

# Editorial

Welcome to the latest edition of *PLA Notes*. As usual, we aim to bring you innovative and current thinking around participatory approaches, and we hope there is much here that is both thought-provoking and useful.

This issue has been coordinated by Holly Ashley, supported by Cristina Zorat, Editorial Assistant for *PLA Notes*. However, for the next issue, Holly will be handing over to our new Editor, Angela Milligan. Angela joined IIED in October from NR International, where she was responsible for disseminating and promoting the results of five DFID-funded natural resources research programmes. She has wide experience of communications as well as practical knowledge of using participatory approaches in natural resource management in East Africa. Over the next few months, Angela will be looking at how to take forward recommendations and comments from the last readership survey, including how to make *PLA Notes* more interactive, and the possibility of translation into other languages. Watch this space!

We are all very pleased that a major project for IIED – that of putting past issues of *PLA Notes* (and its predecessor, *RRA Notes*) into a digital format – is now nearing completion. Back copies from 1998, when the very first issue of *RRA Notes* was produced, through to 2001 will be available on a single CD-ROM. The material will be fully searchable, so that users can easily find articles in their particular areas of interest – for example, training, M&E, or natural resources management. For more details of the CD-ROM and how to obtain it, please see the *In Touch* section, page 69.

Our next issue in February 2002 will be a general one and there is still time (just) to put pen to paper and send us an account of your experiences with participatory approaches. Looking ahead a little further, we hope in the future to have an issue on **disability and participation**. Yalli Yanni's article from the Yemen (see *In this issue* below) highlights methodological innovations which enable disabled people to participate, and we would welcome more accounts of work with the disabled.

Although this issue has a special theme (see below), it is worth remembering that many lessons from experiences

of using participatory approaches and tools can be adapted for use with different groups and situations. One of the articles in our themed section, "Making children's participation in neighbourhood settings relevant to the everyday lives of young people", highlights constraints to involving children in participation, but these factors can be just as applicable to adults in many contexts.

## Theme issue

The theme for this special issue is children's participation in community settings – evaluating effectiveness. Since February 1996, when *PLA Notes* first focused on the theme of children's participation, there has been growing interest in including children and youth in planning, implementing, and evaluating processes of community development. Like all new notions in development, however, there is a danger that rhetoric may substitute for reality. It is also the case that participation can involve risks for children as well as benefits. Therefore, this second special issue on the theme of children's participation focuses on the following questions:

- What happens when children participate in community development?
- What are their own beliefs and attitudes about their participation?
- How can organisations know that participatory processes and outcomes are in fact in the best interests of children themselves and the settings of which they are a part?
- How can governments and organisations effectively support the most beneficial forms of participation?

Our guest editor for this issue is Louise Chawla of Kentucky State University. Louise is International Coordinator of the Growing Up in Cities project, funded by UNESCO's MOST programme. She is an environmental and developmental psychologist who has published widely on topics related to children and the environment, and teaches at Whitney Young College, an interdisciplinary honours programme at Kentucky State University in the U.S.A. Many thanks are due to Louise for her hard work and dedication in producing this issue, and also for agreeing to bring it forward from its scheduled date.

Thanks also to Sheridan Bartlett of the Children's Environment Research Group, University of New York for her collaboration and support.

Finally we would like to thank UNESCO's MOST programme and Childwatch International, both of which have generously provided financial support for this special issue of *PLA Notes*.

## In this issue

As usual, you will find some general articles on participatory approaches in this issue – but you will now find these articles **after** the themed section rather than before. In our first article, Peter Taylor and Per Rudebjer present an account of the use of a participatory curriculum development methodology to create an agroforestry curriculum development guide in South-East Asia. The article outlines the steps used to include stakeholders in the process, and how the outcomes of the workshop led to the creation of a guide, which in turn can be shared with a much wider audience.

Our second general article by Valli Yanni documents her experience of using PRA for training in a workshop on community participatory development in Yemen, and discusses how participatory tools were adapted for disabled participants. Amongst other innovations is the use of "three dimensional" diagrams made out of tactile materials, to enable participants who are visually impaired to participate fully in the activities.

## Regular features

The *Tips for Trainers* section for this issue, "Knives and Forks", has kindly been supplied by Josh Levene of the Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, U.K. The aim of the exercise is to introduce participants to some of the principles of participation and empowerment, transparency, and sharing. Josh also refers to another warm-up exercise called "Fruit Salad", from *Participatory Learning and Action: a trainers' guide*. Details of this exercise can be found as a footnote in Valli Yanni's article.

Our *In Touch* section features our usual selection of book reviews, workshops and events, e-participation pages, and order forms for subscriptions and back issues. The RCPLA pages cover recent activities of members of the RCPLA Network, with news from Kenya, Uganda, Zimbabwe, U.K., Sri Lanka, Nepal, and Nigeria.

We hope you enjoy this issue of *PLA Notes* and – as usual – we welcome your feedback and comments on its contents.

Happy reading!

### Correction – PLA Notes 41

Please note that the article "The use of 'typical families' to explore livelihoods and service provision in urban informal settlements, South Africa" was authored by Sue Marshall and Lucy Stevens, and not Sue Case and Lucy Stevens as appeared in the contents listing for the issue. Many apologies to Sue Marshall for this mistake.

# Overview – identifying best practices in children’s participation

**Nadia Auriat, Per Miljeteig  
and Louise Chawla**

## Introduction

This special issue on the evaluation of children’s participation has its roots in a symposium on “Children’s Participation in Community Settings”, held in Oslo, Norway in June 2000. The symposium brought together members of the Childwatch International Research Network and the Growing Up in Cities project of the MOST Programme of UNESCO. The members reviewed experiences of children’s participation in various settings and various parts of the world and shared what is known of children’s own beliefs and attitudes to participation, effective settings where children feel they are being treated as partners, and the outcomes of participation for children themselves and for their communities. The aim was to identify best practices in designing programmes that provide young people with an authentic and effective voice in evaluating and improving the conditions of their lives. Members were asked to prepare brief issue papers on topics of special interest to them. Several of the articles that follow have been developed from these presentations. Other authors were invited to contribute reports of related work from around the world.

Childwatch International and the MOST Programme of UNESCO are both dedicated to furthering collaborative international research on the implementation of children’s rights. The Childwatch International Research Network is an alliance of child research centres which formed in response to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) to develop a common agenda for research aimed at improving children’s living conditions, well-being and participation. The MOST Programme of UNESCO is an international, interdisciplinary social research programme that supports policy-relevant research. Its mission includes furthering the goals of the CRC and the associated goals of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, the World Summit on Social Development, and the Second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements with regard to children’s participation in the creation of sustainable cities and sustainable societies. Through the Growing Up in Cities project, the MOST Programme works toward these ends by developing ways for children in urban settings to express their concerns about their physical environment, to suggest changes that will improve their lives, and to

influence the establishment of more responsive urban policies and practices.

## A child rights perspective

The Convention on the Rights of the Child contains a preamble and 54 articles that address children’s rights to protection, to the provision of basic needs and to participation in their societies and decisions that affect their lives. Since its adoption by the United Nations in 1989, the CRC has been ratified by all member states of the United Nations except the United States and Somalia, making it the most widely accepted international treaty. In effect, it now carries the force of customary law worldwide.

Children’s rights to participation are spelled out in Articles 12 through 15, as summarised in Box 1. Children too, the CRC specifies, enjoy the right to *freedom of expression, freedom of thought, conscience and religion, and freedom of association*. In addition, Article 17 states that governments shall ensure children’s access to information, especially when it is aimed at the promotion of their well-

### Box 1 Excerpts from the “participation clauses” of the CRC\*

#### Article 12

States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.

#### Article 13

The child shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of the child’s choice.

#### Article 14

States Parties shall respect the right of the child to freedom of thought, conscience and religion.

#### Article 15

States Parties recognise the rights of the child to freedom of association and to freedom of peaceful assembly.

\*Only section 1 of each Article is reproduced here.

being and health – a necessary foundation for informed participation in decision making. Article 16 ensures their privacy and protection from unlawful interference or attacks. Thus, children also enjoy the right to *access to information and protection of privacy*. In sum, the CRC provides that persons below the age of 18 shall enjoy the central civil and political rights laid out by other human rights treaties, such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. In Article 42, the CRC adds the important innovation that children also have the right to be *informed about the rights* established by the Convention.

A number of other articles in the CRC also have implications for participation. Article 23 recognises disabled children's rights to a full and decent life, including their "active participation in the community". Article 29 states that education shall be directed to "the preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society", which implies preparation for active democratic citizenship. Article 31, on the right to rest, leisure, play and recreation, states that governments "shall respect and promote the right of the child to participate fully in cultural and artistic life".

Taken together, these articles make it clear that the provision of opportunities for children to participate in different settings of their lives, and support to do so in informed and meaningful ways, form one of the "pillars" of the implementation of the Convention. The significance and application of these rights to a range of settings, including education, the environment and child labour, have been discussed by Boyden and Ennew (1997), Chawla (2001), Driskell (2001), Hart (1992; 1997), Flekkøy and Kaufman (1997), Holden and Clough (1998), Johnson *et al.* (1998), Miljeteig (2000) and de Winter (1997).

The articles that ensure children's participation constitute probably the most radical and forward-looking part of the CRC. The inclusion of these rights was originally done in a rather mechanical fashion to indicate that children have civil and political rights in addition to economic and social rights. Now, twelve years after the CRC was adopted, we see that it has had a major impact on the way that we understand children and the way policies and programmes to assist their development are designed. In particular, it has sparked many creative initiatives to give children a voice, and to involve them in decisions at community and national levels, even at the global level. To give just a few examples, school councils have been set up; children living in especially difficult circumstances (eg child labourers or those suffering commercial sexual exploitation) have been included in the planning and implementation of projects; representatives from organizations of working children have participated with full non-governmental status in international conferences; and children are now included in research as partners and experts. The symposium on

"Children's Participation in Community Settings" was organised in the belief that it is now time to take stock of these initiatives and to consider how to evaluate projects for participation to ensure that they do in fact promote the goals of the Convention.

## Monitoring the implementation of children's rights to participation

In September 1990, when the CRC came into force, representatives of the world's nations gathered for a World Summit for Children. They adopted a Plan of Action which set measurable goals for implementing the terms of the Convention. The Plan urged governments to prepare programmes of action at the national level as well, and to "establish appropriate mechanisms for the regular and timely collection, analysis and publication of data required to monitor relevant social indicators relating to the well-being of children" (United Nations, 1990, Plan of Action of the World Summit for Children, section III.34.v). In addition, Article 44 of the CRC specifies that nations that have ratified the Convention are required to submit regular reports to an international Committee on the Rights of the Child documenting measures taken to put children's rights into effect, and to make these reports widely available to the public in their countries. Article 45 gives the Committee the power to invite other agencies or expert bodies, such as the United Nations Children's Fund, to provide advice during this review. Thus, formal procedures have been provided for documenting and reviewing the implementation of the Convention on the national and international level.

In 2002, world leaders are scheduled to meet again to review progress in meeting the goals of the Plan of Action, and to set new goals through 2010. The indicators adopted for the 1990s were quantitative, and primarily addressed children's basic health, survival and education, such as the reduction of rates of child mortality, malnutrition and disease, access to sanitation and safe drinking water, and universal access to basic education. In addition to these vital goals, however, the CRC promotes other goals for child development that are more elusive to document.

The Preamble to the Convention states that children should be brought up to "live an individual life in society" and to hold the ideals of the Charter of the United Nations, in particular "the spirit of peace, dignity, tolerance, freedom, equality and solidarity". These goals of autonomy, a sense of dignity and self-worth, tolerance of different backgrounds and perspectives, equality of opportunity, self-expression, and the ability to solve problems and carry out initiatives in a peaceful and collective manner are all benefits that are repeatedly claimed to result from children's participation in evaluation and planning. (See the "participation clauses" in Box 1,

and general discussions of their implications by Flekkøy and Kaufman, 1997, Hart, 1992, Johnson *et al.*, 1998 and de Winter, 1997.) These benefits are also associated with children's creative endeavours in play and participation in the cultural life of their societies (Article 31). These goals for personal and social development are reaffirmed in Article 29, where they are listed among the ends to which education should be directed, along with the "development of respect for the natural environment". (For the relevance of children's participation to achieving the goals of responsible care for the environment, see Chawla, 2001, Driskell, 2001, Hart, 1997, and Mclvor, 1999.)

Clearly, these social and moral goals for children's development are as important a part of the CRC as the physical and mental goals that were the focus of the first World Summit for Children. But how are they to be measured and monitored? They do not lend themselves to quantification, like targets for survival or school attendance. Nor can they be administered as easily at a national level as they imply special qualities of interaction between children and adults, among children themselves, and between children and their environment, in the innumerable settings of everyday life.

These are the same goals that are intrinsic to participatory programmes which treat children with respect, foster democratic initiatives characterised by tolerance and fairness, and seek to manage human settlements and natural resources sustainably. One way to monitor the achievement of these goals, therefore, is to document whether programmes for children's participation are being put in place in the different settings of their lives. But even if this is done, do these programmes cultivate the ideals of the CRC? These qualitative questions must be answered too, for as Hart (1992) has observed, programmes for children's participation can be tokenistic and manipulative, using children for predetermined adult ends rather than engaging their own knowledge and creativity. What measures distinguish programmes that authentically treat children as partners from those that do not? These are the questions that the articles in this special issue seek to address.

## Evaluation for children and with children

This issue builds upon *PLA Notes Number 25*, a previous special issue on children's participation that was edited by Vicky Johnson in 1996. While issue 25 focused on ethical concerns, institutional contexts, and participatory techniques, the current issue takes up discussions and case studies relating to the evaluation of participation. The issue begins with an article by Louise Chawla, which reviews some major areas of discussion during the Oslo symposium. It briefly summarises the presentations given

at the symposium on initiatives currently underway to involve children in actively planning and managing different spheres of their lives, such as school or the local community. It then presents several areas of consensus among symposium members regarding the characteristics of participatory programmes that are authentic partnerships. It also notes that organisations have tended to take either of two approaches to evaluating programme quality. One gives children the methods and skills that they need in order to determine their own priorities in terms of programme outcomes, and to document whether or not these goals are being met. A second approach brings in external evaluators to define and document the achievement of goals. The article notes that these two approaches are sometimes treated as an "either/or" choice, but that they are not necessarily incompatible.

The article by Jasmine Rajbhandary, Roger Hart and Chandrika Khatiwada illustrates how these two approaches can be brought together. It is an example of **evaluation research** in which professional agency staff and an external consultant led an ambitious initiative to understand the history and functioning of children's clubs in Nepal, with the intention of establishing methods and drawing conclusions that could be applied by other organisations and communities to improve the design and evaluation of similar programmes. At the same time, this article describes an effort to introduce a number of methods for **participatory monitoring and evaluation** that children themselves could adopt and incorporate into their self-management of their clubs.

Three other articles also bridge these two approaches of external evaluation and participatory evaluation. Chris Mclvor from Zimbabwe and Glynis Clacherty and Johanna Kistner from South Africa share their observations and reflections as they report on programmes for young people in informal settlements and townships. In each case, the programmes they have assessed involve young people themselves as researchers to document the lives of other children in these harsh environments. From the United States, Kim Sabo reports on her interviews with young people to understand the benefits that they themselves believe they gain from different degrees of autonomy in planning and evaluating programmes on their own behalf. These three articles are examples of external research, which seeks to understand what happens to young people when they are involved in participatory research.

Two articles focus on the principles of participatory monitoring and evaluation, and how to integrate its processes into the day-to-day operations of development agencies. Lalitha Iyer, from India, and Robert Nurick and Vicky Johnson, from the United Kingdom, share their experience with projects around the world that have

attempted to carry out child-centred community development. This approach involves children in setting and monitoring goals for the programmes that serve their communities and themselves.

A final set of articles presents **analyses of settings for participation**. Annette Giertsen of Norway outlines the questions which an organisation must ask itself in order to determine how well it supports children's participation. Barry Percy-Smith and Karen Malone, from the United Kingdom and Australia, discuss the difficulties in involving young people in planning at the neighbourhood level, along with ways in which local governments can create structures for young people's input and influence. Jo Boyden reflects upon why refugee settings are especially problematic locations for participation.

This special issue is the first of several articles and book chapters that will be published as an outcome of the Oslo symposium. The questions that it addresses regarding how to document opportunities for children to have a voice in the settings of their everyday lives, how to determine whether these initiatives actually serve the ideals of the CRC, and how to make evaluation itself a partnership between children and adults, are complex. This issue of *PLA Notes* can only contribute some initial answers. We hope, nevertheless, that this issue will inspire further efforts to identify what happens when children have opportunities to play an active role in shaping their communities and the conditions for their own well-being, and that it will help to promote practices that give children opportunities to be heard in meaningful and creative ways.

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## Note

For more information about the MOST Programme of UNESCO, the Growing Up in Cities project and Childwatch International, see:  
[www.unesco.org/most/growing.htm](http://www.unesco.org/most/growing.htm) and  
[www.childwatch.uio.no](http://www.childwatch.uio.no)

## Acknowledgments

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# Evaluating children's participation: seeking areas of consensus

**Louise Chawla**

## Introduction

The subject of children's participation in decisions that affect their lives, as provided by the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and explored in this issue, is a complex one. Participation means different things to different people, and the form of participation that is most appropriate varies with circumstances, including culture, age, gender, setting, political conditions, available resources, and participants' goals. It follows that one of the questions that brought child researchers and community development experts together in Oslo for a symposium on "Children's Participation in Community Settings" is equivalently complex: *how can participation be evaluated in ways that will encourage best practices?* This article will review some of the areas of consensus and debate during the symposium, with the hope that doing so will indicate some productive ways forward for research and practice in this area. (For the definition of participation adopted at the symposium, see Box 1.)

### Box 1 A definition of participation

Participation is a process in which children and youth engage with other people around issues that concern their individual and collective life conditions. Participants interact in ways that respect each other's dignity, with the intention of achieving a shared goal. In the process, the child experiences itself as playing a useful role in the community. Formal processes of participation deliberately create structures for children's engagement in constructing meaning and sharing decision making.

As the overview to this issue, by Nadia Auriat, Per Miljeteig and this author, has explained, the Oslo symposium brought people together to review the forms of participation that characterise children's involvement in different community settings in different regions of the world, to review research to understand children's own beliefs and attitudes about their participation, and to identify outcomes of engagement for children themselves and the groups to which they belong. Symposium members presented papers or posters on these subjects, and there were small and large group discussions to identify areas of consensus and controversy, as well as the most productive questions for future research.

This article begins by reviewing some general issues surrounding the evaluation of participation that emerged

from the symposium. It then examines opportunities and constraints shaping children's participation in different settings. In the end, it reviews areas of agreement among symposium members in terms of the qualities that characterise good settings for participation and how evaluation research should be conceptualised.

## Evaluation: Who does it? For what reasons?

Childwatch International and the MOST Programme of UNESCO, the two organisations that sponsored the Oslo symposium, both seek to foster policy-oriented research in all regions of the world, in low-income as well as middle- and high-income countries. Therefore the symposium brought together people who do research in countries characterised by distinct research cultures, varying levels of resources, and different questions of urgency. It also convened representatives of non-profit organisations that work on community development and children's rights. These different backgrounds were reflected in different approaches which people brought to the practice of evaluation.

The academic researchers were primarily interested in research about participation: using established qualitative and quantitative methods, how can various forms of children's participation be documented, children's own beliefs and attitudes about their involvement be understood, and outcomes be measured? Symposium members who were anchored in community development tended to be more interested in participatory monitoring and evaluation, in which children and adults in communities work collaboratively with facilitators to design project evaluations that will monitor outcomes of importance to themselves. The philosophy underlying participatory monitoring and evaluation is an extension of the basic concept of participation itself: if community members have a right to self-expression and self-determination in decisions that affect their lives, then the choice of outcomes that will improve their lives, as well as processes of monitoring their achievement, should also rest with the community. As valid and important as this conclusion is, there is a risk inherent in this approach that evaluation may become a series of one-time only project

reviews, each unique, noncomparable and confined to its own boundaries, with no coordinated programme to synthesise results and share processes that work most effectively under specifiable contexts. The two approaches are not, however, necessarily incompatible; and therefore people at the symposium came together to seek areas for collaboration.

A risk to coordinated research is also inherent in the popularity of social constructivism in contemporary child research. This philosophy holds that people mentally structure an otherwise unstructured world, so that there are as many independent constructions of the world as there are individuals – or at least as many as there are cultures which socialise their members to perceive the world in certain ways. One consequence of this philosophy can be the position that there are no universal standards with regard to children's well-being, or corresponding project goals, which can be promoted and compared from site to site.

Andrew Dawes of South Africa advocated a compromise that most symposium members accepted: that evaluation should combine universal criteria of children's well-being with local criteria determined by children and their communities. As Gary Melton argued, if participation is a right, then it is worth doing it carefully. This requires thoughtful analysis to determine the most important dimensions and how to assess them in terms that children, child development experts and other adults find most meaningful, through coordinated research programmes that can transfer useful knowledge from site to site. (For a further analysis of these issues, see Chawla and Heft, 2002.)

As a whole, symposium members brought many different questions to the table, which would need to be explored through different research approaches. Some people were interested in overviews of existing legislation and structures of governance that provide channels for children's participation at national and local levels – topics which would require reviews and surveys, combined with more qualitative methods to identify best practices. Questions about cultures of childhood and existing community practices, including children's spontaneously organised actions, require ethnographic methods, as do questions about what happens during participatory processes in different settings. Efforts to understand children's and adults' perspectives involve interviews, focus groups or questionnaires, as well as participatory monitoring and evaluation. Questions about outcomes under different conditions invite quasi-experimental designs: questions about long-term outcomes, longitudinal designs. To give adequate attention to cultural contexts, cross-cultural and multidisciplinary research networks are needed on all of these fronts.

## Setting constraints and opportunities

The symposium sought to evaluate what is happening in different spheres of children's lives by gathering overviews of typical forms of participation in different community settings and parts of the world. It began with the basic question: *What channels are being created for children to participate in shaping their communities and making decisions that affect their lives? When they exist, what form do these opportunities typically take?*

These reviews of practice revealed a constraint that is not surprising: that most areas of decision making that affect children's lives, where children have the most to gain from participation, are traditionally areas of strong adult control and authority. Therefore adults face the challenge of learning to listen to children and respect their ideas and potential to contribute to their communities. The more that adults feel that serious outcomes are at stake, the more limited children's opportunities tend to be: as in schools, health care settings, substitute care, and municipal planning.

Karen Nairn, for example, reported that a nationwide survey of high school students and staff in New Zealand indicated that students were only allowed to have an influence over relatively inconsequential decisions. Barry Percy-Smith noted that, at the neighbourhood level in the United Kingdom, children tend to be segregated into participating in the design of playgrounds or other youth spaces, or they are given a voice in youth councils which have only tokenistic influence. Nittaya Kotchabhakdi of Thailand observed that children are usually treated as passive recipients of health care, despite some model programmes which have demonstrated the active role they can play in promoting healthy living in their families and communities, and the importance of their partnership in their own care. Jo Boyden gave reasons why refugee settings are an especially difficult arena for participation.

Robin Moore and Nilda Cosco, who work on schoolyard design projects in the United States and abroad, observed that there is often less adult control and more opportunities for children's involvement in design and change in the schoolyard. Per Miljeteig of Norway described how child labourers in the South, who have gained some independence through their work, have created especially dynamic examples of young people's initiative and competence in organising themselves and making their voices heard. More problematically, Robin Kimbrough-Melton and Gary Melton of the United States reported that community institutions that frequently reach out to children and youth to engage them in community service are churches, temples and mosques; yet there is very little research on this area of children's lives. In terms of the philosophy of children's rights, these settings present the paradox that the more engaged that children become with religious settings, the more they are

becoming indoctrinated into their faith, whereas the CRC emphasises children's right to express their own independent views.

On the level of government accounting, Jens Qvortup and Anne Trine Kjørholt of Norway argued that there is a great need to make children's existing participation in their societies more visible by identifying their contributions in official statistics. This should include the contribution of their labour in school to human capital accounting, as well as their role in household economies and the paid labour force.

## The look and sound of participatory settings at their best

There was general agreement among the symposium's diverse members about the characteristics of participatory settings that provide children with optimal scope for positive development.

### Build upon existing cultural norms

Participation occurs in informal as well as formal settings, and adults who seek to facilitate children's participation need to begin by understanding where it already occurs. They need to ask: *how are children already participating in their everyday lives and settings?* Children may already play responsible roles taking care of the home or younger siblings, or working in family enterprises or other workplaces. They may be inventive and self-organising in their play and the creation of play settings. In extreme cases, they may already be surviving on their own on the street or as orphans. These arenas where children already take responsibility can be built upon in several ways. They can be made visible, to make children's competence appear more acceptable and legitimate. They can indicate the most promising settings for investing in participation, where resources can be extended by enhancing opportunities in areas where children already take the initiative. They can also serve as models of processes that can be integrated into new settings, so that participatory processes will appear familiar and acceptable to children themselves as well as adults in their culture.

An implication of this principle is that advocates for children need to work for settings of everyday life that will support participation. Gary Melton noted that this means not only increasing access to participation in as many settings as possible, but also encouraging children to make use of this access, regardless of class, gender or ethnicity.

### Recognise different forms of participation

Several different forms of participation were defined, depending on children's level of involvement and degree of initiative. These distinctions are shown in Box 2. Children may move from one form to another as they

increase their competence: for example, when a child who has helped its parents grow vegetables ("assigned participation") organises with other children to create a garden on school grounds ("collaborative participation"). Typically, however, at one and the same age children will practice different forms of participation in different settings, depending on their level of interest, the degree of skill required, and the opportunities available.

#### Box 2 Forms of participation

##### Prescribed participation

The child feels a moral and cultural obligation to participate and considers the opportunity to do so a privilege. There is some choice, but conventions within the culture are strong for this to happen.

##### Assigned participation

Adults such as teachers and parents provide opportunities for training in participation. This involvement is directed by adults, but the child experiences it to be meaningful.

##### Invited participation

It is adult initiated and controlled, but the child has the right to withdraw without feeling disadvantaged.

##### Negotiated participation

The child is assigned a participatory role, but has opportunities to negotiate how to carry it out and the level of involvement.

##### Self-initiated negotiated participation

The child initiates it and controls it, negotiating the level and type of involvement and how long to continue.

##### Graduated participation

As the child increases in competence, he or she has opportunities to practice new types of participation, assume new levels of responsibility, and find new occasions for meaningful involvement in the community.

##### Collaborative participation

It is initiated and supported by a group, which collectively negotiates the level and form of involvement.

Note: These forms of participation are not necessarily exclusive of each other. For example, a child could be invited to participate, and then negotiate the process.

### Prepare for participation from birth

In keeping with the emphasis on understanding settings for participation in everyday life and increasing the opportunities they provide, symposium members agreed on the importance of early childhood as a foundation for formal channels of democratic decision making in later life. Malfrid Flekkøy, former ombudsman for children in Norway, argued that respect for infants' and toddlers' interests and initiatives, the treatment of young children as persons of worth, and young children's inclusion in social activities form a prototype and precondition for later forms of participation. This principle has been embedded in recommendations for programmes to foster these parenting practices by Fuglesang and Chandler (1997).

## Foster positive outcomes through meaningful participation

Members of the symposium agreed that, to be authentic, participation must appear meaningful to the children involved. It should engage them around issues that concern their individual and group lives, in interactive ways that respect the human dignity of the participants and that seek to achieve a shared goal. As a result, children experience themselves to be playing a useful role in their community. To understand what will engage children actively, it is necessary to know their own motivations and interests and how they themselves perceive issues. This concept of “meaningful participation” implies a developmental perspective that will change depending upon children’s interests, goals and sense of their own capabilities, as well as their societies’ expectations regarding appropriate tasks and accomplishments.

## Look for indicators of effective participation

Symposium members concurred that participatory settings at their best exhibit common characteristics across settings; these are listed in Box 3. These characteristics serve as indicators of underlying principles of respect for children’s dignity as persons, mutual respect among group members, access, and support for growing levels of competence.

Symposium members also believed that positive forms of participation, defined by the preceding indicators, can foster a range of positive outcomes for children themselves, their communities and facilitating organisations (see Box 4.) Some of these outcomes can be quantified, such as the construction of new community facilities or the cost effectiveness of programmes that community members appropriate and maintain. Roger Hart of the United States, however, cautioned that evaluation should not focus on these quantitative measures to the exclusion of more qualitative expressions of the contribution of participatory projects to human development and human rights.

## Assume competence, and build in supports for its development

The developmental psychologists at the symposium opposed any universal, age-based assumptions about children’s competence – such as that children are capable of certain forms of participation at given ages but not others. They noted that the past two decades of research in child development have demonstrated that competence is highly contextualised, depending on how familiar and meaningful an activity is to a child, as well as how competence itself is defined and measured. The best rule, they proposed, is to assume competence in some degree, and to ask at every age: *what support can be provided to enable children to participate to the best of their ability?*

### Box 3 Characteristics of effective projects for children’s participation

#### Conditions of convergence\*

- Whenever possible, the project builds on existing community organisations and structures that support children’s participation.
- As much as possible, project activities make children’s participation appear to be a natural part of the setting.
- The project is based on children’s own issues and interests.

