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Children's Participation Guidebook

jnne

教育協力 NGO ネットワーク (JNNE)

Children's Participation Guidebook

To those who conduct programs involving children

Children's participation is one of the major issues to focus on today.

If asked,

"Does your organization state the Rights of the child and children's participation in its goals (principles/philosophy)?" many organizations would probably answer, "Yes, we do."

Then, responding to the following question,

"How do you implement children's participation in activities?"

various comments would be heard, such as:

"Children are participating in a making-school project."

"We have reflected children's opinions in our events."

"Children are working on local problems."

What would be their answers if asked,

"Is there a gap between what you state and what you do in actual practices regarding children's participation?"

Many of the members who helped make this guidebook answered, "Yes," to this question concerning the organization they belong to.

It is our hope to close the gap between what we state as our philosophy and what we do in our practices. This is what motivated us to make this guidebook and we dedicate it to you who share our interests and concerns.

Aiming to change the awareness of adults and NGOs

How can we encourage children's independent participation?

"There is no universal model for children's social participation," Roger Hart writes in the preface to his book, "Children's Participation."

Probably we are not the only ones who agree with him. Many practitioners who work in the field would find that well-made models are not so impressive. But actual practices pursued in a manner of constant patience are something compelling and give people courage to think, "We may be able to do it, too!"

This guidebook will present case studies of children's participation as well as what we learned from them. This is a guide made by adults for adults to transform themselves. We hope you will find this guidebook useful.

March 2009

Educational Cooperation NGO Network, JNNE

"Children's Participation Guidebook"
Contents

Practical guides show important points picked up from the case studies, commentary and practical information. Part 2 and Part 3 are related so please read them together.

Who would be in the cast for children's participation?

Fathers	Mothers	Principals	Teachers	Local leaders
Supporters	NGOs	Local NGOs	Local government	Central government
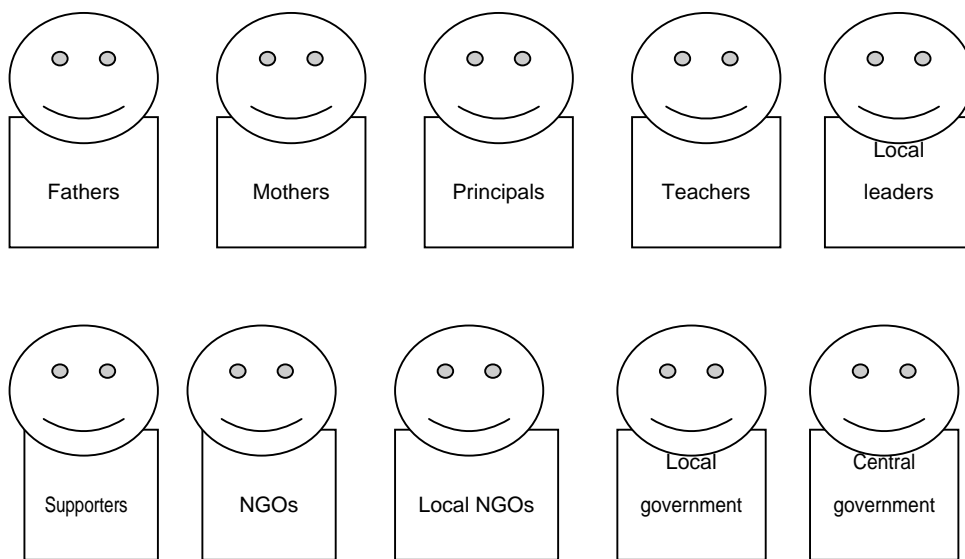
Many adults will appear in scenes of "Children's participation." How would each of these characters acknowledge the potentiality of the children who were invisible to them before, and find it wrong that there is no seat set for children at this table?

Some of you might continue to oppose children's participation, however, it can be a chance for adults or NGOs to transform themselves.

Do you really see children
when you talk about "children's participation"?
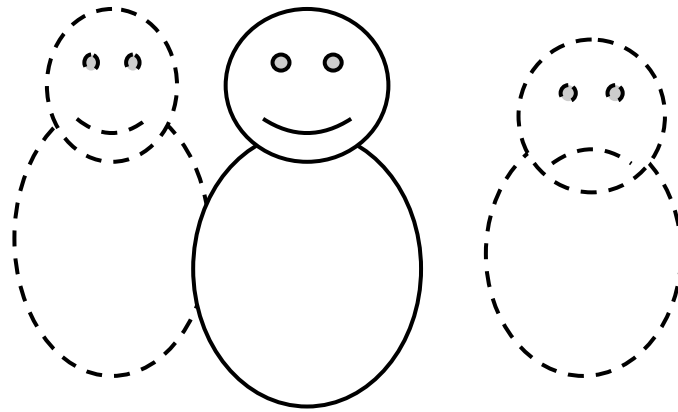
Children's lives vary in different circumstances. The journey toward children's participation should be a process of discovering children and an opportunity for learning more in depth about the structure of a society that you are assisting through your work. For NGOs, this process offers an opportunity to discover partners among children as we aim for a sustainable society in which people can live their decent lives.

Realizing children as your partners brings down walls.

Walls

When can we expect to hear about the results?

Are children really capable for this?

We'll just get more work to do

They will surely be manipulated.

Sponsors of funding

NGOs supporting the project

Local staff

Adults in the local community

Examples of "Children's participation" practices

Building a daycare center initiated by a community survey by children

Children's participation in decision-making in the community development of a slum

Successful results in educational activities for prevention of early marriage

"Literacy programs" conducted by children for children

Children talk to parents whose children are not enrolled in school

Children participate in a school improvement project with teachers and parents

Examples of results of programs for children

Children have confidence in themselves

More children become able to speak their opinions

Children enjoy opportunities to play a main role

Children are prevented from becoming delinquent

There are so many programs for children, though when we consider getting children involved in decision-making there are various obstacles facing to us. While working in the field you might realize that what breaks down the walls you face is recognition of children as partners.

Chapter 1

Theory: Promoting Children's Participation

1. Why is Children's Participation Important?

2. Children's Rights and Participation

3. Child Development and Participation

4. Group Participation and Group Work

5. Ladder of Participation

6. Participation for Tokenism

7. NGOs' Activities and Children's Participation

1. Why is Children's Participation Important?

Parks with no children

Why is it important to consider children's participation when NGOs plan projects and carry them out?

For instance, in Japan there are many parks and playgrounds built solely for children. Some parks are well equipped with play equipment for children, however, few children actually show up. Other parks in Japan are bursting with children running around and yelling with voices full of energy. Those parks are so-called "Play Parks" run by NPOs collaborating with local governments. They tend to be poorly equipped in comparison with ordinary parks, but children roll tires, run after them, and climb trees. What makes these play parks different from other parks is that there are no "Don'ts" prohibiting children, just play leaders who carefully watch over them.

Listen to children's voices

What makes the difference between parks completely lacking the exuberance of children and other parks that are full of children's happy voices?   It depends on whether parks are designed and run from a child's point of view by those who set up and administrate the parks while listening to children ideas.   Play leaders are not instructors who play with children. Rather, they stay quiet and observe children in case of accidents. At the same time they listen to children's voices, watch children's activities, and try to reflect what they learned from and about children in the way they run and manage the park.   As a result, they become able to run the park in a way that meets children's needs, which brings more children to the park to play.

International cooperation NGOs run projects related to children to benefit children.   However, the results are not necessarily successful in terms of impacts on children.   Projects failed in many cases in spite of good intention for children. The question to be asked is whether a project is being run without the involvement of children. The first step of children's participation is always to listen to children's voices.

There are quite a few projects in local districts, such as securing drinking water, building roads, and constructing community centers, which may have a great impact on children's lives. It is truly important to reflect the voices of   "small citizens," the children, in order to make projects successful.

2. Children's Rights and Participation

The Rights of Child

It has not been that long since it became recognized that children have fundamental rights to participation in events concerning their own lives.   Quite recently, in 1989, the Convention on the Rights of the Child was adopted by the United Nation and has now been ratified internationally. The Convention spells out the four basic rights children have: the right to survival, to protection, to development, and to participation.

The articles concerning the right to participation, for example, include Article 12, the right to express her or his own views; Article 13, the right to freedom of expression and to receive

information; Article 15, the right to freedom of assembly; and, Article 31, the right to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities. The right to participation is the most recently regarded as a basic right of children and is officially stated in the Convention for the first time, among the four core rights of the child.

