

Children As Partners :

Child Participation Promoting Social Change

prepared for

The Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA)

Child Protection Unit



IICRD
International Institute for
Child Rights and Development

平和な心
peaceful heart

Children As Partners :

Child Participation Promoting Social Change

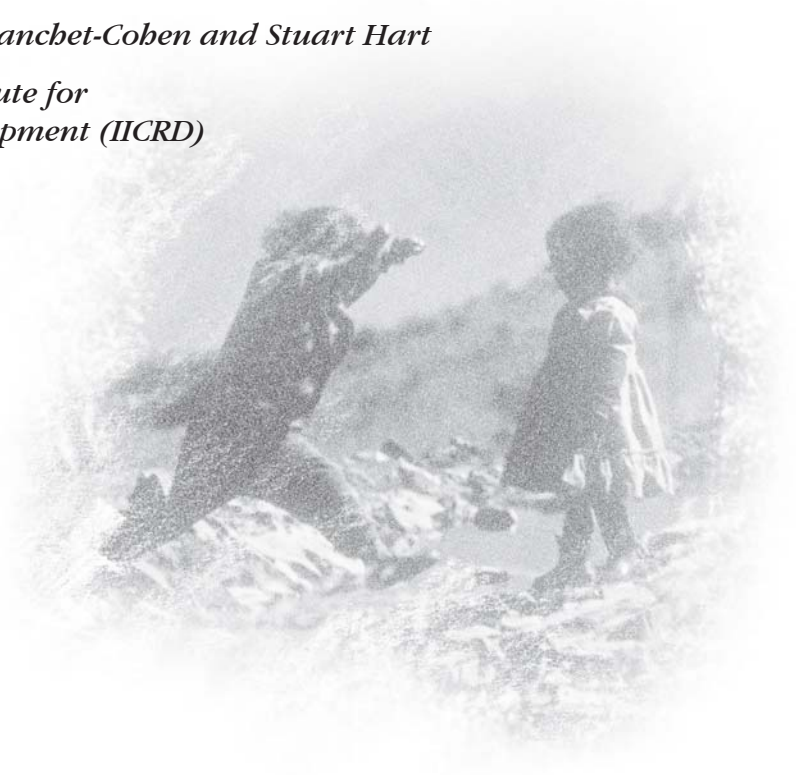
prepared for

*The Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA)
Child Protection Unit*

by

Philip Cook, Natasha Blanchet-Cohen and Stuart Hart

*The International Institute for
Child Rights and Development (IICRD)*



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Finally, the report would not have been possible without the examples of innovative partnerships between groups of children and between children and adults that are described in these pages. These examples of good practice represent a small cross section of many unsung initiatives that are unfolding around the world in which children are often silently and with little fanfare making substantial contributions to creating a better world for themselves, their peers, and others in their communities.

Photos are by participant partners, IICRD interns, and Philip Cook.

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List of Abbreviations

CBO – Community Based Organization
CP – Civil, Political Rights
CRC – Convention on the Rights of the Child
CWC – Concerned for Working Children
CIDA – Canadian International Development Agency
DA – Developmental Approach
GMC – Global Movement for Children
HR – Human Rights
IICRD – International Institute for Child Rights and Development
INGO – International Non-Governmental Organization
NGO – Non-Governmental Organization
RBA – Rights Based Approach
UNICEF – United Nations Children’s Fund
SEC – Social, Economic and Cultural Rights

Executive Summary

Children's participation as outlined in Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) states that children have the right to be heard and considered in decisions affecting them. This article, in addition to Articles 13, 14, and 15 establishing the child's right to access to information, freedom of belief, and freedom of association, have put the issue of child participation on the agenda of governments and institutions as never before.

Increasing recognition is being given to the value of children's participation, on how it furthers children's survival, protection, and development, and how children as right-bearers actively contribute to our society as a whole. The participatory process provides invaluable life experience for young citizens for they learn how to make wise decisions on issues affecting them, and contribute to making communities stronger, and local governance more effective and efficient.

While efforts to involve children have increased worldwide, there is an urgent need to compile and analyse the successful experiences of children's social engagement, in order to apply these lessons learned more widely. Too many children continue to be seen but not heard, whether for political or social reasons.

The present report was commissioned by the Canadian International Development Agency's (CIDA) Child Protection Unit to examine current literature and examples of good practice programming supporting child and adolescent meaningful participation in the context of children's rights. It soon became clear that the practice and knowledge base of child and adolescent participation was growing so quickly that the original parameters of the report would benefit from being more targeted. Following discussions with CIDA and a number of key children's development agencies it was decided to focus on a key aspect of participation: partnership.

All children meaningfully participate at times without the assistance of others. However, children's participation often requires entering into a relationship with other children, adults, or institutions. This holds as true for child participation in conferences as it does for family, school, and community development policy discussions and projects. Key to these relationships is a sense of *partnership*, particularly those that involve shared power and decision-making, whether it be with other children, adults, or institutions. Thus, the title of this report: Children as Partners (CAP).

The CAP report is aimed at development agencies wishing to support children's meaningful participation in designing, implementing, and evaluating programs in the context of *meaningful and effective* partnerships that take place *across various socio-cultural contexts*. Portraying participation in the context of partnership provides opportunities for development programmers to promote child participation in new and more holistic ways that can lead to social change benefiting both children and adults.

The information contained in the report was gathered in partnership with various development agencies including child-led organizations. Four documents make up

the CAP findings. These include three research documents and a summative report. The three research documents that form the foundation for the summative CAP report comprise:

1. An annotated bibliography covering key academic and NGO literature findings on child and adolescent participation from both the developed and developing world;
2. A detailed discussion of participation in light of current evidence on children's evolving capacities, *Children's Evolving Capacities and Participation: Partnerships for Social Change* (Lansdown); and
3. An in-depth retrospective process of young people's reflections on partnership drawn from the collective experience of the Indian NGO Concerned for Working Children (CWC), *Bhima Sangha and the Makkala Panchayats – Chroniclers of our own history*.

The summative CAP report triangulates the background information from these three sources to produce a participation-partnership framework in synthesizing key CAP findings. The framework is then applied to discuss and examine selected child participation "good practice" case studies.

Finally, the CAP report summarizes the lessons learned from child participation research and programming in making a series of key findings to strengthen children's meaningful partnerships in development programming.

The primary findings include:

- 1) Individual Dimensions of Partnerships
 - ◆ Successful partnerships with children need to be viewed in terms of their impact on children's personal lives *as well as* in the context of social programming
 - ◆ Meaningful child participation through partnership with *competent, caring, and critical* adults strengthens individual capacity for self-efficacy, communication skills, and self protective behaviours
 - ◆ Meaningful partnership is a protective process that builds self-protective relational skills amongst children
- 2) Social Dimensions of Partnerships
 - ◆ Identifying and building on assets and protective factories in a child's social ecology is more effective in fostering connectedness leading to productive partnership than focusing solely on problems and deficits
 - ◆ Understand the socio-cultural context of participation in relation to partnership with key persons in children's lives (e.g. peers, family, school, recreation, work)
 - ◆ Individual child self-efficacy developed through healthy relations with adults supports collective adult self-efficacy (and vice versa)
- 3) Linking Human Development and Child-Adult Partnerships
 - ◆ Child participation projects often provide a foundation for greater adult involvement in local decision-making
 - ◆ Adults can learn from children's experience
 - ◆ Discrimination and social hierarchies impact on the realization of child-child and child-adult participation through partnership

- ◆ Given the appropriate support from key adults children can often negotiate these social barriers
- 4) Supporting Partnerships in the Context of Child Rights–Based Approaches and Development
 - ◆ Greater social inclusion and representation through participatory partnerships with children supports more informed and sustainable program and policy outcomes
 - ◆ Holistic partnership programs supporting children’s interdependent and indivisible needs result in more meaningful, developmentally appropriate interventions
 - ◆ “Comprehensive child advocacy” strategies grounded in bottom up participatory partnership approaches that involve diverse stakeholders including children and their various support systems provide more flexible and sustainable programs and monitoring mechanisms

All CAP documents are available on the CAP website at the International Institute for Child Rights and Development (IICRD), University of Victoria www.uvic.ca/iicrd. The CAP process is being carried forward by a group of International NGO’s as part of the Children As Partners Alliance (CAPA) via an interactive CAP website. This website will be used as a future database and hub for critical dialogue for all interested in applied research and programming involving meaningful partnerships with children.

Introduction

*“It is not enough just to save the children.
We have to prepare them to save US.”*

Karl Eric Knudsson

Children’s participation as outlined in Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) states that children have the right to be heard and considered in decisions affecting them. Articles 13, 14, and 15 provide further support for children’s participation by establishing the child’s right to access to information, freedom of belief, and freedom of association. Respect for the dignity of the child as a rights-bearing person is vested in these articles.

Compelling evidence exists that children’s participation furthers their survival, protection, and development (Knutson, 1997; Lansdown, 2001; Rajani, 2001). Children as rights bearers provided with opportunities also actively contribute to the development of our society as a whole. The participatory process provides invaluable life experience for young citizens, our future leaders, for they learn how to make wise decisions on issues affecting them, and contribute to making local governance more effective and efficient.

All children meaningfully participate both with and without the assistance of others. Participation is after all inherent to a child’s development. Eventually, however, children’s participation requires entering into relationships with other children, adults, and institutions. This holds as true for child participation in conferences as it does for community development projects and policy discussions. Key to these relationships is a sense of *partnership*, particularly those that involve shared power and decision-making (Driskell, 2002). While these partnerships take on many forms depending on the context, the individual child, and their age, they frequently depend on a number of factors that include:

- ◆ Trusting and nurturing relationships that allow children to enter into partnerships in a protective and engaging manner;
- ◆ A child’s agency;
- ◆ Supportive social and environmental environments that promote critical dialogue;
- ◆ A reduced power difference between children and adults; and
- ◆ Providing children with opportunities to affect change in their peer group, family, community, and culture.

The challenge facing agencies wishing to support children’s meaningful participation in designing, implementing, and evaluating programs is to understand them in the context of *meaningful and effective* partnerships that take place *across various social contexts*. While some progress has been made in allowing for children’s perspectives to be heard in workshops, conferences, and a number of community development programs, there

has not been equal success in integrating their perspectives in meaningful ways. Nor have participatory programs successfully included many marginalized groups of children. There is therefore a great need to examine the disaggregated experiences of partnership, and to apply this understanding in light of the recognized inter-relational nature of child participation.

These are the issues that frame the Children As Partners (CAP) report, and upon which the CAP evaluative framework is presented and examined in light of a number of “good practice” programs.



Background

The Children As Partners (CAP) report was commissioned by the Canadian International Development Agency's (CIDA) Child Protection Unit to examine current examples of good practice programming supporting child and adolescent meaningful participation in the context of children's rights. The CAP report is targeted at development and United Nations agencies, government institutions, NGO's, advocates, academics, and child-led organizations seeking to strengthen, assess, and better understand young people's participation in a variety of contexts and child rights challenges.

While the original parameters of the report were to conduct a literature review and describe a number of examples of good practice in the growing field of children's participation, it soon became clear that the practice and knowledge base of child and adolescent participation was growing so quickly that the report's usefulness would be limited and outdated upon completion. Following discussions with CIDA and a number of key children's development agencies including UNICEF, Save the Children, Plan International, World Vision, and experts conducting research on children's participation, it was decided to focus on a key aspect of participation: partnership.

The Children As Partners report places special emphasis on the relational aspects of participation in which children interact with other children, institutions, and adults, as partners in development. It discusses the implications of critically examining child and adolescent participation in this context for programs supporting children's survival, full and healthy development, and protection. It is felt that portraying participation in the context of partnership provides opportunities for development programmers to promote child participation in new and more holistic ways that can lead to social change that not only benefits children but adults as well. The report presents a contextual framework illustrated by case studies of good practice that can be used to assess key dimensions of partnership. It is believed that this will be very useful in planning, implementing, and assessing programs aimed at bringing about meaningful child participation.

The information contained in the CAP report was gathered in partnership with various development agencies including child-led organizations. These include: United Nations organizations (especially UNICEF and UNESCO); International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGO's); Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's); Community Based Organizations (CBO's); and key resource individuals (see Acknowledgements for a full list of participating organizations and key resource people). Agencies were contacted individually over the course of the research, with several individuals and agencies participating in the Children As Partners Conference hosted at the University of Victoria in August 2002 (see IICRD website at www.uvic.ca/iicrd for the CAP Conference Proceedings).

Three research documents form the foundation for this report:

1. An annotated bibliography covering key academic and NGO literature findings on child and adolescent participation from both the developed and developing world;

2. A detailed discussion of participation in light of current evidence on children's evolving capacities, *Children's Evolving Capacities and Participation: Partnerships for Social Change* (Lansdown); and
3. An in-depth retrospective process of young people's reflections on partnership drawn from the collective experience of the Indian NGO Concerned for Working Children (CWC), *Bhima Sangha and the Makkala Panchayats – Chroniclers of our own history*.

It was decided that three contexts were especially pertinent in framing the child participation partnership dimensions. These include:

- ◆ Understanding basic principles of partnership across the primary domains of children's participation summarized in the literature findings;
- ◆ Exploring aspects of children's partnership in child rights programming as discussed in interviews carried out with CWC and other NGO's; and
- ◆ Drawing on all the sources of CAP research to deconstruct partnership in the context of culture.



The report is broken down into four sections:

- ◆ A discussion on moving from focusing on children's participation to children as partners;
- ◆ A description of a framework for planning, implementing, and assessing partnerships based on children's meaningful participation;
- ◆ An application of the CAP framework to examining selected "good practice" child participation programs; and
- ◆ A series of recommendations for improving participatory, rights-based programming.