#### Conditions of entry

- Participants are fairly selected.
- Children and their families give informed consent.
- Children freely choose to participate or decline.
- The project is accessible in scheduling and location.

#### Conditions of social support

- Children are respected as human beings with essential worth and dignity.
- There is mutual respect among participants.
- Children support and encourage each other.

#### Conditions for competence

- Children have real responsibility and influence.
- Children understand and have a part in defining the goals of the activity.
- Children play a role in decision making and accomplishing goals.
- Children are helped to construct and express their views, and are provided with the information necessary to make informed decisions.
- There is a fair sharing of opportunities to contribute and be heard.
- The project creates occasions for the graduated development of competence.
- The project sets up processes to support children’s engagement in issues they initiate themselves.
- The project results in tangible outcomes.

#### Conditions for reflection

- There is transparency at all stages of decision making.
- Children understand the reasons for outcomes.
- There are opportunities for critical reflection.
- There are opportunities for evaluation at both group and individual levels.
- Participants deliberately negotiate differences in power.

\*“Convergence” is used here in the sense of the coming together of people, ideas and resources to establish new programmes or settings (Wicker, 1987).

For example, children who may be hesitant to express themselves in words alone may be expressive in drawing and talking about pictures. Or young children who may have trouble reading two-dimensional plans for the redesign of their school may thoughtfully manipulate a three-dimensional model.

In this respect, Anne Smith of New Zealand noted the usefulness of Vygotsky’s (1978) concept of the “zone of proximal development” that children can be enabled to reach through role models and guided practice, Rogoff’s (1990) concept of apprenticeship, and the metaphor of

#### **Box 4 Expected outcomes of children's participation**

##### **For children themselves**

- More positive sense of self
- Increased sense of competence
- Greater sensitivity to the perspectives and needs of others
- Greater tolerance and sense of fairness
- Increased understanding of democratic values and behaviours
- Preparation for a lifelong pattern of participation
- New social networks
- New skills
- Enjoyment

##### **For the organisations that serve children**

- Programme and policy development that is sensitive to children's priorities
- The establishment of processes for participation
- Increased commitment to children's rights
- Innovation

##### **For children's communities**

- Public education regarding children's rights
- More positive public attitudes and relationships to children
- Increased social capital
- Improved quality of life

"scaffolding" developed by Wood, Bruner and Ross (1976). These concepts emphasise the creation of opportunities for the practice of graduated levels of competence.

#### **Balance protection and participation**

Gary Melton noted that, in the history of children's rights, the tradition of child protection has been stronger than the tradition that emphasises children's agency and rights to self-determination and personal expression. One of the great achievements of the Convention on the Rights of the Child is that it integrates these two premises: that, as persons, children deserve opportunities to be heard, at the same time as they are recognised to be vulnerable and dependent persons who require special protections and entitlements if they are to be prepared for fully functioning lives in society. On one side, protection preserves the integrity of the child. On the other side, participation preserves the child's dignity. One of the fundamental principles of the CRC is that these different rights are intended to operate together.

Melton observed that children's rights to self-expression and participation in decision making with parents and other adults can usually be a cooperative venture. When adults believe that protection is necessary, they can negotiate with children so that young people understand their reasons. He also advocated a "learner's permit" model, which focuses not so much on the establishment

of threshold ages for activities, as on the creation of formal structures that facilitate young people's participation in society by balancing guidance and independence in step with young people's demonstrations of growing levels of competence (Melton, 1999).

In summary, symposium members believed that there is no "one size fits all" model for children's participation that can be applied across all community settings, social groups and cultural contexts. They advocated that participation needs to be fostered across a broad range of formal and informal settings. Nevertheless, they believed that the qualities that characterise participatory processes that respect children's dignity and competence can be specified and documented, and that creating processes of this kind benefits not only children, but also their communities and societies.

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#### **Note**

This article is based on discussions and invited presentations at a symposium on "Children's Participation in Community Settings" that was sponsored by the MOST Programme of UNESCO and Childwatch International at the University of Oslo, June 26–28, 2000. The material in Boxes 1–4 is adapted from symposium discussion notes.

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# How can organisations facilitate children's participation?

3

**Annette Giertsen**

## Introduction

This presentation is based on experiences of Save the Children Norway (SCN). Our commitment to children's participation is rooted in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). Although children have participated in different processes for a long time, their participation has not always been recognised. The CRC makes an important contribution to the recognition of children's participation by addressing it explicitly and giving it a framework. So do organisations – by making children's participation visible and calling attention to its advantages and possibilities as well as its pitfalls and limitations.

Children's participation is defined and understood in a variety of ways. For SCN it means that children are able to express their views and participate in influencing decisions on matters that concern them. This includes influencing the society in which they are growing up.

Like other social phenomena, children's participation has to be assessed according to its objective and context. Children's participation in itself will not be sufficient to warrant support. Values that the participation is based upon and conveys will also matter. For example, SCN would not support children in becoming child soldiers or prostitutes, but would support them in searching for alternatives to harmful life choices.

SCN supports children's participation in different ways: by supporting partner organisations' projects where children are invited to participate; or by responding to children's initiatives and working with children's groups as partners. Most often, SCN supports projects that invite children to participate. This work should be guided by the following principles:

- Ask the children first! Before the project's objectives are decided, children, families and local communities should have a say about what they want the project to achieve. This is a way to ensure that the project is in the best interests of the child.
- Clarify why and how the organisation wants the children to participate. Be transparent about it. Enable the children to decide whether they want to participate

or not. Participation must be meaningful, related to the children's context.

- Learn about the children's experiences, age and maturity, and relate this knowledge to the type of participation expected. Ensure that children who participate have the required skills.
- Define limits and be clear about limitations, in a way that encourages children's growth and independence.

## Two examples from Nicaragua

With the preceding principles in mind, we will look at two examples supported by SCN, emphasising dimensions like: who took the initiative, practical conditions, children's contributions and project outcomes. We will also look at the meaning that children's participation can have for project development. The examples show that, by offering children an opportunity to participate, they will make their independent contributions to the shaping of the project and take initiatives beyond the project frame.

- The first example, a project where children were trained as photographers, illustrates the ethical problem arising from starting a project and engaging children without having defined a follow-up. This example also shows that securing a certain level of preparation gives children a basis for taking on responsibilities beyond adults' expectations.
- The second case, the development of a children's radio programme, shows how a group of adults who channelled their professional interests towards children managed to give them an opportunity to promote their rights and develop a profession. The children went beyond their role as journalists by taking action in addition to reporting. This made the project more action oriented.

### 1. When child workers become photographers

In 1996, a photographer in Nicaragua offered a course to a group of eight working children, one girl and seven boys between the age of 12 and 18. The course comprised two sessions of four and five weekends each. Six of the

children were from three small villages and two were from Managua. The intention was to give them a possibility to express themselves through photos and provide them with an alternative to their work as shoe-shiners, servants or coffee harvesters. It was also a possibility for them to make cultural contributions. The children learned how the camera functions, different angles to frame a picture, and darkroom work. Each of them employed a used but well-maintained camera and got some weeks to take the photos they wanted.

The children's work resulted in a photo exhibition, which was shown in the Cultural Centre of Managua, in the villages of the children and at the Forum with Working Children in Oslo. The mayor from one of the villages of the photographers visited the exhibition in Managua and commented that he had never expected children from his village to be able to take such photos. The children took on jobs as photographers in their villages. They are still contacted to photograph weddings, confirmations and other family and school events. Some of them have also arranged workshops and trained other working children as photographers.

### **An adult-initiated and driven project offering photographic expression and a profession to children**

SCN took the initiative by asking four of its non-governmental partner organisations (NGOs) if they were interested in giving two of the children in their respective projects a course in photography. The photographer prepared a plan, which SCN and the NGOs accepted. The children received the plan but had not been invited to participate in its preparation. When the course ended, the photographer, the NGOs and the children made an agreement on the storing and use of the cameras, the responsibility for maintaining them and the purchase and development of films. The intention was to support the children's continued work as photographers. SCN and the NGOs signed the agreement.

In retrospect, it is clear that there was a lack of inclusion of children in the planning, preparation of follow-up and signing of the agreement.

SCN paid all the expenses of the course, while the exhibition localities were provided free of charge.

### **Children's contributions and project outcome**

Six of the eight children responded positively to the course and continued. The two from Managua left the project, as they had other commitments. The outcome of the project was the professional training of a group of children and the increase of self-esteem that this caused. Getting a profession and greater self-confidence enabled the children to establish themselves as photographers in their villages, and also to make the decision of training other

children. In this way the child photographers have been able to help other children who were working in the street get new jobs, for example in a photo shop. One of the child trainers sees this as her contribution to reduce the number of children involved in the worst forms of child labour.

In addition, the child photographers found a new way to express and share their views with other people beyond their own group. They did so through photos but also through the texts they added to the photos, such as this text accompanying a photo of a boy doing shoe-shining:

*One day while I was taking photos, I looked through the lens of the camera and saw some children shining shoes as I used to do. I felt butterflies in my stomach, and a feeling of uncertainty overwhelmed me. I don't know if I felt sadness or joy.*

When the project was started, the expected outcome was defined as providing children with a way of expressing themselves through photography. The experiences from the first course were so positive that a second course was offered, which gave a sufficient basis for the children to work as professionals and train other children.

There is a risk in starting a project when a follow-up is not clearly defined, as children may be left with unfulfilled expectations when the project finishes. This example shows the importance of giving children a relevant offer of good quality, following attentively how the process develops by ensuring close communication with the children, and having the necessary resources to continue the project. Children will most often know if they want to continue, and if so, when and how to do it. The project shows how to support children's initiatives, even when they grow out of experiences introduced by adults, so that they can go beyond what we as adults have foreseen.

## **2. When school children become radio journalists**

In 1991 a group of journalists in a town in Nicaragua invited a group of children to make a 30 minute weekly radio programme at a local radio station. The programme was called *Los Cumiches*, which means "the smaller ones". After three to four years, the children's radio programme lost more and more air time on the local radio, so adults took the initiative to raise funds together with the children to buy their own radio station. In 1996 they succeeded through support from the community and some Save the Children organisations. At that time, 60 children between the age of 6 and 14 participated and began to broadcast their programmes for six hours a day. Former child radio workers, who had passed the age of 18, got a weekly time slot for their broadcast. They are still working independently on this.

The children participating in the radio programmes come from the schools in the poorest areas of the town. In their programmes they address situations related to their rights: for example, how to get water in the school, improve the school sanitation system and get desks for more pupils. They often present interviews with local administrators. In addition to their role as reporters, they have taken action, for example, to get more school desks. On one occasion the children observed a working child being beaten by a policeman. They tried to interfere without succeeding and called on some adults to help them. They then presented the case on their radio programme, contacted adult journalists and denounced the policeman.

On the radio programmes the children also sing, present music and answer letters from listeners, thus letting other children express themselves. In addition they organise leisure and cultural activities in their schools.

Children and adults meet weekly to plan which issues to present on the radio and how to prepare them.

***An adult-initiated project giving children an opportunity to express themselves, take action, promote the rights of the child, and become radio journalists and sound technicians***

The radio station was started by a group of adult journalists who wanted to offer a group of children assistance in making a radio programme. The adults first received support and training from an NGO on how to prepare a project plan and manage a project. Then the journalists established themselves as an NGO. SCN supported them financially and technically. The project also carried out its own fund-raising. The radio programme established a support network consisting of teachers and parents from the community.

The project is based on children's activities as journalists and reporters. The programme reaches a countless number of children. A survey was conducted with children in the town and neighbouring communities, asking them if they listened to *Los Cumiches* and what they thought about the programme. According to the answers, the radio programme seems to have an impact on their lives because they recognise that they have a channel for their opinions and that other children stand up for their rights.

***Children's contribution and project outcome***

In 1993, children within and outside the radio programme made important efforts in promoting their views. Nearly 10,000 children from 15 schools participated in a process of analysing their school situation, identifying problems and their causes, and coming up with proposals. The problems and proposals were presented to the local authorities, who for the first time listened openly to a group of children. The children involved in the radio

project played an important role in getting the messages out. In addition, the same children were active in relation to the Municipal Commission for Children's Rights. The adult representative of the radio station spoke on behalf of the children and the children had access to meetings as radio reporters, which allowed them to broadcast issues and discussions.

Children in the project receive training as journalists, radio reporters and sound technicians and get professional background in these areas. By promoting their rights and taking action to implement them, they have increased awareness of the CRC among the population of Nicaragua, and changed many adults' views of children, so that they see children as having rights. The greatest importance of the radio programme probably lies in the impact it has on the children who participate. They develop as persons with increased self-esteem, get a vision of life where they can take an active role, and see themselves as future adults with professions. Their capacity to report on issues and also take action gives a new dimension to the project.

***Dilemma***

The project is dependent on external financial support. However, when the radio programme developed into an independent radio station, a question arose: should a children's radio station work on the same premises as other radio stations and be responsible for its own funding, for example through advertisements? According to the adults in the programme, if they had to divide their efforts between fund-raising and follow-up with the children, the work with the children would suffer. SCN has continued to support the project, although with reduced funding. This is partly due to the consideration that the project should be at least partially self-supporting. The project continues to operate in this way.

**Concluding remarks**

In the two examples above, it is interesting to note how children take on initiatives and responsibilities when offered participation. When the child journalists added action to their work as reporters, they contributed to further enrich the project. The child photographers initiated new activities outside the original project goals by training other children.

One of the main contributions that organisations can offer to children is to help them to find a space where they can come together and to offer them relevant training. The training may be, for example, on how to run a club, to set up street theatres, to address urgent problems, to prepare a project proposal, to do fundraising or to become a professional. Furthermore, organisations can listen to children, analyse initiatives together with them and, if agreed by both sides, support their initiatives.

Overarching issues are adults' capacity to communicate with children in different situations, and their awareness of their role as facilitators, knowing when and how to intervene without taking over from the children. Organisations' financial contributions are often essential, but funding needs to be complemented by staff members' competence in seeing and discussing dilemmas and analysing their own roles as adults. Organisations also need to know how to cooperate and support movements in civil society in order to strengthen children's participation. Facilitating meaningful participation means creating conditions that enable children to develop what they find relevant for themselves, at local, national, regional and international levels.

However, before an organisation takes these steps, some prerequisites should be considered. The organisation itself has to be convinced of the value of children's participation and the need to promote it. These attitudes should extend to all parts of the organisation. A strategy paper and policy document should serve as a common reference.

Facilitating children's participation also means that organisations should seek to understand what children think about their participation and how it affects children and their development, as well as adults around them.

It is also vital to reflect on values and risks, as well as ethical and methodological dilemmas. To a greater extent, organisations should monitor their work on children's participation in ways that include these aspects. Children should be part of this effort. In fundamental ways, successful participation requires a paradigm shift among organisations, as they reconceptualise their role as not working for but *with* children.

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# Making children's participation in neighbourhood settings relevant to the everyday lives of young people

# 4

**Barry Percy-Smith and  
Karen Malone**

## Introduction

Local environments are socially and developmentally important domains in children's everyday experiences (Chawla 2001). Yet so often young people's views and experiences of neighbourhood settings are characterised by conflict with adults, alienation from community life, environmental hazards or neglect, and limited opportunities. At the same time there is ample evidence to suggest that, despite parental restrictions, increasing control of public space use and the competing forces of leisure practices that focus on consumerism and information technology, children continue to value outdoor place experiences (Chawla 2001). However, the value of local place experiences for children goes beyond issues of place use and provision, yielding also potential opportunities for developing a sense of belonging, identity, self-worth and advocacy as fellow citizens within neighbourhood communities.

Promoted by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the Earth Summit, the search for more effective and child-friendly planning and development in local neighbourhoods has given rise to increasing emphasis being placed on the participation of children. A growing number of projects provide rich insights into children's experience of local places, but there are fewer examples of studies concerning the participation of children in neighbourhood development processes. Nevertheless, a culture of involving children in neighbourhood development appears to be evolving, led in particular by children's charities and nongovernmental organisations (see for example the work of Save The Children, The Children's Society's Children in Neighbourhoods project in Britain, Action Aid and UNICEF). While there are examples of good practices in involving children in neighbourhood research and development processes (Johnson *et al.*, 1998; Adams and Ingham, 1998; Save The Children, 1997; Cannan and Warren, 1997; Hart, 1997; Malone 1999; Chawla, 2001), these often remain on the fringes of mainstream development initiatives. As a result, children's views and interests continue to remain relatively marginalised in neighbourhood landscapes, in the everyday practices of local communities, and in local governance structures and procedures. There are, however, few studies that evaluate

children's experience of participation in neighbourhood settings. When we talk of "evaluating children's participation", we are not necessarily referring to whether initiatives "get children's participation right" or meet programme targets, but rather about whether, by being critically reflective and learning from experience, the achievement of a culture of children's participation may become increasingly more realisable.

The ideas presented in this paper are based primarily on our work with children in neighbourhoods in the United Kingdom (Percy-Smith 1999; 2001) and Australia (Malone & Hasluck 2001, Malone 1999, Chawla & Malone, in press), two of the four industrialised nations researched in conjunction with the international Growing Up In Cities programme (Chawla 2001). Despite this emphasis we believe the paper raises issues and questions which cut across geographically, socially and culturally diverse neighbourhood contexts.

## Children's participation in neighbourhood settings

Discussions about children's participation are dominated by references to children's involvement in decision making processes. Yet if one of the goals of children's participation is inclusionary and democratic citizenship for children, we should extend our understandings of children's participation to include children's cultures and social practices in everyday life. Children are already participating in their neighbourhoods but often in worlds apart from adults. One of the challenges for research, planning and development in neighbourhoods is to incorporate the cultural practices and expertise of children into decision making and management of local places within the context of their everyday lives, to ensure that children feel a sense of ownership, belonging and inclusion within their communities. It is insufficient to simply provide opportunities for children to have their say or participate in adult structures and processes. They should be provided with an opportunity to challenge and change these structures and processes by negotiating their own forms of participation, and consequently, be instrumental in improving their neighbourhoods. We argue that authentic participation involves *inclusion* – wherein the system changes to accommodate the



**During a neighbourhood tour, these young boys showed Growing Up in Frankston researchers the cycle track they constructed. They lobbied the City council to keep the track open.**

participation and values of children, rather than *integration* – wherein children participate in predefined ways in predefined structures.

Increasingly, research and consultation exercises have derived rich insights into children's views and experience of their neighbourhoods. Many have been conducted under the guise of participatory research with children, but all too often, they are introduced by bodies external to the neighbourhood and fail to involve children in the identification of research problems, in the design of the research or development process, or in taking action on emerging insights. In these cases children act as benign participants rather than active co-researchers or social inquirers. There is little evidence as to children's experience of participating in these projects, the value of what they have learned, or whether these initiatives have sustained the involvement of children beyond the lifetime of the projects. Children have also participated in local decision making through central and local government and development agency initiatives, including Local Agenda 21 forums, youth forums and neighbourhood regeneration programmes (Fitzpatrick *et al.*, 1998). While these contexts go some way in involving young people in the democratic process, there is a danger that the token participation of a few young people may appear to legitimate the decision making of adults. The participation of young people appears to work best when a range of channels for participation exists, especially those rooted in neighbourhood issues of direct relevance to the lives of young people, rather than just generic mechanisms for participation in local governance.

In both the United Kingdom and Australian Growing Up In Cities projects, young participants said that they wanted to be more involved in making improvements to their neighbourhood. Despite this agreement, there was uncertainty as to how this might best happen. For the majority, local youth projects were seen as the most suitable venue for ideas to be exchanged. In spite of these

suggestions, being involved in local decisions may not be appealing for some young people, especially those termed 'disaffected.' "The thing is, the kids round here don't want to talk to adults, they just want to go around in their gangs, they don't want to have anything to do with adults" (U.K. study, 13 year old boy). As a consequence, initiatives for participation need to address problems of disaffection, cynicism and cultures of non-participation among some young people, and to pay serious consideration to developing new modes of participation which bring processes of local governance into their everyday worlds. These concerns are illustrated by the following case study from Australia, which describes how one of the authors (Malone) attempted to create a participatory environment for young people.

### **Case study: Frankston Youth Safety Management Team**

A Growing Up in Frankston Youth Needs Assessment, conducted by the Growing Up in Cities research team in conjunction with the Frankston City Council, found that young people felt marginalised and disadvantaged in this suburban city of greater Melbourne, where many adults viewed youth with suspicion and distrust. Therefore when the Mayor and the Community Safety Management Team (CMST) launched the Community Safety Plan in late 2000, the development of a Youth Safety Management Team (YSMT) was included as one of four priorities for the period 2000/2001. Their goal was to: "establish and provide ongoing leadership and support for a Junior Community Safety Management Team, to contribute to the development and implementation of policies, programs and projects related to community safety and crime prevention" (Frankston City Council 2000). The YSMT had its first meeting in late December 2000. Membership in the group was decided through a call for nominations from each of the local secondary colleges, the local university and further education college, the Yellow Ribbon project group (a youth-run volunteer group

supporting youth in crisis), in CYNC (a youth support group run by council youth services with the Frankston Town Centre Management), and through public media. Youth members of the team and the council YSMT administrator gave the following responses when asked about their participation in YSMT and its role.

*Adults stereotype young people too easily. They are only 'visible' when they do things that adults don't do. For example, young people enjoy hanging around with their friends, but that doesn't mean they are going to break into a store or sell drugs. Most young people are doing fantastic things but adults don't see this, concentrating on a small group making trouble who'll probably grow out of it anyway. I hope to represent young people in my community while I am in the YSMT. – Amy, youth member of YSMT*

*The purpose of this group was to provide a connection between young people living and working in Frankston with the local council. The YSMT can provide the council with a direct consultation link between young people and the council on a range of issues. I joined to gain a greater understanding of the decision-making process and other community issues. I think youth participation is important. – Scott, youth member of YSMT*

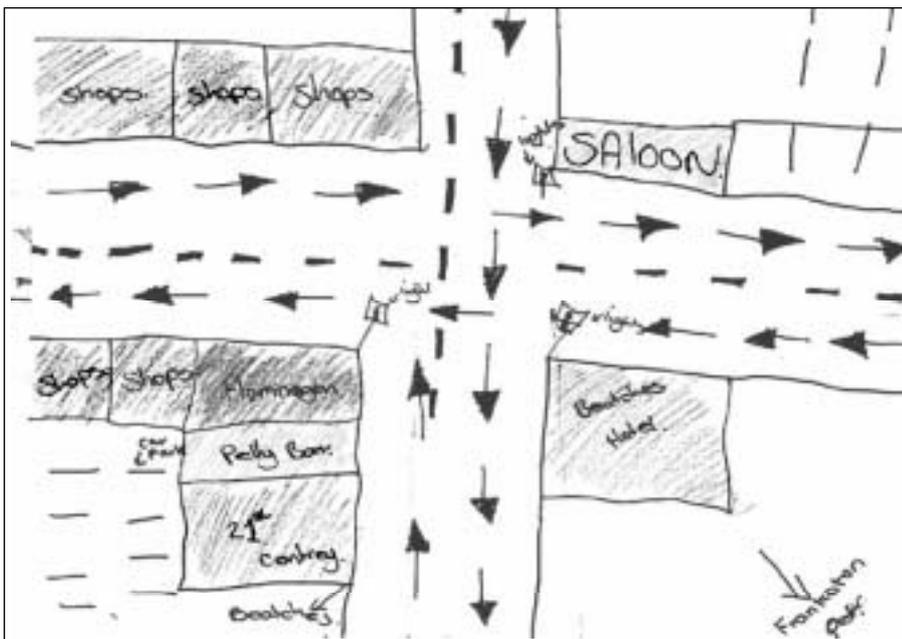
*YSMT was developed as an action under the Community Safety Plan as a result of the Growing Up In Frankston work. I get to listen to people who think I'm really old and for some reason get to make other adults in the 'youth' fields feel really nervous/angry/threatened. This is probably a good sign! They're giving us a perspective that we didn't have before. – Philippa, council administrator of YSMT*

At the time of writing, the 10-member group had met eight times. Their accomplishments during this time included:

- publishing a survey on the concerns of young people who use the skate ramp facility in the city
- developing an action subcommittee to submit a proposal for a long-term facility management plan for the skate ramp
- conducting a "youth-specific places" audit of the city
- developing a media release focusing on positive images of youth, to counteract the current plethora of negative portrayals of youth in local newspapers.

Representatives of the group attend the monthly meetings of the City Council Community Safety Management Team and provide regular input on youth concerns. They are an evolving group, who because of their brief time together are still deciding on directions for their own development. A month ago, at their July meeting, they had a heated discussion about their role, particularly whether or not they felt able to make as valuable a contribution as they had intended when joining. From this discussion, they decided to develop a discussion paper on the prospect of initiating a youth council. Part of their frustration stemmed from the fact that they were the ONLY youth representatives in the city council. The investigations they undertook meant that they made contact with youth council members across the globe – some with success stories, others with failures. The discussion paper was presented to the CSMT and the Mayor and has been picked up by the Youth Services department, who in collaboration with YSMT is developing a proposal for the Mayor. The youth council model the group are supporting would include members of the YSMT and other youth groups operating in the area.

Picture by Sarah, age 12 years



**Sarah's drawing of downtown Frankston shows some of the reasons why young people didn't find it a friendly place – a heavy traffic flow and a lack of public meeting places.**

Additionally, stemming from the discussion at that meeting in July, the young people decided to address issues about their role and responsibility with the CSMT and vice versa. The YSMT members were apprehensive about the reaction of adults when they announced that they had concerns about their role in representing youth and their concerns that their ideas weren't being acted on. When they spoke to me, as the researcher who had put forward the idea of the YSMT, they were concerned particularly that I might feel challenged by their demands. But in actual fact I was pleased they spoke out, because it illustrated a very important point, and that was that these processes are always evolving. Nobody on the CSMT had worked with youth committees before, and therefore many didn't know what the expectations were or how the young people felt. Unless they told us (and we valued them enough to listen) then how would it work? These young people wanted to be taken seriously and make a difference, and they were holding the group and the city council accountable to that. They weren't happy about being token youth, and we inadvertently, through our lack of experience, made them feel that way.

At the next CSMT meeting, they gave out a questionnaire to the adult members of the committee, asking them to articulate their expectations for the YSMT. They collected the forms at the end of meeting and are currently developing a report, which also includes their ideas on how to make the process more inclusive and participatory. The important issue was that, when the group reached a point where it needed to evolve, would they have support from the adults? The key to an equitable participation process was being willing to listen and learn from the young people. The following comment by Emma, a young member of the YSMT, sums up what can be achieved if adults attempt to create equitable, evolving and responsive processes for children's participation:

*I think we've achieved a lot. I like the 'equality' with adults I've experienced since joining the YSMT. We can tell the adults exactly what we want – exactly what is going on. It's a lot different when you are on the same level as adults. No one asked us before 'what do you think?' It's hard to have a voice in a community unless someone asks you. – Emma, youth member YSMT*

This case study highlights the importance of opening up an 'opportunity space' for meaningful participation to evolve and develop reflexively as an organic, relational process built on equality, dialogue and mutual respect, rather than providing a fixed mode or structure for



Photo by courtesy of Lindsay Hasluck

**One of the first initiatives of the Youth Safety Management Team in Frankston was to compile a report on safety and security on the skate ramp. Here skaters take a break to participate in the research.**

participation. It also brings to the fore the importance of treating young people's participation seriously and providing the necessary support to ensure that, through action, young people are able to have a real impact in neighbourhood development processes.

### **Outcomes of participation: impacts on professionals, children and neighbourhoods**

There is limited evidence as to what impact children's participation has on neighbourhood settings. In the Growing Up in Cities projects (Percy-Smith 2001, Malone & Hasluck 2001) the majority of young people involved in the studies stated that they felt good about having the chance to say what they felt and be listened to. "I hope something can be changed now, but it's nice to be able to give your views to somebody that can listen, 'cause most people just aren't bothered" (U.K. study, 15 year old girl). Positive feedback is one way of feeling good about being involved in a participatory process, but what of those young people who don't want to be involved? Three broad reasons have emerged from these studies concerning why young people have not previously been involved. First, young people do not expect participation to be available to them, so they don't acknowledge that it includes them. Second, young people are not aware of their rights and procedures and don't demand opportunities to participate, so unless they are invited, they don't realise that they can contribute to community projects. Third, some young people feel an underlying apathy and cynicism toward participation, arising in many cases from the assumption that their ideas or views will not be taken seriously and acted upon.

Underlying moves to enhance children's role in the development process appears to be an expectation that

the process of participation is positive and benefits both young people and neighbourhood communities. Yet while many young people want to express their opinions and have these taken seriously, this does not mean they necessarily want to be involved in the whole decision-making or development process, such as sitting in a council chamber or doing a survey. The prospect of becoming key players in local development processes also may not be high on their agenda in light of other priorities (to play or spend time hanging out with friends). The dilemma is how research, policy objectives and political processes can be converted into child-friendly practices. This has implications for the nature and extent of children's involvement in neighbourhood development processes, as well as for the role of education in young people's developing capacity to participate.

There is a clear need for children's participation to be rooted in community contexts, but at the same time community development initiatives need to be enabled by support structures at the level of central and local government. However, long-term, qualitative outcomes of community development are often at odds with the tight time lines and target-driven restrictions imposed by funding and political priorities. As a result, what often happens is that the rhetoric of policy intentions and the reality of experiences and outcomes at the grass roots level do not coincide.

