

A WORKSHOP REPORT ON

# CHILD PARTICIPATION

IN THE UN STUDY ON VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

by Clare Feinstein Ravi Karkara Sophie Laws



**Save the Children**



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**The vision**

*Save the Children works for:*

- a world which respects and values each child*
- a world which listens to children and learns*
- a world where all children have hope and opportunity*

**The mission**

*Save the Children fights for children's rights.*

*We deliver immediate and lasting improvements to children's lives worldwide.*

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Project manager:	Eva Ahlen
Facilitators:	Clare Feinstein, Save the Children Child Participation Adviser; Ravi Karkara, Save the Children Sweden and Denmark Programme Manager for South and Central Asia Region; and Sophie Laws, research consultant and co-author of the toolkit on research
Concept:	Ravi Karkara
Copy-editing:	Bela Malik
Design:	Tsering Phuntsok

Save the Children Sweden  
SE - 107 88 Stockholm, Sweden  
Phone: +46 8 698 90 20  
Fax: +46 8 698 90 25  
info@rb.se  
www.rb.se

International Save the Children Alliance  
275 - 281 King Street, London W6 9LZ, UK  
Phone: +44 (0) 20 8748 2554  
Fax: +44 (0) 20 8237 8000  
info@save-children-alliance.org  
www.savethechildren.org

# Contents

*Acknowledgment* \_\_\_\_\_

1

*Preface by Eva Åblén* \_\_\_\_\_

2

i. An Introduction to Child Participation \_\_\_\_\_

5

ii. Involving Children in Research \_\_\_\_\_

15

iii. Ethical Issues and Practice Standards \_\_\_\_\_

21

iv. Involving Children in National and Regional Consultations \_\_\_\_\_

24

v. Bringing it all Together \_\_\_\_\_

30

*Participants' E-mail Addresses* \_\_\_\_\_

32



# Acknowledgment

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We thank all participants for their enthusiastic support for the workshop. The participants brought in their own experiences and insights into the workshop on involving children. A special thank you to Amaya Gillespie and Jane Connors for having been part of the workshop.

INTERNATIONAL SAVE THE CHILDREN ALLIANCE  
GLOBAL TASK GROUP ON VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN  
EVA ÅHLÉN, SAVE THE CHILDREN SWEDEN  
HELENA GEZELIUS, SAVE THE CHILDREN SWEDEN  
MALI NILSSON, SAVE THE CHILDREN SWEDEN  
TURID HEIBERG, SAVE THE CHILDREN NORWAY  
ELIZABETH JAREG, SAVE THE CHILDREN NORWAY  
CLARE FEINSTEIN, SAVE THE CHILDREN  
SARAH STEVENSON, SAVE THE CHILDREN  
FLORENCE MARTIN, SAVE THE CHILDREN UK  
RAVI KARKARA, SAVE THE CHILDREN SWEDEN/DENMARK  
ALANA KAPELL, SAVE THE CHILDREN CANADA

# Preface

It has been recognised that in a context of increasing violence in society, there is a need to treat children as more than ‘victims’ needing protection. Children are agents and can participate in social change. However for this, adults need to involve children in various processes that concern young persons and children.

The UN Study on Violence against Children provides a good opportunity to bring in children’s participation into addressing violence against Children at all levels.<sup>1</sup> Children’s participation has to be more than token. It should also be ethical and meaningful. Apart from the UN Study, Save the Children has already acquired experience and demonstrated competence at the global level in developing good practices and championing children’s involvements in processes such as the UN General Assembly Special Session on Children (2002).

Further, Save the Children is a rights-based organisation that has long since recognised that children have a right to express themselves freely in all matters that affect them. Involving children and encouraging their participation is therefore part of the Save the Children approach. In its view, children’s involvement is essential for the UN Study on grounds of both quality and credibility. The UN Study objective has in any case included the participation of children in its process as observers and researchers. It intends to take into account the perceptions of children about violence and the strategies that children develop to confront violence.

Consulting with children often uncovers the fact that violence is a key issue in their lives and their urgent desire that something has to be done about it. We know from experience that when children have had ready and safe access to child protection mechanisms, violence has surfaced as an issue. As part of Save the Children’s contribution we are committed to begin responding to their agenda. Involving children in issues of relevance, concern or interest to them helps better equip society to protect children, to support their resilience and to enable them to

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<sup>1</sup> On 12 February 2003, United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan appointed Paulo Sergio Pinheiro of Brazil as the Independent Expert to lead the UN Study on Violence against Children. The purpose of the Study is to provide an in-depth picture of the prevalence, nature and causes of violence against Children. It will put forward recommendations for consideration by Member States, the UN system and civil society for appropriate action, including effective remedies and preventive and rehabilitative measures at the national and international levels.



protect themselves against violence.

We believe that children's involvement will provide the following benefits:

- It will provide new perspectives on how children experience violence.
- It will help to challenge one of the key barriers that children face in countering violence against them.
- It will ensure that the measures we design to counter violence against Children are more appropriate, relevant and sustainable, and therefore more likely to succeed.
- It can help to heal the past.
- It can enhance child protection.
- It enhances self-confidence and self-esteem.

Save the Children sees our role in the UN Study in relation to child participation as taking a lead in promoting ways to ensure the ethical and meaningful participation of children. This means that we will play an advisory and technical role at all levels; national, regional and international. We believe further that children can be meaningfully involved in all aspects of the study as for example:

- Participants in planning, analysis, and dissemination
- part of research teams
- as participants in consultations at all levels.
- as active participants in the dissemination and implementation of the outcomes of the study.

As part of Save the Children's contributions to the process of supporting children's ethical and meaningful participation in the study, Save the Children has produced a toolkit, in two parts, intended to inspire and be of practical help to those involving children in research, consultations and events relating to the study:

*So You Want to Involve Children in Research? A toolkit supporting children's meaningful and ethical participation in research relating to violence against Children*

This includes sections on involving children in secondary and primary research. It covers ethical issues, ideas and suggestions

for involving children and approaches and methodologies that can be applied.

