

CASE STUDIES

CHILD PARTICIPATION AND ACCOUNTABILITY 2012



Introduction

This is a set of ten case studies demonstrating Save the Children's practice in Accountability and Child Participation from across the globe. They are intended for use by Save the Children staff both at Head Office and in Country Programmes and are intended to be both illustrative and inspiring.

Each case study includes information about the approach and methodology employed, how quality was ensured through the process and also the impact that this work had on Save the Children, communities and on children and young people.

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PARTICIPATION IN MONITORING AND EVALUATION: THE NATIONAL CHILDREN'S ROUNDTABLE

China

Background

In China, child participation has faced constraints in terms of traditional ideologies and socio-political systems.

In Save the Children's work, children's views did not systematically inform or influence what we did and therefore our efforts were not as effective as they could have been. In order to improve the participation of children in our programmes, it was important to listen to children's opinions and ideas. We felt that it was critical for children that we act accountably throughout our programmes, thus enhancing their understanding of child rights issues. It would take time for both adults and children to become familiar with the broader concept of children's participation and its practicalities and benefits. The National Children's Round Table in China (2007 -2010) was formed through a child rights programme, aimed at making children's voices heard.

Our approach

In 2007 we set up the National Children's Roundtable. It had around **25 members, who were delegates from the Children's Committees** we set up in the provinces where we work. Each provincial committee had around 15 members, who were usually children from the schools or children's centres that we support. The National Children's Roundtable met twice a year in different cities and we provided **training and support** to enable meaningful participation. Children discussed problems and issues that needed to be raised with duty-bearers (such as corporal punishment and access to services) and potential solutions. A key part of their work was to advocate for **children's rights** and to agree **action plans to present to government officials** and other duty-bearers. They also contributed to China's National Report to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child.



A Mock Trial – Children's Roundtable
February 2009

As well as working collaboratively and providing training on children's rights and participation, for children taking part in the National Roundtable, we also **supported them in carrying out their own research**. For example, children in Shanghai collected information about health issues facing their communities and took photos which they displayed in schools and public spaces. This helped other children and adults to realise that children can be agents of change in their own communities. Both the provincial children's committees and the National Children's Roundtable produced **newsletters publicising the research** they carried out to let people know how children were taking part in governance structures.

Impact

On the local community:

- One of our partners, a schoolteacher in Yuxi, Yunnan province, described how his involvement at a National Children's Roundtable meeting had led him to really understand what children's

participation was about. He now feels more confident in communicating with children, and is more open to listening to their views and ideas. Before this he had found encouraging children to participate in class quite challenging.

Upon children's lives:

- For most children in our project sites, this was the first time that adults really listened to their views, and they gained confidence as time went by. Now, they feel empowered to organise and to support other children to raise issues with government officials about the problems that affect them. They understood their entitlements, and were able to help other children realise their rights. For example, when members of the Children's Committees found that some children were not able to go to school, they referred them to the children's centre run by Save the Children and the local government. They worked together to find ways to help these children go back to school.

Children's committees become a key part of our provincial programmes and many projects have built their own committees. It shows the direction of integrating children's roundtable more and more within our project work. Both children and adults learnt how to communicate effectively around child related issues.

"I realised that I could bring my experience here back to my own community, to my peers in the school."

Meeting the UN Requirements for Effective and Meaningful Participation¹

Requirement 8: Participation is Safe and Sensitive to Risk

The **4th National Children's Roundtable in Kunming in February 2009** provided an environment that was safe and sensitive to risk. It focused on the **law on the protection of minors**, and was co-organised with the Chinese Society for Juvenile Delinquency Research. Experts who drafted the Law on the Protection of Minors facilitated training for the children, and **held a mock trial of a juvenile delinquent**. The children and adults then discussed the trial and the issues surrounding children's protection in an open and safe space.

Requirement 2: Participation is Voluntary

The children who participated in the 4th National Children's Roundtable, did so voluntarily and chose to be involved after being informed of the aims and processes. This culminated in the children presenting a number of **recommendations about possible changes to the law**, as well as ideas on a child friendly version of the law.

Resources

Save the Children (2008) **One Step Beyond: Advocacy Handbook for Children and Young People**, Save the Children Sweden

Save the Children (2011) **Junior Reporters in China: Children's Participation for Promoting Health amongst Migrants (Case Study)**, Save the Children Sweden and Child Protection Initiative, Stockholm

¹ In 2005 Save the Children developed 7 Practice Standards for our child participation activities. However, in 2011 we were part of a broad consensus that child participation should in fact meet 9 basic requirements. These were adopted into a General Comment on Article 12 of the UNCRC.

EXTERNAL ACCOUNTABILITY: CHILDREN INFLUENCING THE CONSTITUTION

Ecuador

Background

In Ecuador, as in many countries, creating an enabling environment for children to participate, at both a local and national level is a challenge, but also an opportunity. Many of the adults that children depend on to realise their rights (parents, teachers, government officials and others), **don't understand the benefits of listening to children and being open to their ideas**; nor do they realise the benefits of directly consulting and collaborating with children to improve policies and laws that affect young people.



Our approach

In Ecuador, Save the Children helps **children and young people to find out about their rights in all areas of their lives** – at home, in school, at work, and in their wider community. We do this through supporting children's organisations in the schools and communities where we work.

