



# RESEARCHSTUDY

## What next?

Ways forward for children's and young people's participation



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## FOREWORD

In recent years, we at World Vision have witnessed new and ever-increasing ways in which children and young people are participating meaningfully on issues that affect them and their communities. Our organisation has responded by strengthening guidance and technical support to staff while increasing the commitment of our board and senior leaders to children's and young people's participation. This is becoming an important area of focus for World Vision, as participation is about voice, the lack of which is well known to perpetuate poverty and inequality.

The purpose of this study is to review key theoretical perspectives and practice in relation to children's and young people's participation. This review is being undertaken in order to enhance World Vision's understanding and practice in the field of participation. Our desire is that the findings from this study will contribute to the development and implementation of World Vision's Strategic Direction for Child and Youth Participation. This will be one among other vehicles that will enable our staff to tap into the largest demographic force in the world today as we rally behind our vision of life in all its fullness for every girl and boy.

The study sought to address two questions:

- What is the understanding in relation to children's rights to participate in collective decision-making within academia, practice and policy?
- How can World Vision use this understanding to strengthen children and young people's participation from both a development and an advocacy perspective?

The research is based on two main sources of information. The first involved an extensive literature review with an emphasis on theories and models of children's and young

people's participation, including a review of lessons learned from existing practices. The second analyses the results from a survey of six world-leading participation experts in the United Kingdom and the United States of America, both academics and international independent consultants. This research adds to previous World Vision contributions to this field in collaboration with other child-focused agencies, such as the 'Toolkit for Monitoring and Evaluating Children's Participation', which was produced alongside The Concerned for Working Children, Plan International, Save the Children and UNICEF.

We hope that this study will provide a solid rationale as we continue to work towards shifting the preconceptions of children as passive subjects or mere recipients of aid towards the reality of children as active agents. Children and young people are not only capable of proposing and joining in the implementation of solutions to problems that affect them; they are a necessary part of these solutions. This approach will certainly lead towards discovering paths of innovation in addressing poverty, in partnership with children and young people.

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## CONTENTS

<b>Foreword</b> .....	i
<b>List of abbreviations</b> .....	1
<b>Executive summary</b> .....	2
<b>Part 1. Understanding children’s and young people’s participation rights</b> .....	4
1.1 Evolution of children’s and young people’s participation rights from the UNCRC .....	4
1.2 Why is it important to involve children and young people? .....	6
1.3 What is children’s and young people’s participation? .....	7
1.4 Challenges in implementing children’s and young people’s participation .....	9
1.5 Impacts of children’s and young people’s participation .....	13
1.6 Legislation and policymaking on children’s and young people’s participation rights .....	15
<b>Part 2. Theory and practice on children’s and young people’s participation</b> .....	18
2.1 Theories on children’s and young people’s participation .....	18
2.2 Examples of children’s and young people’s participation and lessons learned from practice .....	26
<b>Part 3. What’s next? General and specific recommendations</b> .....	31
3.1 General recommendations .....	31
3.2 Specific recommendations .....	32
<b>References</b> .....	35



## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CRC/C/GC	Committee on the Rights of the Child link to General Comments
CESESMA	<i>Centro de Servicios Educativos en Salud y Medio Ambiente</i>
CRC	Committee on the Rights of the Child
IAWGCP	Inter-Agency Working Group on Children's Participation
ILO	International Labour Organization
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations Commissioner for Human Rights
ROSA	UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia
SOWC	State of the World's Children
UN	United Nations
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Fund
UPR	Universal Periodic Review
WHO	World Health Organization
WV	World Vision



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report is drawn from a study that was based on an extensive literature review with an emphasis on theories and models of children's and young people's participation, including a review of existing practices and lessons learned. Additionally, a survey was sent to six world-leading experts on participation in the UK and the USA (academics and international independent consultants) to learn from their experiences for the recommendations.

Part 1 acknowledges that the right to participation of children and young people is innovative and progressive; however, at the same time it remains controversial and difficult to implement. Despite considerable interest in children's and young people's participation, in practice there are still numerous barriers. To help us better understand children's and young people's participation rights, the report considers the evolution of children's and young people's participation rights since the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC); why it is important to involve children and young people in participation; what children's and young people's participation means; challenges in implementing children's and young people's participation; impacts of children's and young people's participation; and the legislation and policy on children's and young people's participation.

The Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC) defines the term *participation* as an ongoing dialogue in which children and young people express their views and are actively involved in decision-making at different levels in all matters that concern them. It entails information sharing and dialogue between children and young people, and adults, based on mutual respect and power sharing. It is important that children either have the power or share the power with adults to decide both on the process and the outcome.

Moreover, Article 12 of the UNCRC states that a child's view should be given due weight in all matters affecting the child, according to the child's age and maturity (consistent with their evolving capacity). Thus, Article 12 means not only the right to be heard but also the right to be considered seriously when decisions are taken. However, it does not mean that children and young people have their opinions accepted automatically. They are not 'outcome determinant', but they can inform and influence the decision-making process.

Finally, the report suggests that reviewing organisational structure might be one option for child-focused organisations to implement better children's and young people's participation. Creating safe spaces might be part of the solution, enabling staff members to share their anxieties or difficulties around implementing participation projects with children and young people.

Part 2 indicates theoretical positions and models that inform the understanding of children and young people and their roles in public decision-making. Insights from the debate related to childhood studies theory, children as citizens, notions of space and accountability, and details of the different models of children's and young people's participation help to explain and understand children's and young people's 'public' or collective participation in decision-making.

One of the discussions in relation to children's citizenship theory demonstrates that children and young people may still depend on adults and that they do not have the right to vote in most of the countries. However, children and young people need to be accepted as members of the citizen community. Children and young people are not 'becoming' citizens but are 'being' citizens, here and now. This does not mean that children and young people have the same rights as adults, but they should be respected and listened to as social beings who have valuable contributions to make. Thus, citizenship seems possible for children and young people, once everyone (child, youth or adult) is recognised as interdependent rather than an artificial construct of the autonomous, rational individual. With the recognition that power is expressed rather than possessed, recognising children's and young people's citizenship can result in sharing and increasing power (rather than being in conflict) with adults. This requires adult attitudes to shift, to respect and support children's and young people's citizenship.

Furthermore, in the absence of a right to vote for children and young people, a right to non-electoral public participation has to be acknowledged in order to secure their participation in public decision-making. For example, supporting child-led organisations to raise policymakers' awareness about children's and young people's issues in the local community is one of the solutions. It could lead to children's citizenship becoming a 'lived' experience rather than a 'performed' experience.



However, having a space is not enough to make political actors accountable. The role of adult as facilitator is one of the means to ensure accountability between the collective of children and young people and the authorities, even if it is not sufficient. Indeed, adult organisation and staff members need also to be reflective and more critical about how they work with children and young people.

Finally, the report describes examples and learnings from child-led organisations such as the children's councils in Tanzania, the Makkala Panchayats in South India, and the experiences of children and young people in Nicaragua. Children and young people have identified issues from their daily lives and determined how to influence policymakers with the support of adults.

Part 3 focuses on recommendations for ways forward.

For international non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and NGOs working on children's and young people's participation, it presents a list of seven points developed as general recommendations for strategy:

- promoting a human rights-based approach
- supporting cultural and value shifts
- implementing children's participation in the different programmes and sectors

- increasing support for active children's citizenship rights and engagement in advocacy work
- encouraging accountability and showing impacts on children's participation
- advocating for children's and young people's participation
- fostering collaborative efforts amongst child-focused agencies.

For regional and country-level actors, it offers four recommendations:

- promoting institutionalisation of children's and young people's participation
- working with adults who are engaged with children and young people
- involving children and young people including the most marginalised, at different decision-making levels
- advocating for children's and young people's participation at the government level.



## PART I. UNDERSTANDING CHILDREN'S AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S PARTICIPATION RIGHTS

Children's and young people's participation is not a new phenomenon. Historically children and young people<sup>1</sup> have participated at different levels within their homes, schools, at work and in wars (United Nations International Children's Fund [UNICEF], State of the World's Children [SOWC] 2003: 3). Two significant developments have led to major changes in children's and young people's participation. The first was the new conceptualisation of childhood (James and Prout, 1990) that has challenged traditional explanations of childhood. The second was the introduction of children's and young people's participation as a right with the adoption of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) in 1989.

The 'new' sociology of childhood perceives children as socially constructed, social actors. With the introduction of participation as a right, children and young people have the right to take part in decision-making processes in all matters that affect them individually and as a group (Article 12 UNCRC). With the UNCRC, children and young people have the right to influence decisions regarding their life within families, schools, local communities, public services and wider government policy (United Nations [UN] document CRC/C/GC/12, 2009).

However, children and young people do not appear to be involved and engaged fully within the adult-constructed or adult-dominated societies. The research of Stern (2006) indicates that the status of children and young people has not changed considerably. A child 'being seen and not heard' is still the best description of the child's social status and position in many societies (Stern 2006: 135). The element of power in the decision-making process still dominates adult and child relations at every level. A range of policy and practical initiatives has been developed in different countries largely with the aim of improving opportunities for children's and young people's participation in decision-making. Despite these advances, 25 years after the adoption of the UNCRC, the practical implementation of meaningful, effective and sustainable participation of children still remains questionable.

The right to participation of children and young people is innovative and progressive; however, at the same time it remains controversial and difficult to implement. Despite considerable interest in children's and young people's participation, in practice there are still numerous barriers. To help us better understand children's and young people's participation rights, this section will consider the evolution of children's and young people's participation rights since the UNCRC. It will explore (1) why it is important to involve children and young people in participation; (2) what is children's and young people's participation? (3) challenges in implementing children's and young people's participation; (4) impacts; and (5) legislation and policy.

It is important to highlight that this study focuses on participation as a group (collective decision-making) and not on individual participation. This study does not have a particular focus on any judicial and administrative proceedings contained within UNCRC Article 12.2.<sup>2</sup>

### 1.1 EVOLUTION OF CHILDREN'S AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S PARTICIPATION RIGHTS FROM THE UNCRC

This section summarises the evolution of children's and young people's participation rights from the UNCRC in 1989 to 2014.

The UNCRC is the first legal instrument to recognise participatory rights for children and young people. In fact, both the 1924 and 1959 versions of the Declaration of the Rights of the Child did not mention the right to be heard. The first draft of the UNCRC proposed by Poland in 1978 was a reformulation of the 1959 Declaration of the Rights of the Child. It was in the form of a convention, covering the protection and provision of children. Colombia, which was part of the working group for the draft, suggested that state parties developing programmes for children 'should consider children as active participating members of society' (Office of the United Nations Commissioner for Human Rights [OHCHR], 2007: 56).

<sup>1</sup> In this document, the term 'children and young people' is used to refer to the age group under of 18 years old, as defined by the UNCRC.

This term respects the reality that many older children prefer the category 'young people' to 'children'. This document may use 'children' when referring particularly to childhood studies and children's rights, and when using quotations.

<sup>2</sup> Article 12.2: '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 national law.'





The UNCRC introduces the right to be heard with Article 12.1:

State 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.

Article 12 needs to be interpreted in conjunction with Article 5 (direction and guidance of parents or guardians in the exercise of children's rights). It also needs to be understood in light of Articles 13–17, which refer to freedom of expression (13); thought, conscience and religion (14); association and peaceful assembly (15); the right to privacy (16); and information (17).

The UNCRC was unanimously accepted by the General Assembly without a vote and was the most rapidly and widely ratified international treaty (Burman, 1996). There are observations that the UNCRC's wide appeal was due to the key role played by UNICEF in the drafting process from 1986 and the involvement of 40 NGOs (Twum-Danso, 2008). However, Bentley (2005: 109) notes that despite the UNCRC being the most ratified human rights convention, 'children remain among the most marginalised and abused human beings on earth'. Bentley argues that this is because in the spirit of post-Cold War internationalism and global acceptance, countries ratified the convention without thinking about its implementation and likely consequences.

Another important historical moment regarding children's and young people's participation was the second Special Session on Children, held by the General Assembly in May 2002 in New York.<sup>3</sup> This Special Session was the first to focus exclusively on children's and young people's issues. Government officials, children, young people and representatives of NGOs attended the event. Skelton (2007: 172) explains that at the conclusion of the General Assembly a promise was made to build 'a world fit for children'. The promise was as follows:

To develop and implement programs to promote meaningful participation by children, including adolescents, in decision-making processes, including in families and schools and at the local and national levels. (General Assembly Resolution, 2002: para. 32(1))

This promise revealed that state parties could not make a world fit for children without working with children and enabling their participation. This event for UNICEF (and the UN) was seen as a milestone in putting the understanding of the UNCRC regarding children's participation into practice (Skelton, 2007: 171).