The two world wars of the 20th century led to taking the rights of children into serious consideration, reflecting on World War I, which was caused by grownups and condemned children to death and misfortunes. In 1924, the Geneva Declaration on the Rights of the Child was issued, and in 1959 The United Nation issued the Declaration on the Rights of the Child, in which three basic rights were articulated, including the right to survival, the right to protection, and the right to development. However, the idea of a right to participation was not acknowledged; rather children were considered something to protect and educate. The 20th anniversary of the Declaration on the Rights of the Child, 1979, was named the International Year of Children and work began to enact a treaty that would have binding force in the domestic law of each country. Ten years later, in 1989, the Convention on the Rights of the Child was adopted at the United Nations. By 2008 all countries except for the United States and Somalia had ratified the Convention, meaning the Convention is the most successful, with the highest number of contracting countries in the world, when compared with other similar conventions.

Progress in the right to participation

Has the Convention on the Rights of the Child improved the condition of children's participation significantly? It is true to certain degree that the Convention has contributed to spreading recognition that children have rights to participation and expressing their opinions; however, among grownups some remain uneasy and hesitate to accept the idea that children have the right to participate in all matters affecting their lives.

In order to secure children's participation, it is necessary to have adults change their ways of thinking, as well as to improve the environment and the skills needed to help children become able to participate.

Roger Hart, in his book, Children's Participation, states that it seems children's participation is more advanced in communities within countries that appear to be just awakening to democracy, rather than in those countries in the northern hemisphere where self-acknowledged democracy has been fully established. Hart has done research on the state of children's participation in countries worldwide. It is likely that in Asian countries where shared childcare is still common in communities, children's participation might be more likely than in Japan, where traditional local communities have been collapsing recently. If you get involved in international cooperation activities, keep in mind that children's participation is a common agenda in both Japan and other countries in Asia.

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3. Child Development and Participation

What does children's participation mean?

The word "participation" is used in a broad sense. For example, in the case of "participating in a community athletic meeting," it may mean someone who reluctantly participates by just attending,

or someone else who plays actively aiming to win, or another person who gets involved in the whole process of planning to carry out the event.

The lowest degree of participation is the state of "belonging to a group," meaning one belongs to a group, but does not play a role or be in charge of anything.   The next level of participation is belonging to a group and playing a role within the group, so- called "participation with a role."   In this case, one has a certain role to play to meet the group's expectation.
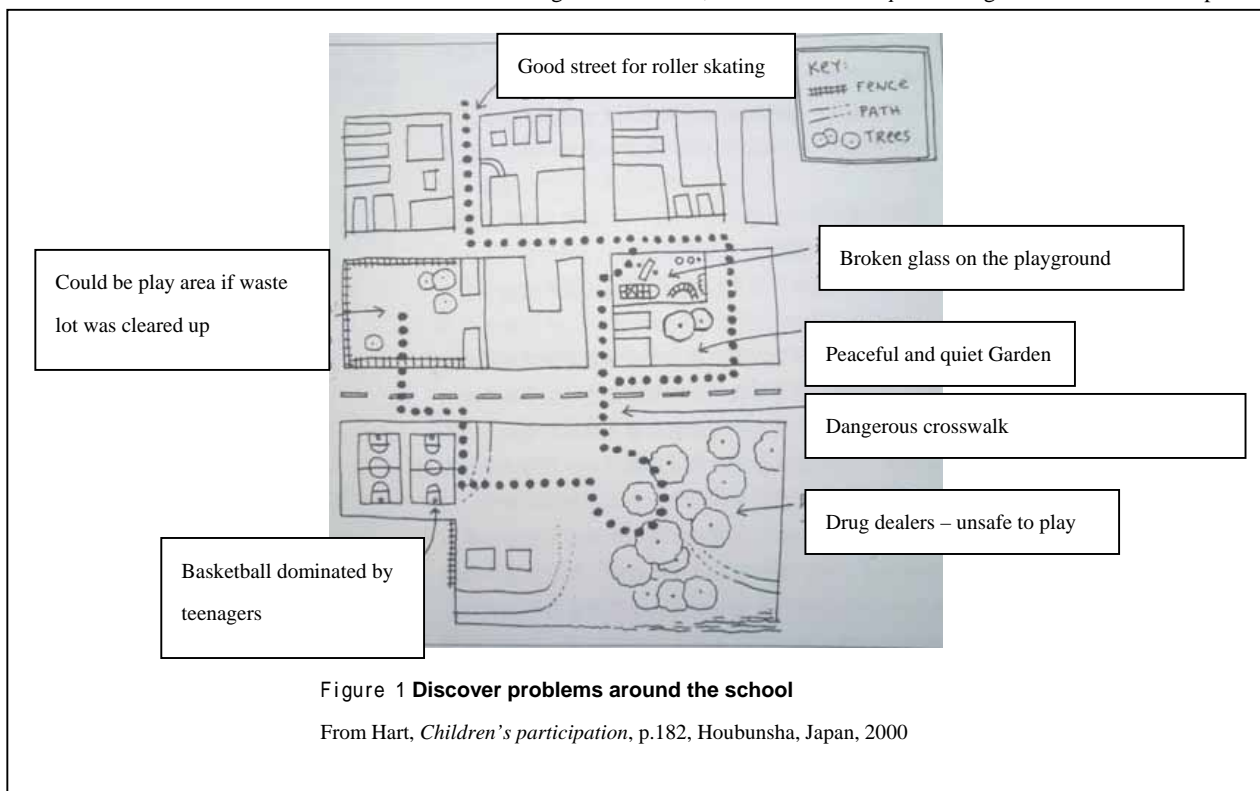
Furthermore, the next level is social participation, in which one gets actively involved in surrounding society and interacts with the rest of the society, which is called "social participation." This means participating, based in the group, in a way that makes a commitment to the broader society by playing a role to bring about change.

This guide book, "Children's participation," focuses more on "social participation" based on children's group participation, taking a look at ways to encourage children to work for the wider society.

There are other ways of categorizing children's participation from the point of view of "place": participation in the family, participation in school, participation in the community, participation in the workplace, participation in one's country, and participation in global society, spreading out in a concentric pattern. This idea reflects the assumption that children's activities will spread out to the wider world depending on their stage of development. Children's awareness of society, however, does not necessarily spread out in a concentric pattern, as they start learning about world incidents when they are very young, owing to advanced mass media.

When is it possible for children to start participating?

Let's consider group participation and social participation separately.   Regarding group participation, children approximately 3 years old can participate, while for social participation, let's take a look at Roger Hart's book, *Children's Participation*. Figure 1 shows the example of an

Figure 1 **Discover problems around the school**

From Hart, *Children's participation*, p.182, Houbunsha, Japan, 2000

elementary school in the US where children walked around the school in order to learn about their neighborhood community and discover problems by themselves. It shows that it is very possible for elementary students to recognize problems and act to solve those problems.   Older students, such as junior and senior high school students, are able to understand and become interested in problems in the wider society and in the world.

4. Group Participation and Group Work

Child-centered approach and children's participation

There are two meanings of a child-centered approach.   One approach emphasizes adults' role of leadership in order to draw out children's autonomy. Group work discussed in this chapter takes this approach and stresses the importance of group workers leading a group.

Another approach is aiming to give the initiative to children regarding all matters related to children's activities.   The next chapter shows a participation ladder designed by Roger Hart, which illustrates that eventually children take the initiative and aim to involve adults in their activities. Two approaches define who takes the final initiative, whether adults or children.

How to implement group participation

When encouraging children's participation it is fundamental for children to participate in a group, play a role of her/his own, learn about the basics of human relationships, and acquire awareness and techniques related to society. Group work is an effective method for assisting children to grow and develop in a group. The group work methodology was originally developed by youth organizations, such as the YMCA, in the late 19th century in the UK and later established in the fields of community education and social welfare.