## Towards a whole community approach to neighbourhood participation

Hart (1997) notes that it is unrealistic to expect children to participate if they have not had the chance to develop the capacity to participate. Children's participation in neighbourhood settings is an important forum in which to develop the skills of responsible citizenship. However, the divisions between the lives and values of children and adults and the lack of structures for community participation pose significant stumbling blocks for progress in children's participation in neighbourhood settings. This was a critical point in the Streetspace project reported on by Malone (1999: 23): "If neighbourhoods are to become youth-friendly, young people need to be part of the planning process. However, to participate constructively, they need to be skilled". As Fitzpatrick *et al.* (1998: 25) observe: "Adults as well as young people require training to ensure effective... participation can take place". At the same time, there is a need for a cultural shift in values and attitudes between adults and young people, so as to provide opportunities for social learning and development rather than conflict and disharmony.

In conclusion, we need to look not just at young people's capacity to participate and the provision of opportunities and structures for participation, but we also need to direct our attention to the dynamic interaction between these

two sets of considerations. In this way we can come to understand how, why and in what ways young people respond to opportunities for learning and participation in neighbourhood settings.

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# Extracts from *The Children's Clubs of Nepal: a democratic experiment*<sup>1</sup>

**Jasmine Rajbhandary, Roger Hart  
and Chandrika Khatiwada**

## Introduction

Children's clubs have emerged as an important new kind of institution in Nepal over the past decade. They appear to be both an expression of, and a promise, for the advancement of democracy and children's rights. This article summarises the process used to evaluate the development and current state of functioning of about 300 of these clubs that have been supported by Save the Children Norway (SCN) and Save the Children US (SCUS). Their progress has been a remarkable natural experiment in the different ways that children can be involved in the management of their own organisations. For a full report of the evaluation and its recommendations, see Rajbhandary, Hart and Khatiwada (1999).



**Child club, Chitawan, Nepal**

It is being recognised increasingly in many countries that there are many advantages to children's having a greater voice in their own development and in the development of their communities. But this is invariably done on a project-by-project basis. It was our belief in designing this study that opportunities for children to act as agents in their own organisations offer the potential for a much more effective, authentic and sustainable approach to actively learning about rights and how to collaborate as more self-determining and caring citizens.

The sponsoring organisations sought to learn not only what was happening nationally in terms of the growth and general patterns of club membership and activities,

<sup>1</sup> This article has been abridged from a longer report of this name published by Save the Children (Norway) and Save the Children (US).

but also how the clubs functioned. In particular, it was thought important to learn to what extent the clubs fulfilled the goals of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) as settings where children could learn about, and act upon, their rights. Finally, because the two agencies had recognized that they needed to improve their monitoring of the clubs, it was their hope that some of the participatory methods found to be effective in this research could be used by children's clubs as on-going tools.

## Design of the research

The goals of the research for both general national patterns and detailed questions of structure and process called for a multi-phased design. In addition to providing an account of the clubs' current membership patterns, structures and functioning, a primary goal was to develop methods that children and facilitators in any club could subsequently use to critically review their own functioning in order to improve their structure and activities. This required that participatory group methods be at the core of our approach. But this needed to be supplemented by individual interviews – as we knew that group methods often hide important individual differences and issues of power in the functioning of institutions. We also felt that it would be important to obtain the perspectives of non-club members and their parents about the place of clubs in their communities.

One of the central principles of participatory group methods is that the methods be simple and clear to a group unschooled in the use of research methods and that the analysis and interpretation of the data be carried out with the group themselves. Furthermore, many of the children in the clubs were not literate so we had to design methods that were visual. This involved considerable experimentation. When using group data of this kind, it is not possible to carry out any sophisticated statistical analyses. It is simply a systematisation of what they are capable of discussing themselves in any of their group meetings. For the more individual and subtle issues, we relied upon our lengthy semi-structured interviews with key informants, child club members, non-members and their parents. The three phases of the research are summarised below.

## **Retracing the history, background and purpose of the clubs**

Archival research and interviews with key policy makers and programme staff of SCN, SCUS and other participatory children's organisations in Nepal.

## **National survey**

A survey of members of a total of 180 SCN-and SCUS-supported clubs.

## **Case studies**

Covering all of the districts where SCN- and SCUS- work, seven "primary case study clubs" and 15 "secondary case studies" were selected. The primary case studies were visited for approximately seven days of intensive research involving both group sessions with children and interviews with children, parents and other actors. The secondary case study clubs were visited for only one or two days with only group sessions with children and interviews with one or two key child informants. (For the case study methods, see Box 1.)

### **Box 1 Case study methods**

#### **Interviews with key informants:**

These were usually the primary local SCN and SCUS staff person, any primary local volunteer/facilitator and the club chairperson.

#### **Group research with all club members:**

Household mapping\*  
Ranking movement game  
Participation card sorting regarding training workshops  
Scenario skits (four separate groups)  
Comparative activities and benefits chart \*  
Generation of activity preference categories  
Activity preference matrix \*  
Organisational diagram of club formal structure \*  
Organisational diagram of informal structure\*

#### **Interviews with sub-samples:**

The chairperson\*  
Three other board members\*  
Four general club members \*  
Club members' parents (2 of board members and 2 of general members)\*  
Non-club members (2)\*  
Non-club members' parents (2)  
A facilitator (if one exists)

#### **Community Feedback Session with the children**

After completion of collection of the data in each of the primary case study clubs, a meeting was held with the children who were executive board members and, when possible, with the facilitators, to discuss the overall findings.

\*All of the above methods were used with seven "primary case study clubs" which were visited for approximately seven days each. The methods that are starred were also used with 15 "secondary case study clubs," which were each visited for one or two days.

When the research was completed, a National Review Workshop on the Child Club Study Recommendations was held in Kathmandu. This four-day workshop enabled children and facilitators to hear the research findings and to comment on the recommendations that emerged. Two clubs from each of the SCN and SCUS districts were invited to send two members and two facilitators as representatives. One of the two clubs in each district needed to have participated in the study.

## **Genesis and growth of children's clubs in Nepal**

Archival research and interviews revealed that there have long been children's organisations, most notably the cubs and scouts, which have served the children of Nepal in many important ways since 1952. But the child clubs are different in one very important respect from most children's organisations in all countries: they are managed, in varying degrees, by the children themselves. Not surprisingly, the genesis of what can almost be described as a child club movement coincides with the time when the country was preparing for the national report on the CRC, in 1993 and 1994. SCN, SCUS, Plan International, Action Aid, Child Workers in Nepal and other groups established clubs. By a rough estimate, currently over 30,000 children may be involved in children's clubs nationally. The evaluation reported here limits itself to the clubs supported by SCN and SCUS: whether they are similar to clubs sponsored by other agencies is not known.

The clubs began in different ways but the great majority evolved out of Child-to-Child training programmes in villages. Since the early 1990s, children throughout the SCN-supported districts have been offered training in the Child-to-Child programme, which covers health, hygiene, injury prevention, care for younger children and children's rights. The Child-to-Child programme guidelines suggest that children may want to form a group to continue their work. This has been the case in the formation of some of the clubs. Others have developed independently by diffusion of the concept to neighboring villages. Some have formed in response to a fictional child club that is used in many of the stories told on a child-to-child radio programme. Whereas the child-to-child groups are structured around classes, the child clubs are structured around a forum for meetings and activities.

## **Organisational structure and club membership**

The majority of the child groups have the same structure as adult organisations in their communities. There is an executive board of seven to nine persons, which includes a chairperson, vice-chairperson, secretary, treasurer, and sometimes a joint secretary. This structure was introduced

to children in the training sessions that they were given by SCN and SCUS and repeated in the advice they received from visiting facilitators. It accords with a "leadership" model with its emphasis on direction being provided by a few talented children with little participation by the majority of the children in decision making.

In spite of the preponderance of this structure, some interesting models have evolved in a number of the clubs. Some children have added committees to their structures like the model shown in Figure 1. Each of the coordinators of the committees in this club are also on the Executive Committee. Our general conclusion is that, while children are capable of creativity in establishing their own organisational structures, there is not yet a great deal of variation. This is because children were only introduced to one kind of structure and they have not been encouraged to challenge it.

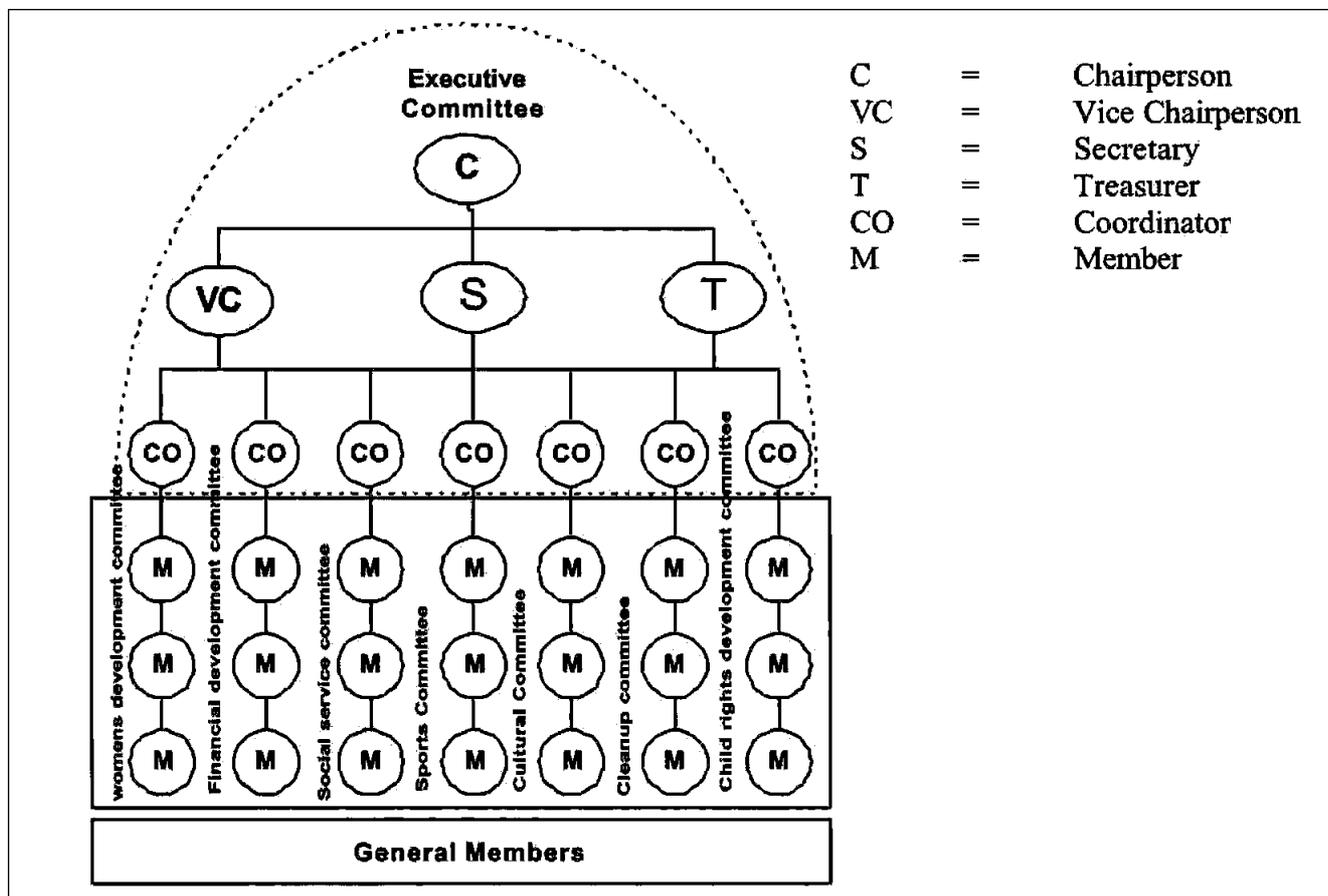
We also sought to understand who attends the clubs, in what capacities, and why some children stay away. The recommended age range for club membership is from 8 to 16. The study showed a modal age of 12, with more children 12 and older than younger than 12. Children over the age of 12 are more highly involved in terms of club meetings and activities, but especially in decision making. Most board members are over 13 years of age, and the selection and planning of activities is also limited

to the older children. Also, with few exceptions, it is the older children who get the opportunity to participate in workshops and training.

In terms of gender, the clubs are remarkably well balanced in comparison to other Nepalese institutions. Nationally, there were a greater number of boys in the clubs than girls, by a margin of 56% to 44% out of a sample of 5005 children. It was also found that slightly more boys than girls attend meetings where decisions are made, whereas similar proportions of boys and girls participate in activities.

The children's mapping of all households in their community with child club members and of all those with no members provides us with our best measure of caste or ethnic exclusion. We conclude that there were no patterns of exclusion based on ethnicity or caste in the child clubs in rural hill areas. In the Terai, there is also generally a representative membership, except for cases where income and caste are correlated. There are many cases of children who are not in the club or who have dropped out who are from low-income and caste groups because they could not pay the monthly club fees. In rural areas as well as urban areas, participation by lower caste and local minority ethnic groups within the executive structure of the clubs is lower. Even when they are a minority, the children of groups that are socially "high ranking" are more highly represented.

Figure 1 Organisational structure of children's club (Adarsha model)



In urban areas, the poorest children and those of minority groups are not well represented because of less information about club opportunities among their families. As a result, two SCN clubs, in Kathmandu and Birgunj, have recently been established to be specifically accessible to children of low-caste populations.

Those who are the most underrepresented are children who experience additional challenges as a result of physical, mental or emotional special needs. None of the 22 case study clubs had any children who were identified as being with special needs. This is unfortunate for these children who are already isolated in their communities, as the clubs offer a unique opportunity to correct this inequality.

In the survey, the reasons that children gave for other children in their community not joining the club were a lack of free time, that their parents did not let them join, and the financial difficulties of families. Our interviews with the non-club-going children and their parents confirmed these reasons, and also revealed that some parents felt that the clubs engaged in relatively frivolous activities like dancing and playing when they felt that their children should either be studying or working to help their family. There was a general feeling that the clubs needed to maintain a high profile of good work for the community if parents were to continue to allow their children to attend.

## Club activities

Meetings form the core of club activities. Most clubs meet on a monthly basis and some bi-monthly. Most of the meeting time, of one to two hours, involves taking attendance, collecting fees, sharing the club's financial situation, going through the agenda and passing decisions. This formal part of the meeting is often followed by an informal part, which involves discussion, song, dance and play. From our large survey we learned that there are a set of activities that almost all clubs engage in: dancing, singing, theatre, development work, play, recreation, sports, and national rallies like Children's Day.

A more revealing survey question was on "activities that you do not get to do anywhere else". We coded the largest category of responses in this chart as "peer relations". Under this category, in order of frequency, are "discussions", "meet and make friends", "share information", "make decisions together" and "work together". To answer a question on activities with such a preponderance of social responses clearly reveals how socially important the clubs are to children. The children also described the clubs as places where they have the chance to participate in celebrations and events such as rallies, contribute to community development, express themselves culturally and artistically, and play.

In the case study clubs, we designed the activity preference method to liberate children to rethink what kinds of activities they would like to do in the clubs. We divided club members into four separate groups of older and younger boys and girls (12 and older or younger than 12). They sat in these groups to identify their favorite current club activity, their favorite out-of-club activity that they would like to do in the club, and a desired club activity that they do not get to do anywhere. They then performed each of these activities as mime skits for everyone to guess. Using the total set of these preferred activities within each club, the four groups of children then voted separately on their preferences. This provides each club with an account of what boys and girls of different ages would like to have as club activity opportunities. The results were also compiled for all of the case study clubs together.



**Children ranking activity preferences using a matrix, Lamjung, Nepal**

## Impacts of the clubs

Although we have no independent measure of the impact of the clubs on children, the qualitative data is overwhelmingly convincing to the authors that the clubs are offering some very new kinds of opportunities for children's personal development. They are learning new skills and gaining knowledge which they cannot learn in other institutions such as school or home. The most commonly heard answer among parents, local facilitators and agency staff regarding the benefits of the club is that the children have gained confidence, especially with strangers.

The children themselves see the opportunity to do things together as a distinctive quality of the clubs. To this we would add that the children are getting real experiences in how to make decisions together, to manage their own organisation and to learn how other organisations function. They are discovering what community development is about by not just doing projects but discussing their plans for these projects. More generally,

they are gaining the habit of managing their relationships in democratic ways from an early age. Some clubs are becoming aware of rights and the violations of rights in the most effective way – by acting on them. When the children voted on the perceived benefits that they gained, girls and boys of both age groups (12 and older, younger than 12) identified clubs as the best place for getting an opportunity to do work, to learn to work with others, to decide what to do and how to do it, to speak publicly with confidence and to learn about child rights.

It is notable that the clubs scored the lowest among different community settings as a place for “getting to laugh”. It could be that the children were responding here in terms of their club meetings rather than the many opportunities most clubs have for games. But our direct observations of those times when children play in the club is that it is usually boys who play and very rarely older girls, for they must go home to work. For them to have the club as a play opportunity, it would probably have to be built into the club time as an event or a competition. Only then might their parents accept such a seemingly frivolous activity.

The samples of parents of club members that we interviewed consistently described the positive impact of the clubs on their children’s studies, self-development, confidence, particularly in speaking, and their learning about environmental conservation. It is notable that the parents did not speak, as the children did, of learning about rights. None of the parents interviewed shared any negative impacts they have seen from the child club on the children, family or community.

Many of the activities the clubs are involved in are designed to benefit the community: such as reforestation, beautifying community areas with flower gardens and cleaning water tanks. Unfortunately our discussions with

general adult members of the communities show that while they see benefits to children, there is a common lack of recognition of such community benefits. Perhaps this is partly because the projects are rarely truly designed by the children. Consequently they may be seen as community projects which the children also get involved in, and hence they do not have any clear identity as child club projects.

The clubs also act as awareness-raising groups on children’s rights and pressure groups on community and environmental issues. Given that the degree of independent identification of projects by children was found to be low, this awareness raising is an area of potential manipulation of children by adults. Examples we have seen where children engage in some action themselves, which in turn leads adults to act, would seem to be much safer for the future of children’s clubs than rallies where children carry out awareness-raising agendas designed by one group of adults for another. For example, when children fixed the water pipes in Jhadewa, Palpa, which had been cut by individuals to intercept water, this was a genuinely positive action by the children themselves, which then embarrassed the adults into action. Even better examples are when children identify and analyse a situation that is central to their own lives. For example, in one community a schoolteacher was spitting in class. The children discussed this in their club and decided to talk to the Principal so that he would stop what they considered to be disgusting behaviour. This may seem like a small issue but it is truly in the spirit intended by the drafters of the CRC when they wrote about children having a voice in matters that concern them.

We have evaluated here only the short-term impacts of the clubs. Their greater effect is likely to be in the long term. For the clubs are fostering ways of thinking and working together which are likely to continue after children leave the clubs. We would need to return in ten years’ time to properly assess their impact. One cannot help but feel that the clubs bring such changes in children’s social relationships and opportunities to act and reflect that they will have far-reaching consequences. While children demonstrate remarkable competencies in collaborative agricultural work with their families, this has not in the past extended to community decision making or to the creation of projects which they themselves initiate. The experience of working with others from an early age on community issues goes well beyond what children have traditionally done in work with their families.



**Organisation charts, Sakine, Nepal**

Families will no doubt gradually come to recognize children as capable of being more fully participating members of their communities. Given the knowledge that they gain on health, environment and childcare, the children will also be able to better their livelihoods and their communities. In addition, their experience in being active citizens will hopefully result in their continued active roles in civil society. Their knowledge and skills in democratic decision making as well as working with individuals of different genders, ethnic groups and socio-economic backgrounds should all contribute to the making of more democratic and inclusive communities.

Our greatest concern is that, although the clubs are remarkably inclusive, there are still some patterns of exclusion. Because those who are excluded are the poorest non-school-going children or disabled children, these children's marginalisation will be furthered by the clubs if a concentrated effort is not made to include them.

## Recommendations

To increase the positive effects of the clubs, numerous recommendations were made and discussed at a National Review Workshop on the Child Club Study Recommendation, held in Kathmandu in 1999. Some of these recommendations came from the children themselves, from the national survey, interviews and discussions. Others were based on interviews with facilitators and programme staff and on the authors' own observations. These recommendations are presented in detail in the report referenced below.

A concluding remark is that one of our goals in conducting this research was to experiment with methods that could be used by the clubs independently to monitor their ongoing functioning. If the clubs are to be self-managing institutions, they need to be self-monitoring ones. Children's voices that are not normally heard, and many issues that are not normally discussed, emerge through this monitoring process. A number of the methods we used were extremely effective in stimulating discussions, which rapidly broadened the awareness of club members. For example, the comparative benefits and the comparative activity preference methods got children of different ages and genders talking for the first time about how well the club served their particular subgroup's needs. Opportunities for reflection through methods of this kind need to become a regular part of the clubs' functioning. These methods are fully described in the video *Mirrors of Ourselves*, which employs video from the Nepal research together with animation. The methods it shows can be modified by groups of young people or group facilitators in any country to improve their democratic functioning.

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## Note

The full report on which this article is based, *The Children's Clubs of Nepal: a democratic experiment*, and the video *Mirrors of Ourselves* can be obtained from either of the following:

Save the Children Alliance, Box 3394, Jawalaknel,  
Kathmandu, Nepal.  
Email: [post@savechildren-norway.org.np](mailto:post@savechildren-norway.org.np)

Children's Environments Research Group,  
Graduate Center of the City University of New York,  
365 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10016-4309, USA  
Internet: [www.cerg1.org](http://www.cerg1.org)

Photographs and diagram extracted from the full report.

## Reference

Rajbhandary, J., Hart, R., and Khatiwada, C. 1999. *The Children's Clubs of Nepal: a democratic experiment*. Save the Children US/Save the Children Norway.

# Evaluating the Zimiseleni researchers' project: participatory research as intervention with "hard-to-reach" boys

**Glynis Clacherty and  
Johanna Kistner**

## Introduction

Twenty-five kilometres outside the city of Johannesburg in South Africa is a large sprawling urban settlement known as Kathorus. Over 2.5 million people live here in apartheid era township housing and mostly unserviced shack settlements. In spite of the fact that the area has been the focus of recent government upgrading, the area is characterised by extreme poverty and violence and is the home to many criminal gangs.

In this setting, the Zimiseleni project involves 12 to 16 year old "hard-to-reach" boys in exploring the reality of children living in a context of poverty, deprivation and criminalisation. The research engaged in by these boys in itself becomes a therapeutic process and creates a model for effective intervention in their lives.

## The Zimiseleni boys

Ekupholeni Mental Health Centre is a non-governmental organisation offering an innovative and comprehensive mental health service in this area. The Zimiseleni Group is composed of 15 boys who have been referred to Ekupholeni because of behavioural problems. When the group started, about half of the boys were in school and the other half out of school. All of them live in deep poverty and all come from difficult and deprived home situations. Most of the boys are involved in crime. This ranges from petty crime to rape and gang involvement, though those involved in gangs are still on the edge of criminal gang activity because of their age. The criminal activities these boys are engaged in have, in most cases, not yet been identified and/or acted on by the law enforcement authorities. Some of the boys are also involved in substance abuse. The boys meet in the Zimiseleni Group after school once a week for two hours, at least three times a year for a day, and once a year for a weekend camp.

The boys represent a microcosm of boys around South Africa who are on the edge of criminal activity and are likely to become fully part of it in a few years' time. The boys themselves acknowledge this fact, sometimes with a sense of powerlessness and inevitability regarding their

journey in life. This is what Sbusiso said while playing a game about the future:

*In 10 years' time I will be a killer and in jail. For boys in Kathorus that is all there is. Crime is all there is. The only university you go to is jail. Boys in Kathorus become gangsters.*

From a psychological point of view, it was evident that all the boys had had severely traumatic experiences in primary relationships with their parents, and as a result, had defended themselves against any kind of meaningful relationships, which in their experience had only let them down. Sbusiso's story illustrates this well:

*I was born in 1982 at Thembisa. I stayed with my mother. I was still young and unable to recognise her although that mutual attraction between a mother and child was there. I didn't know what kind of a person she was. In 1983 I came to Katlehong to stay with my father and his mother who was my granny. I realised that my mother was not showing up to see me grow. I started to ask "who is my mother?". I kept wondering. Other people too asked me who is my mother. In 1985 I was still staying at Hlahatsi wondering and thinking who is my mother. But I was still young and didn't take too much note of it. It never troubled me much because I never saw her. In 1990 I started school and I kept on asking, "who is my mother?". In 1998 I started searching for my mother. My mother who was my granny told me that my other mother stays in Thembisa. Somewhere there. Sometimes when I had money I used to go and search for my mother because my mother's absence hurt me. Even if I find my mother I won't go and stay with her because I don't know what kind of person she is and what she thinks for me. Maybe she thinks evil for me. I do not know her, what kind of person can leave their child like that.*

This defence against meaningful relationships was one of the main reasons why the boys initially resisted any therapeutic intervention.

The group was established by Ekupholeni in the middle of 1999 but struggled for months to achieve a sense of

identity, purpose and cohesiveness. Members drifted in and out of sessions, found it difficult to contain anger and deal with conflict and actively refused to identify themselves with any kind of healing activity. The Ekupholeni team was desperately looking for a way of reaching and assisting these boys to grow through the emotional difficulties that were pushing them into the criminal underworld.

## Research and therapy

The idea of creating a research project that would at the same time develop into a therapeutic intervention was born in early 2000 when the Ekupholeni staff met with Glynis Clacherty, a specialist in participatory research with children. This researcher wanted to explore the realities of boys living on the edge of crime and to use their experiences and perceptions to make child-centred recommendations to policy makers and service providers alike, particularly the National Department of Safety and Security, who were interested in crime prevention programmes.

The researcher, the psychologist and the lay counsellor began to brainstorm creative ways of reaching these very defensive, yet vulnerable and emotionally needy boys, and at the same time undertake research into the lives of boys on the edge of crime. Driven initially by the research need to document the reality of boys on the edge of crime, the decision was made to use a participatory research approach and make the boys researchers into their own lives. The staff at Ekupholeni knew, however, that the boys were too guarded to talk about their own lives, so the decision was made to make the focus of the research 'the lives of boys in Kathorus'. What emerged as the project developed was a powerful model for intervention based on the idea of youth as researchers.

The main research tool used by the boys in the early stages was disposable cameras. These provided a way of catching the boys' interest, in that the technology was inherently interesting.

The boys took photographs that illustrated the "lives of boys in Kathorus". Time was spent labelling the photographs and talking about them: all the time with the boys in the role of "objective" researchers. This discussion was taped and became the qualitative data that the adult researcher used to develop a picture of the reality of boys on the edge of crime and what pushed them into crime. The research was "real" research, and this fact was reinforced when the boys presented their findings at an academic conference of psychologists. In addition, a research report *The Lives, Needs and Experiences of Boys on the Edge of Crime in Kathorus* (Clacherty, 2001) was produced.

Alongside this research process, something else was also happening. The research approach provided a unique

means of overcoming the defence mechanisms the boys had built up because of their experience of relationships in the past. By making the boys researchers into the "lives of boys in Kathorus", they were able to explore and discover their own difficulties and processes from a relatively safe distance. While looking at the realities of other children, the group was exploring their own reality, without unduly threatening the defensive structures that had been built up over the years, which had, in fact, helped the children to survive.

It is important to note that this process had to be done with extreme caution. It would have been destructive to strip away these defences too quickly and leave the boys exposed and vulnerable. For this reason, the process described here took many months and required frequent contact with the boys.

This approach is aligned to the narrative therapy paradigm which recognises the importance of helping children, in particular, to view their problems from a distance, to depersonalise them and find active means of reasserting control over their own behaviours and experiences (Freeman, Epston and Lobovitz, 1991). In this way the child is freed from the label of "problem child". Instead he or she is seen as an active agent who labels, confronts and deals with the problem behaviour.

A model that uses research as an intervention has emerged. It is summed up in Figure 1 which describes the dual role of therapy and research and how they worked together.

The boys began to use the research to provide insights into their lives and the context they lived in. The cameras and role of researcher provided the distance they needed to "see" their own problems and they slowly began to own them.

Thabo's and Sbusiso's stories illustrate how this worked in the boy's lives. Thabo took photographs of boys smoking dagga (marijuana) and sniffing benzene. This is what he said about the photographs:

*Boys from Kathorus smoke dagga, drink liquor, do not respect their mothers and swear at old people on the streets. They go to shebeens (taverns), fight and go home to swear at their parents. Some go to the streets of Jo'burg, smoke glue then get mad. Some smoke dagga because they want to see themselves as clever. Their friends tell them they are stupid when they don't smoke dagga. Then they chase them away. To be accepted they end up smoking dagga too. And they also start seeing themselves as clever. Some smoke pills. Some see themselves as strong after drinking liquor and smoking pills. Sometimes they smoke because they are not treated well at home. Afterwards they go and stay in the veld (bushes). Some no longer stay at their*

homes. Some smoke cigarettes and dagga and they see themselves as old enough as a result. Some get sick and taken to doctors. It is a problem when they start smoking dagga and drinking alcohol. They are used to alcohol already and it is difficult for them to stop.

This one (referring to a photograph of a gangster) has been in jail and wants to influence the young ones. This kind of brother smokes dagga and pills and when we pass they intimidate us. They have toy guns and they chase people at night and take people's money from them.

