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Not for children only: lessons learnt from young people's participation

by LOUISE CHAWLA and VICKY JOHNSON

Spaces for common ground

Around the world now, one hears rhetoric about children's participation and finds many examples of young people's creativity and capability, yet the practice of children's participation has not been mainstreamed into development policy. Children's interests are often assumed to be covered by extending support to women as mothers. However, this does not adequately address children's rights and needs. When young people are excluded from participatory processes, or processes including them are kept separate from broader initiatives for community development, it can be detrimental to both young people and development goals. This paper highlights some of the learning that has been gained from discourse and practice relating to young people's participation and how it might be integrated into the broader development field. It starts by reviewing the background to work in this field and goes on to draw out practical learning.

In addition to two special issues relating to children, *Participatory Learning and Action* has carried a stream of articles showing best practice in working in more participatory ways with children and young people (see Box 1). Since early editions, it has shown the importance of working with different groups by age as well as gender. Among policy makers and organisations that work on development agendas,

Box 1: Young people's participation in *Participatory Learning and Action*

Two special issues have carried a range of articles on creative methods, ethical considerations, working with special populations, and other aspects of good practice with young people: *PLA Notes 25: Children's Participation* and *PLA Notes 42: Children's Participation – evaluating effectiveness*.

Articles in other issues have covered the areas of young people and HIV/Aids, (a series of articles in *PLA Notes 37*), drug and substance misuse (Darren Garratt and Caroline Stokes in *PLA Notes 38*), unemployment and health (Teresa Cresswell in *RRA Notes 16*), literacy (Sara Cottingham in *PLA Notes 32*), and environmental education (Sonia Gomez Garcia and Joze Pizarro Neyra in *PLA Notes 40*, and Ian Baird *et al.* in *PLA Notes 30*). There are also important examples of different issues of facilitation and a range of approaches such as street theatre in Brazil (Barbara Santos, *PLA Notes 39*), educational theatre in Kenya (Roger Chamberlain *et al.* in *PLA Notes 23*), child health calendars (Eleanor McGee in *PLA Notes 27*), Venn diagrams (Carin and Duke Duchscherer, *PLA Notes 27*), photography (Joanna Howard and Anna Blackmun in *PLA Notes 39*), modelling (E. Jonfa *et al.* in *RRA Notes 14*), and a range of methodologies in Uganda (Joanita Sewagudde *et al.* in *PLA Notes 28*). There are also examples of looking at institutionalisation (articles by Louisa Gosling and by Vicky Johnson in *PLA Notes 24*) and urban youth as community leaders (Laurie Ross and Mardi Coleman in *PLA Notes 38*).

All articles from issues 1-40 can be downloaded in PDF format from www.planotes.org

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however, children are usually seen as a separate sector, often solely represented in projects focused on education and the formation of children’s clubs. When it comes to processes addressing natural resources, water and irrigation, or income generation, children are often considered irrelevant. They may sometimes be consulted, but they are rarely seen as key stakeholders in action planning, implementation and ongoing monitoring and evaluation, even when decisions impact on their lives. Yet children are critical to the broader move to rights-based approaches, and those who work on children’s rights have considerable experience to share.

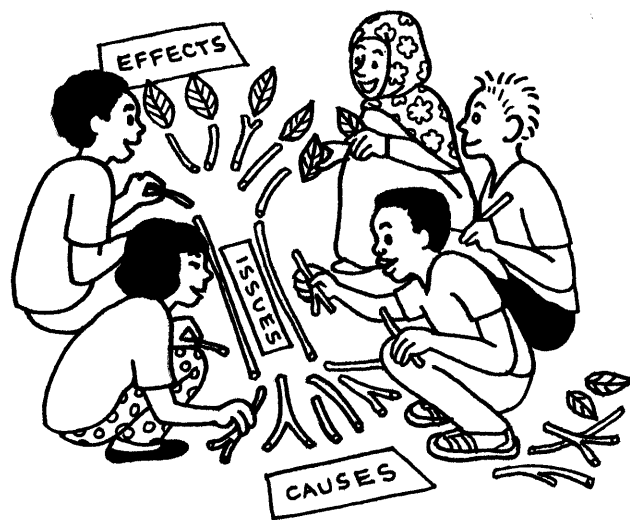
For children’s participation, the watershed event was the United Nations adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in 1989. It has now been ratified by all but two member nations, making it the most rapidly and widely accepted human rights document in history¹. This is true despite its radical implications, because it contains a series of ‘participation clauses’ that extend the basic civil rights of freedom of assembly, speech, and information to children. Article 12 states that children have a right to express their views in all matters that affect them; and the Committee on the Rights of the Child, which reviews the reports that ratifying nations must submit to document implementation, has designated this idea as one of the four fundamental principles that all other provisions of the Convention must consider². Most current initiatives by governments, international agencies and child-focused organisations fostering children’s participation are explicitly based on these claims.