UN agencies along with UNICEF and international development agencies such as Save the Children and Plan International declared their commitment to embed children's participation in their programmes (Boyden and Ennew, 1997; Save the Children Fund 2001). Over the years these organisations have developed tools to understand the concept of participation better. Books, manuals, training initiatives, practice standards, workshops and the appointment of staff to promote participation in the programmes have been developed. For example, Lansdown (2001) elaborated a document named 'Promoting Children's Participation in Democratic Decision-Making' for UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre in Florence. Characteristics of effective and genuine participation are mentioned by the UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia (ROSA) in a document named 'Wheel of Change: Children and Young People's Participation in South Asia' (2004). Save the Children Alliance (2005) developed seven standards on child participation to improve staff practice. The 2005 UN Study on Violence against Children showed the world that children and young people are taking action to stop violence by voicing their opinions. UNICEF also took the step to set up a Global Secretary on Children and Youth Participation at its headquarters. The purpose of this Global Secretary was to look at processes such as a global forum at the 'Junior 8' summit, international conferences and how children's participation could be institutionalised within UNICEF programming.<sup>4</sup> The Inter-Agency Working Group on Children's Participation (IAWGCP) worked on two documents:<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup> The first Special Session on Children was held in 1990 after the adoption of the UNCRC by the UN General Assembly in 1989.

<sup>4</sup> Sessions have been organised by UNICEF alongside G8 meetings.

<sup>5</sup> ECPAT International, Knowing Children, Plan International, Save the Children Sweden, Save the Children UK, UNICEF and World Vision



- 'Minimum Standards for Consulting Children and Young People' (IAWGCP, 2007)
- 'Children as Active Citizens: A Policy and Programme Guide' (IAWGCP, 2008).

From these advances it is evident that international development agencies have been developing materials for operationalising participation. However, as Hinton (2008: 287) points out, 'The pace of promoting children's participation raised cultural concerns'. The diversity of local contexts worldwide makes the implementation difficult.

In 2006, the Committee on the Rights of the Child held a day of general discussion on 'the right of the child to be heard' to explore the meaning and significance of Article 12, to develop good practices and to identify gaps.<sup>6</sup> As a result of this discussion, the General Comment on the Right of the Child to Be Heard was published in 2009 (CRC/C/GC/12).<sup>7</sup> With this General Comment the Committee on the Rights of the Child clarifies the term of participation as follows:

Ongoing processes, which include information-sharing and dialogue between children and adults based on mutual respect, and in which children can learn how their views and those of adults are taken into account and shape the outcome of such processes. (CRC/C/GC/12 para 3)

This General Comment was followed by the resource guide 'Every Child's Right to Be Heard' to assist with monitoring (Lansdown, 2011). In addition a toolkit was developed and published in February 2014 that included six booklets for monitoring and evaluating children's participation (Lansdown and O'Kane, 2014). Several World Vision offices were part of this pilot.<sup>8</sup> Recently, an Optional Protocol setting out a complaints procedure for children's rights violations entered into force on 14 April 2014. It enables the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child to examine complaints from children and their representatives that allege violations of their rights (General Assembly Resolution, 2012). To date, only 11 countries have ratified this Optional Protocol.<sup>9</sup>

Since the inception of the UNCRC the key dates and resources for World Vision on children's participation are the General Comment 2009 which gives a complete interpretation on the 'Right of the Child to Be Heard'; the resource guide 'Every Child Has a Right to Be Heard', published in 2011 to monitor the General Comment 2009; and 'A Toolkit for Monitoring and Evaluating Children's Participation' (Lansdown and O'Kane, 2014).

## 1.2 WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO INVOLVE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE?

There are many reasons for involving children and young people. Lansdown and O'Kane (2014, booklet 1:5–6) summarise the key benefits of involving children and young people in participation as follows:

- The active engagement of girls and boys provides information on, and insights into, their lives that can inform legislation, policies, budget allocations and services, and can lead to the best possible outcomes across a range of rights, including health, education and family life.
- Empowered children can become active and effective advocates for the realisation of their own rights.
- Children acquire skills, knowledge, competencies and confidence through participation. It therefore enhances their development and contributes to the aims of education outlined in Article 29; their optimum development in accordance with Article 6; and their capacities to exercise their rights consistent with Article 5.
- Participation leads to better protection. Children who are silenced and passive can be abused by adults with relative impunity. Providing children with information, encouraging them to articulate their concerns, and introducing safe and accessible mechanisms for challenging violence and abuse are key strategies for providing effective protection. Children who have access to information about health and sexuality are

<sup>6</sup> See <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/CRC/Pages/DiscussionDays.aspx>.

<sup>7</sup> The General Comment is an interpretation of the content of human rights on thematic issues but is not legally binding.

<sup>8</sup> WV Ghana, WV Zambia and WV West Africa Region.

<sup>9</sup> See <http://www.childrightsconnect.org/index.php/connect-with-the-un-2/op3-crc>.



better able to protect themselves from unwanted pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, and HIV. Child workers who form and join associations may be able to protect themselves better against exploitation and abuse by their employers.

- Participation promotes civic engagement and active citizenship. Through participating in discussions about matters that concern them, children can acquire the capacity to contribute to building peaceful and democratic societies that respect human rights. Participation contributes to a culture of respect in which decision-making is undertaken through negotiation rather than conflict.
- Participation helps to build accountability and promote good governance. It is a means through which governments and other duty bearers can be held to account. Recognising children's right to be heard can make an important contribution towards more transparent and open government.

In summary, based on the information above, participation recognises that children and young people are experts in the issues of their own lives; it empowers them; they can acquire skills, knowledge, competencies and confidence; it can lead to a better protection for them; it can encourage civic engagement and active citizenship, and finally, it can assist to build accountability and promote good governance.

### 1.3 WHAT IS CHILDREN'S AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S PARTICIPATION?

This section provides a brief discussion on the concept of children's and young people's participation and attempts to clarify the concept.

#### Why is it confusing?

First, definitions of *participation* are varied. Amongst the definitions there is a continuum, from 'taking part' to activities synonymous with self-determination and autonomy (Crowley, 2012: 2). According to Thomas (2012: 463), the term *children's and young people's participation* can include 'a wide range of different phenomena in different social settings: private and public, structured and unstructured, formal and informal'.

Second, authors have discussed the *normative nature* attributed to participation. For example, Sotkasiira et al. (2010: 176) argue that 'participation is a fuzzy and multifaceted concept that needs clarification.' Teamey and Hinton (2014) refer to Leal (2010), who claims participation is a recurring 'buzzword' of the development industry that brings different meanings and determines values within different organisations and communities.

Sinclair (2004) argues that participation is a complex activity, which is often oversimplified by those seeking to implement it. Sinclair (2004: 111) further argues that the reasons for engaging children and young people need to be clarified from adults' perspectives. Thomas (2012) notes:

One problem with children's participation, both in practice and in theory, is that it is too often described in non-conflictual terms: as if all that is required is for children and adults to sit down and talk together, and all will be well. (463)

Other authors have proposed the use of words such as *empowerment*, *negotiation* or *partnership* to demonstrate more strongly the involvement of children and young people (Hinton, 2008: 287). Regarding the participation of children and young people to date, Lansdown explains that 'the last 20 years have been a period of both advocacy to promote and legitimate the concept of participation, and exploration of strategies for translating it into practice' (2010: 34).

Third, the convention does not define the concept of participation, nor does it mention the words *participation rights of the child* in any particular article (UN document CRC/C/GC/12 para 3). However, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (international experts who monitor the UNCRC) include the term *participation* in the 3P's of the UNCRC (provision, protection and participation rights). They also include it as a key principle of the convention along with Article 2 (non-discrimination), Article 3 (best interests of the child) and Article 6 (the right to life, survival and development).

Fourth, another misunderstanding as outlined in a comparative study (Butler et al., 2009: 171) is that 'some children confused rights with the things they want (doing what they want to do)'. Another point is raised by Orama (2009: 6) in relation to reactions from adults, 'child



participation has caused negative reactions because in giving a voice to children, adults feel a threat towards their own authority'.

Finally, there is also confusion regarding the right *not* to participate. On this point the Committee on the Rights of the Child confirms that 'expressing views is a choice for the child, not an obligation' (CRC/C/GC/12 para 16). According to Percy-Smith and Thomas:

Not everyone is, or wants to be, a leader or to be involved in the same way, but there should be scope for all children to make a contribution in whatever way they feel appropriate according to their own inclinations, interests and capacities. (2010: 362)

As explained above, the concept of the right to participate for children and young people has many interpretations and can be confusing. However, the characteristics described by Percy-Smith and Thomas (2010) highlight that participation needs to come from children and young people themselves.

### What are children's and young people's participation rights?

Article 12 states that a child's view should be given due weight in all matters affecting the child, according to the child's age and maturity (consistent with the child's evolving capacity). Therefore, Article 12 means not only the right to be heard but also to be considered seriously when decisions are taken (Krappmann, 2010: 512). However, it does not mean that children and young people have their opinions accepted automatically (UNICEF, 2003: 4). In other words, respecting children's and young people's views does not mean that they can do or say whatever they want (Lansdown, 2011: 82). They are not 'outcome-determinant', but they can inform and influence the decision-making process (Couzens, 2012: 697).

Woodhead goes further and notes that is not only about listening to and taking into account the opinions of children and young people:

Participation isn't just about adults 'allowing' children to offer their perspectives, according to an adults' view of their 'evolving capacities', their 'age and maturity' or their 'best interests'. It can also involve young people confronting adult authority, challenging adult assumptions about their competence to speak and make decisions about issues that concern them. (Woodhead, 2010, xxii)

Thomas (2012: 463) suggests that participation is not just about talk, or 'voice', but about shared action among children, young people and adults (see also Percy-Smith, 2006; 2010; Percy-Smith and Thomas, 2010). Moreover, as Tisdall (2014) explains, 'Participation is not static, but does indeed involve relationships over time and spaces'.

The UNCRC brings child development ideas into children's rights with the notion of 'evolving capacity' in Article 5.<sup>10</sup> This article states that parents and legal guardians have to provide guidance and at the same time respect children's and young people's evolving capacity to make their own decisions and form their own views (Lansdown, 2005: 6). Lansdown further argues, 'The more the child himself or herself knows, has experience and understands, the more the parent, legal guardian or other persons legally responsible for the child must allow the child to exercise those rights for himself or herself' (2011: 37). These rights include the right of freedom of expression, religion, conscience and association (Lansdown 2010: 13). In addition, Percy-Smith and Thomas note:

Opportunities for participation at an early age enable children to develop and mature through taking on responsibility and learning to make wise choices, to interact and hear different views. (2010: 361)

The involvement of children in participation at an early age is also emphasised in the General Comment on implementing child rights in early childhood (CRC/C/GC/7 para 14).

The General Comment on the right to be heard also underlines that the right to participate applies to all children who can form views, however young. The committee also stressed that 'it is not necessary that

<sup>10</sup> Article 5: 'States Parties shall respect the responsibilities, rights and duties of parents or, where applicable, the members of the extended family or community as provided for by local custom, legal guardians or other persons legally responsible for the child, to provide, in a manner consistent with the evolving capacities of the child, appropriate direction and guidance in the exercise by the child of the rights recognized in the present Convention'.



the child has comprehensive knowledge of all aspects of the matter affecting her or him, but that she or he has sufficient understanding to be capable of appropriately forming her or his own views on the matter' (CRC/C/GC/12 para 21). Indeed, an understanding of children should not be based on their age, but on the development of their capacity to form a view that is determined by information, experience, environment, and social and cultural expectations (CRC/C/GC/12 para 29).

The Committee on the Rights of the Child clarifies the term *participation* as follows:

Ongoing processes, which include information-sharing and dialogue between children and adults based on mutual respect, and in which children can learn how their views and those of adults are taken into account and shape the outcome of such processes. (CRC/C/GC/12 para 3)

The committee adds:

The concept of participation emphasises that including children should not only be a momentary act, but the starting point for an intense exchange between children and adults on the development of policies, programs and measures in all relevant contexts of children's lives. (CRC/C/GC/12 para 13)

The committee has also pointed out that the right to participate applies to all areas of their lives from families, schools, local communities and public services to wider government policy (CRC/C/GC/12). Therefore, participation is seen in both the private sphere (family) and public spheres (local communities, local and national government policymaking).

Furthermore, the committee talks about implementation of the right to be heard in settings such as in the family, health care, education and school, the workplace, play, sports and cultural activities. It also goes beyond these settings and talks about its implementation in situations such as violence, the development of prevention strategies, emergency situations and national and international settings (CRC/C/GC/12 paras 89–131).

The committee points out that the clause 'affecting the child' was introduced in order to make it clear that 'no general political mandate was intended' (CRC/C/GC/12 para 27). However, it is not just applicable to matters

that directly concern children and young people but to all matters affecting them. This means that it might involve adults or other children regarding measures taken by a state, such as planning laws, schooling, transportation, budget expenditure, urban planning, poverty reduction or social protection (Tobin, 2013: 429–30; see also Lansdown 2011: 22).