As we got to know Thabo better, we realised that what he was telling us was his story. The research focus of "boys in Kathorus" allowed him to externalise the problem of substance abuse so he did not feel threatened discussing it in the group. Taking the photographs and talking about them in the group allowed him to explore the issue of substance abuse. As we talked about his photographs and began to analyse in the group what he said about them, he was able to reflect on his own problem and slowly take ownership over it. Over a period of weeks, as we worked with the photographs, Thabo began to say, "Sometimes I smoke dagga, sometimes I smoke pills (mandrax) too". A few weeks later, he was saying, "I want help to give up smoking". He had begun to want to take control of his addiction. His context has made it very difficult for him to act on his wish to escape his addiction, but he has taken the first step of problematising it and asking for help.

They think they are clever. When you smoke dagga you think you are clever. To be clever is to think you are something, you are powerful and stronger than older people. Clevers get involved in crimes as young people.

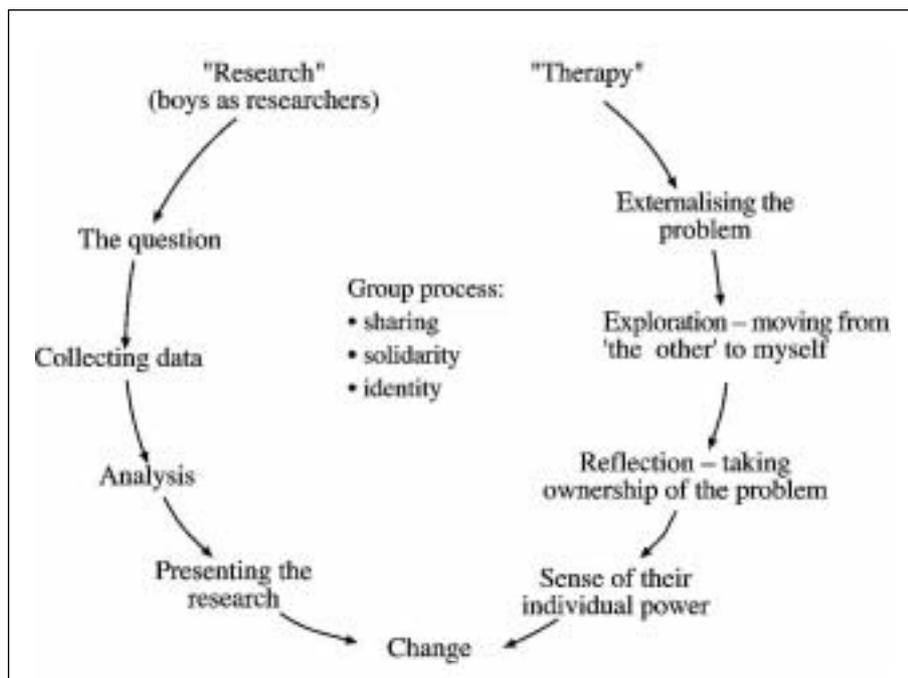
Over a period of about a year, Sbusiso has begun to take control over his situation and to make different choices. He is now very clear about what makes someone a "true clever":

A true clever learns at school and succeeds. It is hard to be a true clever because some people don't like school and they find it hard. It is also hard because bully-brothers pressurise you to join them and when you get into their group you will never be a true clever again. You will never listen when your parents talk to you and you will fail at school even if you were doing well. One way to stay a true clever is to be in a good group.

Sbusiso is the oldest boy in the group and the one most ambivalent about being part of it. He felt a strong pull to belong to the gangsters who the boys call "clevers". He took photographs of the clevers. Talking about these photographs and explaining to the researchers why they were called clevers allowed him to explore why he was attracted to joining them. In analysing his description of them he began to question whether they really were clevers; he began to problematise his reality:

True friends will encourage you to stay a "true clever". The Zimiseleni Researchers group helps me to think about good brothers and true clevers. The cameras gave us a job to do and that also helped – it was not a game to play. These boys tried to take my camera away and I said, "This is not a game, I have a serious job to do".

Figure 1 Research as therapeutic intervention



The Zimiseleni group and the cameras were an opportunity. After school I usually didn't have things to do and now Ekupholeni helps me to see ways I can do it for myself.

In addition to beginning to "own" their problems, another process was taking place. The apparent focus outward gave the boys a chance to build meaningful relationships with each other, the researcher and the therapists in a safe, task-centred context. Once such relationships had been tried and trusted, the boys were more able to use the process to heal their own issues of deprivation, abandonment, abuse and neglect.

The process also allowed the boys to take on a new image of themselves.

They began to see themselves as “researchers” rather than “problem kids”. The significance of this new image is illustrated by the quotations in the following section, which need to be juxtaposed with the things the boys were saying about themselves when the process began. Becoming part of a crime gang was no longer the inevitable path.

The group continue to operate as researchers and they have taken on commissioned research from agencies interested in the lives of boys living in a context of poverty and crime. For example, a local gun control advocacy group, Gun Free South Africa, has commissioned the group to do research on the role of guns in the lives of boys in the Kathorus area. An educational television programme, Soul Buddyz, commissioned them to do research on substance abuse. In both cases, the dual process of therapy and research has been used. As the boys did research about substance abuse and guns, they also dealt with their own addictions and attitudes to guns and their experience of gun violence.

## Evaluating the programme

The National Department of Safety and Security was interested to see if the project could be replicated in other areas. The question they wanted answered by an evaluation was: “Could the intervention model that has emerged be replicated in other areas as a crime prevention project?”. To answer, we would have to assess whether the project has changed the boys’ behaviour on a long-term basis and ultimately prevented them from getting involved in crime.

There are some indicators of success. All the boys are now in school. They all attend the group faithfully every week. The group can cope with conflict and can engage in problem solving. Most of the boys are now staying at home with their families. They have risked creating relationships with Ekupholeni and the team who work with them every week. During the week or whenever they need practical or emotional support, most of the boys come to Ekupholeni to see the team members (whom they have consciously or subconsciously designated as substitute parents). The group has become an alternative family and the Centre an alternative home.

Many of them have begun to articulate life paths for themselves apart from crime. Vezi’s story illustrates the kind of progress made by many of the boys. In the following quotation, Vezi describes his home situation:

*My father does not live with me. I am not living with my mother. She lives with another father and her other children. I am living with her sister. At home they are always fighting each other. Every weekend, Friday to Sunday, fighting all the time. There is a shebeen there*

*and a lot of noise every night. I cannot study because of noise. There is always fighting. I started to drink alcohol. The reason was not for me to think too much. Because every time they were fighting with me.*

In an activity done when the group first started, the boys described how they were seen by other people. Vezi had this to say about himself:

*People see someone who drinks alcohol. Someone who is bad. A person who kills people. Bad boy. A person who robs people. The way people see me will be this way until I die.*

Over time, as Vezi has been involved in the group, he has begun to make changes in his life:

*I asked my father if I can move from that house. He said there is not anything he can do. So I made another change. Now I can go to school and study and I go to sleep in time.*

Vezi and another boy from the group built a shack of their own and they now live alone, supporting themselves with odd jobs and with some help from Vezi’s father. Both attend school and the group regularly. Though the situation is far from ideal, the decision to move from a negative situation was something Vezi would never have had the confidence to do when he first joined the group. Recently, Vezi expressed the fact that when he has left school, he would like to be a doctor.

## The context

All of the boys have made progress, but as a team we continue to question whether we have made a long-term impact on their lives and whether we have helped them to stay away from crime. The behaviour of the boys shows how difficult it is for them to take some of the things they have learned from the group back into their context. Sbusiso recently beat his father badly, Vezi assaulted his aunt, and Thabo brought a cell phone he had stolen to the group. The poverty they live in continues to push them towards crime. The following is a transcript of a discussion held recently by the boys:

- *At Ekupholeni you help us but ...*
- *The main thing is poverty. Perhaps you need to help us get piece jobs.*
- *We need tackies (shoes). The others laugh at us because we have old tackies. The girls laugh at us because we look poor (he points to the holes in his shoes). I want nice shoes and not to look poor. The tsotsis (criminals) started like us, worrying about shoes and they just said “Ag!” and started stealing.*
- *It’s hard sometimes, we just want to have shoes that the others don’t laugh at.*

The transcript shows some shift in attitudes, but the power of their context weighs heavily on the boys. It is hard to stay away from crime in this situation. In addition to the context of poverty, the boys have to cope with their families, which have not changed as they have. Within their families, the boys have been assigned roles as "patient" (or criminal). This is critical in maintaining a balance of relationships and interactions. If a boy was freed from that role, the family would be forced to look at its own dysfunction or choose another child to play the role of "patient". If Vezi were to be seen as an intelligent, talented contributor to the family, his mother's rejection of him would no longer be justified. It is clear how this contextual issue impinges on Vezi's ability to be anything but the "problem child".

Similar issues confront the boys in their relationships with other role players in their micro and meso contexts. As long as the Principal of the local school defines a "criminal" as some one who wears earrings, the boys' enhanced sense of self-confidence, self-expression and freedom is unlikely to be understood or evaluated positively.

This context still exists for these boys, and that context will not change easily, nor can it tolerate their new identities. As a team, we have had to acknowledge this fact by becoming mediators of the context for them.

The Zimiseleni adult team now plays the role of enlightened witness (Miller, 1990). We mediate between their context and the boys' new life scripts. When Vezi was told he would be expelled for having six earrings in his ear, we discussed it in the group, explored the authoritarianism of the principal and contextualised the Principal's response. As a result, Vezi decided it wasn't worth antagonising the Principal and agreed to take the earrings out. We helped him to reflect on the context, while at the same time accepting him unconditionally and not condemning him.

Through the experience of love and support from the adult team as well as the use of critical analysis in the group, the boys are being led to an active and aware confrontation with an environment and context that is, by its very nature, extremely authoritarian and inflexible.

## Conclusion

The entire programme has been underpinned by an ongoing process of reflection. This has been valuable in uncovering the layers of systemic interactions that affect the boys' lives. Given these complexities, it remains extremely difficult to evaluate the programme as a model of intervention and to say with any certainty at this point whether it is succeeding (or failing) in its attempt to keep the boys from crime.

However, what we have learned from the project is that it is impossible to develop a crime intervention programme that does not take into account the complexities of the context. It is not possible to deal with the profound and complex realities of boys on the edge of crime in a short six-week intervention, for example. Two years with ongoing support is a more reasonable commitment, with some form of contact available for the boys to come back to when they face problems.

It is possible to encourage boys to think critically about their own reality and to begin to write an alternative life script for themselves. But if the change is to be sustained, the team of adults working with the boys needs to remain available for a long time. Any attempts to replicate the Zimiseleni Project must adopt a long-term approach. Without ongoing support and context mediation, the chances of long-term crime prevention in the boy's lives are small.

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# “Do not look down on us”: child researchers investigate informal settlements in Zimbabwe

# 7

Chris McIvor

## Background to the project

A 1995 study of Harare’s urban population revealed that some 110,000 people (10 per cent of the city’s total) were living in informal settlements (Auret, 1995). Increasing rural poverty, overcrowded communal farming areas and high youth unemployment continue to fuel a major exodus from country to city. Combined with Harare’s natural population increase, it is now estimated that the capital of Zimbabwe is experiencing a growth rate of some 12 per cent per year.

Many of these people now live in informal settlements, sometimes labelled by the government as “temporary holding camps”. The “temporary” nature of these communities means that both local and national governments are reluctant to invest in social services. Housing, health care, education provision, waste disposal, water and sanitation facilities are among the worst in the country. This in turn has resulted in high mortality rates, low education enrolment, and high levels of crime and prostitution. Referring to informal peri-urban settlements around Harare in 1997, the Minister for Health stated:

*It is as if Porta Farm, Dzivarasekwa and Hatcliffe are dumping grounds, without serious thought given to the consequences of allowing such vast numbers of people in these areas. These communities are the biggest scar on the public health landscape.*

Municipal authorities contend that any substantial investment in informal communities only attracts more residents and is a waste of resources due to their impermanent nature. Nevertheless the fact remains that for thousands of children living in these locations, their rights to survival, development and protection are severely infringed. Concern over the plight of children in these communities prompted Save The Children (U.K.) and a local partner organization (Inter Country People’s Aid) in 1998 to carry out a situation analysis in two informal settlements, Porta Farm and Dzivarasekwa Extension. It was felt that there was insufficient information to ensure that assistance programmes in these communities were adequately targeting people’s real needs. The objective of the study was to answer some of these questions.

On completion of the study, some useful quantitative information had been gathered, relating to subjects such as population numbers, availability of services, and average levels of income. Yet comments relayed from the community by several of the adult researchers prompted us to question both the methodology and the results of the investigation. In particular,



Young boy at Porta Farm

many of the children in focus group discussions had complained that they were not given enough time to explain the gravity of their situation. They were also concerned about the ways in which information was collected, leaving little opportunity to review, analyse and challenge the findings from a group of researchers who were external to the community. They also claimed that, given the objectives of the study, namely to explore the living conditions of young people in informal urban settlements, their voices were marginalised and that adults who spoke on their behalf were often ignorant about their real situation, perceptions and wishes.

## A new research project

These criticisms prompted Save The Children to devise a more extensive and participatory project, where the principal researchers would be children themselves from informal settlements. It was felt that this kind of research would not only yield more comprehensive and qualitative information for both programming and advocacy purposes, but that the process itself would also be important in terms of encouraging children to better analyse and understand their own situation.

The research team was set up in August 1998, drawing children from both Porta Farm and Dzivarasekwa settlements. Some 38 children, an equal mix of boys and girls, were selected for a preparatory workshop through the mediation of two schools in the above communities.

While it was felt important that the child researchers should have reasonable levels of literacy in order to be able to record their findings, the Save the Children project coordinators and the selected children were clear that this stipulation should not mean the exclusion of out-of-school and other disadvantaged youths. These were included in the target list of key informants.

The project was received by the children in these locations with considerable enthusiasm. There was more demand from children to be included in the research exercise than the number of places available. One of the interesting features about the preparatory workshop was the way in which children approached discussions about the proposed research tools. They eagerly contributed their ideas and suggestions as to how these could be modified to more adequately meet the conditions in the community, and what would be more acceptable and stimulating for their peers.

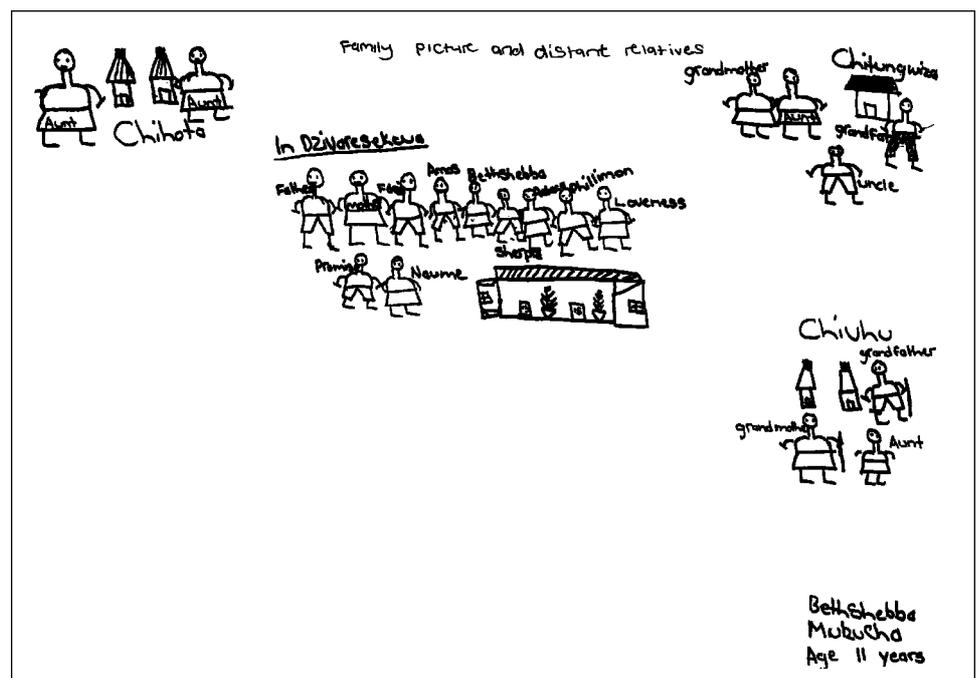
This was evident, for example, in a stone piling exercise used by the researchers with other children to establish priority problems they faced in their communities. Instead of heaping more stones on a big problem (the method proposed by the adult trainers), they felt that different sizes of stone were more accurate in reflecting the gravity of different issues. The adaptation of methods throughout the project provided us with a clear indication that the children saw the research not as a slavish replication of certain tools, but a set of procedures to be utilised, changed and adapted as circumstances dictated. The perception of participatory methods as a means to solicit qualitative, useful information was highlighted by one 17 year old researcher, who claimed:

*Through this project I learnt how to handle and work with children. I also learnt how to get along with them. I got to know the various research techniques, for example, the use of dramas and plays to draw out issues and to loosen people up during the interviews. These techniques made the research process easier for us. The plays were on social and community issues. They were performed by children. Sometimes we had to talk about our own problems as a way of getting people to speak to us.*

As the project progressed, the original team of 38 children reduced to a core group of 10 researchers in Dzivarasekwa and 15 in Porta Farm. The others dropped out for a variety of reasons, often to do with heavy domestic chores and their need to generate family income, which compromised the amount of time they could devote to the project. Arising from the children's observations, the adult facilitators also adopted a flexible timetable to accommodate other commitments. This included exams during the research period, the need to deal with initial community scepticism, further training arising from observations of test interviews, and a family workload that was in excess of what we had envisaged at the start of the project for many of the children selected for the research.

The actual study carried out by the children took place over a four-month period from September to December 1998. Combined with the preparatory work beforehand, the subsequent processing and revision of information, the collation of all data, and the editing, design and layout of the final publication, the entire process lasted over a year. The final result was an 80-page book entitled *Do Not Look Down On Us*, which was launched in Zimbabwe in mid-1999 (Chinyenze-Daniel, Mclvor & Honeyman, 1999). This document has been used: (1) to help create a network of organisations working in informal settlements; (2) for purposes of identifying programmes of assistance based on problems identified by children in the research; (3) as an advocacy tool to raise

**Figure 1 This picture shows the extended family of one child in Dzivarasekwa Extension, and the distances from the immediate family to the nearest relatives. Many children in informal settlements complain that they lose contact with their relatives, because their extended family members live in rural areas and their poverty means that they cannot visit them.**



the profile of this community within government, local government and the wider public; and (4) as a mechanism for promoting the realisation that children can effectively participate in research and project implementation if given adult permission, training and support to do so.

## Obstacles and difficulties

Originally the coordinators envisaged that the research to be carried out by children would probably require one month to complete. In the end it took four times as long. This arose from the need to negotiate a variety of constraints and obstacles that had not been foreseen prior to implementation.

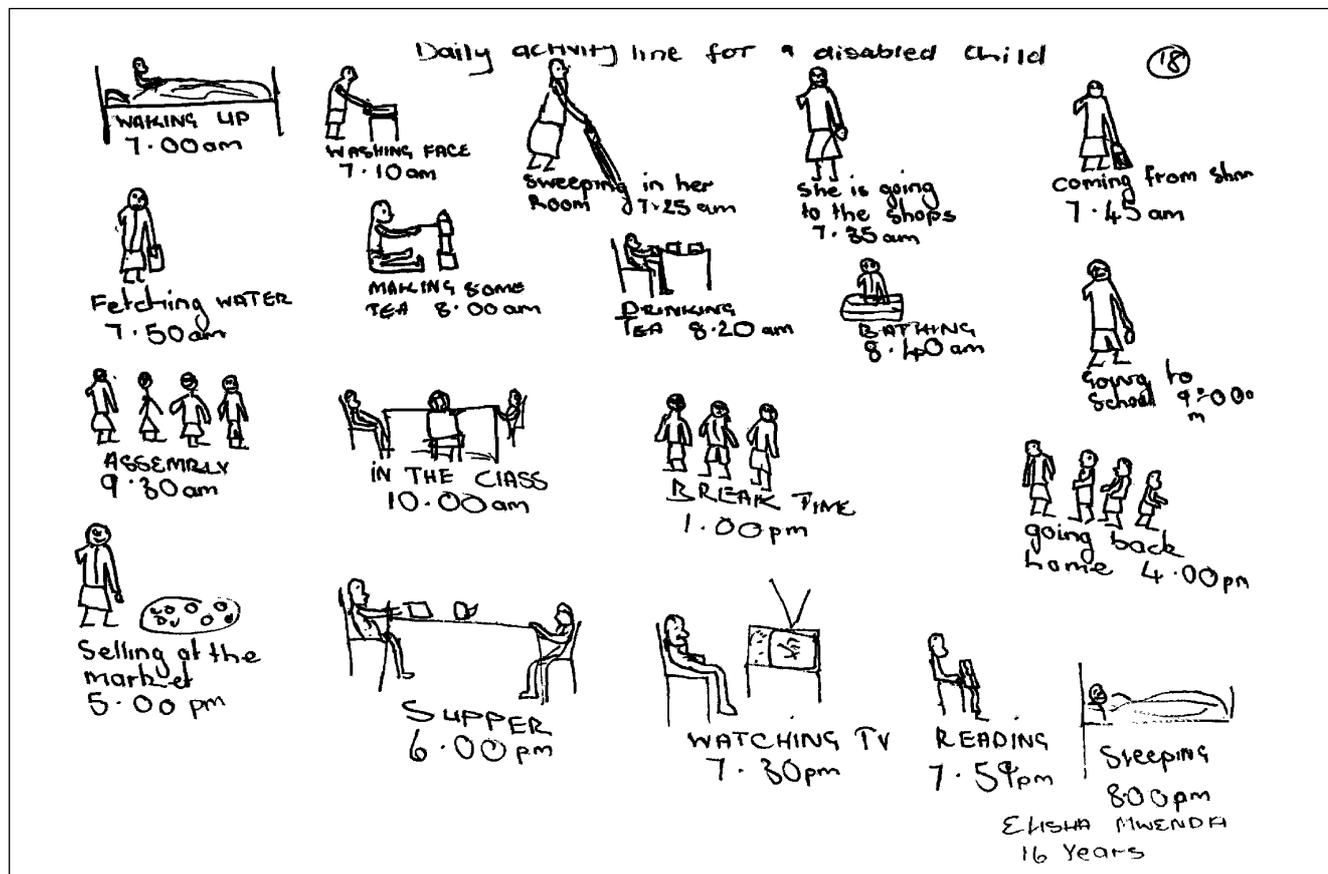
There was considerable adult suspicion as to the nature of the research and why children were being asked to conduct it. Several parents, for example, objected to the involvement of their children, citing domestic and other chores as key activities that could only be compromised at the cost of the family's survival. The question then arose of payment for the researchers, as compensation for lost time, but after discussion it was felt that this might affect the quality of the research and lead to resentment among other children excluded from the process. In the end the project coordinators arrived at an acceptable timetable with parents and children, although this meant that the original deadline had to be delayed by several months.

Several parents and other adults in the community were also sceptical about the rationale for the research in the first place. They pointed out that other organisations in the past had carried out studies in informal settlements, but they had seen very little tangible assistance as a result. Members of the two communities had been particularly perturbed by what they saw as a culture of discrimination in the local media, whereby they were referred to as "squatters" and accused of criminal activities and prostitution. They wondered whether the project with children would end up prying into their private lives and fuel further prejudice against them.

To meet these objections the coordinators of the project, members of the development committees and the children themselves, convened several public meetings where they sought to explain that the first step in devising appropriate and long-term solutions to the problems in informal settlements was to understand the true nature of the difficulties that people face. They pointed out that they all had experience of projects which had failed because of limited and flawed consultation with community residents. From an initial situation of some community hostility, the child researchers noted a definite change as their research progressed. One 16 year old wrote:

*We were given research to do, which involved us asking groups of people questions relating to their*

Figure 2 Daily activity line for a disabled child, drawn by one of the child researchers at Porta Farm



situation. We found these groups at soccer matches and at the market place. Through the research, people were expected to identify the problems they are facing and to find solutions to them. Initially people looked down on us, forcing some researchers to withdraw. But after a while many of them appreciated the whole idea and provided us with the information we needed.

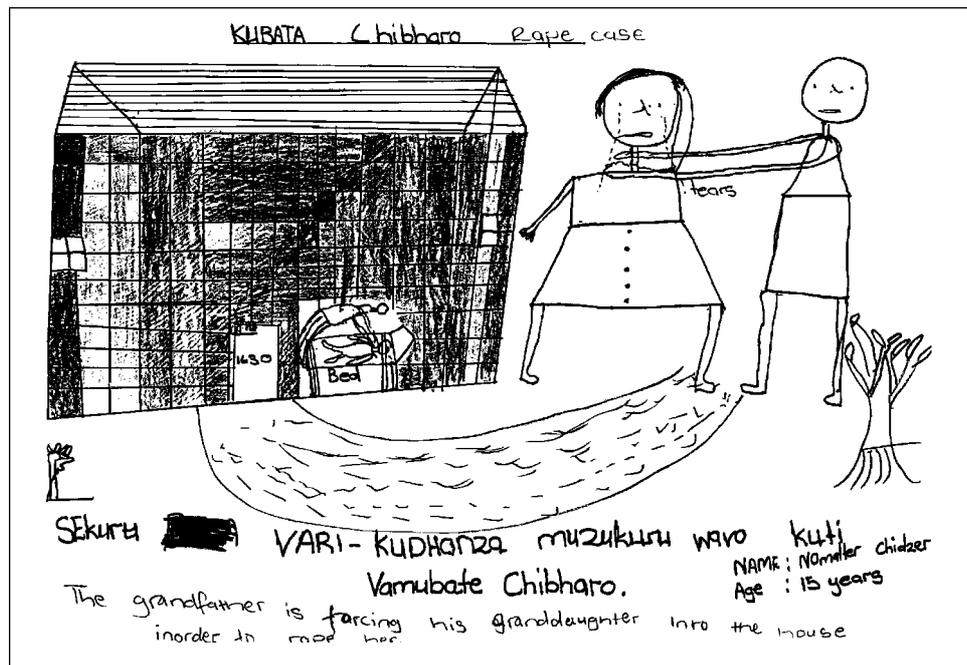
Another problem that arose during the project was the issue of confidentiality and how the researchers should deal with extremely sensitive information. The process of engaging in discussions with children, many of whom had never had the opportunity to confide in anyone else, led to several instances where physical and sexual abuse was strongly indicated. One youth researcher came up with the following information, during a focus group discussion with other children:

*We are physically and mentally abused by our stepmothers. They always accuse us of something we have not done. If anything is missing at home, we are always blamed. Some of us girls are given men, whom we do not want. If the men we are given become broke, our stepmothers usually look for another man with money. Some children are abused by stepfathers, while their mothers are away.*

During the orientation process, and on subsequent supervisory visits when the researchers indicated a high percentage of cases of abuse in the community, the children were given guidelines on the issue of confidentiality. If information were divulged to them of this nature it was not to be discussed with other members of the group or in a public forum but was to be communicated to the adult coordinators, who would then decide the most appropriate response. It was pointed out that if such information became public, and in the absence of a clearly defined counselling, referral and legal service, a child who reports abuse could be placed in an even worse situation.

As a result of information gathered during the course of the project, the adult coordinators strengthened ties with the appropriate child welfare and protection department of the Ministry of Social Welfare. Yet it needs to be stated

**Figure 3** Several children highlighted the fact that sexual abuse of minors, especially by family members or friends, was quite common. This drawing from Porta Farm was done by one child respondent, who had heard of such an event in her community.



that for children in such a situation, living in communities of this nature, an absence of resources, inadequate staff, and a shortage of referral locations and safe houses effectively mean that very little support is available to them for protection and remedy against abusive situations. A major recommendation arising from the research is to improve the availability and quality of child protection services in informal settlements, as well as to conduct a campaign within these locations to look at community responses to this particular problem.

### Conclusion and lessons learned

Many children in Zimbabwe, especially those in marginalised urban and rural areas, are given responsibility for a whole range of activities within their communities. In informal settlements, for example, children indicated that they are often responsible for water and fuel wood collection, agricultural work, family income generating activities, disposal of garbage, child rearing, domestic chores and housing construction. No matter whether we think these activities are appropriate or not for children, the fact is that they are part of young people's lives in many parts of the world. If we wish to assist them, therefore, it makes no sense to exclude them from discussions as to how best this might be done.