*So You Want to Consult with Children? A toolkit of good practice*

This is based upon the experiences of Save the Children in helping to facilitate children's meaningful participation in the process leading up to and including the 2002 UN General Assembly Special Session on Children. It deals with organising consultations with children, planning preparatory workshops with and for children, having children in delegations and other events.

Both are available in published form and on the Save the Children website: [www.savethechildren.net/alliance/publications/main.html#rese](http://www.savethechildren.net/alliance/publications/main.html#rese)

Save the Children organised a one-day workshop on child participation in the UN Study on Violence against Children in Geneva on 1 April 2004. The programme was based around the experiences of Save the Children as encapsulated in these two toolkits and was an opportunity for organisations and agencies involved in the UN Study to explore and reflect upon how children can be involved in the process in meaningful and ethical ways.

EVA ÅHLÉN

CHAIR, TASK GROUP ON VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN  
International Save the Children Alliance



# An Introduction to Child Participation

Participants were introduced to child participation from the Save the Children draft position statement.

## Definition

'Participation' is used by Save the Children and others to mean children and young people

- thinking for themselves
- expressing their views effectively
- interacting in a positive way with other people.

'Participation' means the involvement of girls and boys in the decisions and actions that affect their lives, the lives of their families and community and the larger society in which they live. For Save the Children, the core purpose of children's participation is to empower children as individuals and members of civil society (social actors).

Children and young people can participate (as individuals or as organised groups) by:

- speaking out - examples, expose abuse, make a complaint about services, ask questions, raise awareness of a problem, press for a change in policy
- being involved in decision-making - examples, assessing needs, designing projects/programmes, sharing in school management, drawing up policy guidelines, developing legislation, evaluating services
- practical action - examples, peer education, setting up a

child-led initiative or child-led organisation,  
carrying out research, children's involvement in the media.

Adults, including parents, teachers, and development workers, play an important role in supporting children's participation. They can do this through:

- encouraging children's involvement
- sharing information
- modelling participatory behaviour
- developing the skills needed for participation
- creating safe environments for children to practise participation.

*Child participation is important because*

- It is a child's right – examples,
  - participation is an essential characteristic of the child as an active subject of rights;
  - it is seen as a general principle of fundamental importance to implementation of all aspects of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- It increases the effectiveness of interventions aimed at improving children's lives – examples,
  - it allows children to contribute to the analysis of how particular decisions or actions will serve their best interests;
  - it ensures that projects, programmes and services are more appropriate, relevant and sustainable;
  - it provides new perspectives on issues that are relevant to children (child labour, the impact of HIV/AIDS);
  - it helps to identify the key barriers that children face in securing their rights and innovative responses to address them;
  - it gives children more ownership and sense of responsibility for projects and services developed for their benefit;
  - it leads to better decisions that build on children's own experience and knowledge

- It brings benefits to the children involved – examples,
  - direct improvements in their own lives and life chances (access to schooling);
  - the possibility to protect themselves and challenge abuses of rights;
  - enhanced self-confidence and self-esteem; an opportunity to acquire and expand their skills;
  - familiarisation with group and democratic processes;
  - a sense of purpose and competence on their own lives and on the lives of their peers, families and community;
  - an opportunity to learn and practise the skills of responsible and active citizenship.
- It empowers children as members of civil society and as active, responsible citizens – examples,
  - they can exercise their responsibilities and strengthen their ability to hold others (organisations, governments, institutions) to account;
  - it allows them to play an active part in civil society and compensates for their relative exclusion from formal political processes;
  - it increases the visibility of children and children's issues and places them on economic, social and political agendas;
  - it increases adults' understanding and appreciation of children's capacities and is part of a process of changing attitudes towards children;
  - it increases accountability to children (by enlarging the democratic space and encouraging good governance).
- Girls and boys themselves want to participate.

## The principles of meaningful participation

Save the Children supports meaningful, good quality children's participation that gives children a genuine opportunity to express their views, be involved in decisions or take action.

Meaningful children's participation is characterised by:

- An ethical approach and a commitment to transparency, honesty and accountability (impact on decision-making).
- A safe approach in which children's protection rights are safeguarded.
- A non-discriminatory approach that ensures that all children (regardless of their class, gender, ability, language, ethnicity, sexual preference, religion, etc.) have an equal opportunity to be involved.
- A 'child-friendly' approach which enables children to contribute to the best of their abilities (good information, availability of venues, procedures and support that encourage rather than hinder children's involvement).

## **Group work around meaningful participation**

Participants worked in three groups to identify the key components of meaningful participation of children (principles and methods). Their feedback included:

### *Information and communication*

- Ensure the issue is well-understood (using verbal and non-verbal means).
- Start from scratch and raise awareness with children so that they find their voice.
- Avoid jargon, make sure children's understanding of issues is clear and also of adults.
- Challenge is for adults to really listen to what children are saying.
- Begin the process at their level.
- Children should be consulted on their own terms.

### *Environment and processes necessary for child participation*

- Build trust so child is comfortable, part of whole process, and can opt out.
- Protection is key, information is confidential.
- Process is non-discriminatory.
- Ensure that children realise and feel strongly that their input is going to be taken seriously in final outcomes and they will be involved in full process, including follow up.
- Non-discrimination is an issue.
- Include children who are not perceived as being discriminated against.
- Bring children really together.

- Time needed (no one-off events) so it is part of long-term process.
- Open avenues for children according to their evolving capacities.
- Create a safe environment so that children feel free to speak without threat or fear.
- Choice to participate or not. Be clear that it is their right to participate.

#### *Involving adults*

- Involvement of whole family.
- Two way process – prepare the adults as well.
- Adequate preparation of both adults and children.
- Context of culture and behaviour – sensitive to context of children and community in which they live, includes preparation of adults for this cultural context.