As a consequence, most current participatory projects with children have been grounded in a rights-based approach from the beginning, whereas efforts to broaden adult participation in community development are moving in this direction. In addition, efforts to include young people have had to give careful attention to issues of ethics and power in prac-

¹ The United States and Somalia are the only nations that have not formally ratified the CRC.

² The other fundamental principles are non-discrimination, the right to survival and development, and consideration of the best interests of the child as the first priority in all actions affecting children.

Illustration from cover of *PLA Notes 42, Children’s participation – evaluating effectiveness*



tice. Here, too, the broader development field has much to learn. This article emphasises the implications of participatory work with children and young people for all age groups, drawing on practical experience with ‘children’ (defined by the CRC as all people under the age of 18), as well as young adults in their early 20s. This age group accounts for about half of the world’s population, yet despite its size and its importance as societies’ ‘living bridge’ to the future, programmes for children and young people have been generally relegated to the sidelines of the development field. Placing young people’s participation at the centre of development policy has the potential to introduce fresh and much needed perspectives, improve practice, and create more effective partnerships.

As authors, we write from experience in both urban and rural development in the North and South (see our biographies at the end of this article). Together, we consider issues that the field currently faces, and look ahead to benefits that could be achieved for all ages if young people were moved from the sidelines to the centre of the development agenda.

Formal initiatives to include young people in community development go back to the era of advocacy planning for grassroots urban renewal in Britain and the United States in the 1960s and 1970s. Efforts to include young adolescents in these processes are exemplified by the book *Growing Up in Cities* edited by Kevin Lynch in 1977 (Box 3). In the 1980s and 1990s, innovative methods were created to understand the lives of street and working children (for one example, see Boyden and Ennew in Box 3.) The report *Listening to Smaller Voices*, published in 1995, showed how PRA

Children from a Johannesburg squatter camp, who have been elected by their peers to present their group's ideas, rehearse for a mayor's workshop on improving conditions for squatter children. Passing the toy microphone ensures that each child gets a fair chance to talk, girls as well as boys



Photo: Melinda Swift

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methods could be adapted to young people in rural communities. More radically, youth revolts like the 'generation of '68' in Europe, anti-war protests in the United States, the Soweto uprising, and the Palestinian Intifada demonstrated adolescents' and young adults' potential for political action. Currently, a rich collection of participatory techniques has accumulated and many successful examples of practice demonstrate how young people's competence, creativity and sense of fairness can be channelled in constructive ways if they are given roles in shaping their communities. The great challenge that this field now faces is institutionalising participation by bringing young people on board from the beginning to help set goals and strategies and to evaluate outcomes that affect them. Until this happens, successful examples will remain 'random acts of excellence'.

All marginalized groups face barriers against partnership and shared power. This is true for the poor as a class, ethnic minorities, and women, so it should not be surprising that advocates for young people's participation should find themselves at the same impasse. On this front, those who facilitate

children's participation have much to learn from older traditions of community organising with adults in terms of strategies to not only provide a voice for the excluded, but also ensure that their voices get heard and generate action.

Although children and young people share the status of other marginalized groups in some ways, in other ways they remain distinctive, and this distinctiveness has led to certain emphases in philosophy and practice from which the field of development at large can benefit. Children are a marginalized group, representing a universal aspect of human experience. When working with children, adults encounter what they have been as well as the generation to whom they must entrust the future. Therefore children embody both memory and hope. At the same time, they are especially vulnerable. Their marginality is compounded by the fact that if they are poor, or female, or an ethnic minority, they are in addition *young* and therefore least likely to be heard. Because they have less experience of the world, they can be easily manipulated, and they lack basic elements of political power such as a chance to vote or hold office. Therefore the

Feedback given by children at a Child Rights meeting in Plan Indonesia



Photo: Development Focus

concept of *partnership* lies at the core of work with young people. Partnerships require spaces for all ages to come together in dialogue, if community processes are to be fair, inclusive, and build alliances for sustained change.

