Inter-Agency Working Group on Children's Participation

CHILDREN AS ACTIVE CITIZENS
A POLICY AND PROGRAMME GUIDE

COMMITMENTS AND OBLIGATIONS FOR CHILDREN'S CIVIL RIGHTS AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT IN EAST ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

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PREFACE

Civil rights of children are probably the least understood rights and most challenging to realize. The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) is the first international human rights instrument to explicitly recognize civil rights of children. The CRC specifically provides for civil rights and freedoms. In conjunction with the general principles of non-discrimination; best interests of the child; the right to life, survival and development; and respect for the views of the child; there are eight articles relating directly to civil rights and freedoms of children that must be considered:

- Name and nationality (Article 7)
- Preservation of identity (Article 8)
- Freedom of expression (Article 13)
- Access to appropriate information (Article 17)
- Freedom of thought, conscience and religion (Article 14)
- Freedom of association and of peaceful assembly (Article 15)
- Protection of privacy (Article 16)
- The right not to be subjected to torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment (Article 37 (a))

Civil rights begin from the moment a child is born, when the child is registered with the civil registry, which provides the basis for all subsequent rights to which the child is rightfully entitled, such as access to health and education, protection from all forms of economic and sexual exploitation, and justice when a child comes in conflict with the law.

More than one third of the world's children live in East Asia, South Asia and the Pacific. While Western cultures stress individual rights, Asian societies place greater emphasis on responsibilities of the individual towards family, community and society. By definition, civil rights are protections and privileges given to citizens, and citizenship means a collection of rights and obligations that define the members of a community. In short, civil rights inherently refer to individuals. However, in societies where individuals exist as part of and having responsibilities toward the whole, ensuring civil rights for one third of the world's children continues to be a challenge.

There are two very important aspects to this guide. The first is that it operationalizes children's civil rights; and the second is that it provides detailed information for the progressive realization of children's civil rights, through ways of developing and practicing active citizenship. The Inter-Agency Working Group on Children's Participation (IAWGCP) has successfully conceptualized rights by identifying ten priority policy themes and areas of programming for the East Asia and Pacific Region. The rationale for active citizenship is based on the principle of the right to be heard (Article 12), fully recognizing the evolving capacities of children (Article 5). The Committee on the Rights of the Child has underscored the importance of children's right to be heard by devoting a Day of General Discussion to the Right to be Heard in September of 2006. The Committee is planning to adopt a General Comment on Article 12 in 2008.

Civil rights and citizenship are closely linked to country-specific political, social and cultural contexts. This guide consists of comprehensive and compact analyses of several country-specific situations in the region. It provides detailed examples of programmes that contribute to practicing active citizenship and related to the Millennium Development Goals and other international commitments. What is noteworthy is the inclusion of an indicator checklist for children's citizenship and civil rights.

This publication is an important tool for decision makers at the national level and for all service providers in the East Asia and Pacific region for the progressive realization of civil rights for children. It will serve not only as a guide for policies and programmes in the region, but also to inspire all actors, including parents, adults, government officials, and all persons working for and with children to recognize that children are indeed holders of civil rights. Most importantly, this publication will serve as a reference tool for involving younger children and marginalized children, including children in various difficult situations.

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INTRODUCTION

This guide regards children (below the age of 18 years) as active citizens with rights and responsibilities. It defines some of the main government responsibilities for children's civil rights and citizenship, and provides a vision for children and their roles in families, communities and societies. The aim is to advance children's participation in East Asia, South-East Asia and the Pacific. The guide also draws on examples from South Asia.

This guide has been prepared by the Inter-Agency Working Group on Children's Participation (IAWGCP), a group of regional children's-rights organizations based in Bangkok. The group represents a range of practitioners and researchers who have been promoting the participation of children and young people for many years. The diversity in experiences represented in the group created opportunities for new insights and perspectives that helped to push beyond the current limits in approaches to children's participation.

Purpose: The purpose of the guide is to stimulate discussions with governments, civil society, children, the media and academics. This guide presents a broad agenda for children's civil rights that brings together a wide range of approaches to children's participation and citizenship. It provides a strong rationale for the promotion of children's civic participation and citizenship as an essential contribution to realizing children's rights, and to achieving major international development commitments for children. It identifies a set of basic actions that government departments, civil society organizations and the media should take to promote children's civil rights and active citizenship. It provides guidance on capacities, structures and resources needed to strengthen children's civil rights and proposes ways to measure the civic participation of children in society.

Age focus: The guide focuses on children below the age of 18 years. Priority is given to actions, programmes and policies that benefit the majority of children in their daily lives in their families and communities, rather than to a small number of children at national or international events. Particular efforts are needed to ensure that younger children and marginalized children (ethnic minorities, stateless, migrant and working children, children in institutions and those with disabilities) are fully involved and considered in actions to promote their civil rights and civic engagement.

Audience: The primary target audiences for this guide are government decision makers and service providers in East Asia, South-East Asia and the Pacific region. This includes:

(a) ministries with direct responsibility for children's issues, such as education, health, social welfare, youth, and juvenile justice;

(b) other ministries that do not have direct responsibility for children's issues but nevertheless have an important role in promoting children's citizenship, such as urban-planning and infrastructure agencies, social-security agencies and health-insurance agencies; and

(c) finance ministries and treasuries. The support of finance ministries is critical, as funding often dictates what ministries do and prioritize.

Secondary audiences include development agencies, civil society organizations and child and youth organizations.

Structure: The guide has three parts:

Part One defines children's citizenship and civil rights, provides a rationale for why government departments and civil society should support them, and presents an agenda with concrete outcomes for children's civil rights.

Part Two provides guidance on the practice of children's civil rights to a name, expression, information, complaints, justice and economic equality.

Part Three presents suggestions for supporting children in developing and practicing active citizenship skills in relation to civic engagement, media, public decisions and politics, and children-led associations.

The Annexes provide an indicator checklist for assessing children's citizenship and civil rights at the country level and identify myths regarding children's participation. The guide also includes a glossary of key terms, and an index.

PART 1

DEFINING CHILDREN'S CITIZENSHIP AND CIVIL RIGHTS

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DEFINING CHILDREN'S CITIZENSHIP AND CIVIL RIGHTS

What is citizenship?

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What is citizenship?

Citizenship represents the collection of rights and obligations that define the members of a community. These rights and obligations encompass legal empowerment and justice, political participation and decision making, social engagement, economic rights and access to resources. Citizenship has two complementary aspects: citizenship rights and citizenship practice (based on Marshall and Bottomore, 1992; Lister, 2003; 2006).

Citizenship includes notions of rights and responsibilities, status and practice, individual and community. Western cultures tend to emphasize individual rights, whereas Asian societies place greater emphasis on the responsibilities of the individual towards family, community and society. In order to thrive, societies require a combination of the two.

Citizenship rights include civil, political, social and economic rights (see Table 1). Civil and political rights are people's entitlements to liberty and equality. They include the rights to freedom of expression and religion, to take part in political life, and to have access to information, skills and opportunities for development and enhanced participation. The civil right to equality is expressed in the right to equal protection to redress if injured by another person and to a fair investigation and trial if suspected of a crime. In some countries, citizenship can also mean 'nationality' or the membership of a nation state. However, citizenship and nationality are not synonymous. Human-rights law does not categorically obligate governments to extend nationality to all residents.

Citizenship as practice enables people to exercise their rights as citizens (Lister, 2003, 37). Citizenship practice ranges from civic responsibility to democratic action and is the active expression of formal citizenship rights. Citizenship rights are the instruments for active citizenship.

Table 1: Citizenship rights and citizenship practice

Citizenship rights	Citizenship practice
Civil rights and individual freedoms ■ Freedom of movement ■ Right to privacy ■ Freedom of speech, thought and religion ■ Right to information ■ Right to justice and equal treatment **Political rights: participate in and exercise political power** ■ Right to vote ■ Right to stand for political office ■ Right to assemble **Social rights** ■ Right to education ■ Right to security ■ Right to health **Economic rights** ■ Right to own property ■ Right to conclude valid contracts ■ Right to minimum of economic welfare	■ Social responsibility ■ Citizen campaigns ■ Civil rights movements ■ Volunteering and mutual help ■ Demanding government accountability ■ Voting ■ Demanding justice ■ Acquiring an education ■ Knowing the laws and legal literacy ■ Civic education ■ Active use of the media ■ Paying taxes ■ Monitoring service quality and public spending

Sources: Marshall and Bottomore, 1992; Lister, 2003.

In practice, access to and enjoyment of civil and political rights vary greatly between groups in society. Many women in South Asia, for example, are restricted in their freedom of movement and do not have control over personal decisions, such as marriage. Poor people in most societies have limited access to justice mechanisms compared to wealthier citizens.

Are children citizens?

All children are born with civil, political, social and economic rights. These rights enable them to practice their citizenship – at least to some extent. Children's entitlement to being citizens does not depend on their future contributions to society. Children's ability to exercise their citizenship rights and responsibilities evolves as they grow and learn. As competent social actors, children are making important contributions to society. As members of society, they have a strong interest in their society's development.

Children's citizenship rights: The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC, 1989) is the first human-rights treaty to explicitly recognize children's civil rights (see Box 1). However, the CRC does not extend political rights to children. Some countries, such as Nicaragua and Iran, go beyond the rights enshrined in the CRC and offer the right to vote to some older children. As children's rights continue to be adapted to the social, political and economic realities of fast-changing societies, we may see increased demands to extend the right to vote to older children in the coming decades. Irrespective of their lack of formal political rights, children are taking part in political actions, movements, campaigns, political and armed struggles, and are members of political parties.

Box 1: Some civil rights of children according to the CRC

Article 2: Non discrimination: All rights must be granted to each child without exception. The State must protect all children without exception. The State must protect children against all forms of discrimination (irrespective of a child's political or other opinions).

Article 7: Name and nationality: Children have the right to a name at birth (and a child's birth should be registered). Children also have the right to acquire a nationality, and as far as possible, to know and be cared for by their parents.

Article 8: Preservation of identity: The State has an obligation to protect and, if necessary, re-establish basic aspects of a child's identity. This includes name, nationality, and family ties.

Article 12: The opinion of the child: Children have the right to express their opinions freely and to have their opinions taken into account in any matter or procedure affecting them.

Article 13: Freedom of expression: Children have the right to express their views, obtain information and make ideas or information known.

Article 14: Freedom of thought, conscience, and religion: The State shall respect children's right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, subject to appropriate parental guidance.

Article 15: Freedom of association: Children have a right to meet with others, and to join or form associations.

Article 16: Protection of privacy: Children have the right to protection from interference with privacy, family, home and correspondence, and from libel or slander.

Article 17: Access to appropriate information: The State shall ensure that children have access to information and material from diverse sources, and it shall encourage the mass media to disseminate information which is of social or cultural benefit to them and take steps to protect them from harmful materials.

Article 23: Rights of children with disabilities: A child with mental or physical disabilities should enjoy a full and decent life, in conditions that ensure dignity, promote self-reliance and facilitate his or her active participation in the community.

Article 29: Aims of education: Education shall aim at developing each child's personality, talents, and mental and physical abilities to the fullest extent. Education shall prepare children for an active adult life in a free society and foster respect for a child's parents, his or her own cultural identity, language and values, and for the cultural background and values of others.

Other relevant articles and principles include: the best interests of the child as an overarching principle, children's right to life, and the inter-relatedness of rights.

Children's economic rights are generally restricted. Children are unable to sign valid contracts, open bank accounts, borrow money or conduct other financial transactions. They are constrained in their ownership and control over property, and in their right to work and employment.

Capacities for citizenship

Age markers of adulthood: Legal age definitions provide an important basis for children to exercise their citizenship and to take an active part in public decisions. They also impose limitations on children's ability to exercise their citizenship rights. The CRC established 18 years as a general age marker for adulthood ('unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier'). However, age markers of adulthood vary and states confer citizenship rights and obligations at different ages. These variations may include different rights and obligations between boys and girls. This situation can lead to inconsistencies, such as a gap between the maximum age of compulsory education and the minimum working age. In some cases, a child can be sent to jail (to account for his or her actions) or serve in the military, but not be considered old enough to vote. A child may be legally entitled to have heterosexual sex with another child of his/her age but be expelled from school if this happens.

The CRC provides a basis for greater standardization and harmonization of national legislation regarding children's rights but, as Table 2 shows, almost two decades after the adoption of the CRC by the UN, reality is still far behind the commitments of the global community.

Table 2: Range of legal age for citizenship rights and responsibilities

Rights and responsibilities	Age in years															
	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
Age of majority (incl. contracts, credit)												▶	–	–	▶	
Age of consent							▶	–	–	–	–	▶				
Age of criminal responsibility	▶	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	▶					
Marriageable age – boys												▶	–	–	–	▶
Marriageable age – girls								▶	–	–	–	–	▶			
Legal working age							▶	–	–	–	–	▶				
Age of enlisting in the army										▶	–	–	–	–	▶	
Voting age												▶	–	–	▶	
Minimum driving age									▶	–	–	▶				
Ending age of compulsory education			◀	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	◀					

Evolving capacities: People do not suddenly become 'responsible' citizens on reaching a certain age. Legal age definitions are somewhat arbitrary, and do not reflect the range of children's capacities, which vary from child to child and depend on the contexts they grow up in, on children's mental development (see article 23 of the CRC), and their social, economic, cultural and religious background (see Lansdown, 2005). Human capacities develop and change throughout life at different rates according to individual potential and social environment. Competence as a citizen is not limited to adults and neither is incompetence restricted to children. Citizenship must be learned through everyday experiences of family and community life, education, civic and political awareness. Access to opportunities in school, media, sports and culture are critical for developing and practicing citizenship skills.

Why are children's civil rights and citizenship important?

Benefits of civil rights for child development, survival and protection: Children learn by asking questions. They develop better if parents and teachers listen to them and encourage them to express themselves. Children are able to make important contributions at home, in school, in the community and in the media. Children who have access to information about health and sexuality are better able to protect themselves from unwanted pregnancy, sexually-transmitted infections (STIs) and HIV/AIDS. Children in institutions are less likely to be abused if they can express their views and have access to effective complaints mechanisms. Child workers who form and join associations may be able to protect themselves better against exploitation and abuse. The protection provided by civil rights is particularly important in situations of conflict and emergencies.

Formation of citizenship and civic engagement: As children grow and develop they explore wider social relations and interact independently with the broader community. Governments, parents, teachers, the media, community leaders and youth organizations play important roles in supporting children to develop their civic responsibilities and social awareness through active involvement in community affairs. Willingness and ability to exercise citizenship rights and duties tend to endure throughout adulthood if the foundations for civic engagement have been laid early in life (World Bank, 2006).

Economic growth: Investments in well-informed, aware and educated citizens have major benefits for economic growth and result in improved households and communities. Involvement in social organizations broadens access to economic opportunities, especially among previously excluded groups. Such engagement can also enhance collective action to increase the pressure on governments to provide good public services (World Bank, 2006).

Achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs): Children's civic engagement is essential for achieving the MDGs and other development commitments, such as universal education and poverty reduction. Children's contributions improve services and policies. Their involvement in social organizations and political decisions improves the quality, efficiency and fairness of government services. Health services, for example, are more effective if they are informed by children's opinions and concerns and include children's contributions (for example as community-health promoters). Community participation in government decisions helps improve public services, holds public officials accountable, ensures justice and strengthens the rule of law. The achievement of the MDGs requires the participation of all groups in society.

Harnessing the positive energies of young people: Active citizenship builds trust and responsibility and can reduce violence. When given opportunities for civic engagement, young people can bring energy, enthusiasm and new ideas to the development of their communities.

Why have children's citizenship rights been neglected?

Following the near universal ratification of the CRC, growing attention has been paid by children's-rights agencies to the participation of children in a wide range of areas, including health promotion, education, environmental campaigns, research and consultations on child abuse and exploitation.

For the most part, children's participation has been promoted in events, activities and projects in order to achieve other outcomes, rather than as an end in itself. As a result, initiatives have not led to broader changes in children's position in society. To a large extent, children have no access to complaints mechanisms and are excluded from public decision making. In most situations, children's civil rights have not been turned into practical approaches that make real differences in the lives of the majority of children. The systematic denial of their civil rights disempowers children and contributes to their abuse, exploitation and marginalization in society.

Undefined participation: The term 'participation' is being used for a wide range of activities. The lack of a common definition of children's participation is one reason why no clear agenda for children's participation has emerged. Much of the practice of children's participation is loosely based on children's right to expression in all matters affecting the child (CRC article 12), rather than on children's unconditional right to expression (CRC article 13) and other civil rights included in the CRC. As a result, children's participation continues to be dominated by one-off processes, rather than by a clear set of commitments and actions for children's civil rights. The outcome document of the UN General Assembly's Special Session for Children in 2002, 'A World Fit For Children,' (WFFC) established concrete goals for children's health, education, protection and HIV prevention and recognized the importance of children's participation as a means for achieving those goals. However, the WFFC did not articulate concrete targets and actions for children's participation and civil rights.

Limited in scope: Children's participation initiatives do not generate enough momentum to bring about fundamental changes in the relationships between children and adults. Examples include consultations with children, peer education and support for children as journalists.

Cultural barriers and adult resistance: In many cultures children are expected to be silent in the presence of adults. They are not encouraged to express their views at home, in school or in community gatherings.

No space for children in public affairs: Children in public roles challenge the existing relations between children and adults, and are therefore regarded as 'unnatural' and a threat to the established order. Children are not seen as social and political actors. Adults do not think it is appropriate or beneficial to share information or power with children and to involve them in 'politics'. The CRC allows certain restrictions on children's civil rights, such as restrictions to protect the reputation of others, national security and order (articles 13-15), protection of health or morals (article 15), and the clause 'due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child'. These limitations provide ample space for adults and governments to limit children's civil rights – if they need additional arguments.

Lack of capacities: Promoting children's participation requires a wide range of skills and experiences. Initiatives often fail because of a lack of capacities among adults and children. Some efforts have been made to build capacities for adults and children to work together, change attitudes of adults, establish structures, create enabling environments and promote a 'culture of participation'.

An agenda for children's citizenship and civil rights

Recent years have seen growing efforts to move from one-off events and projects to more systematic and sustainable approaches to children's participation. Mongolia and the Philippines, for example, have developed national frameworks and policies for the participation of children and young people. The CRC Committee is preparing a General Comment on Article 12 to provide greater guidance to governments in implementing children's right to expression of opinion and involvement in decisions. The World Bank's World Development Report 2007 includes a chapter on youth citizenship, recognizing the need to move beyond youth employment and adolescent health to address issues of social and political exclusion affecting children and young people.

There is a need to take a broader approach to define children's civil and political rights and to relate them explicitly to the achievements of children's rights to survival, development and protection. To advance beyond entry points for children's participation it is important to define the social, legal, economic and political dimensions of children's citizenship, and to develop a practical and long-term agenda for governments to take actions that reach all children. Governments can do much to ensure that children have a greater share in the development of their communities. At the same time, without the involvement of committed and informed communities, the effects of government support for children's active citizenship may be limited.

> **Box 2: A vision for children's citizenship and civil rights**
>
> A world where:
> - All children are able to influence decisions and resource allocations affecting them;
> - All children are able to acquire the knowledge, skills and opportunities to contribute actively and effectively as responsible citizens;
> - All children have access to justice and live free from violence, abuse of power and any form of discrimination.

Just like any other set of rights, there is a long distance between ratifying an international convention and reforming national legislation to fulfil, implement and monitor the rights of all citizens. Children's civil rights are among the least-understood and least-realized rights. Implementing children's civil rights is the most challenging aspect of the CRC, a challenge that applies equally to resource-rich countries (Hodgkin and Newell, 2002). Starting positions are extremely low for most children. This should not, however, discourage decisive actions. The progressive realization of children's civil rights requires a long-term vision and a plan with concrete benchmarks for achieving this vision – even if it takes a generation to transform relations between children and adults. The following ten themes define priority policy and programming areas in relation to children's citizenship and civil rights in the East Asia and Pacific region.

Operationalizing children's civil rights

1. **Birth and civil registration** are prerequisites for citizenship, contribute to the fulfilment of the rights to a name and nationality (to some extent) and are essential for the realization of many other rights, such as access to education, health, protection and the freedom to travel across national borders.

2. **Children's expression of opinion and control over decisions** at home and in school is the civil right with the most immediate impact on the majority of children. The foundation for exercising the right to expression is laid during early childhood development. Parenting practices, learning and teaching styles are critically important for developing children's ability to articulate their views and make decisions.

3. **Access to information** is a prerequisite for making informed choices and decisions in relation to education, health and protection.

4. **Feedback and complaints mechanisms** provide children with essential information and enable them to express their views and to seek help (examples are help lines, student monitors, complaints boxes, student counsellors, and children's ombudspersons). These mechanisms are particularly important to ensure the protection and survival of children in institutions, emergencies and conflict situations.

5. **Justice for children** ensures that children's views are heard and considered in judicial proceedings and also relates to children as witnesses and as plaintiffs. More broadly, it relates to children's ability to demand justice.

6. **Economic citizenship and equal access to resources for children** relates to children's ability to access the same resources as adults. This is particularly important with respect to children's inheritance rights, control over their earnings and equal access to economic and business services for children who are no longer in school, and the right to social transfers for children-headed households.

Developing and practicing active citizenship

7. **Citizenship competencies and civic engagement** include communication and problem-solving skills and an understanding of the ways society works (through civic education for example). Civic engagement offers children opportunities to practice and develop their citizenship competencies, to contribute to their communities and to develop a sense of responsibility. This can take the form of peer education, community service, community mobilization and activism (for example against corruption). Governments, communities, youth networks and children-led organizations play important roles in creating opportunities for children to actively exercise their citizenship.

8. **Children being active citizens in the media** can provide children with increasingly important sources of information and opportunities to express their views. The media can be powerful tools for projecting positive images of children as active citizens in the public sphere. In addition, children can develop their own radio productions, newsletters, wall newspapers, TV shows, films and websites.

9. **Children influencing public decisions** is the most high-profile public role. Children involved in local government councils, policy making and legislative reform, and in international political events challenge the conventional notions of childhood. A possible starting point for children's involvement in political discussions is monitoring the CRC and providing feedback on the quality of public services.

10. **Children-led associations** offer children opportunities to develop organizational skills, be supported by other children and collectively campaign for their rights. Unions of child workers have had significant successes in mobilizing children to demand justice and equal treatment in some countries.

Regional context for children's citizenship and civil rights

Much of the agenda for children's citizenship and civil rights is country-specific and has to be defined and adapted to particular political, social and cultural contexts. Close to one third of the world's children live in East Asia, South-East Asia and the Pacific. The region is diverse in terms of languages, cultures, religions and political systems. The economies of many countries in East and South-East Asia are growing rapidly, while other countries, especially those in the Pacific, are seeing very limited investments. Among the main factors that shape the context for children's active citizenship in the region are economic situations, political systems, social relationships, including gender relations and attitudes towards children, and the nature of the education system.