#### *Keeping it relevant*

- Intervention should address the context of the children involved.
- Diversity of response – children are not a homogenous group.

#### *Follow-up*

- Responsibility for immediate task in hand as well as follow up with children and adults involved (learning for life process).
- Sustainability and ownership of any process involving children.

#### *Ethical issues (these pervade all of the above too)*

- Safe environment and the ethical issue of what happens when children leave the safe environment that has been created for them.
- Be clear what are the criteria and principles for ethical and meaningful participation.
- What do we do when children say things we do not like. This is linked to ethical issues, representing views of all children.
- Ethical and other issues needing to be addressed for meaningful participation
  - gender
  - do we offer benefits to encourage more child participation?
  - time, resources, logistics, and language
  - attitudes and behaviour.

## **Ethical issues relating to children and violence**

There is a need for approaches that are

- ethical
- safe
- non-discriminatory
- child-friendly.

Establishing safe and meaningful environments for the participation of children, which minimise the risk to them from their involvement, does not happen by accident. The right environment needs to be created by ensuring:

- an ethical approach – examples,
  - countering the imbalance in power and status between adults and children;
  - ensuring children are able to freely express their views and opinions, that they are listened to seriously and that their views and opinions are taken into account;
  - being clear about the purpose of participation (both adults and children) – what it involves and what impact it might have;
  - providing children with access to relevant information about their involvement;
  - giving children time to consider their involvement and give their personal informed consent to it;
  - sensitising the adults involved to working with children and being responsive to the context in which the children live
- that children's participation is relevant and voluntary – examples,
  - children have the choice whether to participate or not;
  - children participate on their own terms and for lengths of time chosen by them;
  - children are involved in ways, at levels and at a pace appropriate to their capacities and interests;
  - child-centred ways of working are used and methods of involvement incorporate and build on supportive local structures and knowledge
- a 'child-friendly' enabling environment – examples,
  - child-centred ways of working to build the confidence and self-esteem of children;
  - time and resources are made available for quality participation;
  - child-friendly spaces are identified and created where children feel comfortable;
  - accessible information is shared with children in good time, in child-friendly formats and in languages that they understand
- that participation promotes the safety and protection of children – examples,
  - everything is done to minimise the risk to children of abuse and exploitation or other negative consequences of their participation;
  - ensuring the confidentiality and anonymity of children and respecting their



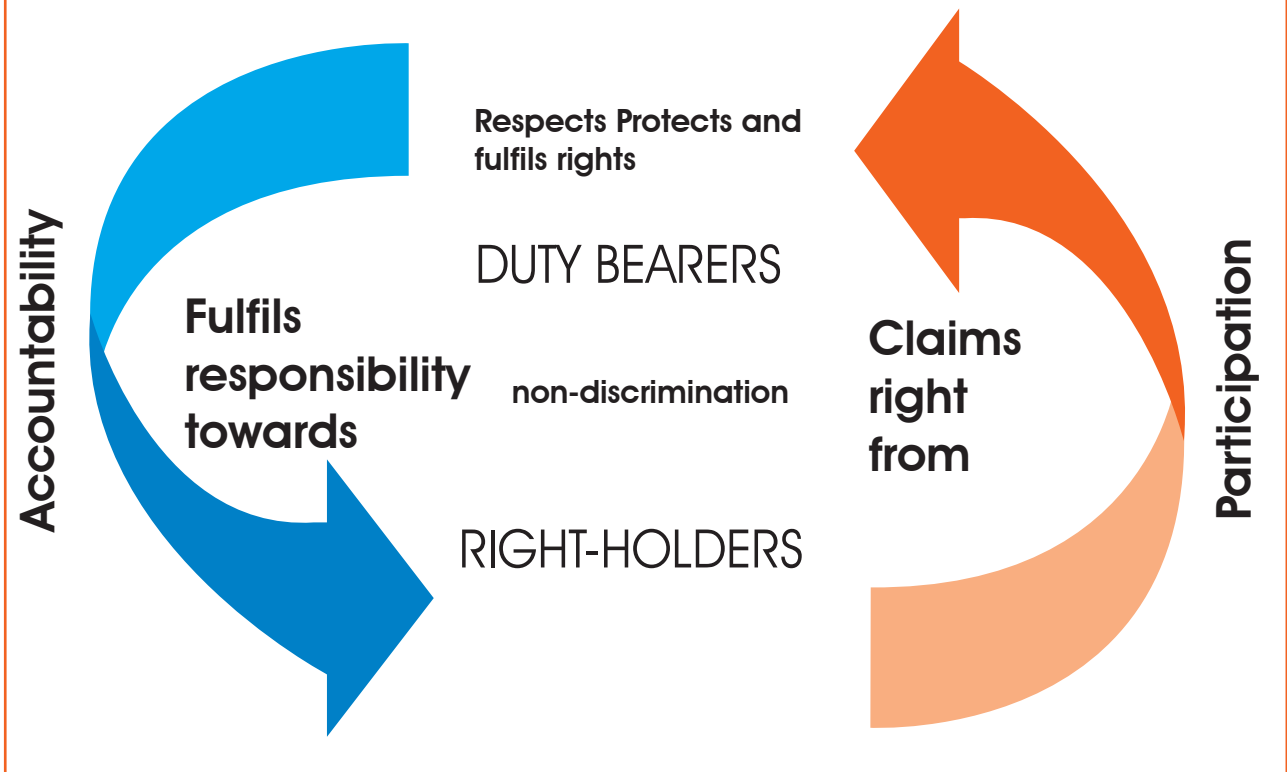
- boundaries (right of disclosure chosen and decided by children);
  - ensuring that children's participation in the study does not increase their exposure to violence;
  - ensuring that the necessary support is available if children's participation risks them reliving the trauma of violence
- that the selection of child participants or representatives is based on principles of democracy and non-discrimination – examples,
  - children are involved in setting the criteria for selection and representation;
  - that children should be able to select from among their peers those who will represent them in any of the study's initiatives
- follow-up and evaluation – examples,
  - committing from the beginning of the process to provide feedback and to follow-up and evaluate together with the children the quality and impact of their participation;
  - make child-friendly versions of reports available in local languages so that children can access the outcomes of the study and their participation in it.