Young people are not the only ones who can gain from these coalitions. The inclusion of children has the potential to change political processes in profound ways. It places the concept of care as well as autonomy at the heart of democratic theory. Children's dependency puts adults under a special obligation to protect them from harm and to provide for their needs, yet the basic needs that children express are conditions for well-being for all ages in society – such as safety, secure homes, adequate food and clean water, attractive environments, the protection of the natural world, education, fair livelihoods, friendly acceptance, and a hopeful future. Attention to children's needs also requires a timeframe that considers the consequences of decisions far into the future. Nobody can make these points more movingly than children themselves in a participatory forum. Therefore development programmes that put children at the centre are well positioned to unify diverse groups and to build a strong foundation for broad alliances for progressive change.

Good practices for all

In addition to the potential to unify diverse groups, participatory projects with young people have much to offer in terms of the day-to-day operations of a project. Given their grounding in the CRC, the clear differentials of power between children and adults, and the twin mandates of autonomy and care, the best projects with children and young people have shown a concern for human rights, ethics, clear communication, and capacity building that can provide models for good practice with all ages. The following sections suggest different facets of this rights-based approach that can be extended to broader development processes.

Rights-based approaches

The field of children's participation has much to share about how the language of rights translates into processes on the ground. The 3 'Ps' of the CRC – **protection, provision and participation** – can be helpful for all groups to consider in terms of how they work together in practice. At the same time, there is a challenge to understand child rights in the context of human rights and to work through processes with different stakeholders, including girls and boys, to determine

A timeline carried out by Rachel Bray and a streetchild in Kathmandu to discuss his work and life