Yet involving children in a meaningful debate, as opposed to much of the tokenistic consultation that currently takes place, is a process which is new for many organisations. Through the course of this research in informal settlements, we learned many lessons that have helped to

inform our subsequent interaction with children in other projects in Zimbabwe. These lessons were derived both from children's comments on the research methodology and process, as well as feedback and observations from the programme's adult coordinators and project managers. Some of the principal issues we had to deal with included the following:

- Several of the youth researchers indicated that interacting with younger children proved difficult. In group discussions younger children were often silent, intimidated by the presence of their older peers. Sometimes they seemed to find the wording of questions too complex and intimidating. In the end the researchers had to "learn the language" of younger children, and devise methods to encourage them to communicate. This resulted in the considerable use of visual documentation. Some of the more salient findings of the project were communicated through drawings by younger children, especially when they were presenting situations of considerable concern and personal difficulty.
- The research findings clearly indicated that life for many children in informal settlements is harsh and difficult, and they face a considerable range of responsibilities we normally associate with adulthood. If we expect them to trade these often hard routines in order to provide us with information, the research process itself has to have an element of fun and enjoyment. Methodologies that are stimulating, interactive, and punctuated with games are more likely to attract large groups of child respondents and promote a meaningful discussion. As children in informal settlements strongly indicated, their rights to recreation are too often infringed. Any attempt to involve them either in research or project implementation needs to recognize this fact and incorporate this dimension as part of any activities.
- Many of the children pointed out that they had never been consulted before. For them the project provided an opportunity to speak out, to raise their concerns in a way that school and family had often denied them. Yet this raises challenges for any project that offers children such an opportunity. It awakens a capacity and need that subsequently requires other outlets. At the end of the project many of the youth researchers asked us: "What next? What more do you have for us to do?". Partly because of our commitment to an educational programme in these communities, we were able to channel this enthusiasm and energy into other activities. Some of the children, for example, formed a drama group in their school, and with some support from Save the Children have performed in other informal settlements around Harare. The lesson here is that participatory research with children creates a new

set of skills and expectations that demand expression. Organisations that start this process have an obligation to see it continue.

- As mentioned elsewhere, the adult coordinators originally assumed that children had sufficient time after school to carry out the research. Any project with children in poorer communities, however, needs to realise that children face major constraints and will have to devise mechanisms to deal with those. Inability to appreciate the workload of children will give rise to conflict. Broken deadlines, failure to complete set tasks in time were initially blamed on the "laziness" of the researchers or their inability to carry out assignments. It was only during subsequent discussions that the full range of children's commitments to economic survival were appreciated.
- Perhaps one of the most rewarding aspects of the project, and one not entirely envisaged at the start, was the development within the researchers of a level of confidence and self-esteem that much of their previous experience had denied them. According to the children, the research process was an enriching experience for them. It allowed them to develop a range of skills in writing, drawing, analysing, communicating and listening. But more importantly, it led to a growth of confidence and self-esteem that several parents and teachers commented upon. In a country where child rights has often been seen as an invitation to unruly behaviour, the growth in responsibility and self-confidence that can come to children through participation is invaluable in challenging sceptical parental attitudes. As one of the researchers from Porta Farm wrote:

*I learned about the research process and about the ways in which research is conducted. We moved around Porta Farm with a questionnaire and asked people to respond to each question. Although some people were difficult at first, once they found out about the project they responded very well. This was an enriching experience for me, which made me realise that there is a lot that I as an individual can do.*

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# Putting child rights and participatory monitoring and evaluation with children into practice: some examples in Indonesia, Nepal, South Africa and the U.K.

**Robert Nurick and  
Vicky Johnson**

## Introduction

This paper presents a range of work that we are doing in the field of children's rights and participation. It is based on the authors' involvement in three initiatives. The first of these is PLAN International Indonesia's training and capacity strengthening for its field staff to promote a fundamental shift towards addressing child rights in its programmes and projects. The second is a DFID<sup>1</sup> Innovations Fund research project which is looking at the ways in which the impacts of development projects on children are addressed in monitoring and evaluation systems, with pilot projects in Nepal and South Africa. The third is a participatory monitoring and evaluation of the Save the Children U.K. "Saying Power Scheme". This is a U.K.-wide scheme that helps young people from socially excluded areas to run projects with groups of their peers.

We begin by differentiating a "rights-based" approach to development from a "needs-based" approach. We then draw on our experience in the field to illustrate these principles in action. PLAN Indonesia provides an example of one strategy for ensuring that children's rights are addressed in practice, through its Child-Centred Community Development Approach (CCDA). The DFID research project and the participatory monitoring and evaluation of the Saying Power Scheme illustrate how agencies are assessing progress towards realising children's rights in their programmes. In the conclusion of the article, we highlight future challenges for promoting a rights-based approach in the work of development agencies.

## How do we put children's rights into practice?

A rights-based approach recognises that children should be active participants in development processes that affect their lives, rather than passive recipients of development interventions conceived and implemented by development agencies. Four principles underpin this rights-based approach to development: universality, indivisibility, inalienability and non-discrimination (see Box 1).

<sup>1</sup> DFID, the Department for International Development, is the British government agency for development assistance.

### Box 1 Principles of a rights-based approach to development

- Universality: all people are entitled to their rights
- Indivisibility: individuals are entitled to all rights laid out in UN conventions and charters – governments cannot assign some rights to individuals and not others
- Inalienability: people are born with their rights – rights are not given to people (and cannot be taken away)
- Non-discrimination: individuals must not be discriminated against because of race, colour, ethnicity, caste, political beliefs, gender, sexual orientation or age

While these principles relate to all people – children as well as adults – the UN has recognised that children are especially vulnerable to not having their human rights respected. Consequently, the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC) was drawn up to ensure that children's rights are realised. In the framework of the CRC, work by international development agencies that was previously conceived as a response to children's needs is now articulated as a response to rights. As such, it is now subject to the four principles outlined above, as well as other principles necessary for implementation (see Box 2).

### Box 2 Elements of a rights-based approach for agencies working with children

- Rights are for all children.
- Children are entitled to all their rights as laid out in the Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- Children are born with these rights.
- Children cannot be discriminated against because of race, creed, colour, gender or any other reason.
- Children's participation is central to translating rights into practice.
- Realising children's rights requires the participation of adults as well as children.

A rights-based approach means ensuring the inclusion and participation of children in identifying and planning for the practical needs of development, protection and survival.

In order to implement these ideas, an approach that has been developed by PLAN International Indonesia has been to adapt its planning and project cycle to ensure that it becomes child-centred. This means ensuring that in the communities where PLAN works, children (girls and boys) and adults (men and women) are involved in all phases of

the planning cycle from preparation to needs assessment, to project identification, planning and implementation, to monitoring and evaluation. This approach is known in the PLAN Asia Region as the Child-Centred Community Development Approach (CCDA). The diagram in Figure 1 illustrates this child-focused approach.

Throughout the CCCDA there should be a process of immersion and reflection, whereby field staff are continually re-appraising their assumptions, findings and strategies. It also requires that field staff build up relationships of trust with the members of the communities where they work and come to understand the realities of their lives.

PLAN field staff employ a wide range of participatory methods to engage with children and adults at each stage of the CCCDA. Resource and social mapping, seasonal calendars and wealth ranking have been particularly effective methods for engaging with children and young people for the preparation and needs assessment stages of the cycle. Network diagrams have also been used to help children analyse underlying causes of problems and issues that they have identified, and to explore in detail the impacts of issues on their lives. Local materials are often appropriate media, particularly for those who are not familiar with pens, post-its or flipchart paper. Often the use of expensive and novel media

disturbs the process, distracting children from the discussion.

An important aspect of the process is the feedback and sharing of information between different groups of children and adults. During the initial phases of the cycle implemented in South Sulawesi, where PLAN has worked for many years, community representatives found that this new approach had changed their lives and their relationship with PLAN Indonesia. Comments on this process by members of the community and by PLAN staff include:

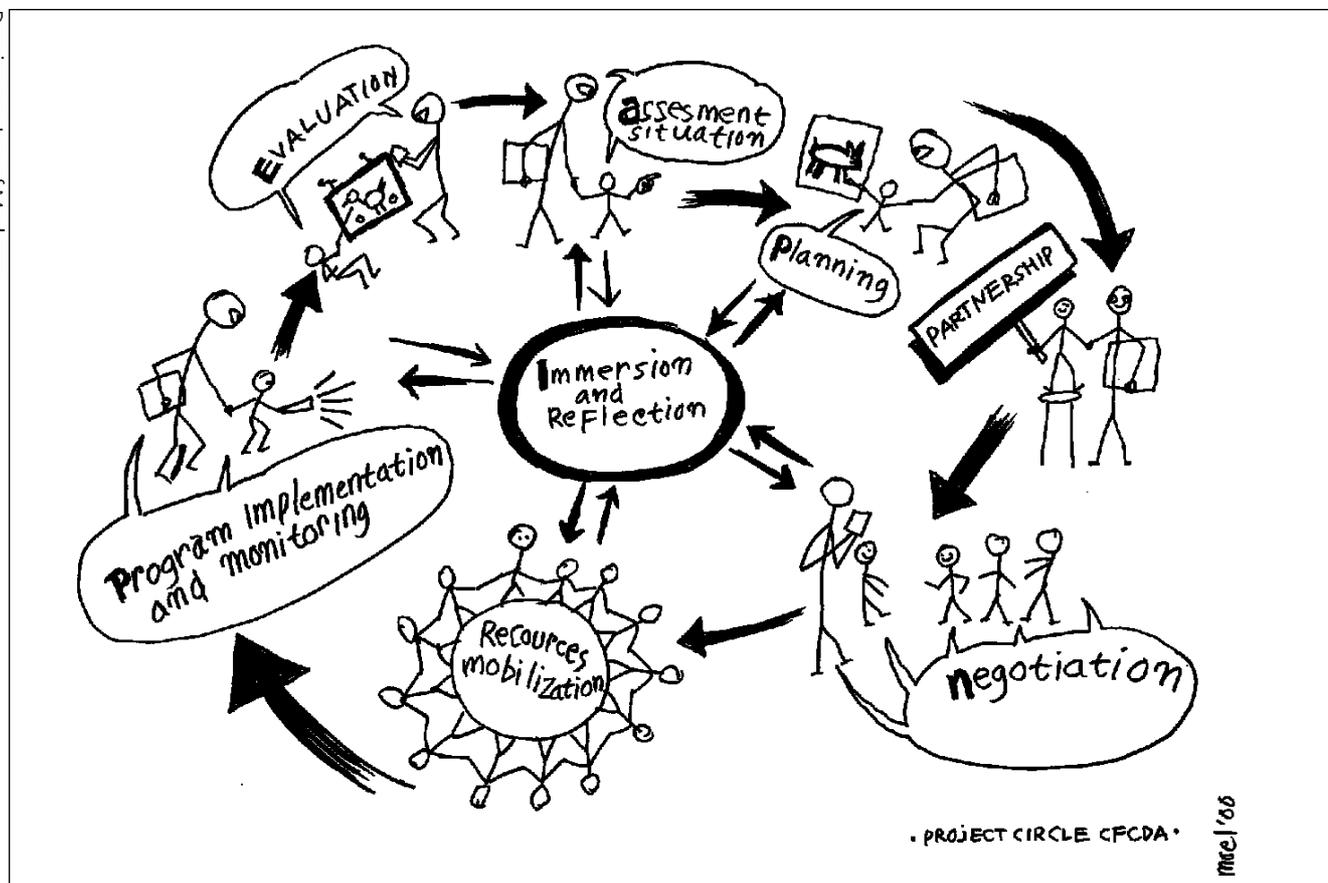
*It is like light in our village. We can solve our problems together. – Old man from the community*

*We don't expect PLAN assistance, but how to solve our own problems. I joined the process so I know what happened in our village. – Group of community women*

*I want to highlight that during the six-day visit, the village realised their own potential ... "who will change if not ourselves". It is not a question of money, but how to find their own way. They know many things but because they didn't realise their own potential, they are dependent on others. We didn't come to give, but to facilitate them to become aware. – PLAN staff member*

Figure 1 Child-centred project and planning cycle in PLAN Indonesia

Drawing courtesy of Moeliono





**Children in Indonesia discussing their cause-effect flow diagram, presented as a tree made with local materials. The trunk represents the issue, the roots the causes and the branches the effects.**



**The cause-effect tree drawn by children in Indonesia**

The CCCDA process in Surabaya, eastern Java has already yielded tangible benefits for children. During discussions with children it was revealed that they were unable to attend non-formal education classes because of competing demands on their time, as parents require their children to collect water. Staff facilitated negotiations between children and parents, with the result that parents no longer insist that children collect water when classes are being held.

The CCCDA process has also had beneficial impacts on girl street children in Surabaya. Parents and guardians send the girls onto the streets to beg for money. The adults use the money for purchasing electronic equipment such as TVs and VCRs rather than spending the money on food or school fees for the girls, which is what the girls themselves had identified they needed. Some girls wanted to speak directly to adults about wanting to stop collecting money if it was not spent on food or education for them. For others, PLAN staff and a partner organisation negotiated between girls and their parents or guardians.

In Makassar, South Sulawesi, PLAN staff have reoriented their programme of support to ensure that children from the very poorest families are given priority. In the past, PLAN field staff would negotiate with adults as to which families and children would benefit. Now, wealth ranking is conducted with children in the communities and children from the lowest wealth groups are identified.

PLAN staff and a partner organisation have facilitated child journalists' writing about corruption in schools, with teachers illegally demanding additional fees from children. These articles were published in the local paper in

Makassar. As a result, the issue was raised within the Provincial Education and Cultural Department. Consequently, the practice has stopped.

In other programme units in Jeneponto, South Sulawesi, and Kupang in West Timor, PLAN field staff have facilitated meetings between adults and children. Upon hearing children's unhappiness at the way parents treat them, specifically in terms of beatings and little expression of love, mothers expressed shock and remorse, stating that they were not aware of the impact of their behaviour on their children. PLAN staff have noticed a significant change in attitudes in adults, who are now prepared to listen to children in meetings and take their views seriously, whereas in the past children never interacted with adults in this way.

So far these initial benefits have been assessed by staff in the programme, who are now in the process of working with girls, boys, men and women in communities to develop participatory monitoring systems to look at the longer term implications of these changes in PLAN's work. In this way, positive and negative outcomes can be learned from and programme implementation can be continually refined to improve the lives of girls and boys.

## **How do we know the progress we are making in realising children's rights?**

Participatory monitoring and evaluation (PM&E) is an essential component of our work to realise children's and young people's rights. Without effective monitoring and evaluation systems, we have no way of mapping our progress towards achieving the goal of securing rights for children, and importantly, without it we have no

mechanism for informing our future work. Two pieces of ongoing work that are addressing PM&E within the context of children's rights are DFID-funded research looking at the extent to which impacts on children are addressed within development projects in South Africa and Nepal, and the Saying Power Scheme supporting the inclusion of young people from marginal and excluded groups in the U.K.

## The use of organisational mapping and case studies

The aim of the first project is to review strategies to better target development policy and practice to meet the different needs of children and adults within communities. Through detailed case studies and organisational mapping (or institutional analysis) in South Africa and Nepal, it seeks to establish how the monitoring and evaluation of development initiatives in different sectors can be carried out in a more child-sensitive way. In this way, we can start to see how broader development interventions – including water, forestry, agriculture, infrastructure, health and education programmes – affect the lives of girls and boys. This learning needs to feed back into further planning and implementation programmes to ensure that children's lives are improved and that they are not inadvertently harmed by well-intentioned development initiatives.

The idea of the organisational mapping is to draw out lessons about M&E from existing initiatives in organisations working in a range of different sectors and settings. Aspects examined include: understanding M&E as part of a rights based approach; documenting strategies that have and have not been successful in looking at issues of quality and impact in M&E; and understanding how M&E systems can be more sensitive to issues of age and gender. The institutional analysis carried out in the mapping also helps to show where in the project cycle and organisational systems child-sensitive procedures could be incorporated, rather than making working with children yet another add-on, or regarding this as a 'new' sector of work.

The mapping process in South Africa involved a range of community-based organisations (CBOs), national and international non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and networks, government departments and commissions. Detailed case studies have been included to show *how* to build capacity, measure impact in different sectors and give guidance on methods and approaches. In Nepal, for example, a case study with the Himalayan Community Development Forum (HICODEF) has documented why it is important to monitor the impact on children's lives of development projects and how this can be done in the future. In collaboration with the authors, HICODEF staff have used participatory approaches with different stakeholders in three villages in the Nawalparassi area in the Mahabarat Mountains to evaluate their programmes.



Photo by courtesy of Subir

### Boy in Nepal using pairwise ranking to prioritise issues

Men, women, girls and boys of different castes and ethnicities, teachers and local government representatives took part. The programmes have included initiatives in education, health, water, sanitation, road building, women's and children's groups, savings and credit schemes, and environmental protection. Analysis has been carried out to look at some of the constraints to conducting child-sensitive evaluation within the community and at the institutional level, and how to overcome these barriers. This analysis has established ways in which programmes need to be modified to take fuller account of children's rights; and in the process, it has led to a fuller understanding of children's rights among HICODEF staff and community members by discussing what rights mean to them in practice and how this fits into the articles of the CRC.

Some of the findings that came out of the work with children surprised staff. For example, the favourite programmes for girls and boys in terms of impact on their lives were the water tap and forestry programmes, as these saved the children time in their daily chores of collecting fodder and water, which can sometimes take hours a day in the hilly areas of Nawalparassi. Likewise, the road programme saved labour in carrying goods to the villages. As a result, more children were able to go to school. Some of the programmes, however, took children out of school: for example, livestock programmes where children were expected to herd the animals.

The impact assessment showed that discrimination between girls and boys and between children of different ethnicities and castes was decreasing among the children through discussions, joint action and magazines produced in the children's clubs. However, this was slow to change among the adults, and especially some of the men who were confrontational about the changing roles of children.

When the roles of children in the projects were analysed, possibilities for changes in the project cycle were highlighted when children showed how they

“participated” in the hard labour of water tap construction, but not in any of the planning or decision-making. One tap for drinking water constructed at a school was too high for the children to reach! These findings are feeding into HICODEF’s ongoing planning and development of programmes and monitoring systems.

Many participatory evaluation methods were tried and tested in the field by the team. These include evaluation matrices, ranking, mapping, time-trends and flow diagrams, and looking at the participation of different stakeholders at different stages of a project cycle. More details of these approaches are given in the project document.<sup>2</sup>

Photo by Vicky Johnson



**Children in Nepal using drawing to explore issues around the different types of work they do**

### Young people’s participation in evaluation

The M&E of the Saying Power Scheme in the U.K. involves developing indicators for assessing projects with young people, as well as with the staff of Save the Children and partner organisations. Rather than occurring at the end of the three-year programme, the M&E process has run parallel to the projects over the lifetime of the scheme. Thus, programme managers and coordinators have been able to learn from experience and modify their approaches accordingly.

Participatory methods have played a central role in facilitating processes with different actors. With young people, confidence lines and the “H” method (see Box 3), and matrix scoring of indicators that they have defined for themselves have been effective methods in highlighting project strengths and weaknesses, steps required to improve the project scheme, and key achievements. Through their inclusion in the evaluation process, young people have not only identified their own assessment indicators, but acquired a greater sense of project ownership.

<sup>2</sup> These will be available on request from the authors from November 2001.

### Box 3 Confidence lines and the “H” method

**Confidence lines** show in a visual manner how a person’s self-confidence has changed over time (in this case over the course of the project). The participant draws the axes of a graph with the horizontal line representing time, and the vertical axis representing confidence. She then draws her “confidence line”. Where the line dips or peaks, she is asked to indicate what specific event caused these changes. The confidence line provides the basis for discussion with the facilitator.

**The “H” method** can be used as an evaluation and planning tool. Participants are asked to think about a question, e.g. “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 then note down the steps that could be taken to address the barriers preventing them from achieving their objectives. This method works well with groups of 10–20 people. For a full description of the “H” method and how it can be used, see Article 15 by Susan Guy and Andrew Inglis in *PLA Notes 34*, February 1999.



Photo by Vicky Johnson

**Young people in the Saying Power Scheme reporting back on a group exercise to assess whether project activities had been met, using the “H” method.**

### Challenges

In the preceding projects, an overriding concern that has been expressed in terms of achieving child-sensitive monitoring of development projects has been the capacity of organisation staff. In Indonesia, the Country Office of PLAN has involved staff and partners in training to work in more participatory ways with men, women, girls and boys in communities. They have also instituted a process for training trainers in order to ensure that the pilot initiative described above will be ongoing and will result in a fundamental shift in PLAN’s work. In South Africa and Nepal, best practice examples have been drawn out at local, national and international levels; and in the process, many lessons have been learned about the need to build staff capacity and confidence in using more participatory approaches, and in balancing quantitative data with more



**Young people in the U.K. scoring their own defined indicators relating to the impacts of the Saying Power Scheme on their personal development**

qualitative information about the quality and delivery of services and the longer term implications of community work.

Common to all of the case studies that have been reviewed here is that they challenge prevailing attitudes within organisations by introducing ideas about the inclusion of children, youth and community adults in strategic decisions. Focusing on the local community level and working with field staff alone will not ensure that children’s rights are realised. Organisations working with children also need to raise awareness and change attitudes within management structures.

Save the Children U.K. has been working to address this issue through research that aims to engage with children, young people and staff to determine how young people can participate in organisational decisions in non-tokenistic ways. Within PLAN Indonesia, changes in management processes at the Country Office level have already started as a result of findings and issues generated by the CCCDA. In South Africa and Nepal, examples of best practices show how addressing child rights has to have an international, national and local policy framework, as well as a foundation in understanding the everyday realities of boys’ and girls’ lives. New partnerships and ways of working will be required to link these levels of understanding together to improve the lives of children in different situations and in different country contexts.

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# Promoting child-centred community development through participatory evaluation

Lalitha Iyer

## Introduction

This paper reflects on issues related to participatory evaluation in the context of child-centred community development (see Box 1). It raises a number of questions that community development agencies need to consider in seeking to implement participatory programmes:

- At what stage should the facilitating agency, community participants and other stakeholders get involved in the evaluation?
- How can participatory evaluations enhance choices for children?
- What considerations should guide the evaluation?
- And how can boys and girls in different age groups be prepared to become effective partners in this process?

In sharing reflections related to these questions, this article draws upon the author's experience as technical manager for PLAN International for five and a half years. The focus of the work was mainstreaming the participation of boys and girls in different age groups into development processes.

Evaluation involves the assessment of the overall design of a programme: its methods, technology, resources, human relationships, relationships with institutions, and physical and qualitative results. Traditionally, evaluation has been seen as a compliance exercise that is taken up at the end of a programme, mainly to measure output and the effective utilisation of funds. Project participants and other stakeholders in the community have little to say in terms of the design of the evaluation or the use of results. The introduction of the principle of "community ownership" in the last decade has brought a fundamental shift that requires that all stakeholders have opportunities to participate in all stages of programming, including evaluation. The inclusion of boys and girls adds another dimension. Adopting this participatory approach to community development, however, raises several challenges.

### Box 1 What is child-centred community development?

To make child and youth participation meaningful to young people themselves and to their communities, child centredness places an emphasis on:

- Enhancing adult awareness and sensitivity about children's rights, needs, priorities and potential, as differentiated by age and gender.
- Facilitating opportunities for children and youth to participate with their families and communities in decisions that affect their lives, consistent with their age and ability.
- Equipping boys and girls with skills and competencies to enable them to participate effectively.

## Basic considerations to guide evaluation

***Participatory monitoring and evaluation is not a simple shift from analysing the effects of a programme from a donor's perspective to taking the perspective of the community***

In addition to measuring results, it should be an empowering experience that leads a community to feel greater ownership and commitment to the project. When it is part of a child-centred approach, it should enhance choices for children by measuring results in terms of long-term objectives set by the community, based on their own vision for their children. This vision should include the priorities of boys and girls in different age groups. Towards this end, it is fundamentally important for children and other stakeholders to understand participatory processes and issues.

While there are no prescribed ways to divide groups by age and gender, usually three or four groups are formed for boys and girls from 6 to 18 years of age. These groups vary depending on the issue and local cultural practices. For example, where adolescent boys and girls are segregated, separate groups are most effective. While all age groups can participate in a project to protect the natural environment, advocacy aspects may be best taken up by adolescent boys and girls, due to their practical involvement in daily life and ability to grasp and articulate the issues.

### **Box 2 Missed opportunities**

In Zimbabwe, a project to provide safe drinking water by harvesting rainwater was implemented by community groups. The project was facilitated by an external agency, based on a study that it initiated to reduce drinking water problems. The project objectives were to reduce waterborne diseases among children and reduce the time that young girls spent in collecting water, so that they would have more time for learning and leisure. Families were trained by the agency on techniques to harvest rainwater and maintain the tanks. With the technical support of a contractor, the community managed to construct the required number of tanks. When they were completed, the tanks were handed over to families, a certificate of completion was obtained, and an audit was conducted to verify that funds had been used according to agreement. After six months, an evaluation by the facilitating agency revealed that several families did not use the tanks, as some tanks developed leaks and some grew moss inside. Children continued to use contaminated water and girls continued to spend a lot of time collecting safe water, when it was available.

Although the project objectives addressed the long-term interest of children, no indicators were developed with community members in order to track results. Children were seen as passive beneficiaries. Girls in particular, who were important stakeholders in the process, were never involved in planning or monitoring.

***Participatory evaluation should not be seen as merely a process of monitoring outcomes against preset goals, but also as a process that allows the incorporation of learning and subsequent programme adjustments***

Programme monitoring by different stakeholders provides critical input, but different groups monitor the same processes with different objectives, using different indicators: adults and children in the community, field staff of the facilitating agency, staff at the programme unit level, partner organisations, local authorities, and the rest of the community. The focus of community monitoring is on day-to-day progress and changes in practices and attitudes. The focus of staff is on the quality of support, the efficient use of resources, and accountability. The programme unit monitors how well the chosen strategy achieves results. For participatory evaluation to be effective, all participants need to share the results and be kept informed about subsequent adjustments that are made in terms of processes and resource allocation.

***Community ownership of an evaluation does not exclude the participation of other key actors but it does change the way that external agents orient themselves to the community, share expectations, and conduct their part of the evaluation***

In child-centred community development, several key actors come together, sometimes with competing interests. Some of these stakeholders are key to the success of the process, and others add value in different measures. Despite these differences, all of them need to

be involved in the evaluation in order to gain multiple perspectives and to enhance collaborative action. Prepare for effective partnerships

### **Box 3 The importance of shared values**

In Bangladesh, a technical partner was identified for a community-managed health care programme and oriented to the values of a child centred approach, such as child rights and community involvement and ownership. However, the technical partner remained focused on service delivery, and staff in this organisation were not fully convinced of the usefulness of community participation in primary health care. When the facilitating agency identified this attitude, it had to invest time in reorienting the partner organisation to the concept of community ownership, and to working in collaboration with them to develop process indicators.

In order to make evaluation an empowering experience for those who are directly connected with the project, as well as a learning experience for other stakeholders, the following steps need to be taken:

- Before the evaluation begins, share baseline information, process records, and relevant studies and reports by the facilitating agency, other agencies or government.
- Examine indicators in relation to objectives. Do all stakeholders view the indicators from the same perspective? Do the indicators of external groups differ from those set by children and adults in the community? The interests of different stakeholders need to be discussed and understood by all sides.
- Design specific mechanisms for sharing results with boys, girls, community adults and other partners so that adjustments can be made to the programme in the future.
- Plan for continuous education. A series of occasions need to be planned that will help community adults, boys and girls reflect on project processes, their roles, benefits to the community, and indicators that will most effectively measure results. By setting up terms of reference for the evaluation through negotiations with other stakeholders, the community will have opportunities to establish their own programme requirements.

### **Don't leave evaluation to the end**

***Contrary to the belief that evaluation is to be designed at the end of the programme, a child-centred approach requires that thinking about the evaluation should begin during the planning stage***

Community development plans emerge out of the discussion and analysis of priorities by adults and by boys

#### **Box 4 Engaging all partners**

In El Salvador, a "school for parents" was created to increase interaction between adolescents and their families, with a view to reducing youth violence. Based on a yearly evaluation, the programme was considered a success. The evaluation indicated that the planned number of sessions was completed and that parents attended all sessions. The youth, however, dropped out in large numbers. Though some parents expressed happiness over improved relationships, the evaluation did not include any measure of actual changed attitudes and practices by parents and youth. Interviews with youth revealed that, from their perspective, the topics addressed were not relevant or interactive enough. Sensitive issues such as abuse at home, the sexual abuse of girls, and parents' quarrels had not been discussed. Based on this feedback from youth, the programme was redesigned in its third year. Youth identified topics for discussion and convinced adults of their importance. They decided on the roles of parents, youth and the facilitating agency, what they would like to achieve, and how they would measure progress and make suitable adjustments as required. The parent education component focused on child rights, including the right to participation in decision making. More youth information and a counselling programme were added. This comprehensive approach increased programme acceptance among parents as well as youth and improved overall programme effectiveness.

#### **Box 5 The risk of unintended consequences**

Participatory evaluation is useful in bringing out unintended as well as intended consequences for boys and girls and their families, as the following example shows.

A watershed development project implemented in the Tamil Nadu province of India is a success in many respects. It increases small farmers' negotiating capacities and enhances families' economic security and health by increasing the availability of water for drinking, for animals, and for producing fruit, fodder, fuel and leaves. During project planning, it was assumed that this general economic well-being would result in improved life quality for boys and girls in all age groups, which would be automatically reflected in increased education and other opportunities for children. Participatory evaluation, however, indicated an unintended negative effect: more children dropping out of school. Given the increased profitability of farm work, a number of families chose to add to the family income by sending their children off to do farm labour rather than sending them to school.

In the same region, an evaluation of self-help credit groups showed economic success as well as greater self-esteem among the mothers who were involved. Their children were proud of their mothers' achievement and considered them role models. An unintended negative effect, however, was an increased workload for adolescent girls who took care of the household and looked after siblings when their mothers went to meetings.

