions select representatives to advocate on specific issues that concern them. For example:

- writing a letter to the churches in Colombia, urging them to work on specific issues that concern children
- presenting the concerns of children at the United Nations General Assembly Special Session on Children, especially to officials from Colombia
- raising awareness about child rights in their communities
- campaigning for peace and for the release of those kidnapped by paramilitary and guerrilla forces at local level.

CASE STUDY

Bhima Sangha: Working Children's Union

Ramachandran and Saihjee (2001)

The organisation Concerned for Working Children (CWC) in Karnataka state, South India, has worked with working children for many years. CWC helped to form a working children's union called Bhima Sangha. Bhima Sangha enables working children to participate in local village councils and to raise awareness of issues facing working children at national and international levels. It has a current membership of 25,000 working children.

The objective of Bhima Sangha is to provide opportunities for working children to discuss issues with each other and those around them in order to gain a collective and visible identity as workers. The Bhima Sangha has been central to CWC's strategy of reaching out to working children, talking to them and enabling them to express their fears, concerns and dreams. It has provided the children with an opportunity to talk to each other – about the circumstances that have forced them to become child workers, why they left school, and their hopes for the future.

CASE STUDY
MANTHOC,
 the Movement of
 Working Children of
 Christian Workers,
 Peru

MANTHOC consists of about 2,000 working children in over 130 communities across Peru. The organisation is divided into groups of 10–30 children. These groups work with adults, who help them to develop plans and activities that meet their specific needs. These include:

- Education: alternative forms of school to fit with their work schedules
- Vocational training and promoting the development of small businesses
- A focus on health education
- Community cafeterias to help improve the nutrition of poor children in the community.

The groups send representatives to meetings at departmental and national levels once a year. The process enables the children to present proposals for policy change at national and international levels that would benefit working children.

Reflection

- What children's movements and networks exist in our country?
- What are the benefits of children's movements and networks?
- What are the barriers to effective children's movements and networks? How might these be overcome?

CHILDREN'S COUNCILS

It can be a great challenge to enable child participation in decision-making at a local level. The creation of a formal space for children in village councils or development committees can be a significant step in achieving this.

CASE STUDY
Makkala
panchayats
 India
 CWC (2002)

The Concerned for Working Children and Bimha Sangha, the Working Children's Union, negotiated with local authorities the creation of village level representation for children. As a result, *makkala panchayats* (children's councils) were developed. The *makkala panchayats* have representation on the village *panchayats*.

Members of the *makkala panchayats* carry out door-to-door surveys to obtain accurate information about children in the village. They use various research tools to find out the issues and needs of children in their communities. This information is used to plan strategies and lobby for specific actions in their village *panchayat*. This could be related to education, working children, health and infrastructure needs such as footbridges, schools and nursery schools.

For the children involved, participation is not just an opportunity to take part in meetings, to be consulted occasionally, or to sing a song at an opening ceremony. For them, participation helps them to advocate for their own needs and transform their situations. Participation means taking a leading role.

Reflection

- What opportunities do children have to contribute their views in our communities?
- What decision-making structures exist in the communities we work with, in which children could be encouraged to participate?
- How can we help children to take part in decision-making in communities?

CHILDREN'S PARLIAMENTS

Children's parliaments are national representative forums for children in which they can discuss policy and advocacy issues. Their goal is to create a voice for children at a political level so that the interests of children are promoted in discussions about policy.

CASE STUDY
The Children's Parliament of Bangladesh

Save the Children Australia supported children in forming a children's parliament in Bangladesh. This gives children space and opportunity to voice their opinions. The Children's Parliament is a national forum of children, which allows children to tell their concerns to the members of the Bangladesh Parliament. The purpose of the Children's Parliament is to influence policy makers to develop pro-child policies and consider the development of Bangladeshi children.

Before deciding the national budget, the finance minister often receives many studies, reports and requests from special interest groups. But children's concerns are rarely heard. As a result, the needs and priorities of children are not always reflected in the national budget.

The Children's Parliament Preparatory Committee organised a Children's Budget Discussion Session in June 2003 during the budget planning session of the Bangladesh Parliament. A total of 68 children from all over Bangladesh participated in the budget discussion, where the children called for an appropriate budget allocation for their survival, development and protection.

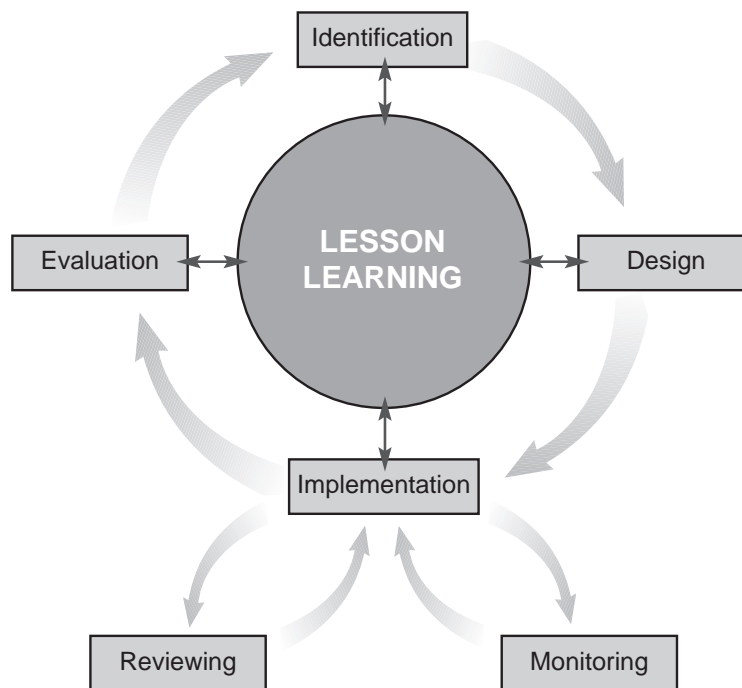
Reflection

- What are the advantages of children's parliaments?
- What activities would be needed to set up an effective children's parliament?

4

Children's participation in the project cycle

The process of planning and managing projects can be drawn as a cycle. Each phase of the project leads to the next.



Project identification

This involves carrying out a needs assessment to identify what the project will focus on.

Project design

This involves carrying out further research into the people affected by the problem and how they are affected by it (the stakeholders), identifying the risks to the project and how the project's performance will be measured.

Implementation and evaluation

During the implementation phase of the project the progress of the project should be monitored. Reviews should be carried out at regular intervals. Once the project is completed, an evaluation should be carried out in order to assess its long-term impact and sustainability.

Lesson learning

The planning tools used during the project design phase should be repeated throughout the life of the project. This ensures that any changes that might affect project success are accounted for. Findings from monitoring, reviewing and evaluation exercises should be documented to benefit organisational learning in order to improve other projects.