We work to sensitise children about their rights over a period of 12 months, to prepare them for getting involved in a range of

activities to promote children's rights and publicise areas where their rights are violated. **The children themselves decide who will participate and when**, and which issues they want to prioritise. All the activities are related to their own interests. We work with each group to debate their ideas and decide final priorities, drawing up a plan of action to be implemented and evaluated.

We consult children about project activities, and their opinions influence what we do. They are **involved in the project planning and design stages, as well as implementation and evaluation**. An example of consultative planning is the drafting of the **Child Rights Situation Analysis (CRSA)** in 2009, when we held workshops with groups of children in Esmeraldas, Azuay, Pichincha, Guayas and El Oro provinces to hear their views about how their rights were being violated, and their ideas about the most appropriate activities and strategies. With regard to **children involved in evaluations**, an example is the first phase of our education and protection project in Guayas and El Oro (2005–2009) in which children from the three municipalities involved participated in the evaluation.

Impact

As a result of their efforts in 2008, 25 assembly members signed a commitment to include those rights in the final draft of the Constitution. The current **Constitution includes the right of children to protection, progressive eradication of child labour, education and participation** at local, provincial and national (political) levels, and encourages children of more than 16 years of age to vote.

On local and national government:

- The children we work with have achieved some impressive results. As well as getting their voices heard nationally in the drafting of the new Constitution, they've also lobbied officials in the Municipal Councils of El Triunfo, Naranjal and Pasaje. They've obtained signed agreements with local mayors to eradicate hazardous child labour and to enforce children's right to education, protection and

participation. They also signed agreements for setting up children's Consultative Councils, which will take part in drafting and approving state programmes for children.

Upon children's lives:

- Participation needs to be viewed by children (and adults) as an absolute right for them as citizens, and as an indispensable requirement for improving policies and projects. Several of the children who have been directly engaged now articulate this:

"We would like to have a place to play, a place where we can express our thoughts and be listened to, a place where we feel we participate and our opinions are considered by adult people."
(During a workshop about children rights)

"I would like my parents and every father and mother to have a job so there won't be more children working, because children that work are like wilted flowers."

Meeting the UN Requirements for Effective and Meaningful Participation²

Requirement 1: Participation is Transparent and Informative

A key part of what we do is helping children to advocate for their rights and ensuring that their voices are heard by policy-makers. For instance, with our direct support and through partner organisations, **children's organisations took part in the national consultation about the new Constitution in 2008**. Ensuring that the children were not only informed of their rights but also the process of contributing and influencing the constitution was vital.

Requirement 3: Participation is Respectful

After considerable debate, in an **environment of respect and mutual understanding**, the children agreed a final proposal and presented it to the National Assembly, clearly setting out which rights should be incorporated in the Constitution. Partner organisations also presented their proposals particularly on education, protection and participation, which incorporated children's feedback.

Resources

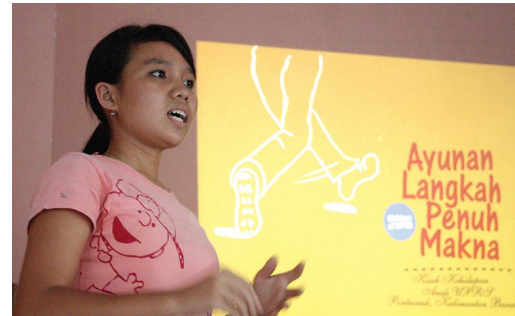
The National Children's Office et al (2005) **Young Voices: Guidelines on How to Involve Children in your Work**, Stationary Work

UNICEF (2006) **Child and Youth Participation Resource Guide**, UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Regional Office, Thailand

UNICEF, **Little Book on Children's Rights and Responsibilities**, UNICEF UK

² In 2005 Save the Children developed 7 Practice Standards for our child participation activities. However, in 2011 we were part of a broad consensus that child participation should in fact meet 9 basic requirements. These were adopted into a General Comment on Article 12 of the UNCRC.

CHILD-LED RESEARCH in childcare institutions Indonesia



A child researcher presenting her research on child care in Indonesia.

Background

Nearly half a million Indonesian children spend their entire childhoods in institutions. We've been working to improve the lives of these children, working with the Ministry of Social Affairs to keep care within a family setting – immediate, extended or substitute – wherever possible. And, whenever it isn't, making sure institutions follow national standards of care, registering on a national database that we helped develop.

As follow up to previous research on the quality of care in childcare institutions in Indonesia, Save the Children initiated a child-led research project in 2009. They invited a total of 60 children to take part from six care homes in two provinces, West Kalimantan and Maluku. The overall aim was to give these **children the opportunity to think about and discuss the issues affecting their everyday lives within a childcare institution.**

The research team wanted to hear from children so they could get a clear picture of their experience of living in a care home, and how it could be improved. Through this process, it was hoped the children would be empowered to understand their rights, and to speak up to ensure that the Indonesian government and the care home staff were respecting their rights and needs.

Our Approach

The research team thought carefully about the ethical implications of involving children in this way. They were concerned that the children would feel inhibited to express any negative views and that by doing so they might experience repercussions from care home staff. To ensure an ethical approach, they followed our Child Safeguarding Policies and Procedures, completed a risk assessment, obtained consent, and prepared the care home staff well. The research included the **development of child friendly materials**, including a leaflet to explain the project (covering confidentiality, expectations and other issues), and a consent form for children who wanted to participate. This explained how their work (including photos, drawings, etc) would be used.