As a result of these discoveries, programme adjustments were made, such as increasing the availability of home- and centre-based early childcare, awareness education for parents, and increased interactions between school management committees and parents.

and girls in different age groups. To begin, these groups identify issues and broad programmes that can address them. Different components of a programme are then broken down into a series of projects that will progressively address the issue over a period of time. For example, to achieve the overall goal of reducing the school drop out rate in a community, project components might include improving school facilities, improving the curriculum, training teachers to use creative and child-friendly methods, developing creative teaching materials, increasing parent awareness about the importance of education, initiating adult literacy classes, and involving parents and children in school management committees. The objectives of these projects reflect stakeholders' visions for improving children's quality of life over the long term. Therefore, from the beginning, as each programme component is being designed, different stakeholders need to work together to define the indicators that will help them measure its success. It is therefore also logical that the ownership of evaluation results needs to remain with the community so that they can make suitable adjustments to the programme in the future.

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The opinions in this article express the the author's reflections rather than the opinion of any organisation.

# The benefits of participatory evaluation for children and youth

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**Kim Sabo**

## Introduction

With the 1998 special issue of the journal *New Directions in Evaluation* on 'Understanding and Practicing Participatory Evaluation', participatory evaluation clearly entered the mainstream dialogue about evaluation and, moreover, showed itself to be the method of choice for an increasing number of evaluators. In the three years since that publication, a new "new direction in evaluation" is appearing on the landscape – the inclusion of youth as members of the participatory evaluation team. While the number of participatory evaluators working with youth is still small, there is wide interest in their work not only by evaluators, but educators, youth workers, researchers, funders, and children's and human rights advocates as well. No doubt this interest is due to the fact that youth involvement in evaluation projects touches on so many issues of concern to these professionals, including youth development, empowerment, decision making, community development, capacity building, organisational democracy, social justice and the relevance and usefulness of evaluation data.

The benefits of child and youth participation have long been understood within international development, a field in which young people have been involved in action research, environmental activism, and planning and monitoring their own programmes. Those who have studied these efforts (Iacofano, 1985; Solomone, 1996; Sutton, 1985; Van Wagenber *et al.*, 1981; Whitmore, 1988) argue that children and youth are significantly impacted through the process of participation. They maintain that young people gain self-esteem, become empowered, learn new skills, and develop into more active citizens. While these outcomes make a compelling case for youth participation, the extent to which youth have participated and exactly what they have participated in is often unclear.

As this emerging field of youth as evaluators begins to gain momentum, it is important to stop for a moment and look at what is meant by participation: participation in what? by whom? under what circumstances? and to what end? In order to address some of these questions, this article will take a careful look at the specific experiences of some youth evaluators and how these relate to both their programmes and their evaluation processes.

## Description of the study

Case study data from four evaluation projects will be presented.<sup>1</sup> These projects were conducted in different programme contexts and employed different types of participatory processes. Two of the evaluation projects were conducted in highly participatory programmes, one entirely run by youth and the other led in concert with a team of adult advisors. The remaining two evaluation projects were conducted in programmes that had little youth participation; however, the evaluation process was highly participatory. The findings are organised below in two categories: participatory evaluations of youth-run programmes and participatory evaluations of non-participatory programmes.

## Description of findings

### Participatory evaluations of youth-led/run programmes

The first evaluation project was conducted within The Center for Young Women's Development (The Center). The Center is a youth-run harm reduction programme that employs young homeless women. This programme is located in downtown San Francisco and serves predominately African American and Latino youth (ages 13–21). The evaluation project was initiated by a funder as part of an overall grant requirement. In keeping with the programme's highly participatory and inclusive approach to youth development, youth staff members hired an outside consultant to train them in evaluation techniques. All senior level staff members (who at this time were under 20 years of age) were involved in defining evaluation questions, developing an overall evaluation plan, developing evaluation instruments, collecting data, analysing data and writing the final report.

Initially the youth felt that the evaluation was an imposition; however, they soon came to value the process and learned much about their programme and their clients. Findings from the evaluation effort helped them

<sup>1</sup> The data described here were part of a larger research effort that looked at twenty participatory evaluations involving youth. Out of these twenty programmes, four were strategically selected as case studies (see Sabo, 1999).

to modify the programme and better target and serve their population. Further, once they learned the value of collecting ongoing data about their programme, they incorporated evaluation strategies into many of their everyday activities.

The evaluation process supported the young people to collect systematic information about both service delivery and youth outcomes. The data allowed them to see the type of impacts their programme was having on the community. Denise (age 19) said they would continue to survey the community for three reasons:

*First, to allow the young women on the street to voice their opinions about their needs; second, to let them know that the programme really cares about what they have to say; and third, to allow the youth staff to feel good about what they are doing.*

All the young people interviewed were extremely proud of their work. The evaluation process afforded them the opportunity to reflect on the impacts their programmes have on the community, and provided them with evidence of their effectiveness as social change agents. As youth saw the results of their hard work, they became more committed to the evaluation process and their programme. For example, Shaniqua (age 18):

*We learned the importance of evaluation. That not only is it really important to funders – we have to have this in by a certain day – but this is a really good tool for you to know.*

The second evaluation project focused on the Town Youth Participation Strategy (TYPS), a youth-led drop-in center serving primarily low-income Caucasian youth (ages 12–19) living in rural Ottawa. TYPS is a prevention strategy seeking to reduce drug and alcohol abuse in the community by providing young people with a place to hang out, while simultaneously supporting them to have voice in the community. The programme was required to report monthly to the local town councils. Evaluation methods were built directly into everyday activities and youth developed monthly reports to share with the community. Young people from the programme kept minutes, interviewed youth participants, kept attendance records and led periodic focus groups. All these data were kept in a scrapbook as part of the institutional memory as the young leaders aged-out and passed the programme on to the next generation.

Like the youth at The Center, these young people came to appreciate the value of evaluation as an ongoing learning tool and were able to see first-hand their effects on the community. The data allowed them to clearly understand their programme's impact on youth, highlighting the importance of "ownership." For example, Beth (age 17)

talked about the data from their evaluation effort and how important it was for young people to be part of the decision-making process within their programme.

*For me, it seems that kids really need to own something. Kids don't own anything. They don't have any say over what kind of schooling they're thrown into; they don't have any say as to what their family is about; they basically don't have very much control over their lives.*

Here again, youth clearly saw themselves as social change agents and were very proud of the work they were doing and the changes they were making. Dan (age 18) stated:

*I enjoyed creating the programme. And I want to be a part of that for the youth, for the younger youth, so they have somewhere that they can go, so that they don't feel that they're only doing nothing, and you feel good knowing that you got to do it.*

In both The Center and TYPS, young people were involved in every aspect of the evaluation. The benefits of participation were clear to them; they reported learning many new evaluation skills, developing new relationships with one another, and a new understanding of their programme and evaluation. Particularly salient to the youth evaluators was the development of new types of relationships with peers and adult consultants. For example, Denise (age 17, The Center), said her programme was:

*A place to dream and be who you are, be comfortable with who you are, not have to lie. Honesty is really important here, because a lot of places, you have to lie about everything, to your parents, your own stuff, everything.*

Karen (age 15, TYPS) talked about the importance of working with adults as equals:

*You also got to get more interpersonal feelings. You're dealing with people. Like you certainly develop the more mature relationships with adult people that you weren't getting. I wasn't getting that before I got involved with TYPS because where would you get it? From your parents? Nah.*

Additionally, in both programmes, the young people were also engaged in all decision-making processes related to the programme. This combination of high-level participation in both programme and evaluation allowed these young people to use evaluation findings to make significant changes within their programmes. Further, it afforded them the opportunity to employ evaluation strategies in other aspects of their programme. Youth in these programmes were defining both the programme

practice and their evaluation processes. In this way, the benefits of participating in programme decision-making and development could not easily be separated from the benefits of participating in the evaluation process. Rather, it appeared that participation in one supported and supplemented participation in the other.

### Participatory evaluations of non-participatory programmes

The third youth evaluation project was a coalition of youth programmes that came together to evaluate the juvenile justice system in San Francisco. The coalition hired young people who were previously in the juvenile justice system. They were trained by an adult evaluation consultant and worked side-by-side with university professors to articulate the evaluation design and questions. The youth evaluators conducted interviews and focus groups with hundreds of youth in the community, focusing on their experiences with the juvenile justice system and supporting them to articulate the future needs of youth. They analysed these data utilising a statistical programme, wrote a final report and presented it to the city. This youth evaluation team worked very hard to obtain buy-in from the adults prior to the beginning of the project and made sure that youth would have a "hearing" to report their findings and recommendations. In this way, youth were able to have a significant impact on the development of several new programmes created for the juvenile justice system.

Similar to the sentiments articulated by youth in the first two evaluation projects, young people in this project felt proud of their ability to affect social change. They saw the value of evaluation as a social change tool and were very invested in impacting the system for other young people. Debbie (age 16) said:

*We're all kinda here because we are interested in making a change, so we're all working toward the same goal. When we're at school it's not like everybody wants to be there so it's just like people don't care what happens.*

Further, they felt very strongly that their evaluation data would facilitate the development of a stronger, more youth-friendly juvenile justice system. When Daryl (age 19) was asked what impact the evaluation might make, he said:

*Hopefully a lot of good, a lot of change in the juvenile justice system, a lot of programmes, hopefully will come out of this to help youth, you know what I'm saying? To help people have other objectives and other options in doing what they do.*

Similar to the first two evaluation projects, these youth developed valuable evaluation skills and were excited by the new job opportunities that may now become available to them. Jennifer (age 17) put it this way:

*You can take this experience outside. You know how to develop instruments. You are going to put this data into the computer. We're going to learn this programme together. We're going to come up with statistics... that was just like, Wow!*

The fourth evaluation project focused on a youth drop-in center serving street children (ages 15–20) in an urban city located in Canada. This project differed in important ways from the other three. First, the drop-in centre is run entirely by adults and has no youth involvement in decision-making processes. Second, the youth evaluation project was initiated by an outside consultant without complete buy-in from staff members, and, consequently, staff involvement with the evaluation project was limited. Within these limits, a select group of youth was highly involved in the evaluation project and worked closely with the evaluation consultant in a democratic process. The youth evaluation team developed, implemented and analysed a community-wide survey that asked businesses to articulate their views of the drop-in centre. They also interviewed a number of staff members and youth programme participants. A full report of this information was generated by the youth in a creative report that utilised youth artwork, colourful tables and photographs. This report was presented to key staff members at the centre. However, the youth did not feel optimistic about their recommendations being implemented. Jay (age 19) said:

*I don't think it would be possible for them [the adults in power] to take all of our recommendations and do them all in one shot. It might take some time to do some things and some of them they might not be able to because of their guidelines.*

Ultimately, these youth evaluators were able to make few programmatic changes. The programmes rigidity and the lack of youth participation in decision-making processes made substantive change nearly impossible. Youth evaluators in this context did not place the same value on evaluation as in the highly participatory programmes described above. They were not able to utilise the findings nor were they able to employ the practices in other aspects of the programme. Further, because these youth felt no ownership of their programme, they did not experience the same feelings of pride when reflecting on programmatic impacts.

While young people were not overly enthusiastic about future programmatic change, they were excited about the benefits they gained by working on the evaluation project. Like youth evaluators in the other case studies, these youth felt that they learned to work in groups, gained financial benefits, developed valuable skills, gained a sense of self-efficacy and confidence, and became more respected by the staff. Also, very much like the three previous projects,

these youth evaluators articulated the valuable experiences they had with peers and adults. Jay (age 18) stated:

*You get to know other people. ...Tolerance. Big tolerance thing because I'm not a group person. I got a little bit closer to some of the members too. I feel like I made friends, like I can talk. I learned to know when not to put my two cents in. I used to interrupt a lot and I worked on that a lot.*

Maribel (age 19) reported:

*Like I'm thinking of going and finishing my high school. Like that's what I wish to do. Before being part of a community, I find that I didn't want to be bothered with it.*

## Conclusion

Young people from all four of these programmes were impacted through their participation in evaluation. Two benefits that stood out were youth seeing themselves as social change agents and increased feelings of programme ownership. However, both of these outcomes were contingent on the level of youth participation in the programme. It was when youth were active in defining both the programme practice and their evaluation processes that these desired outcomes were experienced.

On the other hand, regardless of the level and type of participation within the evaluation or the programme, all young people reported with great enthusiasm changes in relationships with adults and with other peers. The evaluation process created environments for people (young and old) to do something together, to create something new. They formed new relationships, and learned something about respect, difference, disagreement and negotiation.

The benefits of participation have typically been framed in terms of individual gain (i.e., skill development, empowerment, self-esteem building). However, the youth evaluators in these programmes identified the development of new and different types of relationships

as one of the major benefits of participation. In doing so, the young people in this study have shown us the relational nature of participation. A new understanding of participation as a relational activity is an important finding of this research. Perhaps Monica (age 17, evaluation of the juvenile justice system) put it most clearly:

*It was cool we did a lot, we learned a lot, we're doing a lot of learning. A lot of learning about each other, about different environments, you know stuff like that. And we learn from both sides because we do have adults in there, so we're seeing it from both sides. You know, sometimes we agree, sometimes we disagree, but there is always a respectful way, you know what I'm saying?*

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# Children's participation in the context of forced migration

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## Introduction

Forced migration is one of the most significant human phenomena of the 21st century, affecting millions of adults and children throughout the globe. Most displaced populations in the world today settle spontaneously, in the main within their own countries. Only a small minority of those who are forced to flee their homes are registered officially and become part of an organised refugee community and programme. Much of what social scientists and other observers know about displaced populations refers to the minority of displaced persons who are registered. Refugees in camps constitute a captive population for researchers and relief agencies, while, on the other hand, spontaneously settled, "unofficial" populations of displaced people tend to actively seek privacy and anonymity, for fear of antagonism from or eviction by neighbours, or detention and deportation by the authorities.

Global knowledge of the experiences and perspectives of displaced children is extremely limited at this point in time. In terms of research, there are a large number of psychosocial studies of refugee children, but most of these employ a positivist paradigm, with highly structured, pre-coded instruments that reflect the researcher's perspectives rather than those of the child subjects. Other documentary evidence on refugee children and the programmes to assist them tends to be anecdotal, much of it intended for use in advocacy. The bulk of the so-called evaluative research concerning the interventions of agencies that provide support and services to refugee communities is based on self-reporting or investigations by external consultants. In most cases, these studies are more concerned to monitor inputs and outputs, such as school utensils supplied, numbers of refugee children attending classes, or completing a particular grade, than programme processes or outcomes. These latter would have more to do with what children learn, how they view their education and so on.

Based on previous experience in communities in Sri Lanka, Thailand and Peru and secondary sources, rather than primary research, this paper examines some of the key questions and issues regarding the participation of refugee and displaced children in societal and programmatic

processes. Given that there has as yet been very little practical experience or research globally on this subject, this article is of necessity exploratory in nature. The discussion begins by reviewing some of the structural, operational and conceptual reasons why children's participation is, as a rule, highly restricted in refugee and displaced communities, and concludes by considering some recent developments in the field.

## Structural exclusion of displaced populations

It is important to bear in mind that the conditions for child participation in displaced communities may be absent, for cultural or other reasons. Forced migrants often come from comparatively conservative rural areas where gender, generation and class or caste hierarchies are entrenched and interaction between individuals of different social status strictly limited by tradition. When refugee camp officials have tried to implement more liberal and participatory processes for children, this has sometimes been met with resistance by parents and community elders who see such approaches as counter-cultural. In Thai camps for refugees from Cambodia and Laos, parents opposed child-centred education and insisted on the reintroduction of learning by rote, the traditional method of teaching. Community elders were angered by the widespread availability of radios in the camps and by young people choosing to wear western dress. Cultural retrenchment, or the desire to reassert traditional norms and practice, may be a reflection of the overwhelming sense of cultural loss experienced by most adult refugees. It is notable that children tend to be more flexible and adaptable than adults in these situations and, with the benefit of schooling, many are able to learn the language and assimilate the lifestyle of their host community far more quickly. Thus, in many refugee communities the threat to traditional inter-generational power structures results in an adult backlash that impedes the liberalisation of adult-child relations.

More than this, however, refugee communities emerge by definition out of crisis. They are frequently made up of individuals and families that do not share common origins and have no prior connection with each other, who come

together more by accident than design. In many cases, families have been split up and some have been reconstituted, taking in new members, such as orphans or step-parents and siblings. These truncated and revised family relations may prove an obstacle to participation. Sometimes political activists and combatants are housed in camps alongside civilians who may have no interest in their cause. Often displaced communities must contend with the continual threat of forced repatriation. Building trust and confidence in public and collective processes can be extremely difficult in these contexts.

Collective organisation and representation tends to be highly politicised in communities of forced migrants. In conflict and post-conflict situations, information of any kind, however innocuous it may appear, is prone to being perceived as a form of intelligence. Children's protagonism in particular is commonly regarded with apprehension by relief agencies, government officials and others, for it invokes images of children as freedom fighters, combatants, and perpetrators of violence. Collective organisation may be perceived as a potential threat to both the powers that be in the refugees' country of origin and the host government. Refugee representatives in South Africa, for example, argue that both the host government and their own embassies oppose refugee collective activity and organisation since it is taken to be a front for political activism and military recruitment. Several embassies have infiltrated refugee communities in South Africa with a view to monitoring political and military activity. This case illustrates the extreme sensitivity of developing participatory processes among refugee populations.

The experience of forced migration is, by definition, one of exclusion, since involuntary displacement to an alien and sometimes hostile environment fundamentally constrains the contexts, levels and forms of participation available to adults and children alike. Political and social participation in the host society, for example, tends to be extremely restricted in most cases. This may be due to a failure to extend to displaced populations their basic civil rights, including the right to citizenship and an identity, or because of social barriers such as differences of language and religion or social prejudice and discrimination.

In this regard, there are important differences between registered refugee groups in camps and those populations who do not enjoy official recognition. In many instances, refugees in formal programmes are more isolated from normal civil, social, economic and political processes than other displaced populations, since they live in artificial, contained settlements. Until their asylum status is resolved, they are generally subject to a plethora of rules controlling access to the labour market, services and the like. In many cases they are prohibited from leaving the camp. Containment in a camp is a major restriction in

terms of economic participation and often leads to high levels of dependence on rations. However, many camps have quite "porous" boundaries and by bribing camp officials, refugees may take informal jobs outside in the host community. Informal displacement, by contrast, results in extensive economic participation in host economies by both adults and children. This is partly because those who are informally displaced need to blend in as far as possible with the local community, in order to survive economically and avoid eviction. Beyond economic participation, the arenas of collective action for unofficially displaced populations are often restricted to social and spiritual events, such as festivals and religious celebrations, and seldom include meaningful civil or political engagement.

In all cases, because their skills are not acknowledged – due to language difficulties, a lack of social networks or other factors – refugee and displaced populations are extremely prone to exploitation and abuse in the work context. They tend to occupy the most menial and poorly paid jobs, in which the opportunities for collective organisation, self-representation and self-advocacy are minimal. Often they are forcefully dispersed both physically and occupationally, with children taking employment in communities distant from their parents. In Sri Lanka, for instance, girls and young women from refugee communities may be trafficked to the Gulf States, their remitted income making an important contribution to the domestic economy. In Afghan refugee populations, boys are at greater risk of family separation than girls because religious taboos prohibit girls from taking paid employment outside the home or community. On the other hand, prior contact with people from the community of origin can determine choice of settlement and livelihood in displaced populations, sometimes enabling migrants to remain together.

## Operational limitations to participation

### **Short termism**

Given that at present no agency within the United Nations has a mandate to support unofficially displaced populations, organised relief and rehabilitation measures tend to be focused mainly on those populations that are registered as refugees. Thus, membership of a recognised, registered refugee community in theory provides children with the opportunity to take part in decisions and measures designed to assist them. Effective participation takes a great deal of time and considerable resources to develop, however, especially if children are to be meaningfully involved. In most cases, neither the migrant population nor the implementing agency, nor indeed the host community, wishes to conceive of refugee measures as being long term. Most formal refugee programmes, even those that have been sustained over long periods (as

in the case of the many Palestinian camps in the Middle East) are planned as short-term, emergency interventions. Indeed, refugee camps often come into being overnight. Given the artificial nature of refugee communities and the desire of most displaced peoples either to return home or move on to a place where asylum is assured, most forced migrants do not make a major emotional investment in their community. Consequently, there is little motivation to develop the kinds of planning, management and monitoring mechanisms and structures that are required to foster effective participation in community life or programme implementation.

### ***Use of external rather than local expertise***

Another constraint is that emergency interventions tend to be planned on the basis of prior experience and models devised centrally, according to policies elaborated within agency headquarters. This approach invites the use of international experts with previous experience of emergency interventions, as opposed to local experts more familiar with the context and specifics of a situation. Frequently, international staff are unable to speak the local language and are entirely unfamiliar with local custom and practice, which acts as a major barrier to the establishment of participatory procedures and programmes. When use of local expertise is allowed, as for example in many refugee education and health care initiatives, it is sometimes conceived of as a therapeutic measure for the refugees rather than an essential component of a contextually appropriate programme. This situation applies less among refugees who are educated or have a professional background (as in Bosnia and Kosovo), for they are normally better able to assert themselves in the face of paternalistic attitudes, structures and procedures. In a case in South Africa, however, refugees had planned to set up a participatory monitoring and evaluation system as a way of keeping tabs on the conditions and circumstances of their communities. But local support organisations insisted on mediating on their behalf with government officials and others, thereby sustaining a relation of dependency and isolating the displaced population from important channels of political participation. Such evidence raises fundamental questions about the values and attitudes of many relief agencies with regard to their client population

### ***Focus on "basic needs"***

Refugee support measures tend to focus first and foremost on "basic needs" (clean water, sanitation, food, shelter, health care) which are taken to be universal and hence not to require consultation or discussion with affected populations. The lack of consultation applies even more to children than to adults. Only comparatively recently (especially in Bosnia and Kosovo) have implementing agencies begun to appreciate that refugee well-being and rights amount to much more than the satisfaction of mere physical need. Going beyond basic

physical needs certainly requires discussion and joint planning with beneficiaries, since for interventions to be effective, local values, attitudes and practices must be taken into account. However, in practice, this usually leads to consultation with refugee community leaders and representatives, not children.

### ***Inappropriate assumptions about children's best interest***

Agency approaches to refugee children reflect the model of children's rights promoted most widely at present by the international community. This model depends on a triadic structure of child:family:state (although in the case of refugee children, senior members of the relief community often stand in for the absent state). What is missing from this model are peer initiatives and sibling support, these being essential components of any participatory process involving children and crucial to children's survival and well-being in many situations of conflict and flight. Unless relief agencies are prepared to conceive of peers as important emotional, psychological, social and economic resources for children in refugee settings, participatory processes are likely to be little more than tokenism.

There is a very real sense in which initiatives mounted by support and service agencies are in many contexts imposed on refugee children, implying that the role and impact of organised relief efforts on behalf of children need serious evaluation. When children do make their own choices, they often reject the services provided by the relief community. Take the case of a small group of children in Kosovo who were found by a journalist to be living in a derelict building, in hiding not from the bombs but from relief agencies who were intent on evacuating separated children and "reuniting" (or rather fostering) them with families. These children preferred to remain together, even though this meant scavenging and living in grave physical danger.

In Rwanda idealised models about childhood and family drove a massive programme of family tracing and "reunification" involving some 60,000 children. The assumption that children's best interests depend on being in a family was so powerful that relief workers failed to seriously consult and plan with children and foster families about their motives or preferred options for placement. Initially, many agencies even refused to do follow up assessments to establish whether placements had been successful. The one agency that did do follow up work found around 30 to 40% of placements were, for one reason or another, failing, either from the child's perspective or that of the foster parents. This proportion is unacceptably high by any standards, but could be regarded as an inevitable result of the failure to employ participatory processes in planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

There are instances in which children's participation in the refugee context, organised often by non-governmental and intergovernmental organisations, results in children and their families being exposed to harassment, violence and imprisonment, or having their asylum status jeopardised. In this regard, refugee support organisations can sometimes be extraordinarily naive, since families and children are sometimes dependent for their survival on the very agencies that put them in danger. In this kind of situation of dependency it is hard for children or their families to refuse to take part in participatory events and activities, however ill-judged, for fear that doing so will result in the removal of essential support systems.

## Conceptual barriers to children's participation

Most forced migrants undergo enormous disruption and upheaval and have suffered great pain and deprivation. Some experience severe long-term psychological and emotional consequences. In many cases, displaced children (especially girls) are at grave risk of sexual violence and exploitation. There are reports from refugee communities throughout the world of very poor personal security and, linked to this, high levels of rape, abduction and trafficking of both girls and boys. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that the discourse surrounding displaced communities and refugee children in particular is steeped in notions of vulnerability and incapacity. The forcibly displaced are frequently perceived as traumatised victims, overwhelmed by grief, loss and exposure to extreme adversity, dependent for their salvation on the relief agencies. Relief workers tend to find it hard to imagine children in such conditions as having the will or the resourcefulness to take part in decision making and organised collective activity.

Perceptions of the vulnerable dependent victim are more clearly articulated in relation to children than to adults. This is particularly evident in the imagery of media and fund-raising materials that tend to focus on the starving, dying, grieving or frightened child. Seldom are children portrayed as active survivors and seldom are they recognised as social subjects with a major part to play not just in their own survival and coping, but also in that of their families. Considerable anecdotal evidence indicates that refugee children often run major risks to reach camps and other designated refugee sites and frequently display extraordinary ingenuity in doing so. In many cases, children are not merely important economic actors within the household, but a major emotional resource for distressed and depressed parents. While it is important to acknowledge children's pain and suffering and to recognise that some children are extremely vulnerable, it is quite remarkable how relief workers consistently fail to acknowledge the resourcefulness that many children show in situations of conflict and flight.

Over-reliance on concepts of trauma and sickness leads to reluctance (on ethical grounds) to engage directly with children on their own terms, for fear that this might cause "secondary traumatisation" in children. For example, most agencies prefer to ask teachers, parents or other carers about children's problems and needs, rather than conduct participatory assessments with children themselves. This approach, according to the agencies, avoids opening up distressing memories and issues for children. Effectively, an assumption is made that parents know what their children think, feel and aspire to. This is despite consistent research evidence that in situations of crisis, parents are often too depressed themselves to be aware of children's circumstances and condition in detail. In fact, many parents feel constrained to minimise children's problems, possibly out of guilt or anxiety at having failed to provide them with adequate care and protection during crisis.

For children, one of the most distressing aspects of displacement – frequently overlooked by the relief community – is the loss of roles that they played in their homeland. For example, Somali and Sudanese boys talk about the fact that they are no longer able to tend the animals belonging to their family and community. Intuitively, it would seem logical to argue that when children are deprived of meaningful opportunities to participate in the economic life of their communities, this will have major social consequences for them. Loss of opportunity to work is likely to pose a fundamental threat to children's social integration and self-esteem, since in many contexts it is the accomplishment of gendered work roles that ensure the transition to adulthood. In this sense, girls may be better off than boys since there is greater potential to sustain domestic roles in refugee settings than productive roles. Under these circumstances, when children cannot fulfil their social and economic responsibilities and can no longer learn the life skills of their community, it is hard to imagine how confining children's participation to educational, sports and recreation activities can be very meaningful in terms of child development and well-being.

## Conclusion

Since the advent of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, it is increasingly assumed that children's participation in decisions and processes affecting them is not just a matter of right, but also beneficial both for children and their families. That said, the goal of children's participation is far from being realised in most settings. Of all groups of children, those who are forcibly displaced are among the most isolated and discriminated against, socially, economically and politically. As the scale of displacement grows globally, so the challenge of ensuring social inclusion and social justice for these populations increases. Nevertheless, the constraints to children's

participation in the context of forced migration are considerable, in some cases presenting very real security risks to children and their families. There is also the concern that promoting the participation of children in provision, policy and other processes could cause serious discord in situations where adults are themselves excluded. These constraints emphasise the need for great caution in advancing participatory models, which unfortunately has been lacking in some instances.

The problems notwithstanding, there have been several positive developments in this field in recent years. For example, the Save the Children Alliance is trying to introduce participatory processes with children in several countries, as in Sri Lanka where war-affected and displaced children are involved in participatory research and problem identification. A similar process has been instigated by the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children in the Balkans. Mediciens Sans Frontières, Canada, is developing a training programme for relief workers which is intended to instil attitudes and approaches that acknowledge children as protagonists and social subjects, as opposed to objects of pity and relief. And UNHCR recently commissioned a study of participatory monitoring and evaluation with refugees (not children) that was intended to provide policy recommendations and good practice guidelines. Such schemes need close observation and documentation so that their impact on displaced children, their families and communities can be gauged and disseminated more widely, as an encouragement to further action in the field.

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# Participatory agroforestry curriculum development – an account of a participatory writing workshop

**Peter Taylor and Per Rudebjer**

## Summary

This paper describes the process of a workshop which used a participatory curriculum development methodology (PCD) to create an agroforestry curriculum development guide. The paper introduces the underlying concepts of PCD and reflects on some lessons learned about the process. It also discusses some possible reasons behind the success of the workshop in terms of the participatory process applied, the content, and the final product. By the end of the workshop, participants had, together, written a detailed draft guide. After review and editing, this guide will serve to support the development of agroforestry education and training programmes in the South-East (SE) Asia region, and enhance the teaching and learning process of agroforestry.