It is hoped that this report will stimulate further discussion and debate on children's participation and the challenges involved in establishing meaningful partnerships between children, institutions, and adults in promoting greater understanding of the realities of children, and in creating rights-respecting communities.

Finally, a vehicle for furthering this rich and challenging dialogue is being established by some of the CAP partners, through the Children As Partners website (see www.uvic.ca/iicrd). This website will be used as a future database and hub for critical dialogue for all interested in applied research and programming involving meaningful partnerships with children.

Children's Participation to Children As Partners

Article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) clearly mandates that the views of a child be heard and given due weight in matters concerning him or her.

Further references to a child's entitlement to participate are found in CRC Articles 13 to 15. The articles on participation are often considered to represent one of the CRC's most fundamental and far-reaching principles (Lansdown, 2001). They have also been the most challenging to implement, calling for fundamental societal and political changes that generally depart from conventional ways of responding to children's needs.

Significant legislative changes advancing the rights of children have been put into place in many countries, and prevailing social attitudes towards children have begun a noticeable shift towards viewing children as subjects of rights, rather than objects of pity. Internationally, UNICEF's 2002 *State of the World's Children* report was entirely devoted to the child participation theme, pointing to the growing awareness of the importance of child participation on the part of governmental and non-governmental agencies and leaders. Nonetheless, children in most countries continue to be seen but not heard.

This is reflected in the reality of most countries where the socio-political climate provides few opportunities for civil society to participate. In these cases, children in general have been the most excluded members of civil society.

Another reason is that governmental and non-governmental agencies bringing policy and program activities into compliance with the CRC quickly encounter difficulty in effectively

Article 12

1. States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.
2. For this purpose, the child shall in particular be provided the opportunity to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting the child, either directly, or through a representative or an appropriate body, in a manner consistent with the procedural rules of international law.



implementing Article 12 due to the lack of guidance, and evidence-based information about which processes and structures work well in establishing and sustaining children's participation. A great deal of the evidence coming from community-based organizations remains anecdotal. It is difficult to either measure or transport this practical experience across groups of children working in various cultures and across diverse issues. The substantial experience and research on children's participation that exists must be adequately collected, organized, evaluated, and disseminated for use in improving child participation policies and activities.

Benefits of Participation Partnership

The empirical literature collected in the CAP research reaffirms the multiple benefits of promoting meaningful child and youth participation. These mainly include:

- ◆ Participation itself is development and is both a means and an end in itself;
- ◆ Young people can make a valuable contribution to society;
- ◆ Participation builds effectiveness and sustainability;
- ◆ Participation fosters learning, builds life skills, and enables self protection;
- ◆ Young people have strong networks amongst themselves; and
- ◆ Young people's participation builds civil society and strengthens democracy.

A key part of sustaining children's participation is successful partnerships whether they be with other children, adults, or institutions. The principles that underpin the current knowledge base on children's participation in the context of partnership are further discussed below.

Participation is Development

Current evidence on children's evolving capacities to participate underscores the inherent human drive to engage with other human beings and the world that starts in infancy and continues throughout the various stages of childhood (and adulthood). Human beings need other people to thrive biologically, psychologically, and socially. Creating opportunities and building skills for interacting and relating are key features of full and healthy human development. From birth, the child has the capacity to attract adult attention and determine adult behaviour. Recent research indicates that interactions between babies and adults are neither arbitrary nor random (De Casper & Fifer, 1980; De Casper & Spence, 1986).

Children need to acquire skills and competencies. Communication and social skills are important regardless of the many social and cultural variations. It is now accepted that children who are active in decision-making, who learn from their own experience, as well as observing adults engaging in "causes" they believe in, contribute to making a change and are less prone to depression, hopelessness, and suicide (Escalona, 1982; Schewbel, 1982; Raundalen & Raundalen, 1984).

Thus, participation must be encouraged from an early age, in an age specific manner. It must also be encouraged in the small spaces of childhood and youth, as a precursor

to fostering participation in the broader social spaces of community and society. This often begins in the family. It is important to note that ‘family’ can take on a different meaning depending on a child’s socio-cultural context: the traditional nuclear family, the extended family, or a created one composed of children of different ages. Each of these can provide opportunities for a child’s healthy development.



Child Participation Builds Civil Society and Strengthens Democracy

The participation microcosm is reflected in the macrocosm, as the importance of opportunities expressed through basic human freedoms is ultimately fundamental to creating healthy, stable, and robust communities and societies. This is elegantly shown through Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen’s (2000) analysis of the relationship between freedom, as evidenced in indicators of active opportunities, citizenship, and positive economic stability and development.

Thus, children’s participation in community development strengthens both democracy and social robustness. While children’s well-being is more easily supported in active democracies that facilitate the economic security necessary for expectable conditions of childhood and basic security, happiness, and development of personal competence (Melton, 2002), it is also true that in countries where there is not a favourable political environment children can become active agents of social change.

Special attention in recent years has been paid to the potential of the children’s clubs in Nepal (Rajbhandary et al., 2003). Research conducted with children’s clubs suggests that they appear to be both an expression of, and a promise for, the advancement of children’s rights and democracy. Children’s clubs can play a strategic role in the advancement of democratic development. Similar analyses have been made of street and working children’s movements such as those in Brazil (Swift, 1997). In all these cases, children have become agents of change in their community, and some have become movements leading to social transformation at the national level.

Recognizing Children’s Evolving Capacities – Participation as Enhancing Capacities

It is important to recognize children’s evolving capacities as referred to in Article 12 on asserting that a child’s view be given due weight “in accordance with the age and maturity of the child,” as well as in Article 5 stating that parental direction and guidance in the exercising by the child of their rights must be provided, “in a manner consistent with the evolving capacities of the child.”

Although Piaget's ideas on discrete and defined stages of developmental growth have been largely discredited, it is impossible to discount the concept of stages altogether. It is widely accepted that some significant changes in physical strength, agility, and cognitive and social competencies take place during a child's second year, at around 6 to 7 years of age, and again at puberty (Rogoff et al., 1975). Cognitive performance is dependent on the emergence of specific skills which are simply not available to young children (Rutter & Rutter, 1993).

Realizing that age plays a role, experience is as significant. Children's capacities are developed most effectively through interaction: the process of learning generates development, and children grow in competence through participation. Rather than development taking place in orderly, predictable stages, children come to know and understand the world through their own activities in communication with others (Rogoff et al., 1996). In other words, the most effective model for developing competencies is one where children work collaboratively, each serving as a resource for others, and taking varying roles and responsibilities according to their understanding and expertise (Taylor, Smith, & Tapp, 1999).

Culture 'Shaping' Children's Participation

It is apparent that children's developmental capacities owe less to biological or psychological determinants and more to expectations of their community, levels of support, and goals associated with childhood. Woodhead (1999) has argued that three elements influence children's development – the physical and social environment, the culturally regulated customs and child rearing practices, and the beliefs and values of the parents. We can better understand childhood as a product of these processes, rather than as a series of universal stages.



In most Western countries, children are expected to remain in full time education for a minimum of 10 years, and often longer, during which time they are socially and economically dependent on their parents. Indeed, the expectation is that children are recipients rather than contributors to their family and community – emotional rather than economic assets. The experience of childhood largely seen as a period devoted primarily to play, and the acquisition of educational skills and knowledge, precludes children from opportunities to take responsibility for themselves and others. Children's experience in many developing countries is rather different, with much higher expectations of social and economic participation. The research highlights that young people 10 years of age not only demonstrate the capacity to make informed choices based on realistic assessments of the options available to

them, but that in doing so, they are aware of and able to take account of other perspectives than their own (Punch, 2002). The experience of the Concerned for Working Children speaks to this capacity of children.

In light of these differences, it becomes apparent that it is not possible to make universal assumptions about the capacities of children to participate in the decisions and actions that influence their lives. It is the experience of involvement in shared activities with both adults and peers where there is a presumption of ability to complete a task successfully which encourages children's development. Such skills are neither innate nor inevitable consequences of social maturation. Children's competencies evolve in large part in response to the world they grow up in. They develop in accordance with experience, and are influenced by adults' attitudes and the levels of responsibility afforded to them.

Children as Active Agents

Children are not merely passive recipients of environmental stimulation. Rather, they actively engage with their surroundings in purposeful ways, even from babyhood. Studies of both early and middle childhood development show that while children are dependent on adults, they often exercise great "agency" or capacity for interactive action.

The degree of agency expressed is dependent in part on the many stages of development that children pass through. The culture and hence environment in which a child lives are, however, primary influences on the unique "pathways" for individual development within differing cultural "niches" (Super & Harkness, 1986, 1994).

Children's developmental potential can be supported or diminished by the care and attention they receive from parents, friends, relatives, neighbours, teachers, and other caring adults (Guy, 1997). This nurturing component of individual well-being is so strong that evidence indicates that even under situations of extreme adversity children will often show incredible resilience when relations with one caring person are sustained. This person can be an adult or another child.

The story of Concerned for Working Children shows how, provided with opportunities for increased partnerships, children's agency can also blossom. As a result of CWCs support, working children have been able to organize themselves in unparalleled ways. While their initial focus related to addressing work issues, they have since taken on larger societal issues. CWC provides for children's increased capacity, helping them navigate in a world where the social rules are not democratic. Partnering does not mean that children lose agency. They may be strategic, which is essential to bringing about social change.

A Developmental Approach to Child and Youth Issues

Increasingly, across various child rights issues from HIV/AIDS to education, development agencies are making a conceptual shift from thinking that child and youth problems are the principal barrier to development, to valuing children's active

participation as the most effective strategy for the prevention of children's problems (Pittman and Cahill, 1996).

One reason for this shift in thinking is the growing empirical evidence indicating that many children's problems have common antecedents (Dryfoos, 1990), and these can be better addressed by drawing on assets and enhancing protective factors (Brokenleg, 2000; Cook, Ali, & Munthali, 1999; Pittman, 1996; Rajani, 2001). This approach is itself contextual as these assets and protective factors can be best understood in the context of various "systems" of child's social, cultural, political, and economic environment.

These approaches emphasize investing in young people's "assets" and "protective factors" rather than focusing on specific problems as a more effective method for addressing these problems. This places increased importance on partnership as a vehicle to work with children in identifying and building on their own and others' strengths.



Centrality of Partnerships

A common thread throughout these principles is the role of partnerships. As illustrated in the following definition of participation as "the process of sharing decisions which affect one's life and the life of the community in which one lives" (Hart, 1997), partnership is often assumed to be an integral part of participation. But this has yet to be recognized by programmers in the child rights field. This acknowledgment calls for a shift in approach. Most importantly, it requires paying attention to the context within which children are participating.

The degree of true and meaningful partnership will range from "tokenistic" to "prescribed," in which adults dominate the form and content of participation, to "self initiated" and "child-led," where children are in control of all stages of a program process (Hart, 1997). This latter dimension will be important to allow children to fully explore and understand the opportunities for child dominated decision-making, however it often results in limited opportunities for meaningful interaction with adults. It also may not be the most effective process to bring about social change.

A more meaningful form of participation that will have greater long-term impact on the community at large is often "shared decision-making," in which children work as partners with adults in deciding on common goals, for ideally children's empowerment will be linked to adult empowerment. While 'shared decision-making' suggests equality in

Figure 1: Three Examples of Child Participation Partnership Programs

Example 1: Child-Led Participation

A group of street kids involved in gang related activities in Mexico City decide to establish “safe zones” for younger children in their communities following the death of a number of their younger brothers and sisters in drive by shootings. The “safe zones” begin to take on a life of their own as the children’s grandmothers and other adult guardians begin to engage the children in educational activities, story telling, and making crafts. Soon the “safe zones” have become a project led by a newly established NGO of former gang members called “Urban Courage.” The community youth centres incorporate day care centres for young children, spaces for creative child and youth expression, and vocational training for gang members and other children living on the streets. The street kids approach the local municipality for support and are connected with child and youth workers, social workers, and other human service workers to provide more access to basic services as well as an after school education program. The program continues to evolve and grow as the younger children take over the leadership from their older colleagues and the municipality partners with these children to engage other marginalized children in their city.



Example 2: Shared Decision-Making

A group of school children from a squatter community in Cape Town is approached by a national, adult-led NGO providing skill training in the use of the media (radio and video) in documenting challenges for children in various community settings. The children agree to establish a working committee and are trained by the NGO over the course of a series of workshops. The children are soon taking the lead in documenting the rights of children in their community



from the perspective of various groups of children (girls, boys, children from different racial and ethnic groups, children affected by HIV/AIDS, parents, and guardians). The program is further supported by a UN organization and is used as a model for providing other marginalized children across Africa with tools to advocate for their rights. The children partner with adults from various NGO's, UN Agencies, and government ministries in planning, implementing, and evaluating the dissemination and scaling up of the project to other communities and countries. The project is now being used as a tool for including children's participation in planning and implementing South Africa's National Plan of Action.

Example 3: Challenged Relationships

Following a successful international conference highlighting the rights of children and youth living in extreme poverty, a group of youth facilitators is approached by a Child Focused NGO to partner in drawing greater attention to this issue and developing programs for youth at risk of abuse and exploitation. The partnership starts well, and a large amount of funds are raised with the youth at risk taking the lead in a successful public media campaign. Things begin to go wrong, however, when the NGO grows frustrated with the inability of these young people to meet report deadlines, manage finances properly, and attend staff meetings. One of the youth is eventually fired and the rest of the youth quit in anger and frustration at the NGO's lack of ability to develop and maintain a working environment that is youth safe and youth friendly. The youth group is particularly angered that the NGO did not consult them on the management and dispersal of the funds. Both youth and adults decide that they will work independently and the relationship ends in mistrust and hurt feelings.

child-adult perspectives, this is often not the case. Shared decision-making involves negotiation, discussion, and compromise.