Group development and decline

The basic dynamic of group work is transformation, so-called group process. A group follows a life cycle similar to that which people experiencing from birth to death: birth, development, activation, stagnation, reactivation, and decline. Let's take the example of a school class. When the school year starts, members of the class are all discrete. However, as the members start learning about each other and doing activities together, each member finds her/his role to play in the group: children who are good at taking leadership, children who are good at entertain their friends,

Figure 2 **Group work process**

Birth Development Activation Stagnation   Reactivation   Decline

A

Child's activity

B
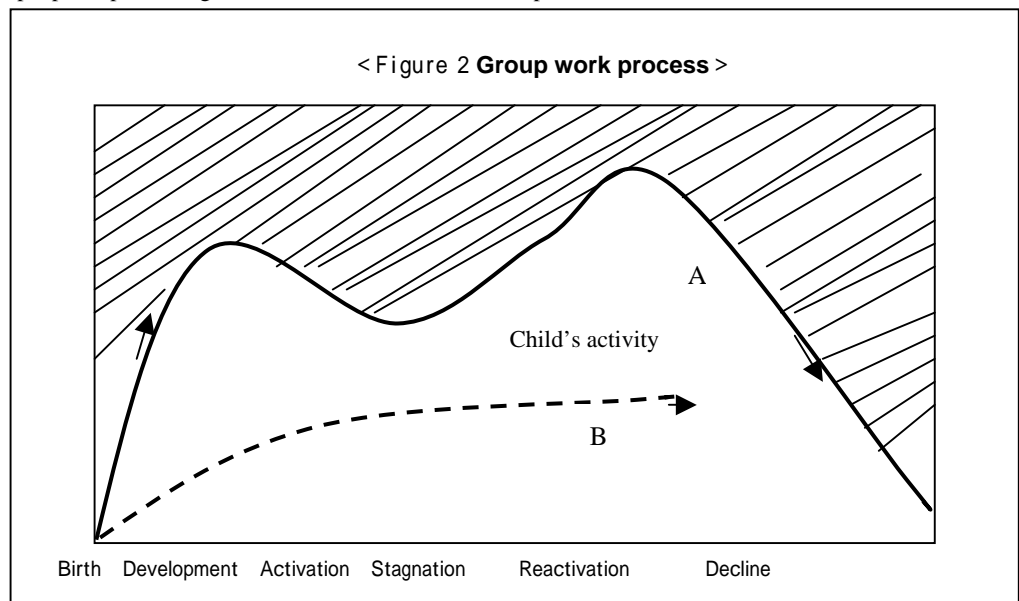
children who are good at talking with others, children who create a world of just two people, and children who are isolated. During the development period these children gradually connect with each other and during the activation period the class starts banding together under a leader, or turns into several small groups, which are ready to work together when required to.

The group, however, does not stay active forever, and experiences conflicts within the group, suffers from routine, loses dynamism, starts to decline, and, comes to an end of the group activity, dissolution.

Required Leadership

The key to group work is a group leader, or group worker.   In the field of NGO activities, they can be called leaders, workers, facilitators, and so on.   A group leader should facilitate the group to help children, who meet each other for the first time, get to know and become closer to each other. At this stage, a leader needs to provide active leadership with creative approaches in order to make the group develop, and at the same time watch individual children carefully to find characteristics and needs, while encouraging children to develop their own uniqueness.

As the group develops, the children become able to conduct various activities by themselves and solve problems when they occur. At this point, the group can be considered to have reached the period of activation. It is important for a group worker to remember to loosen her/his leadership and let the children act on their own. If a group worker continues to intervene and assist the children as they did in the beginning of the group process, the children will come to rely on the leader and not build autonomy. So a group worker needs to stay on the sidelines and keep a quiet watch, but not withdraw or take a laissez-faire attitude, and give advice to the children when they ask.

5. Ladder of Participation

Leadership in stagnation periods

While a group is functioning with autonomy, group leaders should stand back and just watch over the group. As the group starts showing stagnation or decline, it is time for group leaders again to give their support to the group, for example, by encouraging the group to talk about reasons why they are not as active as before, or helping the group to identify conflicts and find solutions if there are any. Effective intervention can help the group revive and sustain.

The hardest thing for group leaders is said to be dissolving a group.   Group leaders should suggest ways for the group to have a positive dissolution, when they judge the group no longer works for the benefit of the children.

Group leaders need to observe carefully to be able to evaluate what condition their group is in (whether it is in a period of developing or stagnating) and give the group appropriate instructions and advice. A group's degree of activeness is in a converse relationship to the degree of the leaders' activeness.

  There are different steps for participation. One model illustrating the steps is the Ladder of Participation designed by Hart. The higher rungs of the ladder show higher degrees of participation (see figure 3). The bottom three rungs are actually considered to be non-participation of children.

Let's take a fictional NGO project in an Asian country, a "Children's club" that involves children in order to promote local community improvement as part of broader Asian activities, which will explain what the ladder of participation illustrates.

We will look at the lowest degree of actual participation, which is the fourth rung, participation with assigned role. Young people know that they are going to do cleaning in their local community where their residences are as the first step for improving their community. The organizer NGO of this project explains the purpose of the cleaning to the members of the Children's club, then divides them into groups, and has the groups do the cleaning – thus participation with assigned roles. The children understand the purpose of the project and try to achieve the goal by playing the role assigned by adults.

How about the fifth rung, participation being consulted for opinions? On this rung, the children can speak their opinion freely, not just following what they are told to do with assigned roles. They can tell their opinions regarding how to clean and how to divide the members into small groups, and the adult staff have to listen to the children. However, decision-making depends on the adults, whether they follow the children's opinions or not.

The sixth rung is a further degree of participation, participation with shared decision-making, and here both children and adults discuss children's opinions and decide by agreement with each other. They decide how to carry out the cleaning activity and how to make small groups through discussions. The idea of this project, the cleaning activity, came from the adults and the initiative stays with the adults.

In the case of usual activities, you may start from the fourth rung, participation with assigned role, and gradually aim to move up to the ladder's fifth rung, participation by being consulted for opinions, in which children voice their opinions, and to the sixth rung, participation with shared decisions, in which decisions are made by adults and children together.

Children' initiative participation

The seventh and the eighth rungs have children initiating participation. On the seventh rung

Figure 3 **Ladder of Participation**

reflect
participation

Rung 8: Children initiate and
share decision-making with adults

Rung 7: Children initiate
and instruct

Rung 6: Adults initiate and
share decisions with children

Rung 5: Children are consulted
for opinions and informed by adults

Rung 4: Children are assigned
roles and informed by adults

Rung 3: Participation
for Tokenism

Rung 2: Participation
for Decoration

Rung 1: Participation
by Manipulation

reflect
non-participation

(Adapted from Hart, R. (1992). *Children s Participation from Tokenism to Citizenship*)

re: http://www.freechild.org/ladder.htm

children achieve goals by themselves. Children make plans, put them into practice, and evaluate independently.   Taking the example mentioned before, as the Children's club develops its activities, children may find the cleaning project alone not interesting and suggest setting up a Children's festival for fun, then develop the idea to run it by themselves. They may ask adults for advice or assistance. The initiative, however, stays with children.
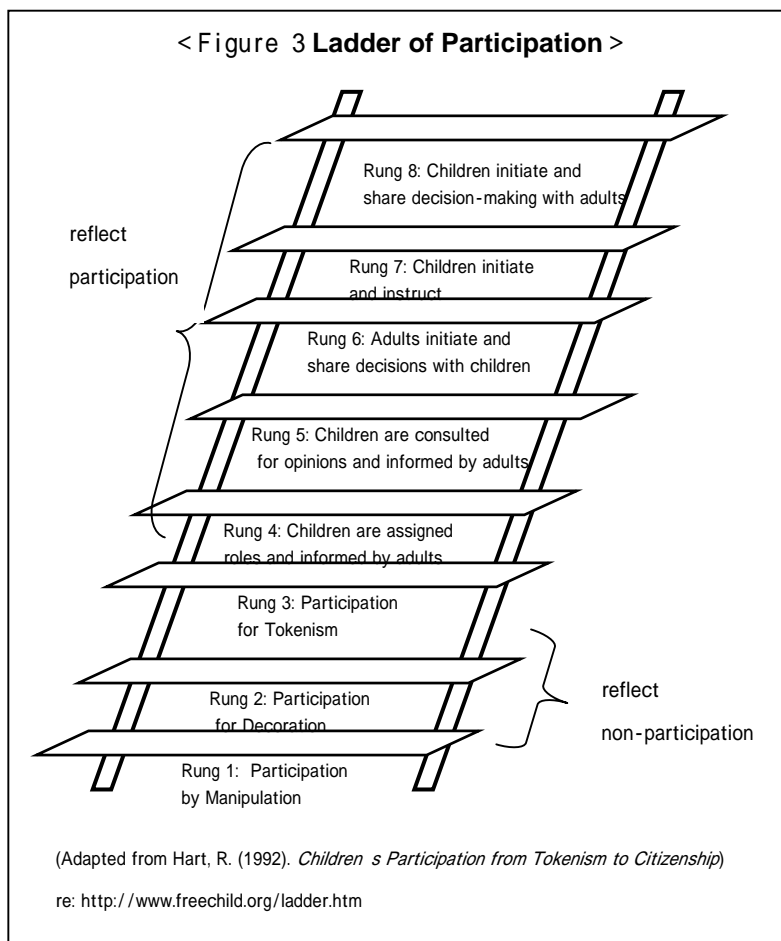
The eighth rung is the highest degree, "shared decisions with adults." For example, adults are asked to participate in the children's festival, planned by the children, and given an opportunity to perform songs and dances during the event. The initiative stays with the children and they get adults in the local area involved in their activities.