Children should be involved as stakeholders in the project cycle, giving opinions, suggestions, information and taking part in the implementation and evaluation of the project.

Children could be encouraged to take the lead in defining their needs, designing the project and gathering the information needed. They can then be supported in carrying out and evaluating the project.

The following sub-sections focus on the different phases of the project cycle. They suggest ways in which child participation can be built into project planning and management.

4.1 Project identification

‘The first step in the project cycle is to identify needs that a development project could address. This is sometimes called a **needs assessment**. Needs assessment finds out what community needs are and whom they affect. Only when we know what people really want will we be able to develop an effective development project.’ ROOTS 5: *Project cycle management*

We may already have a good idea of local needs. However, past experience and project work in the community does not guarantee a complete understanding of the community’s needs. Many organisations do not include children as stakeholders in a needs assessment. This is because they may think that children:

- will not benefit directly from the project
- lack worthwhile experience, skills and knowledge.

Children are therefore often overlooked as key stakeholders even in projects that benefit them directly. A far greater challenge is to involve them in assessing broader community development needs. Children possess useful and important knowledge that no-one else in the community can provide.

Most needs assessment tools can be adapted for use with children. Some ideas are outlined below. Training in communicating with children, child development, and age and gender issues are essential if the techniques are to be used successfully.

NEEDS ASSESSMENT TOOLS

The following tools are participatory activities which have been adapted for use with children.



Listening to children

Listening to children can be difficult for adults. It may also be challenging for adults to hear about the experiences of children in vulnerable situations. It is important to give the children plenty of time to describe their experiences and views.



Dream trees

Mosoj Yan is an organisation that works with street and working girls in Cochabamba, Bolivia. As part of their project identification process, the older girls facilitate other girls in the drawing of a 'dream tree'. They ask the girls to identify what roots are needed to give them opportunities and protection in their lives, such as justice, love and equality. The girls then fill the trunk with the issues that they face at the moment, such as exploitation, isolation, discrimination and lack of education. The flowers or fruits on the tree represent the ideal situation they would like to see for themselves. For example, they might like to have better social networks or skills.



The landscape around the tree represents what they can do to make this happen. They prioritise these suggestions and then present them to the staff of Mosoj Yan. One suggestion led to the formation of 'cells' of working girls who organise themselves in different parts of the city to educate other working girls who cannot access Mosoj Yan's educational centre.



Theatre for development

Many children enjoy drama. It can be used to explore issues that are important to them. To use theatre for development:

- identify important issues with a group of children
- select issues that the children want to concentrate on
- develop a drama based on these issues
- perform the drama to an audience
- encourage the audience to discuss issues raised by the drama.



Transect walks

Children can teach adults a lot about their community by taking them for a walk around it. Children can point out:

- what is important to them and why
- what they are afraid of and why
- what they would like to change
- what they like and do not like about the community
- where vulnerable children live, such as those with disabilities.



Mapping

Children are as good as adults at mapping their lives and their communities. It is an activity that they often find much more enjoyable than other needs assessment methods, such as interviews. Maps can be drawn on the ground using sticks, stones and other readily available local materials. Paper and pens can also be used. The children should not be given much direction about what to draw. Simply ask a question relating to an issue and allow them to draw a creative map that answers the question. Maps can be drawn to represent a number of things. For example:

- **MOBILITY** Where do the children go every day?
- **MIGRATION** (especially for street working and living children) Where do they come from?
- **COMMUNITY** What are the positive and negative aspects of the community?



Ranking

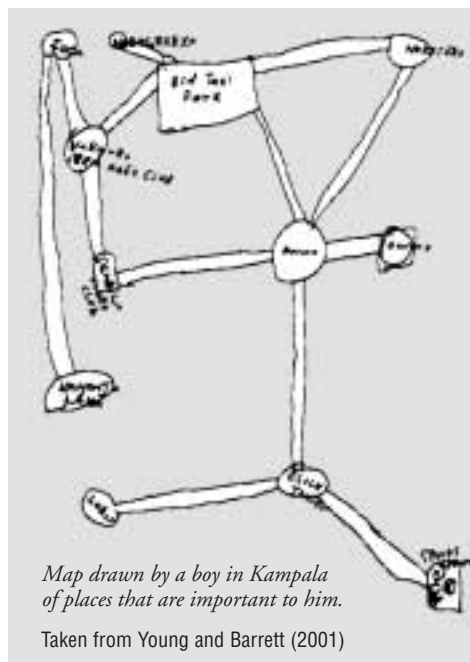
Ranking is used to show priorities. It can be used after a number of participatory exercises. For example, it could be used after children have mapped the positive and negative aspects of their community:

- Write or draw the positive aspects on the ground.
- Give ten bean or stone counters to each child. They can place as many counters as they want next to each aspect, according to how important they think they are. The more counters, the more important the aspect is to them. They may want to put all of their counters next to one aspect if they do not think the others are important to them.
- Repeat this exercise with the negative aspects.
- Encourage discussion of these findings, particularly the more negative aspects of the community.



Child-to-child interviews

Child-to-child interviews help children to collect baseline information. The children can also be involved in analysing it. It is important to first train the children in interviewing techniques.



CASE STUDY
Bhima Sangha

The Bimha Sangha Child Workers Union wanted to document the experiences of the *makkala panchayats*. They interviewed members of the *makkala panchayats*.

A technique used to open up the discussion was the 'fireball'. A coconut was passed around the circle. Someone was chosen to close his or her eyes and clap at a random moment. At the sound of the clap, whoever had the coconut had to answer a question.



Photo: Paul Stephenson

The children recorded the interviews on a cassette recorder and later wrote down what was said. This was then analysed. The findings were given to the Union to help them to plan their future work with the village *panchayats*.