The project kicked off with an inspiring one-week **interactive and participatory workshop** where children came together and formulated their own research questions and identified the issues they wanted to cover. The young research team were supported throughout the process and given **in-depth training** by local facilitators and an expert in child-led processes, who provided ongoing mentoring and support.

The children prepared a report to share their findings and were given the unique opportunity to share their recommendations with the care home staff, Governors and the Minister of Social Affairs. This enabled them to explore and debate sensitive issues, some of which had never been raised before. They ranged from the physical condition of the facilities and services, to the use of punishment at the homes and in school, and worries and fears about missing their families and never being able to go home.

Impact

On the way Save the Children works:

- Staff became increasingly aware that it is crucial to ensure participation does not overburden children. Children should always have the option to withdraw and participation is always voluntary.

- There was a shared learning that all staff need to be trained to support children's participation, not just dedicated research teams. Whilst child participation is a standalone right, it is also a mechanism for enabling effective outcomes across all the other child rights.

On the local community:

- Generally, there was positive feedback from the institutions and agencies concerned. Most institutions acknowledged their limitations and areas of weakness, and were open to accessing support and being evaluated.
- There was an element of risk in bringing together children from both Christian and Muslim institutions, given the recent conflict, and this was considered during planning. The children however often connected with each other almost immediately, and recognised their common ground rather than focusing on their differences. We used creative approaches to break down barriers so that children would feel at ease with each other.

On the children themselves:

- Not only did the children learn new research skills, but they also developed life skills, such as problem solving, team work and empathy.

"At first, I thought that this activity would not bring results. I, myself, rarely speak in class. But since I started to follow this activity, I can speak in front of the class, I know how to interview and I can research problems that occur in the institution. In addition, I got to know some friends, their feelings and lives in other institutions". (Elly, girl, 18, West Kalimantan)

Meeting the Requirements for Effective and Meaningful Participation³

Requirement 3: Participation is Respectful

Save the Children succeeded in supporting the children and young people involved in researching and presenting their views to those who make decisions about their lives. In doing so, they were empowered to advocate on their own behalf, in what is a very challenging socio-cultural context.

Children in care were listened to, respected and above all valued as integral members of their communities.

Requirement 4: Participation is Relevant

The children presented their research findings through seminars and other activities to staff and management at the care homes, social workers and academics, local government authorities and the Ministry of Social Affairs. They used dynamic and relevant approaches to communicate their findings, including a **photo exhibition** to publicise their findings to the media and to other children in their communities. At one seminar, they answered questions from both academics and students, who were impressed with their knowledge of research methods!

Further resources

Johnson et al (2012) **Child led Data Collection: A guide for young people to learn how to do research and create positive change**, Save the Children Sweden

Feinstein and O'kane (2008) **Ethical Guidelines: For Ethical, Meaningful and Inclusive Children's Participation Practice**, Save the Children Norway

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ACCOUNTABILITY: COMPLAINTS AND RESPONSE MECHANISMS

Dadaab, Kenya

Background

In early 2011, the worst drought in East Africa for over a decade struck. This alongside the civil war in Somalia has caused widespread displacement in the region. The **Dadaab refugee camp in North Eastern Kenya** has continued to grow exponentially, and as in all emergencies, children are the most vulnerable and often the most invisible. Amongst the acute stresses of life in a refugee camp, children's voices - their ideas and concerns can go unnoticed.

It is in such an environment that Complaints and Response Mechanisms (CRMs) are crucial. According to the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership (HAP), CRMs are clear, transparent procedures that provide beneficiaries, staff and other stakeholders with access to a safe, confidential means of voicing complaints on issues within the control of the agency.

Our approach

This system has been developed in the Ifo camp at the Dadaab refugee camp in North Eastern Kenya. In August 2010, **focus groups were held with a diverse range of girls and boys** to find out their views on appropriate feedback and complaint procedures. According to the children a CRM should:

- Provide face-to-face reporting
- Be situated in child friendly locations
- Be child focused in terms of set up, information and messaging
- Promote participation and inclusivity i.e. is flexible and includes younger, non-school going children

'Feedback and Information Desks' have been set up based largely on the information gathered from the focus groups, and are at the registration point as well as in all Child Friendly Spaces in the camp since January 2011. They were not called Complaints Desks as it was decided that this was culturally inappropriate. The process of setting up the CRM at Ifo camp served as a pilot, and led to the rollout of child friendly CRMs in other camps including Hagadera and Dagahaley.

The information desks process **general complaints**, mainly relating to project queries and/ or information about Save the Children's work, such as beneficiary targeting. In tandem, the SC office itself, deals with **sensitive complaints**, including Gender Based Violence and staff misconduct.



Complaints desk: seated is a CFS staff member ready with record book and feedback board.

In addition to the information desks, measures to proactively seek and give feedback to beneficiaries were also introduced. For children, group discussions during child club meetings, feedback boards and drawing competitions are used to **proactively solicit feedback**. For adults, **Beneficiary Reference Groups** were established which consist of 9 members: 4 camp leaders (2 male and 2 Female), 3 religious leaders and 2 teachers and they hold monthly feedback meetings.

Impact

On the way Save the Children works:

•We've taken a systematic approach to handling complaints. At each information desk there are two record books, which contribute towards the central database system back in the office. Between April to June 2011, 84 complaints were received from children aged 6 to 18, and the majority of these have been effectively addressed.