Child-adult, child-child, and child-institution partnerships are challenging to foster and sustain. Sometimes participation does not result in positive outcomes for the children, adults, or institutions involved. The three examples in Figure 1 provide a cross section of various forms of partnership programs.

These point to the important role of communication and context in determining whether children can work with adults and institutions. Will and capacity are essential for children, adults, and institutions to collaborate meaningfully and these are sometimes difficult to maintain as the challenges of working with children arise. Good intentions are not sufficient for entering into any partnerships; children are no exception. As illustrated in the experience of the Concerned for Working Children, the degree of shared decision-making will also change depending on the capacity and issues being addressed by the

children. As children, adults, and institutions gain experience and learn from their mistakes, they will be able to enter into more complex partnerships.

Programmers need to pay special attention to the conditions that can facilitate creating and maintaining partnerships. Adults frequently require special skills in practicing open and respectful communication with children that combine both a capacity for listening and an ability to engage in open, honest, and sometimes even “brave” critical dialogue. For, as many unsuccessful children’s programs have learned, true partnerships are not based on uncritically accepting everything children or adults say. Successful partnership involves honest debate and critical inquiry on the part of both children and adults.

Partnership as Reflecting the Rights-Based Approach

An emphasis on partnership also reflects the Rights-Based Approach (RBA) that emphasizes people as “subjects of rights,” and underscores the participatory importance of self-realization of rights. The Rights-Based Approach sees participation as both a means and an end in itself with the fundamental emancipatory nature of human rights as a foundation for human dignity. The rights-based perspective promotes respect for the human rights (HR) of all persons, including children, youth, women, persons with a disability, minorities, marginalized persons, and other adults. It places child participation in the broader range of human rights issues that include the human rights principles of “universality,” “indivisibility,” “interdependence,” and “accountability.”

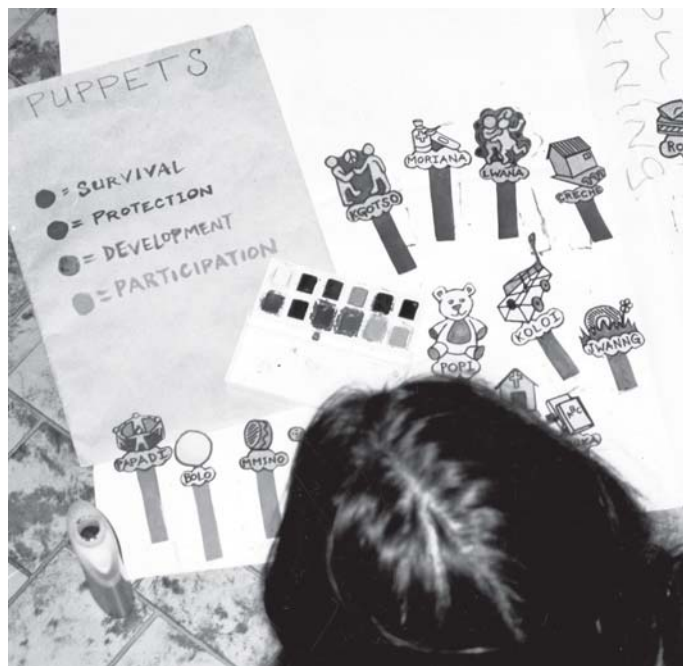
Child rights-oriented programs are not based exclusively on responding to specific children’s “needs.” Rather, they strive to address all aspects of a child’s life in a progressive manner. Such programs identify and apply strengths – developed and developing capacities of persons, and their human and ecological contexts. They are dependent on holistic and inclusive measures that are continually being implemented by governments as “duty bearers” while involving children as active “claim holders.” Rights-based approaches reinforce the importance of implementing creative processes to work with stakeholders, as rights claim holders. The rights approach is consistent with a participatory approach that similarly reinforces the importance of beneficiary-centred strategies driven by bottom-up critical enquiry. In a child rights-based approach, the duty bearer is also extended beyond government, to include parents, teachers, and other community members.

Thus, child rights approaches emphasize children as action-oriented advocates who need to be involved as partners or participants in realizing their own rights as well as the rights of others. This naturally entails drawing on children’s inherent and evolving capacities by identifying assets and protective factors (Karp, 1998). This developmental approach sheds light on the context of children’s lives, emphasizing the importance of connectedness, participation, and strategic partnership as effective strategies for overcoming child and youth challenges.

The framework presented in the next section provides a tool to plan, implement, and assess child participation in the context of engaged, critical partnerships with adults.

The Children As Partners Framework

The Children As Partners framework recognizes the multifaceted and contextual nature of participation partnerships. It is designed to facilitate discussion on potential strategies for planning, implementing, and assessing child participation partnerships at both the program and policy level. It lays out five dimensions of participation and three contextual parameters of partnership in a matrix (see Figure 2).



The framework embodies five dimensions of participation:

- ◆ Purpose of participation;
- ◆ Level of participation;
- ◆ Scope of participation;
- ◆ Evolving capacity to participate; and
- ◆ Indicators of meaningful participation.

These dimensions of children's participation are listed across the top of the matrix. They comprise variables typically used for the critical assessment of participation. They were drawn from current thinking in the field of participation as expressed in the writings of Hart (1997), Chawla (2002), Lansdown (2001), Rajani (2001), and others listed in the CAP annotated bibliography.

These dimensions of participation are examined in the context of:

1. Children's participation in relation to partnerships;
2. Partnerships within child rights programming; and
3. Partnerships within a socio-cultural context.

Each of these participation dimensions takes on a different meaning and contributes added value depending on the partnership context to which it is related. The descriptions and factors identified in each cell (i.e., square) of the matrix are not exhaustive; rather they serve to clarify the meaning and special contributions of the combined participation and partnership themes. A version of a more comprehensive and detailed framework under construction, from which this CAP framework is derived, is presented in Appendix A.

Figure 2: A Framework for Planning, Implementing, and Assessing Partnerships based on Children's Meaningful Participation

Participation Partnership	Purpose of Participation	Levels of Participation	Scope of Participation	Evolving Capacity to Participate	Indicators of Meaningful Participation
Children's Participation in Relation to Partnerships	To enhance children's participation in the context of social connectedness and human development	From adult prescribed roles to equal partnerships in shared decision-making	From observation to shared implementation	Establishing nurturing, trusting relationships that evolve into critical dialogue and action	<i>Increased...</i> Voluntary nature of participation Frequency of participation Time participating Diversity of roles Representation Capacities and competencies to participate Critical dialogue/ action Partnerships with children and adults
Partnerships within Child Rights Programming	To enhance children's collaboration with adults in dealing with human/child rights problems, issues, and opportunities	From consultation to democratic processes and citizenship	From issues and programs centrally-linked to children's daily lives to programs and issues non-specifically related to children's lives	From problem recognition to cooperative planning, implementation, and evaluation	<i>Increased...</i> Application to an inter-sectoral range of child, family, school, community problems Problem clarification and resolution Issue clarification and progress Solution development and implementation Influence of children on child rights issues and problems
Partnerships within a Socio-Cultural Context	To ensure children's participation in partnerships dealing with issues across the range of socio-cultural contexts	Family Peers School Community Work Media Culture Society	Participation in community development and culture at the level of: self, group, and social institutions	From facilitating children's connections to their social and natural world to social engagement and activism	<i>Participation in social collectives through increased...</i> Recognition of value of child participation Community space allocation Child social competency and efficacy Participation-protection measures taken Participation across social contexts Change in cultural values, beliefs, and practices Institutionalization of child participation practices

The matrix can be used to more critically assess the situational purposes, capacity, plan, and progress for children's meaningful participation in various contexts; for example, to:

- ◆ Implement participation in various development sectors; and
- ◆ Qualitatively and quantitatively monitor participation in the context of human rights approaches.

1. Children's Participation in Relation to Partnerships

The first row of cells does not have a specific issue focus. Rather it provides a framework for looking at participation in relation to partnerships with adults. In that context, the dimension **purpose of participation** reflects a range of objectives of participation programs that promote connectedness at the level of the individual child, as well as furthering human development goals at the level of social programs. This ranges from building capacity in children, to encouraging collaboration amongst peers, to encouraging diverse opinions in local decision-making. A key aspect of participation purpose is the realization that child participation partnership goals need to be viewed from both an individual and collective perspective.

The second dimension, **level of participation**, is a rank ordering of levels of participation along a continuum in which children have progressively more input in the decision-making process. This ranges from "prescribed" to "self-initiated" to "shared" decision-making.

The third participatory dimension addresses the **scope of participation**, and includes a range of participation strategies that promote partnership, from "listening" to "accessing information" to "deliberation" to "critical discussion" to "implementation." These dimensions reflect a range of ways in which children can interact with their peers and adults and are not necessarily rank ordered. Rather, they provide various means for promoting sustainable working partnerships.

The fourth dimension is particularly important and addresses children's **evolving capacity to participate**. This dimension encompasses a range of psychosocial variables fostering connectedness that include "nurturing," "trust in self," "role taking," "self-regulation," "cooperating," and "risk taking." This dimension represents the psychological capacity that children develop as a result of healthy development in the context of relations with others.

The fifth and final dimension presents a range of **meaningful participation indicators** that can be used as criterion targets for progress and evaluation. They are drawn from the four previous dimensions. These include such things as: "frequency of participation," "time participating," "diversity of roles," "initiatives taken," and "partnerships with adults and children." The indicators are synthesized from various findings in the academic- and practice-based literature collected during the CAP process (Chawla, 2002; Sabo, 2003).

2. Partnerships within Child Rights Programming

The second context addresses partnerships specifically within child rights programming, such as children affected by HIV/AIDS or children and environmental issues. As illustrated in the **purpose of participation**, the emphasis is placed on strengthening children's partnership with adults in dealing with child rights problems, issues, and opportunities. The **level of participation** focuses on the nature of children's involvement that might range from "consultation" to "democratic processes" and "citizenship." The **scope of participation** in child rights programming can be determined by the extent to which it limits itself to issues and programs that are centrally-linked to children's daily lives to programs and issues non-specifically related to children's lives. Participation programs can achieve apparently significant results from a project objective perspective and still occur in relative isolation from the child's day-to-day life in the context of peers, family, and other important social institutions such as schools. If partnership becomes a central focus of programmers, child rights programming needs to focus on creating greater inter-linkages. It also needs to be recognized that these often happen in stages.

General skills that play a role in enhancing children's **evolving capacities** for partnerships within child rights programming include: "problem recognition," "information gathering, analysis, evaluation and application," "convergent and divergent thinking," and "cooperative planning, implementation and evaluation."

Finally, possible **indicators** identifying objectives to be achieved and used as measures of progress would include such things as increased: "problem clarification and resolution," "issue clarification and progress," "solution development and implementation," and "influence of children on issues and problems."



3. Partnerships within a Socio-Cultural Context

Too often participation debates occur within one issue-based sector of children's rights programming without consideration of the child's specific socio-cultural context. This dimension speaks to the importance of both intra-sectoral and inter-sectoral approaches to participation, recognizing the reality that child partnerships are linked to both narrow and broad personal, collective, community, and societal development issues. It is therefore critical to examine the purpose dimension of participation within and across various socio-cultural contexts. These will include programmatic **sectors**, including "survival," "health," "education," "protection," "human security," and "citizenship," as well as partnerships with societal structures such as CBO's, NGO's, or the municipal governance. The purpose of participation within a socio-cultural context emphasizes the need for children to participate in issues across the range of socio-cultural issues.

The level of participation can range from and across family, peers, school, community, media, and work. This will be determined by each child's social ecology, or

interconnecting social networks (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). It is to be noted that many approaches to participation emphasize the importance of children's views in light of their civil and political rights. While this is often a critical first step in shifting social attitudes towards more acceptance of children's views and ideas, it ignores the equal importance of children's participation in realizing their social, economic, and cultural rights in relation to issues such as schooling, labour, and supportive and harmful cultural practices.

The **scope** of participation addresses the need for participation to be accepted and supported on an "individual," "group," "team," and "institutional" basis and through the broader "social systems," particularly at the level of the local community or municipality.

Some of the developmental and protective factors that enhance children's **evolving capacities** include: "social connections," "social opportunities," "social-cultural awareness," "social competence," "social empathy," and "social protection." "Protection through participation" is a particularly important criterion in drawing attention to the potentially risky nature of children expressing themselves in societies whose hierarchical nature does not accept children's expression or the opinions of groups of marginalized children being heard.



Indicators, as objectives and as criteria for progress, seen through a socio-cultural contextual lens of partnership include such things as: the "recognition and value of child participation," "community space allocation for participation," "protection measures taken to ensure safe participation," "participation noted across social contexts," and the "institutionalization of child participation practices."

In conclusion, it needs to be stated that the CAP matrix is a work in progress. In the form presented here, essential participation and partnership themes and relationships are incorporated as a base that should enable agencies to select and construct the specific factors to be included within each cell (square) to fit the issues, opportunities, processes, and purposes specific to the nature of their work. The CAP matrix should assist agencies to better understand the complexities of working with children in partnership for development. It provides a barometer against which programs can be examined and strengthened. It is also hoped that this summative framework is found to be a practical tool in developing indicators and tools to monitor and assess participation programs in the broader context of creation of rights respecting societies. As indicated previously, Appendix A presents the existing state of evolving work to produce a comprehensive and detailed child participation framework intended to eventually provide a powerful and practical tool for planning, constructing, implementing, and evaluating child participation conditions and programs.

Examining “Good Practice” Partnership Programs

The following examples of “good practice” illustrate programs where children have entered into partnership with other children and adults to improve their lives, and the lives of others in their communities and societies. Each of the case studies highlights different dimensions of partnership “good practice” that address various aspects of the participation matrix. The discussion and analysis following each case study provides an example of how the framework can be put into practice.