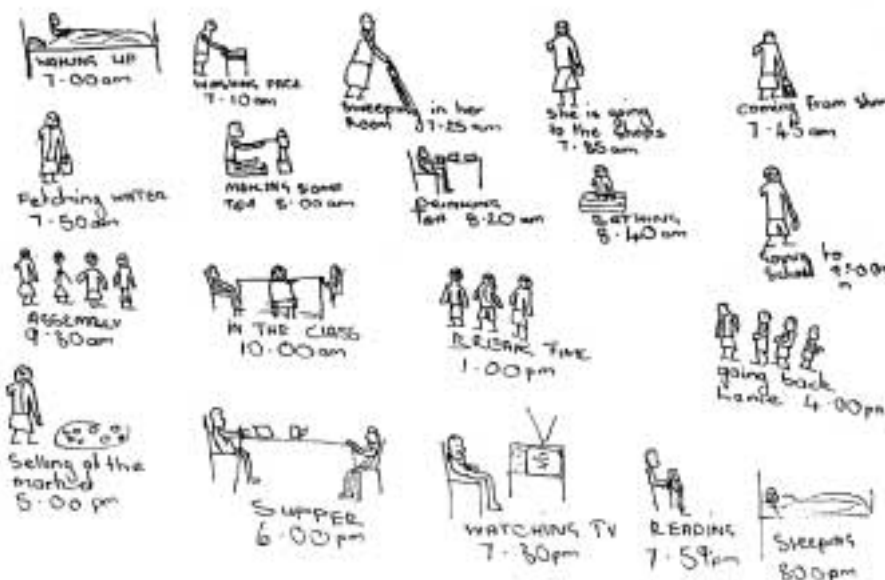


Daily activities chart

Ask children to make a record of their daily lives on a chart. This should involve pictures, but brief notes could also be written by older children. The charts can be analysed to see how much time children spend working, at school and playing. In rural areas, it can be interesting to ask children to draw charts for different seasons of the year to see how these compare.

- What do they do in a typical day?
- How many hours are spent on each task?

EXAMPLE
of a daily
activity chart of
a disabled child
McIvor (2001)





Songs

In some cultures, songs sung by children can give an insight into their concerns and priorities. For example, children might use 'rap' songs to express their views. Daisy, a 17 year old girl displaced by the conflict in Colombia, composes rap songs about war, abuse and hopes for peace.

Daisy's rap

'Good day, good night, good afternoon, good evening.
 It's a very rainy day and we're going out to the fields, we're singing and talking about what's going to happen.
 We just thought about the future and the bad things we share.
 The strength and the tolerance despite the distance.
 We want no more war. Peace in the city and the fields.
 We are taking the hands of the children who are crying.
 We see women and men cry out, there's a healthier world to live in.
 Brothers and sisters, we need your help because children are dying in the streets.'



Focus groups

Children may be more willing to talk in groups than in a one-to-one interview with an adult. Well-facilitated focus groups can produce excellent information.

Adapted from Regional Working Group on Child Labour (2002)

Focus groups involve discussion about a particular subject, led by a facilitator. They are useful for exploring agreed ideas and attitudes. They are especially useful in early research in order to find out what questions to ask and what words to use in interviews and questionnaires. A focus group discussion requires:

- 8 to 15 participants with similar characteristics, such as a group of street working children
- a comfortable place with no interruptions or spectators
- enough space for everyone to sit down comfortably in a circle, with no tables or desks to block the space between them
- a set time for discussion (no less than one hour and not normally more than two hours)
- the list of ideas, questions or topics to be covered
- a skilled facilitator
- at least one person skilled in taking notes.

Be aware that:

- a few individuals can dominate focus groups.
- people who are not comfortable about speaking in public might be excluded.



Consultations

Consultations are an effective way to generate ideas and agreement among children. They are different from focus groups, which are used to gain information. Consultations can bring together groups of children with similar concerns to address issues that affect them. They can also create an environment in which adult decision-makers can listen to children. For example, children displaced by conflict and violence in Colombia gathered together to develop recommendations for the representatives of countries participating in the United Nations General Assembly Special Session for Children.

CASE STUDY

The National Movement of Working Children, India – For the children, by the children

Every country that has signed up to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is required to submit a report every five years on the steps taken by the government to implement the Convention. The UNCRC Committee also asks NGOs and other civil society organisations to report on the government's implementation of the Convention. The Committee then seeks a response from the government on the issues raised by those organisations.

The National Movement of Working Children (NMWC), a national alliance of working children's organisations in India, was a part of the Indian delegation of NGOs and civil society organisations invited to present their reports at the United Nations office in Geneva. The children of NMWC were the only child participants in the delegation.

Their report was prepared entirely by children and contains:

- information about how their rights are being upheld concerning their protection, the provision of services and infrastructure, and their right to participation
- details of their own initiatives which have helped to improve their lives and to realise their rights
- their review of the government of India's report
- their future suggestions for action to enable their rights to be met.

Consultation checklist

Preparing materials

- Allow time to develop and test the materials that will be used for the consultation.
- Keep the exercises simple and clear with a variety of activities.
- Gather comments from target groups and facilitators before finalising materials.
- If possible, talk to people who work with the children to get some ideas about the kinds of activities that will be successful.
- Put together a consultation pack for facilitators which includes guidelines, ideas for icebreakers and advice on how to adapt the exercises. Reference information could also be included, such as a copy of UNCRC and contact details for other useful organisations.
- Hold a meeting to brief all facilitators and share clearly the purpose of the consultation.
- Discuss the materials with the facilitators. Be open to new suggestions and ideas.

Planning the consultation

- Remember that the concentration levels and interest of children will vary depending on the children themselves, the group dynamic, and the environment in which the consultation takes place. The length and structure of the session and materials used should take this into account. Facilitators should monitor the energy level and change the activity to raise energy levels if necessary.
- Make sure that children from vulnerable groups are represented. Remember that they can be difficult to reach. Allow plenty of time for planning and build up a network of other contacts and groups in case any groups suddenly decide not to participate in the consultation.
- Make sure all facilitators follow good child protection practice.
- Ensure that an adult responsible for the group is present at all times. Never do a one-to-one interview with a child unless another adult is present.
- Be realistic about the size of the group. A good number of participants is six to ten. If the consultation is seeking information about very sensitive issues, then smaller groups are more appropriate.
- If possible, try to arrange some one-to-one interviews so that children are able to speak about personal issues that they may not want to discuss in front of other children.

Delivering the consultation sessions

- Try to start the session with a fun activity to get the children interested in the consultation.
- Spend a short time introducing each other and try to learn people's names or use badges.
- Make sure everyone knows the purpose of the consultation. Explain what will happen to the information that is gathered, what feedback they will get and what the law requires us to do if a child shares information about something illegal. Tell the children that any personal information they share will not be passed on to others unless illegal.
- Reach an agreement within the group that each individual should show respect to the others. Anyone causing offence will be asked to apologise or leave the consultation.
- Make sure the consultation is not carried out too fast or too slow or the children will lose interest.
- Children are not very good at sitting still for a long time. Activities should involve some variation in presentation style to keep their interest.
- At the end of the session thank the children for their contributions and remind them of how they will receive feedback.

Recording the data

- If possible, one of the facilitators should take notes throughout the consultation. Make sure quotes are noted down with details such as the gender, age and ethnic group of the child.
- Any information given during the consultation should be used responsibly.

Checklist adapted from Ritchie (1999)

CASE STUDY

The Children of Kabul

In 2001, Save the Children, USA (SC/US) launched a major research project called 'The Children of Kabul', reviewing its work with children in Afghanistan. The research project aimed to encourage broad and open consultation with children, in which children and their carers would talk about their lives and identify issues of concern. SC/US planned to use this information to help develop new programmes with children in Kabul. The exercise was a baseline survey for the start of a new programme cycle on issues identified by children. It was also the start of increased children's participation in SC/US programmes generally.