## Child-rights programming perspective

The following considerations help in developing child-centred programmes and intervention:

- Putting children at the centre, recognising them as right-holders and social actors..
- Recognising governments as primary duty-bearers accountable to their citizens' including children, and to the international community.
- Recognising parents and families as primary care-givers, protectors and guides
- and supporting them in these roles.
- Giving priority to children and to creating a child-friendly environment.
- Being gender and diversity sensitive and seeking inclusive solutions that involve a focus on those boys and girls who are at risk and who are discriminated against.
- Addressing unequal power structures (class, sex, ethnicity, age, caste, religion etc.).
- Holding a holistic vision of the rights of the child while making strategic choices and taking specific actions.
- Setting goals in terms of the fulfilment of rights.
- Aiming for sustainable results for children by focusing not only on the immediate, but also on the root causes of problems.
- Using participatory and empowering approaches, in particular with regard to children.
- Building partnerships and alliances for promotion of child rights.

## RIGHT - RESPONSIBILITY - CLAIM

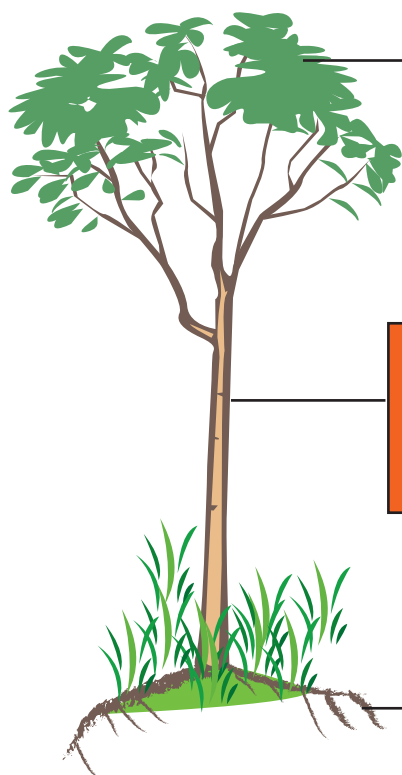


- Counting on **international co-operation**.
- Focusing on those who are most at risk and discriminated against.
- Taking a holistic perspective that requires a **multi-sectoral response**.
- Providing a long-term goal, which is clearly set out in **international legal frameworks** that are shared by governments, donors and civil society.
- Encouraging **legal and other reforms**, such as regular

monitoring mechanisms that create a much greater likelihood of sustainable change.

Girls and boys learn culture while also contributing to its continuity and its transformation. Socialisation ideas and practices are a key part of culture; adults use culture to explain or justify child-rearing and socialisation practices, even practices involving unequal treatment, such as gender discrimination and abuse.

## Tree of Socialisation and Gender



**Leaves and Fruit:** Leaves and fruit depict peoples' attitudes in the society and in this case adult behaviour towards children, which is mostly oppressive. This is transmitted into a seed that germinates into a new tree, which will continue to oppress and discriminate against Children due to age, gender, ethnicity, disability, etc.

**Trunk:** The trunk holds together social institutions (family, religion, education, etc.) that transfer social values, norms and belief. Most social institutions see children as learners of adult behaviour, and as a result give little or no importance to girls' and boys' voices.

**Roots:** The roots hold the society's norms, values and beliefs that shape and define the social fabric of people's behaviour towards each other, including the sharing of resources. These norms are generally patriarchal, putting children in a 'power less' position vis-à-vis adults, as a result excluding and discriminating against girls. Children are not expected to participate in family or community decision-making processes.

Gender, as a social construction rather than a biological given, differs from culture to culture, and changes over time. Efforts to bring about desired behavioural change must, therefore, be directed at all parts of the tree. Behaviour should become more inclusive, participatory, and democratic and gender sensitive, not only towards children but towards adults as well.

Positive beliefs and norms that recognise girls and boys as right holders will lead to the development and evolution of child-friendly social institutions that are gender sensitive, inclusive and respectful of children's voices, institutions which encourage children's participation in decision-making processes. This in turn will result in a more democratic society that discourages all forms of oppression and discrimination.