China and Viet Nam are among the countries in the region that place a strong emphasis on the responsibilities of citizens towards the State. The State, represented by the government, in turn earns its legitimacy by providing political stability and the structural conditions that ensure economic prosperity. Opportunities for media freedom, political expression, and civil society are limited. The hierarchical relationship between State and citizen is mirrored in the relationships between parents and children and between teachers and students (Salazar-Volkmann, 2005).

As a result of rapid economic growth in Viet Nam and China, young people's participation in the labour market is generally high, at least compared to other parts of the world. Children are under pressure to acquire a good education in order to take full advantage of existing economic opportunities. Primary and secondary school students, especially those in urban areas, have limited free time to spend on social activities that are not directly relevant for passing their academic examinations. Levels of political activity among young people tend to be relatively low, as a result of the focus on education and work opportunities, and the limited range of political choices available.

The globalizing economies in East Asia are creating demands for a new type of workforce. In order to capture new markets and to move beyond the provision of low-cost and low-tech jobs, the Chinese education system, for example, is moving away from rote learning and is beginning to encourage students to think critically and to develop their creativity. This requires significant changes in the relationships between teachers and students and greater room for students' individual expression. The new Chinese education system supports some of the values underlying children's participation and to some extent this makes it easier to promote children's expression and decision-making in school and at home.

The situation is very different in some other countries, such as The Philippines, which has a multi-party democracy, freedom of the press , a diverse civil society and independent human-rights institutions. Spaces for political action and social activism are more numerous than in China or Viet Nam. The Philippines offers some of the best opportunities for exploring and experimenting with children's participation in the region.

The current political environments of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPR Korea) and Myanmar, limit the opportunities for children to exercise their rights. Other countries in East and South-East Asia tend to fall somewhere along the spectrum between the two extremes marked by China on the one side, and the Philippines on the other.

The situation in the Pacific differs in significant ways from that in East and South-East Asia. Many Pacific-Island nations are in situations of acute economic distress and face multiple development challenges. Youth unemployment and underemployment are high, while education systems are often focused on academic learning for non-existing white-collar jobs. Other significant differences include the strength of traditional family networks and social pressures to provide material support to relatives. Although significant progress has been made in developing participatory initiatives with young people, no regular mechanisms have yet been established for young people's involvement in governance. While transport costs are high between islands in the Pacific, the widespread use of English and similarities in culture and history, are some of the factors that facilitate networking across Pacific-Island nations.

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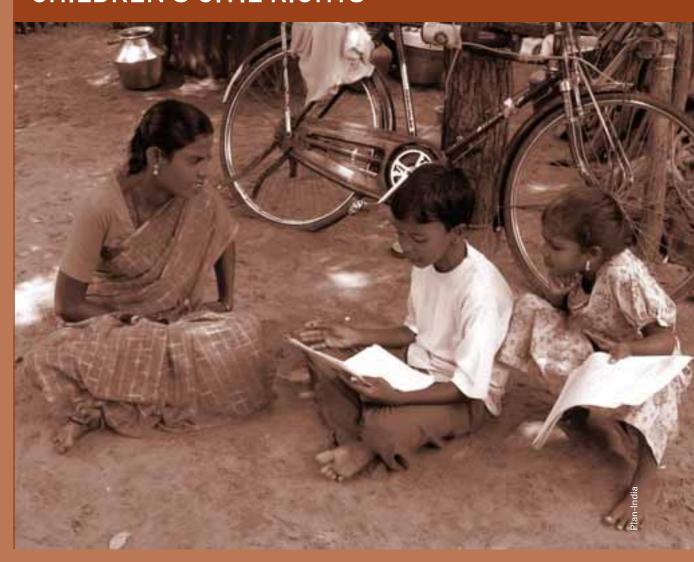
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Plan–India

1. Birth and civil registration

'One in every five children born in East Asia and the Pacific are not registered at birth' (UNICEF, 2005).

What is birth registration?

Birth registration is the official recording of a child's birth by a government department. It is a permanent and official record of a child's existence. Ideally, birth registration is part of an effective civil-registration system that acknowledges the person's existence before the law, establishes family ties and tracks the major events of an individual's life, from live birth to marriage and death. A fully functional civil-registration system should be compulsory, universal, permanent and continuous and should ensure the confidentiality of personal data. It should collect, transmit and store data in an effective way and guarantee their quality and integrity. It should have two main objectives: legal and statistical. A civil-registration system safeguards human rights and contributes to the normal functioning of any society. The right to be registered at birth is enshrined in Article 7 of the CRC. The registration of a child's birth enables that child to obtain a birth certificate. In some cases, the certificate is issued automatically after birth, while in others a separate application must be made. In either case, a birth certificate is a personal document issued to an individual by the state (UNICEF, 2002).

Why is birth registration important?

Identity: Birth registration is a state's first official acknowledgement of a child's existence and is a recognition of each child's individual importance and status under the law. Where children are not registered they are likely to be less-visible, and sometimes less-valued citizens (Hodgkin and Newell, 2002, 108).

Inclusion and non-discrimination: All children are entitled to be registered at birth (or later, if they have not been registered at birth). This includes children of ethnic minorities, migrants, stateless children, refugees, children born out of wedlock, and children with disabilities. Without a birth certificate, children may be unable to prove their age, nationality, or who their parents are. Birth registration is a mechanism of civic inclusion and the basis for participation. It ensures that a child is counted, has legal existence, and is included in family, community and society.

National planning and monitoring: Birth registration is essential for national planning for children. As part of a civil registration system, birth registration generates population data and contributes to good governance. Reliable statistics provide the basis for the rational allocation of public resources for social services and help avoid the risk of overloading government services. Without accurate data, governments risk wasting human capital, which has negative economic effects. In Cambodia, for example, unregistered children may not be enrolled in school until they reach the age of 9 years. This represents a loss of three years for the society for every child not in school by the age of six. A reliable civil-registration system also provides the basis for monitoring the situation of children.

Securing other rights and access to services: Civil registration secures access to services. Children without birth registration risk being denied the rights a nation offers its citizens, such as legal protection and access to education and healthcare. For example, a birth certificate is required for school enrolment in Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand and Viet Nam; for marriage in Indonesia, Philippines and Thailand; and for immunization in Myanmar and Thailand. It has to be emphasised that laws and policies that deny access to services on the basis of registration status are a violation of the CRC and should be changed.

Protection: Birth registration establishes the formal proof of a child's existence and age. Legal age limits are a form of protection, for example in relation to criminal responsibility, access to justice, age of recruitment into the armed forces, age of marriage or the minimum age of work. More broadly, the civic inclusion provided by birth and civil registration results in social, economic and political inclusion, which is the basis for protection.

Civil registration continues to be important throughout a person's life. Children who are not registered at birth still maintain the right to identity and birth registration. Many countries have a large backlog of older, unregistered children. There is an urgent need to step up efforts to register older children who have been left out of the civil-registration system.

Nationality: In general, the nationality to which a person is entitled depends either on the nationality of his or her parents or on his or her place of birth (UNICEF 2002). Birth registration does not automatically confer nationality. Some governments confuse birth registration with nationality, and make this the excuse for not registering the births of children of migrants, refugees, stateless persons or some ethnic minorities.

Statelessness: Persons without nationality are stateless, often refugees, migrants or members of ethnic minority groups who are being denied nationality. They face marginalization and exclusion through lack of access to services, restrictions of movement and travel, lack of access to justice, and the denial of civil and political rights. Statistics concerning the number of stateless children are not available, but the UNHCR estimates that there may be as many as 9 million stateless persons throughout the world.

One of the main reasons some children are stateless is that international law does not clearly define the obligations of states with regard to the right to acquire a nationality. Other reasons include failure to register the birth of children, or failure to register all information concerning the identity, residence, place of birth and nationality of the child's parents; discrimination and refusal to apply legislation concerning nationality to members of ethnic minorities or refugees, or refusal to register their births or provide the identity documentation to which they are entitled; deprivation of nationality for political reasons, or denial of travel or identity documents to political opponents and their families (IPU and UNHCR, 2005).

What has been achieved in East and South-East Asia?

As a result of an international campaign supported by Plan International, UNICEF and country governments, major efforts have been made over the past years to promote birth registration and to strengthen civil-registration systems.

Cambodia: In 2003, less than 5 percent of the population was registered. By December 2006, 92 percent of the population was registered as a result of a massive mobile registration and awareness campaign.

China: Three hundred million people were added in 2003 to the one billion people already included in the national registration database.

Indonesia: In Surakarta City, Central Java Province, registration went up from 62 percent in 2003 to 95 percent in 2006. This was a result of a campaign of social mobilization and strengthening the system for civil registration and vital statistics. The campaign also made registration free of charge.

Lao PDR: A provision on birth registration was included in the draft children's law that was presented to the National Assembly for approval in 2006.

Myanmar: In 2003, the vital-registration system was launched and established in five states and divisions. In 2005, the vital-registration system was operational in all 14 states and divisions, and all 325 townships. More than 6,000 basic-health workers were trained in recording and reporting.

Papua New Guinea: A national campaign conducted in 2004-2005 led to an increase from 3 percent to 25 percent of children registered. The civil registration system was decentralized to ten provinces.

Philippines: In Agusan Norte Province on the island of Mindanao, birth registration coverage increased from 86 percent to almost 100 percent in 2005, through support from young volunteers, schools and Parent Teacher Community Associations, which helped to identify unregistered children.

Thailand: The number of computerized registration offices went up from 505 in 2003 to 2,073 at the end of January 2004, thereby improving the functioning of the civil registration services.

Timor-Leste: In 2003 and 2004, an average of 25,584 births were registered per year. By 2005 this figure had more-than-doubled, to 59,402.

Viet Nam: The percentage of registered children increased from 72 percent in 2000 to 95 percent in 2005.

Box 3: Timor-Leste: Developing a civil registry in a new nation

In August 1999, a United Nations-sponsored referendum on independence was held in Timor-Leste, resulting in an overwhelming vote in favour of self-governance and an end to Indonesian rule. The referendum sparked a rampage of violence by armed militia against civilians. Nearly two thirds of the population was forced to flee across the border into West Timor. The United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET) was established in October 1999 to administer the territory until a new government could be elected. Because most of the civil registry records had been destroyed during the violence, the documentation of the entire population of East Timor had to be restored so that voting could take place. In early 2000, work began on a new registration system with the support of UNTAET, and in December 2000 the Central Civil Registry was established under the Ministry of Internal Affairs within the East Timor Transitional Authority.

The procedures for birth registration explicitly stated that the birth of a baby 'shall be reported to the Central Civil Registry by the mother, father or another family member within four weeks of said birth.' On the basis of the UNTAET regulation, district-level civil registry offices were opened. More recently, a Civil Registration Code has been drafted by the Ministry of Justice to help decentralize registration to the sub-district and village levels and promote birth registration as a national priority.

But the new government has faced numerous challenges. Timor-Leste was colonized by Portugal in the 16th century. In 1975, Indonesia seized and occupied the territory. Before independence, few people used the state-run registration service because it was associated with oppressive authority. Instead the predominantly Catholic communities viewed the Church as the only trusted institution and baptism certificates were used to formalize identity, effectively creating a parallel system of birth registration. As a result of this long-standing tradition, recognition of the importance of government birth registration is low.

Baseline figures from January to May 2003 show that only 1,540 people were officially registered, and just two of them were infants. The situation persists because in many areas a baptism certificate has been the preferred method of establishing name and identity and is sometimes required for school enrolment. In addition, transportation is difficult because of the mountainous terrain and poor roads. Families living in remote villages may be far from the registry office, and during the rainy season travel can be treacherous, leaving some areas entirely isolated. For all these reasons, awareness raising is still needed to encourage registration of children.

Another challenge is the lack of human resources. Efforts have been made to staff the 13 district offices, but there is little support at sub-district or village level. And even within the districts, the ability to carry out effective civil registration is hampered by lack of equipment and irregular power supplies.

Despite the many challenges, significant progress has been made. In October 2002, the Ministry of Justice and UNICEF Timor-Leste signed an agreement identifying birth registration as a priority, and in 2003 two pilot birth registration projects began in Manatuto and Bobonaro Districts. A 'training of trainers' workshop was conducted to teach civil-registry staff and volunteers, who then formed mobile registration teams. The mobile birth registration campaign registered approximately 17,000 children, the majority below the age of five years.

Based on experiences and lessons learned from the pilot projects in Manatutu and Bobonaro Districts, the mobile birth registration campaign, combined with awareness-raising campaigns, has been expanded to include an additional eight districts. The mobile teams have been successful in decentralizing the birth registration process and greatly increasing the numbers of children registered. More collaboration is needed with schools, health centres and religious officials to promote registration in villages and ensure that results are sustained.

Source: UNICEF, 2007

Remaining challenges

Despite significant achievements, a large number of children in the region remains unregistered. In many countries the civil-registration systems require further strengthening. It is not enough to issue birth certificates in isolation. Birth registration has to be an integral part of a broader and more efficient civil-registration system (registering birth, marriage, death and, where possible, adoption). National laws on civil registration, nationality and citizenship, marriage, and civil courts need to be aligned. In order to operate effectively, the civil-registration system should receive resources from the national budget and civil registrars need to have the required skill levels.

Aside from the weaknesses of existing civil-registration systems, some population groups are excluded from civil registration based on their ethnicity, nationality or residence status. In Cambodia, for example, only Khmer nationals and foreigners legally living on the territory of Cambodia are entitled to register births. This excludes children whose parents are considered illegal immigrants, refugees or asylum seekers. There is a need for legal reform to ensure that civil-registration laws include specific groups, such as illegal immigrants, asylum seekers, stateless people, minorities, children from mixed marriages and children born out of wedlock.

Government responsibilities

Through the CRC, states in the region have committed themselves to developing civil-registration systems to ensure the registration of every child at, or shortly after birth: to fulfil their obligation to give children their right to a name and a nationality, in accordance with national laws and relevant international instruments. It is the government's responsibility to:

■ Record every child immediately after birth;

■ Register older children retrospectively to prevent them from falling out of the legal protection net;

■ Register all children, including those who are stateless or children of non-nationals, asylum seekers, or refugees;

■ Ensure that birth and civil registration should be free of charge;

■ Ensure that registration is easy for parents, in terms of physical access and language;

■ Raise awareness among parents of the importance of birth registration and reinforce parental responsibility for protecting their children;

■ Take all necessary measures to prevent children from being without nationality;

■ Provide all children with an ID card containing information relevant for the child's identity.

Development commitments and birth registration

MDG 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger: Birth registration facilitates access to education, services and livelihood opportunities, thereby contributing to poverty eradication at different stages of life.

MDG 2: Achieve universal primary education: Birth registration facilitates children's access to education, contributing to school enrolment and retention.

MDG 3: Promote gender equality and empower women: The registration of both girls and boys contributes to gender equality and reinforces the rights of equal treatment and entitlements for girls and women. It helps in monitoring imbalances between male and female birth rates and contributes to greater equality in access to opportunities such as education, health care and employment.

MDG 4: Reduce child mortality: Effective registration mechanisms are essential to monitor accurately trends in morbidity and mortality among children (below the age of 5 years) and to develop effective and targeted approaches to reducing mortality among children.

MDG 5: Improve maternal health: Maternal mortality and morbidity rates are higher among teenage mothers than among adult women. Birth registration establishes a girl's age and can help prevent child marriage and teenage pregnancies.

MDG 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases: Unregistered children are less likely to access health services and may be more vulnerable to exploitation, thereby more at risk of HIV/AIDS.

MDG 7: Ensure environmental sustainability: Civil registration provides accurate population information. Such data are essential for effective government and for the rational allocation of public resources. This reduces waste and contributes to environmental sustainability.

Decent and productive work for youth: Entering school at the appropriate age increases children's chances of completing basic education. This increases young people's livelihood opportunities.

Protect children from violence, exploitation and abuse: Birth registration is essential to protect children from violence, exploitation and abuse. By establishing a child's age, birth registration can provent child labour, sexual abuse, trafficking, child soldiering and denial of justice.

Targets and indicators

The following targets and indicators can be used by governments and development agencies to track the status of birth and civil registration systems in a country:

- Existence of a free, universal, compulsory birth registration system
- Percentage of births registered within the time stipulated by national law
- Recording of names of both parents on the birth certificate

- Existence of a process for establishing paternity in contested cases, including cases initiated by children
- All children – irrespective of their nationality – are registered and issued with birth certificates
- Legal mechanisms are in place to enable children of refugees, asylum seekers and stateless people to obtain a nationality (of the country where they live, or other country)

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2. Children's expression of opinion and control over decisions in daily life

The rights to expression of opinion and freedom of thought are fundamental civil rights. Articles 12, 13, 14 and parts of 23 of the CRC are devoted to these rights.

The CRC Committee identified the right to freedom of expression 'in all matters affecting the child' (article 12) as a fundamental principle of the CRC that applies to all other children's rights. Article 13 reinforces children's rights to expression: '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.'

Children have competencies, knowledge and abilities, and are able to contribute these to society and to shape their school, family and community environments. This chapter focuses on children's expression and decision making in places where children are commonly present: at home, in school, in health facilities and in care settings. Many of the other chapters in this guide deal with children's expression of opinion and involvement in decisions in other contexts, such as complaints mechanisms, justice systems, media, governance and politics.

Why is children's expression of opinion important?

Children who are able to express themselves and who are listened to at home and in school learn and develop better than children who are told by adults to be quiet and not to ask questions. Better academic results lead to more competitive human resources, better critical thinking skills and better employability. Government services are more effective if they are informed by children's opinions and concerns. Better interpersonal communication helps develop non-violent forms of solving conflicts. Less violence leads to more harmonious communities and stronger nations. A reduction in violence also translates into financial savings and improved economic performance.

However many parents and teachers do not listen to children and do not encourage them to express their views. Children are excluded from decisions that affect them at home, in school and in the community. Inadequate attention is being given to the promotion of children's civil rights and freedoms. Traditional social attitudes regarding the role of children stand in the way of accepting children's rights.

What and where?

The right to expression of opinion applies to all matters affecting children at home, in school, alternative care settings, health services, work places and community settings.

Family environment

Communication between children and adults: Supporting children to express themselves starts from birth. Newborn babies are able to express themselves through sounds, facial expressions and body movements. Even at this young age babies will discover whether their parents and carers are responsive to their expressions. Parenting and childcare practices have a large impact on children's communication skills and styles. In many societies children are expected to be quiet in the presence of adults. Their views are not considered important or relevant. In such environments, children's right to expression challenges adult authority. As parents become more comfortable listening to children, they discover the joys of communicating even with very young children. Education and preparation for parenthood promote more democratic forms of communication between children and adults.

Box 6: How can very young children express themselves?

The following capacities relate to developmental norms of the 'average' child (in the UK) and have to be treated with caution. Some children are capable of certain actions at an earlier age, others at a later age.

0-18 months

Children of this age range are dependent on adults to ask the 'right' questions, to interpret their responses and to take these into account in any decisions that affect the child.

Can participate in decisions about: food, clothing, who they want to be with, how they are handled and what they play with.

Developmental capacity:

■ Have limited mobility and control over their bodies

■ Experience the world through their senses

■ Are wholly dependent on others for provision of their basic needs

■ Use facial expressions, body language, gestures and sounds to express feelings and needs and to indicate preferences

■ Have limited memory span

■ Are largely egocentric

■ Can respond only to things in the immediate present that they can see, touch, hear, taste and smell

■ Have limited experience and understanding of danger

Methods of participation:

■ Accepting or refusing things offered

■ Indicating what interests them through gazing intently, turning towards or reaching out to objects or people

■ Indicating how they are feeling through facial expressions, body movements, tears and laughter

■ Indicating preferences between given options: reaching out, grasping or pointing; nodding or shaking their heads

18 months - 3 ¹/₂ years

Can participate in decisions about: Food, clothing, activities and who they play with.

Developmental capacity:

■ Have increased mobility and control over their bodies

■ Are beginning to use language, but still express many feelings and indicate preferences physically

■ Increased memory span and ways of expressing themselves enable them to consider options beyond the immediate present

■ Are able to wait and defer wishes for short periods of time

■ Older children in the age range will play in pairs or small groups

■ Beginning to use language to cooperate and negotiate with others

■ Will take part in small group work, provided they can participate actively through singing and movement

Methods of participation:

■ Choosing between given options as before, verbal communication, pointing to pictures and using movement

■ Suggesting additional options, using language, mime and movement

■ Express feelings as before, plus using language, mime, movement, painting and music

Source: Miller, 1996, 24-26

Decisions affecting children: Children are entitled to be involved in decisions regarding their education, play, health care and family. Children's right to be involved in decisions is particularly important in relation to placement in alternative care, adoption processes and immigration procedures, including those affecting asylum-seeking children.

Schools and educational institutions

Children-centred learning and teaching methods are fundamental for encouraging children to express themselves in school. There is overwhelming evidence that participatory teaching methods and inquiry-based learning are more effective than rote learning. These techniques build knowledge, skills and capacities that children need to participate actively in society. Student-centred, activity-based learning methods enable children to take an active part in classroom work. This influences their learning and makes their education more meaningful, relevant and enjoyable.

Box 7: Chinese education system promotes active-learning methods

The Chinese education system is undergoing fundamental reforms. As part of these reforms, teachers across the country have been instructed to promote children's expression and decision making and to switch from rote learning to student-centred, active learning and teaching methods. Students are being encouraged to think critically and independently, and to develop their creativity. This requires significant change in the relationship between teachers and students and greater room for students' individual expression. China's education reform aims at developing a modern work force. In a globalized economy, companies are looking for employees who are confident, can think for themselves and make decisions, work well in teams, and are creative.

Involvement in education decisions: Children have the right to be involved in education decisions, such as choosing a school with their parents. Involving children in the choice of learning content, and in the selection and development of learning materials, ensures that the curriculum is relevant to children's lives.

School management and student representation: Student associations and student councils offer opportunities for student representation and participation in school management and planning. These are important forums for students to learn and practice debating and democratic decision-making skills. Forums for student participation should use venues and methods of communication that children feel comfortable with, rather than those that teachers prefer. Younger children should also be able to participate. It is not uncommon for student-participation forums to privilege older children, who do not necessarily foster the participation of younger children.

Box 8: Children say what makes a good teacher

What makes a good teacher has always been determined by educationists, educational administrators or teachers themselves. Government officials, experts and scholars, as well as the public and media all have their own expectations. However, few assessments have asked what children have to say on this question.

The Beijing Academy of Educational Sciences invited children to share their views on this topic. Over 4,000 children from all over China responded. In their writings and drawings they explained that they wanted teachers to respect them, be sensitive to their emotional well-being, allow them to express themselves, and be fair to all children regardless of background, gender, ability or other individual characteristics. Most children dreamt of loving and caring teachers.