On the children themselves:

"I thought that it would be good to have women because it will help to teach us family values and give the children good care. They said they would look at my complaint. I am very happy with the answers they gave. Now we have extra women working at the centre" Boy, Dadaab

Meeting the UN Requirements for Effective and Meaningful Participation⁴

Requirement 7: Participation is Supported by Training for Adults

A **series of trainings** were held with Save the Children staff and partners before Complaints and Response Mechanisms roll-out. Trainings covered proposed child friendly CRM processes and procedures, including interview techniques with children, how to facilitate feedback sessions with children and adults, and formats for recording complaints. Regular refresher trainings/meetings are also held from time to time.

Requirement 9: Participation will be Accountable (focusing on follow up and feedback with children)

Every child visiting a Child Friendly Space (CFS) for play and psychosocial support is registered on arrival. During registration, not only are the children introduced to each other and staff, but they are shown and encouraged to visit the feedback desk. At the end of morning and afternoon sessions, children available at the CFS are often brought together for a feedback session. During this time, **children are given time to provide feedback about the services received** and encouraged to share information about Save the Children services with their peers and caregivers.

Resources

Save the Children (July 2011). '**Guide for setting-up Child Friendly Complaints and Response Mechanisms (CRMs) - Lessons Learnt from Save the Children's CRM in Dadaab Refugee Camp**'.

Save the Children (November 2011). '**Assessment of Pilot Complaints Response Mechanisms in SC UK Ethiopia**'.

Save the Children (2011). '**Improving Accountability to Beneficiaries: The Malakand Response Program's Initial Experience**'.

⁴ In 2005 Save the Children developed 7 Practice Standards for our child participation activities. However, in 2011 we were part of a broad consensus that child participation should in fact meet 9 basic requirements. These were adopted into a General Comment on Article 12 of the UNCRC.

ACCOUNTABILITY: INFORMATION SHARING IN EMERGENCIES

Myanmar

Background

In May 2008, Cyclone Nargis hit Myanmar and caused widespread destruction. During Save the Children's emergency response, efforts were made not only to engage children during our recovery activities, but to also provide them with the opportunity to hold Save the Children to account for our operational promises.

Initially we **consulted children about their immediate needs**, both physical (including access to food) and emotional. Staff also encouraged and supported children and young people to act as **peer educators**, talking to others about health, hygiene and protection. In February 2009, Save the Children set up Information Centres within child-friendly spaces in three villages. By **May 2009 there were information centres in 100 villages**.

Our approach



Children discussing their right to information, Pyapon.

An accountability team has worked with area office teams since early 2009 to develop a **system that captures feedback from children** – their comments, queries, complaints or suggestions. Children express their views through drawing and/or writing on postcards. The team then collects these cards each month, and records and analyses the feedback, responding quickly to the issues raised. Furthermore, staff and children used **'theatre for development' methods** and jointly developed songs, games and dramas (including puppetry) about our work, as well as the role of the information centres.

We consulted and collaborated with children right from the start, in programme design, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation of the information centres. Children's insights were crucial. They gave views on proposed venues; including their accessibility, as well as what the most convenient times of day to use the centres would be.

Impact

On the way Save the Children works:

- Staff now have a greater appreciation that accountability is not just the responsibility of one person or team. They've received training from members of the accountability team in how to use methods and tools for children's participation, and they are encouraged to reflect on and learn from their practice.
- We've drafted a Humanitarian Accountability Framework, which has helped staff to understand the purpose and benefits of accountability.

On the local community:

- Parents, carers and village elders are more appreciative of the value of involving children and encouraging their participation.

- The information centres and the complaints mechanism enabled staff to save time, by identifying gaps in coverage, and sharing suggestions on how to improve the food distribution system. It helped us to reach more than 100 families whose needs would otherwise have been overlooked.

Upon children's lives:

- There have been some very positive practical changes for children. In one village in Pyapon, children raised concerns about the lack of mosquito nets making them vulnerable to catching malaria. The education team organised a distribution of mosquito nets to all children attending the Early Childhood Care and Development centres.
- Many of the children now have more confidence to express their views, experiences and opinions – reflected in the growing level of feedback they've given over time. They also have better access to information on issues that affect them.

“People from other organizations don't want to talk with us. We love Save the Children Information Centre team, we are very happy for your coming, we would like you to come here for many days.” (Boys and Girls, 9-12, Thingangone)

Meeting the Requirements for Effective and Meaningful Participation⁵

Requirement 6: Participation is Inclusive

Save the Children is working with **girls and boys of different ages and abilities**, with different life experiences, including children who are out of school and working, children from different ethnic groups, and children with disabilities.

Requirement 5: Participation is Child-Friendly

Creative methods to feed back information about what we do have been developed. These include **child-friendly materials**, such as *Young Voices, Big Impressions*⁶ - an evaluation findings report, which used **cartoon images** throughout.

Resources

Save the Children (2009) **Children Know so Many Things Even we Didn't Know: Consultations and Children's Participation in Myanmar**, Save the Children

Save the Children (2009) **Young Voices, Big Impressions: Children's Feedback on our Post Nargis Response**, Save the Children in Myanmar

Save the Children (2010) **Accountability Matters in Emergencies: Listening to Children and Responding to their Feedback During Save the Children's Humanitarian Response in Myanmar (Burma)**, Save the Children UK on behalf of Save the Children Myanmar

⁵ In 2005 Save the Children developed 7 Practice Standards for our child participation activities. However, in 2011 we were part of a broad consensus that child participation should in fact meet 9 basic requirements. These were adopted into a General Comment on Article 12 of the UNCRC.