Article 12 states that a child's view should be given due weight in all matters affecting the child, according to the child's age and maturity. This does not mean that children and young people can tell their parents or adults what to do. What it does mean is that children and young people have the right to express an opinion and to have that opinion taken into account in any matters affecting them (individually and as a group).

The right to express a view is not limited by age and children and young people do not need to have all the knowledge, but rather enough understanding to participate in the discussion. Therefore, no matter what their age, children and young people should participate. However, the level of decision will vary according the age and evolving capacity. As highlighted by scholars and the General Comment on implementing child rights in early childhood, participation should start at an early age.

Article 5 of the UNCRC could also be applied to adults working with children and young people as a way to accompany the latter in the process. Nevertheless, one of the difficulties of participation is to ask staff members to work outside their comfort zones in engaging with children and young people. The question of adults as facilitators in the process needs to be analysed.

#### 1.4 CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTING CHILDREN'S AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S PARTICIPATION

This section emphasises two elements: organisational structure to implement children's and young people's participation, and the confusion between participation and consultation.

##### The debate about organisational structure

Sinclair raises the question of how to move beyond one-off or isolated consultations to a position where children's participation is firmly embedded within organisational cultures and structures for decision-making to offer



genuine participation to children that is not an add-on but an integral part of the way adults and organisations relate to children (Sinclair 2004: 116).

This section explores the concept of organisational change through examining the hierarchy in the organisation, the capacity building of staff and the creation of a 'reflection space'.

### Organisational change

O'Kane (2007: 236) observes that in the literature on children's and young people's participation, culture has been seen as a stumbling block to implementing children's participation. This is especially the case when the values and practices of local people, such as parents, discourage children's and young people's active engagement. However, for Hart et al. (2011: 331), the values and practices of the organisations that promote participation have been less examined. This conclusion is drawn from analysing a four-year process by Save the Children Denmark aimed at developing children and young people as stakeholders in the organisation's work. This study showed that

engaging children as 'stakeholders' in development thus requires consideration of and changes to both the values, beliefs, and assumptions ('culture') and the procedures, systems, and practices ('structure') of an organisation. (Hart et al., 2011: 331)

A discussion about organisational change is necessary for the promotion of children's and young people's participation (Elsley and Tisdall, 2014). The National Youth Agency in the United Kingdom has worked on considering organisational change in order to support children's and young people's participation in services.<sup>11</sup> They developed the 'Hear by Right Standards Framework' to encourage the sustained and effective participation of children and young people (Badham and Wade, 2010).

The seven standards that facilitate the improvement in an organisation are shared values, strategies, structures, systems, staff, skills and knowledge, and style of leadership. The shared values are at the centre of the framework; each standard depends on the other to move forward and bring change in an organisation. For instance, to illustrate the staff standard, 'recruitment and selection, induction, supervision and appraisal are all important ways to help

bring about change in an organisation' (Badham and Wade, 2010: 15). They add that the organisation 'needs to be honest about what can and cannot be changed and what the limitations are due to the organisation's responsibilities' (Badham and Wade, 2010: 11).

Another research finding in Scotland (Elsley and Tisdall, 2014) emphasises the structure of organisations as an influencing factor on how participation works. The authors go on to say that 'internal organisational "energy" was necessary to maintain commitment, problem solve and make sure that children's and young people's participation in policy-making was sustainable' and that having the support of the chief executive of the organisation was essential (Elsley and Tisdall, 2014:3).

### Hierarchy in the organisation

An organisation that operates with a strong hierarchy in which staff on the lower rungs do not feel able to voice their concerns faces a potential contradiction in this respect and is likely to find the progress of its work hampered as a result. (Hart et al., 2004: 59)

Hart et al. (2004) go on to say that the promotion of children's participation begins with each staff member. They conclude that 'paternalistic organisations can't make children's participation work' (2004: 59).

One of the learnings from the work of Hart et al. (2011: 338) with Save the Children Denmark is to avoid considering 'the local staff as functionaries with technical tasks rather than as partners with knowledge, insight and experience that could enhance programming.' To expand on this, if local staff, parents and adults do not feel they are involved in the process, how can they ensure children and young people are involved?

### Capacity building of staff

Ways of working often need to be changed to promote children's and young people's participation. Orama (2009: 6) argues that, 'adult professionals tend to take for granted that they know what is in the best interest of children, often without even asking the children concerned'. Staff selected to work specifically on participatory programming with children and young people need to demonstrate relevant attitudes and sensitivity (Hart et al., 2004: 59).

<sup>11</sup> See <http://www.nya.org.uk/quality/hear-by-right>.



As indicated in 'A Toolkit for Monitoring and Evaluating Children's Participation' (Lansdown and O'Kane, 2014):

Staff must have the knowledge and capacity to facilitate children's meaningful participation. This may involve training and preparation prior to engaging children in activities, as well as ongoing support as required (Lansdown and O'Kane, 2014, booklet 3: 18).

Another point in the work of Hart et al. (2011: 335) is that capacity building involves two elements: technical expertise as well as personal values and behaviour. Therefore, the individual development of staff members is essential to bring about change. Badham and Wade (2010: 15) goes further in encouraging not only capacity building of staff members, but also improving recruitment, selection, supervision and assessment.

### Creating a reflection space

Creating a reflection space is another suggested mechanism to improve the organisational culture around child participation. As part of the research in Scotland (Elsley and Tisdall, 2014), participants suggested having a forum or space in which to share their own learning and experiences with other agencies. They observed that there were no appropriate places to express what is effective in participation practice. However, for Arora-Jonsson and Cornwall (2006), one also needs to be aware that

creating space for reflection – space where people can test out and acquire new ideas, and gain new perspectives on routine activities – may be counter-cultural in many development organisations. But such reflective spaces can provide a way of fostering the kind of responsiveness that is ever more important in the world of contemporary aid. (Arora-Jonsson and Cornwall, 2006: 92)

Hart et al. pinpoint that 'organisational change towards the greater effectiveness of participatory development initiatives with children inevitably involves reflexivity' (2011: 341). In addition, the resource guide 'Every Child's Right to Be Heard' suggests that 'staff are able to express any views or anxieties about involving children, in the expectation that these will be addressed in a constructive way' (Lansdown, 2011: 155).

In conclusion, to look at the organisational structure might be one option to implement better children's and young people's participation. Creating safe spaces might be part of the solution, enabling staff to share their anxieties or difficulties around implementing participation projects with children and young people. In fact, children and young people are usually keen to participate. However, the issue might be more related to staff members if the organisation is running with a paternalistic approach.

### Confusion between participation and consultation

There exists significant confusion between participation and consultation. Hill et al. (2004: 83) describe consultation as 'seeking views' and participation as 'the direct involvement of children in decision-making'. Consultation could be seen in two ways, either as a subcategory of participation or as a separate category (Thomas, 2007: 199). Shier goes further in saying that in consultation, children and young people 'do not participate at the stage where decisions are actually made' (2001: 113–14). Lansdown (2011: 119) adds, 'ad hoc, one-off initiatives are not sufficient to give effect to a sustained and effective opportunity for children and young people to inform or influence the decisions that affect their lives.' In other words, these types of initiatives amount to consultation but not dialogue (Barnardo's Scotland, 2011). Lansdown (2010) also explains in her participation models the differences among consultation, collaborative participation and child-led organisation (see part 2, 1–3).

According to the UNCRC Committee, the concept of participation

should not only be a momentary act, but the starting point for an intense exchange between children and adults on the development of policies, programs and measures in all relevant contexts of children's lives. (CRC/C/GC/12 para 13)

It is important to note that consultation can take place without necessarily having any impact (Tisdall and Davis, 2004). Shier notes that 'there is no point in enabling children to express their views if they are not going to be taken into account' (2001: 113), for example, if a 'tick box' exercise is conducted without any real change taking place (Tisdall, 2008: 422; Tisdall et al., 2008: 350). Similarly,



activities labelled 'participation' seem to proliferate, especially when activities match the agendas of adults' organisations and those of funders, policymakers or government settings (Tisdall, 2008: 422).

One of the explanations given by White and Choudhury (2010: 45) is that: 'child rights NGOs felt increasing pressure to "produce" children's participation, particularly in their advocacy activities, to demonstrate their own internal and external legitimacy.' However, Lansdown (2014, booklet 3: 5) highlights that consultative participation can also be significant as it allows children and young people to express their views, especially in a research project, planning processes, in developing legislation, policy or services, or in decision affecting individual children and young people in the family and in health care or education services. Moreover, taking the example of a research project with children and young people, Lansdown explains about how a consultative process can be collaborative (2014, booklet 3: 8).

Tisdall (2014) summarizes the literature on challenges for children's and young people's participation in different countries and contexts:<sup>12</sup>

1. **Tokenism.** Children and young people may be consulted, but their views have no discernible impact on decisions. The policy process often leaves insufficient time to involve children and young people meaningfully.
2. **Lack of feedback.** Children and young people are asked to participate, but they do not know what has happened with their contributions.
3. **Who is included or excluded.** Some children and young people risk being 'over-consulted', too frequently asked for their views, and become frustrated at the lack of subsequent action. Other children and young people are never reached by participation activities. Some children and young people are only invited to participate on certain topics; for example, disabled children and young people have expressed frustration at being consulted only about issues around their disability. The children and young people consulted are often presumed to be speaking on behalf of their peers, although they are not supported to be representative in this way.

4. **Consultation but not dialogue.** Children and young people are frequently consulted in one-off activities but are not involved over time in ongoing, respectful dialogue.
5. **Adult processes and structures exclude children and young people.** Children's and young people's participation is frequently not integrated into how policy decisions are made, implemented and evaluated. It is seen as a specialist activity and not a mainstream one. As a result, children's and young people's participation can be side-lined if their advice and recommendations run counter to views of other more powerful groups.
6. **Lack of sustainability.** Funding for children's and young people's participation is frequently short term. As a result, staff may move on, the groups dissipate and the participative process stop.

In addition, Shier (2010a: 24) combines categorisations and tensions to understand the problems linked to participation in the United Kingdom and in Nicaragua. Shier describes 15 tensions in three groups that emerged from a comparative study of child participation practitioners in these two countries. The first group includes tensions between participation as social control and participation as empowerment. The second group illustrates tensions specific to children as a social group. The third group includes tensions of process versus product. A summary of the 15 tensions is underlined below from Shier's article (2010a).

#### **Group 1: Participation as control and participation as empowerment**

- Tension 1: The child as consumer versus the child as activist
- Tension 2: Government agendas versus children's agenda
- Tension 3: Consultation versus shared decision-making
- Tension 4: 'Invited spaces' versus 'popular spaces'
- Tension 5: Reactive participation versus pro-active participation
- Tension 6: Manipulated voices versus autonomous voices

<sup>12</sup> From the list extracted from Barnardo's Scotland (2011).





Tension 7: Legitimising the existing power structure versus challenging it

Tension 8: A public service framework versus a rights framework

**Group 2: Tensions specific to children as a social group**

Tension 9: 'Youth participation' versus 'children's participation'

Tension 10: Mimicking adult structures versus inventing new ones

Tension 11: Child protection versus child empowerment

Tension 12: Local and close-to-home versus national and global participation

Tension 13: Extrinsic motivation versus intrinsic motivation

**Group 3: Process versus product**

Tension 14: Getting a quick result versus including everybody

Tension 15: One-off projects versus long-term development

In conclusion, consultation can be seen in two ways, either as a subcategory of participation, or as a separate category. The model of Lansdown (2010) on the categorisation of participation clarifies this by making the difference between consultation and children's and young people's engagement. Participation means not only to have a say, but how children, young people and adults work together. The six points mentioned by Tisdall describe the current challenges in relation to how children's and young people's participation has been implemented so far. With the 15 tensions highlighted by Shier, practitioners can reflect on their practice to understand the challenges linked to children's and young people's participation in the Global North and Global South.

## I.5 IMPACTS OF CHILDREN'S AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S PARTICIPATION

In accordance with Article 12, views of the child and the young person are given 'due weight', and therefore it is expected that there will be some impact resulting from children's and young people's views. Indeed, 'simply listening to the child is insufficient; the views of the child have to be seriously considered' (CRC/C/GC/12 para 28). Hart (2008) highlights that children's participation in community development focuses more on activities and processes than on accountability and impact.

This section discusses the impact of children's and young people's participation through looking at the notion of transformative participation and how to measure this participation through different tools.

### Transformative participation

According to Tisdall et al. (2014), one of the frustrations across contexts and countries is 'focusing on process rather than impact, so that children and young people may have positive experiences of involvement but their views have little to no impact on decision-making'. In such situations, although evidence has shown that the children and young people participating have benefited from the activities through increasing self-confidence, knowledge, skills and networks, no real changes affecting their lives in society seem to have been visible (Hart, 2008: 416).