## Involving Children in Research

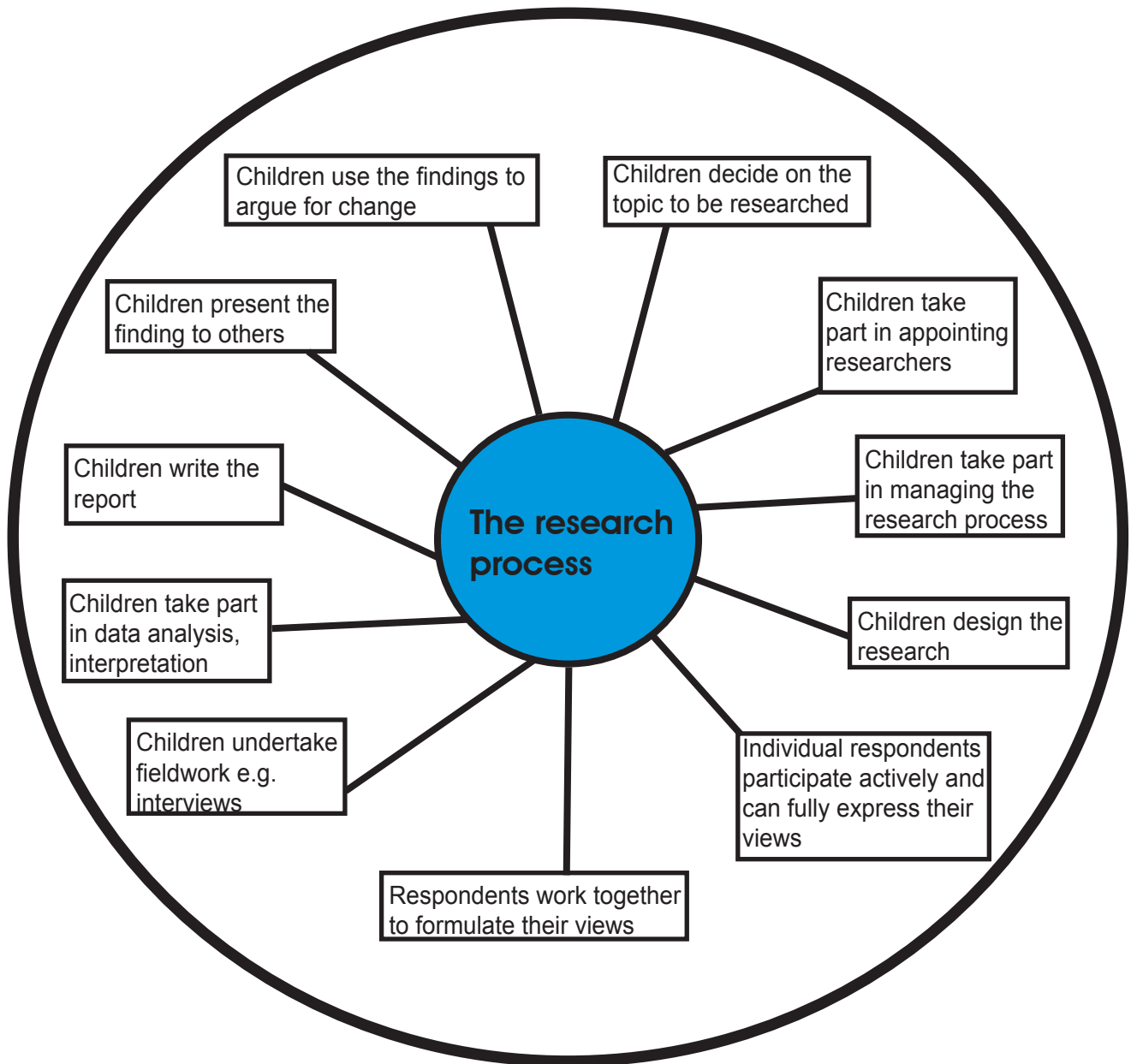
The session started with a discussion about what is meant by research in the context of the UN Study. With contributions from the floor it was established that we need to focus on a range of types of process, not just on primary research in the usual sense. The study will involve much bringing together of existing evidence, and consultation with children and adults. There is currently no funding available for new primary research, though NGOs and other organisations are commissioning their own research, and governments may do likewise.

There is no one right way to involve children, just as there is no ideal technique to use in research with children. You may want to involve children in every stage of your research, or to consult them about specific areas. Ideally, consult children themselves about what they think would be an appropriate way for them to be involved. It will be important to develop good, open communication with children, and you must expect to take time and care to achieve this.

Whilst there is great value in a participatory approach, there will be research topics and contexts where a more conventional approach is the most suitable. Violence against Children includes some very controversial topics, and it may not be possible (i.e. acceptable to powerful adults) to investigate them using methods that are also seen as controversial. Within traditional qualitative research carried out by adults, there is scope to increase the active engagement of children as respondents, and to ensure that they feel more in control of the process. It is very valuable for children to be properly 'heard' as research respondents, whether or not they have other roles in the research process.

Reproduced here is an image of a wheel of participation, looking at participation in the various parts of the research process. It also suggests the idea of travel and of learning from one's experience.

A wheel of children's participation in research



There are a number of distinct roles children could take in research. Different groups of girls and boys could be involved at different stages of the process.

*As advisers*

- members of advisory groups
- being consulted on specific issues

*As respondents*

- fill in quantitative questionnaire
- be interviewed
- take part in focus group discussion
- take part in active group work including play, drawing, singing, ranking and scoring exercises
- validate findings by hearing summary and confirming key points
- assist in developing recommendations

*As co-researchers*

- plan the research alongside adults
- act as peer researchers, carrying out fieldwork
- act as a research assistant

*As development workers*

- lead projects on issues of importance to them
- develop plans for advocacy/ action arising from research work

## GROUP WORK

Participants worked in three groups, and discussed ways in which children could be actively involved in research processes on some relevant topics chosen by the group:

Research on children in jails, law enforcement	Children who are sexually abused/exploited in communities and schools	Impact of domestic violence on children
<p><b>Assess the context and background</b> where research will take place</p> <p>Key Questions; Assess child-specific laws on juvenile justice Children in prison Children born in prisons Safety of the child Protection of children that testify</p> <p>Responsibility that the state has towards children in prison</p> <p>CRC and ICCPR: violation of child rights</p> <p><b>Safety of the child</b> Access to children in prison is very difficult What question to be asked and who is asking and how</p>	<p>Introduce a social context to the broader community</p> <p><b>Earn their trust</b> and get consent</p> <p>Any approach has to be respectful of context</p> <p><b>Confidentiality</b> to be ensured</p> <p><b>Theatre, videos, role plays, writing, group discussions,</b></p> <p>Point to keep in mind – in one group you may have both the perpetrator and the victim</p> <p>Meaningful child participation guideline and training</p>	<p>As child advocates</p> <p>Gathering the level of knowledge among their peers on the issues</p> <p><b>Children to be part to designing</b> the process: theatre, developing questionnaire, music, drawing roles play and puppets, etc.</p> <p>Role children could play in analysing the data: it is clear that it is one of the most challenging areas</p> <p>How domestic violence is linked to the country and cultural context /drawing out global commonalities</p>