When combined, the case studies illustrate the richness of partnerships that children are engaged in from partnering with adults, institutions, the media, the environment, and even the spiritual realm. Many of the case studies were solicited directly from the agencies themselves. Others are drawn from interviews carried out with individual children or groups of children working with these agencies. Each case study attempts to remain as true as possible to the words of the children.

Case Study 1: Getting Rid of Pollution in Our Cities

Ram Nath Rajak
Kolkata, India¹

We were all in class one day discussing pollution and some of us put up our hand and said that we wanted to do something to help the environment. We also needed to show other people that we (as poor – mostly marginalized Muslim children) could actually make a difference. We told our teacher we wanted to help. She said she would support us. So we organized ourselves. Our teacher gave us space to organize (her home, the classroom), where we conducted meetings and organized our plans. We wanted to see how we could get rid of this pollution in our city.

Well the day we decided to make a difference, we all went home and began to prepare. Before the next class (which was one week later) some of us decided to go map the area to decide where to focus our attention. Some of us went around the city by bicycle and some of us walked around. There were six or seven of us who went and mapped the area to find the space most in need of attention.

***Ram Nath Rajak** lives in Kolkata, West Bengal, India. He was 12 years old during this project, for which he worked with a group of children from the St. Xavier Night School for the Disadvantaged, and from Alor Riday, a local NGO founded in 1997 that works with street and working children to educate and empower them in their everyday lives. His father and mother wash clothes and sweep the streets for a living. Now 16, he shared his story at his school.*

¹ Interview conducted by Kabita Chakraborty, IICRD Intern

We saw the air pollution from the factories; all that black smoke. We realized that if there were trees there, the air pollution would be cut. If the trees are very big they will cut the pollution, and filter the air.

We also saw that there was this particular slum area that was most in need of attention. Some of us lived very close to it, and others lived right in that neighborhood. There is a hospital in the slum that makes the area more polluted. If you know this hospital area, then you know that this area is very disgusting. Wherever people see space they throw their garbage. There were no dustbins. People just dumped their garbage anywhere. It smelled bad in people's houses, and all the slum children had to breathe in these fumes. So we all got together and decided that dustbins in the area would be a good solution.



Together with our teacher we all went to the mayor's office to ask for the dustbins and plants. At first he did not let us in because we were slum boys. But we

Ketaki Dutt-Paul

Founder of Alor Riday

I began the values education program by telling the children "that they can change the world." This immediately caught the imagination of the children. You see, they are used to a system where they are not taught to think critically. They are not expected to participate within their own education. They were accustomed to be lectured at, and their minds were closed... The boys knew that garbage and garbage collection was the responsibility of the municipal government, so in order to bring about change, they had to involve the mayor and his officials... I initially went to the office to represent them. Then, I asked the boys to come. The boys got all dressed up, and we waited for two hours and he never met us. This story was published in the paper by a journalist friend of mine. I thought maybe this would be some added pressure for a meeting. For four months I harassed and hassled the office. What was amazing for me is that the boys never lost hope. Finally two months after the article was published, we had a twenty minute meeting with the mayor.

demanded these trees and dustbins because it is the poor that suffer, and all the children have to breathe in this pollution. After much confrontation at the mayor's office, the plants and dustbins were given to us. We then planted the trees and now they have become large and they will clean the air by filtering it.

We were also able to get two or three large dustbins. We investigated where to put these bins and found appropriate places, and now everyone in the slum community uses these dustbins instead of the ground. And every morning the people at the Kolkata Corporation come and pick it up.

Case Study 1 Analysis

The initiative undertaken by Ram and his friends is an example of the potential of youth participation to improve communities when provided with support from an individual adult and their organization. This **partnership** provided the opportunity for Ram and his peers, minority and poor children, to improve their quality of life and that of their community in a hierarchical society, where responding to youth's requests is fairly uncommon.

The case study illustrates **partnerships in the context of child rights programming** whereby the scope of children's participation is centrally linked to their daily life. As Ram mentions, providing a clean environment is essential to improving the health of the slum community. Each category covered in the **purpose of participation** is also covered through this story from recognition of child relevant issues, their involvement in problem-solving, to participation with and across child rights issues.

Throughout the project, children's **evolving capacities** are addressed by the children being involved in identifying the focus of the problem, in analysing the solutions, and in developing a plan for implementation, all in an age appropriate manner. While children took the lead in designing the project, it was in the context of a supportive and enabling environment; they were part of an alternative school program and were provided with the space and the support to carry out the project. In this regard, the help of adults was necessary to arrange for the meetings with higher authorities, thus highlighting the importance of adults in negotiating aspects of child participation in ways that benefit the whole community.

The fact that the children improved the services delivered to their community and were able to obtain plants to assist in improving the environment are **indicators** of success, as they demonstrate the children's capacity to solve problems and engage in convergent and divergent thinking. Another indicator of success is the increase in self-esteem the boys gained from taking the lead in the project and bringing about change in their community.

While the initiative remains localized, and its impact on policy and legislation fairly unlikely, it may be a necessary first step of children bringing change into their community. In evaluating this program, it would be interesting to examine the repercussions a successful partnership in a child's life has on his/her future self-efficacy, as well as the future capacity for efficacy of the community.

Case Study 2: National Program for Municipal School committees in Peru Building citizenship, democracy, and values with and for children and adolescents²

Accion por los Niños, Peru

Municipal school committees are organizations run by children and adolescents that operate in Peru throughout the educational system. In these communities, children and youth build their self-esteem, social skills, and sense of belonging to the community with the support of teachers.

The activities selected support and complement the curriculum by providing a holistic education for children and youth, strengthening the development of rights respecting values, citizenship, and democracy. Currently, there are approximately 5,000 educational centres with municipal school committees throughout Peru supported by seven organizations under the coordination of *Accion por los Niños*. Over the years, they have gained social and institutional recognition. The media frequently contacts elected school mayors, and school committees are asked to participate in other community projects. They are also being included in adult consultation groups such as the National Plan of Education.



Each municipal school committee includes a council for the school, the classrooms, and working groups. While the school remains the central body and representative, it is in the classrooms that students have a real opportunity to express themselves on what they want and what they are interested in. The working groups are an opportunity to coordinate and plan specific activities. There are also coordinating committees at the level of the district and province on specific issues (i.e., education, sports, environment, and health) and for different education levels. Coordinating the networks is important to increase the capacity of municipal school committees to bring about change.

Included in the category of activities undertaken are: (1) Education, culture, and sports that includes school, press (radio, newsletter), cultural, and artistic events; (2) Health and the environment which involves campaigns on waste management, anti-drugs, and health prevention(?); (3) Production and services

² Prepared by Jaime F. Jesús Pérez, Director Ejecutivo, ACCIÓN POR LOS NIÑOS, translated and collated by N. Blanchet-Cohen.

which include gardening, recycling, fund-raising, maintenance, and capacity-building; and (4) Rights of the child that include leadership-training, campaigns against sexual exploitation, maltreatment, selling of alcohol, and security.

Some of the strengths of this model are:

- ◆ Large-scale. Large number of participants
- ◆ National. Coordinated at the national level
- ◆ Participatory. Involvement at the level of the classroom
- ◆ Sustainable. Does not require specific resources, integrated into existing school program
- ◆ Flexible. Opportunities and potential to initiate any activity as long as it meets the objective of building rights respecting values, citizenship, and democracy
- ◆ Integral. All activities and themes are welcome
- ◆ Institutionalized. Integrated into the regular operation of the school
- ◆ Widespread. Covers all educational centres in the country.



Challenges for the municipal school committees include:

- ◆ To be an organization run by the children and youth rather than the teachers
- ◆ Consolidate the different levels of involvement in the committees to provide for greater and more permanent child and youth participation
- ◆ Generalize the model throughout the country so that they operate in all educational centres
- ◆ Reduce the impact of predominant values and ways that inhibit children's participation (i.e., political behaviours, adult reference points, etc.)
- ◆ Increase partnership with adult organizations (local networks and committees)
- ◆ Narrow down the thematic interventions to provide for greater capacity

John Ludeña Cárdenas,

School Mayor of the Educative Centre Antonio Raimondi

I have learned to develop intellectually, to socialize with my peers and with the important people in my community.

Thanks to this, we as mayors know the problems of other young people of our country and in this way identify solutions.

I have been able to develop my sense of democracy and solidarity. I have learned a lot which will help me in the future. If God wants, as another student said, we will be the future leaders of our people. And because we are better prepared, we will know more or less how to lead our country.

Xuxy Azucena Tuesta del Aguila,

School Mayoress of the Educative Centre Jose Antonio Ravines Arévalo

Over there in Tarapoto there is an educational centre called CRES, for children with disabilities. There is a problem with the teachers; there are too many teachers for the number of students. There are only 12 students and the school is about to disappear. So we are trying to ask support from companies. We do not want the school to disappear because it is needed in Tarapoto. The municipal school committees are very good. Everyone does their work as they want to, each one wants to support the other; no one wants to be better than the other. My schoolmates have helped me ask the companies for help at my educational centre. We are also asking for support for the school canteens and the gardens. These experiences have taught me a lot. I have learned not to be selfish, to be respectful, to help, to support others and those in need and to organize ourselves.

Case Study 2 Analysis

The National Municipal School Committees program draws its strength from a partnership between children organized in committees, and institutions, primarily schools. Another significant component of the program is the facilitating role provided by an external non-governmental organization, *Accion por los Niños*, that supports the networking, the promotion, and the design of the committees across the country.



The program is especially commendable for its scale and capacity to link children's social systems. This highlights many of the dimensions of both **partnership within child rights programming** and the **socio-cultural context**, particularly in connecting children's participation spheres at the level of the child, school, non-governmental organization, and government.

The **scope of participation** reaches many levels as the program enhances democratic practices. Children are modelling participatory values; decision-making processes and structures that will help them become future citizens of their country. As reflected in the testimonies, in leadership roles children and youth are addressing many of the categories in **evolving capacity**, such as increasing social competence, social connections, and opportunities. They are taking on new roles, as well as increasing their

protection. The structure of the municipal school committees with a council for the school, the classroom, working groups, and coordinating committees provides for representation, so all children can express their views at least at one level.

Most remarkable are the committees' capacity to go to scale – beginning in a few schools it has now spread throughout the country. Child participation is now **institutionalized**, and municipal school committees are part of the mainstream school curricula. Another indicator of success is that while the primary focus of their activities relates to addressing the most pressing local issues affecting children and youth in school, children are also being included in larger community issues. The municipal school committees provide a space for youth to be consulted; youth are now a democratic player to be included in decision-making. Similarly, greater recognition and opportunity is provided for them to affect larger changes in society. The testimony from the school Mayoress of the Educative Centre Jose Antonio Ravines Arévalo highlights the influence of networking to create pressure for continued support for a school for children with disabilities.

As mentioned in the challenges, the municipal school committees operate in a society that continues to resist the notion of child participation. Higher authorities and teachers do not always seriously take into consideration children's perspectives. Also challenging is the extent to which the broader social structure will support the voice of especially marginalized groups such as Indigenous children.

Case Study 3: The Wayuu Women's Network and University of Zulia Indigenous Children's Education Project

Venezuela

In 1985 the Wayuu Women's Network established a partnership with the University of Zulia to address a growing concern over the acculturation of Wayuu children. This had resulted in the loss of language, culture, and religion, and an ensuing breakdown of family and community protection of children. The Wayuu, a matriarchal indigenous nation, inhabit a strip of territory on the Caribbean coast of Venezuela and Colombia, and have experienced longer contact with the dominant Spanish culture than many of their indigenous neighbours in the region. This has resulted in a severe breakdown of traditional childrearing customs and beliefs, as local communities have been impacted by loss of land to rapid population growth and the incursion of the oil industry. Recent cross border drug trade has also negatively impacted the Wayuu in the form of persecution by border guards and police, and an escalating rate of youth drug use and addiction.

The project was initiated by Noeli Pocatererra, founder of the Wayuu women's network, and currently vice-president of the National Assembly. Ms. Pocatererra, an active advocate for women and children, is both a traditional leader in her own community and a former faculty member in the Department of Social Anthropology at the University of Zulia. The main focus of the children's project is to give Wayuu and neighbouring indigenous



Renilda Martinez

Co-ordinator, Wayuu Women's Network

In the work, we have had to reevaluate the place of the child and youth. Children's place has been impacted by official schools, by television, and by countless other things that do not permit the maintenance and recognition of our knowledge and practices. Today we are trying to recapture those mechanisms of transmitting values and education. We believe this to be a fundamental pillar for all processes of the child's development.

children a high standard of bicultural education to provide them with the tools to thrive in their own and in the dominant culture. The project also trains teachers at the University of Zulia (both Wayuu and non-Wayuu) to work effectively in local community settings. This involves adapting curricula to fit the daily lifecycle of children and their families, many of whom work during the day, as well as drawing on the strengths of traditional Wayuu teaching by eliciting the help of traditionally trained Elders.

Girls are especially targeted in the program as a vulnerable sector of the Wayuu population. Many of these girls are hired as domestic servants by wealthy Venezuelan families, and a high percentage of these girls experience work-related discrimination and abuse due to lack of regulation and protection measures. Youth voice is encouraged in the program in the form of youth clubs that were initiated by students from the University and local community members. These clubs meet once a year to discuss issues of mutual concern, as well as participate in traditional activities organized by their Elders and youth animators. The success of the yearly meeting has grown to such an extent that it has now become a regional meeting for indigenous youth, and is partially supported by UNICEF Venezuela. Many of the youth “graduating” from the Wayuu educational program have gone on to become leading social advocates in their own communities. For example, during a Cholera epidemic in 1998, Wayuu youth organized children’s teams to help educate other children (Wayuu and non-Wayuu) about Cholera prevention and treatment, thus reducing the incidence of the disease in many of these communities. Children have also been questioning traditional practices that are harmful for them, such as early marriage, as well as socio-economic issues, such as the poor working conditions of their merchant mothers who often face life-threatening discrimination as they bring goods to Venezuela across the Colombia border.