"He treats every student equally. In his kind and pure heart he is never partial. As a student I think this is the most valuable thing about a teacher… In teacher Chen's class we feel relaxed and lively. If we say something wrong he would not blame us. Instead he would smilingly say: 'Good mistake! The mistake helps us find out problems.' Not after very long, even the most timid student can raise his or her hand and answer his questions." Tang Yiyi, grade 4

The resultant book with children's stories and drawings is useful for teachers and teacher trainers as a tool for self-reflection. It can also be used in peer-learning groups to motivate and help teachers to reflect together and seek ways to reach standards that children set for them. It is important that children's honest expressions inspire and motivate teachers to become more responsive to children's needs.

Adapted from UNICEF, 2004

How can children's expression of opinion be supported?

Developing capacities: Children can and do form views from a very early age. The CRC does not set any minimum age for children's right to express their views freely. Children's abilities to express their views and to make decisions increase as they develop and mature. The more opportunities they have to form opinions, the better they will become at making decisions. At the same time, parents, teachers and caregivers have an obligation not to pass on responsibilities for decisions to children who may not be able to understand the full implications of their decisions. To express their views and make decisions, children should:

- Be informed;
- Learn how to express opinions;
- Be confident of being listened to;
- Know about decisions and be free to make decisions;
- Know how to make choices and be aware of the consequences;
- Learn how to deal with conflict;
- Be aware of their responsibilities and rights;
- Understand and practice democratic processes.

Inclusion: Particular efforts are required to ensure that marginalized children are able to express their opinions and make decisions. In many societies, girls face greater exclusion than boys. Special means of communication are needed to include children with disabilities (for example providing signing for children with hearing impairment). Efforts have to be made to include economically or socially marginalized children, such as street and working children, children with HIV, refugee or displaced children, and children from ethnic minorities.

New roles for adults: Adults also have to learn new roles and new forms of communication. They have to provide children with full information in ways children of different ages and abilities can understand. Adults should:

- Listen respectfully to what children have to say and take them seriously;
- Promote children's skills for making choices and taking responsibility for the consequences;
- Leave children free to make their own decisions, while providing guidance and leading by example;
- Practice democratic parenting and teaching, which rejects corporal punishment of children (physical and emotional punishment only reinforces the existing unequal power relationships between children and adults).

Steps towards changing relationship between children and adults: Even if adults listen to children and encourage them to express their opinions, adults are often reluctant to give up control over decisions. Learning to give up control and to share decision-making power requires changes in both children and adults, and takes time. It is a gradual process: from adults listening to children, to adults supporting children to express their views, to adults taking the views of children into account, to adults involving children in decisions, to adults sharing responsibilities for and control over decisions.

Government responsibilities

There are no limits to the obligations of governments to ensure children's right to express their views freely. Priority actions include:

- Review legal and administrative procedures to ensure children's involvement in important decisions (including marriage, custody, adoption, separation, school, juvenile justice, institutional care, and asylum-seeking procedures) is compatible with the CRC and consistent with the child's evolving capacities;
- Raise awareness among adults and children about children's right to express their opinions and its implications for children to be involved in decisions;

- Promote active learning and teaching methods in education;
- Develop the capacities of teachers, health workers, social workers and other professionals to communicate with children and to involve children in decisions;
- Promote respect for children, listening skills and democratic parenting practices through parenting education and preparation for parenthood;
- Develop children's decision-making skills in schools and in other institutions through management committees and other participatory decision-making structures.

Development commitments and children's right to expression and decision making

MDG 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger: Expressing opinions and influencing personal decisions from an early age helps children develop critical thinking and problem solving skills that help them make sound livelihood and health decisions, thereby improving their economic situation.

MDG 2: Achieve universal primary education: Student-centred active learning methods improve learning outcomes and enrolment rates. Involving children in school management (for example through school councils), as well as decisions about teaching and curricula, improves the quality of education, the learning environment and retention rates.

MDG 3: Promote gender equality and empower women: Girls who are able to express their opinions and who have control over decisions are better equipped to overcome gender inequalities.

MDG 4: Reduce child mortality: Parents, carers and medical staff who are able to understand what young children are communicating are better able to ensure their health and survival. Research and assessment results are better if they are based on information from children. Consulting children leads to better understanding of children's own health care needs and concerns. If adults listen to children, give them time to articulate their concerns and provide them with appropriate information, children will acquire the confidence and ability to contribute to their own health care. This encourages children to take more responsibility for their own health.

MDG 5: Improve maternal health: Adolescent girls who have control over personal decisions are able to delay marriage and pregnancy until their early 20s. This greatly reduces the risk of birth complications.

MDG 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases: Children who are able to refuse unsafe sex are in a better position to reduce the risk of HIV transmission.

MDG 7: Ensure environmental sustainability: Involving children in research and in community decisions on the environment contributes to greater environmental sustainability.

Decent and productive work for youth: Involving children in research about livelihood opportunities and giving them control over livelihood decisions can help reduce youth unemployment.

Protect children from violence, exploitation and abuse: Children who have control over decisions relating to child custody, adoption and care arrangements are less vulnerable to abuse and exploitation.

Targets and indicators

- Age at which children are entitled by law to express their views on matters of adoption, custody and guardianship
- Ability of adolescent girls and young women to make decisions in relation to work, school, marriage and mobility
- Percentage of parents who involve their children in family decisions
- Percentage of schools applying student-centred teaching and learning methods

- Percentage of schools with active mechanisms for involving students in school-management decisions (student councils and school-management committees)
- Teacher-training curricula include teaching non-violent forms of discipline and student-behaviour management
- Social work training curriculum includes modules on listening to children and seeking children's views, and the appropriate methods for doing so

Table 3: Pathways to participation

Levels of participation	Openings ➔	Opportunities ➔	Obligations
5. **Children share power and responsibilities for decision making**	Are you ready to share some of your adult power with children?	Is there a procedure that enables children and adults to share power and responsibility for decisions?	Is it a policy requirement that children and adults share power and responsibility for decisions?
4. **Children are involved in decision-making processes**	Are you ready to let children join in your decision-making processes?	Is there a procedure that enables children to join in decision-making processes?	Is it a policy requirement that children must be involved in decision-making processes?
3. **Children's views are taken into account**	Are you ready to take children's views into account?	Do your decision-making process enable you to take children's views into account?	Is it a policy requirement that children's views must be given due weight in decision making?
2. **Children are supported in expressing their views**	Are you ready to support children in expressing their views?	Do you have a range of ideas and activities to help children express their views?	Is it a policy requirement that children must be supported in expressing their views?
1. **Children are listened to**	Are you ready to listen to children?	Do you work in a way that enables you to listen to children?	Is it a policy requirement that children must be listened to?

Source: Shier, 2001

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3. Access to information

This chapter covers children's access to information and the media, media literacy and protection of children from harmful media content. Chapter 8 looks at reporting about children as well as at children as producers and broadcasters of media content.

Availability of information

Access to information is a basic civil right that has major implications for children's development, survival, protection and participation. Article 17 of the CRC emphasizes the need to provide information that benefits children's social and cultural development; promotes their physical and mental well-being; fosters understanding, peace, tolerance and gender equality; and prevents juvenile delinquency.

Health: Children who have access to information about health, water and sanitation are better able to survive and to protect themselves. Information is essential for children to realize their right to survival. Where children are denied access to information about health matters, their survival is put at risk. Children who have access to information about sexuality, drug use, and HIV/AIDS are better able to protect themselves from HIV/AIDS and sexually-transmitted infections. If doctors listen to children, give them time to talk about their concerns and provide them with appropriate information, children will acquire the confidence and the ability to contribute to their own health care.

Box 9: Children's rights to information and expression in paediatric health

- Enables children to get answers to any questions they may have and avoids misunderstandings
- Children feel more respected
- Relieves children's anxieties and helps them cope with the treatment better
- Gives children confidence: Children involved in the process of treatment will not fear that action will be taken without their knowledge or understanding
- Encourages cooperation: If children lack information, they are likely to be more frightened and less willing or able to cooperate in treatment. As a result, interventions will be more painful and distressing for the child
- Eliminates the need for children to worry unnecessarily about what is going to happen to them, which can occur if information is withheld
- Leads to better understanding of children's own health care needs
- Encourages children to take more responsibility for their own health

Source: *Respecting Children's Rights in Pediatric Practice*

Preventing traffic accidents: The increase in motorized traffic as a result of rapid economic growth has led to a sharp rise in road accidents in many East-Asian countries. Educating children about the dangers of traffic, and teaching traffic safety are vital. This is the responsibility of parents, government departments, teachers, media, car manufacturers and road-construction companies.

Preparing for emergencies: As the Asian tsunami of 2004 showed, children also should be involved in emergency-preparedness efforts and need information to protect themselves in case of a natural disaster. Children can also be effective channels for information sharing, especially among other children.

Protection: Well-informed children are better able to protect themselves from exploitation, abuse and violence. As the example in Box 10 shows, information can help street and working children to find sources of support and to seek protection from arbitrary arrests and violence in the street. Access to information is important for increasing children's well-being and decreasing children's self-blame in difficult family circumstances.

If migrating children are well-informed about migration routes, work opportunities and sources of support, they are less likely to being trafficked and to end up in exploitative situations (Box 11).

Equal access to information

Information has to be not only available but also accessible to all children. Among the issues to consider in terms of equal access are:

Free or low cost: Information has to be free of charge and available in a variety of formats and mediums to ensure that all children are able to access the information.

Variety of information: There is often a shortage of creative reading materials for children of different ages and there is a need to produce a greater variety of books. The formats and channels of information have to be appropriate so that children of all ages and backgrounds are able to access the information they need, whether the information comes from friends, adults, radio, books, magazines, Internet or television.

Child helplines can be effective sources of information for children's questions about relationships, sexuality, pregnancy or legal matters. For helplines to be widely accessible, they have to use communication methods that reach all children, such as through telephone, online counselling, radio or peer-outreach networks.

Equal access: Special efforts are required to ensure that information is available in all languages spoken by ethnic minority, migrant and refugee children. Illiterate children require information through visual or oral media. Information for children with communication disabilities has to be produced in Braille, sign language or other appropriate formats. Children in detention centres are also entitled to access to media and information.

Young children: Information for very young children has to be appropriate in terms of the content and the medium of communication. For example, all children should know about risks, such as drowning, traffic safety and sexuality, as part of their development and in order to protect themselves against accidents and abuse. The age at which children should have different types of information depends on the context and the risks they are exposed to in their communities. If children below school age are being sexually abused in their community, they need to be able to understand risk situations and how to avoid them.

Overcoming barriers to access: Access to information is sometimes blocked by adults who are concerned with 'protecting' children from harmful content. While this is a legitimate concern, children are often denied access to vital and necessary information because of adult fears. For example, research studies have repeatedly confirmed that sex education does not lead to an increase in sexual activity among children.

Box 12: Adolescent girls giving and providing information in Bangladesh

The mainly traditional and conservative nature of Bangladeshi society demands that young, unmarried adolescent girls are modest and, at least in theory, sheltered from sexuality and reproductive-health knowledge. This, combined with low levels of education, creates an environment of misunderstanding regarding reproductive and sexual health. Soon after the onset of menstruation, adolescent girls, particularly in rural areas, are married off, although this practice is changing in some regions. The social taboo regarding the mention or discussion of menstruation is so great that young adolescent girls may lack knowledge of menstruation. A recent research study that was carried out in rural and urban areas of Bangladesh revealed that out of 232 girls between the ages of 10 and 14, only 34 percent knew about menstruation before experiencing it. Without this knowledge, first menstruation is often a traumatic experience.

To address this lack of awareness among adolescent girls, the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) Education Programme developed the Adolescent Peer Organized Network for 6,000 reading centres. The primary objective of the reading centres is to provide an opportunity for adolescents to socialize among themselves and to have access to reading materials. Members of the centres can read about menstruation and reproductive health, family planning methods, HIV/AIDS, STIs, leprosy, inheritance law, marriage registration and other social and environmental issues. They also can discuss the readings in small groups.

In the initial project, teachers provided the information. Based on this experience, the project was redesigned as a peer-education project. Now, adolescent girls are both giving and receiving information.

Appropriate and effective information

Children-friendly: Children need to be able to access and understand information on topics that are relevant to them. Information has to be presented in formats that are appropriate to children's abilities to understand. Children require information, materials and media that are specific to their level of understanding as well as their social and cultural background.

Non-discriminatory: Information for children (and adults) has to be non-discriminatory with respect to (for example) gender, disability, ethnicity and HIV status.

Are the materials effective? Involve children in the development of information. This helps to ensure that materials are appropriate and effective.

Who is responsible for providing information?

Parents, teachers, community leaders, government departments, media and private-sector companies all have a responsibility to provide children with adequate and relevant information.

Role of the media: The media are responsible for providing accurate and relevant information to children. The media also have a responsibility to prevent harmful materials from reaching children. The media should:

■ Develop agreements with media companies to protect children from harmful influences and enable consumers to block out certain types of media programmes. This may include restricting violent programmes to certain hours, announcing the content of a programme before broadcasting, or using technical devices, such as 'V-chips', to block unwanted content;

■ Review experiences with voluntary ethical media mechanisms, codes of conduct, professional guidelines, press and broadcasting councils, and press ombudspersons;

■ Develop and promote media guidelines on standards for reporting on the abuse of children and on protecting the dignity of the children involved. Special emphasis has to be placed on not exposing the identity of any child;

Box 13: How to produce children-friendly documents

Establish why the document is relevant to children and try to make sure that this is kept in mind throughout the process: WHY is this particular document being produced for children? And HOW can this be expressed?

Be clear about the age group you are targeting and state this on the document. Know your target group. It is important to find out about the children and young people who will read the document you are trying to produce. It is best to find out the age range, education, language, gender, location (rural/urban), and any potential disabilities of the target group. Reading a few children's books for your target age group will help you get into the thinking of the age group.

Ask **"what do children need to know about the subject?"** Ask yourself what is relevant to children reading this and what would they want to know and expect to read about in the children-friendly document.

Use simple language and try to keep the document as short as possible. Use the present tense if possible and keep sentences short. Write as though you are speaking to the child (don't be afraid to use 'you'). Don't use metaphors, some are not clear. Don't use acronyms or abbreviations, spell things out in full. Don't use e.g. or etc. Explain any difficult words, terms or concepts. Produce materials in local languages.

Use visual images to support the words. Images should help to explain difficult concepts. Do not use images that are not directly related to and relevant to the text. You may want to specifically commission photographs, drawings, paintings, cartoons or graphics.

Use photographs carefully. Be sure that any people, particularly children, pictured in photographs have given their consent for the photo to be used. Photos should show children adequately clothed and not in sexually suggestive poses. Respect children's dignity and do not portray them as victims. Be sure photographs are culturally appropriate.

Protect children's identity: If the children depicted are victims of violence (and not actors), even more care needs to be used to hide their identity. Use false names for any children shown and state that these are false names. Do not identify children's precise location; use only general geography; To protect children's identity, use images of children that are in profile, or darkened or obscure part of the face if it is showing fully (for example, a thick dark line or dappling across the eyes).

Text should look 'interesting': Use a font size that is not too small for the age group. 'Sans serif' fonts are generally considered more children-friendly because they are clearer to read. Break up long sentences or paragraphs with bullet points or numbering. Break up large blocks of text, use headings and sub headings, boxes and illustrations. Highlight key words – use bold, a different colour, italics or a different font. Try not to use too many graphic tricks, for instance, a maximum of three different fonts or text colours (except in colour illustrations).

Source: *Minimum Standards for Consulting with Children*

- Take into account the rights of children to access, participation, media education and protection from harmful content in the development of new media products and technologies (Oslo Challenge Box 31, page 59);
- Make the best interests of the child a primary consideration in the pursuit of commercial and financial success, so that today's children become adults in a global society, in which all people are protected (Oslo Challenge Box 31, page 59).

Government responsibilities

- Ensure legislation, policy and practice that promote children's rights to information;
- Ensure children are well-informed on all matters affecting them;
- Provide compulsory and free education as a fundamental way of ensuring children's access to information and knowledge;
- Ensure children have access to information from various sources, such as radio, television, books, press, Internet and helplines;
- Ensure information is readily available in formats that are appropriate for children of different ages, backgrounds and abilities;

- Allocate resources for the production and dissemination of children's books, magazines and papers, music, theatre and other artistic expressions for children, as well as child-oriented films and videos;
- Ensure children are protected from harmful information, such as cybersex, tobacco and alcohol advertising, regulation of reporting about children, violence, and gender stereotyping;
- Encourage the development of guidelines for the protection of children from information and material harmful to their health and well-being.

Development commitments and access to information

MDG 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger: Access to information and knowledge is recognized to be important for eradicating poverty. This includes information on education, health, social welfare entitlements and poverty reduction policies.

MDG 2: Achieve universal primary education: Access to information and knowledge is one of the central aims of education. Learning content has to be relevant, accurate and accessible for children.

MDG 3: Promote gender equality and empower women: Access to information about the rights and responsibilities of girls and boys, women and men is fundamental for promoting gender equality and to protect girls and women from discrimination and exploitation.

MDG 4: Reduce child mortality: From a young age, children can begin to learn and understand basic health messages (for example related to hygiene, sanitation and injuries). Older children often have important responsibilities for child care and require information about child health.

MDG 5: Improve maternal health: Adolescent girls and boys who have adequate information about sexuality and reproductive health are better able to protect themselves from unwanted pregnancy, STIs and HIV.

MDG 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases: Access to information about the transmission of HIV, STIs, malaria and other diseases is essential to prevent the spread of infectious diseases.

MDG 7: Ensure environmental sustainability: Information about environmental impact increases commitment to environmental sustainability.

Decent and productive work for youth: Access to information about livelihood opportunities and job-seeking strategies helps reduce youth unemployment.

Protect children from violence, exploitation and abuse: Access to information about children's rights, protective services and sources of support helps children protect themselves and makes them less vulnerable to abuse and exploitation.

Targets and indicators

- Education is compulsory and free
- Level of learning achievement
- Children have access to information from various sources including radio, television, libraries, books, press, Internet and helplines
- Information is readily available in children-friendly formats that are appropriate for children of different ages
- Children have knowledge about their rights, sexuality, HIV/AIDS, and contraceptive methods
- Children have the right to access their personal health records
- Teacher and social-work training curricula include modules on children's rights to access information, the value of children having information and how to provide information

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4. Feedback and complaints mechanisms

Feedback and complaints mechanisms enable children to express their views and to seek support. Without access to complaints mechanisms children are at increased risk of abuse and exploitation, and the perpetrators of violence against children can continue to abuse children with impunity, without fear of detection or prosecution.

Feedback mechanisms

Education, health and social welfare services are more effective if they are informed by the views and concerns of children. Establishing regular feedback systems in institutions serving children can help to gather children's opinions. Feedback mechanisms can take many different forms, such as boxes where children place their comments, child monitors who gather the views of other children and present them to the adults, or involving children more formally in monitoring, evaluations and reviews. UNICEF, for example, often involves children in its mid-term reviews. The examples in Boxes 14 and 15 show how children have provided feedback in schools.

Box 14: Feedback mechanisms in schools in Mongolia

Teachers may refuse to accept feedback from their students, especially regarding their own performance. In order to introduce monitoring mechanisms, schools in Mongolia set up anonymous feedback and suggestion boxes. An elected group of students checked the comments regularly and passed them on to the headmaster for follow-up.

A student committee also organized a series of competitions. For several weeks, children were asked to nominate teachers according to the topic of the week, such as: 'the most attractive teacher', 'the best dressed teacher', 'the friendliest teacher', 'the strictest teacher', or 'the grumpiest teacher'. The results were displayed every week on a notice board in the school. Using humour helped to break the ice and to make it easier for teachers to accept feedback from students.

Source: UNICEF Mongolia

In schools in Viet Nam and Pakistan, children made lists of attributes that characterize 'a good teacher' and those that make 'a bad teacher'.

Box 15: What makes a good teacher in Pakistan?

In Pakistan, children, parents and teachers were asked to define 'what makes a good teacher'. The review used interviews, focus-group discussions, role plays and drawings to collect children's views about their teachers. The review brought out some clear characteristics of good teachers. Good teachers are good human beings. They have a loving personality, are kind and warm-hearted, patient, assertive, flexible in attitudes, hard-working and committed to their job. Good teachers are primarily children-focused. Their focus is not on the textbook or the curriculum, but on the child. They are conscious of the different ways in which children learn, the differences between children, and the need to use different methods to enable a child to learn (such as repetition, examples, individual coaching and peer teaching). Children in classes of such teachers do not need to take extra-tuition classes after school hours.

Other attributes of a good teacher also include the ability to deal with punishment and classroom management in a positive manner. Classroom management refers to the way a teacher facilitates teaching and learning, handles large classes, teaches more than one class simultaneously, and deals with weak, shy, naughty and bright children.

"Our teacher knows the name of every child." – Boy from Peshawar

"She explains on the blackboard. If someone does not understand, she seats the child next to her and explains again." – Girl from Kasur

"She respects children. She always calls them 'aap' [the respectful form of 'you']." – Girl from Lahore

Source: Save the Children UK, 2001

Complaints mechanisms

The Committee on the Rights of the Child considers the provision of effective complaints procedures for children as part of the implementation of children's right to expression. Children need access to complaints procedures in all aspects of their lives: in the family, in alternative care, in all institutions, and in services and facilities relevant to them. The Commitee has expressed concern about the lack of complaints procedures for children.

Establishing complaints procedures is just the first step. Ensuring that the procedures are accessible to all children is another challenge. Complaints mechanisms also have to be appropriate for different locations and population groups. Such mechanisms can take many forms, ranging from complaints boxes in schools to call-in radio programmes, telephone helplines, text messaging and on-line counselling services. Complaints mechanisms can also take the form of a buddy system in schools, a network of trusted adults, mobile counselling teams or community child-protection networks. There are many examples in Asia of children's clubs in schools acting as 'watch dogs', visiting children who miss school and providing peer support to at-risk children.

Complaints mechanisms in institutions: Complaints mechanisms are particularly important when children are institutionalized, whether for reasons of care and protection or for penal detention. It is important that complaints procedures are consistent and sustainable and have effective follow-up.

Box 16: Child Helpline International

Child Helpline International supports emerging and existing child helplines in over ninety countries. In 2005, child helplines globally received over 10 million calls from children and young people covering a wide range of topics, including abuse and violence, commercial exploitation, homelessness, HIV/AIDS, peer relationships, school-related issues, legal matters, substance use, sexuality, family relationships, mental health, physical health and racism. To reach out to as many children as possible, child helplines are preferably toll-free, nationally accessible, and use easy-to-remember 3 or 4 digit numbers. They are being set up in partnership with NGOs and governments, and with support from telecommunications companies.