The consultation took six months. More than 400 children aged between 7 and 18 were involved as well as over 200 carers. Focus groups consisted of about 12 children and met for a total of six discussions. The groups discussed issues such as family relationships, risks and dangers faced by children, children's work and responsibilities, and children's experiences and feelings. Key learning points were:

- The need to provide intensive support and training to the adult facilitators. Enabling children to express their views and opinions does not necessarily come naturally to adults. Adults may interpret children's words in ways that suit them.
- The benefit of participatory tools. All the focus groups used participatory research activities such as drawing, acting and story telling. These activities encouraged children to open up and to express complex ideas and concerns.
- In communities where SC/US were already working, the focus groups enabled trust to be built and allowed feedback on their existing and ongoing work.

Through analysis of the conversations, SC/US were able to identify some key areas for new programme activities. For example, children in Kabul were worried about road safety and injury from traffic accidents. On the basis of this information SC/US raised funds for developing child-focused road safety materials.

SC/US also worked with children to identify local issues of concern. For example, in one community children were worried about the danger of open wells. In another community they were worried about dogs with rabies. In another, they were concerned about a rubbish dump. SC/US worked with these groups of children to mobilise community action to resolve these problems.

Once the children had prioritised the issues they wanted to work on and identified the root causes, they decided on an action plan to address the problem. They then involved their parents and local communities by raising awareness of the problem at local community meetings. They took action, sometimes with the financial support of SC/US and at other times using their own resources. Finally they evaluated their success in solving the problem.

Each phase of the project involved participatory activities to facilitate the process and the children's thinking. Through these phases SC/US was able to move from a level of consultation with children used in the research to a level of supporting children to take a leading role in solving problems in their communities.

Using PLA with children with disabilities

Adapted from Yanni (2001)

Some Participatory Learning and Action tools may need to be further adapted for use with children with disabilities. The following ideas come from experience with blind people in Yemen.

- Explain the process and activities before they are carried out.
- During the activities, seeing people explain what is happening so that those who cannot see can be involved in discussions and presentations.
- During activities and discussions, everyone addresses people by their names, explains what they are doing in detail and uses spoken words rather than pointing at things.
- At the end of each activity have time for reflection about how the tools could be better adapted next time.
- For the activities that involve drawing, materials that can be touched can be used instead of pens, such as grains, grass and paper clips.

Reflection

- In what ways has our organisation involved children in identifying their needs?
- What are the opportunities and constraints in increasing children's participation in project identification?
- What needs assessment activities do we currently use? How could these be adapted for use with children?
- Which ideas given in this section will we try?
- How might the tools in this section be adapted for use with children with disabilities? They might need to be adapted in different ways for children who cannot hear, see, move around and so on.

4.2 Project design

'Once a priority community need has been identified, we can start to think about how we will address it.' ROOTS 5: *Project cycle management*

During the project design stage, we need to collect further information about the problem identified by or with the children, and its context.

STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS

Projects, particularly those specifically for children, should always include children as primary stakeholders. Children, like adults, are not all the same. Within any community, certain children will be less visible due to disability, gender, ethnicity, caste or because they are involved in income-generating activities. It is important to ensure that their voices are heard.

If a project is addressing a problem specifically related to children, we might want to select particular groups of children to participate. For example, the focus may be on child labour, or children involved in trafficking. The stakeholders might include child labourers, trafficked children, their parents, and representatives of government, non-government and international organisations.

Adapted from RWG-CL (2002)

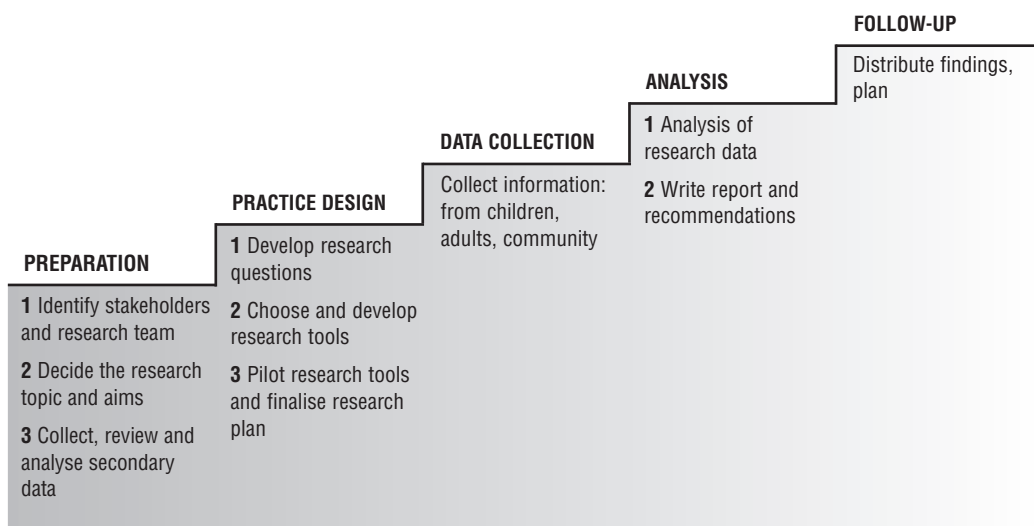
RESEARCH WITH CHILDREN

Research is an important part of good project design. The project should be based on reliable, accurate information. Children’s participation in research is important because it:

- increases their sense of ownership of the project by enabling them to research the issues that are important to them
- affirms their right to express themselves, be heard and listened to
- develops their abilities to analyse information
- gives them confidence and independence
- develops their ability to protect themselves from things such as abuse
- changes the way adults view children
- changes the relationship between adults and children
- improves the quality of the research results because child researchers can access information that adult researchers cannot
- helps develop better policies and programmes for children.

Stages of the research process

Adapted from RWG-CL (2002)



The research process is made up of several stages. It is necessary to decide which stages of the research process children will be involved with and how. This should take into account:

- the time available to both the development organisation and the children
- the age and capacities of the children
- the nature of the research
- the children’s past experience of participating. Children who regularly take part in activities that build their participatory skills will be able to participate more at each stage.

Where possible, these decisions should be discussed with the children. They can be changed during the research process if necessary. It can be useful to draw and complete the following table.