In the same way Hart describes participation as follows: 'the process of sharing decisions which affect one's life and the life of the community in which one lives' (1992: 5). However, for Tisdall et al. (2014) this definition focuses on children's and young people's participation in everyday lives and in communities, but the impact of participation is missing.

Hart gives some explanations regarding changes at the individual and at societal levels based on other scholars:

While children's and young people's empowerment and the transformation of their lives are clearly elaborated as aims of participatory initiatives, the connection between immediate changes that individual participants experience and broader process of societal change has been considered only intermittently. (Hart 2008: 409)



White uses the term *empowerment* to describe transformative participation as follows:

The idea of participation as empowerment is that the practical experience of being involved in considering options, making decisions, and taking collective action to fight injustice is itself transformative. It leads on to greater consciousness of what makes and keeps people poor, and greater confidence in their ability to make a difference. (White, 1996: 8–9)

According to Tisdall the phrase 'transformative participation' raises at least two questions: transformations for whom and transformation for what?

Transformation for those involved, such as extending skills, experiences and networks of children and young people, and changed relationships between children, young people and adults; transformation as a product of these activities, for example influencing a particular decision; and broad societal transformation due to the accumulated combination of the first two. (Tisdall, 2013: 190)

In addition, Sotkasiira et al. (2010: 181) introduce the concept of effective participation, meaning participation that has an impact on the transformation of young people's living conditions and the acquisition of citizenship skills. They have developed the learning-based network approach in Finland. Confirming the transformative impact of effective participation on children's living conditions and citizenship skills, Le Borgne (2014) shares testimonies of 'graduate' members of a programme in Tamil Nadu (South India) who have been empowered and now have the potential to transform society. Indeed, in being involved in activities for eight years, their enthusiasm to contribute to society was greatly encouraged: 'All of them wish to be actors of change through being involved in politics, becoming NGO staff or in creating their own NGO'.

Their experience in the project had had an influence on their aspirations for their rest of their lives. Another example of such effective participation comes from a radio project in which children and young people took

on the role of reporters transgressing social conventions of communication in South Africa in engaging across generations. Meintjes observes that as a result of the project 'many adults argue that having been exposed to children's ability and insight, they have changed their practices when communicating with children' (Meintjes, 2014).

The Leverhulme academic network on children's and young people's participation, which involved the UK, Brazil, India and South Africa noted: 'We are still a long way from understanding the drivers of change to enable children's and young people's active contribution in society'. However, the role of adults must be considered, especially their role in the achievement of impact from participation, either assisting or blocking children's and young people's participation (Tisdall et al. 2014).

### Measurement of children's and young people's participation

The Committee on the Rights of the Child has also expressed that governments and organisations working to promote children's right to participate need to achieve effective, ethical and meaningful participation. For this, state parties need to integrate nine requirements into all legislative and other measures (UN Document CRC/C/GC/12 paras 133–34). These requirements are as follows:

1. transparent and informative
2. voluntary
3. respectful
4. relevant
5. child friendly
6. inclusive
7. supported by training for adults
8. safe and sensitive to risk
9. accountable

To measure what has been done in terms of participation and what has been achieved is another challenge. Following the publication of the handbook 'Every Child's Right to Be Heard', an 18-month international pilot project led by Lansdown and O'Kane was conducted in nine countries.<sup>13</sup> As a consequence, in February 2014, 'A Toolkit for Monitoring and Evaluating Children's Participation' was

<sup>13</sup> Nepal, India, Ghana, Zambia, Malawi, Guatemala, Ecuador, Nicaragua and Nigeria. The steering group committee for the project: The Concerned for Working Children, Office of the Special Representation on Violence Against Children, Participation Works, Plan International, Save the Children, UNICEF, World Vision.



published in six booklets (Lansdown and O'Kane, 2014). Twenty-five indicators were designed to monitor and measure children's and young people's participation in terms of structure, process and outcomes.

Similarly, the Council of Europe, following a recommendation (CM/REC(2012)2)<sup>14</sup> of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the participation of children and young people under 18 years of age, has recently developed a Child Participation Assessment Tool.<sup>15</sup> This aims to enable member states to monitor and measure progress in promoting the right of children and young people to participate in decision-making in matters of concern to them. It includes 10 indicators categorised as structural, process and/or outcomes, as developed by Lansdown and O'Kane (2014). This tool is still in the pilot study stage.

In 'A Toolkit for Monitoring and Evaluating Children's Participation' (Lansdown and O'Kane, 2014, booklet 5: 42–53) there are also examples of tools to be used by children and young people to collect data to measure outcomes and enhance the evidence base. Another example is highlighted in the UNICEF SOWC 2014 where young people from communities from Rio de Janeiro, Brazil and Port-au-Prince used mobile phones to collect data with the Geographic Information System application to take geotagged photos on neighbourhood issues.

According to the cross-country analysis project referred to above (Tisdall et al., 2014), organisations still focus on activities and process rather than impact. As a result, the views of children and young people have been seen to have little or no impact. It can be concluded that 'simply listening to the child is insufficient; the views of the child have to be seriously considered' (CRC/C/GC/12 para 28). To gain an effective, ethical and meaningful participation, the Committee on the Rights of the Child has defined nine standards to help governments and organisations working to promote children's right to participate. In 'A Toolkit for Monitoring and Evaluating Children's Participation' (Lansdown and O'Kane, 2014, booklet 3), a matrix to measure the nine requirements has been designed with questions to use as prompts to

measure whether or not the organisation has met these requirements.

'A Toolkit for Monitoring and Evaluating Children's Participation' (Lansdown and O'Kane, 2014) is the newest resource for monitoring and evaluation for children's and young people's participation in the development field. It is opportune that child-focused organisations integrate them in their monitoring and evaluation frameworks. However, this toolkit does not assist explicitly on how to create dialogue among children, young people and adults. It also does not explain how adults and children can work together or how adult organisations or decision makers enter into dialogue with children and young people.

## 1.6 LEGISLATION AND POLICYMAKING ON CHILDREN'S AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S PARTICIPATION RIGHTS

Realising children's right to participation requires the introduction of legislation to affirm or 'institutionalise' their entitlement; it is not sufficient to rely on goodwill or commitment on the part of individual adults. (Lansdown and O'Kane, 2014, booklet 1: 6)

This section highlights how children's and young people's participation rights can be incorporated through legal and non-legal measures.

According to Twum-Danso (2008: 409), the UNCRC does not take context into account. This is due to the responsibility governments have after ratification to translate it into national legislation such as Children's Acts and Children's Codes and to guarantee that national laws will include the social and cultural features of the country. Article 4 of the UNCRC requires state parties to 'undertake all appropriate legislative, administrative, and other measures for the implementation of the rights recognised in the present CRC'. With regard to economic, social and cultural rights, states parties have the obligation to undertake such measures to the extent of their available resources.

<sup>14</sup> See <https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?id=1927161>.

<sup>15</sup> See [http://www.coe.int/t/dg3/children/participation/Child\\_participation\\_AssessmentTool\\_en.pdf](http://www.coe.int/t/dg3/children/participation/Child_participation_AssessmentTool_en.pdf).



The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child encourages direct and full incorporation of the CRC through legal measures such as direct incorporation (the CRC is fully transformed into domestic law at either legislative or constitutional level),<sup>16</sup> indirect incorporation (the CRC has some effects in the domestic legal order),<sup>17</sup> or by sectoral incorporation (transposing relevant provisions of the CRC into relevant sectoral laws, such as those concerning education or family).

Non-legal measures can also be used to progress implementation of the CRC, such as national strategies and action plans for children; children's rights impact assessment processes to anticipate the impact of proposed laws, policies or budgetary allocations; the establishment of children's commissioners or ombudspersons; child budgeting (or monitoring and allocation of resources spent on children and their services); children's rights training, awareness raising and capacity building for all those working with and for children; and improved monitoring of data on children's lives.

A difficulty arises with the UNCRC under federated countries. Indeed, a state party may ratify the UNCRC but transfer responsibility to its regions for implementation in law, policy and practice, since regions have the major responsibility for areas such as education, health and social care. In such situations the central government often has a limited role in monitoring and compiling data for the state member report (see Lundy et al., 2012: 4).

### Children's and young people's participation in the constitution and in legislation in Europe and in the Global South

Examples of countries that incorporate the right to be heard into their constitution include the following:

- Constitution of Ecuador 1998 – contains extensive references to the rights of children, including the 'right to be consulted in matters affecting them'.
- Constitution of Finland 1995 – has been amended by the addition of a sentence providing that 'children shall be treated equally and as individuals and they shall be allowed to influence matters pertaining to themselves to a degree corresponding to their level of development.'

- Constitution of Poland 1997 – provides that 'organs of public authority and persons responsible for children, in the course of establishing the rights of a child, shall consider and, insofar as possible, give priority to the views of the child'. (Lansdown 2011: 20)

Examples of countries that establish the right to be heard in legislation:

- In Kazakhstan, the Rights of the Child Act, 2002 provides that every child has the right to express his or her opinion, the right to freedom of conscience and the right to participate in public life.
- In South Africa, Article 10 of the Children's Act 2005 states: 'Every child that is of such an age, maturity and stage of development as to be able to participate in any matter concerning that child has the right to participate in an appropriate way and views expressed by the child must be given due consideration'. The particular significance of this legislation is that Article 10 falls within the 'General Principles' chapter of the Children's Act, which is similar to a mini bill of rights. This means that it applies not only in the Children's Act but in all laws and actions.
- In Australia, the Child, Youth and Families Act of 2005 requires that decisions affecting children 'be reached by collaboration and consensus, wherever practicable'. Everyone involved in the decision-making process must be 'provided with sufficient information, in a language and by a method that they can understand, and through an interpreter if necessary, to allow them to participate fully in the process [and they should be] provided with the opportunity to involve other persons to assist them to participate fully in the process'. (Lansdown 2011: 21)

Examples of legislation regarding children's participation in schools' pupils or participation council:

- In the Danish Act of 1997 dealing with upper secondary schools, Section 14 states: 'Each upper secondary school will set up a pupils' council, appointed by and among the school's pupils. The pupils' council will submit reports to the headmaster, inter alia, on general matters concerning pupils' affairs'.

<sup>16</sup> Such as Belgium, Norway, Spain (see Lundy and Kilkelly, 2012).

<sup>17</sup> See [http://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2014/8/pdfs/asp\\_20140008\\_en.pdf](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2014/8/pdfs/asp_20140008_en.pdf).



- In the Netherlands, under the Education Participation Act, 1992, every primary, secondary and special school is legally required to set up a participation council. (Lansdown 2011: 105)

A number of countries have lowered the voting age to 16, including Bosnia-Herzegovina, Brazil, Cuba, Nicaragua, Yugoslavia and the British Channel Islands (as well as Germany and Israel for local elections). Other countries have lowered it to 17, including East Timor, Indonesia, Seychelles and Sudan (Hurst, 2003). In some ways it can be considered a step forward to have lowered the voting age. However, we need to ask whether it means that young people gain better recognition in society. Adults' behaviour towards young people may still need to be changed to truly consider young people as citizens.

Children's and young people's participation is also a key theme of the European Union's broader strategy of 'building a Europe for and with children'.<sup>18</sup> The Council of Europe introduced a new recommendation on children's participation in 2012, setting out what states should do to achieve effective children's participation:

Participation is about individuals and groups of individuals having the right, the means, the space, the opportunity and, where necessary, the support to freely express their views, to be heard and to contribute to decision making on matters affecting them, their views being given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity. (Recommendation CM/REC(2012)2)

A study led by Queen's University Belfast (Lundy et al., 2012) on the legal implementation of the UNCRC in 12 countries<sup>19</sup> indicated that Norway and Belgium have implemented the participation principle in their domestic law and policy, and there appears to be recognition that participation is required at all levels of decision-making. For example, they have good examples of children's participation mainly in individual decision-making, such as child protection and alternative care, and in private family law matters. The study reported that in other countries children and young people have been involved in city-planning decisions (Melbourne, Australia), and

child participation has been embedded in local authority decision-making. For instance, Ireland has made an explicit commitment to listen and take into account the views of children in national policy.

For children's and young people's participation rights to become a reality a children's rights culture needs to be established. From the study previously mentioned, three factors were acknowledged as being essential to build a culture of respect for children's rights. First, the advocacy work done by the NGOs was effective regarding legal and constitutional reform and their role in the alternative reporting process to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. Second, children's rights advocates or supporters in government or public office are essential. Having people who champion children's rights – a reputed government official, an experienced law professor or a well-known NGO – is the key to change. However, it is important to note that to rely on these people is not enough if the culture and the infrastructure have not been adequately created. Third, the CRC periodic reporting process was identified as a factor to encourage a culture of respect for rights.