Elmis

14, Wayuu

Our grandparents say that the only way that relations with the criollos can be equal is by maintaining and defending our culture and our values.

We must continue producing and distributing that which we produce communally, like we have done until now.

Of course we have to learn some ways of life and work that the criollos offer us to improve our lives. But we are not going to give up being Wayuu for this.

Case Study 3 Analysis

The Wayuu children's education program stands as a potent example of the effectiveness of partnerships between indigenous peoples and mainstream institutions in overcoming discrimination of indigenous children's fundamental right to basic education. The program also offers useful strategies for addressing **partnership within a socio-cultural context**. By promoting the child's right to basic education, as well as to education in their own language, culture, and religion, Wayuu children participate in ways that reflect and honour their own culture. This contrasts with the mainstream education system that has frequently inhibited children's engagement by negating their cultural rights. As indicated in the case study, as children build their sense of self-worth they take on greater roles in their community, taking a critical look at their own cultural practices, as well as discriminatory practices. Children have also taken an active part in national processes that have been favourable to indigenous peoples.

It is interesting that in the context of communal societies, such as those found in indigenous populations, greater inclusion of children involves greater inclusion of all persons. This addresses **participation in the socio-cultural context**, especially in terms of greater respect for the rights of indigenous persons. In this case, particular emphasis is placed on the close relationship between indigenous women and children's rights. One of the challenges of the program is institutionalization of child participation practices, as discrimination and resistance against child participation remain prevalent in the country.

Case Study 4: The Journey from Recovery to Becoming a Youth Advocate

Sarah Ninnie, 23

Saskatchewan, Canada

When I went to *Out From the Shadows: International Conference for Sexually-Exploited Youth*, I was recovering from sexual abuse.

I was 14 when I first went on the streets. I faced abuse at home, and needed to feel a sense of belonging. I did not like myself, I felt very vulnerable. On the streets I did not know what I was getting into, no one told me. My friends and ex-boy-friend encouraged me to work on the streets.



One day, when I was 17, I read in the newspaper Cherry Kingsley's story and how she had herself been in the sex-trade and wanted to help her peers exit it. She was organizing a focus group to speak about our issues. I thought I needed someone to help me, who I could relate to, who understood me. All this while I felt no one understood me. I tried to go back to school and talk to my school nurse about it, but they only told me to test for HIV/AIDS. I faced discrimination and judgment from everyone. I thought that by attending the focus group I would begin finding help for myself. I really just needed someone to listen to me, give me respect, and care for me.

When I came to the Conference, I was not staying at my parents, I was barely going to school. I was using drugs, which I had been since 14 with my family. I did not have a clue of what was going on but I really liked the fact that sexually-exploited youth were being asked their opinion. I think meeting people with the same experience empowered me, and gave me hope that I could change my life and do something better. It also gave me determination to work in my community, Saskatoon, where kids are not getting the help they need.

When I came home, though, it was hard to change people's point of view and share what I had experienced at the conference. I came back to the same things in my life. But I felt that I would die soon if I did not leave life on the streets.

A few months later, an outreach worker I knew told me about the creation of a safe house for children. I made a presentation to professionals working on this safe house, raising the importance of involving youth on the streets in designing the safe house. They said they would not work with youth on the streets – they were drug-addicts. I was treated badly, not listened to, nor respected.

A year later, the outreach worker with whom I became close friends invited me to work on a committee for the Street Symposium Communities Gathering. I worked on workshops for street kids. I felt the need to do a lot of awareness-building, so people understood better where youth were coming from, and what were the solutions for recovery. I was doing better myself. Not thinking so negatively, I had hope for myself. With my family my relation has improved – I forgave them.

In 2000, I started working with my ex-peers. So many kids are not exiting, there is no place to exit. We formed the Sexual Exploited Youth Speak Out (SEYSO). We worked hard for this to happen. We started by having meetings twice a week and borrowing space at the safe house. Now we have asked for funding and a coordinator, and become partners with the Saskatoon Communities for Children.

I trust myself but there is also something out there, a sense of a higher power. My Saulteaux culture has helped me. I became addicted to morphine when I was 13, I thought I would never see a day when I would not use drugs. An elder helped me and prayed for me. I also went to a Rain Dance for 3 days where I danced and prayed. My cravings for drugs went away and I have not used drugs after that.

I am now 23 in my first year of university.

Case Study 4 Analysis

Sarah Ninnie's testimony illustrates the transformative potential of partnerships in the context of rights-based advocacy for marginalized youth. She highlights a range of partnerships that have been central to helping her **gain respect and acquire security**, from her peers, an outreach worker, her culture, and finally her own inner-strength and conviction that she needed to get off the streets. It is various and repeated partnerships that have made a difference. The *Out From the Shadows* conference was the first in a series of significant turning points when Sarah realized the need for herself and her peers to be actively involved in solving their problems, and to communicate this to adult decision-makers. Her story shows that profound life changes often occur as a result of a multitude of diverse interventions that strengthen linkages between key people in a child's social-cultural systems. A significant characteristic of Sarah's experience within this context is the importance for experiential youth to be an integral part of all aspects of building and sustaining these relationships.

Sarah's involvement demonstrates a graduated **level and scope of participation**. At the conference, she recalls being mainly an observer and listener, taking in information. She later had the opportunity to provide information to people planning a safe-house, and then sharing her perspectives and deliberating with them in workshops and conferences. She reached a higher stage of participation in founding an organization led by experiential youth. In this youth-dominated organization all decisions were in their hands. Interestingly, though, they later saw a need to partner with an adult-led institutionalized organization for greater human and financial security.

This latter aspect of child-adult partnerships highlights the importance of the "mutuality" of relationships benefiting both children and adults. In this case Sarah and the youth received support from the adults and the adults in turn created more effective community advocacy initiatives with the greater stakeholder input provided by a highly marginalized sector of the local population.

Interestingly, the **indicators of success** of the increased type and scope of Sarah's participation cross over more than one category in the framework. As an individual, she experienced many of the components of success found in the first row, **dimensions of children's participation**, such as increased frequency, capacities, and competencies to participate. She has also had a larger impact on society through her advocacy role, touching upon some of the components of success in the **partnership within a socio-cultural context**. This has included providing for greater recognition of the value of child participation for addressing issues related to sexually exploited youth.

Case Study 5: Concerned for Working Children –Supporting Children’s Movements

Bangalore and Karnataka State, India

The Concerned for Working Children (CWC) believes in enabling working children to come together to assert their identity and access adult power structures as well as their rights as citizens. CWC has facilitated the convening of working children into two unique youth organizations: Bhima Sangha and the Makkala Panchayat. Bhima Sangha is an association of working children with a current membership of over 20,000, and the Makkala Panchayat are children village councils. These organizations support the continuous process of child participation, enhancing child protagonism and allowing for child-centred development and interventions.

The first Bhima Sangha emerged in 1990 as a response to CWC’s fieldwork with child workers in the city of Bangalore. In partnering with these children, CWC activists realized that in order for child workers to determine their own agenda, they needed a political space to voice their concerns as well as a movement to carry out their own plan of action. Since then, members of the Bhima Sangha in both urban Bangalore and rural Karnataka have been



Children say no to early marriage

Bhima Sangha challenging the status quo

Uchengamma, 14, president of the Bhima Sangha State Committee, fought a personal battle to protest her family’s decision to marry her off. After failing to convince her family, she filed a complaint with the local police and Panchayat seeking their protection. Although the police explained to the family that child marriage is against the law, the family members still persisted in their mission. As a result, other members of the Bhima Sangha decided to support Uchengamma, launching an extensive campaign to gain both publicity and justice for their colleague. Eventually the protest was successful and the marriage was stopped. She is now leading a protest movement against child marriage in her village in northern Karnataka.

bringing the issues of working children centre stage.

The Makkala Panchayats, or children's governments, were launched in 1995 in five districts in Karnataka as a result of Bhima Sangha's need to include more children in their movement, specifically non-working, school-going, and disabled children. They saw the need to interface with local governments, specifically the Gram Panchayat's in order to push forward children's agendas in a formalized manner and effectively enact lasting change. In the Makkala Panchayats, all the children of a village are able to join and are urged to participate in electing their officers, following the same election rules and regulations of the adult Panchayat, including reserving seats for girls and disabled children.

Essential to the success of the Makkala Panchayats is the Task Force, a representative forum comprised of local government functionaries, elected representatives, and Makkala Panchayat members, and the Makkala Mitra, an adult "children's friend" responsible for ensuring that children in need receive assistance in advocating for children's rights. A powerful example of both weighted ranking decision-making and children's agency is reflected in the Bhima Sangha's and Makkala Panchayat's recent endeavour of defining child labour for themselves.

As reported on by in Bhima Sangha and the Makkala Pachayats – *Chroniclers of their own history* – the work has focused on a range of issues. First and foremost, their focus is on protecting the livelihood, well-being, and dignity of child workers. Many of the Bhima Sangha and Makkala Panchayat joint activities deal with obtaining safe working conditions, protecting young workers from all forms of abuse, pursuing legal avenues for justice and compensation, and freeing children from bonded labour. Bhima Sangha and Makkala Panchayat campaigns also involve creating livelihood opportunities for working children. They advocate for establishing schools in their villages, both formal and vocational, as well as working with CWC to develop more meaningful curricula that takes into account the specific needs of working children. Bhima Sangha and Makkala Panchayat members also put much of their efforts into building community infrastructure, and thus improving the lives of all around them.

In keeping with this community development philosophy, members of Bhima Sangha and Makkala Panchayat also devote their energies towards ensuring community harmony and promoting community participation. In one instance,

Bhima Sangha's Impact on Children

- ◆ *Gained confidence and ability to speak*
- ◆ *Increased respect for women/ disabled youth*
- ◆ *Able to identify problems and design solutions*
- ◆ *Have better working conditions*
- ◆ *Have better health*
- ◆ *Gained respect from peers, community members and family*
- ◆ *Gained knowledge of rights as a child and worker*
- ◆ *Gained access to appropriate educational programs*

Working Children Unite

Bhima Sangha members noticed that Muslim girls were not participating in any of their activities. Bhima Sangha approached the parents to discuss the benefits of tailoring training for their daughters. As a result, the girls attended the workshop and became more involved. Another area the members are focusing on is the environment.

Finally, these children highlight their ongoing struggle to break harmful cultural norms, as well as raising awareness of social ills. These include campaigns to stop child marriages and raise the status of the girl child. Bhima Sangha has many female presidents, even at the state level, who have engaged their members, both girls and boys, in protests to stop child marriages, in some cases their own!

Bhima Sangha and Makkala Panchayat members also want to facilitate change in the lives of children world wide by influencing international policy, and championing child rights. From 1995 to 1998, Bhima Sangha and Makkala Panchayat members spearheaded a campaign to monitor the observances of these protected civil liberties through a CWC facilitated process of planning, developing, and documenting the first ever Working Children's Report. Along with working children representing other collective organizations from various areas in India, Bhima Sangha and Makkala Panchayat members analysed their situation in relation to the CRC guarantees. In 1999, India became the first country to have children invited to the United Nations to present this one-of-a-kind report. Three working children from different regions in India travelled to Geneva to present their recommendations before the Committee on the Rights of the Child, asserting their fundamental right to participate in any legislation involving them.

The National Movement of Working Children's Unions in India actually evolved out of the international movement led by Bhima Sangha and Makkala Panchayat members. When children came together for the Regional Convention of Working Children and the International Meeting of Working Children in 1996, child labourers from other parts of India realized the importance of unionizing. Looking to the Bhima Sangha for guidance, these newly formed children's unions began a dialogue with each other. They began to discuss the prospect of working together to influence the government at the national level, eventually leading to the formation of the National Movement of Working Children's Unions. With this, a new structure, inspired by the Bhima Sangha and Makkala Panchayats, took shape, allowing more of India's working children to participate in the political and social movements designed to improve their own lives.

Case Study 5 Analysis

The supportive role that Concerned for Working Children (CWC) has played in initiating and supporting two child-led organizations, *Bhima Sangha* and *Makkala Panchayats*, stands out in a number of ways. Most remarkable, the partnership has provided an opportunity for working children to increase children's involvement in issues that affect them and bring about change in what is generally considered a hierarchical and traditional society.

The diversity of issues being addressed throughout its history mean that many of the categories of the framework have been touched upon, from the **dimensions of children's participation** to **participation in the socio-cultural context**. It is interesting to note the evolution of these organizations as presented in *Chroniclers of their own history* – CWC (see www.uvic.ca/iicrd for this report) playing first a supportive role in initiating *Bhima Sangha*, a child-led organization for working children, and then *Bhima Sangha* creating the *Makkala Panchayats*, which provides a political space for all children and youth to have a say in community issues. Through their involvement in these organizations, the individual child benefits from many of the dimensions of children's participation, and as a whole the organizations have been able to address larger issues.

The testimony 'Children saying no to early marriages' speaks to children bringing about change in traditions that have great significance for children's everyday lives. The program also illustrates children's evolving capacities to effectively develop and implement a strategy that successfully advocates for their rights and the rights of other groups of marginalized and disempowered children. For example, it is impressive how these child-led organizations have been able to reach out to other working children in the country as well as speak out internationally.