Children’s participation in project design

Adapted from Kirby (1999)

STAGES IN THE DESIGN PROCESS	LEVEL OF INVOLVEMENT ¹	WHO WILL CARRY OUT THE TASKS?
Identify stakeholders and research team		
Decide the research topic and aims		
Collect, review and analyse secondary information		
Develop research questions		
Choose and develop research tools		
Test research tools and finalise research plan		
Collect information: from children, adults, community		
Analyse research data		
Write report and recommendations		
Distribute findings, plan		

¹ In the **LEVEL OF INVOLVEMENT** column write *None, Informed, Consultation, Collaboration or Leading role*. In the **WHO WILL CARRY OUT THE TASKS?** column write *Children, Programme staff or External consultant*.

Choosing a research team

The children who participate in the research team should be chosen carefully, taking into account their age, gender and experience. Where possible, children should be involved in selecting research team members.

- If we work with a children’s club or youth group, we already have a group of potential researchers. The decision to select children from this group should be made with the children.
- For broad research issues, the choice of children can be wide. For example, if the issue of ‘access to water’ has been identified, the researchers could be ‘local children’. In order to understand the range of issues associated with access to water, we should try to involve both boys and girls of different ages in the research.

- For more specific research questions, children who represent the population being researched could be selected. For example, if the research looks at access to water affecting the attendance of girls at school, the majority of researchers could be girls of school age.

The support and involvement of adults is crucial. Training, experience, guidance, support and issues of protection and legality need to be taken into consideration.

Setting objectives for research

Sometimes research objectives have already been decided by the project staff. However, children can be involved in setting objectives in the following ways:

TAKING A LEADING ROLE Children decide what issue they want to research and then write their own objectives

CONSULTATION Staff decide the research topic, then write the objectives in consultation with the children

INFORMED Staff decide the topic, write the objectives and ask children to review them

Collecting information

Secondary information is information that other people have collected. For example, we could look at child-focused books, research reports, videos and statistical, policy or legal documents. Staff members, consultants or older children could be responsible for collecting secondary information. Information collected and analysis of such information should be shared with the children as they develop the research questions.

Primary information is information that we collect ourselves.

When considering which children to involve in collecting primary information, the following issues should be taken into account:

- literacy levels
- children's ability to express themselves verbally
- access for children with disabilities.

Participatory approaches, such as drawing and mapping, are appropriate ways of collecting information from children. Traditional interviews and questionnaires can also be an option, although the children's ability to use these methods should first be assessed. Some of the methods described on pages 30–35 are suitable for the research phase. The methods on the following pages can be used with children.

Surveys and questionnaires

Surveys and questionnaires are useful when trying to gain an idea of patterns of behaviour, knowledge and attitudes of children. If sensitive issues are being researched, a written questionnaire can be used to enable children to provide information without being identified. However, written questionnaires can only be completed by children who can read and write. Spoken questionnaires can be used with children with few or no skills in reading and writing. Pictures or other visual aids can be used to make the questions clear.

CASE STUDY

Using questionnaires in schools – understanding sexual exploitation in high-risk areas of Sri Lanka

Miles (2000a)

In the high-risk beach areas of Sri Lanka a number of children were being sexually exploited, but the size of the problem was unclear. To find out this information it was decided that the children themselves should be asked. Face-to-face discussion with children about such a sensitive topic was considered to be unethical and inappropriate. However, as literacy rates were high, it was felt that a written questionnaire could be used. It was to be a confidential questionnaire and children could choose to take part.

After gaining permission from the authorities and schools, a questionnaire was designed. Questions were asked about whether children knew other children their age in their area who had been abused by adults. The children were also asked whether they could think of solutions. The questionnaire was tested with a group of children to ensure that the questions could be understood.

The results of the questionnaire gave an indication of the level of sexual exploitation in this high-risk area and children's views of it. For example, one boy said 'Children don't have sex with adults for pleasure'. The results were used when lobbying the government on the need to address the issue.

CASE STUDY

Using surveys in communities – understanding children's access to pornography in urban Cambodia

In Cambodia, there was concern about the access of children to pornography. In order to gain information from children who were unable to read, a simple survey was carried out which used drawings to show where such materials could be found. Focus groups were used to help develop the survey in order to ensure that good questions and appropriate language were used.

Children between 11–17 years old took part in the survey. The results were taken to a group of children the same age to get their views. They then helped to develop a youth theatre production about children's access to pornography, which was performed on International Children's Day.

The report was distributed to key stakeholders including government and NGOs. This helped to raise awareness of the issue. Much still needs to be done if laws are to be changed.



One of the drawings used in the survey.

Reflection

- What survey techniques do we currently use? How could these be adapted for use by children?
- The survey in the Cambodian case study was used for theatre and advocacy. In what other ways could completed questionnaires and surveys be used?

Visual methods

Adapted from Boyden and Ennew (1997)

It can be easier and less threatening to use visual methods when collecting information from children. These methods include drawing, painting, making models, puppets, photography and video.

However, visual methods are not appropriate if:

- they are likely to bring up painful memories or thoughts that children will not be able to cope with
- children are not familiar with visual images
- using a pen or pencil or other equipment makes children feel uncomfortable
- some images used are not culturally appropriate
- researchers are not familiar with the way children see their world
- there is no opportunity for children to explain or interpret the images they have created
- the equipment used attracts too much public attention, such as cameras
- making a visual record could present a security risk for children and researchers.

Drawing

Children usually enjoy drawing. By asking children to draw, the researcher can reduce their own power and control and give the children more freedom of expression. In order to avoid drawings being misinterpreted, it is important that the researcher ensures that the interpretation is done by the children themselves. Permission to use or copy the drawings should be gained from the children who drew them.

Apart from drawing pictures, children could be asked to draw maps, diagrams and charts to explore their communities, relationships and use of time and space.

CASE STUDY

Using pictures in Myanmar

Miles (2000b)

The following tool has been used with children in a variety of contexts:

- former child soldiers
- children in long-term orphanage care
- former child sex workers
- children whose parents have died from AIDS.

Children were asked to draw three pictures of themselves: one of the past, one of the present and one of the future. They were then invited to explain the pictures to adults. The adults were respectful, did not interrupt and encouraged the children as they shared their pictures. Children were invited to participate but they could leave if they felt uncomfortable at any time.

For many children this was the first time that adults had been prepared to listen to them. They were encouraged by the changes they had made from the past and their hopes for the future.

The adults realised that each child was unique. For example, although some adults had previously seen historical information about the children in files, they had not thought about the children as people with a future. The adults were able to gain a better understanding of how the children saw their own situation.

Reflection

- Are we committed to listening to children in our work?
- Do we consider them as individuals with their own needs, hopes and fears?
- How can we listen to children more effectively?

Photographs and video

Children from all cultures quickly learn to use cameras and video equipment. They are popular and provide an opportunity to capture images from inside a child's world. They provide children with a creative tool to represent their lives in a positive way.