6. Participation for Tokenism

Participation for tokenism

While on the first to third rungs children may appear to be participating, in fact they are not. The third rung is participation for tokenism. Children are made to participate for what they represent. The children's club, for example, may have a working committee consisting of three children, representing the child members, and two adult group leaders. They may hold a meeting, but the children participate in a way of confirming whatever the adults suggest. The adult leaders may say, "We makes decisions with children," but the voices of children are not actually reflected in their activities.

The second rung, participation for decoration, shows a lower degree of children's participation. For example, a working committee of the children's club has never been held, and the children only participate in whatever adults plan and run. In this case, children's committee simply decorates the process.

The first rung is participation by deceit or participation by manipulation. The children are used by adults and may even be cheated. Take for example a model project for children's participation that receives funding by utilizing the promise of a children's project to be planned and run by a children's committee, but in fact the committee never meets. Here, the difference from the second rung is the use of a falsehood that uses and deceives the children as a result.

The first rung, participation by deceit, is clearly unethical, though we should also be careful about the third rung, participation for tokenism. There are many cases among observed practices in which children are given opportunities to participate just for tokenism. The difference between participation for tokenism and participation by being consulted for opinions is hard to identify. Having children speak their opinions does not always mean they are participating for their own opinions. If children speak out saying what adults want to hear, they are considered to be participating for tokenism. There are many cases of this sort found in the practices of student councils in junior and senior high schools in Japan. Similar examples are also often found in the practices of children's conferences and youth conferences organized by local governments. During these occasions, children give opinions to city mayors, however the opinions might be written by adults in scenarios, or there will be no documentation to show that the children's opinions are listened to and put into practice for governing a city. The local papers, however, may have articles with a big photo of the mayor with a caption, "The Mayor listens carefully to children."

7. NGOs' Activities and Children's Participation

Don't focus on the result in the beginning

What should we pay attention to in order to encourage children's participation? The most important thing in the field is to listen to children's voices. Some children are good at speaking their opinions; however, many children probably find it hard expressing their thoughts and feelings to adults in ways that adults can understand. But with a supportive atmosphere and someone who is willing to listen carefully to them, things would be different even for those children who falter. "Listening to small voices" is the first step.

It is important to remember not to look to the end immediately. As the ladder of participation shows, there are different rungs for children's participation. There is also a certain process to follow to generate children's active participation. The ideal is considered to be the seventh rung, "Children initiate and instruct." Consequently people would expect something visible, such as children speaking out and acting out. But that might be the third rung, "participation for tokenism," which means non-participation of children. After the fourth rung, all the rungs involve children's participation. Even participation with assigned roles is a step leading up to the next step. Nevertheless, the process of children's participation is never as smooth as going up a staircase. It is a slow process with ups and downs and twists and turns. Children should be learning something from this process. So we should take time to go along with children at their own pace without looking to the end quickly.

Making organizational policy support Children's Participation

In order to promote children's participation, it is significant that not only fieldworkers work on it but also organizations need to offer backup support by making their policies support children's participation. Each organization needs to form a consensus toward the needs of children's participation.

It takes much patience to encourage children's participation, however, according to reports from actual cases of children's participation, if it works successfully the results can bring unexpectedly beneficial consequences. Because of children's participation, not only children grow but also the project itself develops significantly. Also, the adults that help the children have a chance to grow themselves.

Children tend to listen to other children more than to adults. One NGO, Plan Bangladesh, has reported the consequences of children's participation in one of its activities: early marriages decreased, teasing girls decreased, more girls became likely to get education, and the number of boys taking drugs decreased. The NGO might not have accomplished these things, or might not have meet with the same degree of success, if there had not been children involved in the project or adults had been in sole charge. Children's participation, raising their voices and interacting with other children, was certainly a key to the project.

When you plan a project, consider children's participation a main issue not a side purpose, so you can make the project even more beneficial for both children and your organization.

Chapter 2

Case Studies

Children's participation in Society 1, Bangladesh

Involving Children Throughout the Process

Children's Participation in Society 2, Nepal

An Education for All Children

Education programs for children's participation 1, The Philippines

Workshop to Nurture Self Esteem:

Creating the Fundamentals to Encourage Participation in Society

Education programs for children's participation 2, India

Enhancing moral values for building a new society

Involving Children Throughout the Process

Children Organization / Bangladesh

Plan Bangladesh   PB

Children's participation in Society 1

Child Centered Community Development

Under the Plan Bangladesh (PB) approach of Child Centered Community Development (CCCD), local residents, including children, are actively involved in the entire process of identifying problems in the community, planning projects to respond to them, project implementation, and post-project evaluation.

By formally establishing the "Children Organization" as a Community Development committee, and through the participation of children in various decision-making committees, children are given the opportunity to participate in community improvement efforts.

Let's look at the Children Organization as an example of a project that PB is implementing in Dhaka's slum areas.

" The meetings run by adults were, at first, formal and uncomfortable. After several meetings and with us sharing our opinions, the adults gradually warmed up to the children."   (Girl in front row)

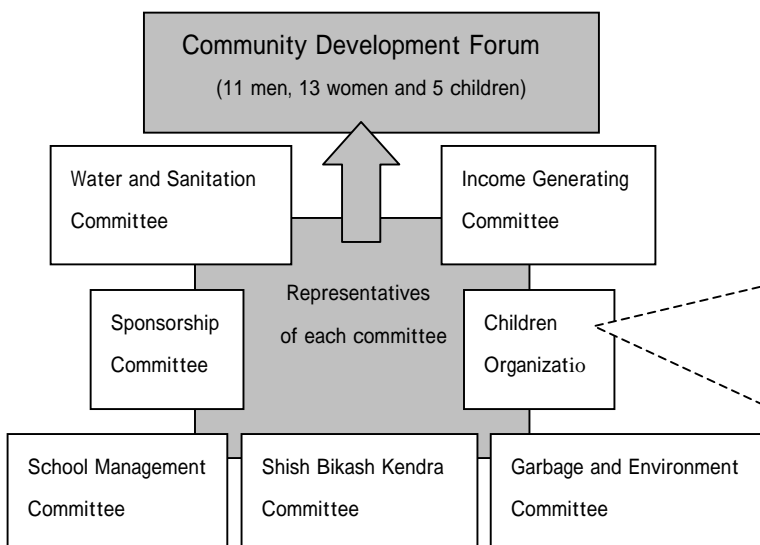## The Children Organization, Participating in the Community's Decision-Making Bodies

PB has been working since 1998 in Bawniabadh slum, located in the northeast of Dhaka City. Now, ten years later, local resident-initiated community development efforts are rooted in Bawniabadh. The Children Organization plays a valuable role in these development efforts.

The Children Organization is an official body within the local organization for community development (Figure 1). Based on an Annual Plan that they prepare, children are involved in various activities, such as raising awareness in the community and monitoring.

Children find pleasure in dance, music and drama, which are important ways for them to express how they feel to others.

Figure 1 **Bawniabadh's Community Organization**

Community Development Forum

(11 men, 13 women and 5 children)

Water and Sanitation Committee

Income Generating Committee

Representatives of each committee

Sponsorship Committee

Children Organizatio

School Management Committee

Shish Bikash Kendra Committee

Garbage and Environment Committee

Children Organization

Member Eligibility: 9 to 18 years of age (one person per family)

Activities: - Area surveys

Producing and performing songs, dances and skits based on surveys and experiences to raise awareness among adults.

Engaging adults to find solutions to problems in the community and evaluating efforts through the Community Development Forum.

Meetings: Monthly

Officers: President, Vice-president, Treasurer, Communications Officer, Secretary, two Steering Committee members (elected annually)

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Efforts of Children Bring Change to the Community

The cornerstone of the Children Organization activities can be said to be its work in raising awareness of problems affecting the community through song, dance and skits using community festivals and other such events as opportunities to perform.

These highly entertaining forms of communication are received well by both adults and children and are effective at communicating their message. Through repeat performances, changes in the community can be observed.

PB staff members serve as facilitators for these activities initiated by the children.