Source: Child Helpline International

Appropriate technologies and resources: Helplines have to be adapted to local conditions, using the most affordable and appropriate technologies. Depending on circumstances, these can be radio, telephone, Internet and e-mail for on-line counselling, SMS text messaging, mobile caravans and outreach programmes to connect with children living in remote areas. Low-cost solutions have to be found and developed. Ultimately this requires greater investments by governments, development agencies, media and telecommunications companies to ensure that all children have access to complaints mechanisms.

Table 4: Child helplines in East Asia and the Pacific

Country	Members	Helpline Number	Toll-free	24 hours, daily
Australia	Kids Help Line	1800 551 800	Yes	Yes
Brunei	Department of Community Development	141	Yes	No
China	All-China Youth Federation	12355	No	No
Hong Kong SAR	Hotline of Against Child Abuse	852-27551122	Yes	No
India	Childline	1098	Yes	Yes
Indonesia	TESA	129	Yes	No
Japan	Childline Support Centre	0120-7-26266	No	No
Republic of Korea	Korea Youth Counseling Institute	1388	No	Yes
Republic of Korea	National Child Protection Agency	1577-1391	No	Yes

Table 4: Child helplines in East Asia and the Pacific (continued)

Country	Members	Helpline Number	Toll-free	24 hours, daily
Mongolia	Friends 1979	1979	No	No
Nepal	CWIN Helpline	1098	Yes	No
New Zealand	Kidsline	0800-kidsline	Yes	Yes
New Zealand	What's Up	0800-whatsup	Yes	No
New Zealand	Youthline	0800 376-633	Yes	Yes
Pakistan	Madadgaar	9221111911922	No	No
Philippines	Bantay Bata	163	Yes	Yes
Singapore	Tinkle Friend	1800 2744 788	Yes	No
Taiwan ROC	113 Hotline	113	Yes	Yes
Thailand	Saidek 1387	1387	Yes	Yes
Viet Nam	Child Helpline in Viet Nam	18001567	Yes	No

Emergencies: Children in emergencies and in conflict situations have special need of complaints procedures. Relief agencies are beginning to address this issue as part of their emergency response.

Box 17: Setting up a complaints and response system in emergencies

1. Inform children how to make a complaint and that it is their right to do so:
- Use staff and notice boards to give information about complaints processes
- Be clear about the types of complaint you can and can't deal with
- Know your agency's procedures on abuse or exploitation
- Explain details of the appeals process

2. Make access to the complaints process as easy and safe as possible. Consider:
- How children in remote locations will be able to make complaints
- Having both verbal and written complaints mechanisms
- Permitting complaints made on behalf of somebody else
  (who might be illiterate, frightened, unable to travel or lack the capacity to complain themselves)

3. Describe how complaints will be handled:
- Develop standard complaints procedures
- Give the complainant a receipt, preferably a copy of their signed form
- Enable an investigation to be tracked and keep statistics on complaints and responses
- Keep all documentation confidential and de-linked from the identity of the complainant
- Know your agency's procedures for dealing with complaints against staff

4. Give beneficiaries a response to their complaint:
- Make sure each complainant receives a response and appropriate action
- Be consistent: Ensure similar complaints receive similar responses.
- Maintain oversight of complaints processes and have an appeals process

5. Learning from complaints and mistakes:
- Collect statistics and track any trends
- Feed learning into decision making and project activities

Source: Adapted from *Emergency Capacity Building Project*, 2007

Effective follow-up and referral: It is a challenge to ensure that complaints procedures are effective in relation to family life (including ill-treatment), alternative care, schools, health services, employment, detention and the juvenile justice system, environmental, planning, housing and transport issues, and other services affecting children. Effective complaints mechanisms have to be linked to emergency assistance, counselling support and referral systems. Establishing complaints procedures for children includes the development of independent human-rights institutions for children. These institutions can have different names and be variously known as children's ombudsperson, children's commissioner, desk or focal point for children's rights in human-rights commissions. There is more than one model for independent children's-rights institutions. Offices vary according to whether or not they deal with individual cases and complaints from children.

Box 18: Aims of independent child rights institutions

- To promote full implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child;

- To promote a higher priority for children, in central, regional or local government and in civil society, and to improve public attitudes to children;

- To influence law, policy and practice, both by responding to governmental and other proposals and by actively proposing changes;

- To promote effective co-ordination of government for children at all levels;

- To promote effective use of resources for children;

- To provide a channel for children's views;

- To encourage governments and the public to give proper respect to children's views;

- To collect and publish data on the situation of children and/or encourage governments to collect and publish adequate data;

- To promote awareness of the human rights of children among children and adults;

- To conduct investigations and undertake or encourage research;

- To review children's access to and the effectiveness of, all forms of advocacy and complaints systems, for example in institutions and schools, and children's access to the courts;

- To respond to individual complaints from children or those representing children and, where appropriate, to initiate or support legal action on behalf of children.

Factors for effective operation: The United Nations Handbook on National Human Rights Institutions suggests the following 'effectiveness factors': independence; defined jurisdiction and adequate powers; accessibility; cooperation; operational efficiency; and accountability.

Source: http://www.ombudsnet.org/enoc/about/index.asp

Government responsibilities

- Establish and support safe, confidential and accessible mechanisms (such as child helplines) through which children can report abuse, speak to a trained counsellor in confidence and ask for support and advice without fear of reprisals.

- Nominate an independent children's ombudsperson to ensure effective response and follow-up to children's complaints and violations of their rights.

- Ensure all schools and other children's institutions (including prisons and correctional facilities) have effective complaints mechanisms for children.

- Ensure health services and other government services have accessible complaints systems for children.

- Define and enforce minimum standards of care and protection of children in all institutions dealing with children.

Development commitments and complaints mechanisms

MDG 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger: Complaints mechanisms are essential to ensure that the distribution of public services and resources is fair.

MDG 2: Achieve universal primary education: Feedback and complaints mechanisms in schools ensure that teachers and school management are aware of children's concerns. Student feedback helps to improve the learning environment. Effective complaints mechanisms can help prevent children from dropping out of school.

MDG 3: Promote gender equality and empower women: Complaints mechanisms are essential to enable girls and women to express their concerns. In order to be effective, such mechanisms must have follow-up mechanisms.

MDG 4: Reduce child mortality: Parents, carers and medical staff who are able to understand what young children are communicating are better able to ensure their health and survival. Consulting children leads to better understanding of children's own health-care needs and concerns.

MDG 5: Improve maternal health: Teenage girls are better able to protect themselves from unwanted pregnancy and marriage if they have access to effective complaints mechanisms (for example regarding child marriage).

MDG 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases: Complaints mechanisms at health posts help ensure that health services are children-friendly and non-discriminatory.

Protect children from violence, exploitation and abuse: Complaints mechanisms help children (in families, institutions, schools, communities) to express their opinions, report abuse and seek help. This helps to make children less vulnerable to abuse and exploitation.

Targets and indicators

- Confidential mechanisms (such as child helplines) are in place for children to complain and to seek redress in cases of abuse, without fear of reprisals
- Level of use of child helplines and other complaints mechanisms by children
- Effectiveness of mechanisms responding to children's complaints
- All institutions are enforcing minimum standards of care and protection of children
- Teacher training curricula include modules on setting up and maintaining effective complaints mechanisms
- Police are trained to deal appropriately with complaints from children

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5. Justice for children

'Children are the only grouping in a democracy whose political rights are entrusted to another group, to be exercised on their behalf without the restraint of any mechanisms of control' (Bob Franklin, 1986, The Rights of Children).

What is justice for children?

Children are often unable to seek redress and claim their entitlements. This includes children who are seeking redress from exploitation, abuse and victimization; children who have been forced to become labourers or child soldiers; and orphaned children who have been cheated out of their inheritance. In many countries children are only able to lodge complaints through their parents or legal guardians. Therefore, children who are victims of abuse, including sexual abuse, neglect or ill-treatment within their families often do not have access to justice, and those responsible for these rights violations are never brought to justice.

Justice for children is the ability of children (and their representatives) to seek and obtain remedies through formal or informal institutions of justice, and in conformity with human-rights standards. Justice for children has three elements:

- *Legal awareness:* to recognize the infringement and to know about legal remedies;

- *Legal aid and counsel:* all necessary capacities in this regard, including legal counsel, financial options and psycho-social support;

- *Legal empowerment:* children's ability to seek and demand remedies from the justice system. This includes children being able to lodge complaints and seek redress before a court or other relevant authority without parental consent. This covers criminal prosecutions of parents.

An effective justice system promotes respect for the law among children and young people. A fair legal system and effective protection mechanisms increase young people's confidence in the formal justice system. Several countries in the region have taken decisive steps in accordance with their international treaty obligations towards justice for children, including Cambodia, Philippines, Australia and New Zealand.

Juvenile justice

Juvenile justice is one aspect of children's justice that has already been clearly defined and is enshrined in a number of international agreements such as the Beijing Rules and Riyadh Guidelines (see Hodgkin and Newell, 2002). These agreements emphasize the need for a separate justice system for children in conflict with the law and community-based prevention and rehabilitation mechanisms (Martin and Parry-Williams, 2005). These aspects are important because marginalized children are often unfairly brought into conflict with the law, where they tend to face discrimination and abuse. The civil rights of children in conflict with the law include children's right to legal representation, right to remain silent, children-friendly court procedures and the right to be informed about charges brought against them.

Children in judicial proceedings

Justice for children goes beyond juvenile offenders caught up in the legal system. It means children are able to use the justice system to claim their rights. It includes children as witnesses and as plaintiffs (victims) in any judicial proceedings affecting children. This covers a wide range of court hearings, including all civil proceedings, such as divorce, custody, care and adoption proceedings, name changing, judicial applications relating to place of residence, religion, education, disposal of money, judicial decision making on nationality, immigration and refugee status, and criminal proceedings.

Courts and other judicial bodies have to be adapted to enable children to participate in the justice system. For court hearings this includes innovations, such as greater informality in the physical design of the court and the clothing of the judges and lawyers, the videotaping of evidence, sight screens, separate waiting rooms and the special preparation of child witnesses. Aspects of a trial that may frighten a child, such as cross-examination, should be conducted in a way that considers the welfare of the child without contravening the rights of the accused. Special measures are required to address the specific needs of child victims, such as the provision of psychosocial support, the use of trained investigators and the maintenance of a child's anonymity. Efforts should also be made to ensure that child victims understand the trial process, its aims and objectives, and possible consequences. The children-friendly UN Guidelines on Justice in Matters Involving Child Victims and Witnesses of Crime provide guidance for children as victims and witnesses in justice processes.

Box 19: How children's views are heard in child protective proceedings

Yale University is supporting a global study on children's expression in child protective proceedings. This initiative categorizes legal procedures according to the following five systems:

1. The child must be heard directly according to the law. Mandatory in Viet Nam, Indonesia, Australia, Nauru and Tonga, discretionary in Mongolia

2. The child must be heard through a representative according to the law: Mandatory in Myanmar, Australia and Tonga, discretionary in Thailand

3. The child must be heard through a body according to the law
   (no examples from East Asia and the Pacific region)

4. There is no requirement that the child's views be expressed in the law: Japan, Republic of Korea, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Australia, New Zealand, Fiji, Palau, Samoa

5. There are no child protective proceedings provided for by the laws of this jurisdiction: Cambodia, Lao PDR, Timor-Leste, Solomon Islands, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Tuvalu

Source: www.law.yale.edu/rcw/rcw/summary.htm

Children's involvement in truth commissions

Truth commissions can play an important role in addressing the past and re-establishing the rule of law in post-conflict situations. By providing a forum for victims, witnesses and perpetrators to tell their experiences, and by documenting the crimes of the war, truth commissions can serve as an important tool to build stability in societies where systematic violations have occurred. Truth-seeking mechanisms have the potential to engage communities in accountability processes and can be an effective and safe mechanism for children's involvement. Over 25 truth commissions have been convened in various countries over the last decades and several have addressed the experiences of children.

Efforts to promote justice for children have to be linked to the broader work to promote access to justice. Putting children and their specific justice concerns on the agenda of the UN Development Programme and other agencies who are working on the legal empowerment of poor people more broadly should provide significant opportunities for scaling up and increasing the impact of justice for children work.

Box 20: Truth and Reconciliation Commission

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) for Sierra Leone was the first to specifically focus on children as victims and witnesses, and to profile their role as actors in the reconciliation process. Because children were among the primary victims of the civil war in Sierra Leone, their participation in the TRC was deemed essential from the beginning. The challenge was twofold. On one hand, the TRC needed to identify opportunities for children's involvement and, on the other hand, it was necessary to develop children-friendly procedures to ensure children's protection, helping them feel safe when recounting their experiences. The Sierra Leone TRC was also the first truth commission to prepare a children's version of the report.

A key activity involving children in the TRC was statement-taking at the community level. Over 300 children participated in statement-taking across the 13 districts, providing a critical contribution to the findings of the commission. The statements exposed the severity of suffering that children endured and helped give expression to their overall concerns. For example, among the statements given, an overwhelming majority of children spoke about their desire to return to school and to create a new and positive future. While there was initial concern about potential negative impacts for children in remembering the horrors of the war, this was not observed. Instead children's participation in statement-taking seemed to help them come to terms with their experiences (although there has been no follow-up assessment to validate this).

The preparation of a children-friendly version of the final report of the TRC provided another opportunity to involve children in the Commission's work. Children contributed throughout the process, helping to give shape to a report that would bring about positive action and would directly engage children as members of their communities, contributing to reconciliation and the transition to a more just and stable society. Participation in the drafting of the report came from three national children's networks – the Children's Forum Network, the Voice of Children Radio, and the first ever Children's National Assembly. The children-friendly version is a much shorter and simpler version of the full report that children can read and understand. It was proposed 'to prevent recurrence of what happened'. By engaging children it helped to build their capacity for active citizenship in the aftermath of war.

Source: Siegrist et al, 2007

Government responsibilities

Justice for children requires actions by a wide range of actors, including the ministry of justice, police, court system and prosecutors, alternative justice system, local government, administrative agencies, media, social movements, community organizations, and children and young people. Teachers and the education system have responsibilities for legal education. Children's legal empowerment has to be made practical through parents or guardians and laws have to be made more accessible for children of different ages and abilities. Specific government responsibilities include:

■ Reform the legislative framework to ensure children's legal empowerment and to change discriminatory laws and regulations;

■ Ensure availability of appropriate children-sensitive legal aid services – not only for criminal cases;

■ Create opportunities for children to be heard in judicial and administrative proceedings affecting them;

■ Establish mechanisms for consulting and assessing children and to take their complaints into consideration in legal provisions and judicial decisions;

■ Train professionals working with children in the justice system (judges, probation officers, police and prison officers) to communicate and consult with children;

■ Adopt children-oriented communication strategies to increase legal awareness;

■ Produce and disseminate legal information for all children in accessible forms.

Development commitments and access to justice

MDG 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger: Access to justice contributes significantly to children's ability to claim their entitlements and to protect themselves against exploitation and abuse.

MDG 2: Achieve universal primary education: Access to justice-diversion programmes increases children's opportunities for education.

MDG 3: Promote gender equality and empower women: The justice system is often particularly inaccessible to girls and women. Justice for women and girls contributes greatly to gender equality and women's empowerment.

MDG 5: Improve maternal health: Women who can choose their age of marriage and are not forced into marriage, pregnancy and child bearing as teenagers are healthier.

MDG 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases: Access to justice enables children affected by HIV/AIDS to claim access to essential services and resources.

Decent and productive work for youth: Diversion programmes provide opportunities for children to have access to decent and productive work.

Protect children from violence, exploitation and abuse: Access to justice for children is a fundamental part of a protective system for children.

Targets and indicators

- Law courts are obliged to consider children's views when deciding matters affecting them
- Elimination of life imprisonment and capital punishment for children
- Mechanisms for complaints and redress accessible to children in cases of torture
- Existence of legal restrictions on taking physical measures (including physical restraint) against children in institutional settings
- Children-friendly court procedures for child victims and witnesses
- Children's right to separate legal counsel
- Mechanisms for recording and using children's statements in child-protective proceedings
- Separate juvenile-justice system in place with an emphasis on diversion and in accordance with international agreements
- Legal-aid mechanisms for children
- Legal information and education for children
- Lawyers, magistrates and judges undergo professional training in children's participation.

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6. Economic citizenship and access to resources

What is children's economic citizenship?

Children have limited control over economic resources and assets, and are denied the economic rights of adults. Children cannot sign contracts or obtain bank loans. Children often do not receive the wages they earn for their work. Children-headed households are treated differently from adult-headed households and often denied services and resources. Orphans may be cheated out of their inheritance and pushed into poverty. Children's economic disempowerment makes them more vulnerable to poverty, exploitation and abuse.

Over the past few years, increased efforts have been made to increase the resources spent on children. Examples include research on childhood poverty, advocating for increased spending on services for children and budgeting for the participatory involvement of children. These initiatives focus on greater allocation of public resources *for* children, rather than on greater control over resources *by* children, and the economic dimensions of children's citizenship.

Access to financial services and resources: Usually, if children have not reached the age of majority they cannot sign contracts, buy property, receive bank loans or obtain credit. For children who are forced to work or who are self-employed the lack of access to financial services and resources is a serious problem. Lack of financial skills and inexperience in handling money contribute to children's social and economic inequality.

Box 21: Youth Microenterprise Conference

The youth population, aged 12 to 24 years, has reached a historical high of 1.5 billion. Youth are the entrepreneurs, workers, leaders, and parents making an impact today, and they will be responsible for the economic and social development of tomorrow. However, many young people around the globe continue to lack access to quality employment and education opportunities. Without a background in financial literacy or access to business-development resources, youth face constraints made more difficult by their age. Expanding the entrepreneurial culture and skills of young citizens has the potential to improve economic stability and the overall health of communities.

The Youth Microenterprise Conference (10-11 September 2007 in Washington, DC) brought together international development practitioners, policy makers, members of the private sector, young people and experienced professionals in the fields of education, global health, microenterprise creation and youth entrepreneurship to explore and discuss three issues:

- The role of youth microenterprise in the 21st century: facing the challenge of youth unemployment and vulnerability
- Strategies to address the needs of youth entrepreneurs
- How to build partnerships and advance youth microenterprise to support social and economic development

Source: www.ymeconference.org

Right to own earnings: Working children often do not see the economic returns of their work, because employers may pay directly to the parents, or not pay children at all. This is partly the result of the illegality of children's work, and partly because children cannot sign contracts. This economic exploitation increases children's frustration and lowers their self-esteem.

Children-headed households: Access to economic resources forms a major source of protection for children. This is especially important for children who are heading their own households. Children-headed households may be denied access to services and resources available to adult-headed households. For example, during emergency relief operations, children have been denied their own rations, since humanitarian agencies did not consider the possibility of children heading their own households. This form of economic discrimination puts children at a double disadvantage. As children they usually have fewer resources than adults. In addition, they are denied what adults in the same circumstances are receiving.

Disinheritance of orphans: Children who have been orphaned by AIDS or other causes are often vulnerable to property- and land-grabbing by relatives or others who are entrusted with their care. Disinheritance is more likely where legislation is outdated, codified laws and customary systems of justice are contradictory, public awareness is low and laws are inadequately applied. Developing, implementing and enforcing specific protection for inheritance and property rights, marriage and divorce, and the treatment of widows and orphans can reduce economic vulnerability among families and children affected by AIDS (UNICEF, 2007).

What can be done?

Review laws and policies regarding land ownership and private property. Statutes, codes and regulations should clearly articulate the rights of children to own property under national law. Procedures for ensuring enforcement of these rights should take account of gender and age differences. Focusing only on legislative obstacles is insufficient to ensure equitable property protection and transfer. Where customary law (rules that have been accepted for generations and have achieved legal status) is practiced, local leaders, with support from governments, non-governmental organizations and human rights groups must be equipped to help protect orphans from losing their inheritance. Legal aid groups can provide training on writing wills, taking into account the particular vulnerability of girls. Where customary law may jeopardize the well-being of citizens, governments should be responsible for enforcing national law. This may require additional support to local civil courts, making lawyers and judges aware of any legislative changes, and taking further steps to make legal aid and the court system accessible to poor families, including children (UNICEF, 2007).

Social protection and cash transfers: Over the past years there has been growing interest in social protection as a way to alleviate poverty and to reduce vulnerability in developing countries. Social protection includes measures to prevent and respond to risk and vulnerability. For child orphans, the risks of poverty and loss of livelihood are compounded by the risk of losing family care. Social protection measures, including income transfers, family support services and alternative care, can help mitigate the impact of orphanhood by reducing poverty and family separation. Such measures can contribute to better health, education and protection of children (UNICEF, 2007).

Social protection includes social transfers, which may be provided as cash, in kind (often as food) or as vouchers. Effective social transfers alleviate income poverty and enable vulnerable households to meet their basic needs. Social transfers can also relieve families of the pressure to place children in institutions, lessen the risk of child labour, and reduce the stress that contributes to domestic violence. Successive Mongolian governments have experimented with different children support schemes. In Kenya, after the government's elimination of school fees, there was a reduction in the number of children and families living on the street and increased school attendance (UNICEF, 2007).

Health insurance and pension schemes are another way to reduce the impact of shocks and crises on families and children. The 30-Baht scheme in Thailand is an effort to provide basic minimum health care to every citizen. Insurance and social-protection transfers have to include and reach children-headed households.

Government responsibilities

- Guarantee children's access to and control over resources and their own income. This has to be respected and protected in formal legislation and in cultural practices;

- Provide financial education in school as an essential livelihood skill for children;

- Review legislation regarding children's access to financial services and resources and explore ways to overcome the economic marginalization of children who are earning their own living;

- Change banking policies to facilitate access to banking services for children aged 14 years and older. This should be accompanied by protection under the law from unscrupulous practice on the part of financial service providers;

- Ensure that children-headed households receive the same entitlements to social protection as others households. Abolish discriminatory legislation that excludes children (especially those heading households) from accessing public services and resource transfers.

Development commitments and children's equal access to resources and services

MDG 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger: Resource transfers targeted at children can reduce current and intergenerational transmission of poverty. Protecting the economic rights of children (for example orphans) prevents them from sliding into poverty. Children's access to health services, health and disability insurance reduces their vulnerability and protects them from poverty.

MDG 2: Achieve universal primary education: Children's access to resources and social protection reduces economic pressures, increases school enrolment and reduces the risk of drop out.

MDG 3: Promote gender equality and empower women: Equal access to resources and inheritance rights are essential prerequisites for gender equality.

MDG 4: Reduce child mortality: Health insurance for children makes medical treatment more accessible.

MDG 5: Improve maternal health: Health insurance for children makes medical treatment more accessible and less discriminatory.