Cameras can be expensive to buy so it is important to consider how important the use of photographs might be. Disposable cameras could be used in situations where children need to take photographs without supervision.

CASE STUDY

Photo diaries – children documenting their community life in southern India

Stephenson (1998a)

Children from the village children's club were given disposable cameras and training on how to use them. This was the first time that they had taken photographs. They were asked to document their daily lives, and to take pictures of what they thought was good and what was bad in their village. The children themselves made decisions about which children should take the photographs, and which pictures would be taken.

The photographs were analysed by all the children in the club. The children ranked the daily activities according to preference. They discussed the good and the bad things shown in the photographs, and agreed on the most important issues. These were used to create a plan of action for the children's club to carry out over the following year.

Video cameras are expensive. The technology can go wrong and editing can be time-consuming and complicated. Video cameras are best used as a tool to document an issue for advocacy or for raising awareness. Be prepared by having plenty of video tape and spare batteries.

Role play and drama

Role play and drama can help children to explore sensitive and important issues. The use of puppets and masks can allow children to express their views on sensitive issues without initially having to talk about their own traumatic experiences.

CASE STUDY

Using role plays – understanding children's view of violence in Cambodia

Miles and Varin (2004)

Cambodia has a long history of violence. Most research has focused on the extreme cases rather than violence affecting the average child at home and in school. Children in Cambodia tend to be shy of adults. They are not used to being asked to give their opinions. However, role play is something that children enjoy. It can be used to gain an understanding of their views.

Children were invited to take part in role plays based on six drawings by a local artist. The role plays were recorded on video and were then played back to encourage discussion.

The children's willingness to open up and share views using this method was a surprise to the facilitators. There had been a concern that boys and girls would not work well together, but they did. There were ten children in a group, which meant that those children who did not want to take part did not have to.

The results of the role play exercise were used to develop a survey for school children which is currently being carried out throughout Cambodia.



One of the drawings on which a role play was based.

Reflection

- Why are role play and drama useful?
- What makes a good role play or drama?

Recording information

TAKING NOTES Notes should be taken during any discussions that are held – interviews, focus groups and interpretations of role-plays and drawings – and about any observations made. Where possible, more than what is said should be written down. The dynamics of the discussions, body language and emotions should also be noted. It is important to ensure that details of dates, time, place and first names of participants are recorded.

DOCUMENTS Copies of the drawings, photographs and other maps and charts should be labelled and filed. If the maps or charts use local materials, a drawing on paper should be made to ensure that the details are recorded.

Analysis and use of the research information

The information should be analysed with or by children. It can then be used in a number of ways:

- The findings can be used to design a community project that addresses the issues children face. The children should be involved in project design and implementation.
- A report or video documentary could be shown to government officials as part of advocacy work.
- A display of photography and drawings could be used to raise awareness and increase the profile of an organisation's work or a particular project.
- The information can be used by children for their own needs.

CASE STUDY Chisomo Children's Club

The Chisomo Children's Club in Malawi is a good example of the use of participatory tools to help children identify and design projects.

Activities include:

- drawing maps showing the places of threat and opportunity to them
- drawing pictures of specific issues that they are concerned with, such as police harassment or family violence
- brainstorming and then ranking their problems
- analysing their use of time, using charts
- drawing seasonal calendars of their ill health
- drawing income-generation trees showing where they get money and how they spend it.

These methods enable children to understand the issues that face them and to work out solutions together. They have helped to choose the land for Chisomo's three centres and to design the buildings and identify their uses. The children are involved in advocacy, staff recruitment and project evaluation.



A child explaining a chart that the children drew.

Photo: Jim Loring

Once primary and secondary information have been collected, the children should be involved in designing the project. Older children may be able to help develop a logical framework and be involved in budgeting.

Reflection

- When we ask a group of children to analyse the information they have provided or collected, how can we:
 - encourage quieter children to participate?
 - stop particular children dominating the conversation?
 - help resolve conflict that might occur?
 - ensure that we are drawing the ideas out of the children and not putting ideas into their heads?
- How can we involve children in project design?

4.3 Implementation and evaluation

Once children have been involved in project identification and design, they should be included in the implementation and evaluation of the project.

It is important to make sure that:

- children take a role in the organisational aspects of the project.
- children take on an active role in representing the project.
- children are involved in monitoring and reviewing the progress the project is making towards the objectives.
- children evaluate the impact of the project on their lives.

The following paragraphs look at these issues in more detail.

Children take a role in the organisational aspects of the work

In order to ensure that children can participate in the running of a project, make time for regular discussion of project decisions such as deciding on location and decoration of youth centres, hiring staff and agreeing budgets. This could involve a weekly or monthly meeting.

EXAMPLES **Monthly meetings** Mosoj Yan in Bolivia works with girls who live or work on the streets. The girls hold monthly meetings where they are involved in decisions about Mosoj Yan's projects and evaluating progress.

Elected councils Children at Namma Boomi, the Concerned for Working Children's training centre, elect a children's committee and president each year. The committee acts to improve the conditions and projects at the Centre.

Children take on an active role in representing the project

Development organisations often receive visitors such as donors and government officials. A common approach to welcoming them is to make the children sing or dance for them. The visit then continues with adults showing adults what is being done for the children. Think about how the children themselves can put together a welcome programme. This could include presenting the project to donors and other visitors. This may challenge the perceptions of children by staff, donors and visitors.

At conferences, organisations working with children are normally represented by adult staff. Think about the possibility of selecting children to attend the conference with members of staff.

EXAMPLES **MANTHOC, Lima, Peru** Children from the Working Children's Movement greet visitors to MANTHOC. The children then take them around the neighbourhood and answer questions about the programme. An adult representative from MANTHOC is with the children at all times, but makes no attempt to control the conversation.

Bhima Sangha, India Children from the Working Children's Union Bhima Sangha regularly represent the Union at international conferences. These children are selected by the other children to present the Union's concerns and ideas. Adults from the Concerned for Working Children accompany the children and provide support, translation and guidance.

Children are involved in monitoring and reviewing the progress the project is making towards objectives

Monitoring is done continuously to make sure that the project is on track. Organised children's assemblies or councils can ensure monitoring takes place. A monthly meeting to discuss progress can ensure that the activities are being carried out as planned.

Reviewing is done occasionally to see whether each level of objectives in the logical framework leads to the next one and whether any changes need to be made to the project plans. For example, a review could take place every six months.

CASE STUDY

Reviewing the identity and purpose of a children's club in Malawi

'Chisomo is a children's organisation that helps children to have a better future; to know their future and provide for their own needs.'

This was how children from the streets of Blantyre, Malawi, described Chisomo Children's Club during a participatory review they carried out with staff in 2002. The children established Chisomo's identity when the club began in 1998. However, there was a chance that over time, the club might evolve into an organisation run by adults, with little input from the children. The review in 2002 was therefore carried out in order to clarify Chisomo's mission, purpose and values.