Examples of outcomes of the children's efforts

A decrease in early marriages

Many girls can now have an education

Incidents of boys teasing girls have decreased

The number of boys taking drugs has decreased

Children, Encouraged by the NGO, Begin with Community Assessment

In addition to assessing the situation in the community upon launching its activities, PB set up an immersion period of 2 to 3 months to allow local residents to accept them into the community. After this important preparation work, PB called upon the children in the community to organize. These children were living in the same area and already knew each other well. Their first task was an assessment of their community. The children pinpointed and discussed what kinds of problems they face, the reasons for these, and what kinds of resources the community had available and where.
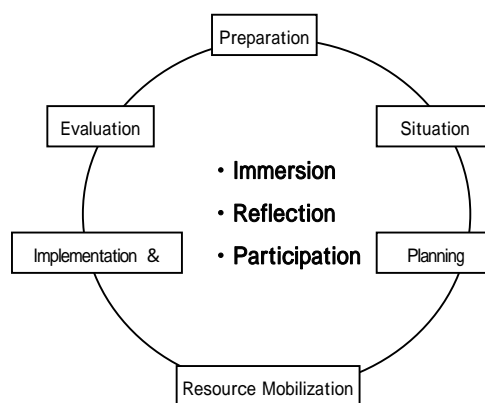
Basic Approach of Child Centered Community

Participation Skills Increase When NGO Leaves Work in Their Hands Instead of Leading Them

During the assessment process, the staff of PB helped the children draw out opinions and ideas and organized and analyzed the issues raised using participatory tools.

PB's basic stance on facilitation is to leave matters to the children. PB staff offered questions or raised different perspectives when necessary.

Over the first few years, PB staff were usually present with the children, but as the children gain experience, they become able to take on the role of facilitation. Thus, through the work of the Children Organization, the children learn the basic skills for social participation.

As a volunteer serving as facilitator (the girl in the back) encourages opinions. The children learn to voice their opinions and make decisions.

Look Back on Efforts and Problems of the Past Year, then Move Forward

The community prepares a Three-Year Plan together with the Community Development Forum, Plan Bangladesh, and a partner NGO. They invite local government officials so they can see what efforts local residents are involved in. The Children Organization makes an Annual Plan, and every year, looks back on what they have achieved through their work, as well as what changes have occurred in the community and the issues that are still outstanding. Through this, they make their plan for the next year. Apart from the activities already touched upon, they also learn about children's rights and have support, through sponsorship, for making materials for communication. They also take on monitoring roles, such as birth registrations.

A Children Organization Meeting. A mother turns up and tries to bring her child home. They introduce the history of the Children Organization through a skit.

Children Notice Problems that Adults have Missed and Discuss them with the Community

Another important point to mention about Bawniabadh as a case study is the participation of children in the decision-making process of community development activities.

Two to six representatives of the Children Organization participate in the Community Development Forum (the highest decision-making body in the community) and its various committees. They themselves decide who is to attend which particular meeting. They do not just join (attend) meetings, during discussions they share opinions and ideas from their own points of view, just like the adults, and participate in decision-making.

For example, one of the issues pointed out by the Children Organization was that there were some children whose parents were both working so older children had to look after their younger siblings. The Children Organization considered whether there was somewhere that these children could safely leave their younger siblings, as well as how such children could go to school. This issue and ideas on how to resolve it were discussed at the Community Development Forum, resulting in the launch of a daycare center run by a partner NGO of PB.

A member of the Children Organization said, "Before, even if we shared our opinions, no one listened to us. Now, with the forum, children can have their opinions officially heard." With the opportunity to participate in the forum to discuss problems facing the community,

Activity evaluations are carried out by both adults and children separately.

Record of the Community Development Forum (CDF). Attendees, comments and decisions made are recorded.

A daycare center resulted from children discussing how to resolve a problem in the community.

those who need to be there and whose voices need to be heard are now present and their opinions heard.

Patience in Waiting for Adults to Change

The adult members of each committee who now respect the children's opinions and recognize the efforts they are making did not always accept the children in this way. Even if they recognized in their minds, through training sessions and studies, the significance and necessity of child participation, it was very hard to change their attitudes and values due to prevailing fixed notions and practices. Gradually, in watching the children's presentations and efforts, they began to feel that children, too, could participate in what they were doing. This realization grew stronger with time, and adult members came to accept children into their activities.

One child member said, "I learn from the opportunity to participate in the committees with adults and join discussions. When I grow up, I will be able to do even more to help my community. It is also an opportunity to nurture the next generation." If this way of thinking reflects the environment of the community organization as a whole, then it will surely lead to sustainable community-based development.

Children Organization members presenting at the radar chart. Adults recognize the strengths of the children, and the children can be confident in what they do.

An Education for All Children

Child Empowerment Centers, Child Clubs/ Nepal

Save the Children Japan (SCJ)

Aasaman Nepal (Aasaman)

Children's participation in Society 2

Save the Children Japan (SCJ) works with partner NGO Aasaman Nepal (Aasaman) to "ensure compulsory and inclusive quality education for all children." To meet this goal, apart from improving operational issues in public schools, SCJ and Aasaman have focused on community mobilization through a JICA-funded project launched in 2008. A key player in this has been a children's group.

Literacy Classes in the Community *for* Children *by* Children

Children participating in Child Empowerment Centers organized at the village-level discuss various issues of concern to children in the village and launch activities that involve them in doing what they can to improve the situation.

Dhamaura VDC is made up of about 2,000 households and many of its residents are Muslim. Due to poverty and other issues, there are many cases of children here leaving to work in garment factories in India once they are over 10 years old. Further, many parents are not aggressive regarding the pursuit of education for girls.

In response, children in the Child Empowerment Center have been hosting literacy classes since September 2008 for 15 girls in Dhamaura VDC who are not attending school.

Members of the Center take turns teaching simple reading and writing skills, three hours a day, five days a week, for free. Classes take place in a hut that is lent to them by the father of one of the Center's members.

Members of the Center provide the girls with writing materials that are contributed by Aasaman. Five months have passed since these literacy classes began. Three of the girls who had been studying reading and writing here have already been admitted into public schools.

Members of the Child Empowerment Center. The tin container contains writing materials and the attendance book used during literacy classes.

> The girls have been admitted to public school after taking literacy classes

Launch of Activities upon Observing Education in the Community and Wanting to Mobilize

Why did the members of the Child Empowerment Center decide to run literacy classes? This has to do with the process of establishing Dhamaura VDC's Child Empowerment Center.

First, Aasaman called upon the children to organize at the school level and created an opportunity for children attending school to think about educational issues affecting them, such as children's rights and access to education. Then, the Child Club in the school was formed and activities began. Next, the organization of children at the village level began.

The children of Dhamaura VDC are affected by problems such as non-attendance of school (particularly girls), early marriage, and child labor. To respond to these, it was suggested that a center be established, with the support of Aasaman. Parents were approached to raise the

> It began with the NGO giving children a chance to think about education

importance of education, after which it was agreed to establish the Center. The Center's headquarters is a hut lent to the members by one of the villagers, where they formally began their work.The work of the Dhamaura VDC Child Empowerment Center is to provide "counseling" so that children not going to school are able to attend.

In Dhamaura VDC, parents' acceptance of education for girls is limited due to traditions and customs, so many girls do not attend school because of reasons such as housework. Once they are over the age of 13 it becomes embarrassing for them to study under the same roof with younger children, in classes for first graders. Thus many hesitate to go to school.

The members of the Center wanted to do something about this, and after discussions, decided to hold literacy classes.

Children Visiting and Convincing the Parents of Children Not Attending School

Starting these literacy classes was not easy. First, the children had to convince the parents of girls who weren't in school to allow them to go. Aasaman staff accompanied the members of the Child Empowerment Center during these visits, but it was the children who did the negotiating. Touching on the merits of having an education and the future, they patiently worked on convincing the parents, resulting in 15 girls being able to participate in the literacy classes. To date, the Center's members have visited 35 homes of girls who are not in school.

There are also cases of children ceasing work to attend school

Apart from the parents, the children have also raised the issue of the importance of education with the village's women's forum. They have also visited parents who have sent their children to work in hotels in India several times to try to convince them to send their children to school instead. This has resulted in cases of the children being able to return to the village and go to school.

Able to feel the impact of their work, the Center's members emphasize the importance of cooperating with parents so that children can go to school. Encouraged that the situation of children in their community is slowly getting better, the children of Dhamaura VDC's Child Empowerment Center continue to work actively today.

Children Join Teachers and Guardians in Plans to Improve Schools

There are also many children-initiated programs being run in the schools.

Striving for the participation of children in decision-making regarding school improvements

In Nepal, it is part of the education policy that each school establishes a Child Club. Nepal's provisional constitution, promulgated in 2007, also includes mention of "children's participation." The interpretation of "children's participation" has been debated within Nepal, but Aasaman promotes the participation of children in solutions to social problems, as in the case of Dhamaura VDC's Child Empowerment Center, as well as in the process of drafting School Improvement Plans.

## Children Beginning with Doing What They Can, then Join Discussions with Adults

In public schools, school management committees consisting of the principal, teachers, guardians and members of the community have been established to draft School Improvement Plans.

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It is recommended that Child Club members participate in the planning process for School Improvement Plans. This does not mean, however, that they should be involved in the process from the very start.