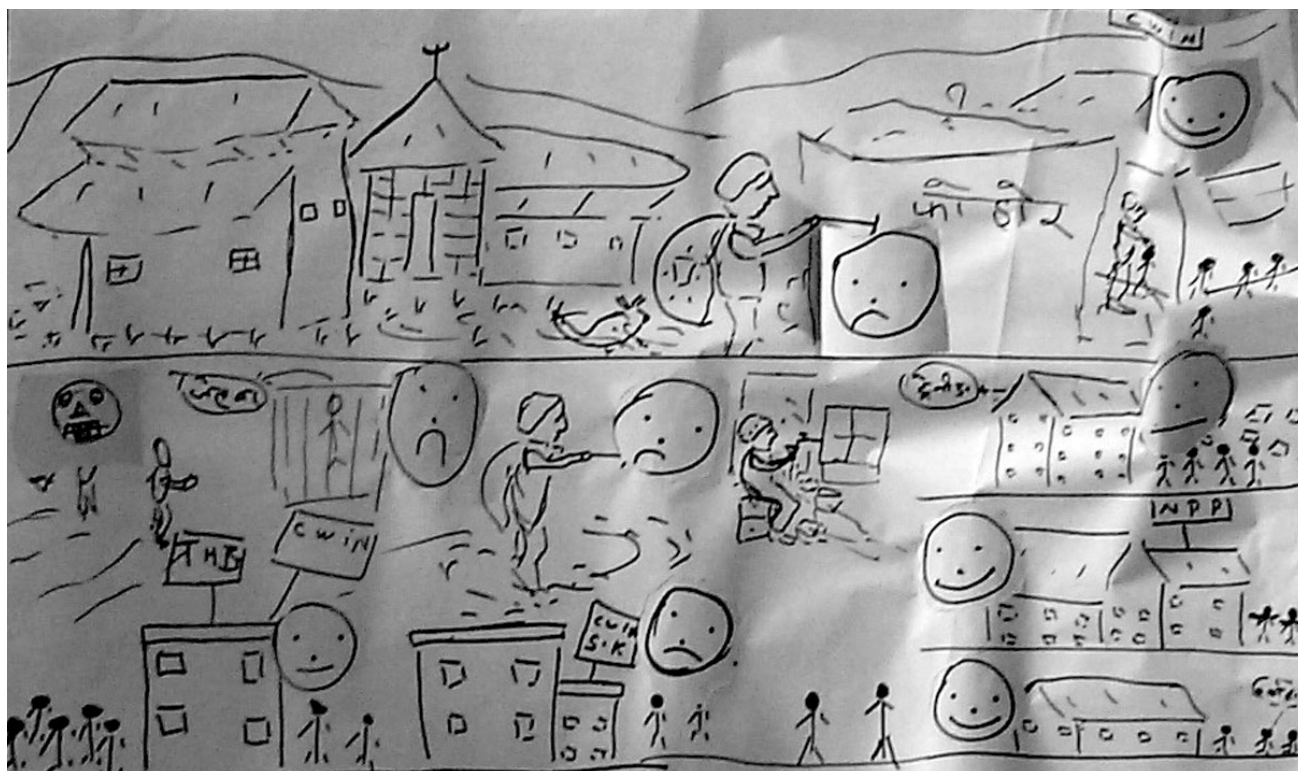


Photo: Development Focus

what this means for practice. There is a tendency for Child Rights Training to rely on simply teaching the articles of the CRC and encouraging programmes to spread this knowledge among children and adults; but the best models also embed children's rights in a larger human rights framework, focus on how to apply rights in day-to-day activities, and demonstrate how work with children connects to broader development agenda.

A series of Save the Children Norway sites in Africa have shown one way that these goals can be achieved (see, for example, Irene Guijt's report in Box 3). Separate workshops are carried out with children, young women, young men, older women, and older men at a village level, and then the community identifies common priorities that can be merged into a Community Action Plan on which everyone can work. Additionally, Save the Children commits itself to move forward with the priorities that are special to children. Sometimes the children's groups are divided into younger and older ages or those who attend school and non-schoolgoers. Priorities at the village level can be coordinated into a District Plan of Action for Children, with an understanding of how some goals can serve and mobilise other age groups as well. For example, all ages may determine that there is a need for

quickly maturing crops that can generate income, and in addition, with the children's suggestion that a community group should form to maintain local school buildings. In addition, more participatory work using visual forms of communication can feed into children's participation in decision-making processes in schools (see, for example, Cox and Robinson-Pant 2003, *Empowering Children through Visual Communication* in Box 3).

Understand starting points and who you are including

More and more, people in the development profession recognise the importance of reaching the poorest of the poor, the socially excluded, those from minority religious and ethnic groups, and people with differences in dis/ability. This recognition of the need to involve all stakeholders does not, however, always extend to children. Even when children have been consulted by researchers or project staff, their perspectives are not always integrated into processes of community planning, and even less so into participatory monitoring and evaluation systems that are developed locally. Thus there are examples of projects installing water taps which are too high for children to reach, introducing income-earning activities that lead to children being taken out of school to assist their

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parents, and resettling families in land reform programmes that weaken children's safety networks (see *Rights Through Evaluation*, Box 3).

Work that has regarded children as stakeholders in development processes has benefited from their insights. Work carried out with Action Aid in Nepal for *Listening to Smaller Voices* helped us understand the contribution of children in rural households alongside adults and issues of child labour. It dispelled some myths about children working in carpet factories and brought the harsh realities of living in mountain areas to light, especially for girls. The book *Stepping Forward* contains examples of other workers who have listened to children, understood new realities, and responded to their concerns through changed programming.

Some of the most innovative and exciting work has been with street children and children in the sex trade. The manual *Children in Focus* by Jo Boyden and Judith Ennew (Box 3) documents insights on techniques and ethical frameworks that have evolved in working with these and other marginalized groups of young people. This work has helped to focus on children as active participants rather than just recipients of aid, and it has led to advocacy work in vocalising rights in local, national and international arenas.

One way in which participatory processes have been continually improved, as documented in past issues of *Participatory Learning and Action*, is to disaggregate information by age as well as gender, ethnicity, and relative well-being. Development processes in the UK now require rigorous statutory monitoring of who has been consulted, where priorities in the community lie, and how to evaluate impacts for different groups within society. In *Regeneration through Community Assessment and Action*³, a training programme offered

³ Regeneration through Community Assessment and Action is a trademark of Development Focus Trust.