The review looked at what Chisomo is, what it is for and what makes it different from other organisations. This involved asking children who had been there at the beginning to tell their stories of how it was named, what they had done, and who had made the decisions. As the review was carried out, Chisomo began to redefine itself as a children's organisation. The children emphasised that they were not just given things, but could meet their own needs and develop their own skills and knowledge for the future. They were pleased that the project was based on God's word and prayer, and helped them escape abuse.

EXAMPLE
Reviewing the activities of a church education programme

Lifestream Ministries in the Philippines works with children from poor urban communities. Its programmes provide health, learning, social, emotional, physical and spiritual support to over 580 children. In 2001, Lifestream Ministries began to teach the children about the Convention on the Rights of the Child and to take seriously the principle of participation in their planning and evaluation activities.

An annual review process enables children to help develop the yearly plan of activities. They are also asked to review the activities of the previous year and assess the performance of the teachers. The children selected representatives to attend a two-day workshop.

Activities the children carried out at the workshop included:

- thinking about why it was important to assess what happened in the past year.
- looking back at the past year and assessing their personal lives: what they did well, mistakes made, what they had learnt and applied to their lives, how their lives had changed and what their relationship with God and with others was like. The children were given a notebook in which to write down their self-assessment.
- reviewing the plan for the past year. Four pieces of paper of different colours were used. Each piece of paper represented part of the rating scale to show whether implementation of each activity had been done. The rating scale was 'well done', 'done', 'partially done' or 'not done'. The participants individually wrote the activities on the pieces of paper according to how they felt each activity had been done.
- assessing the performance of teachers. To do this, a set of indicators was developed by the teachers and volunteers. The indicators were written on a chart with boxes according to whether the indicator was met fully, partly, poorly or not at all. A copy was given to each class. Each child in the class was asked to rate their teacher according to how well they had met each performance indicator. They placed a sticker in the relevant box. In classes of younger children, the facilitator would read the indicator to be rated and explain the meaning. The results of the review were analysed by the children and staff and presented to the teachers. A performance improvement plan was developed by the teachers to respond to the results of the review.

Many things were learnt during this process:

The children:

- increased their ability to express their ideas, make suggestions, ask questions and share problems.
- gained confidence
- increased their ability to evaluate the performance of Lifestream Ministries and their teachers.
- became more aware of the standards of performance required of their teachers.
- became more aware of the value of assessing plans and their teachers and contributing to the overall improvement of the programme.

The teachers:

- became more aware of their need to be accountable to the children – to deliver good quality teaching and to serve as role models.
- realised that children can give meaningful feedback and rank their preferences.

Lifestream Ministries:

- decided to make the children part of the process of assessment and evaluation, not only of their teachers but of all the processes undertaken in the programme.
- decided to adapt the tools further for use with younger children.

Children evaluate the impact of the project on their lives

Unlike monitoring and reviewing, evaluation is done at the end of the project to assess its impact. A participatory evaluation enables the primary stakeholders to assess whether the purpose and goal of the project have been achieved, and to suggest major changes in strategy and future work. The methods used should reflect the age and experience of the children involved in the evaluation.

CASE STUDY
Empowering street children in Myanmar through participatory evaluation

Dorning and O'Shaughnessy (2001)

World Vision's Street and Working Children's project in Yangon and Mandalay in Myanmar seeks to improve the quality of life and status of street and working children, and to reintegrate them into society. It also aims to address the issues that push children onto the streets in Yangon.

In 2001, an evaluation of the programme was carried out. The evaluation aimed to assess the impact of the programme and to identify ways in which the children and staff could evaluate and improve it in the future. Until the evaluation, there was limited children's participation in the project. The evaluation took the following steps:

- 1 ELECTION OF EVALUATION TEAM** Children elected 16 children to be on the evaluation team.
- 2 INITIAL MEETINGS** Staff and children met together to brainstorm a list of questions. Primary stakeholders were identified and meetings held with them.
- 3 QUESTIONS** Questions were developed for each stakeholder group that focused on their specific motivations and interests.
- 4 CHOOSING QUESTIONS** From the lists, eight major questions were selected.
- 5 PLANNING THE INTERVIEWS** The evaluation team planned the interviews in detail, deciding who would do what, how, where and when. The questions were grouped according to particular focus groups.
- 6 QUESTION GUIDES** A guidebook was developed for the interviewers, to give them advice about time, participants, and note-taking.
- 7 TRAINING** Children volunteered to be interviewers and were trained to facilitate focus groups.
- 8 IMPLEMENTATION** The interview teams were formed, and schedules and question guides drawn up. Focus groups and interviews were carried out. Secondary information about the project was gathered from office records.
- 9 RESULTS** The evaluation team held a three-day workshop. The findings were presented in participatory and visual ways. A SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) was done using the information from focus groups.
- 10 RECOMMENDATIONS** The workshop ended with key recommendations for the project including a step-by-step process to achieve some of them.

Evaluation tools

The focus groups and interviews used by World Vision Myanmar are key evaluation tools. Many of the participatory tools already mentioned in this book can also be adapted for evaluation purposes. Two other tools are described in the box below.

Confidence and evaluation lines

Confidence lines show how a person's self-confidence has changed over time, such as over the course of a project. Participants draw their 'confidence line' on the graph below. Where the line dips or peaks, they are asked to indicate what specific event caused these changes. The confidence line provides the basis for discussion with the facilitator.



The evaluation line can be used as an evaluation tool with older children. Participants are asked to think about a question, such as 'How successfully have you met your objectives?' They score their success on a line ranging from 'not at all' to 'completely'. They are then asked to note down all the reasons why they have or have not met these objectives. After discussing the responses and issues arising, participants note down possible actions that could help achieve these objectives. This method works well with groups of 10–20 people.

Reflection

- How can we enable children to take a role in the organisational aspects of our work?
- How do we involve children when visitors come to visit a project?
- How do we think our projects would be improved if we involved children in monitoring and reviewing the progress that is being made?
- What changes would we need to make to enable children to review, monitor and evaluate the impact of the project on their lives?

4.4 Celebrating and documenting lessons learned

Children know how to celebrate! A spirit of fun and playfulness should be a feature of all work with children. Adults tend to be more focused on the outputs and results, whereas children enjoy the process. Everyone wants a good result, and opportunities should be created to celebrate success and learn from mistakes.

Celebrations offer a chance for creativity and cultural expression. Rwandan refugees in Tanzania celebrated the end of a project cycle facilitated by Tearfund's Disaster Response Team using dance, song and handicrafts that expressed the different activities they were involved in. Drawings, paintings and photographs can be displayed in the community. Sketches can be presented that show the good and bad points of the project.