First, Child Clubs begin by slowly doing what they can through activities, such as campaigns and rallies promoting school attendance. They have also been involved in many other activities, such as school beautification (e.g., making flower beds), encouraging children not in school to attend, checking teacher attendance, monitoring corporal punishment in the classroom and related reports from Child Rights Protectors, and attending regular monthly meetings.

In participating in these activities, the children show the adults around them that they are prepared to engage in various kinds of work and join in discussions. It is important to promote a gradual change in adult consciousness and understanding of children's participation.

In the five villages where activities are underway, the participation of children in such decision-making processes has just begun.
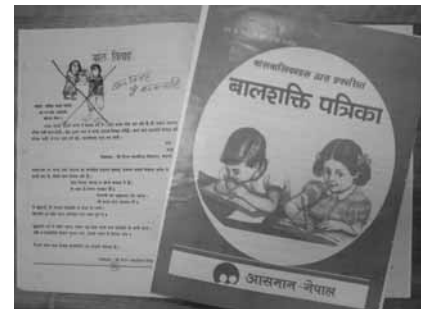
A booklet of children s essays. There are funny stories, but also pictures depicting the problem of early marriage. Published by Aasaman. It is produced by adults, but there are plans to teach publishing techniques to children and make this a regular publication.

Structures to Support Education in All Villages

This is how Aasaman works in each village so that community members, including children, can work together to "ensure compulsory and inclusive quality education for all children" and take initiatives in mobilization.

Figure 1: **Support structures in place, from community to central government**
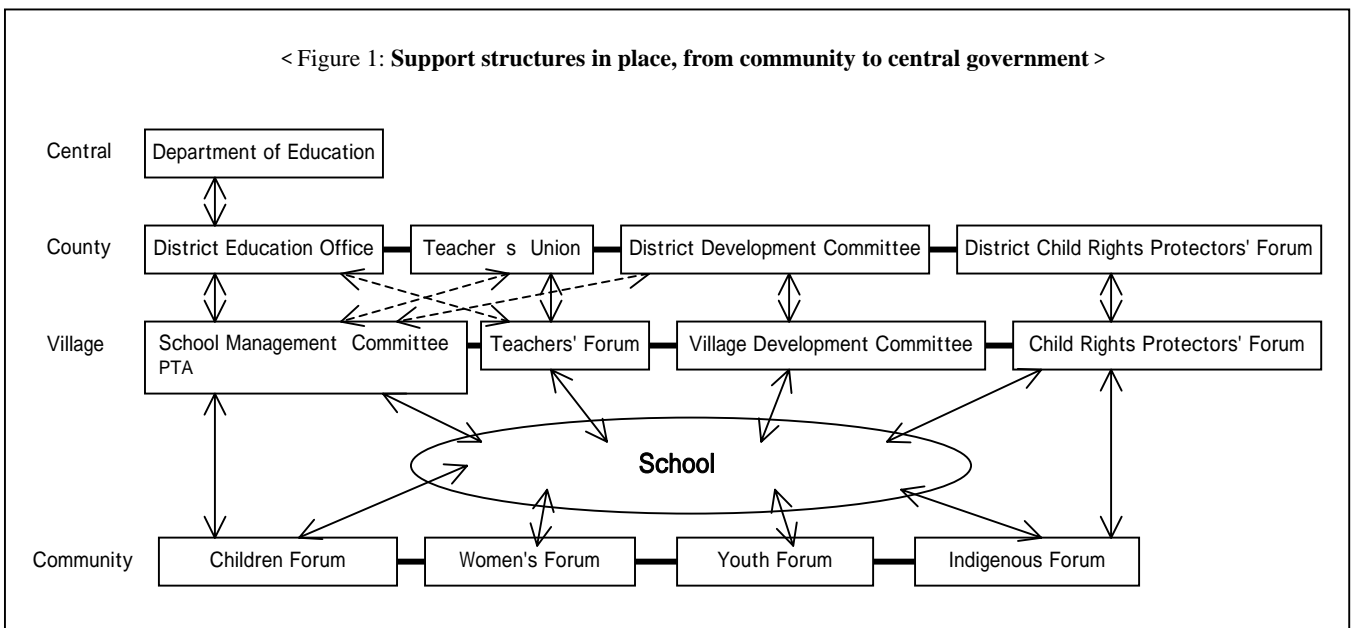
SCJ and Aasaman agree that the foremost way to achieve their goals and to make the voluntary mobilization and efforts of the residents of the communities a success is to create a structure that supports children's education at the village level. The abovementioned Dhamaura VDC Child Empowerment Center is one such structure. In the beginning stages of the project, as Figure 1 shows, Aasaman worked with the central and local governments to create support structures at the village level. More concretely, groups for children, women and youth, each called a "forum," were established at the community level, and structures were put in place for this community level organizing to work with the School Management Committee, PTA, Teacher's Forum, Village Development Center, and the Child Rights Protectors' Forum to support children's education.

It is important to gain government cooperation in the early stages of the project

A Social Mobilizer and a Children s Rights Protector survey and record the school attendance status of all children everyday.

A CRP s map and survey records. The daily work of the field staff supports the activities of the children.

Adult Consciousness Hindering Children's Participation

In the process of children and adults cooperating to mobilize for community improvements many problems emerge. Among these is the fact that there are still many adults who have fixed, negative ideas or attitudes toward children: This factor poses a big obstacle to the creation of an environment that embraces children's participation.

In particular is the situation where an adult recognizes the value of children's participation within the school, but finds it difficult to accept it at the community level. Even in Aasaman's past work, there have been cases of adults in the community ignoring the voices of children, leaders of organizations not wanting children to join meetings, and adults not creating opportunities to interact with children.

A lot of time and perseverance is needed for there to be a change in the consciousness and attitude of adults towards children, but as mentioned above, Aasaman staff note that it is important to make adults gradually recognize the achievements made by children through their activities. It is Aasaman's role to create support structures at the community level to make an environment that allows children to be able to take part in such activities more easily.

Potential of field staff

There is field staff in each village, a "social mobilizer" who promotes collaboration between the activities of the Child Club and Child Empowerment Center and supporting organizations. The Child Rights Protector (CRP) also plays an important role in the village, regularly checking the school attendance status of children in the village, both at home and at school.

Aasaman employs the social mobilizer and CRP from within the communities it supports. Requirements for these roles are that they are from the community, have completed 10 to 12 years of education, as well as are from poor families or scheduled castes (Dalit). These conditions are to ensure that they will be able to view things from the same point of view as the residents of the community and understand the many problems that relate to poverty.

These staff members who take on roles of supporting the activities of children in various capacities are provided with different forms of intensive training for the job. Aasaman also aims to improve their practical knowledge and skills through on the job training and discussions at regular meetings.

In SCJ and Aasaman's current projects, in addition to improving school-going rates, improving the quality of education is demanded. This is a first for SCJ and Aasaman, and a challenging test.

The head of SCJ Nepal emphasizes that discussion of the meaning of "Child Participation" and "Quality of Education" - pillars of the project - should not be made only between SCJ and Aasaman: These questions should be posed to children and other members of the community and continue to be discussed from the project planning stages onwards. As for the goal of promoting "Quality Education" as defined by children and other members of the community, the head of SCJ Nepal has said that they were able to find the clue to this definition through what they heard at a Child Empowerment Center in a village they were working in during regular monitoring activities.

It is precisely because their activities are based on concerns raised by children and other members of the community that the supporting NGO is able to carry out its work in confidence and that positive results in the community can be expected. SCJ and Aasaman continue to cooperate with the community so that everyone, including children, can carry out their role in improving education.

Workshop to Nurture Self Esteem:

Creating the Fundamentals
to Encourage Participation in Society

Education programs for children's participation 1

Value Formation Program, The Philippines

Child Fund Japan

Child Fund Japan runs a sponsorship program in the Philippines aimed at comprehensive improvement of the quality of life in local communities, focusing on education, health and nutrition and the elevation of income levels.

Transitioning from NGOs Responding to Local Needs to Locals Engaging in Self-Initiated Solutions

In the beginning, Child Fund Japan engaged mostly in providing communities with their basic needs. Believing, however, that locally initiated activities are more effective in responding to problems, Child Fund Japan established the Value Formation Program as one of the pillars of its sponsorship program.

The workshop

The Value Formation Program is a series of workshops targeting people in the community, especially children. It is also the foundation for the sponsorship program, and is held on weekends and summer holidays for locals, especially children.

One of Child Fund Japan's central values is, "Through raising self esteem and promoting positive values, these values can become the motivating force behind a person acting toward positive change"; the modules in the workshop series based on this value deal with various themes and goals. Within the Value Formation Program, "self esteem" is described as feeling self-respect, self-affirmation and self-worth. Through the workshops, children learn that they have this power within themselves. The way they view and think about issues and their sense of values are nurtured, and they learn how to take the initiative.