MDG 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases: Safety nets for orphans and vulnerable children can help children cope with the impacts of diseases and protect them from HIV.

Decent and productive work for youth: Access to resources, livelihood skills, business services and agricultural extension improves children's livelihood opportunities.

Protect children from violence, exploitation and abuse: Economic citizenship and access to resources protects children from exploitation and abuse. Where children are deprived of resources they are much more vulnerable to exploitation and abuse. Protecting the inheritance rights of orphans helps prevent them from becoming poorer, and thus more vulnerable to exploitation and abuse.

Targets and indicators

- Children have access to and control over resources, including their own income
- Wage differentials between adults and children
- Level of children's financial skills
- Equal treatment of child-headed households in respect to services and social protection
- Legal protection of children's inheritance rights

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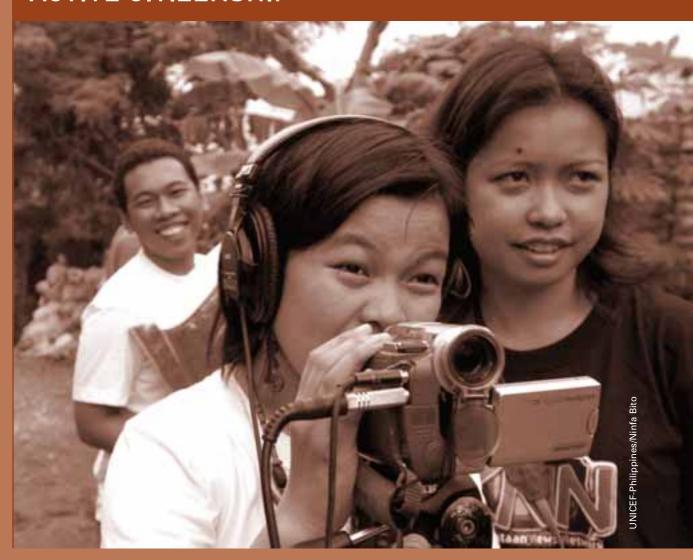
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DEVELOPING AND PRACTICING ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP

UNICEF-Philippines/Ninfa Bito

PART 3

DEVELOPING AND PRACTICING ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP

7. Citizenship competencies and civic engagement

Citizenship is not just a legal and political status, it also encompasses involvement in public life and affairs. Exercising the rights and fulfilling the obligations of a citizen require certain social and moral behaviours and actions. What these rights, responsibilities and forms of behaviour should be is an area of on-going public debate. Being skilled and competent as a citizen includes being empowered, using one's potential for positive action and being prepared to take a constructive and pro-active approach to issues and problems.

Citizenship competencies

Children and young people require certain skills, information and knowledge for active citizenship. Rapid social, economic and technological changes brought about by globalization are increasing the demand for new skills. Competencies for responsible participation in political, economic, social and cultural life include: social, emotional and moral skills and responsibilities; community involvement and volunteering; and political literacy and skills. Other skills areas that concern young people as citizens include economic literacy, money management and budgeting. Fostering children's social, emotional and behavioural skills in and out of school has benefits for: academic achievement, self-esteem, personal responsibility, tolerance of difference, workplace effectiveness, classroom behaviour, and mental health.

> **Box 22: Competencies for active citizenship**
>
> **Social, emotional and moral skills and responsibilities**
> - Develop good social relationships, including mediation and negotiation skills and non-violent conflict resolution
> - Respect differences between people and accept decisions by other people
> - Decision-making and problem-solving skills
> - Communication skills
> - Develop self-confidence, self-esteem and responsibility
> - Self awareness and critical-thinking skills
> - Coping with emotions and stress management
>
> **Community involvement and volunteering**
> - Develop respect for the environment and promote sustainable development
> - Develop responsibilities for community life and citizenship
>
> **Political literacy and skills**
> - Strengthen respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms
> - Legal literacy: human rights, criminal and civil law, justice and the rule of law
> - Promote tolerance for others, gender equality, equality of ethnic and religious groups, persons with disabilities, people with different sexual orientations and people living with HIV/AIDS
> - Government and politics, electoral systems, taxation, democracy, budget
> - Media education should be introduced in school curricula for children to develop critical understanding of all media forms and nurture a healthy environment for debate

Opportunities for children's civic engagement

Children's civic engagement covers a wide range of activities, including community volunteering, youth service, service learning, peer education, social entrepreneurship and leadership, social activism, and children-led associations. Children's civic engagement is an important resource for a society's social and economic development that can have a variety of positive effects on children and their communities. Civic engagement addresses specific problems (for example health, drug use, HIV, school enrolment and literacy) and builds social responsibility. Investments in children strengthen a society's human capital. This is particularly important in countries with a large population below the age of 25 years. Civically-engaged children become civically-aware and committed adults. Strengthened trust and mutual help prevents problems, makes social and economic transactions cheaper and frees up resources that can be used for other productive activities.

Active civic engagement gives children responsibilities and opportunities to practise choice, decision making and independence. Children gain experiences and skills they need to make successful transitions to adulthood. Civic engagement also serves to provide opportunities for leadership, help prevent risky behaviours, and re-engage children who have dropped out of school or are unemployed. This includes programmes that prevent negative behaviours and rehabilitate young offenders.

The following sections provide an overview of different forms of children's civic engagement, highlighting the strengths and weaknesses of these approaches.

Youth service

The aims of youth service and volunteering are to develop children's sense of responsibility for the community; build practical and organizational skills; and harness the contributions and resources of children. Youth service includes various forms of volunteering and public service. National service for example, is often compulsory for young males and sometimes for females. Some countries offer choices of service (military or civil), others mandate service in the armed forces. Youth organizations, such as the Scouts (or the young volunteers of the Red Cross), organize children to make positive contributions to their communities as volunteers, to instil a sense of responsibility in them. Informal community mobilization and volunteering often includes children. An example is the mobilization of students for improving the school environment.

Strengths

- Involves many children and young people
- Structured and sustainable
- Can bridge ethnic, socioeconomic and religious differences
- Programme design varies according to target population
- Meets critical community needs
- Improves skills and improve job opportunities
- Involves children in programme design and evaluation

Weaknesses

- Children have little control over decisions
- Becoming politicised
- Replacing full-time jobs in certain sectors
- Insufficient funding
- Marginalization of children
- Lack of quality training and monitoring of standards

Box 23: Youth Star, Cambodia

Youth Star was set up as a rural community volunteer service for urban secondary school graduates following a detailed feasibility study (Mysliwiec). The volunteer service aims to expose future leaders to the realities of life in poor villages and to instil in them a sense of social responsibility. Youth Star hopes that this experience will lead former volunteers to tackle poverty and inequality throughout their careers and lives, either working for NGOs, as politicians or as socially responsible private sector entrepreneurs. Volunteers are screened by Youth Star to ensure they have the necessary commitment and attitudes to live and work alongside villagers.

In many countries, children's civic engagement is supported by youth organizations and civil society rather than by governments. In others, such as Viet Nam, many children are members of mass organizations, such as the Young Pioneers or the Youth Union. Mass organizations are part of the structure of the ruling party and fulfil important roles in mobilizing people to raise awareness and to carry out community activities. Scope for individual decision making tends to be limited within these organizations.

Box 24: Children's health clubs in Indonesia

In Indonesia, 200 school water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) programmes have established child health clubs where students monitor the hygiene behaviours of their community. Every sixth-grader is responsible for monitoring a dozen neighbouring households. Students develop indicators of hygiene practices through school-level hygiene assessment and planning.

Box 25: Lessons learnt about youth volunteering for development

Some of the lessons learnt about youth volunteering:

- The achievement of effective volunteering for development depends on the recognition and promotion of volunteering at the highest policy level.
- Youth are capable of playing a vital role in the development of their communities if given the opportunity and the necessary training.
- Build capacity at local level to manage and monitor volunteers.
- There is a need to consider youth development initiatives in a holistic manner because youth needs tend to be interlinked.
- Identifying interventions that not only interest youth but also address the developmental needs of youth and their communities, will be most beneficial in the long run.
- Cooperation between government departments and between government and civil society organizations can strengthen the resource base for volunteering.
- Well-designed programmes can develop young people themselves, equipping them with skills that are broadly applicable and encouraging young participants to consider opportunities for further learning and new career directions.
- Youth volunteering builds the employment and leadership competencies of youth.

Source: UNV, 2006

Peer education

Peer education involves children in HIV/AIDS education, and promotes good practices in health, water and sanitation, for example using the child-to-child approach. Peer education may be integrated into youth service.

Strengths

- More informal than youth service
- Potential for greater decision-making roles for children and young people

Weaknesses

- Fewer children involved than youth service
- Poor quality of peer education
- Exploitation of young people as cheap labour
- Lack of decision-making control by young people
- High turnover of peer educators and lack of sustainability

Social entrepreneurship and leadership

Social entrepreneurship and leadership programmes support exceptional children and young people as change agents. Social entrepreneurs are catalysts for change who mobilize others to tackle social problems in their communities. Agencies, such as UNICEF and the World Bank, have organized competitions where young people were invited to submit proposals for social and economic community projects.

Strengths

- High degree of children's control over decisions
- Some social entrepreneurs have started youth service programmes that have been scaled up

Weaknesses

- Limited opportunities for institutionalization and scaling up
- Small number of children are social entrepreneurs
- Elitism through focusing on privileged children

Box 26: Youth development market place in Papua New Guinea

In 2006, the World Bank, through the Youth Innovation Fund, invited young people from across Papua New Guinea to apply for small grants to fund innovative youth initiatives. The World Bank received 820 applications, most of which were for agriculture and chicken farming and lacked innovation potential. After a lengthy process, 18 projects were selected for funding support. The award-winning innovations included: bilumwear, waste management, and youth against corruption. There is a potential for attracting additional funding and private-sector sponsorship for this initiative in future years. The huge interest in this initiative shows how starved young people are in Papua New Guinea for opportunities to do something useful and productive. There are no other youth-volunteer or youth-entrepreneurship programmes in PNG.

Box 27: Ashoka Youth Venture

Youth Venture enables young people to learn early on in life that they can lead social change. Ashoka developed the concept of Youth Venture from understanding a key insight of Ashoka Fellows in the field of youth development: one of the most effective ways to improve the lives of young people is to empower them to realize their own ability to make positive social change. Youth Venture inspires and invests in teams of young people to start and lead their own social ventures, and is building a network of young changemakers across the world. Youth Venture is currently operating in the US, Mexico, Argentina, Brazil, India, South Africa, Thailand, France, Germany, and Spain.

Youth Venture seeks to create impact by transforming:

- The youth participant, through the enabling experience of starting a social venture;
- The youth team, as they learn important life skills and realize that they can create change;
- The community, as growing numbers of Youth Venture teams "tip" the local culture toward greater youth leadership;
- Society at large, by fundamentally redefining the role of young people as leaders of social change.

Youth Venture plays a critical role in realising Ashoka's vision of 'Everyone a Changemaker.' By giving young people the means to know that they have the ability to change the environment around them, Ashoka believes that youth will gain the skills and understanding that can be powerful long into their adult future. Through this experience, young people will grow up practicing applied empathy, teamwork, and leadership – the underlying skills needed to make change.

Source: www.ashoka.org/youthventure

Box 28: Youth Against Corruption Association in Papua New Guinea

Youth Against Corruption Association (YACA) has strong links to the Catholic Church and is supported by Transparency International (TI) to mobilize young people to stand up against corruption and theft in government. YACA organizes petitions, mobilizes people to vote and conducts mock elections among young people. A major focus of YACA is to educate young people about their rights and duties as democratic citizens and to give youth in PNG a political voice outside party and partisan politics. YACA aims to bring about change by changing the attitudes and behaviours of its members. It builds leadership skills and a sense of commitment among youth members.

YACA is a partner in the TI coalition against corruption. Such coalitions are a key element in TI's strategy and approach to fight corruption. One example of success is that the network of coalitions stopped a bill on the leadership code by organizing a petition on raising the level of political slush funds. The coalition used media and sent out the petition through the church network to collect 70,000 signatures. YACA learns from good models for youth against corruption in Africa (Network of African Youths Against Corruption – www.nayacafrica.org/index2.php) and Fiji (Fiji Youth Council – www.pacifikayouth.org).

Most YACA members are aged 14-24 years and are in school. There are more female than male members (60/40), but most leadership positions go to males. Some ethnic groups in PNG are more outspoken than others and this is reflected in the membership. YACA is decentralized and therefore has no clear idea of membership numbers. All board members of YACA are young people aged 16-22 years.

YACA faces several challenges. It is important to ensure that the anti-corruption message is clear and does not get confused or diluted. Sometimes it is difficult to draw the line between corruption and *wantok*/nepotism. Another challenge is to keep YACA members focused on anti-corruption activism. Many YACA members want to use their energies to bring about tangible changes in their communities. They want to help homeless or disabled people, or clean up areas, rather than just focus on the rather abstract topic of corruption (there may be potential in combining these). Another challenge is to spread YACA membership and coalitions to other communities and provinces. So far, YACA is not being seen as a threat by corrupt politicians, which shows that it is not yet having much of an impact on the culture of corruption in PNG.

Service learning

Service learning offers students work opportunities in communities or businesses while still in school. This practical work experience develops children's technical, organizational, social and emotional skills and builds their confidence and problem-solving capacities. As a potential risk, children might be exploited as unpaid workers or exposed to dangerous work.

Child activists

Some agencies support children to become social activists and to tackle social and political issues in society. Transparency International, for example, organizes groups of young people to raise awareness in their communities about corruption and to promote honesty, trust and social capital. Potential dangers include attacks on child activists or the manipulation of children to advocate on behalf of adults and their agendas.

How to support children's civic engagement?

Developing citizenship competencies: Children's competencies for citizenship can be developed at home, in school, in youth groups and in the community. In schools, children's citizenship can be fostered through the ways students are engaged in school life and decision-making. It can also be promoted through a curriculum on political literacy, by developing social and moral responsibility through student-centred learning and teaching methods.

Education for citizenship goes far beyond formal schooling. It includes a wide range of life experiences and learning processes that enable children to develop their personalities, talents and abilities. This requires that schools are children-friendly and promote children's dignity. The participation of children in school life, the creation of school communities and student councils, peer education and peer counselling, and the involvement of children in school management should be promoted as part of the process of learning and experiencing the realization of rights (Hodgkin and Newell, 2002). Students must feel that their education is not divorced from real life. Curriculum and teaching methods must be of direct relevance to children's needs and capacities and to their social, cultural, environmental and economic context.

Schools may not always be the best place for children to learn about the rights and responsibilities of citizens. Schools are often conservative and may impart non-democratic values. In addition to the formal education system, young people need practical opportunities to build civic competencies and put these skills into practice.

Civic engagement should encourage children's own interests, motivations and ideas. Children need to be involved actively rather than just being told what to do. Children whose experiences are grounded in their own actions are able to speak with confidence. Many countries have set up specific youth-volunteer programmes or incorporate civic-engagement activities in other programmes, including education, economic development, democratic development, environment, sports, culture and gender. Civic engagement takes time to build up. It requires resources and supportive, experienced adults who can guide children. It should reach out to groups that are generally excluded from social life (for example children with disabilities).

Box 30: Children's and young people's capacities in emergencies

What children and young people have done at different ages:

Children aged 5-10 years

- Making toys for younger children

Children aged 9-12 years

- Providing first aid
- Playing and supporting children who lost family members
- Talking and supporting friends who were sad
- Collecting food and rations for old people
- Helping prepare food
- Helping to clean IDP camps
- Making representation to adults

Children aged 12 years

- Teaching younger children
- Caring for younger children
- Working as part of emergency task group

Children aged 12-17 years

- Rescuing and saving younger children
- Caring for younger children
- Teaching younger children and peers
- Treating wounds and caring for injured people
- Clearing up after an emergency
- Collecting bodies
- Helping to trace families
- Helping old people to collect food and rations
- Helping families with small children to collect food and rations
- Packing food for distribution
- Providing information about milk powder needs
- Cleaning camps
- Cleaning and painting buildings
- Developing businesses

Young people aged 18 and older

- Rescuing and saving younger children
- Organizing entertainment
- Developing businesses
- Providing community communications
- Negotiating with outsiders on behalf of a community

Source: Drawn from several sources, especially Penrose, 2005

Government responsibilities

Some of the main responsibilities of governments include:

Competencies for citizenship:

- Introduce explicit learning outcomes for citizenship competencies;
- Establish mechanisms, such as school councils, for children to practice competencies for citizenship. Councils provide practical, first-hand experience of decision making and democratic processes. They enable children to participate effectively in schools and address issues of concern to them and their school;
- Train teachers for citizenship education;
- Support parenting education for the next generation of parents.

Civic engagement:

- Remove legal and institutional obstacles to children's civic engagement;
- Reform legislation to promote children's civic engagement;
- Develop opportunities for children's civic engagement;
- Ensure opportunities for civic engagement are accessible for all children, irrespective of age, sex, ethnicity and disability.

Development commitments and civic engagement

MDG 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger: Children's service and social entrepreneurship build important skills that assist them in their transitions to adulthood. They mobilize children and harness their energies and creativity to make positive contributions to poverty eradication and to social development in their communities.

MDG 2: Achieve universal primary education: Children can make important contributions to learning through student clubs, buddy systems, peer education, student councils and service learning.

MDG 3: Promote gender equality and empower women: Creating opportunities for young women to become leaders and social entrepreneurs has far-reaching implications for promoting gender equality and women's empowerment.

MDG 4: Reduce child mortality: Older children can make important contributions to children's health: community-based health work, prenatal care, emergency obstetric care and family planning, child-to-child health education, environmental sanitation (for example school sanitation clubs). Children who are involved in health education develop an interest in their own health and will take better care of themselves and others. Water, sanitation and health services are more effective if they include the contributions of children.

MDG 5: Improve maternal health: Adolescent girls and boys can make important contributions through community-based health work, prenatal care, emergency obstetric care and family planning. They can provide peer-to-peer education on sexual health and community-based condom distribution for youth by youth. They can advocate and raise awareness about negative consequences of child marriage and adolescent pregnancy. Involving young men in leadership trainings and awareness programmes contributes to preventing gender-based violence.

MDG 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases: Peer education in schools, communities and institutions is a key component of HIV-prevention strategies.

MDG 7: Ensure environmental sustainability: Children are making important contributions to environmental sustainability as educators, campaigners, mobilizers and monitors.

Decent and productive work for youth: Children's civic engagement helps develop their livelihood skills and improves their economic opportunities. Children who are allowed to be members of labour unions could contribute to lobbying for decent working conditions.

Protect children from violence, exploitation and abuse: Child workers who are able to join a union are better able to demand their rights and protect themselves. Children are forceful advocates against violence, abuse and exploitation of children.

Targets and indicators

Competencies for citizenship:

- Political and legal awareness
- Communication skills
- Problem-solving skills
- Opportunities in school curricula to critically evaluate and act upon community issues

Civic engagement:

- Percentage of children who volunteer regularly
- Participation in social, cultural or environmental activities
- Extent of children's social networks
- Children's free access to public spaces and freedom to meet safely with their friends

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8. Children as active citizens in the media

Chapter 8 covered children's access to information and their protection from harmful media content. This chapter focuses more specifically on the role of the media in supporting and advancing children's citizenship through reporting about children and by offering opportunities for children to use the media to broadcast their views and to engage in public debates. 'Mass media' means all communications and broadcast media that reach large audiences. 'Broadcast media' include television, radio and newspapers. In recent years, information and communication technologies (ICT) have opened up new channels for children to express and disseminate their views - free from adult control.

Reporting about children as active citizens

Promoting and presenting children as active and empowered citizens: Media are (almost) everywhere and are a powerful force in forming, influencing and changing public opinions. For the most part, the media project images of children either as helpless victims in need of protection or as troublemakers, juvenile offenders and problems for society. The media are not only powerful and pervasive tools for change, they also transmit strong role models for children and childhood. Broadcast media have important roles to play in challenging stereotypes, projecting children as positive forces and active citizens in society, and in building young people's citizenship.

Children's involvement in the media can have a tremendous symbolic role because it can show a wide public that children have much greater capacity than most adults give them credit for. This idea can strengthen public acceptance of children's rights generally. Children as journalists in the media can challenge conventional images of children as helpless victims. Instead they present children as empowered citizens who are able to express their views and to demand their rights. Showing images of children 'in charge' can change the way people think about children. Young journalists demonstrate what children are capable of doing and what they have to say. They can help other children to visualize empowered roles for themselves.

> **Box 31: The Oslo Challenge**
>
> On the 10th anniversary of the CRC – at a meeting in Oslo organized by the Norwegian Government and UNICEF - children, young people, media professionals and children's-rights experts met to discuss the development of children's rights and their relationship to the media throughout the world. From these discussions emerged the Oslo Challenge, issued on 20 November 1999, which acknowledges that 'the child/media relationship is an entry point into the wide world of children and their rights - to education, freedom of expression, play, identity, health, dignity and self-respect, protection - and that in every aspect of child rights, in every element of the life of a child, the relationship between children and the media plays a role.' The Oslo Challenge organizations working for children is:
>
> - to respect the need for independence of the media as a component of democratic society;
> - to work together with media professionals to promote and protect children's rights and to respond to children's needs;
> - to provide effective media liaison services to ensure that media have access to reliable sources of information on children's issues;
> - to facilitate accurate coverage of child-related issues by developing media liaison policies that discourage misrepresentation in the interests of publicity and fundraising.
>
> Source: http://www.unicef.org/magic/briefing/oslo.html

Youth media as civic engagement

Opportunities for children in the media include television journalism, radio, community and school radio, and print journalism (Box 32; Oliver, 2006; Shuey, 2004). Children's reporting can send powerful messages about children's contributions and their right to have their views taken into account. When children are able to express their opinions in the media and change its messaging, media can become powerful tools for overcoming obstacles to children's participation. Providing the space and the resources for children and young people to become journalists can place the power of the media into the hands of children to make their views heard.

Box 32: Philippine youth produce their own nationwide TV programme

Kabataan News Network (KNN) is the only show in the Philippines, written, shot and produced by young people from different places, ethnic and religious backgrounds.

On Saturday morning TV in the Philippines: 17-year-old Athea talks about the infamous but delicious local fruit, the durian. Later, a young reporter discusses how tribal wars disrupt children's schooling and make young people feel unsafe in their own homes. These are some of the many features shown on the 'Kabataan News Network' or KNN, the content of which is produced entirely by young people – a first for the Philippines.

This is not the only first for KNN. It is also the first – and so far only – Philippine TV programme to have active bureaus all over the country. Furthermore, KNN is the first programme to feature children from indigenous communities and varying ethnic and religious backgrounds. The programme is presented in an entertaining way, providing lively coverage of the things that matter most to young people. Nickelodeon, the global children's channel, was so impressed with the quality of KNN it has started to air segments in a regular featured called: KNN on Nick.