Box 2: Integrating Children's Participation into Development Processes

The following points arise from work that Development Focus has carried out in South Africa, Nepal and Indonesia, drawing on the experience of more than 50 different types of projects and organisations. They suggest how to integrate children's rights into broader development processes:

- Understand the starting points of different children and adults in communities and make sure that people who are not usually consulted can participate.
- Make sure that processes are flexible and use language, tools and approaches that reach different groups of children and adults in a way that they can relate to.
- Make processes transparent and action oriented, and make it clear when there are areas of agreement and disagreement between the perspectives of different children and adults.
- Allow separate spaces for girls, boys, men and women to articulate their views, and form strategies for how to deal with conflicts of opinion.
- Have clear systems of monitoring and evaluation that engage children and adults regarding their different perspectives on success.
- Have clear ethical and safety frameworks to protect both children and marginalized adults in their participation.
- Encourage training and ongoing support in participatory processes, including looking at how child rights can be seen in the context of human rights, and how rights can be applied in practical programming.

For more background, see the article by Vicky Johnson and Robert Nurick in *PLA Notes* 47 and the report *Rights Through Evaluation* (Box 3 and www.devfocus.org.uk).

by Development Focus, coding systems give a disaggregated and scaled up picture of information that includes age as one of many variables (see Johnson and Nurick, *PLA Notes* 47). In this process, it is important to remember that children and youth, like adults, cannot be seen as homogenous groups.

Processes that are fun and engaging

It is important to use language, tools and approaches that reach different groups of children and adults in ways that they can relate to, to make processes intrinsically engaging, and to remember that what is culturally appropriate may vary due to location, ethnicity and social situation. There are many examples of using a range of visual tools with children including diagrams and drawing, video and photographs, role-plays and drama, singing and poetry. In addition, children and youth often have their own ways of communicating that are different from adults. Involving young people as team members and researchers can help practitioners be flexible and sensitive in this respect.

Young people often say that the most valuable part of a project is the chance to do things that are fun and mean-

Girls at a school in the Salford area, UK, evaluating a policing project



Photo: Development Focus

ingful with friends. Many processes with adults also take into account the way in which people interact and whether participants are enjoying themselves, but sometimes we are all so time pressured and focused on action and research that we forget to have fun! Again, young people can help monitor these aspects of a project.

Transparency and action-oriented processes

Processes should always be as transparent as possible and repeated checks need to be made throughout the process in order to ensure that ideas are communicated as intended. The guiding rule is to take time to listen – to allow children to raise questions and concerns and to verify that understanding is shared.

Processes need to be action-oriented, as we have a responsibility not just to listen to children and allow them to be heard, but to also act on their concerns. It is important to clarify potential limits to how much may be achieved and not appear to promise too much, but at the same time, opportunities for young people to experience competence should be programmed into every stage to ensure that the

participatory experience as a whole will be empowering. For example, if young people have an opportunity to design a youth space over which they are given control, they are less likely to feel dispirited if their local council fails to follow through with their suggestions for other public areas.

Create safe spaces and manage conflict

Safe spaces need to be created where young people can feel free to express themselves, where powerful feelings can be managed, and where issues of power can be honestly explored. Time needs to be allowed for trust building. To achieve these ends, separate spaces are often needed where different groups of children and adults can articulate their views.

It is important not to go into a situation looking for consensus, for if all people are allowed to make their opinions heard, there will be differences. Strategies need to be planned to deal with disagreements, especially between children and adults. Sometimes people just need to understand the perspectives of others, but at other times it is necessary to apply processes of conflict negotiation and

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peace building. Consensus on some issues may need to be built through the often slow process of working from people’s starting points and building on indigenous processes of conflict resolution. People coming into a community to get involved in participatory processes need to remember that they are not observers of a static culture, but there are many different cultures within a community, and the most vulnerable members need to be supported to change the status quo in the direction of human rights and children’s rights.

Participatory monitoring and evaluation

Projects in broader development processes typically fail to have monitoring and evaluation processes that include children as stakeholders, even when they introduce changes that affect children’s lives. Participatory monitoring and evaluation (PM&E) needs to be seen as an integral part of a rights based approach, with clear guidelines to engage children and adults regarding their different perspectives of success. Processes need to be monitored to ensure that they do not actually put children and vulnerable adults at risk rather than improving their quality of life. Project staff need to regularly ask themselves: *Are we further empowering the already powerful, rather than changing harsh realities for girls and boys in households and communities already divided by difference? Are we supporting a process of change that is truly leading to improved realities?*

There are good examples of inclusive monitoring processes. Save the Children UK, for example, devoted funding for PM&E during the full three years of an initiative called *Saying Power* that supported young people in running their own project with their peers. The television series *Soul City* in South Africa, which provides ‘edutainment’, involves children in reviewing programmes made by

children for children. In her book *Involving Young Researchers*, Perpetua Kirby has shown a number of ways that young people can contribute (Box 3).