Research on children in jails, law enforcement	Children who are sexually abused/exploited in communities and school	Impact of domestic violence on children
<p><b>Design research in accordance with children's views</b></p> <p><b>Flexible approach</b> Due regard to their expression Culture context</p> <p>To talk to peers of children and street children and children who have been involved in prisons</p> <p><b>Plays, story writing, art work</b> – to be determined by children and based on their levels</p>	<p>It is very important to have a <b>support team</b>– psychosocial needs to be kept in mind</p> <p><b>Keep the community informed</b> about the progress of the research</p> <p>Not to end just with a publication but the progress of the <b>research could or would have identified young people to the follow up process</b></p> <p>Study should help in the prevention of the abuse by generating awareness</p>	<p>How to gather experiences of children, we could use childline (telephone crisis line)</p> <p><b>How do you involve young children?</b></p>

The facilitator drew the strands together with the following thoughts on how to approach involving children in research work.

Be clear about why you are involving children in this piece of work.

In making decisions, consider:

- time
- human resources
- money and organisational resources.

In early planning and development you could:

- consult children about how they would like to be involved

- discuss with children on the research objectives, or on ‘what do we need to know?’
- involve children in determining the overall direction of the project
- prepare adults as well as children for children’s participation in the research processes
- consult children on how to tackle ethical dilemmas.



## Ethical Issues and Practice Standards

It is important to be guided by a primary concern for the best interest of children. The process of involving children should be fair and transparent. Children should be given information about the process in which they are to participate. The consultation process itself should be designed with the involvement of young people and children. Besides these fundamental considerations, there are others including some which are specific to research processes. The workshop discussed these issues that are drawn from the research toolkit. At the end of this section there is a short overview of practice standards for consulting children.

### *Avoiding harm to participants*

This is of course a central value for this kind of process. Researchers need to be clear that avoiding harm is more important than completing the research. When there are children as active participants in these processes, they can have a useful contribution to make in advising on avoiding harm, but adults/professionals retain the primary responsibility to make judgements about risks and appropriate action.

Clarity is needed on what is possible within the process of the research. Usually researchers are not able to make any substantial difference to the lives of individual children, and they should ensure that children understand this. It will be important to arrange appropriate support and follow-up for participants who are upset by their involvement. Adults need to think broadly about who might be able to offer this.

*Child protection*

In making appointments of staff, child protection procedures must be followed. Necessary background checks should be made. Abusers of children have used research as a cover for their activities.

Child protection should be considered broadly as an issue in relation to the training, seeking a positive to approach to enhancing the protection of the children involved – child protection training could be provided for all staff. A very basic code of behaviour is included in the toolkit.

It is also worth thinking about child protection in relation to research methods – it may be best to avoid children being alone with a single researcher. Consider what will be safest for the child, not the adult.

*Informed consent*

Children can only give informed consent if they understand the research they are agreeing to. The preparation of child-friendly information materials is a good opportunity to involve children. Information sheets can usefully include a statement of children's rights as respondents (the toolkit includes a possible model). However verbal explanation is also important in all cases.

Consent by respondents must be seen as an ongoing process. Children should be informed that they can withdraw from the research at any point.

*Confidentiality*

It is crucial to actually protect confidentiality in practice. This includes keeping records carefully and remembering to avoid compromising confidentiality in informal interactions with local practitioners. Obviously there should be no names in reports. Beware of stories that could identify respondents to those close to them.

There is a need to explain what is meant by confidentiality to

respondents carefully and in practical terms. What exactly will you be doing to protect their confidentiality?

Sometimes participating children may want to put their names on their stories. They may not have enough experience to judge the possible consequences of doing this, and they may have to be over-ruled.

Confidentiality cannot be considered an over-riding value, where children's safety is in question. There is much debate about how disclosures of current abuse should be dealt with by researchers, and the team should discuss this and agree on an approach. Researchers should be prepared for a detailed discussion with the child, on the spot, about how they want to deal with their situation before taking any other action. Children should be helped to keep control of what is done, as far as possible. If you will take action (which may violate confidentiality), if you are told that a child is currently at risk, you need to inform respondents of this, in an appropriate manner.

#### *An inclusive approach*

Make special efforts to reach out to sections of the community who might otherwise be excluded: girls as well as boys of course, but also disabled children, minority ethnic groups, lesbian and gay young people, any group who may be excluded, perhaps disapproved of by the majority.

#### *Fair return for participation*

We must be aware that there may be costs to children of participating in research. There is no 'right' answer to this issue. The toolkit lists some pros and cons to consider. A flexible approach keeping local contexts in view is suggested.

#### *Welfare of research staff*

Staff need to be clear that their own safety must be placed above the completion of research tasks.

Emotional support is also important, and arrangements need to be made for this. This should apply to all staff, including e.g. interpreters, transcribers, as well as lead researchers.

### *Wider accountability*

Full negotiation with the surrounding community and systems of authority is important, and this is part of protecting child respondents. Consider how you can build useful skills within the community as part of the process. Avoid raising unrealistic expectations.

## **Practice standards for consulting children**

Participants were recommended to consult and work with Save the Children's draft practice standards in children's participation. These standards are identified under the following headings:

### Overview of Practice Standards in Child Participation

#### **Standard 1:**

An Ethical Approach: Transparency and Honesty

#### **Standard 2:**

Children's Participation is Appropriate and Relevant

#### **Standard 3:**

A Child-friendly, Enabling Environment

#### **Standard 4:**

Equality of Opportunity

#### **Standard 5:**

Staff are Effective and Confident

#### **Standard 6:**

Participation Promotes the Safety and Protection of Children

#### **Standard 7:**

Ensuring Follow-up and Evaluation



## Involving Children in National and Regional Consultations

Save the Children believes that it is fundamental that any consultation at the regional level starts with good processes at the country level, including plans for follow-up. The organisation is committed to supporting, wherever possible, children's meaningful involvement in national and regional consultations linked to the UN Study.