In conclusion, countries such as Norway and Belgium have implemented children's and young people's participation policies and have been effective mainly in legislation and policy for individual decision-making, such as protection and alternative care or in private family law matters. Therefore, further efforts need to be carried out to implement children's and young people's participation rights in building a child rights' culture. The non-legal measures to implement children's participation rights are also possibilities to bring about this change. Advocating to have children and young people involved in national strategies and action plans for children and young people, child budgetary allocations, and establishment of children's commissioners or ombudspersons are alternative options to lengthy legislative reform processes.

<sup>18</sup> See <http://www.coe.int/t/dg3/children/>.

<sup>19</sup> Australia, Belgium, Germany, Ireland, Norway, Spain, Canada, Denmark, Iceland, New Zealand, South Africa and Sweden.



## PART 2. THEORY AND PRACTICE ON CHILDREN'S AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S PARTICIPATION

This section explores how the different theoretical positions and models inform the understanding of children and young people and their roles in public decision-making. Insights from the debate related to childhood-studies theory, children as citizens, notions of space and accountability and details of the different models of children's and young people's participation help to explain and understand children's and young people's 'public' or collective participation in decision-making.

This section also examines good practice and lessons learnt on how to implement children's and young people's participation in public decisions, with different examples from local-level initiatives and children's participation experts.

### 2.1 THEORIES ON CHILDREN'S AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S PARTICIPATION

#### Childhood studies theory<sup>20</sup>

This section focuses on the 'new' sociology of childhood, looking at the UNCRC views regarding protection versus participation rights and the debate about whether the UNCRC can adequately address childhood diversity.

The 'new' sociology of childhood argues that constructions of childhood have evolved over time. In the Global North, historically, children and young people have been seen as dependent on adults, vulnerable, passive, immature and/or lacking in competence (James and Prout, 1990). Tobin (2013: 429) explores the evolving ideas about childhood: from where the child was seen as the property of the father (and was expected to be neither seen nor heard); to children being recognised but with no expectation that they should be heard (the welfare model); to children having rights to be 'seen and heard' with the implementation of the UNCRC.

#### The new paradigm

Based on Ariès' work (1962), James and Prout (1990) discuss the construction and reconstruction of childhood in society. They propose that 'a child's immaturity is a biological fact: but how this immaturity is understood and how it is

made meaningful is a culture one' (1990: 7). Therefore, the 'new' sociology of childhood has emphasised the social constructions of childhood. James and Prout suggest a new paradigm for childhood: children and young people are seen as capable, competent to make decisions in their lives, and as social actors exercising agency. James et al. (1998: 6) define children as social actors in the following terms: 'They are active in the construction of their own lives, the lives of those around them and of the societies in which they live'. They go further to say that children are who they are, without bundles of negative attributes, and not simply waiting to become adults (1998: 14; see also Skelton, 2007: 177).

#### Protection versus participation rights from the UNCRC

According to certain scholars, there is no contradiction in the idea of children being citizens exercising agency and continuing to depend on the support or regulation from adults (Alderson, 2001; Jans, 2004; Lister, 2008; Neale, 2004). Indeed, as highlighted by Smith and Bjerke (2009: 18): 'If they are to exercise citizenship fully, children must be protected against abuse, discrimination, neglect and other ill treatment'. However, the debate around protection and participation rights continues. To illustrate this, some scholars suggest that Article 3 (the best interests of the child) and Article 12 (the right to be heard) of the UNCRC are complementary instead of contradictory. In fact, for the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, there is no tension between the protective approach of Article 3 and the participative approach of Article 12 (CRC/C/GC/12 para 74). Article 3 could be seen as a framework for addressing the well-being of the child, and Article 12 could be seen as a methodology to help determine what are the best interests in allowing the child to express his or her view regarding the model (CRC/C/GC/12 para 74; Zermatten, 2010: 496; Krappmann, 2010: 504). To expand on this, participation serves to protect children and young people. As noted by Lansdown: 'The self-esteem and confidence acquired through participation also empower children to challenge abuses of their rights' (2011: 7). However, for Lückner-Babel (1995: 393–94), Articles 3 and 12 are contradictory. She argues that, on the one hand, Article 3 focuses on the adult position as

<sup>20</sup> Childhood studies is the umbrella term for multiple disciplines working in the area of childhood' (Punch and Tisdall, 2012: 244).



educator and decision maker, knowing best what the best interests are for children, while, on the other hand, Article 12 focuses on the child's growing autonomy. Cantwell (1998) and Liebel (2000) support Lucker-Babels position that Articles 3 and 12 of the UNCRC are in contradiction, with a tension between the power of adults and the rights of children to express themselves freely.

### Universal childhood from the UNCRC to diversity of childhoods

In the Global North, children have tended to be seen as lacking agency and in need of protection. In contrast, in the Global South, children are recognised as demonstrating significant abilities as citizens, capable of taking responsibility and playing an active role in their communities (Malone and Hartung, 2010: 26).

The UNCRC has been ratified by almost all state parties (except two countries). The image of childhood has been standardised and exported globally by the United Nations bodies such as the International Labor Organization (ILO), UNICEF, World Health Organization (WHO) and international NGOs, all of which have played an important role in disseminating their concept of childhood in the Global South as a norm. For Montgomery et al. (2003: 69), 'beliefs and values about childhood are also becoming globalized'. Boyden (1990) and Burman (1994) show the negative impact of globalising the concept of childhood from the Global North, as it represents an ideal that poor families will not be able to fulfil. Global South critiques have highlighted the unhelpful practice of perceiving children and young people solely as individuals, rather than interdependent and living in networks of intergenerational relationships in their communities (Valentin and Meinert, 2009; Kellett et al. 2004; Butler and Teamey 2014). Local cultural practices can conflict with notions of the universal concept of childhood advocated in the UNCRC. However, if we look closely at the UNCRC, cultural diversity is acknowledged in certain articles, such as articles 1, 5, 17, 29, 30 and 31 (Tobin, 2013: 419).

Scholars resolve the universalist critique against the UNCRC by recognising these differences in ideas about childhood. Hill and Tisdall (1997) have mentioned that concepts of childhood are different among cultures, societies and communities. Wyness (2013a: 340) prefers to talk about childhood diversity rather than opposing non-Western childhoods negatively against a unitary global standard. Percy-Smith and Thomas have stated

that 'childhood is not a universal given, but varies in its construction, interpretation and enactment across different cultures and contexts' (2010: 1).

Moreover, experiences of childhood are inevitably shaped by family, environment and economic and socio-political conditions (Hart 1997; Boylan and Dalrymple, 2009). Malone and Hartung (2010: 26) have placed emphasis on this, stating that 'childhood is a social construction that varies over time and space'. Finally, for Tisdall and Punch (2012: 259) there is a need to give attention to 'the intricacies, complexities, tensions, ambiguities and ambivalences of children's and young people's lives across both majority and minority world contexts' rather than to look only at children's and young people's perspectives, agency and participation.

The acknowledgment of children and young people as social actors, as part of the paradigm shift of the 'new' sociology of childhood suggested this change with the key principles. As explored above, the childhood studies literature allows us to reflect upon and conceptualise how we see children and young people. It also has an impact when we talk about children's citizenship.

### Children's citizenship theory

Marshall (1963) argues that only full members of a community have the status of citizenship. This section draws attention to the status of children's citizenship and the notions of interdependence, space and accountability.

### Status of children and young people in society

According to Bacon and Frankel (2013: 5), the UNCRC recognises civil rights (freedom of expression, freedom from discrimination), economic rights (freedom from poverty), social rights (rights to health, nutrition and education) and arguably political rights (if this means having a say in those matters that affect their lives, Article 12). However, according to Tisdall:

Despite the potential of the civil right encapsulated in the UNCRC, Article 12 is in fact a very qualified right of involvement and the UNCRC contains no rights to formal political engagement, such as voting. (2010: 327)

Couzens (2012: 699) argues that in the absence of a right to vote for children and young people, a right to non-electoral public participation has to be acknowledged as



the tool for them to secure their participation in public decision-making (see also Bray, 2011: 28). Similarly, Wall observes that 'it is important to frame children's active citizenship in terms of participation rights if children are to gain political agency in any systematic and institutionalized sense' (2012: 90). Based on this understanding of political participation, 'children-led organisations play important roles in creating opportunities for children to actively exercise their citizenship' (IAWGCP, 2008: 9).

Some academics refer to children and young people as citizens (Invernizzi and Milne 2005; Jans 2004), but others see children and young people as semi-citizens (Cohen, 2005) or citizens by some standards and not by others, depending on adults, unable to vote and with aspects of their social citizenship administered through adults (Lister 2008).

Furthermore, for certain authors we cannot say that children and young people are 'becoming' citizens as they are 'being' here-and-now citizens through their contributions (Hinton 2008; Roche 1999). For Osler and Starkey, children are citizens rather than citizens-in-waiting because 'in giving children the right to express their views and receive appropriate information and education, children are empowered to make informed decision about their lives' (2005: 43).

However for some scholars, this does not mean that children have the same rights as adults, but they should be respected and listened to as social beings who have valuable contributions to make (Willow and Neale, 2004; see also Smith and Bjerke, 2009: 34). Indeed, children want to contribute to society as children rather than be assimilated as adults (James et al., 2008: 88). By the same token, Lister (2007) notes:

Recognition of children as citizens is not so much arguing for an extension of adults' rights (and obligations) of citizenship to children but recognition that their citizenship practice (where it occurs) constitutes them as *de facto*, even if not complete *de jure*, citizens (2007: 717).

However, for this to occur, children and young people need to be accepted as members of the citizen community as a starting point (Lister 2007: 701). Thomas and Percy-Smith suggest that children and young people want an

equal voice and influence, defining children's agency (in terms of political life) as follows:

Children's agency means they deserve an equal voice and influence in public affairs. It points to children being active citizens, articulating their own values, perspectives, experiences and visions for the futures, using those who have power over their lives. (Thomas and Percy-Smith, 2010: 3)

Therefore, they claim children and young people as differently equal members of society (see the difference-centred model in Moosa-Mitha, 2005). Similarly, Lockyer (2008: 30) notes that children and young people want equal citizenship without denying them differential status in relation both to rights and responsibilities. To illustrate this, Shier et al., (2014: 2) use the conceptual framework based on a human rights approach (universal, the same for all) and a human development approach (children and young people as unique and diverse) (see 'Models of children's and young people's participation' section).

### Global North, Global South and children's citizenship

The practice of children's citizenship differs between the Global North and Global South. On the one hand, countries of the Global North mainly see citizenship education as 'human becoming', that is, learning for future citizenship, such as pupils' experiences of participation and engagement in school that promotes educational knowledge of rights and responsibilities (Invernizzi and Williams, 2008: 4; see also Turkie, 2010) or as a voice within a regulated environment (Wyness, 2013b: 11). Children and young people are involved in discussions of policies generally through consultation, that is, the top-down approach (Hill et al., 2004).

On the other hand, Liebel (2008: 38) talks about 'citizenship from below' as a form of everyday action that refers to empowerment of children and young people as human beings in their present lives. For example the creation of child-led movements in many parts of the Global South such as working children's movements in Africa, India and Latin America (Liebel, 2001).

Children and young people define their needs and interests based on their everyday lives and their contributions to the community: the bottom-up approach (Liebel, 2008; Shier 2010a, Tisdall et al., 2014). Percy-Smith and Thomas





conclude: 'There is institutionalised participation and public sector decision making in "Western" countries, and a stronger orientation to community-based participation in the majority world' (2010: 360).

### The notion of interdependence

Some scholars indicate that children's citizenship uses the notion of interdependence as the basis for children's and young people's participation. For example, according to Jans (2004) this could be seen for both children and young people and adults as continuous learning or a social process whereby children and adults are alike (see also Bacon and Frankel, 2013: 19), or have a more equal footing (Wall, 2012: 92). For Cockburn (1998: 113) 'both adults and children are socially interdependent'.

Similarly, Tuukkanen et al. (2013: 144) reaffirm that children and young people need support from adults to participate and be citizens. Lansdown (2010: 16), referring to a study about child participation across South Asia (UNICEF ROSA, 2004), notes that children and young people asked for support from adults to access information and policymakers, for advice, and for capacity building. In the same way, Hart et al. (2004: 54) refer to one study that identifies seven different facilitation roles that adults may adopt when supporting children's participation, ranging from less directive roles (observation, facilitation) to offering input (challenging and developing ideas, advising) to more directive input (instructing and undertaking tasks on behalf of the children). Couzens (2012: 699) notes: 'Isolated children's and young people's participation from adult participation might be detrimental'. However, at the same time it is important to ensure that 'adequate safeguards need to be provided to avoid children's voices being silenced by adults' (2012: 699; see also Percy-Smith and Thomas, 2010: 362).