## Introduction

While agroforestry is a practical activity, mostly done by small-scale farmers, their voices are rarely heard in curriculum development. On the contrary, many or most existing agroforestry curricula in SE Asia have been developed using a classical, top-down approach. Participatory approaches are increasingly used in agroforestry research and development programmes. But universities and technical colleges still have no or little experience in applying such methods in curriculum development.

The Southeast Network for Agroforestry Education (SEANAPE) is a regional network with a mission to improve the quality and accessibility of agroforestry education. It was formed in 1999 by 32 universities and technical colleges in Indonesia, Lao PDR, Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam. The network identified curriculum development as a main priority, as well as identification of tools that could be utilised to bring this about.

Key questions that needed to be addressed in the curriculum development process were:

- How could stakeholders be involved to help improve the relevance and quality of agroforestry curricula?
- How could institutions and teachers be guided, in a flexible way, in developing agroforestry curricula that

capture both recent research findings and field-based realities?

- How could the agroforestry curriculum development process lead to an educational approach based on learning rather than on teaching?

In the first general meeting of SEANAPE, members reviewed and prioritised potential agroforestry education activities and decided to develop a regional guide for participatory agroforestry curriculum development. This guide would present both a participatory curriculum development process and a flexible framework for agroforestry curricula in SE Asia. We envisioned a step-wise process, as follows:

1. Writing first draft during a regional workshop, held in Hanoi, Vietnam, November 1999.
2. Testing the guide in national and institutional curriculum development fora.
3. Evaluation and feedback by individual reviewers.
4. Revision to suit regional and institutional requirements.
5. Final editing and publishing.
6. Use of the guide as one of a range of resource tools for national and institutional curriculum development activities.

## The workshop approach

A participatory curriculum development (PCD) approach underpinned the workshop process. This has been used as the basic educational approach for the development of social forestry education in universities in Vietnam. The aim of PCD is to develop a curriculum from the interchanges of experience and information between the various stakeholders in the education and training programme. It is believed that increasing the extent of participation of different stakeholders in the curriculum development process will lead to greater ownership of education and training, leading to more effective learning. From this perspective, the process of curriculum development should involve a wide range of stakeholders in meaningful roles. It should draw upon their experience and insights in a structured approach to curriculum planning, implementation, and evaluation. PCD involves stakeholders in a flexible and dynamic way, in an attempt

to achieve a deeper understanding of a complex situation. It was decided by the workshop organisers that participants at the workshop should comprise a fairly small group (about 20, plus resource persons) from the SEANAFE member countries.

## Aim of the workshop

The four-day workshop aimed to introduce participants to the basic concepts and methods associated with PCD so that they could apply these in the development of the agroforestry curriculum guide. Although the primary goal of the workshop was to produce a draft guide, the process was rather similar to that followed when developing a curriculum using the PCD approach. This begins with experiential activities (learning from practical experiences or doing rather than formal learning) that promote reflection on existing experience, followed by analysis, and then action.

## The workshop process

The workshop process is summarised in the table below by indicating the key points addressed, the methods used, and the outputs. The main steps of the process are then described in more detail:

### Step 1: Participants' background in agroforestry; how agroforestry is taught; when curricula were revised

Following participants' introductions and listing of expectations, each participant was asked to indicate how agroforestry is taught in his or her institution, and also the time when those curricula were developed or revised.

### Step 2: What is involved in curriculum development?

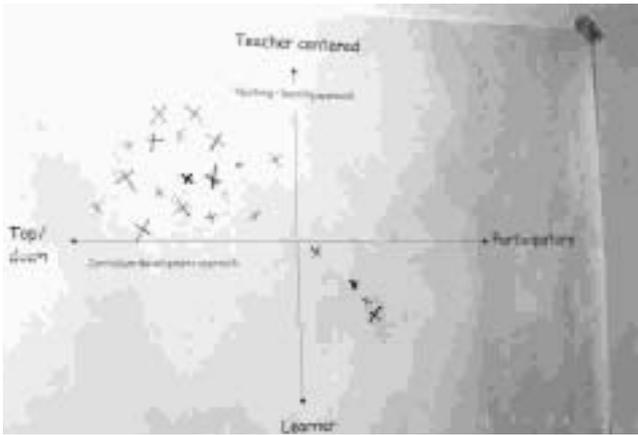
The objective of this activity was to learn about participants' perspectives on what is involved in curriculum development. The ideas were then discussed in plenary. This was followed by a short presentation on PCD concepts and approaches, which related quite closely to many of the comments emerging from the brainstorming session.

### Step 3: Curriculum development methods and teaching/learning approaches in participants' institutions

The objective of this exercise was to indicate how curricula are developed (top-down vs. participatory) and which teaching/learning approaches (teacher-centred vs. learner centred) are used in participants' institutions. In a short discussion about the result of a participatory exercise, participants agreed that it would be desirable to move in

**Table 1 The workshop key points, methods, and outputs**

Step	Key points	Method	Output
1	Participants' background in agroforestry; how agroforestry is taught; when curricula were revised	Participants place marks in matrix on poster	Range of agroforestry curriculum development needs that the guide would need to address
2	What is involved in curriculum development?	"Merry-go-round" brainstorming. Presentation on PCD approach	List of participants' perspectives on what is involved in curriculum development, compared with existing theory
3	Curriculum development methods and teaching/learning approaches in participants' institutions	Completing matrix of "curriculum development approach vs. teaching/learning approach" on poster	Participants' agreement on desirability to move in the direction of more learner-oriented teaching approaches and more participatory curriculum development
4	Stakeholder analysis	Listing stakeholders and their interests, importance and influence matrix, stakeholder participation matrix	Potential roles and responsibilities for a list of identified stakeholders
5	Why this guide is needed	Focused conversation	Consensus about what needs this guide should address
6	Stakeholder perspectives on agroforestry education	Case study presentations (by a university teacher, a field worker, an employer, and a former agroforestry student)	Issues raised about the job and characteristics of an "agroforester" in each country, as well as the regional implications arising
7	Knowledge, skills, and attitudes which this guide should address	Listing on cards (group exercise), posted on wall	Consensus on categories and lists of knowledge, skills and attitudes to be addressed by the guide
8	Planning and writing the main sections of the guide	Groups writing detailed content	Agreed structure and main content of the guide Detailed sections of the guide written, presented, and agreed
9	Evaluation	Positives and negatives chart. "Satisfaction dartboard" Process vs. product graph "Overall feeling" chart	Participants' evaluation of workshop



**Completed matrix of curriculum development and teaching and learning approaches**

the direction of more learner-oriented teaching approaches, and more participatory curriculum development.

**Step 4: Stakeholder analysis**

This step-wise exercise started by identifying the stakeholders of this guide, and their particular interest in the development of the guide. Participants then looked at the influence and importance of those stakeholders, and finally the potential role for each stakeholder was suggested.

**Step 5: Why this guide is needed**

To harmonise the groups' thinking about why this guide is needed, we used a "focused conversation". This helped the group to reach consensus about what needs this guide should address. A short open discussion analysed the results, which were synthesised as follows:

1. Agroforestry is a relatively new science, "competing" with traditional fields of agriculture and forestry. It is rarely offered as a full programme so this curriculum guide is very important to keep curricula relevant and to ensure a practical orientation.
2. There is not a clear boundary between agriculture and forestry in upland areas of SE Asia. The co-existence of agriculture with forestry calls for the identification of specific knowledge, skills, and attitudes for the field of agroforestry.
3. Many institutions in the region already offer agroforestry courses, and so good experiences from different countries can be collected, shared, and harmonised.
4. There is a need to update and harmonise old and diverse curricula and to develop practically oriented curricula.

5. It is important to articulate the field contained by agroforestry and to identify and design a framework for agroforestry curricula for different ecological regions.
6. To consolidate diverse curricula and give a solid frame to this area of study which will facilitate a continuous rural development process, relevant to stakeholders.
7. To provide direction for the attainment of desired objectives in the quality control of graduates, monitoring and evaluation, and the implementation process.
8. To help stakeholders to have a common understanding of the agroforestry curriculum.

**Step 6: Stakeholder perspectives on agroforestry education**

Four case studies were presented towards the end of Day 1, to add various stakeholders' perspectives on agroforestry education. Speakers had been selected on the basis of their different functions and experiences. Following the presentations, a plenary discussion ensued, which raised many issues about the job and characteristics of an "agroforester" in each country, as well as the regional implications arising.

**Step 7: Knowledge, skills, and attitudes which this guide should address**

The first part of the workshop involved activities which were mainly short, intensive and carefully managed. The rest of the workshop adopted a more open, flexible, and iterative strategy, beginning with the question "What knowledge, skills, and attitudes should this guide address?" A list of knowledge, skills, and attitudes (KSA) was elaborated which should be addressed by the guide.

**Step 8: Planning and writing the main sections of the guide**

At this point the participants seemed to have developed a good understanding and consensus about what



**Categorising the knowledge, skills, and attitudes required as the basis for the curriculum**



### **Writing the curriculum guide required intensive discussion from all participants**

curriculum development involves, the stakeholders for the guide, their interests and potential roles, why the guide was needed, and the KSA which the guide should focus on. The rest of the workshop was devoted to planning and writing the main sections of the guide. The facilitators proposed a structure for the guide, based on the outcome of earlier workshop sessions. This proposal was discussed in plenary to reach a consensus. The participants then individually “signed up” for one of the seven chapters of the guide according to their interest, and were asked to include and elaborate on the main learning points which should be addressed (based on KSA), the main content, suggestions for appropriate learning methods and materials (ideally based on real practical experiences), and how learning would be evaluated.

### **Step 9: Evaluation**

The workshop evaluation was made visually using several participatory tools, and also through a short plenary discussion, which gave some feedback on the main points raised.



### **Participants engaged in the evaluation process**

## **The output from the workshop**

The participants wrote a detailed framework (totalling around 100 pages) for a curriculum development guide for agroforestry. Following a post-workshop peer review

and editing process, this guide has now been completed. It provides a tool for review and development of agroforestry curricula in training institutions (in particular universities and colleges), as well as for national curricula.

## **Reflections on the process**

Although the participatory curriculum development method has been used before, notably in Vietnam, this was the first time it was used to write an actual product. A lot of discussion was required to clarify that the guide would not be a curriculum itself, but a tool for users who are developing agroforestry curricula for different institutions and different target groups. This made the stakeholder analysis complex, initially, since their interests and roles were affected by this orientation. As the participants followed the activities and discussed the results (often very intensely), this issue was resolved, and consensus reached. In planning the workshop, the facilitators had decided to allocate one day only to pre-planned activities, and then to “see what happens” according to the needs and dynamic of the group. This had a certain risk element attached, but the approach proved effective. The outcomes of the first day did seem to fuel interest and prepared the participants well for taking greater responsibility for the preparation of the guide as the workshop progressed.

There was a great cultural mixture among the participants, while professionally the group was more homogeneous, most being teaching staff in universities. An interesting fact to note was that a positive group dynamic developed very quickly among the participants during the workshop. We attribute this to earlier national and regional networking experiences among the participants. About half of them had met before in a regional activity. In the five country groups almost all participants had met before. When the workshop started, therefore, a core team already existed. This shows the strength of a networking approach, not only in the exchange of experiences, but also in breaking the ground for an effective workshop process. Another factor which probably increased the interest of participants in this workshop was that SEANAFE members had already identified curriculum development as a priority, so that this workshop responded to articulated needs. Many participants provided positive feedback on the process and the outputs during and after the workshop. Several declared their intention to use the process in their home institutions for forestry curriculum development.

This workshop was an example of how the PCD approach can be used for a specific subject – in this case agroforestry. The workshop thereby contributed to the evolution of the PCD approach itself. As mentioned above, participants were mainly limited to teachers and

researchers from academic institutions, although a small number of other stakeholders (a senior government policy maker, an NGO representative, several development project advisers, and a field-based graduate) attended. An attempt had been made during preparations for the workshop to have at least one “non-academic” stakeholder from each represented country. The universities themselves played a role in participant selection, and this may have been one reason why a wider range of stakeholders did not participate, indicating that the concept of stakeholder participation is still rather weakly developed in the academic system. A participatory approach for agroforestry curriculum development was certainly something new to many participants in this group of university teachers. It will be interesting to monitor how the participatory approach laid out in the guide is actually followed by institutions.

The stakeholder analysis carried out in the workshop reflects the perceptions of this group, which was not fully representative of all stakeholders in curriculum development for agroforestry. Through this workshop, however, participants gained understanding on how to involve stakeholders, including farmers and local resource users, in their curriculum development efforts. By the end of the workshop they showed a great degree of enthusiasm about the need for change in the way they worked. Hopefully they would later act as “champions” of stakeholder involvement in subsequent curriculum development activities – undertaken by users of the guide – since many of the individuals concerned are quite influential within the education systems of their own countries.

This workshop was to some extent an exchange of South-South experiences in curriculum development for agroforestry, building on valuable experiences of ICRAF in Africa and combining it with more recent experiences in Vietnam and other SE Asian countries. The workshop built on the experiences of individuals from five countries, and through the use of a process which encouraged group and individual learning, a tangible, regional product – a draft guide – was created. This will now be brought back to the national level for testing, adaptation, and further revision. Ultimately there should be a multiplier effect in the region, where this guide will be shared with many more institutions and curriculum developers. Since the guide advocates a participatory approach to curriculum development and was itself developed in a rather participatory way, this provides further experience, which can be shared with a wider audience. The PCD approach continues to evolve through its use in Vietnam and has attracted a high degree of interest from a range of institutions and individuals in countries throughout the SE Asia region, especially through the efforts of networks such as SEANAFE. Efforts are being made to document

and disseminate details of PCD processes in different contexts, as well as concrete outputs developed through collaborative curriculum development activities. Through regular analysis of lessons learned, efforts are now being made in the SE Asia region to develop support strategies for groups and institutions that are interested in using a participatory approach to curriculum development. Networking and information exchange through meetings and workshops at regional, national and institutional level, electronic communications and the Internet, will become increasingly important, especially by forging and strengthening linkages between like-minded organisations, institutions and programmes.

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**The guide entitled *Guiding Learning in Agroforestry*  
(Eds Per Rudebjer, Peter Taylor and Romulo del  
Castillo, ICRAF, 2001) is now available from  
SEANAFE.**

# Community participation with the disabled: training in Yemen

# 13

Valli Yanni

## Introduction

Through this article, I would like to share with the readers a workshop that I ran in June 2000 on using PRA for community participation from a gender perspective. This two-and-a-half-day workshop was designed for Oxfam partners in Yemen, with the following objectives:

- To introduce community participation as a tool for more sustainable development work.
- To develop an understanding of the role of Oxfam partners as facilitators for community mobilisation and participation.
- To introduce the participants to the PRA tools and their relevance to their work.
- To enhance mainstreaming gender analysis in Oxfam partners' work.

## Yemen

The Republic of Yemen lies on the south-west corner of the Arabian Peninsula, bordering the Arabian Sea, Gulf of Aden, and Red Sea, between Oman and Saudi Arabia (Figure 1). The terrain of Yemen includes a narrow coastal plain backed by flat-topped hills and rugged mountains; and dissected upland desert plains in the centre slope into the desert interior of the Arabian Peninsula. Yemen is mostly desert; hot and humid along the west coast; temperate in the western mountains affected by seasonal monsoon; and extremely hot and dry in the east (desert).

The population of Yemen is 17 million (24% urban and 76% rural). On the Human Development Index, Yemen comes as country number 133. The following are some development indicators:

- Life expectancy at birth is 56 years.
- Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 live birth) is 82.
- 46% of children under five years of age are malnourished.
- 39% of the population has access to improved water sources.
- 56% of the adult population are illiterate (23.9% of men and 76.1% of women).

Figure 1 Map showing location of Yemen



(Map by courtesy of: [www.theodora.com/maps](http://www.theodora.com/maps))

## Participants

The participants in this workshop presented a diversity of backgrounds: urban and rural, men and women, NGOs, government (ministry of planning: NGO department), and Social Fund for Development<sup>1</sup>. They also presented a diversity of fields of work:

- Women's development (training, income generation, literacy, health and environment, education, income support, basic services, women's rights).
- Marginalised communities, providing basic services (health, literacy, housing), health and social activities,

<sup>1</sup> The Social Fund for Development (SFD) was established in 1997 as one of the measures to cushion the effects of the government's reform programmes on vulnerable groups, especially the poor. The SFD was formed as an autonomous agency with financial and administrative independence, governed by a Board of Directors, representing the government, NGOs, and the private sector under the chairmanship of the Prime Minister. The SFD seeks to reduce poverty by improving living conditions and providing income-generating opportunities for the poor.

income generation, women's empowerment, kindergarten, enrolling children in government schools.

- Disability (for blind, mentally retarded, and physically disabled): providing rehabilitation services, vocational training, teacher training, social work, inclusion in social services especially in education (basic and higher education).
- Social Fund for Development: community development (health, education, agriculture, environment, water), small loans, capacity building, planning, monitoring and evaluation.

This diversity was enriching to the participants, as well as to the process of learning. Participants contributed their wealth of experience in diverse fields of community development; raised many issues relating to both the potentials and the difficulties of using PRA, which brought reality closer to the discussions; and also allowed group and individual learning to take place in an atmosphere of fun!

## Community participation

The main focus of the workshop was on promoting community participation in the various development interventions undertaken by local partners, through the use of Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) tools. However, since PRA tools have now moved beyond the "rural" arena, I would like to refer to it here as participatory approaches. The analysis of community participation took place in three stages:

- Firstly, breaking down the word "community". Communities are not homogeneous entities. We need to consider who has power (leaders, money lenders, land owners, etc.) and who does not have much power (poor and marginalised people); also social differentiation in a community (men and women, boys and girls, race, ethnic background).
- Secondly, exploring the concept of participation (who participates in what, and how).
- Thirdly, reflecting on the changes in the role of partners as a result of the new approaches to understanding and working with communities using participatory approaches and tools.

This analysis allowed the participants to bring out much of their real experience of the diversified communities they work with. As a result, participatory approaches were not discussed in isolation of the specific contexts that they would be applied in, at a later stage. Within these contexts, participants identified two major obstacles to

community participation using participatory approaches: the opposition by the powerful in a community and donors' agendas.

## The opposition to real participation by the powerful in a community

Through focused and small group discussions, participants identified some strategies for dealing with such opposition, such as:

- Involving the opponents in the functioning of a project.
- Involving the beneficiaries in the planning and running of projects.
- Defining the role of government at a local level.
- Transparency in terms of project resources.
- Knowing the government plans.
- Strengthening the role of an NGO as a facilitator.
- Exploring donors' views in terms of capacity building of NGOs.
- Appropriate choice of participants in an NGO from the community.
- Taking all these issues into account at the stage of planning (before conflicts arise).

## Donors' agenda

The majority of participants in this workshop represented local NGOs, who receive funding mainly from foreign donors, including Oxfam. Participants recognised that these donors tend to have their own agenda in terms of philosophy, development approach, and methodology of work. Participants expressed their serious concern about coping with donors' constant changing agenda, that does not seem to allow enough time or space for local partners to develop their own identity and methodologies.

Examples were given about how donors tend to focus on certain approaches (forms for funding proposals, gender analysis, PRA) and require that partners follow the same approaches with the same pace. The capabilities, limitations, and obstacles facing local partners do not seem to be taken much into account by donors. As a result, community participation can become a burden for both NGOs and community unless donors take its requirements into account.

## PRA for the disabled

The main challenge to this workshop was in modifying PRA tools to accommodate the specific needs of certain participants (one participant with physical difficulties and two participants who are visually disabled). The challenge here was two-fold:

1. Difficulty in finding energisers that do not involve seeing or moving around:

- An adaptation of fruit salad<sup>2</sup> was used which was called *Daosha* (this means noise in Arabic). In this exercise you name people: sing, shout and whisper. When the person in the middle calls out one of these three words, those participants with this word would act it out (i.e. sing, shout or whisper their real names). When you say *Daosha* everyone does everything at the same time.
- Other energisers were in terms of minimum physical stretching: start from your feet/roots (organisations' philosophy and history), passing by the various steps (activities they are involved in – stretching arms to the front as if making steps), and then reaching up for the sky (achieving objectives).

2. Difficulty in combining visualisation (for sighted people) and non-visualisation (for non-sighted people) principles when using participatory approaches and tools. Strategies to overcome this difficulty included:

- Meeting of the two blind participants before the workshop to explain the process and the activities as well as go over the programme in detail. This meeting was much appreciated by them.
- Each participant had a 'seer' throughout the various sessions to make sure that they were fully involved in discussions, activities and presentations.
- Within activities and discussions, there was a conscious attempt to: address people by names; explain activities in details; and verbalise rather than pointing at things.
- At the end of using each participatory tool there was a reflection in terms of strengths, weaknesses, uses, and variations. This reflection also included ideas on how to adapt the tool to be used by non-sighted people.

In terms of the participatory approaches and tools themselves, tactile materials were used. For example, in mapping the community, glue was used to draw with, then grains (lentils or rice) or some powder was spread on top to make the maps more tactile. Dow (flour and water and a pinch of salt, no yeast) was used to illustrate the

<sup>2</sup> This is an energiser, where group members sit in a circle with the trainer/facilitator standing in the middle. All members are named after some fruits (for example: apple, melon, orange, etc.). The person in the middle calls out the name of one fruit. All the participants with this name must change chairs, including the person in the middle. One person will be left in the middle (without a chair), who then repeats the process by calling out another fruit. When "fruit salad" is called out, then everyone must change chairs. (For further details and other exercises, see *Participatory Learning and Action* by Jules Pretty, Irene Guijt, John Thompson, and Ian Scoones. 1995.)

**Figure 2 Social mapping: drawing with a glue pen, then spreading rice and lentils on the lines to make the map more tactile for the non-sighted participant to go over it with the help of another participant**



**Figure 3 Using dough with non-sighted participants to illustrate daily routines in men's and women's lives**



**Figure 4 Workshop evaluation form: for sighted participants (two-dimensional) and non-sighted participants (three-dimensional)**



daily schedules of men and women, with other materials such as paper clips, pins, grass, and grains.

These modifications to participatory approaches and tools provided a rich environment for learning for all involved: Oxfam, Oxfam partners (participants), and the workshop trainer.

## Training approach

The conventional approach to training in participatory approaches is to explain theoretically what participatory approaches are and what the tools are, then practise the tools in the field. The main feature of the methodology for running this workshop was starting the learning about participatory approaches by “doing the tool” first then reflecting on it, and ultimately backing this knowledge and practice with background information on participatory approaches. Unfortunately, time did not allow for field practise.

I, personally, found the latter approach more in line with the philosophy and principles of participatory approaches: starting from where people are and building on their knowledge and experience. In addition, tools were not given their known names until the end of reflection. The purpose of this was to allow the participants to name the tools on the basis of what they had experienced, and what was relevant to their local situations.

## Role and special skills

The discussions throughout the workshop challenged the participants in terms of their role when working with communities. It was realised that the role would need to change from a “decider-and-doer” to a “facilitator-and-listener”. As a result, participants acknowledged the need for developing and improving certain skills and attitudes to be able to take up such a role. These skills included: communication skills (including listening skills), gender analysis, and how to run a focused discussion. Attitudes required included: flexibility and adaptability, patience, observation and common sense, absorbing anger, not ignoring but involving all sectors of a community and knowing how to deal with them, being aware of not raising community expectations, honesty and transparency, respect for community traditions, ability to bring different opinions together, listening more than talking, transfer of knowledge and experience to the community, and acknowledging the knowledge of people in the community.

## Conclusion

As expected, two-and-a-half days was too short for participatory approaches training, especially for participants with first time exposure to participatory approaches. There was a shared recognition that this workshop would require some follow-up with the participants. This would imply a systematic approach to supporting partners, which would include: encouraging them to keep a record of their application of participatory approaches and tools and concepts of community participation when working with communities; exchanging visits between various projects to share learning, difficulties and coping mechanisms; and a refresher workshop for the same participants in six to eight months' time.

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## Knives and Forks

Josh Levene

### Objective

The aim of the exercise is to introduce participants to some of the principles of participation; especially how empowerment depends in part on transparency and sharing. It is especially effective with participants who are in positions of seniority.

### Time

- One hour.

### Materials

- A knife and fork (or something similar).
- Flipchart paper, pens.

### Format

- Participants seated in a close circle (preferably on chairs).

### Number of participants

- Minimum: eight; maximum: thirty; optimum: sixteen.

### Steps

1. Begin by having participants seated in a closed circle – include yourself in this circle.
2. Before the day begins, it is useful to have identified a co-conspirator to covertly explain the secret code to.
3. Explain to participants that during the course of this game, you want them to concentrate on how they are feeling.
4. Tell participants that you are only going to explain the rules of the game once – so they should listen carefully.
5. Explain to participants that all they are required to do is to pass the knife and fork onto the next person either crossed or uncrossed and, as they do so, to announce to the whole group whether they are “crossed” or “uncrossed”. Explain that you, the facilitator, will tell them whether they are correct or

not. Do not explain any more to them. There will be bemused looks and questions: ignore them and just get started!

6. You the facilitator start the process off. Now, here’s the secret code: whether participants are correct or not in announcing “crossed” or “uncrossed” does not depend at all on how they position the knife and fork – but on whether their legs are crossed or not! So for example, if a participant’s legs are crossed and s/he announces that the knives and forks are “crossed” then they are correct and you congratulate the participant. The participants can position the knives and forks any way they like – but they will only be correct if their announcement matches the position of their legs.
7. Keep participants passing the knives and forks around and around the circle. As the game progresses, participants quickly realise that there is a code to be cracked. Before long, some people will discover the code and join in congratulating or berating people depending on whether they get it right or wrong. As time progresses, those who haven’t yet cracked the code will begin to experience feelings such as frustration, infuriation, stupidity, apathy, boredom etc. These are all good indications that the exercise is going well.
8. About ten minutes of passing the knife and fork around is usually enough for participants to go through the full range of emotions. You’ll know when it is time to stop. At this stage (and before telling the participants the secret code) ask those who still haven’t cracked it how they are feeling. Write these up on a flipchart. Then ask those who have cracked it how they feel and record these. Then ask one of them to explain the code to those who haven’t got it yet.
9. Now ask those participants who cracked the code why they didn’t tell the rest of the group what the code was (they rarely do – yet the rules you explained did not mention that they could not).

10. Divide the participants up into four discussion groups; each covering one of the following sets of questions:

**Set A**

- When I'm disempowered I feel...?
- Towards those who disempower me I feel...?
- Examples of this are...?
- We are unable to participate when...?

**Set B**

- When I'm empowered I feel...?
- Towards those who empower me I feel...?
- Examples of this are...?
- We are able to participate when...?

11. After fifteen minutes ask the two Set A groups to come together in one group and the two set B groups to come together to share ideas. Ask them to record these ideas on a flip chart.
12. After another fifteen minutes ask Set A and set B to present to each other.
13. Hold a short plenary discussion and draw out the main points of the advantages of participation and disadvantages of non-participation.
14. This exercise can be followed up with identification of "upper-lower" relationships or other similar exercises that introduce participatory behaviours and attitudes.

**Variation on this theme**

An alternative discussion to that above may be held specifically around issues of information sharing and people's inability to participate when they are not in full possession of "the facts" or "rules". For example, encouraging greater information sharing between all stakeholders in Poverty Reduction Strategies.

**My experience**

- I usually precede this exercise with an energiser of Fruit Salad: this ensures that participants are already in four discussion groups, in the required seating format, and that they are relaxed and ready for anything!
- There are several advantages to identifying a co-conspirator. If they are seated opposite to you, they can help you check whether participants' legs are crossed or not on your side of the circle, of which you don't have a clear view of. They can also prove to participants that it is not just you who is making up the rules as you go along. Additionally, if that person is, relative to the other participants, perceived as a "lower" in some way, then it makes the rest feel doubly "inadequate".
- This exercise is most powerful when used with managerial or senior participants – especially when they are in a mixed group with more "junior" participants. It is a good leveller.
- But, because of that, people can get very sensitive and defensive – use your best judgement on who to use this exercise with.
- That said – don't be too shy about using this exercise! I have employed it with government ministers and international donors without hesitation. The aim is to make people conscious of the feelings dominant power dynamics, attitudes and behaviour produce. As long as you stress that it is a learning exercise and not personal, you should be fine.

**Josh Levene, IDS, Participation Group, Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, Brighton, BN1 9RE, U.K.**  
**Tel: +44 (0)1273 606261**  
**Fax: +44 (0)1273 621202**  
**Email: J.Stevens@ids.ac.uk**

# Notes



Welcome to the *In Touch* section of *PLA Notes*. Through these pages we hope to create a more participatory resource for the *PLA Notes* audience, to put you, as a reader, in touch with other readers. We want this section to be a key source of up-to-date information on training, publications, and networks. Your help is vital in keeping us all in touch about:

- **Networks.** Do you have links with recognised local, national or international networks for practitioners of participatory learning? If so, what does this network provide – training? newsletters? resource material/library? a forum for sharing experiences? Please tell us about the network and provide contact details for other readers.
- **Training.** Do you know of any forthcoming training events or courses in participatory methodologies? Are you a trainer yourself? Are you aware of any key training materials that you would like to share with other trainers?
- **Publications.** Do you know of any key publications on participatory methodologies and their use? Have you (or has your organisation) produced any books, reports, or videos that you would like other readers to know about?
- **Electronic information.** Do you know of any electronic conferences or pages on the Internet which exchange or provide information on participatory methodologies?
- **Other information.** Perhaps you have ideas about other types of information that would be useful for this section. If so, please let us know.