The forthcoming national processes and regional consultations linked to the UN Study offer us all an opportunity to further institutionalise the process of children's participation. This can be done not only through the promotion and delivery of good practice but also through the application of lessons learned from past experiences of involving children at these levels. Therefore, the Yokohama and Special Session on Children processes are particularly valuable to enable us to draw on good practice and lessons learned.

The UN Study presents us with an enormous opportunity to do this as we have time. Most, if not all, the regional consultations will take place in 2005. Therefore, unlike the Special Session on Children, when children participated in regional consultations, this time round we

have the opportunity to involve them meaningfully in national processes, in the planning process and in the regional consultations themselves and also in ensuring quality follow-up. This session of the workshop explored how this could be done.

Participants worked in three groups to look at what needs to be done: before, during and after national and regional consultations related to the UN Study in order to ensure that children are meaningfully involved. Groups were asked to take into account the principles of meaningful child participation as previously discussed.

Feedback from the groups included the following:

Pre-	Consultation	Post-
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• identify local organisations</li> <li>• set criteria for who participates and how they are selected</li> <li>• determine content/direction/how for the actual consultation</li> <li>• preparation for creative alternative ways of providing input</li> <li>• conduct pre-activity (child-to-child research)</li> <li>• two-way process to know what to expect; provide info/education</li> <li>• prepare adults</li> <li>• communications strategy throughout</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• clear responsibilities and opportunities jointly with adults</li> <li>• faithfulness to original planning agreements</li> <li>• provide specific space in programme for children</li> <li>• consider follow up as part of programme</li> <li>• fun</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• follow up events and processes</li> <li>• evaluation by young persons</li> <li>• involved in report preparation</li> <li>• influence new generation of children</li> <li>• use processes and networks built throughout the research</li> <li>• reach beyond obvious sectors</li> <li>• create accountability for continuing</li> <li>• create opportunities for young persons to continue</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• fundraising</li> <li>• training</li> <li>• identify children in democratic non-discriminatory manner</li> <li>• speak to the independent expert</li> <li>• clarification on the role of children</li> <li>• friends of the study involved</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• logistics</li> <li>• visual display support materials (to show alternative forms of participation)</li> <li>• language</li> <li>• child-friendly main and side events</li> <li>• children decide the agenda and the points going back to the independent expert</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• email group/chat room</li> <li>• child-friendly outcome documents</li> <li>• monitoring and follow up mechanisms, include children reporting on violations</li> </ul>



Pre-	Consultation	Post-
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• having a child-friendly agenda and distributing it to children in national context</li> <li>• agenda is discussed with the children (include children of different ages)</li> <li>• child-rights coalitions and local NGOs working with children throughout the process</li> <li>• discussion of nominating child representatives at the consultation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• not all structures within which discussions take place are biased in favour of the adults</li> <li>• give children a reasonable amount of time</li> <li>• procedures of consultation should be made accessible to children and adults</li> <li>• adults should encourage other adults to be child friendly</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• child reps should report back to other children</li> <li>• children should then decide on an appropriate response for follow-up</li> <li>• outcomes we want to see are part of follow-up</li> </ul>

The facilitator concluded the session by presenting 14 key considerations prepared by Save the Children for child participation in national and regional consultations.

1. Start sharing information on the UN Study with children.
2. Consider approaching children who have been involved in previous processes (such as UNGASS or Yokohama) as a first step. They will be aware of the issues under discussion and the sort of process being undertaken.
3. Contact and involve other child-led organisations/initiatives who are also involved in the issues under discussion.
4. If a national/regional steering committee or organising group has been established in the country/region, ensure that child representatives have a 'place at the table'. It is important to make sure that children involved in such a steering committee are well informed about their role and are able to make an informed decision about their participation. It is also important to ensure that the adults involved on such a committee and those accompanying the children are given training/briefings on how to give children the space and time to participate meaningfully.

5. Use a national/regional steering committee, or other appropriate mechanisms, to establish together with the children a transparent and fair process for the selection of young participants to the national events or regional consultations.
6. Use a national/regional steering committee, or other appropriate mechanism, to allow children to determine the most appropriate model for their participation in the national/regional consultation. Plan the national/regional consultation in partnership with children.
7. Allow sufficient time and resources for good prior preparation to enhance children's capacity to participate effectively in the national/regional consultation. This includes:
  - making information about the national/regional consultation accessible to children through making it available in relevant languages and child-friendly formats;
  - making any relevant 'official' or background documents available to child participants beforehand so that they have a chance to review them *before* discussions begin.
8. Plan the logistics, including budget, carefully. A budget will need to include pre-consultation preparation for the children, travel and accommodation costs for children and accompanying adults, resource persons/facilitators, interpretation, documentation, including translation of key documents, and support for follow-up processes.
9. Consider holding a preparatory workshop for the children involved *immediately before* the national/regional consultation.
10. Work with the lead UN agencies in the country/region (UNICEF/WHO/OHCHR) to make sure that children are able to participate fully and actively in all aspects of the national/regional consultation by ensuring that they are adequately

supported, made to feel welcome and are treated with respect by adult participants. This may include:

- providing a short written briefing that outlines the key issues to all adult participants
- providing oral briefings to key adults, such as chairs of sessions.

11. Work with the lead UN agencies in the country/region to ensure that media activities are undertaken in an ethical way and that they correspond to the interests and needs of the children participating in the national/regional consultation. This may include:

- preparing media guidelines for the children that can be sent to participants ahead of the event
- using a preparatory workshop as a space in which children can prepare for interaction with the media and other dignitaries
- actively co-ordinating the participation of young journalists who can cover the event from their own perspective
- asking children and their parents/guardians to sign a media consent and release form *prior* to the event

12. Actively promote and ensure good child protection practice. This includes the role and responsibility of accompanying adults, code of conduct for accompanying adults, briefings on child protection for adults and children, medical and travel insurance, and knowing who the children are and where they are at all times.