⁶ Featherstone, A. et al, *Young Voices, Big Impressions: Children's Feedback on our Post Nargis Response*, Save the Children, Myanmar, April 2009.

PARTICIPATION IN GOVERNANCE: CHILD PARLIAMENTS

Mozambique

Background

Children account for around 55% of the total 20 million people making up the population in Mozambique. UNICEF identified that children are deprived of their rights in seven key areas, in particular, access to food/nutrition, water supply, sanitation of environment, healthcare, housing, education and information.⁷



In **Mozambique**, we support Children's Parliaments in the provinces of Zambezia and Manica. Children and young people who are **elected as parliamentarians** bring children's needs and views to community leaders, parents, teachers and government officials, giving them a greater say in the decisions that affect their lives.

Our approach

The Children's Parliaments work on issues at the **community, district and provincial levels**. Issues include calling for practical measures to protect children's health (eg, stopping children having to carry bricks for building new classrooms); giving support to orphans and other vulnerable children (e.g. delivering food parcels to them, or taking them to hospital if they're ill); making sure children and young people's views are heard by meeting with government officials to discuss key policies that affect children (e.g. the Ministers of Justice and Social Affairs to give their views on the Child Protection Bill) and raising awareness about children's rights and violations of their rights through the media including community radio, theatre, and talks.

Challenges

Children's parliaments can be tokenistic, unrepresentative, uncoordinated and heavily dependent on adult supervision and control. However, in Mozambique, Save the Children decided to go ahead and **work with and build upon the existing structure**. Because the foundations had already been laid, and arguments about the value of a children's parliament had already been won, it had **considerable national legitimacy with regard to citizen governance**. We felt that by working through an existing structure, perceptions that we were importing foreign ideas into the country could be avoided. The challenge for Save the Children was to transform the Children's Parliament into something that was accountable, representative and of value to children themselves.

Learning

We've learned the importance of **starting from the community level** and building the parliaments upwards, which leads to better representation and accountability.

Impact

On the way Save the Children works:

- Staff reported that they not only learnt new skills on how to work with children, but that this work led them to reflect on their own preconceptions and cultural beliefs. This highlighted the diversity of

⁷ Save the Children, Reference Guide for Child Protection, Save the Children Mozambique, 2010, p.10.

perspectives, with some adult partners and colleagues being more committed than others to involving children in their day-to-day work. More experienced staff were comfortable and confident in allowing children to direct things, rather than taking the lead.

On the local community:

- Cultural and religious leaders as well as other adults that we've worked with who were originally critical and reserved about children's participation, have now become enthusiastic supporters. For something as socially sensitive as how to engage with children, it is important that they do not undermine our efforts to get children to participate.

Upon children's lives:

- Children who were elected as Parliamentarians have become much more confident, and are able to encourage and inspire other children to speak out.

"When we first heard about the Child Parliament we thought that the children involved came from rich families. We thought that they were playing at helping poor children, that they were being paid, and that the Child Parliament "belonged" to the ruling party. But over the course of time we have seen that the Child Parliament in Zambezia is not made up of rich children who know nothing about the lives of poor children in other parts of the community. We come from different backgrounds and economic circumstances. We live in all parts of the province. We do not "belong" to any political party and our time is given to the Child Parliament voluntarily and without any payment."

Meeting the UN Requirements for Effective and Meaningful Participation⁸

Requirement 1: Participation is Transparent

We try to be **open and honest with children about what their responsibilities will be** if elected, and the practical commitment that this will involve. They can decline to be elected if they feel they can't commit to this level. Whilst it is a **voluntary role** it is still a commitment.

Requirement 4: Participation is Relevant

In Mozambique, Save the Children **built on existing structures** in a culturally sensitive approach. This was important, because you can't expect a community that has never been participatory and democratic to suddenly transform itself into a society that demands accountability from its decision makers. Children's participation can create a practice in young people that is a precondition for change in future years.

Resources

Jensen & Ladegaard (2012) **Child Rights Governance: Children in Politics** (A collection of 11 inspiring, motivating and suggestive case studies on children's engagement in governance), Child Rights Governance Global Initiative, Save the Children, Copenhagen

Lansdown (2001) **Promoting Children's Participation in Democratic Decision-Making**, UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, Italy

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PARTICIPATION DURING EMERGENCIES: NEEDS ASSESSMENTS Pakistan

Background

In the **summer of 2010, Pakistan experienced the worst flooding in 80 years**. Around 20 million people were affected and they required food, shelter and clothing to face the harsh Pakistani winter. The flooding, which began with the onset of the annual monsoons, eventually affected about one-fifth of the country — nearly 62,000 square miles — an area larger than England. Sadly, children were amongst the most vulnerable and disproportionately affected.

It was for this reason that it was crucial to consult children in informing long term programming and recovery in the region.

Our approach

Save the Children conducted a **needs assessment in two of the worst hit regions**, Swat and Muzaffargarh. The assessment was conducted in September 2010 to **assess the main child protection concerns** in these areas through directly consulting diverse groups of children, women and community leaders primarily in **Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)**. The overall aim was to

inform an effective response to children and families in these two districts.