In the Philippines, KNN is the centrepiece of UNICEF's communication work for adolescents. UNICEF had previously been training children in video production with impressive results but there was no effective outlet for their productions. In 2003 this changed. Workshops were organized to help young people create a new programme to broadcast their own productions. The name Kabataan News Network or KNN was chosen by the young people themselves. KNN started with six bureaus; the number has now grown to 12. The Probe Media Foundation Inc (PMFI) is UNICEF's main implementing partner.

The main objectives of this initiative are: to change the perception of young people in society; to give young people a chance to demonstrate their capacities; to create a powerful youth-to-youth communication platform, with a view to fighting HIV/AIDS among young people; and to link marginalized youth populations (impoverished, remote, indigenous, Muslim) with mainstream national media. 'KNN features issues that regular media do not include in their reports,' notes Cynthia, a 17-year-old reporter.

PMFI provides training for the young people who act as reporters for the show. The organization also edits the packages and compiles the overall show each week, according to scripts written by the young reporters and producers. Stories fall into various categories: 'my society', 'my environment', 'my family', 'my friends'. Mini-segments cover fads, youth-on-the-street interviews, young people with exceptional achievements, hobbies, and editorial stands on current issues.

Regardless of category, all stories address children's rights, and issues around adolescent development. In the highly-competitive Philippine TV market, KNN is now rated third out of ten channels in its premier time slot (Saturday 10 am), with an average audience in the capital city alone of 70,000 – 100,000 households. And the numbers keep increasing. The programme is also aired on the government TV station, and segments of the show air several times every day on the Nickelodeon Channel. The programme has quickly established itself as a huge success with adolescents throughout the country. 'I have been craving this kind of show for many years', wrote a fan, 'I commend you for showcasing the talents of other regions'.

The young people of KNN have set a goal of establishing a firm place in the mainstream media for their own voices. Time will tell how the programme changes the perception of young people in society, and also changes their own perception of themselves. KNN reporter Nicai, 14, says, 'When people find out that KNN stories are done by kids, they are amazed! Now people know that kids can do it!'

Source: Dale Rutstein, UNICEF Philippines

Children inform children: Children's control over media content and programming facilitates child-to-child communication and information sharing on important issues that adults often fail to cover adequately in communication with children, such as HIV/AIDS, drug use and sexuality. Children's broadcasts can reduce stigma against exploited children and promote the recovery of children traumatized by violence, abuse and neglect. This can help to secure a place for children from marginalized communities in mainstream media and strengthen the protective environment for children.

Linking communities: Children in the media have been able to link marginalized communities with mainstream society and have contributed to inter-ethnic and inter-religious understanding as well as to conflict resolution.

Building skills: Engagement with the media builds essential competencies, such as learning about citizenship, social issues and politics, developing critical media skills, life skills and livelihood skills.

Children reaching a wide audience: Engaging children in the development of media content in institutional (radio, TV, film) and informal (webcasts, social networks, videolinks) media channels gives children direct access to a significant portion of the general population. This allows them to create more realistic media images of children and to connect radio and television audiences to the real concerns of children – rather than to the topics adults choose for children.

Box 33: Indian Media Code to Realise Children's Rights, 2005

The Media Code to Realise Children's Rights attempts to bring about a paradigm shift in the media's approach to children – from being recipients of adult benevolence to being viewed as full partners in society. As contributing members of society, children have the right to be heard in all forums and debates and they must have a say in defining and determining media in society. Children have three main roles in relation to the media:

- Children as 'producers' of the media, creating spaces for children's expression and opinions of the realities around them;
- Children as 'users' of the media: children's access to the media; right to information; children's rights over programming content, right to protection from harmful content;
- Children as 'subjects' of the media: right to protection from misrepresentation and stereotyping; right to privacy, confidentiality and dignity.

The Media Code emphasizes the need to examine the media and children's rights in the light of their right to expression as 'citizens' of this world, and their right to be partners in creating the media;

- Children have the right to produce media for communication among themselves and to the rest of the world;
- Children's opinions and perspectives must be respected by the media and appear in the media;
- Children must be consulted in the programming of children's media;
- Children must have a say in deciding how they are represented in the media;
- Children's issues must be represented the way children perceive them;
- Children's realities must be presented the way children perceive them;
- All children, irrespective of gender, class, caste, ethnicity, religion and ability must have access to the media as 'producers' and as 'users';
- Children's media groups must be recognized and treated as part of the media fraternity;
- Children's groups must be given space in the media;
- Children's issues must be given space in the media;
- Opportunities must be available for all children irrespective of their gender, class, caste, ethnicity, religion and ability, to build their capacity to design, produce and disseminate media products;
- Media programming, monitoring and regulation must have a children's-rights perspective.

Source: http://infochangeindia.org/features410.jsp

Growing momentum for children's citizenship: The growing presence, importance and reach of the media in a globalizing world guarantees that children's involvement in the media offers a dynamic area for promoting children's active citizenship.

Standards: Not everything presented by children in the media meets these expectations, however. Children in the media face multiple challenges, from adult control and interference, to censorship, lack of resources and continued support. Children may produce programmes that are never broadcast. Key issues to consider are the degree of control by children over media content and production and the lack of adult interference and censorship; adequate adult support and resources; reaching audiences and regular broadcasting (Box 33).

Children and Information Communication Technology (ICT)

Digital media revolution: While children's involvement in formal broadcast media is limited by cost and adult control, information and communication technology provide growing opportunities for children to publicize their views to a wider audience. An estimated 4 to 10 percent of households in East Asia have Internet access, but children's Internet access through Internet cafés is estimated at 30 to 50 percent in some countries. Not only are the costs of Internet access coming down, Internet speeds are increasing rapidly and opportunities for internet access are growing fast. More and more mobile phones are web-enabled, allowing users to download to their handheld devices (within the limits of local censorship). The ease of uploading text, photos, films and sound to websites popular with young people, such as YouTube, DailyMotion and Stikcam has created a movement of 'Broadcast Yourself' and of on-line social networks. SMS text messaging and other forms of wireless communication are creating new opportunities for social networking and for political mobilization (Box 35). Blogs, podcasts, Skype and webcams are changing the way some children communicate with each other. The nature of broadcasting is changing, and young people are largely driving the changes.

Box 34: Voices of Youth

Voices of Youth, UNICEF's interactive website for children, has dedicated itself to harnessing the educational and community building potential of technology to ensure all children and young people can know more, say more and do more about the world they live in. In addition to providing safe virtual spaces and meaningful opportunities for children to learn about and impact the world around them, this has also entailed influencing decision and policy makers to hear children and take their opinions into account. By September 2006, the Voices of Youth community involved more than 17,000 children, with over 60 percent from developing countries and more than half girls.

Source: www.unicef.org/voy/

Digital generation: Children are powerfully attracted to the basic components of media: music, storylines, images and graphics. They can quickly acquire skills in new media. Many children are more 'media-savvy' than their parents. Children also feel a need to make a mark on the world and to share their views. The digital technology revolution is provides opportunities for democratizing electronic media.

Box 35: Photo clubs

Photo clubs for children affected by armed conflict (Philippines) or by natural disasters (tsunami in Aceh and Thailand) allow children to share their views with the general public. These open fresh perspectives on the effects of emergencies and of conflicts. Children have unusual abilities to connect through visual images. The photo clubs provide images for local media and for NGO communication.

Source: www.insightout-project.org

Scaling up children's participation: ICT can be a powerful tool for children to broadcast their views. The number of children accessing information, becoming socially active and taking on leadership roles using technology is growing every day. Globally, increasing numbers of children are turning to ICTs as their preferred medium of communication; the most efficient tool for national and global participation on a large scale. Harnessing the digital revolution to support children's civil rights to information and expression is critical for scaling up, and to inspire children to engage meaningfully. ICT is, in principle, multi-lingual and has the potential for anonymous, non-hierarchal participation, making it particularly suitable for children to by-pass adults. ICT cannot be ignored as a powerful tool for children and young people to broadcast their views to large audiences.

Challenges: New information and communication technologies are not a panacea, however. The digital divide is real and large numbers of poor children, especially those from ethnic minorities, have very limited access to these media. Another challenge is the lack of oversight mechanisms and the exploitation of children through cyber abusers, for example by using the Internet and mobile phones to spread child pornography. The World Summit on the Information Society addressed this issue in Tunis in 2005 and made a commitment to incorporate regulatory, self-regulatory, and other effective policies and frameworks to protect children and young people from abuse and exploitation through ICTs into national plans of action and e-strategies (www.it.int/wsis/tunis/).

Government responsibilities

The most important contribution the broadcast media are making to children's active citizenship is providing information for children. Children in the formal media constitute a very small but highly visible part of efforts to promote children's citizenship and civil rights.

■ Offer training opportunities for children to develop media skills and critical media literacy

■ Recognize that independent media are fundamental to the pursuit of democracy and freedom and that censorship and control are inimical to the best interests of both children and adults, and thus to create an effective and secure environment in which the media can work professionally and independently.

■ Explore ways in which, without compromising professional independence, support can be given to media initiatives aimed at providing greater access to children, serving their needs and promoting their rights.

■ Support the creation of space and opportunities for children to use mass media (print, radio, television) to communicate their views. Children should be able to hear, see and express themselves, their culture, languages and life experiences through broadcast programmes which affirm their sense of self, community and place.

■ Actively involve children in media to ensure that media content is relevant and appropriate

■ Increase children's access to and promote safe use of ICTs

Development commitments, children and media

MDG 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger: Children's media broadcasting can help to disseminate new perspectives on children's poverty and exclusion.

MDG 3: Promote gender equality and empower women: The media have an important role to play in projecting positive images of young women and to promote gender equality and women's empowerment.

MDG 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases: Broadcasts by children can be effective in getting messages on HIV prevention through to other children.

Decent and productive work for youth: Children's media work can raise awareness of the challenges young people are facing in finding decent employment.

Protect children from violence, exploitation and abuse: Child broadcasters can make important contributions to raise public awareness and change behaviours in relation to the abuse and exploitation of children.

Targets and indicators

- Existence of systems to monitor broadcasting about children
- Number and frequency of opportunities for children to use broadcast media to communicate their own views
- Number and frequency of opportunities for children to produce media content
- Spread and equity in children's access to Information and Communication Technology (ICT) – percentage of children with access to ICT
- Existence of independent media
- Degree of media censorship
- Enforcement of media standards to protect children

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9. Children influencing public decisions

Why should children be involved in public decisions?

Children's participation in the public sphere is the logical extension of the right to expression and decision making. Over the past ten years children and young people have participated increasingly in research, in national consultations and international conferences, in youth councils and parliaments. Some agencies have established children's advisory panels or have included a number of young people on their boards. In some countries children have been involved in participatory policy reviews and social auditing.

Public decisions that are informed by the views and concerns of children and young people lead to better policies, better services and increased budget allocations for children. Exposing young people to public decision-making processes offers important opportunities for civic education and learning about government. Involvement in such processes can strengthen children's social responsibility and develop their social, communication and facilitation skills.

Challenges of children in governance and politics

No place for children in politics: The vast majority of public decisions affecting children are made without considering the views of, or involving, children. Much of the work of government and civil society is carried out without explicit recognition of children and young people. Policy making, planning and resource allocation are often viewed as benefiting some 'universal' citizen, without regard to age or gender (Bartlett, 2005). Children are not considered as political actors. In most countries they do not have the right to vote or to stand for public office. The dominant concept of childhood leaves no role for children in the public political sphere. Children in governance and politics are a contradiction according to this view of childhood. Children may be junior members of political parties, but they are regarded as apprentices rather than as political actors in their own right.

Politics and protection: To a large extent, interpretations of the CRC – as having a primary concern with children's protection, survival and development – confirm this dominant childhood paradigm and do not articulate children's roles as political actors. Indeed, the CRC has been used to stress the risks for young political activists and the need to protect and prevent children from joining political and military struggles (Bainvel, n.d).

Children's control over decisions: Children have no formal place at the decision-making table and adult-controlled mechanisms are always likely to be required for children to represent their own opinions (Van Bueren, 1995). Children involved in political processes are often considered as technical actors who can provide useful information, rather than as citizens or political actors with rights to uphold and interests to defend. Many of the activities presented as children's participation in political decisions fall short of their ambitious objectives. Youth parliaments may be little more than debating clubs where children learn about governance and politics. At conferences, adults may listen to children but, when it comes to the important decisions, children are often excluded. In some cases children present their own resolution or declaration, leaving it up to government delegates to make use of or ignore children's contributions. Adult agencies may use children to present their advocacy agendas, or manipulate children to say what the adults want, rather than to present children's own concerns. In some situations, it may be safer for children rather than adults to articulate political demands, because they are considered to be 'just children' and do not have to be taken seriously.

> *Levels of children's control over decisions:* The levels of children's control over public decisions and the results of children's action vary greatly from one institution and mechanism to another. The following list provides some benchmarks for measuring examples of children's control over decisions:
>
> > *Children influence policies, resource allocations and services.*

Consideration of children's views:

- Children are included in decision-making processes (but their views may ultimately be ignored by adults);
- Children's views are gathered, presented and considered;
- Adults listen to children and exchange views with them (but take no further action).

Adults accept children's presence in the public sphere:

- Children are present (but adults may not listen to their views);
- Children learn about governance, politics, policies and budget processes.

Sustaining participation: Another challenge is to move beyond one-off events and consultations. High-profile political events involving children offer brief moments of publicity for small numbers of children but do little to enable the majority of children to make important decisions. Children taking part in high-level events require a great deal of support and guidance. During such events a few select children make brief forays into the public, adult-dominated arena. Children are under heavy adult protection, only to be chaperoned safely back into their own world once the event is over and the cameras have gone. More energy is given to attention-grabbing initiatives for children than to the small, difficult-to-effect organizational changes and tasks that are essential for lasting change (Bartlett, 2005).

Degrees of institutionalization of children's involvement in decisions:

- Mandated structures for involving children in decisions
- Regular mechanisms for considering children's views and involving them in decisions
- One-off events and processes

Building permanent mechanisms for children and young people to influence public planning and budget decisions and creating a public-policy environment where children and young people are being taken seriously take much time and effort. There are no simple models that are guaranteed to work. Since children are not considered part of public decision making, the public arena tends to be hostile to the inclusion of young people. Initiatives that are far removed from children's everyday lives are the least likely to be sustained over long periods of time.

Broader context of governance. Participation alone is inadequate to improve the performance of government services. Resource constraints, socio-political contexts and political and administrative features of decentralized structures affect government performance. Without accountability and resources, participation can deliver little (Crook and Manor, 1998). Children's opportunities to influence public decisions are determined to a large extent by a country's political system and level of democratization, the degree of decentralization of political authority, the strength and nature of civil society, and the independence of the media and justice system. Decentralization may open up new opportunities for children's involvement in governance. On the other hand, local authorities are further removed from international obligations and may feel less bound by the CRC than national authorities do.

Options for involving children in public decisions

The following section compares different ways for children to inform and influence public decisions. Children's involvement in governance and politics can be grouped into three (overlapping) types:

Children as political activists and actors outside formal governance and political systems. Children who are activists aim to influence the public decision-making process from the outside, through lobbying, campaigning and mobilizing. Some of the most well-known examples include children-led organizations, such as the unions of child workers in India.

Children in parallel governance institutions, forums and processes, such as children's parliaments and youth councils.

Children as members of decision-making bodies, political institutions and processes. Examples include children as members of management and audit committees or advisory boards.

Most support by children's-rights agencies has focused on children in governance institutions rather than on children's activism outside formal governance structures.

Research with children allows agencies and departments to gather the views of hundreds or even thousands of children. Systematically researching children's concerns and feeding them into policy decisions can ensure that children's views are represented in decision making. Research also offers a mechanism for capturing the perspectives of those children who would normally not be included in consultations and events. Examples include children who are very young, stateless, illiterate, or from remote areas. Research with children is one of the most objective methods to gather representative views from a wide cross-section of children.

Research methods have to be adapted to the children who are involved in the study. Opinion polls and household surveys leave little room for detailed answers from children. Qualitative and participatory research approaches and the use of drawings and role play can be useful for obtaining in-depth data from children. In most research studies children are just informants. They are not involved in the analysis of the data or in deciding how the results of the research will be used. Increasingly, children are being involved in the design of studies and the selection of topics and questions for research. A growing number of agencies is supporting children to become researchers, to collect and analyse data, and to present and disseminate research results (Ennew and Plateau, 2004).

Community-level planning can offer opportunities for involving children in decisions that affect them, such as the location of water wells, the use of public spaces, or the placement of lights to make streets safer at night. Experiences with children's involvement in community planning following natural disasters are well documented (UNICEF, 2007).

Box 36: Children designing homes and resource centres

After the 2004 tsunami hit Sri Lanka, children were consulted on models for houses. Although the government had already provided designs, modifications were made. This process revealed the different perceptions and concerns of children to those of their parents. Adults wanted all the characteristics of the house to be bigger; children were more concerned about the layout, the environment and privacy.

After the tsunami hit Tamil Nadu in India, children participated in the design and development of children's resource centres. This involved children observing, describing and analysing their communities through maps, focus groups and interviews. They defined the aims and functions of the proposed children's resource centre. They also suggested designs that were presented to the broader community. Children's participation continued into developing activities for the centres. The facilitating agencies observed that, through this process, adults in the community began to view the children with respect.

Source: Chen and Thompstone, 2005

Involving children in consultations and conferences has become very popular, but results have been mixed. At their best, children are present as full participants, are well-informed about the topic and make valuable contributions that influence the outcomes and decisions of the event. Some regional consultations on violence against children achieved these standards. At many conferences, however, adults may listen to children but do not take their views into account. Children may have their own forum or be part of the official government delegation. Children attending consultations are often not representative of the diversity of children in their community or country. Conferences are often expensive, especially if they are held internationally. Some argue that children's citizenship rights would be better served through mechanisms encouraging representation of their views and concerns at community, local and national levels, which could then be forwarded to global events. This would mean a more democratic representation of children at United-Nations meetings, without the need for their physical presence (Beers et al, 2006; Ennew et al, 2004).

On the other hand, high-level conferences offer exceptional opportunities for children to interact with senior politicians and decision makers. These events, which attract a great deal of media attention, present children as active citizens, even if they have little influence over the final decisions. Such high-level events can raise awareness among decision makers (and the general population if the event is covered by the media) and broaden acceptance of children in the public sphere. Even if children are not directly involved in decisions, their presence at conferences may raise their profile and indirectly lead to greater attention to their concerns and rights.

Internet-based consultations and video conferencing: The Internet offers new and potentially cheaper alternatives for consulting children. Voices of Youth and other Internet-based tools can reach and link hundreds or thousands of young people quickly and relatively cheaply. Web-conferencing and video-conferencing are being increasingly used as alternatives to face-to-face meetings and consultations as the cost of technology goes down and Internet speeds are increasing. In 2006, the participants of the Junior 8 meeting in St. Petersburg linked with groups of children in Bangkok, Cairo, Johannesburg and Mexico City, through video links, to exchange their views. However, often only those with access to the Internet and with English-language skills are included. Agencies are beginning to overcome some of these constraints by making web-conferencing and networking multi-lingual and by combining moderated global Internet discussions with local-level consultations. This combination of approaches overcomes the difficulties of Internet access and makes the use of the Internet more inclusive.

Box 37: Peace Tech Video Conferences

Peace Tech Video Conferences (Philippines) offer opportunities for live video link dialogues between young people in Mindanao and in Manila. The young people from Mindanao (mostly Muslim) have an opportunity to share their experiences of armed conflict with their peers in the capital city (mostly Christian) and to make them aware of their lives. A series of seven Peace Tech video talk shows have been held so far, contributing to peace and understanding between young people in different parts of the Philippines.

Children's committees, councils and parliaments have been established in many countries. They can mean different things in different contexts. Some youth parliaments are annual events in the capital city where children take over the national parliament for one day to 'practice' politics. At the other end of the spectrum, in one district in Southern India alone there are 7,000 'children's parliaments' – one in every village (Box 38).

Box 38: Neighbourhood parliaments in India

India offers an interesting example of community governance through neighbourhood parliaments. The Neighbourhood Community Network in Tamil Nadu, India is an organization of neighbourhood parliaments, each comprising of 30 families, including children, youth and adults. Separate parliaments are also organized comprising of children (6-12), adolescents (age 13-18) and youth (above 18), with the goal of enabling all the community to participate in governance, including planning, implementing and monitoring.

Source: Davila-Ortega and Freeburg

At their most basic, children's councils are little more than debating societies where children practice politics. They are often not representative of the diversity of the child population and often include mostly older children from better-off backgrounds. In some countries they are dominated by boys. There is usually little representation of children with disabilities or ethnic minorities. Migrant or stateless children are virtually never present. The sons and daughters of elite families are over-represented in the community-level youth councils in the Philippines, where they learn to become the next generation of leaders, thereby replicating existing power structures (Box 39).

Box 39: Youth councils in the Philippines

The Philippines is the only country in Southeast Asia to have established youth councils (Sangguniang Kabataan) in every community. Ten percent of the district budget is controlled by young people. A recent evaluation of the youth councils showed some successes, but also many challenges. The performance of the SK is very variable and depends on the quality of the relations between the young members of SK and adult officials. Adults determine the level of success and the range of activities of the SK. The ten percent of the budget allocated for SK activities is a source of tension and, in some areas, adults are trying to influence the decisions of young people. Local-governance mechanisms are not children-friendly and young people are forced into adult structures and schedules. Because they are attending school, many youth-council members are unable to attend meetings. The training of young SK members has been inadequate. Because of lack of understanding of the functions and roles of SK, the youth councils often do little more than organize basketball tournaments, mostly for boys.

Source: Department of Interior and Local Government et al, 2006

However, with the right support, a long-term perspective and adequate resources, youth councils have the potential to succeed (Matthews and Limb, 2003). In Peru, children's parliaments were developed in stages: first in classrooms, then at the provincial and regional levels and finally at the level of the national parliament. Such a strategy allows children and adults to build participatory structures from the bottom up, which is generally more sustainable than starting at the highest policy level – that is furthest removed from children's lives and least able to accommodate children's presence.