13. Plan and budget now for support to good quality follow up processes. This includes:

- children being able to provide feedback and use their experience of participating in the national/regional consultation with their peer group as well as in projects or work in their local communities

- children becoming active partners in helping to implement the recommendations of the Study
  - children having the opportunity to assess the quality and perceived impact of their participation and the learning opportunities it provided both individually and collectively as a group
  - children receiving follow-up information such as reports or other key documents from the national/regional consultation, information about ‘what happens next’ and information about whether the outcomes from children are being included/integrated in the plans of adult organisations. Children can play an important role in monitoring the implementation of commitments made at such a consultation.
14. Evaluate the lessons learned from involving children in national and regional events/consultations related to the UN Study.



# Bringing it All Together

This training session was the first one conducted by Save the Children at the international level in the context of the UN Study on violence against Children. Its aim was to encourage ethical and meaningful child participation in the UN Study. Obviously, it is not only Save the Children that has experience of child participation; many organisations have a rich experience of working with children. It is very important that we work together in ensuring ethical and meaningful child participation for which a co-ordinated and collaborative approach is needed in order to achieve the best possible results. This workshop underscored the need to involve children and indicated some broad issues and guidelines on how this could be done.

## Feedback from participants

### *Most useful parts of the workshop*

- Gaining an overview of important elements for child participation.
- Methods of communication/consultation with children.
- Presentations – really excellent with plenty of information.
- The sharing in the group sessions.
- The materials.
- Ethical aspects of research.
- How to include children in research.
- The action points, concrete suggestions, and examples.
- Clear context (UN Study on violence against Children).

*How the training helped the participants*

- Get a clearer picture and ideas on how to involve children in my work, both with the Committee on the Rights of the Child and with the Study.
- Apply youth participation principles to a specific task/event (the UN Study) so theories became practical and applicable.
- To get to know others who are involved in child participation issues.
- To find how sensitive/deep the issue can be.
- Understanding participation via broad context.
- Ideas to share with my organisation.

# Participants' E-mail Addresses

1	Agneta Ucko	<a href="mailto:ucko@arigatou.ch">ucko@arigatou.ch</a>
2	Amaya Gillespie	<a href="mailto:agillespie@unicef.org">agillespie@unicef.org</a>
3	Astrid Melchner	<a href="mailto:amelchner@ohchr.org">amelchner@ohchr.org</a>
4	Benjamin Lee	<a href="mailto:bjl7@hotmail.com">bjl7@hotmail.com</a>
5	Clare Feinstein	<a href="mailto:clare.feinstein@savethechildren.nl">clare.feinstein@savethechildren.nl</a>
6	Denise A. Allen	<a href="mailto:dallen@tiscalinet.ch">dallen@tiscalinet.ch</a>
7	Eva Åhlén	<a href="mailto:eva.ahlen@rb.se">eva.ahlen@rb.se</a>
8	Frederike Seidel	<a href="mailto:fseidel@unicef.org">fseidel@unicef.org</a>
9	Helena Gezelius	<a href="mailto:helena@savethechildren.ch">helena@savethechildren.ch</a>
10	Hélène Sackstein	<a href="mailto:hsack@free.fr">hsack@free.fr</a>
11	Ikuku Yamaguchi	<a href="mailto:iyamaguchi@unicef.org">iyamaguchi@unicef.org</a>
12	Jane Connors	<a href="mailto:jconnors@ohchr.org">jconnors@ohchr.org</a>
13	Jennifer P. Nissen	<a href="mailto:jphilpotnissen@wanadoo.fr">jphilpotnissen@wanadoo.fr</a>
14	Jo de Linde	<a href="mailto:jo.de.linde@wanadoo.fr">jo.de.linde@wanadoo.fr</a>
15	Joseph Aguetant	<a href="mailto:josepha@their.org">josepha@their.org</a>
16	Laure Domeniconi	<a href="mailto:wwsf@vtxnet.ch">wwsf@vtxnet.ch</a>
17	Mara Steccazzini	<a href="mailto:msteccazzini@ohchr.org">msteccazzini@ohchr.org</a>
18	Margaret McCallin	<a href="mailto:margaret.mccallin@bice.org">margaret.mccallin@bice.org</a>
19	Maria Gabriella Lay	<a href="mailto:lay@ilo.org">lay@ilo.org</a>
20	Monique McClellan	<a href="mailto:monique.mcclellan@bice.org">monique.mcclellan@bice.org</a>
21	Ravi Karkara	<a href="mailto:ravikarkara@savethechildren.org.np">ravikarkara@savethechildren.org.np</a>
22	Sandrine Létard	<a href="mailto:dcf.childlabour@bluewin.ch">dcf.childlabour@bluewin.ch</a>
23	Sophie Laws	<a href="mailto:sophie@sophielaws.co.uk">sophie@sophielaws.co.uk</a>
24	Thea Borum	<a href="mailto:tb@redbarnet.dk">tb@redbarnet.dk</a>
25	Usha Selvaraju	<a href="mailto:dcf.classistant@bluewin.ch">dcf.classistant@bluewin.ch</a>

Save the Children Sweden  
SE - 107 88 Stockholm, Sweden  
Phone: +46 8 698 90 20  
Fax: +46 8 698 90 25  
[info@rb.se](mailto:info@rb.se)  
[www.rb.se](http://www.rb.se)

International Save the Children Alliance,  
Second Floor  
Secretariat Office,  
Cambridge House,  
100 Cambridge Grove,  
London  
W6 0LE  
United Kingdom  
Phone: +44 (0) 20 8748 2554  
Fax: +44 (0) 20 8237 8000  
[info@savethechildren.net](mailto:info@savethechildren.net)  
[www.savethechildren.net](http://www.savethechildren.net)