A Focus Group Discussion using a body map with Pakistani girls

The assessment methodology was based on data collection using three tools: **key informant interviews** (mainly with adults), FGDs with women, and **4 FGDs with children**, as well as an **observation sheet**. FGDs were carried out in camps for internally displaced people, open air spaces, community centres and buildings, while individual interviews took place in homes, open air spaces, buildings and tents.

Around **600 children** aged 8-12, and 12-18 took part in same sex FGDs. They were split into groups by gender to fit with the cultural context, and by age to gather views of different age groups. The findings were then used as a vital tool to inform long-term programming in the recovery phase after the floods.

Impact

On Save the Children staff:

- Several staff members reflected on the danger of assuming that they already know what the needs are when an emergency hits, but this assessment proved them wrong. As one staff member noted:

“When consulting children we were surprised by some of the issues that arose. For example, when the floods first began, we assumed we would need a large family tracing and reunification programme. However, on further consultation this was not seen to be a strong issue.”

Upon children's lives:

- Staff reported that the FGDs gave children something to do, because often after a natural disaster the structure and routine of a child's day is turned upside down. It also gave them a platform to discuss their experiences of the floods with other affected children, which allowed them to normalise their situation. Finally, children had their voices heard through consultations with adults and had the opportunity to express their opinions, a step towards developing their self esteem and confidence in an extremely challenging environment.

"Before the flood our parents talked to us with stories now we listen to angry voices, we are beaten." (Girl, aged 8-12)

Meeting the UN Requirements for Effective and Meaningful Participation⁹

Requirement 6: Participation will be Inclusive

Save the Children **tried to be inclusive and reach children who had been the most severely affected**, for example those who had lost their homes, had been separated or orphaned, and those with disabilities. We visited rural and urban areas and asked children from each. We also conducted a Focus Group Discussion with women (particularly mothers), in order to get a more rounded view of the needs of children. It is important not to forget that children are part of wider communities, nor to exacerbate potential social or demographic divides.

Requirement 4: Participation will be Relevant

Although this was a time-consuming process the value of consulting diverse groups of children was clear from the results of our assessment. The FGDs were a relevant approach (given the emergency situation), which yielded highly useful data. **We received much more information about children's issues than we did from adults in the community.** We also received more in depth information about what children did during the day, where they played, how they interacted with other children, opportunities for school, and how they were feeling. Many children explained that they were scared to go near the water again, and told us who they felt they could trust in the community. We actually found out that many of the children felt the army were helpful, but the police were not child friendly or supportive.

Resources

Lenz and Pike (2007) **Child Friendly Participatory Assessment Tools: A Toolbox of Ideas**, CCF

UNICEF (2007) **The Participation of Children and Young People in Emergencies: A Guide for Relief Agencies, Based Largely on Experiences in the Asian Tsunami Response**, UNICEF, Thailand

<http://www.arc-online.org> – A capacity-building tool for child protection in and after emergencies

⁹ In 2005 Save the Children developed 7 Practice Standards for our child participation activities. However, in 2011 we were part of a broad consensus that child participation should in fact meet 9 basic requirements. These were adopted into a General Comment on Article 12 of the UNCRC.

PARTICIPATION: PEER EDUCATION AND SEXUAL HEALTH

Sierra Leone

Background

In Sierra Leone, like many parts of the world, talking openly about safer sex and sexual abuse is still taboo. The legacy of Sierra Leone's civil war is that **many children have experienced extreme physical and sexual violence**. Children were raped, mutilated, orphaned, or forced to work for armed groups as child soldiers or sex slaves. Furthermore, a high teenage pregnancy rate contributes to high rates of maternal and infant mortality - these are some of the worst in the world. Sadly, today, children are still extremely vulnerable to sexual abuse and exploitation in Sierra Leone.

Our approach

To **tackle the sensitive issues of sexual and reproductive health and child abuse** head on, Save the Children works through **children's clubs, school health clubs and Child Welfare Committees**, helping children to learn how to protect themselves and hold duty-bearers to account.

We do this by running 34 children's clubs and school health clubs in some of the poorest slums of Freetown, and in remote border areas in Kailahun and Pujehun Districts. Through our **'Lifeskills/Sissy Aminata'** programme, we encourage and create collaborative and child friendly safe spaces for discussion on formerly taboo topics relating to sexual and reproductive health. The programme does this by **inviting children to send letters about sexual health to 'Sissy Aminata', a fictional big sister or 'aunty'**. Children have written letters about teenage pregnancy, female genital mutilation, contraception, and HIV.



A Traditional Leader handing over certificate to a graduate of the Sissy Aminata Session.

The letters are used as a catalyst for discussion on reproductive and sexual health. We train children to participate and be directly engaged in informing, and counseling their peers: **girls and boys become peer educators**, equipped with the skills to give information and advice to other children on all kinds of problems – from what to do if you become pregnant when raped, to where to get hold of contraceptives and how to use them.

Impact

Through the Sissy Aminata project, we're giving 2,000 children and young people advice on important lifeskills, relationships and sexual health.

On Save the Children:

- Children are now very involved in all areas of our work, from monitoring and evaluating our activities, to research and advocacy work (for instance, monitoring implementation of the 2007 Child Rights Act).