> **Box 40: Makkala Panchayats in Karnataka, India**
>
> The Concerned for Working Children and Bhima Sangha (an organization of working children), initiated the Makkala Panchayats (children's assembly) in 1995 in five Panchayats. Today, Makkala Panchayats are present in 56 Panchayats and cover the entire Kundapur Taluk (subdistrict). Over 65,000 children are members of Makkala Panchayats. About 20,000 children of Makkala Panchayats have developed 'five-year plans' for their Panchayats or wards.
>
> Makkala Panchayats have strengthened accountability of the adult Panchayat administration (village self-government body). There has been a shift in the way adults in the communities view children. Adult Panchayats have gained insights from the recommendations of children. This has resulted in Panchayat plans that are sensitive to the real needs of children.
>
> Source: The Concerned for Working Children: www.workingchild.org

National planning, budgeting and policy change: Policy reform and national planning and budgeting are typically complex processes carried out by technocrats and negotiated by politicians. Children have been involved in various forms of policy change and national planning. Examples include the development of national plans of action for children (for example in Malaysia), the development of poverty reduction strategy processes (O'Malley, 2004) and budget reviews (Guerra, 2002). Involving children in policy processes requires adults to identify the most appropriate and effective entry points. Children-friendly versions of policy documents have to be developed, and policy processes have to be broken down into separate steps.

> **Box 41: Children debating poverty strategy**
>
> The Philippines' National Anti-Poverty Commission Children Basic Sector (NAPC-CBS) is mandated by law to ensure that the opinions of marginalized groups of children are presented in the public policy arena. A children's council was constituted to offer a regular, institutionalized mechanism for children to influence government policies and decisions on issues affecting children. For over six years, the children's council raised concerns of poor children in the country. As a result of these efforts, pupil-to-book ratio improved and violence against children in school has been given greater attention. NAPC-CBS is also monitoring government commitments to the achievement of the MDGs using a monitoring tool developed by the children.

CRC promotion, monitoring and reporting: Children's groups in many countries have been involved in the promotion of the CRC. In Cambodia, for example, the Children's Committee raises awareness of the CRC among children and the general public, campaigns for the enforcement of the CRC, mobilizes children and acts as a representative of children at public events.

The reporting process for the CRC provides an opportunity for civil-society engagement in monitoring the progress of implementing children's rights and advocating for improvements. Groups of children in various countries have been involved in CRC monitoring and periodic reporting. Some of these efforts are being supported and coordinated by children's-rights agencies; others are driven by children-led associations and movements. In a number of countries, children have written alternative reports and submitted them to the CRC Committee in Geneva, contributing their own perspectives to complement the official, government report. Some countries are exploring possibilities for involving children in ongoing national monitoring systems, either as part of coalitions monitoring the situation of children, or as members of advisory boards to ombudspersons for children.

Children's involvement in monitoring, evaluation, reviews and auditing has similar benefits to involving children in research. Where children are evaluators, reviewers (for example in public policy reviews) or auditors (for example in social audits of government services) they may have significant influence over decisions. Reviews and audits are often periodic events (for example UNICEF's Mid-Term Reviews) that offer repeated and regular opportunities for children to be involved in decisions. This provides opportunities for adults and children to learn to work together and to gradually increase children's involvement in decision making.

Children's advisory boards, panels, councils or committees consist of selected children who provide advice to adult organizations. Save the Children in Papua New Guinea, for example, has established such an advisory council to inform its programme work and ensure that the agency's work is based on children's priority concerns. Children advisory committees have specific tasks and provide inputs needed by the adult-led agency. Children's advisory bodies require capacities, experience and time for adults to adapt their working styles and practices and to work together with children. Efforts are underway to establish youth advisory panels to support the work of UN country teams in Cambodia, the Pacific and Mongolia.

Children as political activists: Children have the right to join political parties. It is an opportunity for them to learn about the political process and prepare for political leadership. Legislation preventing children from joining political parties or labour unions violates article 15 of the CRC. Especially in conflict situations, many children and young people take part in political struggles. Children's-rights agencies have generally approached children's political activism as a child-protection concern and have denied children the right to engage in political struggles. There is growing awareness that effective and participatory work with children and young people in conflict situations has to accept that children should not just be manipulated by adults and be denied the right to make their own decisions.

How can children be supported to influence public decisions?

As this overview shows, there are many ways to support children in governance and to ensure that decisions are informed and influenced by children's concerns and opinions. The high-profile political events where a few children make public statements may not be the most effective avenues for children's influence over government decisions. Careful research with children and young people can provide a more detailed and more representative account of their views and concerns, especially of those who are unlikely to be invited to high-level events. Involving children in auditing government services and reviewing policies offers opportunities for in-depth discussions and collaboration between children and adults.

What is possible depends to a large extent on the political system and the strength of civil society, and on local context and capacities. In many countries in East Asia, the space for participatory and democratic forms of governance is severely limited and these constraints are magnified with respect to children's engagement in politics. With so little space for children's political expression, the whole range of opportunities and mechanisms for influencing public discussions has to be considered. Much can be learned about participatory governance from adult civil society and more work is needed to link children's involvement in public decisions within broader governance agendas, for example of UNDP and the World Bank.

There are many challenges. No approach to the involvement of children in public decision making is guaranteed to succeed. It takes hard work, persistence, innovation, flexibility and attention to detail to build the capacities, commitment, resources, standards and structures needed for children's views to be reflected in policy decisions. Creating space for children's influence on public decisions takes time. Approaches should allow children to assume greater influence over decisions, as adults gradually give up some of their control. Some approaches offer the possibility of step-by-step progress, but many stop at a low level of children's control. Starting low is acceptable as long as there is upward movement. Starting high, as in the case of the community youth councils in the Philippines, is no guarantee of success, especially when the environment is not ready to accept and support children's involvement in public decisions.

General principles for children's involvement in public decisions:

- Place the main emphasis on children's involvement in decisions at community level rather than the national or international level (see Williams, 2004).

- Ensuring that public decisions are informed and influenced by children's views and concerns is more important than high-level events that bring children and decision makers together but fail to take children's opinions into account.

- Take a long-term approach to gradually increasing children's control over decisions and to strengthen sustainable mechanisms for children's involvement in decision making (Shier, 2001).

Government responsibilities

- Create mechanisms and structures within government, at local and national level, for children to be consulted and to have influence over public decisions and resource allocations.

- Ensure that policies are developed based on the views of children and youth;

- Create opportunities for children and young people to provide feedback on the quality, accessibility and appropriateness of public services (social auditing);

- Ensure the protection and safety of all children involved in public decision-making processes.

Development commitments and children influencing public decisions

MDG 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger: Involving children in the development of poverty-eradication strategies ensures that these strategies develop opportunities, resources and services that are relevant to the specific concerns of children and that they harness children's energies.

MDG 2: Achieve universal primary education: Involving students in educational reform and curriculum development ensures that these address their priorities and concerns. This leads to greater relevance of the education system and to improved learning outcomes and retention of children in schools.

MDG 3: Promote gender equality and empower women: Involving girls and women in legislative reform, policy making and budgeting ensures that public decisions are gender sensitive and promote the rights of women and girls.

MDG 4: Reduce child mortality: Water, sanitation, environment and transport services are improved if children are involved in planning and have control over their design, operation and maintenance. Children can monitor water quality and sanitation facilities and can be members of water-management committees.

MDG 5: Improve maternal health: Involving adolescents in legislation on age of marriage, as well as in public policies on sexual and reproductive health, ensures that such policies reflect the concerns and priorities of teenaged girls and boys.

MDG 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases: Involving children in the development of government policies and programmes on HIV/AIDS ensures that they are addressing their real needs and concerns. It ensures that public programmes are effective and efficient.

MDG 7: Ensure environmental sustainability: Involving children in public decisions ensures that they are committed to contribute to environmental sustainability throughout their adult lives.

Decent and productive work for youth: Youth-employment programmes and policies are more effective if they have been developed together with children and young people.

Protect children from violence, exploitation and abuse: Child-protection policies are more effective if they are based on the experiences and opinions of children – especially those who have experienced violence, exploitation and abuse. Child-protection agencies who regularly consult with children are able to offer more effective services.

Targets and indicators

- Policies are developed based on the views of children and youth people
- Regular consultation of young people regarding local government decisions and resource allocations
- Children and young people are represented in local and national governance bodies.
- Children and young people provide feedback on the quality, accessibility and appropriateness of public services for children and young people
- Children involved in recruitment of staff who work with children
- The right to vote for national political offices (and at what age?)
- Child protection policy ensures safety of all children involved in programmes
- Freedom to discuss politics in the community and to express dissent in public settings

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10. Children-led associations

What are children-led associations?

The CRC affirms children's right to form and join associations (article 15). Many children are members of cultural associations, sports clubs or social movements. Some of these organizations are led by children, often with support from adult agencies. Children-led associations can play an important role in developing social awareness, organizational skills and self-confidence of children. They also can help children to protect themselves by seeking strength in numbers and can aid them to achieve social justice.

Clubs and committees offer children opportunities to learn how to organize themselves and to manage activities. Clubs are particularly popular in schools, where students may form clubs for sports, cultural, social or environmental activities. Children's clubs have the potential to move far beyond extra-curricular activities. As the example of the child clubs in Nepal shows, children's clubs can become platforms for children-led advocacy and a movement for legitimizing children-led associations (Box 44).

Box 44: Child Clubs in Nepal

"Before we had a Child Club I didn't have the confidence to express myself and even people in my family didn't expect me to have a view. However, since being a part of the club I feel like I am a human being with views to contribute and I feel confident in doing so." (Boy, member of Child Club)

Child Clubs emerged in the early 1990s out of various child-to-child initiatives for health education and environmental protection. Currently, about 3,000 Child Clubs are operating across Nepal in hill communities, rural plains and urban areas. Child Clubs include girls and boys aged 8-18 years from different ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds. Members hold regular (usually weekly) meetings to share their views and organize activities which are of interest to them.

Over the years, Child Clubs have gained influence and organizational capacity. Following a participatory assessment of the situation of Child Clubs, a Consortium of Organizations Working for Child Clubs was established in 1999, in order to promote children's citizenship rights and the children's movement in Nepal. Significant developments in recent years have been the establishment of district level Child Club networks and the forming of stronger partnerships with Village Development Committees (VDCs) and District Child Welfare Boards (DCWB). This has increased children's influence on village- and local-government-level decisions on issues concerning children. In Surkhet district, for example, the DCWB includes child representatives, and in Siraha district the Child Club Network is seeking official registration in the VDC.

Child Clubs have enrolled working children in school, monitored school drop-out, prevented early marriage, child trafficking and other forms of exploitation, and taken action to secure justice for child workers and other groups of marginalized children and their families. Children contributed directly to Nepal's CRC report, through an inclusive process supported by Save the Children and the Government of Nepal. In August 2001, after a long struggle for legal recognition of children's organizations, the Supreme Court of Nepal granted Child Clubs the right to register their organizations, based on Article 15 of the CRC (right to association). This decision set a historical precedent both nationally and globally that children could legally register their organizations.

Source: Theis and O'Kane, 2004

Child-workers unions: Marginalized children, especially child workers, have been at the forefront of the movement of children-led associations. In the Philippines, young domestic workers formed a small group to give each other support. With support from the Visayan Forum, the group began to reach out to other child domestic workers on their days off, when they were hanging out in parks. SUMAPI (Association and Linkage of Domestic Workers in the Philippines) now has 8,000 members, the majority of whom are teenagers. In India, child workers formed their own unions as mutual support groups and to campaign collectively for better services and the protection of the rights of poor children (Box 45).

Box 45: Unions of child workers in India

Children-led organizations constitute one of the most ambitious expressions of children's empowerment. In 1990, Indian child workers formed the Bal Mazdoor Union (Child Workers Union) in Delhi and Bhima Sangha in Karnataka (with more than 10,000 members). These early forms of children's collectives were supported by local NGOs who believed in the power of children's associations. Over the past decade, unions of child workers have gained recognition as legitimate representatives of child workers, in large part due to their success in demanding justice for the abuse and killing of child workers, their impact on decisions made by village councils, campaigns to stop child marriage, and their vocal participation in international conferences. These unions have succeeded in asserting the rights of child workers and in achieving recognition as legitimate representatives of child workers.

Representatives of unions of child workers have attended international meetings and conferences where they present their agendas. Some labour unions see this as a threat. At the root of the tensions between labour unions and child workers are the control over the labour market. Labour unions have a strong interest in keeping children out of the labour market, since they are seen as competing with adult workers. In this context, ILO Conventions on the minimum age for work are seen by some child workers not as benevolent attempts to protect children from labour exploitation, but as a concerted effort to keep children out of the adult labour market. Representatives of the World Movement of Working Children and Adolescents declared in May 2004: 'We value our work and view it as an important human right for our personal development. We oppose every kind of exploitation and reject everything that hurts our physical and moral integrity.' And further: 'We denounce the policies of the ILO that aim at abolishing children's work. The ILO has failed to understand the realities of working children and the viable alternatives to exploitative labour.' This illustrates how unions of child workers are challenging the mandate of organizations who consider themselves the guardians of children's welfare and protection.

Source: Theis and O'Kane, 2004

Youth gangs are also a form of children-led associations that provide protection and mutual support, for example for groups of street children. Gangs may be part of a wider network and may be associated with criminal activities. In Timor-Leste, martial-arts groups were formed in an attempt to provide a positive outlet for the energies of young unemployed men. Within a short time these groups began to fight each other and to extort money from local businesses. Tens of thousands of young people, mostly men, are organized in gangs and groups in Timor-Leste. The political instability and violence provides a need for seeking protection in a group. At the same time, these groups become themselves a source of violence. Efforts are now underway to transform gangs, such as the martial arts groups, into positive forces for the development of the country, while there are also widespread reports of spontaneous, village-based youth groups working for peace and community development (Scambaray, 2006).

Box 46: Child Workers in Asia task forces on children's participation

Child Workers in Asia (CWA) is a network of organizations in Southeast and South Asia supporting working children. Recognizing that the problem of child labour cannot be solved without the participation of working children, CWA formed task forces in Southeast Asia and in South Asia to institutionalise children's participation in the work of every CWA partner organization.

Challenges

■ Understanding and respecting local structures and practices and identifying adult partners to promote children's participation;

■ Creating flexible and accessible activities, which serve working children's needs and respond to their interests;

■ Involving and reaching scattered working children.

Recommendations

■ Promote children's participation at local, national and international levels for society and institutions to appreciate and support children's participation;

■ Build the advocacy and leadership capacity of working children;

■ Strengthen capacities of development workers to work effectively with children and other institutions;

■ Understand and respect local structures and practices;

■ Identify advocates in communities and institutions, such as social workers, teachers, youth leaders, employers;

■ Respect authorities and get adults involved;

■ Empower children, help them make informed decisions and help them know what to do to protect themselves;

■ Start with simple activities; define a gradual but consistent process;

■ Believe in young people and help other adults believe in them.

Source: CWA, 2004

How to support children-led associations

Since most children-led associations are, to some extent, dependent on adults, there is a risk that adults try to determine what children should do. Opportunities for children to run their own associations, free from adult interference, tend to be greater in countries with established democratic institutions and strong civil society, such as India, the Philippines and Cambodia. Much can be learned about ways to support children-led associations from the experiences of the child-workers movement.

Assessing children-led associations: The Save the Children Alliance global interest group on children-led initiatives and organizations has developed a tool for assessing children-led organizations. The 'spider tool' consists of 15 quality elements against which children-led organizations can be measured. Each of the quality elements comes with a set of indicators or benchmarks that have been grouped into four levels, ranging from low to high achievement. These can be used by children-led initiatives and organizations to decide where on the scale their initiative or organization lies and where they want to go. In determining how best to move towards the future ideal, the spider tool is used both as an assessment and a planning tool (Feinstein and O'Kane, 2005).

Criteria for assessing children-led associations should be agreed through a participatory process that involves children and adults. Discussing criteria raises awareness and builds ownership and commitment towards quality standards. Detailed benchmarks are useful for auditing children's participation practices in organizations and can be used to measure performance (Box 47; Table 5).

Box 47: Elements for assessing children-led organizations and initiatives

1. Dynamic membership and regular meetings
2. Common vision, identity and ownership
3. Agenda setting: children-led (rather than adult-driven)
4. Building friendships
5. Fostering life skills
6. Democratic decision making and inclusive representation
7. Access to information and open communication
8. Children aware and active in promoting their rights and responsibilities
9. Analysis, action and change-oriented
10. Creative and inclusive methods
11. Supportive adults
12. Partnerships and influence
13. Networks with other children-led organizations
14. Resources and sustainability
15. Reflection, monitoring and evaluation

Source: Feinstein and O'Kane, 2005

Table 5: Benchmarks for membership of children-led associations

Level			
1 (low)	**2**	**3**	**4 (high)**
■ Very few members in the children's organization ■ Many of the original members have left the organization ■ Most of the current members are aged 15-18 years or older ■ No new members have joined in the past year	■ Few new members have joined in the past year ■ 'Graduated' members (older than 18 years) interfere with the running of the children's organization	■ Older, more experienced members become facilitators and mentors ■ Provisions made for the inclusion and participation of children of different age groups	■ New members (girls and boys) are regularly encouraged to join the organization ■ Younger children (girls and boys younger than ten years) regularly participate in the organization and are encouraged to play an active role ■ Children with disabilities and other marginalised groups are active members of the organization ■ Supportive links are made between children's organizations and youth organizations (with 'graduated' members)

Government responsibilities

Few countries have put in place the necessary policies and legislation to fully implement their commitment to children's right to association. Laws concerning the administration of organizations often prevent children from acting as directors or trustees of public associations. As the example of the children's clubs in Nepal shows, persistent lobbying can lead to changes in national laws governing children's right to form their own associations.

- Reform legislation to promote children's associations;

- Provide legal guarantees and a supportive environment for children's associations and fulfillment of their right to organize as citizens;

- In relation to working children, ensure there are no limits on the right of children to form and join trade unions;

- Ensure that membership of any organization is voluntary;

- Take special measures to promote the freedom of association of children with disabilities.

Development commitments and children-led organizations and initiatives

Children-led organizations and initiatives cut across all Millenium Development Goals contributing to their eventual achievement.

Targets and indicators

- Percentage of children who are active members of a group or association

- Percentage of children involved in any community-based association that has members ranging in age from over forty to below 12 years

- Opportunities for children to participate in decision making in the governance of children-led associations

- Legal status of children-led associations

- Number, diversity and quality (for example independence, years of existence) of children-led associations

- Children-led associations are fully accepted as a regular part of civil society and represent children's views and concerns in all arenas (services, policies, programmes)

- Number of marginalized children (such as girls, disabled, indigenous) included in children's associations

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Visayan Forum. www.visayanforum.org

ANNEXES

ANNEXES

Indicator checklist for children's citizenship and civil rights

Common myths about (and some risks in) children's participation

Indicator checklist for children's citizenship and civil rights

This checklist of indicators presents some ideas for measuring children's civil rights and civic engagement. The indicators cover legislation and policies guaranteeing children's civil rights and opportunities to exercise their citizenship; services and institutions supporting children's active engagement as citizens; and practices, behaviours and attitudes in relation to children's civil rights and citizenship. The indicators are illustrative rather than comprehensive and many other indicators could be added to the list. The indicators have to be further defined, made more concrete and measurable, adapted to country and regional contexts and also need to be tested.

Data for some of the indicators presented here are already being collected as part of household surveys. Others would have to be gathered through special surveys. For many of these indicators, data are not available, are of poor quality or are only available for some developed countries. Any data about children's citizenship have to be disaggregated by age, sex, and other relevant characteristics.

The format and some of the indicators are based on the CIVICUS Civil Society Index. Using a scoring table helps to emphasize the different degrees to which children's civil rights are fulfilled. In many cases, four scores may be too crude and a more detailed scoring scale will have to be developed, depending on how data will be used.

These indicators could be used for international comparisons between countries, for national assessments, and for programme planning and monitoring. In general, it is preferable to use hard data. However, where no hard data exist, the scoring scale can be used to initiate discussions on the degree to which children's civil rights are fulfilled. This is more subjective than accurate statistics, but, in the words of business oracle Warren Buffett, 'it is better to be approximately right than precisely wrong.' This list should be used to stimulate further work on indicators for assessing, planning and monitoring children's civil rights and active citizenship.

Overall indicators: Political context and political rights

What is the political situation in the country and its impact on civil society?

How strong are the restrictions on citizens' political rights (for example to participate freely in political processes, elect political leaders through free and fair elections, organize in political parties)?

This indicator is included to place children's civil rights in the broader governance context rather than to look at children in isolation. Much work has been done in recent years to measure civil rights and governance and this work is very useful for informing and guiding efforts to measure children's civil rights.

There are severe restrictions on the political rights of citizens. Citizens cannot participate in political processes	Score 0
There are some restrictions on the political rights of citizens and their participation in political processes	Score 1
Citizens are endowed with substantial political rights and meaningful opportunities for political participation. There are minor and isolated restrictions on the full freedom of citizens' political rights and their participation in political processes	Score 2
People have the full freedom and choice to exercise their political rights and meaningfully participate in political processes	Score 3

Sources: World Governance Indicators – www.govindicators.org
DataGob – Governance indicators database: http://www.iadb.org/datagob/
Civil Society Index – CIVICUS - http://www.civicus.org/new/CSI_documents_and_publications.asp
Center for Civil Society Studies: http://www.jhu.edu/~gnisp/index.html

1. Birth and civil registration

No system in place for registering births	Score 0
Civil registration system is in place but large numbers of children are not registered	Score 1
Certain groups of children are denied birth registration on the basis of ethnicity, migration and residence status or statelessness	Score 2
Civil registration system fully functioning, free, universal and compulsory. All births, deaths and marriages are registered in a timely manner. Ethnic minorities, migrants and stateless people are registered and issued necessary papers. Legal mechanisms are in place to enable children of refugees, asylum seekers and stateless people to obtain a nationality (of the country where they live or of other country)	Score 3

Source: UNICEF – http://www.childinfo.org/areas/birthregistration/countrydata.php

Indicator for early marriage: Percent of women aged 15-19 who are married:

Source: http://www.childinfo.org/areas/childmarriage/tables.php?cat=0

2. Children's expression of opinion and control over decisions in daily life

Extent to which civil liberties (such as freedom of expression, association, assembly) are ensured by law and in practice

Civil liberties are systematically violated	Score 0
There are frequent violations of civil liberties	Score 1
There are isolated or occasional violations of civil liberties	Score 2
Civil liberties are fully ensured by law and in practice	Score 3

Source: World Governance Indicators – www.govindicators.org

Age at which children are entitled by law to express their views on matters of adoption, custody and guardianship

No legal provisions for children to express their views on matters of adoption, custody and guardianship	Score 0
Legal provisions exist for children to express their views on some matters related to adoption, custody and guardianship, but they are not enforced	Score 1
Existing legal provisions for children to express their views on matters of adoption, custody and guardianship, are applied selectively	Score 2
Children are entitled by law to express their views from the earliest age possible – in accordance with their capacities	Score 3

Schools applying student-centred teaching and learning methods

No student-centred learning and teaching methods	Score 0
A few schools experiment with student-centred teaching methods	Score 1
Student-centred learning and teaching methods have been promoted widely in the country	Score 2
Student-centred learning methods are mandatory at all schools and all teachers are trained in student centred teaching techniques	Score 3

Schools with active mechanisms for involving students in school management decisions

No student council	Score 0
Student councils in some experimental schools. The 'best' students are appointed to the council by teachers. Students debate issues but have no influence over the final decisions	Score 1
Student councils are wide-spread in schools. Members of student councils are elected by the students. Children's decision-making power is limited	Score 2
Mandatory student councils and school management committees, through which students have real control over important decisions. Student councils are fully representative of the student body	Score 3

3. Children's access to information

Extent to which public access to information is guaranteed by law. Accessiblity of government documents to the public. This general indicator on freedom of information provides a broader context for children's access to information in a society.

