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

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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[1] 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 (CCCDA). 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).

[1] 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

Source: PLA Notes (2001), Issue 42, pp 39–44, IIED London

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 (CCCDA). 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:

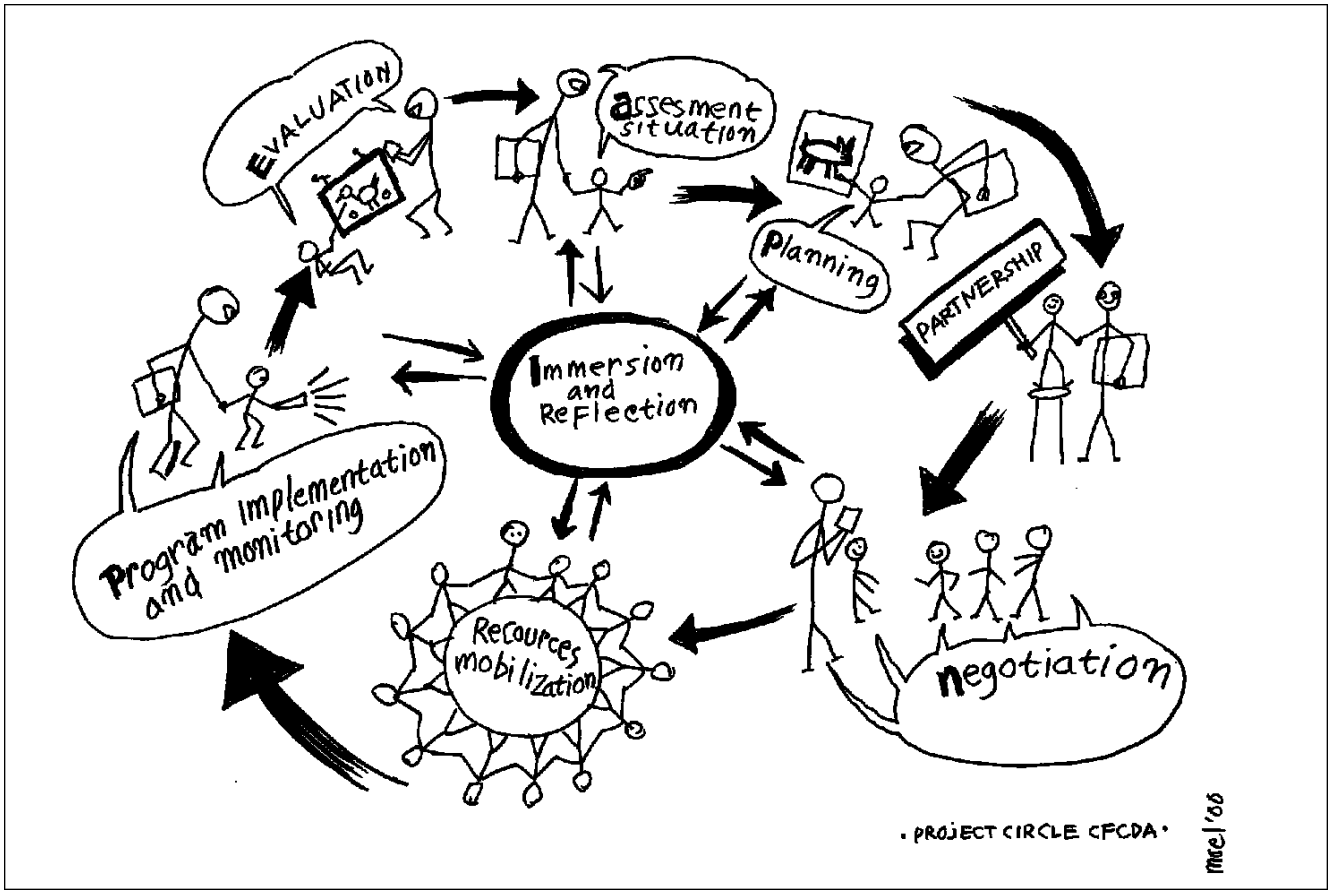
It is like light in our village. We can solve our problems together. – Old man from the community

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 Moelyono



Source: PLA Notes (2001), Issue 42, pp 39–44, IIED London

Photos by Robert Nurick

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

Source: PLA Notes (2001), Issue 42, pp 39–44, IIED London

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

Source: PLA Notes (2001), Issue 42, pp 39–44, IIED London

"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.[2]

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.

[2] 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

Source: PLA Notes (2001), Issue 42, pp 39–44, IIED London

Photos by Robert Nurick

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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