In this way the children of *Bhima Sangha* and the *Makkala Panchayats* are creating an impact that goes beyond improving the livelihood of working children. The repercussions of children collectively advocating at a local level are now resulting in the broader promotion of the **cultural, social, political, civil, and economic** rights of a much wider group of children and adults.

Case Study 6: Student Participation, Action and Cross-Cultural Collaboration

*The European Network of Health Promoting Schools*³

"Young Minds – exploring links between youth, culture, and alcohol" is a web-based educational project in which students from a number of countries were collaborating on health issues related to alcohol. Students from Denmark, the Czech Republic, Macedonia, and Sweden explored links between youth, culture, and alcohol consumption through cross-cultural collaboration and the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT).

"Young Minds" was initiated by the Technical Secretariat for the European Network of Health Promoting Schools (ENHPS), WHO, Regional Office for Europe. The project's target group consisted of primary and lower secondary

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school students in the age range 12 to 16. In addition to the students from the four schools in the above-mentioned countries, a number of schools and students throughout the ENHPS (about 40 countries in Europe) took part in the web-based discussion forum in the final phase of the project.

The theoretical concepts underpinning the project belong to the democratic, as opposed to the moralistic, paradigm within health education and the health promoting schools initiative. These concepts include: genuine student participation; action orientation in teaching and learning; a broad landscape of health-knowledge; and the IVAC (investigation-vision-action-change) approach. We argue that democratic health education and the health promoting school are valuable alternatives to moralistic health education, particularly to its focus on behaviour modification. Within the democratic paradigm, students' action competence or ability to take reflective action and bring about positive change with regard to health is considered as the main educational aim.



Genuine student participation in learning focused on the development of meanings, critical reflection, and interaction between the individual and society is seen as one of the crucial elements of democratic and action-oriented teaching. Our experience shows that, in order for health education and health promotion in schools to be characterized as truly democratic, students should be able to actively influence both the content and process of their learning.

Furthermore, action-oriented teaching within the democratic perspective involves working with a broader landscape of knowledge that encompasses insight into causes and not only consequences of health problems, but also visions about the future and knowledge about solutions strategies. In other words, action-oriented knowledge is a complex interdisciplinary knowledge constructed in a shared process of critical dialogue, reflection, development of visions, planning, and taking action as part of the teaching/learning processes.

Within this framework, the main underpinning principles or criteria for the “Young Minds” educational approach are the following:

- ◆ *Action orientation: the school projects are targeted towards action and change addressing root causes of health related problems;*
- ◆ *Genuine student participation: students are actively involved in deciding about specific aspects within the area of alcohol they work with; their visions and ideas play a crucial role with regard to which actions would be carried out;*

- ◆ *Cross-cultural collaboration: all classes work with the same overall topic; they carry out joint investigations using the benefits of the involvement of students from different European countries working on the same issue at the same time and emphasizing the relational nature of learning; and*
- ◆ *The use of ICT: Information and Communication Technology was used with a multiple purpose (e.g., information, presentation, international collaboration, debate, widening the space for student participation, and voicing young people's opinions at the conference in Stockholm).*

An important feature of the project was its presentation by student representatives from all four classes at the WHO Ministerial Conference “*Young People and Alcohol*” that took place in Stockholm. This presentation was construed as a “real-life” student action, contributing to the project’s main aims. Prepared by their work in the project, “*Young Minds*” students had the role of facilitating and editing the web forum and thereby acted as a dynamic link between young people throughout Europe and the conference participants. The students also presented and discussed with the conference participants their investigation results, ideas, and opinions in the area of alcohol and young people, using the project’s website www.young-minds-net as a starting point for the discussion.

It has been a challenge to let the pupils decide how to approach and investigate alcohol since the outcome doesn't reveal itself until the work is finished. Most of the students were not only engaged and curious but also very open-minded. That made a good climate and reminded me that I have to meet them with the same open mind and still not forget to be an authority.

Teacher, excerpt from website

With their action at the conference, “*Young Minds*” students, supported by their teachers and the project’s consultants, participated actively in voicing young people’s opinions about alcohol consumption and problems related to it, with a view to influencing the ideas of the conference participants and alcohol policies concerning young people.

We learned that it is possible that young people can express their voices so people can see that we have the right to say what we think and be responsible just like the adults. We can make decisions and participate in solutions of alcohol problems

Student, interview extract

Several new educational initiatives are currently being developed, drawing on the experience from this project. One of them is “*Young Minds – Exploring links between youth, culture, and health*,” in which students from 12 European countries have been working with broader health issues. In that sense, the project outlined here could be viewed as the initial phase of a broader “*Young*

Minds approach” aimed at strengthening the potential of cross-cultural collaboration and the use of ICT in school teaching with a view to fostering students’ genuine participation, empowerment, and action competence.

There are a number of challenges that need to be addressed when thinking about involving children and young people as serious partners in learning processes in school as well as introducing the action-orientation in teaching. The reflection of one of the teachers below highlights one of the dilemmas, namely, the right balance between stepping back to provide more space for student participation, and guiding the learning process:

However, research findings related to the project, and particularly the accounts of students as well as teachers involved in “Young Minds,” univocally indicate that cross-cultural communication, student genuine participation and action taking in the processes of learning are invaluable issues worth exploring further if (health) education is to enable young people to competently participate in fluid social realities of the increasingly interconnected, globalized world.

Case Study 6 Analysis

The “*Young Minds*” initiative shows children partnering across geographical boundaries. Specifically it describes an initiative where youth come together via their classrooms with the help of Information Communication Technologies (ICT’s) to discuss issues on health, in particular alcohol consumption. The use of ICT’s is particularly interesting as a tool that has the potential of reaching large audiences and a medium to build children’s own capacity for self and collective efficacy. The program is also commendable in its reach in impacting regional conferences on these health issues, thus increasing the opportunity for sharing experiences, and creating a momentum for change.

The program utilizes a range of participation strategies across the **scope of participation** (e.g., accessing information, deliberation, and decision-making) in taking the project from an early adult-led stage to a place of shared decision-making in which young people apply critical thinking and diverse communication strategies in addressing an issue that directly impacts themselves and society more broadly.

In regards to the **level of participation**, emphasis is placed on children actively being involved in many aspects of problem solving in the context of learning democratic values and strengthening citizenship in young people.

Finally, the project supports a rights-based approach to overcoming issues of inclusion to enable children to participate via various interdependent and interrelated mediums in creating more accountable institutional responses to adolescent health.

Case Study 7: The Children's Parliament in Slovenia⁴

Ljubljana, Slovenia

Slovenia is a small country in south-central Europe in the process of transition. Formerly being a part of socialist Yugoslavia, for more than a decade Slovenia has been an independent democracy and is well on its way to a full membership in the European Union and, probably, NATO. Old forms of child participation in schools, far from being neglected in Slovenia in socialist times, actually vanished together with the old social structures, to which they were adopted. New ideas had to be developed.



The Slovene “Children’s Parliament” was launched the same year as the first multi-party elections (1990), sponsored by the “Slovene Association of Friends of Youth” NGO. It was launched as a meeting of children’s representatives with representatives of the new government. Their first debate was on the topic of environmental issues. In subsequent years, a number of issues selected by students at each parliament were discussed, including but not limited to drugs and other addictions, young people’s leisure time, student-teacher relationships, student-student relationships (including bullying), and the media. The number of involved schools and local communities has grown continually.

Perhaps of even greater importance than the content issues has been a shift in the formal aspects of the process. The closing meeting with the state politicians (who have been seriously held accountable for the progress achieved) is no longer the most important part of the process – although it remains the “big event” with due media coverage and a formal closing ceremony. The main focus has shifted to the school parliaments, indeed to the very classrooms where children encounter most of their problems and can best test their true influence. There, of course, students discover and discuss locally relevant issues, as an addition to the centrally chosen theme.

The Parliament is accompanied by a number of activities in schools: a variety of workshops, surveys, social skills games, and bulletins. Mentors ensure that pupils are well informed of the issues to support the quality of discussion that follows. At the class (department) level, pupils elect their representatives for the school

⁴ Written by Zoran Pavlovic, Director, Institute for Education and interview with child representative collected by Jennifer Toth, IICRD intern.

parliament, where the procedure repeats. The process results in a number of class and school decisions, including rules created and adopted by students themselves. The elected students represent the school at the municipal parliament, which is a step between school and national parliament (another one, on a regional level, has also been included recently, for practical reasons).

While the school system is responsible for organization of the parliament at the class and the school level, local branches of “Friends of Youth” NGO take over at the municipal level, which is a fine example of cooperation. Finally, the National Children’s Parliament is hosted by both the “Friends of Youth” association and the State Assembly (Slovenian “adult” parliament), which also provides the assembly hall for this occasion.

The Ministry of Education and Sport has supported the process thus far, in particular through several regulations included in the new school legislation, committing head-teachers to enable at least two assemblies of parliament in a school year. Teachers and school psychologists who assist the parliament in schools report encouraging developments. Following initial skepticism, the parliament has become a natural and welcome part of school life. Schools have reported improvements in the atmosphere, resulting indirectly in a decline in destructive behaviours. Moreover, direct influences were also noted: having previously discussed and adopted the rules, students are now able to stop a potential “perpetrator” by simply pointing to the list of rules that they had put on the wall together. The process has the potential of becoming a “school of applied democracy in action,” a form of citizenship education.

Anzej Dezán

Representative of the Republic of Slovenia in the Children’s Parliament of the World

Children’s parliaments are a way of saying: “I am here,” “I am important!” to the people of Slovenia. I find them to be really useful for us, the children, to learn how democracy works, of how our opinions can develop and how our thoughts can come to live and be heard. The position that I currently take in the Children’s parliaments gives me a certain view on how children are very much intelligent, even if at an early age. The abilities to wish, want, and demand have become the very basis of our work.

I think that the parliaments need a lot of different ingredients to work: an organization and its people that make it happen (the Association of Friends of Youth in Slovenia has brought immense joy to all the children by volunteering and helping us out), a lot of smart and bright children and the society that will accept the mixture of both. I, personally, am a bit disappointed in the acts of the State and the government. I still consider them not to give us the attention that we need and deserve. What I would like them to do is spend a little more time on the future of the society, not only the money that is going to military waste – now!

There are several problems with this kind (but not only this kind) of children's participation that need to be mentioned. They don't diminish the value of the experience, but will need to be addressed in the future.

- ◆ The parliament is really "all-inclusive" only at the class level – which for that reason is the core of the whole thing. From that point on, it shares all the weaknesses of "democracy by representation." The "bad" children tend to be excluded from the further process; the elected children, who represent their class/school/municipality, are hardly representative of the group they are supposed to represent. Some themes (like those on peer violence, alcohol, smoking, and drugs, etc.) seem to particularly stimulate the division of "good" and "bad" kids and diminish generational solidarity.
- ◆ Children, given such an opportunity to assume responsibility, sometimes respond overly self-critically. This can be related to a tendency to produce "socially desired" responses that interferes with a desire to criticize the school. The school, after all, is an environment in which at least some of the adults can be feared to be capable of retaliating.
- ◆ Sometimes a tendency can be observed, particularly on the national level parliament, of delivering adult political messages to the Slovene government through the children's mouth. However, no matter how well prepared these young representatives are for their speeches, they always very soon abandon their drafts and engage in a spontaneous discussion – which keeps reassuring us that the whole process is worth the trouble. Although the adults control many aspects of the parliament, an authentic children's voice does come through.
- ◆ Finally, we think that some formal, obligatory links and feed-backs are missing regarding the duty of adults to respect conclusions of the Children's Parliament. To be fair, some school councils take the conclusions into consideration, and the state representatives report seriously on the progress being achieved since the last assembly. However, formal mechanisms are missing that would ensure such responses to become regular practice. An opportunity to realize that what they had said, suggested, and demanded had some real impact on the school (and even higher) would promote children's participation to a new cycle of development.

It is anticipated that many of these challenges will be improved with the maturation of the children's parliament process.

Case Study 7 Analysis

An analysis of the Children's Parliament in Slovenia, using the **Partnership-Participation Framework**, indicates that it embodies a close form of collaboration between adult societal governmental interests and children in schools and community-based child/youth representatives. It involves young people in representative **democratic processes**, respecting the universality, indivisibility, and interdependence of human rights.

The Parliament program enables young persons to select their representatives and identify and bring forward for consideration **issues of concern to them in their daily**

lives, particularly in the school environment. It is therefore an important example of child participation in a very real context of improving **governance and citizenship in schools and society**.

The institutionalization of the program within schools and in its relationships with the Ministry of Education and Sport and the State Assembly, including support from the NGO “Slovene Association of Friends of Youth,” indicates recognition of the value and support for a wide range of child participation. It also supports a more effective system of **accountability**, respecting **child problem identification/solving and social competency**, and advancing children’s participation at the level of policy and program development in **social institutions**.

The evolution of the program appears to be adding infrastructural strength and setting the stage for increased assurance both that appropriate weight will be given to children’s views and that the adults with whom they collaborate will be held increasingly accountable for follow-through.

Case Study 8: Students Against Violence Everywhere (SAVE)

USA

The SAVE national Youth Advisory Board has provided me with an opportunity to make a difference in thousands of lives.

This experience has helped me reach out to others and grow as a person.”
- Britt Hinchliff, National Youth Advisory Board member



SAVE (Students Against Violence Everywhere) is a national non-profit organization created for students, governed by students, and comprised of students. The mission of SAVE is to decrease the potential for violence in our schools and communities by involving students in meaningful school safety efforts. The powerful partnership between the advisor and the students is crucial. The students are in touch with the issues, yet the advisors assist the school system for successful implementation of the program. SAVE’s slogan, “Youth Voices ... Grown-Up Choices!” reflects the importance of youth empowerment with the program.