Therefore, the discussion turns to explore a shift of adult attitudes towards children and young people as key to achieving children's citizenship. As highlighted by Doek (2008: xv), behaviour towards children and young people is a fundamental challenge and it is necessary to see children as citizens today. However, in some cases 'adults do not think it is appropriate or beneficial to share information or power with children and to involve them in politics' (IAWGCP, 2008: 7). Butler and Teamey (2014) argue that participation is about 'changing patterns of relations between adults and children and also between children

themselves, in terms of the roles and expectations of them'. This requires both a 'head change and a heart change' (De Wet et al., 2009). This change might happen if both adults and children are seen as partial 'becomings' (Lee 2001; Roche 1999) or simultaneously 'human beings and human becomings' (Invernizzi and William, 2008). Bacon and Frankel (2013: 19) have strengthened this argument and advocate 'seeing children and adults as unfinished persons who are both learners and decision-makers'.

To gain a better understanding of the concepts of childhood and children's citizenship, adult-child relations and the element of power in decision-making processes need to be analysed. Children and young people have long been viewed as subordinate to adults, and it is still difficult to see children as partners of adults (Mayall, 2012). Still today 'adults make decisions on behalf of children without any reference to children's own knowledge, experience or preferences' (Lansdown and O'Kane, 2014: 1; see also Shier et al., 2014: 6).

In addition, the notion of evolving capacity (see Article 5 of the UNCRC, and Part I, point 3 above) challenges parents' behaviour towards children and young people. Parents can no longer have exclusive power and control. Children's and young people's evolving capacity represents one side of participation. The other side involves adults' willingness to listen to and to learn from children and young people; to understand and consider children's and young people's point of view; to be willing to reconsider children's and young people's opinions and attitudes; and to adopt solutions that address children's and young people's views. Adults who have responsibility for children have a role in giving directions and guidance to their children (Article 5). Nevertheless, parents have to reflect upon their authority and to accept that when their children grow up, parental control needs to decrease. In other words, Article 5 gives some explanation of the term *maturity* mentioned in Article 12. Therefore, as children and young people grow up and become more mature, the weight given to their views increases (Krappmann, 2010: 505; Archard and Skivenes, 2009: 17).

Addressing power relations is one of the conditions for determining full participation by children and young people (Seminar series, 2004: 98). This means power in these relationships needs to be explored (Prout and Tisdall, 2006: 245). Gallagher provides an interpretation of Michel



Foucault's conception of power, suggesting that power should not be viewed as something that can be owned or redistributed, but rather as a form of action that can be exercised rather than possessed (2008: 397). Thus, recognising children's and young people's citizenship can lead to sharing power with adults rather than being in conflict with them.

In relation to interdependence, children's and young people's participation not only benefits children but, as parents, adults also gain insights, especially in relation to citizenship. Wyness explains that 'children's participation offers adults opportunities to reflect on their own social and political participation' (2013b: 438); see also Lansdown, 2011: 14). By the same token, McDevitt and Kiosis (2009: 2) talk about 'second-chance citizenship' for parents as they increase their political involvement due to their children's participation.

Mannion (2010: 338) notes that 'repositioned roles for adults become the critical and often unseen consequences and processes of children's and young people's participation' (see also Cockburn and Cleaver, 2009: 57). Along the same lines, Kelly (2006: 43) proposes a new relationship between the political order and children and young people, thinking collaboratively. Wyness (2013b: 430) suggests that adults need to be regained as partners. For Bray (2011) the notion of 'social dialogue' is one answer to making this relationship possible. He defines this as

children and adults working together to explore issues or make decisions that will affect a community or society, or simply the delivery of services to children by professionals such as nurses, teachers, police officials, lawyers or early childhood development practitioners. (2011: 30)

Liel explores this further and asks if children and young people need special 'children's structures', or whether to promote 'inclusion and collaboration with adults' (2008: 34). Wall and Dar (2011: 607) opt for the second option and propose that children and young people hold parliamentary seats as long as it does not interfere with their education, because with children's parliaments we simply continue their historical exclusion from power. However, according to Shier et al. (2014: 9), children and young people need to have their own spaces to make decisions, agree upon activity plans and solve problems

in order to prepare themselves to meet adult decision makers with confidence.

To assess these issues more fully, it is important to understand in which spaces children and young people can express themselves.

### The notions of space

According to Tisdall (2008: 428), children's and young people's participation can be seen on different scales, from the community level (micro scale) to the national or even international politics levels (macro scale). As discussed earlier, very often the right to be heard is largely understood as a consultative process in which children are invited into adults' spaces and given the opportunity to respond to adult agendas (Lansdown, 2011: 119).

### *High-profile political events at national and international levels*

Children and young people are given high-profile public roles when they are involved in local government councils, policymaking, planning, service development, data collection and legislation development; or in international political events that seek children's and young people's concerns, experiences and suggestions. To provide such opportunities, governments may establish mechanisms such as children's parliaments, youth advisory committees, national or regional consultations, dialogue with children through electronic media, and focus groups on specific issues for engaging with children at the national level (Lansdown, 2011: 128). Successful examples have been seen throughout the world. For example, in 2004, in Bolivia, a Children's Parliament was created and children's representatives made regular formal recommendations to the adult National Assembly (Sarkar and Mendoza, 2005). The Government of Rwanda held a National Summit for Children and Youth around particular themes (Pells, 2010: 199). The Children's Parliament in Yemen influenced government policy on child labour in 2007 (Lansdown, 2011: 132). A Youth Advisory Committee in Scotland (UK) was created to complement a national Domestic Abuse delivery plan. The members of the committee had had experiences of domestic abuse and been supported by different services (Barnardo's Scotland et al., 2011).

The role of children and young people through different platforms at the national, regional and international levels has been significant in making key recommendations to the world leaders. Children and young people have been



present at many meetings held by the UN, such as the World Summit for Children in New York in 1990, the International Labour Conference in 1998, the UN General Assembly Special Session on Children in 2002, and in children's reports to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. One example was the regional consultation for East Asia and the Pacific under the UN Secretary-General's Global Study on Violence against Children in Bangkok in 2005. This showed the positive implications of children's and young people's involvement beyond a simple process of consultation, with the report and its findings becoming a collaborative work among children, young people and adults. Children and young people developed case studies, created a child-friendly publication and documented children's and young people's views<sup>21</sup> (Lansdown and O'Kane, 2014 booklet 3: 8).

However, to date children's and young people's involvement at these high levels has been criticised as being 'symbolic' rather than 'substantive' (Hart, 2008; see also Ennew, 2008). For This,

Ensuring that public decisions are informed and influenced by children's views and concerns is more important than high-profile events that bring children and decision makers together, but that fail to take children's opinions into account (2010, 352).

Thus 'participation needs to be rooted in the lived lives of children and young people on tangible issues of concern and importance to them' (Cockburn and Cleaver, 2009: 58). Tuukkanen et al. also emphasise that

instead of seeing citizenship as participation in formal politics, there is a need for adopting a broader definition of politics that recognizes the potentially political dimensions of children's everyday experiences (2013: 132–33).

### *Everyday spaces of participation*

Some authors emphasise the importance of including children's 'everyday life' in definitions of children's citizenship (Buckingham, 2000; Jans, 2004; Bacon and Frankel, 2013; Larkins, 2014). Cockburn follows this argument and notes:

Citizenship is not something learned as such, but rather it exists in the everyday; thus, 'citizenship education' cannot be a preparation for some magical rite-de-passage to be engineered and possessed but is a practice embedded in the everyday for all, including children (Cockburn, 2012: 225).

For Couzens, 'The state is expected to take positive measures to encourage children to participate and to create the structures which allow for meaningful participation' (2012: 697). As noted by Frick (2012: 32), governments should not only promote local youth or children's parliaments, but also encourage child-led initiatives and organisations (see the CRC General Comment 12, 2009: paras 128–29). For example, children's councils have been created to raise policymakers' awareness about children's and young people's issues in the local community.

From the discussion above, further questions arise such as how to bridge the gap between children's interest in local issues and wider political debates (Buckingham, 2000; see also Cockburn and Cleaver, 2009: 55). Percy-Smith and Thomas define 'social' participation as 'children as active citizens, making contributions and taking actions within their everyday life settings.' Thus, for these authors there is a false dichotomy between 'social' and 'political' participation as both are necessary (2010: 359–60; see also Smith and Bjerke, 2009: 17). On this point Cockburn and Cleaver note that 'it is necessary for public and formal decision-making to be entwined with children's and young people's everyday lives and personal and family decision-making' (2009: 57).

To answer the question of how to bridge the gap, Ennew notes:

Children's citizenship rights would be better served through mechanisms encouraging representation of their views and concerns at community, local and national levels, which could then be forwarded to global events (2008: 71).

Percy-Smith and Thomas add that, 'the initiatives are more likely to be sustainable' if done in that order (2010: 360).

<sup>21</sup> Report of the Independent Expert for the UN Study on Violence against Children, General Assembly, 61st Session, October 2006, A/61/299.



Local spaces need to be created, and not just national and international ones. These spaces in themselves need to engage with children's and young people's everyday lives. However, creating spaces does not necessarily mean that participation influences change.

### The notion of accountability and political actors

According to Kelly, having a space, a seat at the table is not enough: 'We need to do more than "hear their voices" – we need to respond to their views' (2006: 44). This is also emphasised by Tisdall et al., (2014): 'Their [children's and young people's] views have little to no impact on decision-making.' One reason offered by This is that 'children involved in political processes are often considered as "technical actors" who can provide useful information, rather than as citizens or political actors with rights to uphold and interests to defend' (2010: 350). Thus, as suggested by the CRC General Comment (2009, para 130): 'Networking among child-led organisations should be actively encouraged to increase opportunities for shared learning and platforms for collective advocacy' (see also Shier et al., 2014: 9). Shier et al. emphasises that coordination with the authorities is necessary to ensure that politicians keep their promises and to avoid disputes with them. They go on to say that children and young people can take this on themselves, but help from skilled adults can make a real difference (2014: 12; also Shier, 2010b: 225). In addition to the coordination work for collective advocacy, Tisdall adds that 'it may require adult organisations and workers to be reflective and more critical of our role in children and young people's participation work' (2008: 428).

In conclusion, in relation to children's citizenship theory, children and young people may still depend on adults, and they do not have the right to vote (see Part 1, point 6). However, children and young people need to be accepted as members of the citizen community. Children and young people are not 'becoming' citizens but are 'being' citizens, here and now. This does not mean that children and young people have the same rights as adults, but they should be respected and listened to as social beings who have valuable contributions to make. Furthermore, in the absence of a right to vote for children and young people, a right to non-electoral public participation has to be acknowledged to secure their participation in public decision-making. In this space, child-led organisations

provide important opportunities for children and young people to exercise their citizenship.

Citizenship seems possible for children and young people, once all people (children, youth or adults) are recognised as interdependent, rather than an artificial construct of the autonomous, rational individual (Arneil, 2002). With the recognition that power is expressed rather than possessed, recognising children's and young people's citizenship can result in sharing and increasing power (rather than being in conflict) with adults. This requires adult attitudes to shift so they respect and support children's and young people's citizenship.

This section also explored the idea that the right to be heard is largely understood as a consultative process, and usually children and young people are invited into adult spaces to respond to adult agendas. To date, children's and young people's involvement in high-profile political events has been criticised as being 'symbolic' rather than 'substantive'.

One of the opportunities to make the involvement more substantive is to include children's and young people's everyday experiences in the practice of their citizenship; for example, supporting child-led organisations to raise policymakers' awareness about children's and young people's issues in the local community. This could lead to children's citizenship becoming a 'lived' experience rather than a 'performed' experience, as highlighted by Pells (2010).

Networking among child-led organisations for collective advocacy can also be supported to make the demands from the child-led organisation more significant. However, having a space is not enough to make political actors accountable. The role of adult as facilitator is one of the means to ensure accountability between the collective of children and young people and the authorities, even if it is not sufficient. Indeed, adult organisation and staff members also need to be reflective and more critical on how they work with children and young people.

### Models of children's and young people's participation

In the following section different models of children's and young people's participation will be considered. These models include Hart's ladder (1992), Shier's diagram (2001), Lansdown's categorisation of children's participation (2001 and 2010), Lundy's conceptualisation



of Article 12 (2007), the Change-Scape model (Johnson 2011) and the Yingyang model (Shier et al., 2014).

Roger Hart describes the possible types of adult-child exchange in terms of eight steps of a ladder (1992: 4). He adapts Arnstein's (1969) 'ladder of citizen participation' regarding the involvement of citizens in planning processes in the United States, with eight levels of participation. Hart's ladder is specific to the public sphere, especially community development such as the school, community groups and informal groups beyond the private domain of family. The first three steps of the model are non-participation and are named 'manipulation', 'decoration', and 'tokenism'. The next five steps are more representative of participation: 'assigned but informed', 'consulted and informed', 'adult-initiated shared decisions with children', 'child-initiated and directed' and 'child-initiated shared decisions with adults'.