Please send your responses to: *PLA Notes*, Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Livelihoods Programme, IIED, 3 Endsleigh Street, London WC1H 0DD, U.K.

Fax: + 44 (0)20 7388 2826; Email: [PLA.Notes@iied.org](mailto:PLA.Notes@iied.org)

***PLA Notes* is published in February, June, and October.  
Please submit material two months before the publication date.**

## Books, reports and videos

### Angkinin ang Kaunlaran: participatory approach in local development planning in the Philippines

Video on CD-ROM, 2000

Farmer communities of Sta. Josefa, a poor rural municipality in Mindanao, take the centre stage in this 25-minute video. It highlights the value of people's participation in the local development planning process in the Philippines. Also featured is a participatory planning process in a second region – Toboso, Negros Occidental.



Available from: **KAISAHAN, Sampung Taon Ibayong Sigla sa Hamon ng Panahon, 43 Masikap St., Brgy. Pinyahan, Q.C. The Philippines**

**Tel: +63 46 9282085; +63 46 4330760;**

**Fax: +63 469286158;**

**Email: kaisahan@phionline.com or kaisahan@codewan.com.ph**

**A limited number of copies are available from: IDS, University of Sussex, Brighton BN1 9RE, U.K.**

**Tel: +44 (0) 1273 606261;**

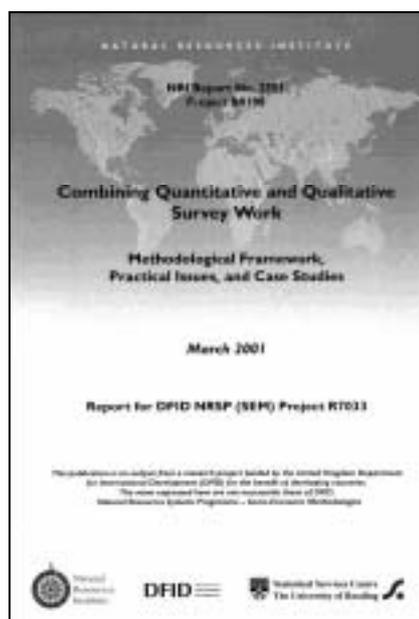
**Fax: +44 (0) 1273 621202;**

**Email: J. Stevens@ids.ac.uk**

### Combining Quantitative and Qualitative Survey Work: methodological framework, practical issues, and case studies

March 2001

This document is an output of the DFID-funded research project "Methodological Framework for Integrating Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches for Socio-Economic Survey Work". The project, jointly implemented by the Natural Resources Institute and the Statistical Services Centre, attempted to bridge the gap between informal/qualitative methods on the one hand and



formal/quantitative ones on the other. The report consists of: the main Methodological Framework document (also available as a Best Practice Guideline published by the Natural Resources Systems Programme of DFID); a series of six theme papers which look into a number of practical issues encountered when combining quantitative and qualitative survey techniques; and six case studies used to demonstrate how the two approaches can be integrated in survey work and experiments related to the natural resources sector.

Available from: **The University of Reading, Statistical Services Centre, Harry Pitt Building, Whiteknights Road, PO Box 240, Reading RG6 6FN, U.K.**

**Tel +44 (0) 118 9318025;**

**Email: statistics@reading.ac.uk;**

**Website: www.reading.ac.uk/ssc**

### Growing up in an Urbanising World

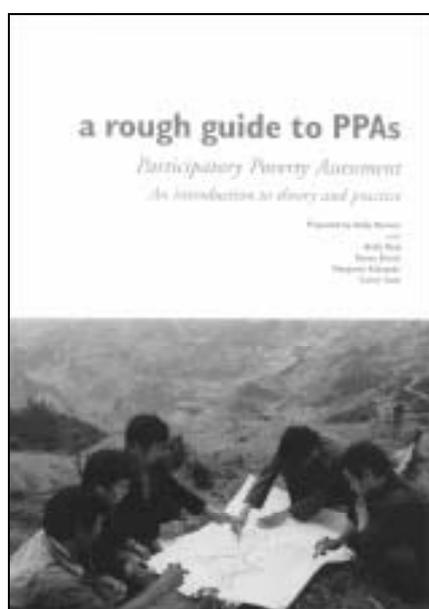
Edited by Louise Chawla, UNESCO Publishing / Earthscan, Paris / London

*Growing up in an Urbanising World* explores young people's relationship with their urban surroundings across a spectrum of low-income neighbourhoods in the industrialised and developing worlds. The book gives new emphasis to the active participation of children and youth in the planning, design and implementation of urban improvements, documents typical obstacles to



participatory processes and recommends policies and practices that will make cities more responsive to the needs of children, adolescents and their families.

Available from: **UNESCO Publishing online** ([www.unesco.org/publishing](http://www.unesco.org/publishing)) or **7 place de Fontenoy, 75352 Paris 07 SP, France.**  
**Fax: +33 1 45 68 5737; Tel: +33 1 45 68 4930 or Earthscan Publications Ltd, 120 Pentonville Road, London N1 9JN, U.K.**  
**Email: [earthinfo@earthscan.co.uk](mailto:earthinfo@earthscan.co.uk);**  
**Tel: +44 (0) 20 7278 0433; Fax: +44 (0) 20 7278 1142**



## A rough guide to PPAs: Participatory Poverty Assessment – an introduction to theory and practice

Andy Norton with Bella Bird, Karen Brock, Margaret Kakande, Carrie Turk, ODI, 2001

This handbook aims to help development professionals particularly in conceiving and designing a Participatory Poverty Assessment Programme. It gives useful indications on how to assess whether a PPA will be useful; how to decide where the PPA should be located institutionally; how to build the initial partnerships; how to find good technical assistance; how to design the PPA process; and, finally, how to enhance quality in the fieldwork and analysis. The manual also explores potential future directions for development practice arising out of the experience of PPAs.

Available from: **Overseas Development Institute, 111 Westminster Bridge Road, London SE1 7JD, U.K.**  
**Tel: +44 (0) 20 7922 0300; Fax: +44 (0) 20 7922 0399;**  
**Email: [odi@odi.org.uk](mailto:odi@odi.org.uk); Website: [www.odi.org.uk](http://www.odi.org.uk)**

## Creating Better Cities with Children and Youth

David Driskell, UNESCO Publishing / Earthscan, Paris / London

*Forthcoming*

This is a “how to” manual for promoting young people’s participation in urban planning, design, and implementation. It provides a framework for strategising participatory projects and building the institutional support necessary for effective implementation. It also provides concrete examples of methods that can be used to engage young people in looking at and evaluating their local environment; analysing and prioritising key issues; and developing and implementing a plan of action. It is particularly useful for reaching out to “marginalised” groups of young people who are typically excluded from local decision making. Readers who would like a description and analysis of how the participatory methods were used should read *Growing Up in an Urbanising World* (Louise Chawla, Ed., 2001).

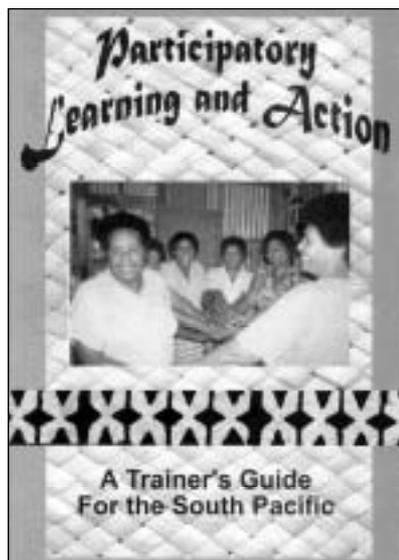
Available from: **UNESCO Publishing online** ([www.unesco.org/publishing](http://www.unesco.org/publishing)) or **7 place de Fontenoy, 75352 Paris 07 SP, France.** **Tel: +33 1 45 68 4930;**  
**Fax: +33 1 45 68 5737 or Earthscan Publications Ltd, 120 Pentonville Road, London N1 9JN, U.K.**  
**Email: [earthinfo@earthscan.co.uk](mailto:earthinfo@earthscan.co.uk);**  
**Tel: +44 (0) 20 7278 0433; Fax: +44 (0) 20 7278 1142**

## Mirrors of Ourselves: Tools of Democratic Reflection for Groups of Children and Youth

Roger Hart and Selim Iltus

This video is designed for use by groups of children or youth that are reasonably self-organised. It provides an introduction to how children and youth (and their facilitators) can assess the democratic qualities of their organisation and reflect critically on the structure of their organisation and their decision-making processes in order to improve upon them. The methods include: social maps, comparative benefits charts, card sorting, activity preference matrices, diagrams of political structure and political influence, and drama. The methods are illustrated by video, followed by colour animations to give the viewer a clear, step-by-step description of the method.

Available from: **Save the Children Alliance, Box 3394, Jawalikhel, Kathmandu, Nepal or from the Children’s Environments Research Group, Graduate Center of the City University of New York, 365 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10016-4309, U.S.A.**  
**Website: [www.cerg1.org](http://www.cerg1.org)**



## Participatory Learning and Action: a trainer's guide for the South Pacific ECOWOMAN, April 2000

This manual is aimed at practitioners seeking to incorporate PLA techniques in their approach when working with communities. It is designed to guide trainers/facilitators through the PLA process, from background research and coordination, training of PLA practitioners, conducting the field work, analysing the results, following up with the community, and the development of pilot projects. The manual is drawn from local experience gained in conducting PLA projects in Fiji.

Available from: **ECOWOMAN, P.O. Box 16737, Suva, Fiji; Tel: (679) 312371; Fax: (679) 303053; Email: Ecowoman@is.com.fj**

## Children of Thula Mntwana: growing up in cities, (video)

UNESCO and Jill Kruger Research CC  
*Forthcoming–Dec. 2001*

Children describe and evaluate their lives in Thula Mntwana, a squatter camp in Johannesburg (South Africa). The principal character, 13-year-old Zukiswa, explains how her family became squatters in Braamfontein, through force of circumstance. She tells of how she and other children in the squatter camp then learned through the UNESCO-MOST Growing up in Cities project to identify problems in their living environment and how they presented insights to public officials but, still struggle, nevertheless, in an inhospitable environment.

Available from: **UNESCO Publishing online (www.unesco.org/publishing) or 7 place de Fontenoy, 75352 Paris 07 SP, France. Tel: +33 1 45 68 4930; Fax: +33 1 45 68 5737**

## Growing up in Cities: partners in research and planning

Jill Swart-Kruger

This video records the first-ever workshop in South Africa at which children from a Johannesburg squatter camp join urban policy makers and planners, NGO and donor agencies to discuss problem areas in their lives and how these could be improved.

Available from: **Unisa Press, Video orders, PO Box 392, 0003 Pretoria, South Africa; Tel: +27 12 429-3081; Fax: +27 12 429-3221; Email: frasehhj@alpha.unisa.ac.za or thearl@alpha.unisa.ac.za**

## Growing Up in Canaansland

Editor: Jill Swart-Kruger

This report describes participatory research methods used with children aged 10 to 14 from the Canaansland squatter camp, and discusses the results. It outlines the children's preparations for the Mayor's workshop to share findings with urban planners, and summarises workshop deliberations. The subsequent, unexpected relocation of Canaansland to a desolate spot outside the city is recorded, and a petition lodged in protest is reproduced. An Epilogue contains the children's reflections.

Available from: **On the Dot Distribution, Attn: Marietha van Wyk, PO Box 487, Bellville, 7535, South Africa**

## PLA Notes on CD-ROM

This new CD-ROM covers issues 1 to 40 of *RRA/PLA Notes* – over 500 articles in total. It includes all the recent, popular Special Issues such as *Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation*, *Community Water Management* and *Deliberative Democracy and Citizen Empowerment*, as well as the General Issues, covering a wide variety of topics and tools. A powerful search engine allows users to search by key words for particular themes or authors, and printable, full text versions of all articles are included in portable document format (PDF). *PLA Notes* on CD-ROM will be an invaluable resource for practitioners, academics, and students interested in the scope and practical use of participatory approaches and tools. System requirements: Windows 95/98 or NT/2000. All other software required is included with the CD-ROM.

**Available: January 2002**

**Free subscribers to *PLA Notes* as at 31/10/01 will receive a copy of the CD-ROM in the first half of 2002. Other subscribers: please see order form on page 78.**

## Workshops and events

### Participatory Appraisal

21st–25th January 2002,  
University of Northumbria, U.K.

This is an interactive course, with great emphasis on learning by doing. The course is designed to enhance participants' transferable skills such as group working, personal development and communication. Participants will learn about the background and philosophies of participatory appraisal, get familiar with examples of projects that have used the methodology and become skilled at how to use the tools and techniques with confidence in "real world" settings through fieldwork placements.

For further information, please contact: **Dr Duncan Fuller, Division of Geography and Environmental Management, Lipman Building, University of Northumbria, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 8ST, U.K. Tel: +44 (0) 191 227 3951; Fax: +44 (0) 191 227 4715; Email: duncan.fuller@unn.ac.uk**

### Participation and Development with Gender

March–May 2002

In this short course, participants engage in the struggle to engender development work, and have space to reflect on the politics and complications of gender-sensitive development. The introduction starts with a thorough exploration of gender concepts and issues. Practical frameworks and other methods are introduced, with a critical perspective, e.g. gender analysis frameworks, participatory methods, M&E and gender etc. Participants consider how to institutionalise gendered approaches and encourage institutional change, and how to be effective in gender advocacy. Sectoral themes include sexual and reproductive health rights, rural livelihoods, income and gender, education and gender, agriculture, children and conflict.

### Participation & Development with Monitoring & Evaluation

September–November 2001, March–May 2002

The MEIA (Monitoring, Evaluation and Impact Assessment) short course emphasises approaches that integrate social analysis and awareness of social differentiation with effective M&E in applied development contexts. The fundamental concepts of MEIA are explored as are issues of quality, reliability, communication, and ethics, and core issues about the appropriateness of qualitative and quantitative approaches. Participants learn a range of methods, from quantitative indicators and survey methods to participatory approaches and interview skills, in the context of designing MEIA systems and processes.

### Urban Poverty Reduction and Policy

March–April 2002

Many poorer countries are struggling to cope with rapid urbanisation. As urban areas expand, poverty comes into the direct view of policymakers and civil society organisations. This course explores measures, methods and policies for urban poverty reduction.

For further information about these and other courses about participation, please contact: **Centre for Development Studies, University of Wales Swansea, Singleton Park, Swansea, SA2 8PP, Wales, U.K. Email: development.short.courses@swansea.ac.uk; Website: www.swan.ac.uk/cds/teaching/index.htm; Tel: +44 (0) 1792 295332; Fax: +44 (0) 1792 295682**

### International Course on Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation

28th February–2nd March 2002 (Pre-Session)  
4th–22nd March 2002

The participatory monitoring and evaluation (PM&E) course is designed for development project executives, research study leaders and extension officers who have been managing and/or implementing community-based development. It will examine PM&E at the community, programme and organisational levels. Selected cases will be presented and discussed. PM&E concepts and theories and methods, tools and techniques which have been tested and used in the field will be shared.

For further information, please contact: **Education and Training Program, International Institute of Rural Reconstruction, Y.C. James Yen Center, Silang 4118, Cavite, The Philippines. Telefax: +63 46 4142423; Tel: +63 46 4142417; Fax: +63 46 4142420; Email: Education&Training@iirr.org; Website (still to be launched): www.iirr.org**

### Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation

26th November–7th December 2001,  
Nairobi, Kenya

The course covers types and elements of M&E, setting up of M&E systems, development of indicators and data collection. Participants will share ideas, experiences and acquire skills in the use of various tools for monitoring and evaluation.

For further information, please contact: **The Course Co-ordinator, IIRR-Africa Regional Office, P.O. Box 66873, Kenya. Tel: +254 2 442610; Fax +254 2 448148; Email: training@iirr-africa.org or iirraro@form-net.com; Website: www.iirr-africa.org/training.htm**

# e-participation e-participation e-participation

Welcome to our e-participation page, which includes the latest news about electronic information, websites and email discussion lists. We would like to hear more from our readers about electronic resources developed in the South and in other languages. If you would like to recommend anything to be included in this section that you would like to share with other readers, please let us know!

## **NRM: Links for developing change in natural resource management**

[nrm.massey.ac.nz/changelinks/](http://nrm.massey.ac.nz/changelinks/)

This is an on-line guide for natural resource managers and others working to help improve the use of participatory approaches for environmental management. External links and on-site material offer approaches, information and theory in related fields such as sustainable development, adaptive management, collaborative learning, action research, facilitation, conflict resolution, information management and Internet use.

## **Popular Education for Human Rights: 24 participatory exercises for facilitators and teachers, by Richard Pierre Claude, HREA; <http://erc.hrea.org/Library/community/Claude00.html>**

This trainer's handbook seeks to promote participatory methods useful to human rights education facilitators. The manual was designed for non-formal education (but can be used in formal education as well), and gives teachers options appropriate for participants with minimal literacy skills. Women's and children's issues are explored, in terms of specified values, e.g., respect for dignity and fair rules, links between human rights and responsibilities, building civil society, confronting prejudice, 'information for empowerment', etc. The handbook is available free of charge from the Library section of The Electronic Resource Centre for Human Rights Education <http://erc.hrea.org>, an on-line repository of human rights education and training materials.

## **[www.crin.org/](http://www.crin.org/)**

The Child Rights Information Network (CRIN) is a global network that disseminates information about the Convention on the Rights of the Child and child rights to a wide and varied membership, including NGOs, United Nations agencies, inter-governmental organisations, educational institutions and other child rights practitioners. The website provides information about publications, events, legal treaties and news, including material on child and youth participation. For more information email: [info@crin.org](mailto:info@crin.org)

## **Dev-Zone International PLA Update**

The Participatory, Learning and Action Update is an irregular email update of news, resource materials and

upcoming events about participatory approaches to development compiled by the Dev-Zone (formerly Development Resource Centre). For inquiries please contact: **Email:**

**Gitanjali at [gbedi@drc.org.nz](mailto:gbedi@drc.org.nz) or write to Dev-Zone, PO Box 12440, Aotearoa Wellington, New Zealand. Tel: +64 4 496 9597; Fax: +64 4 496 9599; Website: [www.dev-zone.org](http://www.dev-zone.org)**



## **Mekong Info: Regional Information System on Participatory Natural Resource Management [www.mekonginfo.org](http://www.mekonginfo.org)**

Mekong Info is an interactive system for sharing information and knowledge about participatory natural resource management (NRM) in the Lower Mekong Basin. In addition to over 2,000 documents (full-text and abstract) in the Library, MekongInfo provides: a contacts database of individuals, projects and organisations, news and announcements of events, relevant web links, a gallery of useful resource materials, a forum for online discussions, and a free web hosting service.

## **Kabissa: Space in the Internet for the African non-profit sector on the Internet for the African non-profit [www.kabissa.org/ctnetwork](http://www.kabissa.org/ctnetwork)**

Kabissa is a non-profit capacity-building organisation that seeks to further democratic change and social justice in Africa by providing a space on the Internet for the African non-profit sector. Eligible non-profits get free membership accounts, including standard email mailboxes, FTP accounts, web space, mailing lists, and more. By using the search facility available, you will be able to access several full-text documents around children and participation in the African context.

## **Growing Up in Cities**

**[www.unesco.org/most/growing.htm](http://www.unesco.org/most/growing.htm)**

This is the website of a UNESCO-MOST project, which is run in collaboration with the Norwegian Centre for Child Research and Childwatch International, Norway. See the introduction to the special issue Overview (page 3) for further details.

## **The Childwatch International Research Network [www.childwatch.uio.no/](http://www.childwatch.uio.no/)**

Childwatch International is a non-profit, non-governmental network of institutions involved in research for children. It initiates and coordinates research and information projects on children's living conditions and the implementation of children's rights. Its website gives detailed information on the network's activities, as well as news on forthcoming conferences, recent publications and other activities. It also compiles lists of relevant links to child-centred institutions, on-line research reports and journals, and bibliographies.

# RCPLA Network

In this section, we aim to update readers on activities of the **Resource Centres for Participatory Learning and Action Network (RCPLA) Network** ([www.rcpla.org](http://www.rcpla.org)) and its members. For more information please contact the RCPLA Network Steering Group:

**West Africa Region:** Awa Faly Ba (*Interim Network Chair*), c/o IIED Programme Sahel, Point E, Rue 6 X A, BP 5579, Dakar, Sénégal; Tel: +221 824 4417; Fax: +221 824 4413; Email: [awafba@sentoo.sn](mailto:awafba@sentoo.sn)

**Asian Region:** Jayatissa Samaranayake, Institute for Participatory Interaction in Development (IPID), 591, Havelock Road, Colombo 06, Sri Lanka; Tel: +94 1 555521; Tel/Fax: +94 1 587361; Email: [ipidc@panlanka.net](mailto:ipidc@panlanka.net)

**European Region:** Jane Stevens, Participation Group, Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, Brighton. BN1 9RE, U.K.; Tel: + 44 (0) 1273 678690; Fax: + 44 (0) 1273 21202; Email: [participation@ids.ac.uk](mailto:participation@ids.ac.uk); Participation group website: [www.ids.ac.uk/ids/particip/](http://www.ids.ac.uk/ids/particip/)

**Latin American Region:** Fernando Dick, Dirección de Programas de Investigación y Desarrollo (DPID), Universidad Nur, Casilla 3273, Ave Cristo Redentor No 100, Santa Cruz, Bolivia; Tel: +591 3 363 939; Fax: +591 3 331 850; Email: [participa@tabarsi.nur.edu](mailto:participa@tabarsi.nur.edu); Website: <http://dpid.nur.edu>

**North Africa & Middle East Region:** Emad Morris, Center for Development Services 4 Ahmed Pasha Street, Citibank Building, Garden City, Cairo, Egypt; Tel: +20 2 795 7558; Fax: +20 2 794 7278; Email: [cds.lrc@neareast.org](mailto:cds.lrc@neareast.org); Website: [www.neareast.org/explore/cds/index.htm](http://www.neareast.org/explore/cds/index.htm)

**Southern and Eastern Africa Region:** John Kennedy, Participatory Methodologies Forum of Kenya (PAMFORK), Jabavu Road, PCEA Jitegemea Flats, Flat No. D3, P.O. Box 2645, KNH Post Office, Nairobi, Kenya; Tel/Fax: +254 2 716609; Email: [pamfork@nbnet.co.ke](mailto:pamfork@nbnet.co.ke)

## Pamfork's participatory poverty assessments (PPA) experiences and forthcoming regional RCPLA workshop

The Participatory Methodologies Forum of Kenya (PAMFORK) in conjunction with the African Medical and Research Foundation (AMREF) were mandated by the Government of Kenya to carry out participatory assessments on poverty. The exercise was funded by the British Department for International Development (DFID) and was carried out from January and February 2001. The PPA exercise was designed to provide a detailed input to the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) process. Some of the causes of poverty identified included the following:

- People are poor because they were born poor and no effort was made to change the situation.
- Poor health was acknowledged by poor people to be the major cause of poverty.
- AIDS is a major hindrance to development and a major initiator of poverty.
- Corruption is another contributory factor to poverty development.
- Institutions at the level of communities are very weak.

Other problems cited included landlessness, inadequate marketing opportunities for agricultural produce alongside its low price value, inadequate water, poor sanitation, poor methods of agricultural farming and techniques, tribal and ethnic disputes and general lack of security.

All the above are summarised in *Voices of the People for Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper*.

PAMFORK, in conjunction with the PRA Network of Zimbabwe and Uganda Participatory Development Network (UPDNet), are also organising an RCPLA regional workshop to launch the RCPLA Southern and Eastern Network, to be hosted by the PRA Network of Zimbabwe will host this event which will also be a strategic planning event/ workshop for the region. Tentative dates are late November or early December 2001. This workshop will focus on strategic planning and the exchange of experiences, conceptions, challenges and the way forward. Contact **PAMFORK (see above) for more information**.

## *Encuentro latinoamericana: experiencias sobre diagnóstico y planeación participativa comunitaria*

*(Latin American Meeting: experiences in diagnostic and participatory community planning)*. Islas Mujeres, Quintana Roo, México, agosto 1995 (Published: 2000).

This volume offers 30 cases and experiences presented at *The Latin American Meeting on Diagnostic and Participatory Community Planning*, Islas Mujeres, Quintana Roo, Mexico, August 1995. The result of two years of preparation, it was organised by the World Resources Institute, GEA and the Centro de Estudios de la Realidad Económica y Social (Bolivia). The objective of this meeting was to review, critically analyse and identify a plan of action to improve participatory approaches used for rural development in Latin America. Main themes included community action participatory methods, participatory action with regional social organisations, projects in

forested areas, and experiences of international institutions with participatory methods. The compilation of transcripts from recorded presentations and papers is completed by the minutes resulting from the debates and work groups. This book is an invaluable resource for development practitioners. For more details contact: **Grupo de Estudios Ambientales AC, Allende 7, Sta Ursula Coapa DF, Coyoacan CP 04650, Mexico;**



**Tel: +52 5 617 9027; Fax: +52 5 617 9027;; Website: www.laneta.apc.org/gea/; Email: gea@laneta.apc.org**

### Training on Public Consultation in Environmental and Social Assessment of Projects in Nigeria

The Nigeria PRA Network (NIPRANET), in collaboration with the World Bank, delivered a training workshop on "Public Consultation in Environmental and Social Assessment of Projects", organised for officials from the Agricultural Development Programmes (ADPs) and Micro-Environmental Management Programmes (MEMP) in Nigeria.

About 60 participants attended the training. The main objectives were to build the capacities of participants in the use of participatory approaches to environmental and social assessment of projects. The workshop also acquainted participants with the safeguard policies of the World Bank.

"Lecture" sessions as well as experience-sharing sessions were held to capture the objectives of the workshop. In addition, a field visit gave participants a practical appreciation of PRA as a tool for environmental and social assessment of projects. The training workshop was held in Jos, Nigeria in June 2001. For further information, please contact: **Abdulkareem Lawal, Program Coordinator, Nigeria PRA Network (NIPRANET), 28A, New Dawaki Road, Off Sultan Road, Kaduna, Nigeria; Tel/Fax: +234 62 242 495; Email: nipranet@infoweb.abs.net**

### Participatory initiatives in Sri Lanka

Over the last few months, the Institute for Participatory Interaction in Development (IPID) in Sri Lanka has been using participatory methodologies for several research studies, impact assessments and project formulation/planning activities. The work includes:

- A study on the Impact of Rural Electrification on Gender and Poverty in collaboration with MARGE in France for the World Bank.
- A study on "Human Insecurity and the Threat of Firearms: Perspectives from South Asia". The project was coordinated by the Small Arms Survey, International

Institute for Graduate Studies, Geneva and the Regional Center for Strategic Studies (RCSS).

- Consultation workshops with dairy farmers in Sri Lanka and their Service Providing organisations, initiated to obtain inputs/ insights into the formulation of a project proposal to develop the dairy industry in Sri Lanka.

Other projects include: using PRA methods to conduct baseline surveys; micro-planning and monitoring of inputs and outcomes of a project to promote cultivation of Asian pears and strawberry among small farmers; and an assessment of the socio-economic benefits and impacts of the Kirindi Oya Irrigation Project on the livelihoods of farmers. For more information contact: **IPID (see above)**

### Radio programmes in Nepal and related websites

The Nepal Participatory Action Network (NEPAN) is continuing to run its regular radio programmes on Participatory Development Approaches and Processes, jointly produced with Sagamath 102.4 FM. NEPAN now air this programme on a weekly basis, every Friday at 7:45 pm to 8:00 pm from 19th Asoj 2058 (5th October 2001). If you miss the programme, it can be downloaded from [www.radiosagamatha.org](http://www.radiosagamatha.org).

NEPAN has also redesigned its website ([www.nepan.org.np/](http://www.nepan.org.np/)). The two NEPAN publications *Sahabhagita* (Participation) in Nepali, and a yearly English magazine *Participation* can be downloaded or ordered by email.

For more information, contact: **Rabi Chitrakar, Information Officer, Nepal Participatory Action Network (NEPAN), New Baneshwor Chowk (South), PO Box 13791, Kathmandu, Nepal. Tel: +977 1 482955; Fax: +977 1 419718 (attn: NEPAN); Email: nepan@mos.com.np; Website: www.nepan.org.np/**

### The Participatory Approaches Network for London launched

In London, many local area initiatives and regeneration schemes have begun to use PA in their work. This network offers examples of good practice, better understanding of the value of this approach and access to advice, and aims to act as a "hub" connecting other networks and groups across London. Specifically it aims to:

- Link practitioners through regular workshops, meetings and a website.
- Support practitioners by developing a mentoring system for those new to PA.
- Share information through exploring case studies and examples of the use of PA.

For more information, contact: **Sue Lloyd-Evelyn, King's Fund, London. U.K. Tel: +44 (0) 20 7307 2675. A website at [www.participatory-london.org.uk/](http://www.participatory-london.org.uk/) is being developed in association with IIED7.**



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Nazneen Kanji and Laura Greenwood, October 2001

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Bainbridge V, Foerster S, Pasteur K, Pimbert M, Pratt G, Iliana Yaschine Arroyo, 2000

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