No laws guarantee information rights. Citizen access to government documents is extremely limited.	Score 0
Citizen access to government documents is limited but expanding	Score 1
Legislation regarding public access to information is in place but, in practice, it is difficult to obtain government documents	Score 2
Government documents are widely and easily accessible to the public	Score 3

Compulsory and free education

Education is neither compulsory nor free	Score 0
Education is compulsory but not free	Score 1
Education is compulsory and free by law, but not in practice	Score 2
Education compulsory and free by law and in practice	Score 3

Children have access to information from various sources. Percentage of children (or households) with access to radio, television, libraries, books, press, Internet, helplines (disaggregated, for example, by urban/rural, wealth quintile, ethnicity)

Children have no access to information	Score 0
Children's access to information is largely limited to wealthier children	Score 1
Children have access to a range of information, but large disparities exist between children	Score 2
All boys and girls have access to a wide range of information from various sources: radio, television, libraries, books, press, Internet, helplines. Information is age-appropriate, including information for younger children.	Score 3

Information available in children-friendly formats

No children-friendly information available	Score 0
A few documents are available in children-friendly formats – usually just one format for all children	Score 1
Children-friendly information is widely available (in different local languages)	Score 2
Information is readily available in children-friendly formats that are appropriate for children of different ages and abilities. Government departments are mandated to produce key documents in children-friendly formats (and in different local languages).	Score 3

Children have knowledge about their rights, sexuality, HIV/AIDS, contraceptive methods

Children lack basic knowledge in a wide range of areas	Score 0
Wealthier, mostly older children in urban areas have knowledge about their rights, sexuality, HIV/AIDS, contraceptive methods	Score 1
A majority of children have knowledge about their rights, sexuality, HIV/AIDS, contraceptive methods	Score 2
All boys and girls of different age groups have adequate knowledge about their rights, sexuality, HIV/AIDS, contraceptive methods	Score 3

4. Complaints mechanisms for children

Effective mechanisms are in place for children to complain and to seek redress in cases of abuse, without fear of reprisals

No complaints procedures available	Score 0
Complaints procedures in urban centres are accessible to some children. Follow-up mechanisms not effective	Score 1
Complaints procedures are widely available in all parts of the country. Follow-up, referral and response mechanisms are working well in some areas	Score 2
Complaints procedures are mandated by law and easily accessibly by all children. Follow-up, referral and response mechanisms are well-established and effective.	Score 3

Minimum standards for care and protection of children are being enforced in all care settings

No minimum standards exist	Score 0
Standards exist but are not enforced	Score 1
Standards are enforced selectively	Score 2
Minimum standards for care and protection of children are being enforced in all care settings	Score 3

Children's ombudsperson operates independent of government and has adequate resources to follow up complaints

No children's ombudsperson	Score 0
Children's ombudsperson appointed but not able to work independently	Score 1
Children's ombudsperson works independently but lacks financial, human and organizational capacity	Score 2
Children's ombudsperson operates independently and receives adequate public funding that is not dependent on the discretion of a government or minister	Score 3

Every school is mandated to have effective complaints procedures. Every school has a student counsellor who follows up complaints

No feedback or complaints mechanisms in schools	Score 0
Complaints and suggestion boxes exist in schools, but lack systematic follow-up	Score 1
Complaints procedures exist in larger schools and are being followed-up by the headteacher	Score 2
Every school is mandated to have effective complaints procedures and has a student counsellor who follows up complaints	Score 3

5. Justice for children

Law courts are obliged to consider children's views when deciding matters affecting them

There are no child-protective proceedings provided for by the laws	Score 0
There is no requirement that a child's views should be expressed in the law	Score 1
The law mandates that children must be heard through a body or representative	Score 2
The law mandates that children must be heard	Score 3

Source: www.law.yale.edu/rcw/rcw/summary.htm

Children-friendly court procedures for child victims and witnesses

No children-friendly court procedures	Score 0
Rules and procedures for children-friendly court procedures developed but not yet put into practice	Score 1
Children-friendly court procedures applied in selected courts	Score 2
Fully functioning children-friendly procedures in all courts	Score 3

Separate juvenile-justice system with a focus on diversion rather than punishments is in place in accordance with international standards and agreements

Whether a 'juvenile-justice system' is separate or not is an important question, but one which often does not admit a categorical answer (even after 'system' is defined). What if there are separate correctional facilities, but not separate courts, or vice versa? Or one specialized court in the capital city, but none anywhere else in the country? What if there are separate facilities for convicted boys, but convicted girls are confined with adult women? What if the situation varies from province to province?

No juvenile-justice system	Score 0
Juvenile-justice law exists, but a system has not been developed	Score 1
Separate juvenile-justice system exists but diversion practice is not in accordance with international standards	Score 2
Effective, separate juvenile-justice system is in place with an emphasis on diversion and in accordance with international standards	Score 3

Source: http://www.juvenilejusticepanel.org/en/

Other juvenile justice indicators:

■ Whether children can be charged with 'status' offences;

■ Percentage of children deprived of liberty prior to disposition of the case;

■ Minimum age at which a child can be prosecuted as a juvenile offender;

■ Maximum sentence that can be imposed on a child;

■ Whether persons under the age of 18 years can be prosecuted as adults.

Legal-aid mechanisms for children

No mechanisms for legal aid for children	Score 0
Legal-aid mechanisms are in place in some parts of the country for some legal proceedings (such as defense of accused juveniles)	Score 1
Legal-aid mechanisms are in place in certain parts of the country for all legal proceedings involving children	Score 2
Girls and boys in all parts of the country have ready access to legal-aid mechanisms for all legal proceedings	Score 3

6. Economic citizenship

Legal protection of children's inheritance rights

No legal protection of children's inheritance rights. Disinheritance of orphans is widespread	Score 0
Legislation in place to protect children's inheritance rights, but implementation and enforcement are lacking. Conflict between formal legislation and customary laws	Score 1
Legislation is in place and is being implemented in parts of the country	Score 2
Children's inheritance rights are fully protected by law	Score 3

Children control their own income

No legal guarantee for children to keep their income	Score 0
Legislation in place to ensure children's control over their income. No mechanisms to enforce the legislation	Score 1
Legislation is in place and is being implemented in parts of the country	Score 2
Children in all parts of the country have full control over their income	Score 3

7. Children's civic engagement

Percentage of children involved regularly in collective activities: social, environmental, sports, cultural and political

A very small minority (less than 10 percent)	Score 0
A small minority (10 to 30 percent)	Score 1
A minority (20 to 50 percent)	Score 2
The majority of children are regularly involved in collective activities	Score 3

Degree of children's political awareness and legal literacy

A very small minority of older children is politically aware and has legal literacy	Score 0
A minority of children is politically aware and has legal literacy	Score 1
About half of the children is politically aware and has legal literacy	Score 2
High degree of political awareness and legal literacy of children and young people	Score 3

8. Children in the media

Media freedom: To what extent are media freedoms ensured by law and in practice?

The degree of media freedom has important implications for children's ability to broadcast their views in a country.

Media freedoms are systematically violated	Score 0
There are frequent violations of media freedoms	Score 1
There are isolated violations of media freedoms	Score 2
Freedom of the media is fully ensured by law and in practice	Score 3

Source: http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=15

Opportunities for children to use broadcast media to communicate their own views

No opportunities exist for children to use broadcast media to communicate their own views	Score 0
A few projects exist to support young journalists and reporters	Score 1
A growing range of opportunities is available for children to broadcast their views. Access to these opportunities is concentrated on wealthier children in urban areas	Score 2
Opportunities for children to use broadcast media to communicate their own views are readily and easily available for a majority of girls and boys (radio, newspapers, ICT, television)	Score 3

Children's access to Information and Communication Technology (ICT)

No ICT available in the country	Score 0
Only children from wealthier families have access to ICT	Score 1
From 50-70 percent of children in the country have access to ICT	Score 2
All boys and girls have access to ICT	Score 3

Enforcement of media standards to protect children

No media standards exist to protect children	Score 0
Media standards exist but are not being enforced	Score 1
Mechanisms to enforce media standards are in place and are beginning to be enforced in some media	Score 2
Systematic enforcement of media standards to protect children	Score 3

9. Children influencing public decisions

Policies are developed based on the views of children

Children are never consulted in relation to policies	Score 0
Some consultations are held with some children on some policies	Score 1
The views of girls and boys are gathered systematically in relation to a majority of policies affecting children	Score 2
The development of all policies affecting children requires that children's views have been gathered systematically and have been taken into account	Score 3

Children are represented in local and national governance bodies

No children are represented in local or national governance bodies	Score 0
A few youth councils and children's parliaments exist, but mostly with older, wealthier children, and these institutions are often not sustained for very long	Score 1
A range of effective mechanisms have been developed for children's representation at local and national levels. These are spreading across the country.	Score 2
Local and national governance bodies are mandated by law to have children represented – with fair representation of girls and boys of different ages, abilities and backgrounds	Score 3

10. Children-led associations

Number, diversity and independence of children-led associations

No children-led associations exist in the country	Score 0
Only a few types of children-led associations are active, mostly for only short periods of time	Score 1
Growing number and diversity of children-led associations	Score 2
A large number of different types of children-led associations is active and effective in the country	Score 3

No legal restrictions on children's ability to form and join associations

Children are prevented by law from forming their own associations. Child workers are prevented from joining labour unions	Score 0
Legislation entitles children to form their own associations, but bureaucratic procedures make it very difficult for children to formally register their associations	Score 1
Procedures for establishing and registering children-led associations have been simplified with the result that the number of registered children-led associations is growing steadily	Score 2
Children are entitled by law to form their own associations and to join unions. Responsible government departments process applications for children-led associations in a professional and timely manner	Score 3

Children-led associations represent children's views and concerns in all arenas

No representation of children's views by children-led associations	Score 0
A few children-led associations represent the views of certain groups of children on some issues (such as unions of child workers lobbying for the end of child marriage)	Score 1
The representation of children's views by children-led associations is becoming widespread and common	Score 2
Children-led associations represent children's views and concerns consistently in all arenas (services, policies, programmes, campaigns)	Score 3

Children-led associations are accepted as part of civil society

Children-led associations are not being taken seriously by civil society	Score 0
Selected children-led associations are being included in some major civil society events	Score 1
Contributions of children-led associations to major civil society events and campaigns are common	Score 2
Children-led associations are fully accepted as parts of civil society and are actively involved in all major civil-society initiatives, campaigns and movements	Score 3

Children manage their own associations without adult interference

Children-led associations are completely controlled by adults	Score 0
Adults set the agenda of the children-led organizations and make all important decisions	Score 1
Girls and boys set some of the agenda. Adults listen to children's views but retain final say over the agenda of the organizations	Score 2
Children-led associations receive support, advice and resources from adult civil-society organizations, without interference in their internal decisions	Score 3

Networks among children-led associations are being established

Children-led associations do not network among each other	Score 0
Occasional networking opportunities exist for children-led associations at local levels	Score 1
Networks among children-led associations are established and are being used regularly at local and district levels, and occasionally at national level	Score 2
Networks among children-led associations are established and are being used regularly at local, district, national and regional levels to support the sharing of experiences and collective advocacy	Score 3

Common myths about (and some risks in) children's participation

This section presents some of the most common arguments made against the participation of children and young people. They are largely taken from Lansdown 2002: 280ff.

Myth 1: Children (especially younger children) lack the competence or experience to participate. Competence is, to a great extent, determined by a child's own social context and culture. Children have different levels of competence in respect to different aspects of their lives. Evidence from around the world demonstrates children's capacities to take responsibilities in family life, at the workplace, in political negotiations, and in creating democratic schools. Even very small children can tell what they like or dislike about school, can produce ideas for making a lesson more interesting, can offer help to and counsel other children. Provided they are given appropriate support, adequate information and allowed to express themselves in ways that are meaningful to them, all children can participate in issues that are important to them. The creation of settings that maximize children's opportunities to explore and initiate activities themselves is a means of fulfilling the spirit of the CRC.

Myth 2: Children must accept responsibilities before they can be granted rights. One of the more effective ways of encouraging children to accept responsibility is to first respect their rights. Listening to children and taking them seriously encourages children to understand others and to respect their views. Adults do not have to prove that they will act responsibly before they are given the right to vote. In many countries, adults will have had no experience during their childhood and adolescence to prepare them for the responsibilities of adult citizenship. Providing opportunities for children to experience democratic decision making can only strengthen their commitment to, and understanding of, the importance of exercising responsibility in a democratic environment.

Myth 3: Children's participation is not part of our traditional culture. It is true that listening to children and taking their views seriously is not part of many cultures. But the fact that women, children and young people have been treated in a particular way in the past does not justify continuing to do so, as new standards of respect for human rights evolve. Women have traditionally been denied access to power, to economic equality, and to protection from violence, but it is now widely recognized that attitudes towards women must change and must be backed up by legal protections to promote women's equality with men. The same applies to children. The CRC challenges all cultures to review their attitudes and behaviours towards children. These changes should be introduced in ways that are sensitive to cultural traditions and religious beliefs, but culture should not be used to justify denying children the right to be heard. Children's-participation practice around the world is developing in different ways, in part reflecting diverse cultures and political environments.

Myth 4: Giving children participation/civil rights takes away their childhood. The CRC's 'participation' articles do not impose an obligation on children to participate in decisions. Rather, they assert the right of children to do so. Children should not be forced into participatory initiatives for which they do not feel prepared. However, it is a romanticized view of childhood to imagine that most children are not making decisions and taking responsibilities from a very early age. Even small children in highly protected environments make decisions about friendships, decide on what games to play, or may have to negotiate between parents in conflict. In many countries, young children are caring for younger siblings and sick family members, or participating in the labour market. Offering these children opportunities to articulate their concerns is not imposing any further responsibilities on them. Rather, it is providing an opportunity to improve the quality of their lives and promote greater respect for their rights.

Myth 5: Children's participation will lead to lack of respect for parents. Listening to children entails respecting them and helping them to value the importance of respecting others. It is not about teaching them to ignore their parents. Article 29 of the CRC clearly states that one of the aims of education is to teach children to respect their parents. Listening is a way of resolving conflict, finding solutions and promoting understanding – these can only be beneficial for family life. It can be difficult for some parents to respect children's rights to participate if they feel that they, themselves have never been respected as subjects of rights. This does not imply the need to retreat from encouraging children to participate but, rather, the need to be sensitive in doing so. Children should not be led to believe that they alone have the right to express their opinions. Wherever possible, all other members of their families should be involved in the process.

Myth 6: Children who participate are not representative. When children speak on an issue, whether at a conference or to their national or local government, they are often accused of not representing other children. Children can rarely be formally representative but this does not invalidate their contribution, provided they make no claim to speak for all children. Their own views may be based on experience of rights abuses within their community, on research undertaken with a wider group of young people, or on work within a project they are involved in. These experiences provide legitimacy to speak, certainly no less so than many of the adults who make representations to governments. However, it is important that the voices of children from different experiences and perspectives are heard. It is also important that children chose their representatives themselves, through a fair and transparent process, rather than children being selected by adults.

Myth 7: Some children become professionalized child speakers. There is a risk that some children become almost 'professionalized' as speakers and representatives for their organization, with the result that they spend their lives in public arenas and away from the roots that provide the source and legitimacy for their contribution. The particular value of creating opportunities for children to be heard is that they are speaking from direct and continuing experience. It is important not to lose that legitimacy. Some organizations have developed democratic structures, or have created many roles for children, to ensure that public roles are not monopolized by a few children who claim to represent children overall.

Myth 8: It is difficult to sustain children's participation. Projects and organizations involving children, by their very nature, will experience continual loss of children as the children reach the age of 18 years and become adults. Children do not remain children. This can weaken children-led agencies and threaten their continuity. It is important to involve new children and facilitate the transfer of skills from older to younger children. Some organizations develop a group of young people as advisers who continue in a supportive role once they have reached the maximum age for membership.

Some risks

Children can be manipulated by adults. There is a danger that adults use children to promote their own political agendas. It is important that events and projects establish clear principles, setting out how decisions are made and the relationships between adults and children. As children gain skills and confidence through their involvement, they will increasingly want to determine their own agendas and will challenge attempts by adults to manipulate them. This issue highlights the need to build strong children-led initiatives and to avoid one-off participatory events that are not part of on-going processes to build children's capacities, networks and organizations.

Children's participation puts children at risk. Children's participation in the media, in advocacy, or in high-level political events may put children at risk of abuse. This risk may be particularly high in conflict situations and in non-democratic societies where public expression of opinions can result in reprisals. Children who participate in projects, events or organizations may also be at risk of physical and sexual abuse. Minimum standards and operational guides for child participation define the responsibilities of organizations to protect participating children from harm (see for example Inter-Agency Working Group on Children's Participation (2007) *Minimum Standards for Consulting with Children*. Bangkok, Thailand).

Children may be over-burdened by participating. Participation is a right rather than an obligation. Adults must ensure that children who are involved in public activities are not overburdened. Expectations have to be realistic and appropriate, based on children's capacities.

Younger children are marginalized in children's participation. Younger children are often marginalized or simply ignored by adults and by older children. Unless they are adequately supported by older adolescents and by adults, young children often find adolescents intimidating, and may hesitate to speak out in forums that include a wide age group.

Reference

Lansdown, Gerison (2002) 'The participation of children.' In: Montgomery, Heather, Rachel Burr, Martin Woodhead (eds.) *Changing Childhoods: Local and Global*. The Open University and John Wiley & Sons, Milton Keynes, UK.

GLOSSARY AND ACRONYMS

Adolescent	Human being aged 10-19 years (UN).
Advocacy	Giving active support to a cause or position.
Blog	A frequently updated personal journal on a website, intended for public viewing (same as weblog).
Child	Human being aged 0-17 years (CRC).
Citizenship	Has two complementary aspects: citizenship rights and citizenship practice. Citizenship rights include civil, political, social and economic rights. Citizenship practice is the active expression of formal citizenship rights and ranges from civic responsibility to democratic action.
Civic education	Education that aims to develop an acceptance of the rights and responsibilities of citizenship. Civic education includes education for peace, human rights, democracy and international understanding. (UNESCO)
Civic engagement	A broad term that covers all forms of community volunteering, national service, 'social entrepreneurship' and 'social activism'. In the USA civic engagement is used more in the sense of volunteering, in the UK more in the sense of political influence and activism. In this text, civic engagement is used in the social sense and distinguished from influencing public and political decisions.
Civil rights	Individual freedoms: to movement, privacy, expression, information, justice
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)
Customary law	Rules that have been accepted for generations and have achieved legal status, whether they are written or not.
Education for citizenship	Provides students with the knowledge, skills and understanding they need to play an effective role in society at local, national and international levels, helping them become informed, thoughtful and responsible citizens aware of their duties and rights. It promotes their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, making them more self-confident and responsible both in and out of the classroom. It encourages pupils to play a part in the life of their schools, neighbourhoods, communities and the wider world. It also encourages learning about values, respect for different national, religious and ethnic identities and develops their ability to reflect on issues and take part in discussions. (UNESCO)
Equality	All human beings have the same rights. For example, in an ideal education system all children should have equal opportunities to develop their abilities to the fullest extent regardless of family background and social class. (UNESCO)
Equity	Justice and fair treatment without discrimination (for example as a result of sex, race, religion, age, customs, way of speaking).
Fulfilling rights	States must take positive actions to realize rights. For example creating laws that enshrine equal pay for equal work or increasing budgets to the poorest regions of a country. See also 'respecting' and 'protecting' rights.
G8	Group of the eight most-industrialized nations in the world, comprised of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Representatives from these countries meet regularly to discuss and draw up global economic policies.

ICT	Information and communication technology.
IAWGCP	Inter-Agency Working Group on Children's Participation.
IFRC	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.
IPU	Inter-Parliamentary Union.
J8	Junior 8 forum of children held annually to coincide with the G8 Summit. Offers opportunities for children from G8 countries to meet with G8 leaders and to present their proposals and demands.
Justice	Fairness in the way people are treated or decisions are made. The legal system, or the act of applying or upholding the law.
KAPB	Knowledge, attitude, practice and behaviour (survey).
Life skills	Social and emotional skills, for example problem solving, conflict resolution, self awareness, assertiveness, interpersonal communication.
Lobbying	Petitioning politicians or influential people to persuade them to support or oppose a particular cause.
MDG	Millennium Development Goal(s) (2000-2015).
Mass media	Communications media that reach large audiences, especially through television, radio and newspapers.
Nationality	Status of belonging to a particular nation by origin, birth or naturalization.
Podcast	Broadcasting over the internet, a form of webcasting.
Political rights	Rights to participate in and exercise political power, such as right to vote, right to stand for political office.
Protecting rights	States must prevent violations by others, and must provide affordable, accessible redress, for example: ensuring that employers comply with basic labour standards, preventing monopoly ownership of the media, or preventing parents from keeping their children out of school.
Respecting rights	State laws, policies, programmes and practices must not violate rights. States must avoid interfering with people's pursuit of their rights, whether through torture or arbitrary arrest, illegal forced housing evictions, or the introduction of fees that make health care unaffordable for poor people.
Service learning	A school programme that integrates citizenship values into education by involving students in community service, often as a requirement for graduation. Related terms are internship, practicum.
Skype	Telephoning over the Internet.
SMS	Text messaging using a mobile phone.
Social activist	Person using campaigning, advocacy and lobbying to effect social change in society.
Social capital	'Social capital' has many definitions. In this text it means individual or collective access to resources, networks and support.
Social entrepreneur	Individual who mobilizes others to solve social problems in society.
Stateless	Not being a citizen of any country and having no nationality.
STI	Sexually-transmitted Infection.

UNGASS	United Nations General Assembly Special Session.
UNV	United Nations Volunteers.
VOY	Voices of Youth.
Webcasting	Broadcasting over the internet (see also podcasting).
WFFC	World Fit For Children (2002).
Young people	Human beings aged 10 to 24 years (WHO, UNICEF).
Youth service	Volunteering and community service by young people. Includes national military and civilian service.
Youth	Human beings aged 15 to 24 years (UN).
WASH	Water, sanitation and hygiene.

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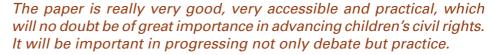Sukhumvit 53
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