Ethical and safety frameworks

All of the issues covered above have ethical dimensions. Formal ethical frameworks need to be developed in the context of local institutional cultures, protocols and legislation. Organisations need to not just develop and discuss these frameworks, but also work through the practicalities of putting ethical procedures into place. In work with children, it should be standard procedure to obtain informed consent, maintain clear rules of confidentiality, and protect children from risks. For example, Development Focus, in its work on Community Assessment and Action in the UK, has local safety and ethical frameworks for every process, both to protect children and more marginalized adults in their participation, and to ensure team members’ own safety in their work on the streets and in different urban settings.

There need to be clear lines of responsibility to respond to risks to individual children. In some countries, such as the UK, there are legal procedures for disclosure if children reveal issues of abuse, and all researchers need to know these laws. In the UK, researchers working with children in particular settings also get police clearance. For fuller reference to research ethics of working with children in the UK, see Barnado’s publication (Box 3). In countries where these types of procedures are lacking, organisations need to draft their own protective rules.

Practitioners also need to be sensitive to the potential risks that participation can bring. As a rule, sensitive information should be shared anonymously. There has tended to be a journalistic approach to raise awareness of children’s issues and advocate change. Individual girls and boys may be quoted, with pictures to engender sympathy, or they may be encouraged to stand up and state their case. These processes need to be approached carefully, as there may be unforeseen risks for the children involved. An example of good practice comes from India, where an organisation called Butterflies represented the views of street children to the Delhi Police through project workers in order to protect the children’s identities.

Special ethical considerations apply in conflict zones, where participation can put children at serious risk of harm. This is evident in accounts of conflict situations in Sri Lanka, the former Yugoslavia, and parts of Africa, in the book *Stepping Forward*, as well as in Jo Boyden’s discussion of children in refugee situations in *PLA Notes* 42. These cases

Box 3: Important resources for young people's participation

Alderson, P. and Morrow, V. (2004). 'Ethics, social research and consulting with children and young people', Barnado's, London.

Boyden, J. & Ennew, J. (1997). *Children in Focus: A manual for participatory research with children*. Stockholm: Save the Children Sweden.

Chawla, L. (ed.) (2002). *Growing Up in an Urbanising World*. London/Paris: Earthscan Publications/UNESCO.

Cox, S. and Robinson-Pant, A. (2003) *Empowering Children through Visual Communication*, University of East Anglia: UK

Development Focus International (2001). *Rights Through Evaluation: Putting child rights into practice in South Africa and Nepal*. Development Focus website, www.devfocus.org.uk

Driskell, D. (2002). *Creating Better Cities with Children and Youth*. London/Paris: Earthscan Publications/UNESCO.

Edwards, M. (ed.) (1996). Special issue on 'Policy arena: Children in developing countries', *Journal of International Development*, vol. 8.

Guijt, I. (1996). *Moving Slowly and Reaching Far*. London: Redd Barna Uganda/International Institute for Environment and Development.

Hart, J., Newman, N., Ackermann L. (2003). 'Children changing their world: Understanding and evaluating children's participation in development', Plan UK/ Plan International, London and Woking. Also 'Understanding and Evaluating Children's Participation: A review of contemporary literature, Plan UK/ Plan International, London and Woking.

Hart, R. (1992). 'Children's Participation: From tokenism to citizenship'. *Innocenti Essays 4*. Florence: UNICEF International Child Development Centre.

Hart, R. (1997). *Children's Participation: The theory and practice of involving young citizens in community development and environmental care*. London/New York: Earthscan Publications/UNICEF.

International Save the Children Alliance, (2003). 'So you want to consult with children? A toolkit of best practice', International Save the Children Alliance, London.

James, A. & Prout, A. (1997). *Constructing and Reconstructing Childhood*, 2nd ed. London: Falmer Press.

Johnson, V., Hill, J. & Ivan-Smith, E. (1995). *Listening to Smaller Voices: Children in an environment of change*. Chard, Somerset: ActionAid.

Johnson, V., Ivan-Smith, E., Gordon, G., Pridmore, P. & Scott, P. (1998). *Stepping Forward: Children and young people's participation in the development process*. London: Intermediate Technology Publications.