'Unfortunately, both debates and research about children's participation lack systematic documentation. We need records of how things were done, not just of what was done, including learning from mistakes.' *Ennew* (2002)

Few organisations document what has been learned from projects. This is especially true with what has been learned about children's participation. We could decide to:

- write a newsletter with children that describes what has been achieved. For example, Bhima Sangha developed a 'wall journal' which was designed and written by the children. The paper was posted on walls around the villages. It contains information for children and adults about health and local issues. This involves cartoons and articles.
- write a document outlining what has been learned about the interaction between children and adults.
- encourage the children to document their own experience and learning. For example, the children from Bhima Sangha recorded their own history and experiences in order to represent the true meaning of their lives.

Children grow up! The participatory approaches and culture learned by one generation of children should be shared with the next generation. Documentation of what has been done and learned can be shared with new children that our organisation works with, as the case study below shows.

CASE STUDY
Timeline

Stephenson (1998b) and *Footsteps* 58 pages 8–9

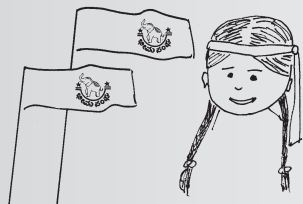
The children from Bhima Sangha, India wanted a tool that they could use to document what they had achieved over the past eight years. They decided to create a large mural on paper with drawings of significant events.

- STEP ONE** Several members of Bhima Sangha were selected by other children to draw the timeline.
- STEP TWO** The selected children found all the documents about their history and decided which events should be shown on the timeline
- STEP THREE** They pasted several large sheets of paper together and began to sketch out the mural
- STEP FOUR** As they drew, they invited other members of Bhima Sangha to join them to check the content, make suggestions and help with the drawing
- STEP FIVE** The mural was completed and used to orientate new Bhima Sangha members.


The timeline was so successful that Bhima Sangha decided to copy it onto a large cloth and add new events every six months. The cloth is used to orientate visitors and new members and to raise awareness about the Union. Another version of the timeline has been painted on a specially-built wall in the training centre.

SOME OF THE DRAWINGS USED IN THE BHIMA SANGHA TIMELINE

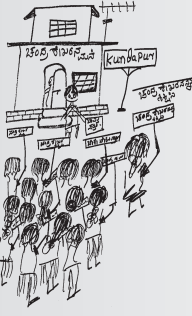
1 Belonging to Bhima Sangha



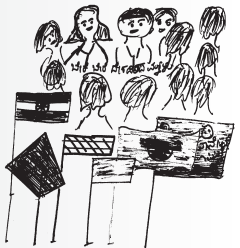
2 Walkathon



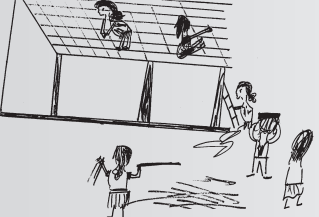
3 Ayodhya Hotel incident




4 1996 Regional consultation



5 Building programme



6 Makkala panchayats (children's councils)



Resources

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Recommended reading

- *A journey in children's participation* (2002) by Concerned for Working Children in Reddy N and Ratna K (eds) 'A journey in children's participation', The Concerned for Working Children, Bangalore.
- *Child development study pack* (1999) by Miles G and Stephenson P, Tearfund
- *Children at risk guidelines (family breakdown, health, disabilities, sexual abuse, residential care and conflict)* (2001) by Miles G and Stephenson P, Tearfund.
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(All the books published by the Regional Working Group can be ordered free of charge from: Child Workers in Asia (CWA), PO Box 29, Chandrakasem Post Office, Bangkok, 10904, Thailand, or download from www.seapa.net.)
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Websites

- **www.crin.org** Child Rights Information Network (CRIN)
The Child Rights Information Network is a global network that publishes information about the Convention on the Rights of the Child and child rights for NGOs, United Nations agencies, educational institutions, and other child rights experts.
- **www.crin.org/childrenaspartners** Children as Partners
Children as Partners is an international initiative which promotes meaningful child participation at all levels of decision-making.
- **www.child-to-child.org** Child-to-Child Trust
The Child-to-Child Trust is an international movement of health and education workers and programmes. It aims to protect and preserve the health of communities by encouraging and enabling children to play an active role in the health and development of themselves, other children and their families.
- **www.workingchild.org** The Concerned for Working Children: Working Children's Movement
- **www.savethechildren.org** Save the Children Fund
Save the Children Fund supports rights-based work with children across the world. They produce a wide variety of excellent resources on children that can be accessed through their website.
- **www.settingthestandard.info**
This website is a guide to child protection for NGOs.
- **www.unicef.org/cre** UNICEF
UNICEF is a United Nations agency which advocates for the protection of children's rights, to help meet their basic needs and to expand their opportunities to reach their full potential. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child can be viewed on this website.
- **www.wvi.org** World Vision International
World Vision International is a Christian relief and development organisation working for the well-being of all people, especially children. Through emergency relief, education, health care, economic development and promotion of justice, World Vision helps communities help themselves. Their publications page features reports and research on child rights and participation.

Appendix

Child protection

Taken from A Tearfund Guide to Child Protection 'Everybody's business'.

It is important for all staff members and others in contact with children to:

- **be aware** of situations that may present risks and manage them
- **plan and organise** work and the workplace in order to minimise risks
- **be visible** to others when working with children whenever possible
- **be open.** Create and maintain an open culture in which any issues or concerns can be discussed
- **be accountable** to each other so that any potentially abusive behaviour can be challenged
- **develop a culture** where children can talk about their contacts with members of staff and others openly
- **respect each child's boundaries** and help them to develop their own sense of their rights as well as helping them to know what they can do if they feel that there is a problem.

In general, it is not appropriate to:

- spend a lot of time alone with children
- take children to your own home, especially where they will be alone with you.

Staff members and others must **never**:

- hit or otherwise assault or physically abuse children
- develop relationships with children which could in any way be seen as exploiting or abusing them
- act in ways that may abuse a child or may place a child at risk of abuse.

Staff members and others must avoid actions or behaviour that could be seen to potentially abuse a child. For example, they should never:

- use language, make suggestions or offer advice which is inappropriate, offensive or abusive
- behave physically in a manner which is inappropriate
- have a child or children with whom they are working to stay overnight at their home unsupervised
- sleep in the same room or bed as a child with whom they are working
- do things for children of a personal nature that the children can do for themselves
- excuse, or participate in, behaviour of children which is illegal, unsafe or abusive
- act in ways intended to shame or humiliate
- discriminate against, show different treatment to, or favour particular children while excluding others.

Notes

Notes

Child participation

By Paul Stephenson with Steve Gourley and Glenn Miles

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