Each of the 23 Child Fund Centers in the Philippines has its own Value Formation Program with content and approaches that respond to the situation of the communities they work with. A total of about 150 to 400 children participate in each. Let's look at the case of the Guimaras Island Child Fund Center, in the province of Visayas.

Value Formation Program Workshop "Our Community"

6 to 9 year old children

two hours

Objective: To appreciate the cooperation of the people in the community

Materials: Two contrasting pictures of the community. (One shows a meticulously clean environment with people cooperating with each other. The other shows a dirty environment with garbage, animal waste and unhealthy children.)

Procedure:

1) Facilitator will introduce the song, "It's I Building Community," while waiting for the children to gather.
   Once the children are together, ask one child to volunteer to lead a prayer.
   Have the children sit in a semi-circle.

4) Explain the purpose of the workshop.

5) Divide the children into three groups.

6) Present the two different pictures of the community to the children: Look at the picture. What are the people in the community doing? Look at their faces. What feelings are they expressing? Why are the people happy?

7) Ask questions: What do you like about your community? Do people share with each other? Do you like it or not? What kind of community would you like to live in, in the future? What do you and your friends do to preserve the cooperation in your community?

8) Each group makes a collage that responds to these questions and presents them to the others.

9) The facilitator will summarize: "Being a member of a community means that we must love, cooperate, share and serve our community as our way of helping it be a community."

10) To close the activity, let the children sing, "It's I Building Community," and end with a short prayer.

* Workshops exploring the themes "My Surroundings" and "Things Around Us" are held prior to the workshop described above.
The children are divided into three groups according to age: 6-9 years, 10-12 years, and 13-16 years, each group's activities reflecting their particular stage of development in terms of mental and emotional needs and social and cultural needs.
In the case of the group of children aged 10-12 years, the workshop includes elements for them to think about their role in the community and what kinds of things they can do to contribute to it and make their community a better place.

A collage

Sharing Opinions and Ideas in Response to the Facilitator's Questions

The schedule for the workshops, based on the theme of community environment, including "Our Community," is set up so that the children can think about what they can do to make their community environment better in different phases.

As can be seen from the workshop order, the facilitator mainly asks the children questions. The latter then talk within their group about what they feel or think, sharing opinions and ideas regarding the facilitator's questions. The children are the main actors in the workshop. The facilitator plays an important role in urging the children to think about and discuss the theme from different perspectives.

The Value Formation Program also runs workshops where children and adults participate together. For example, they create opportunities before school begins and during summer holidays to discuss responsibilities and expectations of children, parents and schools regarding children's education.

The program targeting children also tries to nurture a supportive attitude from adults by introducing its activities and showing adults the internal changes and development that the program can potentially bring about in the children.

Children sharing their views

Gaining Confidence and Building Up Communication Skills

One girl participating in the program said: "I was nervous at first about joining the Value Formation Program. I was pretty gloomy about it. But it eventually became easier because no one would reject my opinions as wrong or make fun of me, and I came to understand that there is nothing wrong with thinking differently from others." Asked what changed the most about her since joining the program, she said, "I have become more confident about myself."

Through their workshop experiences the children improve themselves, gain confidence, and learn group communication skills and how to work well with others.

Learning and Beginning New Activities

Among the children taking part in the Value Formation Program, some make bead necklaces and bracelets by hand during their extracurricular hours to sell at school (both boys and girls).

as an idea during a workshop about the value of rich talent, creativity and economizing. The children discussed and decided on what they could make on their own and how they could sell it. They report to each other when their handmade bead accessories are sold and record sales properly. Although it isn't much, the children hope that the precious payments they receive from this work will be useful to their school or family.

Making a bracelet

Training for facilitators

The workshop facilitator is a trained Child Fund Center staff member. The facilitator assists in the workshop process to encourage children, through listening to each other's ideas and discussing them, to become more aware of problems in their community, and generalize the issues to create a corresponding plan of action.

A method for thinking analytically that is fun and participatory is required for this, rather than the traditional manner of teaching in schools.

At the Guimaras Island Center, mock facilitation sessions are done amongst the staff. They learn about effective facilitation by evaluating actual facilitation scenarios and providing feedback to each other.

They also study concrete examples of potential problems that can arise in workshops and meetings and are provided with detailed training on how to respond to such situations (e.g. if one participant speaks too much, does not keep track of time, or outright rejects other people's opinions).

A child who is no longer as withdrawn and shy and now has a trade.

Visual presentation is an effective method to use in workshops and meetings. Ideas are being pooled, for example, to create a module that will enable facilitators to help participants work together to create something using locally available materials (stones, sand, flowers, twigs, leaves etc.) based on particular themes.

What is Important is a Conviction that Children can Change

Although learning these facilitation skills is important, the head of the Guimaras Island Center also emphasizes the fact that staff members have a strong commitment to and belief in the importance of the Value Formation Program. All have a firm belief that through the program, positive values can be nurtured and children can change.

It takes time for children to become confident about their potential. Through repeat participation in the workshops, they learn to respect themselves and others, and nurture their value and desire to change their life and community for the better. The Value Formation Program is engaged in creating the groundwork for child participation in society.

A children s meeting

Children's Voices Take Shape:
Establishing A Regulation Prohibiting Junk Food Sales

The scenic province of Guimaras in western Visayas, the Philippines, has a population of about 150,000 and about 30,000 households.

Child Fund Japan began the sponsorship program in Guimaras Island in 1996. At that time, 68% of the children eligible for schooling support were malnourished.

This problem has been addressed through supplementary meals being provided for children and guardians, as well as health education, but the Center is now facing the issue of sustainability. Based on the suggestion of a staff member, a participatory survey was carried out in three elementary schools in the area regarding the eating habits of school-going children. It was mainly carried out by high school students in the area who were receiving Center support, with the assistance of a Center staff member. From the data gathered, it became clear that many children were eating junk food on a regular basis. The results of the survey also caused a stir among adults in the community, leading to a discussion among the school principals, teachers, parent representatives, Center staff members, and representatives from the children regarding how to respond to the problem. A municipal office representative was also called upon to join in the discussions. This led to the children, following discussions at the Value Formation Program held at summer camp, submitting to each village office in the area a proposal calling for a resolution banning junk food. The suggestion was taken up by the village offices, which took it to the municipality level, after which the regulation was passed.

Enhancing moral values

for building a new society

Life School for Transformational Development (LSTD), India

World Vision India (WVI)

World Vision India (WVI) has run Area Development Programs (ADP) around the country with their vision, "Life in all its fullness for every child by building child friendly communities." Life School for Transformational Development (LSTD) is developed as part of ADP targeting a large number of children. It is considered a movement that promotes transformational development among communities through children's initiatives for actions.

A Five Day Intensive Course for Children as well as Adults

LSTD started in Kerala in 1977 and has spread across the country; a group of 100 to 500 children participate in each community, totaling 7000 children involved in the program all over India. LSTDs are open to all the children during school summer vacation for a five-day intensive program. Children commute from home without staying over so they can participate easily. Held in open spaces in villages, LSTDs also welcomes adults whenever they wish to attend.

Play Way Method for Creative Learning

The LSTD objective is to create a sense of higher values while assisting children to become able to play a vital role in creating peace and social transformation; this is done by offering a curriculum that helps children learn to perceive various issues from multiple points of view. Each year particular themes are selected. One year the theme was "Let us build a new world"; the program was developed as follows:

LSTDs focus on children of 5-15 years old and categorized them into three classes based on their age. Each class is divided into small groups of about 10 children for activities.

Programs offer the children various activities so they can think and discuss, adjusting to their ages and learning styles and utilizing creative participatory methods, such as group games, craft work, painting, drawing, cooking, reading stories, singing and music training.

At the end of the program, special presentations by the children are held for the parents and adults in the community.

Children presenting their proposal to the society.

"Let Us Build a New World."

First Day: Qualities for leadership

Second Day: About family

Third Day: About community

Forth Day: About health issues (including HIV/AIDS)

Fifth Day: About faith and moral values

Children advocate the needs of education to the society and their parents

There are many children who repeatedly participate in the LSTD every year. In some areas, after participating in LSTD, children started education advocacy activities to their parents. LSTD has played a significant role in fostering a high sense of moral values, as well as independence toward taking action.

Children cook local food and serve their parents and the community.

< Process of Running LSTD>

Formation of LSTD organizing body (general committee, financial committee, publicity committee, entertaining committee, food committee, program committee, reception & registration committee, theme committee)

Various committee meetings, registration of children, selection of teachers, search and collection of finance, etc.