The ladder became a topic of debate because it was understood by some that 'all participation of children and young people should be at the highest rung' (Green, 1999, quoted in Hinton, 2008: 287), while others saw a linear progression from one rung of the ladder to the next (Reddy and Ratna, 2002: 18). Hart commented on his own model: 'It does not imply children should always be operating at the highest rung; children may work at whatever level they choose, at any stage of the process' (1997: 41). Treseder (1997) has reworked the model into a non-hierarchical circle and left out the first three rungs of Hart's model.

An alternative model to Hart's ladder of participation is the diagram by Shier (2001: 110), which presents a pathway to participation with degrees of commitment at each level. He describes five levels of children's participation with three stages of commitment by adults at each level: openings, opportunities and obligations. The first two demonstrate how adults are ready to engage with children and young children as a result of the organisation policies. The result is a logical sequence of 15 questions that can be used as a tool for planning participation.

In 2001, Lansdown categorised children's participation in international projects into three categories: consultation, participation and self-advocacy. In 2010, Lansdown revised the model, still with three levels but with the following new terminology. The first term, *consultative participation*, means that adults seek children's views in order to build knowledge and understanding of children's lives and

experience, for example, with regards to legislation, policy or services, or in decisions affecting individual children within the family, in health care or in education, or as witnesses in judicial or administrative proceedings. The second term, *collaborative participation*, is a partnership between adults and children with the opportunity for active engagement at any stage of a decision, initiative, project or service. The third term, *child-led participation*, occurs when children have the space and opportunity to identify issues of concern, initiate activities and advocate for themselves. The role of adults in child-led participation is to enable children to pursue their own objectives, with adults providing information, advice and support (Lansdown 2010: 20; see also Lansdown and O'Kane, 2014, booklet 3: 4–9).

Lundy's model (2007) proposes conceptualising Article 12 in a way which will make decision makers pay attention to four key points: *space* (provide opportunity for children to express views), *voice* (children must be facilitated to express their views), *audience* (the view must be listened to) and *influence* (the view must be acted upon, as appropriate). Nevertheless, she adds that the model will be incomplete without reading Article 12 in light of Article 2 (non-discrimination), Article 3 (best interests), Article 5 (right to guidance), Article 13 (right to seek, receive and impart information), and Article 19 (protection from abuse) (2007: 933). Lundy suggests that this tool can be used for 'informing, understanding, developing policy and auditing existing practice' (2007: 941).

Shier et al., (2014) developed the 'Yinyang model' for children's and young people's participation. This model is based on children's and young people's successful political advocacy in Nicaragua in four case studies. The case studies combined a human rights-based approach and a human development approach. In the human rights-based approach, 'organisations work directly with people concerned as citizens and social actors, helping them to identify the violations of their human rights that are preventing them from gaining access to these necessities' (Shier et al., 2014: 2). This model can resolve the dichotomy between children being perceived as human beings and as human beings; in this model they are recognised as both (see also Uprichard, 2010). In this model the three main barriers to influencing policymakers are adultism, dependency, and lack of accountability and follow-up. The research identified preconditions for influencing policymakers: participation spaces, ways of



organising for effective advocacy and adults' facilitation methods.

Johnson (2011) proposes a 'Change-Scape' model called 'Conditions for Transformational Change and Change in Services to Improve Children's Wellbeing'. This comes from three evaluation case studies from Nepal and the UK. She focuses her model on contextual and structural issues shaping transformational change, with influencing external forces (culture, politics and policy, and the physical environment) and internal forces (confidence, capacity and commitment). Those forces were seen either as facilitators or inhibitors in the participatory evaluation process. Finally, Johnson emphasises that there is a need to develop mechanisms for building capacity, communication, confidence, collaboration and children's evidence in order to hear children's and young people's views.

In summary, this discussion demonstrates that different models of participation have been developed to map out and explain the modes of interaction between adults and children and young people. Tisdall states that typologies of children's participation 'have been immensely useful to challenge policy and practice, as they have been powerful tools to highlight the lack of children's participation and to advocate for change' (2010: 318). With Hart's model, adults remain in control of the process as they decide the level of participation that they are expecting (Jupp Kina, 2012: 333). Hart's model is more about what is done rather than how it could be done as shown by Shier's model (2001), Shier et al. and Lundy (2007). Moreover, Hart's model identifies what is not participation. Lansdown (2001, revisited in 2010) and Shier (2001) both introduced categorisations of participation. Johnson (2010) adds to this the links among context, children and process, drawing her evidence from across a multi-case research study.

However, it is important to highlight that participation should be understood as 'context dependent and contingent on particular local and regional setting' (Kesby, 2007: 2820). Cockburn (2013: 201) notes that a reinvigoration of participatory forms of democracy can be seen amongst children in the Global South as children's voices can be more clearly heard and recognised there. The following section examines how children and young people participate in their own countries in the Global South context.

## 2.2 EXAMPLES OF CHILDREN'S AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S PARTICIPATION AND LESSONS LEARNED FROM PRACTICE

Since the UNCRC was adopted in 1989, a proliferation of initiatives in different parts of the world have sought to create spaces for children and young people to influence policies, services and decisions that affect their lives. In the following part, examples of good practices and learning from local communities are presented and lessons learned from children's participation experts are highlighted.

### Examples of children's and young people's participation in public spaces

In different countries child-led initiatives and organisations have been recognised at the local-community level. Children and young people have identified issues from their daily lives and determined how to influence policymakers with the support of adults. The following section describes examples and lessons learned from child-led organisations such as the children's councils in Tanzania, the Makkala Panchayats in South India, and the experiences of children and young people in Nicaragua.

#### Children's councils in Tanzania

*The example of children's councils in Tanzania is based on data collected by Couzens and Mtengeti (2011). The goal of the research was to investigate a model of child participation in local government as developed by Save the Children in Tanzania.<sup>22</sup>*

In Tanzania, Save the Children supported the establishment of children's councils to respond to the slow implementation by the government of the Junior Council of the United Republic of Tanzania, which was agreed in 2002 following the UN Special Session on Children. The children's councils initially were based on an adult-initiated structure, but children and young people took ownership afterwards. The local governments were partners in establishing children's councils in their jurisdictions. Three children's councils took part in the research.

Children's councils were set up at the ward and district levels. All children and young people (below 18 years of age) were able to elect members for two years to form

<sup>22</sup> See [http://www.repoa.or.tz/documents/RR\\_11\\_1\\_LR.pdf](http://www.repoa.or.tz/documents/RR_11_1_LR.pdf).



a ward council, and representatives from the different ward councils then formed the district council. The representation of girls and boys in these councils was equal, and seats were reserved for the most vulnerable children. Children's councils varied in size; the ones studied comprised between 24 and 70 children and young people.

The children's councils are run by elected children office bearers: a chairperson, a secretary and a treasurer. Adults may be elected or appointed to advisory positions such as district development officer/council guardian.

There is also a central committee at the district level which consists of a chairperson (who is also the district children's council chairperson) and a vice chairperson; a secretary (again from the district children's council) and a vice secretary; a treasurer and a vice treasurer; two representatives of the most vulnerable children and young people; two members of the advisory committee; and two special members. The role of this central committee is to prepare the agenda for meetings at the district level and to serve as a go-between for the children's council and the municipal council. The general assembly is composed of all children and young people who are members of the children's councils in the district where they take major decisions. However, children and young people who are not members of the children's councils could also participate, but they are not allowed to vote.

Children's councils have a constitution that institutionalises the relationship between local governments and the children's councils. Members of the children's councils meet every month or every week to identify their priorities through a work plan, and tasks are allocated to implement the plan and follow-up. If they can identify solutions for their issues during the ward meetings, they take the problems to local government officials at the municipal/district level or to Save the Children.

The council guardians have been seen as the most important contact for the children's councils because they are the formal link between the children's councils and the local government authorities. They are appointed from local government officials to give advice to the councils,

to facilitate council meetings and to advocate on behalf of children. The study states that 'children have consistently indicated the need for adult support and guidance, and they welcomed the opportunity to work with the councils' guardians' (Couzens and Mtengeti, 2011: x).

### Makkala Panchayats in South India

*The Makkala Panchayats (children's councils) example is based on Ratna (2009).*

In 1995, Bhima Sangha<sup>23</sup> and The Concerned for Working Children,<sup>24</sup> in collaboration with the Ministry of Rural Development and Decentralisation, initiated the formation of Makkala Panchayats (children's councils) in five village Panchayats in Karnataka. The Bhima Sangha proposed a permanent structure that enabled close interaction between children and decision-making bodies in order to inform and influence local governments.

The model of Makkala Panchayats includes different groups of children and young people, such as working children, children with special needs, children from migrant communities and school-going children. The Makkala Panchayats are elected bodies. Children resident in the Panchayats between the ages of 6 and 18 years vote for the representatives. They elect children and young people aged 12 to 16 years.

Children and young people have raised issues and problems related to education, basic facilities, personal problems, gender discrimination, disability and child labour.

In order to link the children's councils to the village Panchayats, a task force has been set up. It consists of representatives of the Makkala Panchayats, elected members of the local government, government officials and community-based organisations.

Each children's council selects a Makkala Mitra (Children's Friend) who is an adult it relies on and depends on for support within the task force and in the community. The Makkala Mitra's role is to take immediate action in cases where children request help individually or collectively. As a consequence, children and young people have been

<sup>23</sup> Bhima Sangha is a union of working children and young people in Karnataka facilitated by The Concerned for Working Children.

<sup>24</sup> Active since the late 1970s, The Concerned for Working Children was one of the first organisations in India to focus on working children and their needs. The group has been recognised as a world leader in children's rights, particularly children's right to self-determination.



able to address and resolve problems with the help of the Makkala Mitra, independently of the task force.

The Makkala Panchayats uses evidence to present its findings and influence policymaking. A video has made to illustrate this,<sup>25</sup> and below is a quotation from Ratna (2011):

Lessons learned and impacts:

- The children's councils led to new dynamism within local government. Children and young people have been able to identify issues that concern them and to propose solutions as well. They have showed how they can be actors in the political space and influence decision-making processes.
- The experiences of the children's council have demonstrated that children and young people use spaces constructively as they stay away from conflict and look for win-win solutions.
- From the experience of being on the children's councils, members of extremely marginalised communities have been more willing to express their views in local government.
- The role of the NGO has played a significant role in capacity building for both adults and children. As a consequence, the members of the Makkala Panchayats have gained knowledge on how local government structures work and are better prepared to interact with the local authorities.
- The process of children's participation has a snowball effect on adults in the community as many of their longstanding issues have been given attention in a democratic manner; as a result, the adult Grama Sabhas and village Panchayats have been revived.

### Children and young people in Nicaragua

*The example of children and young people influencing policymakers in Nicaragua is based on Shier et al. (2014).*

The CESESMA (*Centro de Servicios Educativos en Salud y Medio Ambiente*) organisation supports the project in Nicaragua.<sup>26</sup> Harry Shier joined the team in 2001 and developed several models on child participation based on work with children and young people working on the coffee plantations.

The research project involved CESESMA and the University of the North of Nicaragua. Through a survey, the research team selected 10 cases in Nicaragua that demonstrated that children and young people had influenced public policy decisions. Out of the 10, they selected four for case studies.<sup>27</sup> As part of the case studies they conducted focus groups with children and young people, along with adults who facilitated the process, and they interviewed decision makers.

### *Lessons learned from children and young people in Nicaragua influencing policymakers*

The following lessons learned have been summarised from Shier et al. (2014: 7–12).

The lessons which are examined include conditions to support children's and young people's influence on policymakers; spaces and ways of organising to influence public policy; and the methods and approaches by adult helpers/facilitators that help increase children's and young people's influence on policymakers.

<sup>25</sup> See <https://docs.google.com/file/d/0B3MAx-b6BpynVG51bIFqdVg0cFU/edit>.

<sup>26</sup> CESESMA was founded in 1992 as an environmental education action group to promote and defend the rights of children and young people. See [http://www.cesesma.org/bienvenida\\_eng.htm](http://www.cesesma.org/bienvenida_eng.htm).

<sup>27</sup> The selection of the four case studies was based on evidence of influence on policy, geographical spread, contrast and logistical issues.





## Conditions to support children's and young people's influence on policymakers

### 1. Conditions related to children and young people

- The interest of children and young people as a starting point for the advocacy initiative.
- Focus on the knowledge and the capability of children and young people.
- Recognition and encouragement of leadership to reduce children's and young people's dependency on adults.
- Children and young people working together with a teamwork spirit.