On the local community:

- Many adults have told us that they've changed their attitudes towards involving children in decision-making, when they see how capable the children are in communicating about these issues.

“Before this time, nobody regarded as a child should know about sex, but with the coming of Save the Children, we now discuss sex and its negative effects so that the ‘adolescents’ will see reason to defer sex until when ready for it. Save the Children has taught us to involve children in decision-making.” (Child Welfare Committee, Pendembu)

Upon children’s lives:

- Many of the children and young people involved have gained the confidence to talk to adults. They’ve also begun to raise these issues with adults such as community chiefs, cultural leaders and the police. In one village, the rules around school attendance during pregnancy have changed as a result of the project. Before, girls weren’t allowed to attend school if they became pregnant. But after the children approached the school and spoke to community chiefs to discuss the issue, pregnant young girls can now stay in school.

Meeting the UN Requirements for Effective and Meaningful Participation¹⁰

Requirement 5: Participation is Child-Friendly

The approach of using an ‘aunty’ is child friendly: Sissy Aminata – the ‘aunty’ replies to each letter. Unless there is a need to include specialist knowledge in Sissy Aminata’s reply, all the **advice comes from the children themselves**. The peer educators then run training sessions using the letters and Sissy Aminata’s replies to get discussions going. The children take part in a role-play, **acting out a drama based on what’s in the letters**, applying the story to their own lives.

Requirement 3: Participation is Respectful

The **young people running the session facilitate** the discussion, encourage children to learn from each other; rather than just ‘giving the answers’. The children and young people themselves evaluate each session, and come up with ideas about how to do things differently if need be. This creates an environment which demonstrates respect from adults to children (whereby adults assume a facilitator’s role), and from children to children (whereby children engage in open dialogue with each other).

Resources

Cox (2009) **Playing and Protecting: Learning from Children’s Clubs in Sierra Leone**, Save the Children, Sweden

IPPF (2007) **Effective Strategies in Sexual and Reproductive Health Programs for Young People**, IPPF/WHO, New York

Youth Peer Education Network (2005) **Standards for Peer Education Programmes, Youth Peer Education Toolkit**, YPEER

UN Interagency Group on Young Peoples Health Development and Protection in Europe and Central Asia (2003) **Peer Education: Training of Trainers Manual**, YPEER

¹⁰ In 2005 Save the Children developed 7 Practice Standards for our child participation activities. However, in 2011 we were part of a broad consensus that child participation should in fact meet 9 basic requirements. These were adopted into a General Comment on Article 12 of the UNCRC.

PARTICIPATION IN ADVOCACY: SCHOOL BASED CLUBS

Somalia/Somaliland

Background

Please note that this case study is very useful and provides a great example of good practice but refers to a project which ran from 2007 to 2009.

Many of the children and young people we work with have been affected by conflict and its legacy has meant that most Somali children have received little opportunity to engage in decision-making processes about issues that affect them.

So in Somalia, Save the Children has viewed consulting and collaborating with diverse groups of children in our programmes as important to help children become active and responsible members of their communities. Through participation, they acquire positive attitudes, knowledge and skills that they can build upon in later life, not only for their own benefit but for their wider community too.

Our approach

Between 2007 and 2009 we set up **Community Education Committees (CECs)** which later became known as **Children's Clubs**. These were formed **to get children more involved in how schools are run**, and to promote nonviolent forms of classroom discipline. We've had considerable success through setting up **Girls' Education Network Committees** to increase the number of girls who enrol and stay on in school.

To get children more involved in the planning and implementation stages of our projects we've also set up a **Regional Children's Club in Togdheer**, including 31 members from five districts. The members of the Regional Children's Board (an Advisory Committee) are selected by their peers in the district school clubs according to set criteria. The district school clubs include members from each of the schools that we work in. Children (15-25 pupils) representing their classes in the school clubs are in turn elected by their peers for these clubs.



Presentation from the Girls' Education Network Committee

The Children's Board also influences policies outside of Save the Children. They **work with the Community Education Committees** to influence education policies (including the Alternative Basic Education curriculum review), and participate and **advocate on other social issues** affecting them like HIV and AIDS, children with disabilities accessing schools, and sanitation.

The children we work with are thus engaged in **advocacy work at many different levels**. Club members raise awareness within their school and in their wider community, mobilising other children and adults, and drawing attention to areas where children's rights are being violated.

Impact

On teachers and their local community:

- The clubs and committees have achieved some real practical changes. In some schools, the relationship between students and teachers has improved, and **corporal punishment has been**

reduced or even banned. More children, and girls in particular, have enrolled in schools. Between 2004 and 2008 the enrolment of girls rose from **4,324** to **6,583**, an increase by 52 % in the Save the Children supported schools (PEP final report 2008).

Upon children's lives:

- Children have been able to raise the issues and challenges that affect their lives, such as their right to basic services (education and health), and their right to play.
- Children have gained confidence to express their views and demand their rights. For instance, they've started to ask that the community and Save the Children meet their priority needs. These have been documented in monitoring and evaluation reports. Comments and appreciation on the spot have been provided to children.