In 1989, Angie Bynum and other students from West Charlotte High School in North Carolina created SAVE, along with their advisor/teacher Gary Weart. Angie was deeply disturbed by the tragic death of her friend and classmate Alex Orange. Alex had been shot at a party while he was trying to break up a fight between rival school members. Friends and classmates of Alex did not want his death to go unremembered, so they started SAVE.

Perspectives from Save Members⁵

My name is Mario Marijanovic. I'm in the 5th grade and I'm 11 years old. I attend "Ivan Goran Kovacic" Elementary School in Slavonski Brod, Croatia. I've been a S.A.V.E. member since October 2002. My friends told me about many actions they were doing to prevent violence at school, so I've decided to join. I participated in collecting fresh fruit for sick children in our local hospital during the Week Without Violence in School and Local Community and I really enjoyed it. There are a lot of S.A.V.E. members in my school. We try to stop violence of any kind in our school and community. Best wishes to all S.A.V.E. members.

My name is Robert and I attend Marquette Elementary/Middle School. I'm in the 8th grade and a member of S.A.V.E. I would like to tell you how S.A.V.E. has helped me. I was transferred to Marquette School in late October. I was told to leave Burbank Middle School because of fights. I had some trouble with anger management. I really didn't want to come to Marquette School. I thought that I would get into trouble. However, I was wrong. I was invited to join the Marquette S.A.V.E. Chapter. I thought it wouldn't work but I could get out of class for an hour once a week. Man, was I wrong! I learned that there are other ways to handle problems. Fighting isn't the answer, talking it out is. I learned that I like to help other people and I'm good at it. I now mentor two fifth grade students. I enjoy discussing ways to solve problems with them. S.A.V.E. has helped me focus on improving myself and my grades have improved also. I have set a record for myself. I haven't been suspended since coming to Marquette School. I am proud of myself. I try to think twice and act once. S.A.V.E. has saved me.

In the beginning, SAVE spread through word of mouth. Then, in 1999, SAVE received a huge boost when Chevrolet decided to sponsor them. Chevrolet's attention had been brought to school violence by the tragic shooting at Columbine High School, in Littleton, Colorado. A student who had been shot drove an old Chevrolet pickup truck, which he was trying to restore. The truck became a memorial to the students. Chevrolet decided to restore the truck to its original condition and help make a difference in stopping school violence. SAVE is very fortunate to have a sponsor like Chevrolet, and Chevrolet knows that what they are supporting IS making a difference on school campuses nationwide. SAVE is currently soliciting additional sponsors who share a strong commitment to this cause.

⁵ For more information on how you can start a SAVE chapter in your school or community, visit www.nationalsave.org or call toll-free 1-866-343-SAVE.

National SAVE has created a national Youth Advisory Board (YAB) where select youth advise the entire National SAVE organization on different issues affecting students today. The YAB is also responsible for organizing the National SAVE Summit, where all SAVE chapters gather at the end of the year to celebrate a year of accomplishment and success. Other responsibilities include establishing a national service project, such as providing gently used violence-free children's books to agencies that deal with traumatized children. YAB'ers reach out to other schools to establish chapters in their region of the United States. The Youth Advisory Board members are the student leaders who make paths for other students to follow.

SAVE can be implemented at any grade level (elementary, middle, or high school); even community organizations may start a chapter. SAVE currently has 102,000+ members with 1,200+ chapters. Located in 42 states and 4 foreign countries, SAVE is always looking to expand as more students and schools become aware of SAVE.

With 1/3 of 11-18 year olds involved in at least one serious fight in the past 12 months, our work is far from done (<http://www.ncvc.org/gethelp/youthviolence/>). However, if each one of us strives to make a difference, the problem will soon become nonexistent and SAVE can make its vision of all students attending schools that are safe and secure, free of fear, and conducive to learning a reality.

Case Study 8 Analysis

The SAVE (Students Against Violence Everywhere) program illustrates the possibilities for programs that are initiated by children and youth who are galvanized by an issue of common concern, in this case violence in schools. All aspects of the SAVE program are directed and implemented by students. However, the program has been assisted substantially by the social space allocated for it in schools and by the sponsorship of Chevrolet that reportedly supports and does not limit the autonomy of student leadership in the program. "With Chevrolet's support SAVE is educating and conducting outreach to teachers and students on how to start chapters; developing and enhancing its educational materials; providing technical assistance to new and existing chapters; sponsoring the Youth Advisory Board's activities and helping to create an awareness for SAVE nationwide (taken from the SAVE website)."

The relationship between SAVE and Chevrolet deserves to be followed and examined closely to explore possibilities for achieving respect for children's participation from powerful business enterprises. This underscores an important aspect of partnership, the importance of a **diversity of partnerships** that extend beyond the more traditional partnerships of teachers, parents, or NGO's and includes partnerships with private sector corporations genuinely interested in social entrepreneurship.

The project focuses on **day-to-day student life** safety issues in ways that can expand to life outside of school. While the project started in school environments, and can be implemented at any age/grade level (this supporting the notion of **evolving capacities**),

it can be instituted within the general community and seems to now be reaching adults as well as other groups of children. This project provides an example of **facilitating children's connections to their social and natural world leading to social engagement and activism**.

SAVE is now building national and international frameworks for **communication** and mutual support and it has both a national website, making good use of **media** across accessible to potentially huge and varied audiences, and specific project site websites to provide information and forums for sharing information. The messages posted by SAVE members reflect a wide variety of problems and solutions from the individual level through community and cultural levels of the **socio-cultural context**. SAVE appears to potentially incorporate nearly all the sectors of the Participation-Partnership Framework.

Case Study 9: CHILD-TO-CHILD Direct Involvement of Children in Health Education and Promotion⁶

The Trust's Objectives

To protect and preserve the health of communities worldwide by encouraging and enabling children and young people to play an active and responsible role in the health and development of themselves, other children, and their families. The work of the Trust centres on the belief that children, a large proportion of the world's citizens, can play a positive role in raising the health of others and in so doing improve their own knowledge and self-belief, and develop attitudes of caring responsibly for others.

Child-to-Child ideas and activities represent an *approach* to health

education. They do not constitute an alternative program. The distinguishing characteristics of Child-to-Child are the direct involvement of children in the process of health education and promotion and the nature of their involvement.



⁶ Taken from the Child-to-Child website www.child-to-child.org and from Pridemore, P., & Stephens, D. (2000). *Children as partners for health*. London: Zed Books.

The most effective programs are those that involve children in decision-making rather than merely using them as communicators of adult messages. However, whenever children are involved as partners in this way, change is demanded in current structures and methodologies in health and education.

Child-to-Child ideas and activities spread and take root in many different countries and contexts, for example, in national education programs; in local programs and individual schools; in training programs for teachers and health workers. Wherever Child-to-Child activities take place, they stress the potential of children to promote better health:

- ◆ To younger children;
- ◆ To children of the same age;
- ◆ In their families and communities.

Child-to-Child uses a six step approach: (1) Identifying a local health issue and understanding it well; (2) Finding out more about the health issue; (3) Discussing what's been found out and planning action; (4) Taking action; (5) Evaluation: discussing results; and (6) Discussing how we can be more effective next time and sustain action. The six-step approach has an important effect on the way we teach and learn because:

- ◆ It links what children *learn* with what they *do*;
- ◆ It links what children do in *class* with what they do in the *home*;
- ◆ The activities are not taught in one lesson and then forgotten; they are learnt and developed over a longer period of time.

Niño a Niño, Child-to-Child in Mexico. Child-to-Child is being used in more than 80 countries around the world. Niño a Niño (Child to Child) in Mexico started in 1999 in Oaxaca State, rich in cultural diversity and natural resources but one of the poorest states in the Republic. Child health conditions are very poor with a 10 percent infant mortality rate, usually the result of malnutrition, infectious diseases, gastro-intestinal infections leading to dehydration, respiratory illnesses, and accidents; all of which are preventable. Courses were run from 1990-1994 to train local people from various indigenous communities to work as 'guides' with children in their communities. Guides were trained to lead their children through the Child-to-Child methodology to: recognize a health problem, study that problem, act to prevent the problem, and evaluate their work and the results of their actions. What was learned was put into practice with a group of local school children.

Niño a Niño is strictly community-based and does not function within the public educational system or governmental health programs. Guides, all of whom are volunteers, are very dedicated to the program. However, a weakness in the program is that it has no 'automatic' infrastructure. The organization has become a legally recognized NGO with tax-exempt status and is in the process of designing its own infrastructure unique to Mexico. There are now Niño a Niño

groups in six states – Oaxaca, Chiapas, Campeche, Quintana Roo, Queretaro, and Guanajuato – and in Mexico City. A staff of 75 guides and 6 regional coordinators works with approximately 1,500 children who in turn reach out to over 3,000 children.

The following influences, problems, and constraints have been recognized for Niño a Niño: selection criteria for ‘guides’ could have reduced the training required; the program has been implemented in so many communities that it has become rather thinly spread and communication has been a major problem; lack of formative evaluation in early years has resulted in the need to retrain active guides; it is now recognized that some paid staff will be needed to overcome problems associated with total reliance on volunteers; the program’s philosophy is so revolutionary that it has been a challenge to change the way of thinking of both guides and children; the program has been dependent on a small amount of funding and needs to raise further funding.

Case Study 9 Analysis

Child-to-Child is a complex program with multiple organizational layers that incorporates a top down approach from adults that leaves ample opportunity for participation in and influence on local practices by children. Among its many fine attributes are its central belief that children are capable of creating and implementing interventions that benefit themselves, other children, and their communities.

This is achieved by involving children directly in **problem identification**, decision-making, intervention design, and education. The program deals with health issues of critical importance to the existing and future conditions of children and their societies. The Child-to-Child Trust provides supportive assistance through its production of health education materials and through its preparation of adult guides to work with children who will apply a variation of the **critical inquiry** method for problem solving, enabling the children to strengthen their capacities for **problem identification, problem/solution exploration, analysis of data/information, planning and taking action, evaluating results, and refining strategies**.

While a majority of Child-to-Child’s on the ground work appears to occur in schools, it is not restricted to schools and may have significant community outreach and involvement. The Nino a Nino program in Mexico is not school-based, and works on a variety of **locally important issues**, such as nutrition, that are of great significance, and meaningfully involves children and their families.

The outputs from the participatory program include changes in child growth, provision of basic education, and development of **self-efficacy and self-sufficiency** at an individual and collective level. The adventurous, reflexive, risk-taking nature of the project, and its inclusion of locally controlled monitoring and self-correcting mechanisms, are particularly laudable and hold relevance for many other children’s programs.

Case Study 10: Circles of Care: Community Support for Children Affected by HIV/AIDS

(Child and Youth Care Agency for Development – CYCAD) South Africa

CYCAD has been working for 5 years to support the rights of vulnerable children in South Africa. Their work crosses various child rights sectors including children living in institutions, children with a disability, children suffering from abuse and neglect, and children affected by HIV/AIDS. Their partners include: children's organizations, local governments, other NGO's, UN Agencies, and international development organizations.

Since 1999, CYCAD and the University of Victoria, IICRD have taken the lead on a project entitled *Circles of Care: Community Support for Children Affected by HIV/AIDS*. The project seeks to promote and protect the rights of children by involving young people in partnerships that strengthen systems of local governance in two South African Provinces, the Free State and Eastern Cape. In doing this, the project applies the Triple "A" participatory research method in which children, women's groups, local leaders, and other key children's stakeholders *assess, analyse, and take action* on issues relating to HIV/AIDS and poverty affecting vulnerable children.

The project was initiated in the municipality of Maluti-A-Phofeng, in the former Homeland of Qwa Qwa, in the Free State. This is a highly vulnerable region of South Africa with some of the country's highest incidence of poverty, unemployment, violence and abuse, and HIV/AIDS infection.

Community mapping conducted with children and key community and local government stakeholders at the inception of the project highlighted specific geographic and population sectors with high vulnerability. These included:

- ◆ Neighbourhoods with high youth and adult unemployment
- ◆ Areas where many parents and guardians were absent from children's lives due to job seeking, abandonment, death or sickness from HIV/AIDS
- ◆ Areas with high rates of child rape and sexual abuse
- ◆ Areas with high numbers of orphan-headed households
- ◆ Areas where many children were not attending school



The next stage in the community mapping process had children and key adults identify local assets and protective factors in these same communities. Local strengths identified included:

- ◆ Presence of faith-based organizations
- ◆ Strong local cultural traditions involving children
- ◆ Intact extended families
- ◆ Many children's clubs
- ◆ Willingness of community leaders to make children's issues a local development priority

The information collected during the mapping phase of the project was used as a basis for children and local leaders to identify community challenges and also develop a local response mechanism that could be used to bridge some of these gaps during the course of the participatory research.

The next stage of the project involved applying the Triple "A" process to issues of vulnerability and HIV/AIDS. This work was facilitated by local youth who were trained by CYCAD staff. Focus group sessions were designed to fit into people's daily life, and throughout each stage of the participatory research the four guiding principles of the CRC (survival, development, protection, and participation) were used to direct the assessment, analysis, and action. Each Triple "A" focus group (children, women, community leaders) identified its own area of concern and developed an action plan to respond to this need, wherever possible building on local assets and protective factors. In some cases the separate focus groups worked together to combine their strategies in order to avoid duplication and pool local resources.



Actions resulting from this bottom up approach resulted in the following initiatives:

- ◆ Community gardens for vulnerable children and their families
- ◆ Day care centres for vulnerable infants to support sick or unemployed parents
- ◆ Recreation programs for children and youth
- ◆ Youth leadership-development programs focusing on life skills, HIV/AIDS awareness, and vocational training
- ◆ Advocacy initiatives to support vulnerable children not attending school
- ◆ Cultural programs (e.g., choirs and traditional dance) to help reconnect vulnerable children with their community

Interestingly, a younger children's focus group (ages 9-14) was the only group to rank children's emotional needs as a top priority. The action from this group, linking isolated children to existing family resources, was a direct attempt to address this need. In addition, younger children identified the need to include other vulnerable groups of children, for example children with a disability, in community events, especially those involving play and recreation.