Kirby, P. (2000). *Involving Young Researchers*. London: Save the Children.

Lynch, K. (ed.) (1977). *Growing Up in Cities*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

UNICEF (2002). *The State of the World's Children 2003* (on the theme of participation). New York: UNICEF.

also confirm that even in extreme situations, children need to be treated as social actors rather than passive victims.

The way forward

Children's participation has become much better documented over recent years, and there are many resources to draw upon. There is now a well-established body of prac-

tice and training in the 'children's sector' of development agencies, but the issue is how to build capacity more broadly and how to integrate it into development policy and processes. Doing this is pivotal for moving practice in this field forward.

One of the best ways to achieve this goal is to include child and age sensitivity in mainstream training programmes related to rights-based approaches, participatory processes, gender, poverty and social exclusion, project management processes, and monitoring and evaluation. Special ethical considerations relating to the protection of children need to be included, with procedures that are worked out within the context of different organisations and national cultures. Donors can begin by providing support to integrate issues of age and child rights into their own staff training, as well as supporting capacity building and evaluative processes in this area in the projects that they fund.

One of the most critical arenas that governments and donor agencies can influence is schools. In many countries, the education system is rigidly hierarchical, bound to a national curriculum, and based on rote memorisation rather than creative problem solving. Yet this model can be changed to support cooperative group work, student councils, and the development of basic skills through investigations of the local environment and initiatives for community care. In as well as out of school, participatory processes can build skills of literacy, numeracy, practical life, social life, and civic and environmental awareness. Inspiring examples are found in the system of *Escuelas Nuevas*, or New Schools, in Latin America⁴. These changes require support from the top down, beginning with more democratic relationships between ministries of education, systems of school inspection and evaluation, teacher training colleges, and the teachers and students they are supposed to serve.

We need to continue to learn how to work together. *Participatory Learning and Action* has been an important forum where practitioners in the field of children's participation have been able to share ideas and good practice. This sharing has advanced the debate and filtered into child-focused programmes, but the current challenge is to mainstream these ideas into broader development processes and to reach larger audiences. Girls and boys are key stakeholders in the development process. They need support to have their voices heard, but also recognition that their voices are worth acting on and that they can positively

⁴ This model is described in *The State of the World's Children 2003* by UNICEF, pp. 28-29, and *Children's Participation* by Roger Hart, pp. 46, 129-131 – see Box 3.

influence goals to achieve communities characterised by less poverty, social exclusion and abuse. This means integrating children into real partnerships.

Every organisation working on the ground in community development needs to take the lead and review processes of involvement. How are girls and boys, as well as men and women, influencing project cycles through ongoing processes of participatory inquiry, action implementation, monitoring and evaluation? How do children influence decisions within organisations and the formation of development policy? Some good examples of self-reflection and learning can be found from Scandinavian and Canadian bilateral development programmes, the Save the

Children Alliance, and PLAN International. See the Save the Children toolkit and work that PLAN has been carrying out on evaluation (Box 3). We can also reflect on work related to children in the policy arena, as in a special issue of the *Journal of International Development* (Box 3).

We need to continue to share best practices in terms of what works to improve participatory processes with children and young people, and ultimately their lives. By learning to listen in this way, development agencies stand to learn when their assumptions are out of touch with the realities of young people's lives, and to reorient policy so that it can more effectively build partnerships among all ages to achieve a better future.

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Louise Chawla brings experience as International Coordinator of Growing Up in Cities, a UNESCO project that involves low-income children and youth in cities around the world in documenting their lives and planning ways to improve their living conditions. Methods and case studies from this project are presented in the books *Growing Up in an Urbanising World* and *Creating Better Cities with Children and Youth. PLA Notes 42*, which she guest edited, focused on issues surrounding the evaluation of participatory projects, both in terms of personal outcomes for participants and institutional change.

Vicky Johnson has worked in rural areas of Nepal and in different parts of Africa and Asia to understand children's roles and work in the household, leading to an ActionAid publication called *Listening to Smaller Voices: Children in an environment of change*. Her work with her colleagues in Development Focus Trust extends participatory work with children and youth to urban and rural contexts in the UK and internationally. Her networking and sharing with other international practitioners led to *PLA Notes 25*, which focuses on ethical and institutional issues, and then to a book called *Stepping Forward: Children and young people's participation in the development process*.