"When I was ten years old, I had a girlfriend who was older than me, she used to miss classes during certain days of the month and I did not know why. After I went through FGM and later succumbed to frequent sickness during my menstrual periods and could not attend school, I realised that this was the reason...I am grateful now that I got more information about FGM...now as a member of the Children's Board, my priority is the eradication of FGM and I plan to provide information to other children." (Girl, 17)

Meeting the UN Requirements for Effective and Meaningful Participation¹¹

Requirement 5: Participation will be Child Friendly

We're using a range of child friendly methods to get children involved, such as setting up **mini-media studios** in seven schools so that students can find creative ways to express their views and ideas. They make programmes on a wide range of subjects, including music, sport, and health and relationships.

Requirement 6: Child Participation will be Inclusive

In participation activities staff have made particular efforts to provide equal opportunities for children from socially excluded groups, such as girls, internally displaced children and those from minority ethnic communities. In December 2008, we held meetings with key members of the communities where we work to assess the extent to which children from different backgrounds had a chance to participate. **Somali language version tools** were developed in order to achieve this.

Resources

Save the Children (2008) **Making Schools Inclusive: How Changes can happen (Save the Children's Experience)**, Save the Children UK

Save the Children (2000) **Working for Change in Education: A Handbook for Planning Advocacy**, Save the Children UK

¹¹ In 2005 Save the Children developed 7 Practice Standards for our child participation activities. However, in 2011 we were part of a broad consensus that child participation should in fact meet 9 basic requirements. These were adopted into a General Comment on Article 12 of the UNCRC.

ACCOUNTABILITY: PARTICIPATION IN A CHILDREN'S ADVISORY BOARD

Zanzibar

Background

In 2009, the Zanzibar office made the decision to become more child focused and make a more pro-active effort to put **children back at the heart** of everything that it does. This was based on a realisation that sometimes children's involvement was tokenistic. The programme's main remit is to strengthen the national child protection system, and the key partners for this work are now the government and children themselves. The programme aimed to involve children in the work that it does in a meaningful and effective way by providing children with the platforms and skills they need to ensure dialogue and feedback.

Our approach

Save the Children's accountability work in Zanzibar consists of a set of holistic activities that support each other. It is a system for accountability, rather than one mechanism. At the core of this system is the **Children's Advisory Board (CAB)**. The CAB was created in January 2010 and consists of eight girls and seven boys between the ages of 12 and 17.

The initial set up and running of the CAB included seven key elements. These included:

- Staff training, both initial and ongoing
- Learning from the experience of others
- Involving children at an early stage to plan and design the system
- Electing children to the CAB and ensuring they are representative of the community
- Ensuring children's safe participation
- Working with partners, parents and communities
- Government relations



While the CAB makes the organisation accountable to children, the broader **Children's Councils** ensure accountability for all children in Zanzibar with regard to the government, care givers and community adult leaders. There are currently more than 130 Children's Councils. They are part of the government's child protection system and were set up with the support of several NGOs, including Save the Children prior to the CAB. According to the children, the councils **help elected officials to protect the rights of children**, bring focus on children as people who have rights and opinions, and help to support children to negotiate and speak out. The goal is to have a Children's Council in each of the *shhias* (community councils) in Zanzibar, of which there are over 300!

It is the **link between the CAB and the Children's Councils that makes the CAB representative and accountable to other children**. Each member of the CAB is also a member of a Children's Council. Each of the Children's Council members represents ten districts and feeds back from the CAB to each of them. Children in those communities can raise issues in their Children's Council, and their representatives can then take them to the government via the CAB.

Impact

On the external community:

- Save the Children co-ordinated a consultation with 500 children on the new Children's Bill and more than three-quarters of the children agreed that the bill should explicitly ban corporal punishment in schools. **The Ministry of Education has now established a Coordination Unit responsible for promoting alternative forms of discipline** and a coordinator has been recruited. A training manual on positive discipline has been developed and once it is approved by the Ministry of Education the manual will be incorporated into teacher training.

"We think after the experience we've encountered that working with children makes your work easier." Director of Department for Labour, Youth, Women and Children's Development

- The children have witnessed a number of changes in their local communities resulting from the work of the Children's Councils and the CAB. For example in some communities pregnant girls can now go to school, whereas before they were too embarrassed, child labourers have been leaving their jobs and going back to school, and some of the discrimination towards children with disabilities has ended, including **blind children who have been given machines that help them to read and write Braille.**

Upon children's lives:

- Children have gained confidence and a can do attitude and they took part in an event to discuss corporal punishment, organised by the Swedish Ambassador.
- The children told us about their newly developed skills in peer education and how they've passed on their knowledge to other children, including informing children with disabilities about their rights.

Meeting the UN Requirements for Effective and Meaningful Participation¹²

Requirement 1: Participation is Transparent and Informative

The process of forming the CAB was transparent and informative: by October 2009 one boy and one girl were elected from each *shehia*. Regional elections were then held. Each region in Zanzibar consists of two districts, so a boy from one district and a girl from another district formed a pair and were elected together. This system was planned so that the CAB **represented all districts** and allowed the easy flow of information.

Requirement 6: Participation is Inclusive

Of the CAB's membership, five children were elected to **represent minority and vulnerable groups of children**, including children with disabilities, those living with HIV/AIDS and those coming from remote areas, such as the smaller islands.

Resources

Save the Children (2011) **Agents for Change: How Children Can be Involved in Accountability: a Case Study from Zanzibar**, Save the Children UK

Christian Children's Fund (2008) **We Have Something to Say: Promoting Child and Youth Agency (A Facilitators Manual)**, Christian Children's Fund International Programs