One of the strongest partnerships established over the course of the Circles of Care program has been the alliance forged between children and elders. This relationship arose from a mutual concern over the perceived breakdown of traditional cultural initiation ceremonies for boys, locally referred to as “Mountain Schools.” These were frequently criticized for their increasing commercial nature and widespread reports of abduction, abuse, and death of vulnerable children, especially orphans. As a result of this shared concern, youth and elders hosted a local workshop on the theme of “rediscovering healthy rituals.” The workshop attracted significant local and provincial government interest and has resulted in a grant being provided to the community elders and young people from the provincial Department of Social Development to focus community activities on harmonizing African values with children's rights.

Case Study 10 Analysis

The Circles of Care project highlights a number of dimensions of the CAP framework. First, the project encourages **critical thinking skills including convergent and divergent thinking** on the part of children in assessing local child rights challenges and strategically taking action based on their own analysis of these challenges.

The project is particularly noteworthy in addressing participation partnerships in the context of children's **everyday lives**. It also seeks to reinforce children's **developmental social ecologies** through its focus on identifying local assets and protective factors and connecting children with these factors through various forms of participation. This process is especially noticeable in the program's emphasis on strengthening relationships between vulnerable children participating in the project activities and other caring children and adults from their communities.

The bottom up approach of the project helps cross a number of sectors, including health care (nutrition), protection (focus on abuse and neglect), and education (school advocacy). These sectors are specifically targeted based on the immediate and real needs of vulnerable young people, and have resulted in interventions that are more targeted, holistic, and responsive.

The **rights-based approach** is central to the project, and Circles of Care is unusual in applying the core principles from the CRC as touchstones in all project stages. This is especially important in the reflexive research process through which children are supported by adults in critically assessing challenging and positive aspects of their lives in the context of community and culture, then engaging in creative partnerships to build bridges of support in filling these gaps.

The **partnership** between children and elders is a potent example of an unanticipated social alliance to address a human rights issue of mutual concern. This exemplifies the importance of establishing innovative partnerships that bring together civil society, government, and in this case an international research agency, to build the capacity of duty bearers to support the unmet needs of right holders.

Tools for Assessing Partnerships

A variety of tools were used in assessing aspects of partnerships in participatory programs reviewed during the CAP research process. While there is no space to list all the tools being used in the field, it is useful to classify the types of assessment tools being applied by children and youth, especially in regards to the purpose of the tools.

The following is a list of various purposes for participation assessment tools, with examples provided for each category.

Partnership assessment tools for:

- ◆ Examining patterns of social exclusion (e.g., social mapping)
- ◆ Understanding decision-making (e.g., children's matrices, surveys)
- ◆ Comparing benefits of different settings and contexts (e.g., key informant interviews, surveys, children's focus groups)
- ◆ Identifying external influences (e.g., key informant interviews, surveys)
- ◆ Diversity of tools to assess rights-based universality and interdependence (interviews, Triple "A" rights-based, rapid assessment tool)
- ◆ Tools to assess partnership process (Participatory Action Research, observation)
- ◆ Situational analysis to assess accountability



Summary

While these examples of children's active participation continue to unfold, they provide a snap shot of the wide-range of areas where exciting partnerships are being fostered and illustrate rights-based, developmental principles for participation in light of the Children As Partners framework.

When analysing the case studies using the framework as a lens, it becomes evident that in practice each dimension of participation interacts with the other dimensions, ultimately strengthening the rights-based approach to participation partnerships. The framework therefore provides a holistic, development lens for putting "good practices" into the context of better programming that will improve the lives of children through establishing stronger connections with other children, adults, or institutions.



One of the primary themes emerging from the CAP research process is that social connectedness facilitated through meaningful partnerships can be a powerful force for social change for both children and adults. These partnerships can be with adults, other children, or institutions. Of importance is a favourable environment for negotiating 'shared decision-making' that honours children's capacity.

Conversely, while the case studies do not directly emphasize this, the CAP research shows that when child participation is deliberately withheld as a measure for correcting or punishing perceived negative behaviour, children will either develop unhealthy relations or engage in risky, unprotected behaviour.

Another important lesson emerging from the Children As Partners research report is the key role of critical dialogue, in which adults and children need to listen to each other and challenge their respective opinions. Representation is a critical component for ensuring that partnerships include the broad spectrum of children's opinions and experiences. The CAP case studies also highlight that children's participation has both a *political* and *social* dimension, the benefits of both needing to be regarded in a separate light. In this regard, certain programs have a political objective requiring broad-based representation that necessitates a process of including diverse children's input. Many community participatory projects, however, focus on the direct benefits to individual children in relation to their immediate social situation. In many instances, community development

planners become stuck in implementing child participation programs due to concerns over representation in confusing these two categories of partnership.

It is crucial to recognize that real partnership building between children and adults holds unique challenges, and the framework emphasizes the need for greater capacity building for both children and adults to develop the unique skills needed to promote and sustain participatory partnerships. However, the case studies indicate that, when properly facilitated, children's partnerships can add significant value for development programs. A critical component of this added value, one that is still largely unexplored, is that sustained child participation has significant added benefits in terms of its *diffusion effects* across other social issues and different social sectors.

The concept of diffusion is currently being applied in research examining the surprisingly rapid rate of transmission of fertility attitudes and behaviour in many countries *irrespective* of social-economic trends. The power of the concept of diffusion is that it indicates the potential for rapid and wide scale attitudinal and behavioural shifts when compelling ideas are spread in innovative means via popular education and the media (Casterline, 2001). The notion of diffusion should likewise be applied to examine the specific effects of children's participation in terms of its impact *on both* children and adults. This would help to better understand the success of participation for the groups of children involved in these activities while also attempting to understand the power children's participation can have in more widely impacting social attitudes and behaviour amongst our society relevant to civic engagement, social democracy, and good governance.

Finally, while it is recognized that the Children As Partners framework parallels the creation of other valuable analytical frameworks examining children's meaningful participation, it is hoped that this report will contribute to bringing together divergent critical strands of a rapidly expanding field of development and human rights. Ultimately, it is hoped that the framework and other components of the CAP initiative will provide a way of better understanding the direct benefits and challenges to meaningfully partnering with children in the realization of their rights and in the creation of rights-respecting, sustainable societies.

Key Findings for Effective Programming

In light of the research undertaken, the Children As Partners framework, and examination of “good practice,” the following recommendations are suggested to help improve program planning, implementation, and assessment in support of children’s participation partnerships.

1. Individual Dimensions of Partnerships

- ◆ Successful partnerships with children need to be viewed in terms of their impact on children’s personal lives *as well as* in the context of social programming
- ◆ Meaningful child participation through partnership with *competent, caring, and critical* adults strengthens individual capacity for self-efficacy, communication skills, and self-protective behaviours
- ◆ These assets should be fostered from as early an age as possible
- ◆ Allow for diversity of skill building, roles and opportunities for participation in different forms of partnership at different ages
- ◆ Wherever possible connect participation to children’s everyday lives
- ◆ Differentiate between the various requirements and skills needed for child participation in political and social partnership
- ◆ Meaningful partnership is a protective process that builds self-protective relational skills amongst children

2. Socio-Cultural Dimensions of Partnerships

- ◆ Identifying and building on assets and protective factories in a child’s social ecology is more effective in fostering connectedness leading to productive partnership than focusing solely on problems and deficits
- ◆ Understand the socio-cultural context of participation in relation to partnership with key persons in children’s lives (e.g., peers, family, school, recreation, work)
- ◆ Identify the different sub-groups of children and adapt responses to the specific needs of these groups
- ◆ Individual child self-efficacy developed through healthy relations with adults supports collective adult self-efficacy (and vice versa)
- ◆ Create an environment that supports positive relationship building
- ◆ Examine issues of mutual concern between and amongst children and adults

3. Linking Human Development and Child-Adult Partnerships

- ◆ Child participation projects often provide a foundation for greater adult involvement in local decision-making
- ◆ Adults can learn from children’s experience
- ◆ The media, UN agencies, development agencies, government, NGO’s, and other advocacy agencies can play a key role in supporting the “diffusion” of the benefits of children’s participation to other groups of children and adults

- ◆ Discrimination and social hierarchies impact on the realization of child-child and child-adult participation through partnership
 - ◆ Given the appropriate support from key adults, children can often negotiate these social barriers
4. Supporting Partnerships in the Context of Child Rights-Based Approaches and Development
- ◆ Greater social inclusion and representation through participatory partnerships with children supports more informed and sustainable program and policy outcomes
 - ◆ Holistic partnership programs supporting children's interdependent and indivisible needs results in more meaningful, developmentally appropriate interventions
 - ◆ "Comprehensive child advocacy" strategies grounded in bottom up participatory partnership approaches that involve diverse stakeholders including children and their various support systems provide more flexible and sustainable programs and monitoring mechanisms
 - ◆ Child rights education fosters children's moral development and increases their capacity for social engagement with other children and adults
 - ◆ The media and education sectors are critical components in supporting child partnerships in going to scale through diffusion-impacting key adults

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APPENDIX A: Comprehensive Children As Partners Framework

The comprehensive Children As Partners framework is designed as a tool to stimulate discussion on the multifaceted, contextual nature of participation. It is also designed to facilitate discussion on potential strategies for planning, implementing, and assessing child participation at both the program and policy level. It lays out five dimensions and four contextual parameters affecting child participation in a 5 X 4 matrix (see Table 3).

The framework is broken down into five perspectives on participation:

- ◆ Program purposes of participation
- ◆ Levels and types of participation
- ◆ Scope of participation
- ◆ Children's evolving capacity to participate
- ◆ Indicators of meaningful participation

These perspectives are examined in the context of:

- ◆ Dimensions of participation;
- ◆ Child rights issues;
- ◆ Developmental Social Ecologies; and
- ◆ A Rights Based Approach (RBA).

The criteria listed in each cell of the matrix are not meant to be exhaustive; rather they serve as examples of each dimension.

The matrix framework is being produced for the following uses to foster programs of child participation through partnerships:

- ◆ Setting goals and selecting priority factors for inclusion
- ◆ Identification and selection of resources and processes
- ◆ Determination and application of relationships supportive of participation
- ◆ Formative and summative evaluation of stages and progress
- ◆ Reporting on the nature of programs and their successes and challenges

Figure 3: A Comprehensive Children As Partners Framework

Perspectives on participation	Purpose of Participation	Levels/Types of Participation	Scope of Participation	Evolving Capacity to Participate	Indicators of Meaningful Participation
<i>Dimensions of Children's Participation</i>	<i>To Enhance Participation...</i> Capacities Competencies Self-esteem/Confidence Acceptance Collaboration Support Roles Quantity Quality Diversity	Prescribed Assigned Invited Negotiated Self-initiated Graduated Collaborative Child-Led Shared Decision - Making	Observing Listening Accessing Information Deliberation Decision-making Implementation	Nurturing Trust in self Communication skills Self-efficacy Role-taking Empathy Self-regulation Convergent and divergent thinking Cooperation/Reliability Risk-taking	<i>Increased...</i> Voluntary nature of participation Frequency of participation Time participating Diversity of roles Representation Capacities and competencies to participate Initiative taken Partnerships with children and adults
<i>Participation in the Context of Child Rights Issues</i>	<i>To Enhance...</i> Recognition of child relevant issues Involvement of children in problem identification and solving Participation within and across child rights issues	Survival Protection Rehabilitation Security Self-Efficacy Health Shelter/housing Development Education Citizenship	Unrelated to child's life Unclearly related to child's life Related to child's future life Peripherally but meaningfully linked to child's daily life Centrally-linked to child's daily life	Problem recognition Information gathering, analysis, evaluation and application Convergent and divergent thinking Cooperative planning, implementation, and evaluation	<i>Increased...</i> Application to an inter-sectoral range of child, family, school, community problems Problem clarification and resolution Issue clarification and progress Solution development and implementation Influence of children on child rights issues and problems
<i>Participation in Developmental Social Ecologies</i>	<i>To Enhance children's opportunities, skills and effects in social ecologies through...</i> Development and application of assets, protective factors and practices in families, schools, communities, cultures and societies	Family Peers School Community Media Culture Society	<i>Linking participation to community development via...</i> Individual Group Team Institution System	Social connections Social opportunities Social-cultural awareness Social competence Social empathy Social protection	<i>Participation in social collectives through increased...</i> Recognition of value of child participation Community space allocation Child social competency and efficacy Participation -protection measures taken Participation across social contexts Institutionalization of child participation practices
<i>Participation in the Context of a Rights-Based Approach</i>	<i>To Enhance Respect for ...</i> Human rights of all persons Child participation in wide range of human rights issues Universality Indivisibility Interdependence Accountability	<i>Child's views...</i> Recognized in local decision-making Sought in programming Applied to indivisibility, interdependence of rights considered Incorporated in monitoring and evaluation	<i>Involvement in ...</i> Social rights Economic rights Cultural rights Civil rights Political rights Through legal advocacy and human rights promotion	Understanding of self Understanding of self with rights Understanding of rights of other children Understanding of rights of all persons Understanding and skills of democratic processes Understanding of rights in relation to human development (e.g., poverty, environment, governance)	<i>Increased...</i> Access to basic services Recognition of holistic children's views Representation and diversity Participation in legislation, policy and programming Child participation in education and media Participatory Monitoring mechanisms Child participation in other HR and development issues

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