### 2. Conditions related to an NGO (or other organisation) that is supporting or facilitating children's and young people's initiatives

- Significant role of NGO in the preparation, facilitation and assistance of the advocacy process.
- Human rights-based approach by the NGO to support children's and young people's advocacy.
- A focus on the different settings of children's and young people's lives such as family, school, local community and municipality, and involvement of all the relevant stakeholders in the process.

### 3. Conditions related to other actors (stakeholders and duty bearers)

- Encouragement from children's and young people's parents and from their extended family.
- Support from the school to conduct surveys and consultations to start the advocacy process (support from teachers, school authorities and local authority are positive elements to carry out children's and young people's advocacy).
- Local authority is aware of the value of taking children's and young people's concern in decision-making.
- Coordination/alliances with the local authority and the civil society.

## Spaces and ways of organising to influence public policy

### 1. Children's and young people's spaces

- Children and young people created their own participation spaces where they make decisions, agree upon activity plans and resolve problems.
- Participation starts with interest groups – such as artistic, cultural, environmental, recreation groups – and vocational education courses. There was not a focus on influencing public policy at the beginning. The aim here is to learn to work together, to plan, to organise and to develop communication skills. Only after that can children and young people initiate another level if the need occurs.
- Transition from a local group to be part of a network of children's organisations to have impact at the municipal level.
- Children and young people as direct participants in advocacy initiatives such as marches, public assemblies and lobbies and also as representatives (election) to present and discuss proposals in decision-making spheres.

### 2. Spaces for training and development

- Capacity building as a starting point (information put together regarding the issues, rights, communication skills); can be conducted by the staff members as well as by young volunteers.

### 3. Lobbies, forums, assemblies

- Lobbies, forums, assemblies for children and young people as advocacy mechanisms; monitoring and follow-up are also needed to ensure that the politicians keep their promises.

### 4. Access to adult-influent decision-making spaces

- Access to adult-influent decision-making spaces in order to influence policy; to find a way to influence what goes on in these spaces is essential.



**Methods and approaches by adult helpers/facilitators that help increase children's and young people's influence on policymakers**

- working in the schools
- house-to-house visits
- raising awareness with adults at the same time (such as parents, teachers, local community, local leaders, and so on)
- working with existing out-of-school activity groups
- liaising and coordinating with different groups in the area
- providing relevant capacity building for children and young people (using fun, creative, participatory methods, real-life experience)
- creating or supporting children's and young people's organisation structures, where they can make their own decisions and ensure that self-organisation, activism and leadership are recognised and valued
- identifying the problems that affect children and young people in their daily lives through participatory appraisal (a survey carried out by children and young people with appropriate training and support)
- formulating children's and young people's demands based on group consensus with adult support without manipulation
- conducting fair elections of representatives to take children's and young people's demands and recommendations to the adult authorities
- accessing the people and places where the real decisions are being made (mayor's office, district council, education ministry, and so forth); supportive adult facilitators can help with this
- going with children and young people to attend adult decision-makers' meetings, such as forums, lobbies and other advocacy activities
- including children and young people in monitoring and follow-up to make sure that their demands are heard



## PART 3. WHAT'S NEXT? GENERAL AND SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the literature review, theories and practices, and the author's experience, general and specific recommendations have been developed to contribute to the debate and strategic decision around child participation.

### 3.1 GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

The general recommendations are organised in seven points:

- promoting a human rights–based approach
- supporting cultural and value shifts
- implementing children's participation in different programmes and sectors
- increasing support for active children's citizenship rights and engagement in advocacy work
- encouraging accountability and showing impacts on children's participation
- advocating for children's and young people's participation
- fostering collaborative efforts amongst child-focused agencies.

#### Promoting a human rights–based approach

*Recognising that children and young people are stakeholders in society, as one group amongst others in public decision-making:*

- Develop a human rights–based approach to support children's participation.

#### Supporting culture and value shifts

*Reflecting on what it means to do participation with children and young people:*

- Carry out a context analysis in relation to the legal, socio-cultural, political and economic barriers that impede children's and young people's opportunities to participate and be heard. For example, see the 25 indicators developed by Lansdown and O'Kane for laws, policies and services that have an impact on children's and young people's lives (Lansdown and O'Kane 2014).

*Supporting cultural and value shifts by promoting legislation, capacity building, media campaigning and valuing children's and young people's involvement in the process:*

- Encourage intergenerational dialogue and promote the idea that children's and young people's participation is everyone's responsibility, including parents, caregivers, government officials, religious leaders and community members.

#### Implementing children's participation in different programmes and sectors

*Embedding children's participation in different programmes:*

- Support children's representation in school management, local governance, disaster risk reduction, community-based child protection mechanisms, peacebuilding and so forth.
- Include children's participation in job descriptions and reviewing processes.

#### Increasing support for active children's citizenship rights and engagement in advocacy work

*Promoting children's citizenship as integral to advocacy and programming:*

- Organise children and young people as active citizens to make sure that their voices are heard by politicians and decision makers, even though their right to vote is denied.
- Support active citizenship in everyday life with the establishment of child-led organisations, gradually reaching the national, regional and international levels.
- Ensure that advocacy work is supported by evidence of the problem that children and young people are addressing to influence policymaking.
- Encourage children and young people to be not only 'technical actors', that is, providers of information, but active citizens.
- Work on intergenerational dialogue amongst children, young people, youth and adults.
- Have a budget for children's citizenship project in all country programmes.



### Encouraging accountability and showing impacts on children's participation

*Using participation to build accountability and promote good governance:*

- Promote the role of adults as 'facilitators' to keep decision makers accountable to their promises to children and young people.
- Create an accountability advisor position on children's participation to offer support, guidance and advice to staff members.

*Showing the impacts on children's participation:*

- Use 'A Toolkit for Monitoring and Evaluating Children's Participation' (Lansdown and O'Kane, 2014, booklets 1–6) as part of monitoring and evaluation frameworks.
- Create relationships, dialogue amongst children, young people and adults to implement children's participation collaboratively.

### Advocating for children's and young people's participation

*Being a leader to advocate on children's and young people's participation:*

- Advocate for the establishment of a children's commissioner or an ombudsperson and liaise with that person to promote the opinions of children and young people.
- Encourage the countries in which your organisation works to produce alternative/shadow reports to the UN Committee and to identify people to champion children's and young people's participation, especially politicians.
- Develop collective advocacy initiatives with child-led organisations to bring issues with valid research to the attention of national, regional and international actors; carrying out campaigns globally on the social media, radio and/or on TV.
- Support children's and young people's participation in CRC reporting, UPR (Universal Periodic Review) reporting and other 'strategic opportunities' such as the post-2015 agenda and the new post-Hyogo Framework.

### Fostering collaborative efforts amongst child-focused agencies

*Being part of a larger network of organisations and developing a participation knowledge hub – a global collective conversation on children's and young people's participation; also emphasising collaborative efforts between child focused agencies such as World Vision, Plan International and Save the Children:*

- Move beyond 'voice' and Article 12 to recognise the connections with other participation rights – freedom of expression, information, association and other human rights (such as non-discrimination) – and mainstream an ethos on children's and young people's participation for all stakeholders.

## 3.2 SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

The specific recommendations for country and regional offices are organised in four points:

- promoting institutionalisation of children's and young people's participation
- working with adults who are engaged with children and young people
- involving children and young people, including the most marginalised, at different decision-making levels
- advocating for children's and young people's participation at the government level.

### Promoting institutionalisation of children's and young people's participation

*Promoting sustainable mechanisms such as child-led organisations where all children and young people (especially marginalised ones) are involved:*

- Advocate and work with the government authorities to review laws and policies to ensure spaces for children and young people to be heard and taken into account.
- Initiate activities with children and young people focusing on their interests, for example, artistic or cultural activities, having fun, working together, planning, organising, etc.
- (After completing point 2 above) organise another group on influencing public policy (if the groups want to) either by direct participation of everyone or by electing representatives to meet decision makers.



### The change of mind-set in participation 'recipe'

– Carine Le Borgne, doctoral researcher, University of Edinburgh

In order not to be anxious about participation, we need to think about the benefits of changes for children and young people and for adults as well. New things make people uneasy, especially when they imply a change of mind-set. Participation means a change of mind and behaviour in taking seriously into consideration the view of the child; but in some societies children 'don't exist'. Participation is to understand each other; to feel free to speak without fear; to take part in dialogue in the family, in school, in the community and within the NGO.

When we want to make a change in our life, we need to consider the 'time elements'. We can change, but to do so we need to know the meaning of 'participation'. We need to be 'motivated' to do it (know the benefits) and to take action, to practise it (the knowledge that we have a safe space to reflect on it will help). We need to make an effort to initiate change and to achieve it.

We all need to incorporate some 'ingredients' to bring about change. We need self-confidence and determination. Changes consume time (even weeks or years), but the important thing is that when we have the knowledge, we should immediately start to internalise and utilise it. Indeed, participation needs to be practised in day-to-day life in order to understand its benefits rather than only talked about theoretically.

In the process of change we may come across many hurdles, but we need to sustain a positive attitude and commitment to continue. (A person with whom to discuss our difficulties can be an asset.) We can also recall our achievements since the beginning of the process and be proud of our accomplishments so far.

All this forms a 'recipe' for accepting the true meaning of participation. Until we do this, participation will remain only a concept to preach, but it will not be practised.

### Working with adults who are engaged with children and young people

*Strengthening organisational structures in developing the organisational capacity to support the overall process of children's and young people's participation:*

- Hire dedicated and accountable staff members to work with children and young people.
- Promote capacity building for all the staff members involved with children and young people.
- Provide support beyond capacity building with a safe space where the staff members involved can explore their own attitudes, problems and challenges in implementing children's and young people's participation. This could be done with the help of an external person or someone from the regional or national office who has the skills to supervise the staff on children's and young people's participation. For the safe space, a trust relationship needs to be established to talk about difficulties in a constructive way and to learn from mistakes. It is also essential to get commitment from senior management to focus on children's participation.

- Ask staff members and chaperons to work outside their 'comfort zone' to help adults avoid anxiety about children's and young people's participation; emphasise capacity building needs by shadowing practitioners and having practical experience. (The 'recipe' in the text box might also be helpful.)

*Involving adults in supporting children and young people who are creating spaces for children and young people is not enough.*

- Encourage effectiveness by encouraging children and young people from the organisation, adults supporting the process and decisions makers to work together, thus promoting decision makers to enter into dialogue with children and young people.
- Promote capacity building for politicians and civil servants:
  - train them with communication skills that will help them exchange opinions with children and young people
  - give them practical experience by shadowing the work of children and young people and interacting with them



- provide them with information on children's and young people's participation and on how children and young people can contribute to policymaking.
- Develop specific capacity building for staff members:
  - for facilitating deliberative processes where children and young people contribute to public policy debates
  - for facilitating participative processes with children and young people
  - for supporting children and young people in engaging with adults in power on public policy issues
  - for supporting and facilitating children and young people using research methodologies but also participatory and creativity approaches
  - for using the media and enabling children and young people to do so directly.
- Capitalise on young people who have already been part of the project to be facilitators in staff capacity-building sessions.

*Tools that can be used for staff members to reflect on their practice:*

- The nine basic requirements for ethical and effective participation to plan, monitor and evaluate the quality of participation (see CRC, 2009).
- Shier's Pathway models (2001; 2010b) and the categorisation of participation from Lansdown and O'Kane (2014, booklet 3).
- The 15 tensions highlighted by Shier (2010a) – help practitioners reflect on their practice to understand the challenge in doing children's and young people's participation in the Global North and Global South (see Part 1, point 4.2 above).
- The Hear by Right Standards Framework (Badham and Wade, 2010) – to encourage sustained and effective participation of children and young people (see also Part 1, point 4.1).

- The lessons learnt from Nicaragua as a checklist document from Shier et al. (2014) to influence policymakers (Shier et al., see part 2, point 2.1.3).
- The 'Article 15 Resource Kit' with 10 modules, available at <http://crc15.org/kit/>.

### **Involving children and young people, including the most marginalised, at different decision-making levels**

*Providing children and young people with opportunities to experience participation:*

- Participating within the family, care facilities and the local community, gradually becoming involved up to national and international levels in wider issues that affect children and young people.
- Focusing not only on the involvement of adolescent and youth but also on the participation of younger children (for instance, from eight years of age).

*Creating more opportunities for the most marginalised girls and boys to have voice and influence:*

- Reflecting on issues of inclusion and exclusion to challenge discrimination.

### **Advocating for children's and young people's participation at the government level**

*Encouraging government to attribute child budgetary allocations:*

- Encouraging government to run child-led organisations and have staff appointed to facilitate the process; to create a special project on children's citizenship; to provide resources linked to services to children and young people; to train in capacity building for people working with and for children and young people.

*Promoting children and young people to be involved in national strategies and action plans for children and young people:*

- Encouraging consultative participation to obtain the opinions of children and young people, who are the experts of their lives.



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