Various committee meetings, leader training, placing orders for teaching materials, etc.

Conduct teachers training

PR activities, Distributing brochures, family visit, skit presentations, etc.

Various committee meetings

Conduct LSTD program

Evaluation

Senior high school students and youth are teachers for the children

Teachers are selected from the community to instruct children's activities; they might be high school students or young would-be-educators chosen from the community; they will be given special training for a week before the school starts. They will learn about textbooks used in LSTD classes, facilitation skills, and how to protect and handle children. LSTD highly value the qualities of teachers and state the qualities required, as written on the next page.

LSTD teachers also benefit from being part of the process, from the preparation to the facilitation of a five-day program. A former teacher commented, "LSTD brought me much inspiration, socially, intellectually, morally and spiritually. I enjoyed a precious opportunity to work collaboratively with children and people in the community."

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<Teacher Qualities>

Teacher herself/himself is the best medium

Inspire the children with life

Know every child individually

Be child like

Should believe in the message of the lesson

Help students to think, feel, share and experience

Should use appropriate language style knowing the level of the children

Foster conducive atmosphere for participatory learning

Make long lasting effect on children

Encourage children to convert problems into possibilities

Teach them to dream ideals and visions

Help them to imbibe godly values

Encourage personality development, leadership

Help them to live with determination

Loving nature of the teacher

Encourage children to question things around them

Concern for their future

Prepare lessons carefully

Use different methods

Bring models - even living things

(Ref: "Teacher Concept," Life School for Transformational Development Manual, by World Vision)

A child who participated in LSTD and staff member.

Building trust relationships with communities for a sustainable program

The key to running LSTD is building trust relationships with people in communities. LSTD entrust the responsibility to an organizing committee with representatives from community leaders, schoolteachers, NGOs, youth clubs, and self-help groups.

Commitment of communities to the process of LSTD will ensure the sustainable development of LSTD in local areas. Also good rapport with government organizations, such as education departments, is important for the success of LSTD programs, so get them involved as members of the organizing committee if possible.

Chapter 3

Practical Guides

Preparing groups and individuals

Key points for promoting Children's Participation			
Group	Vision and action plans	The leadership and managerial levels of groups	Leaders and managers of groups lead their groups with clear vision and aim for adults as well as children to act as agents of change.
	Views and attitudes	Staff	In dealing with children, all the co-operating partner NGOs show the same consideration and have the same positive attitude.
		Facilitator s role	The NGO has the function of stimulating an entire process or discussion, but acknowledges that the people who play the main role in carrying out that process should be the beneficiaries themselves.
	Staff training	Field staff training	The attitudes and skills of staff are improved by a combination of training and putting into practice what they learn on a daily basis. Continuous on-the-job training monitoring reflecting on one s actions
Community	Adults views	Show adults concrete examples of children s participation in action	Get adults to understand that children are ready (to take part in activities or debates) by actually showing them children in action.

Preparing groups and individuals

Groups: Where to begin?

There may well be people who look at the activities of Save the Children Japan (SCJ) or Plan Bangladesh and have doubts about what the groups they form, based on the principles of the child participation and child empowerment, can actually do. In fact there is a lot they can do, though gradually, as explained below.

Firstly, why is the participation of children so important?

If a community is to undergo change for the better and then continue to build on that change it is vital that children are part of the decision-making process that brings about change. Experience has shown that children do have this power and that NGOs have a role to play in giving children the chance to participate.

Important factors to bear in mind before beginning

Guidelines for Implementing the Participation of Children,[1] a document put together by several NGOs, states two points to be careful of when implementing a child participation program:

> **Protect the rights of children not to participate, and avoid compulsory participation.**
>
> **Don't harm the children by beginning without adequate preparation.**

Simply adding "children's participation" to an existing project can lead to their participation being manipulated by others or to their participation becoming just a form of decoration, and this can have a negative influence on the children.

At the planning stage groups must re-examine what they understand by the term "children's participation."

1-1 The leadership and managerial levels of groups

Leaders and managers of groups lead their groups with clear vision and aim for adults as well as children to act as agents of change.

In 1988 Plan Bangladesh introduced the approach that formed the basis of Child Centered Community Development (CCCD). The move away from a need-based support approach to one in which children and residents become the main instigators of development sought to bring about big changes in the way groups and their staff view themselves. Specialists involved in improving abilities and nurturing talent for the CCCD project stressed that "the leadership and managerial levels of groups should lead them with clear vision and purpose." Leadership of the group is the

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[1] Guidelines for implementing the participation of children (for international NGOs), "Southern" NGO network for helping children.

key factor. Group leaders must clearly set out action plans to enable children to play a central role in changing the local community and society, and impress this concept on the whole group. When the CCCD approach was first implemented there were even some staff members who opposed the tactic of staying in a home in the target community for one or two nights to help the process of immersion. This showed that, first, staff members' ways of thinking had to be changed. Plan Bangladesh drove home the importance of the principles behind CCCD: "Believe that every human has abilities and rights," "Believe in the potential of children and young people, and give them an opportunity to play major roles," "Assume that people do not lack knowledge but only chance, and so give them appropriate opportunities." The key to instilling these principles thoroughly is learning from objective reflection on everyday tasks (see Staff Training for more detail). Leaders have a vital role to play.

1-2 Staff

A common view on and attitude to the participation of children

In dealing with children, all the co-operating partner NGOs show the same consideration and have the same positive attitude.

In the north of Dhaka, Plan Bangladesh is working with eight partner NGOs, each specialising in a different field. These NGO staff had all been working as service providers and did not have either the right attitude or the skills to encourage children's participation. In their activities, these NGOs all need to have the same views on and attitude toward children as the Plan Bangladesh staff. The first stage of staff training lasts two weeks, and takes place when there are staff changes or the need arises for other reasons. Each of the partner NGOs select three or four "resource personnel" (known as the "resource pool") who are responsible for improving standards in their own organisations. Plan Bangladesh holds an annual CCCD workshop for partner NGOs and local residents, and also sets up various opportunities for exchanging experiences and information aimed at promoting the involvement of children in community development.

The role of facilitator

The NGO has the function of stimulating an entire process or discussion, but acknowledges that the people who play the main role in carrying out that process should be the beneficiaries themselves. Many of the social development projects currently being carried out by aid organisations and NGOs are reputedly based on the approach that the beneficiaries, such as local residents or women, are in charge. There are an infinite number of ways an NGO can be involved in some kind of "local resident-centered approach," even when the terminology is the same.

Plan Bangladesh specifically states that one of the NGO's functions is to facilitate opportunities for children and local residents to play the main role. The key to this is "entrusting." Although the level of involvement is different for children and local residents, the basic idea is that children or residents try to carry out tasks by themselves. Then the NGO helps them to reflect on what happened and to apply what they learned to their next task. The NGO also has another important

role to play in enabling children and residents to bring their ideas to fruition by bringing together people, groups, capital or information and matching local areas with appropriate administrators or NGOs.

1-3 Staff Training

Field staff training

The success or failure of any enterprise largely depends on the abilities of the field staff. The attitude and skills of staff are improved by a combination of training and putting what they learn into practice on a daily basis.

Both Plan Bangladesh and Aasaman stress that reflecting on one's daily tasks and learning from them is more important than training. It seems likely that there will be a tendency for more experienced staff to have less chance to correct their ways of acting.

"Learning is a never-ending process" - Plan Bangladesh

Plan Bangladesh offer a three-day CCCD orientation workshop, a twelve-day intensive training course, a six-day training course for trainers, and a three-day reflection training course. However, they say that to improve their attitudes and skills it is more important for process facilitators to reflect on their daily work and learn from that.

Specialists involved with improving abilities and nurturing talent on the CCCD program suggest that there are three keywords: believe, practice, self-reflect. Believe that people can change, and that people have the power to make things happen. Put good practice into effect on a daily basis, and then reflect on what you and your group are actually doing. This is the way to bring about improvement. This approach to CCCD has been put into practice for the last ten years, but it is not yet considered perfected.

The strength of the CCCD approach could be said to lie in the creation of a group culture of constant learning being used to produce improvement.

Using a survey to find talented people in target communities (Aasaman)

In Aasaman's case, they find front-line staff to work with local residents from the area to be assissted. Asaman starts by conducting a baseline survey in the villages where aid is to be given. The survey helps to get a grasp of the situation, such school attendance and the general state of the children in the village and of the village itself, and it also helps to build a trusting relationship with the residents. About ten young volunteers from the village are chosen to help with the survey. The survey not only provides information about the local community; it also helps to find good candidates for field staff jobs. Field staff are chosen from survey respondents who come from impoverished homes and satisfy certain conditions, and consideration is also given to recommendations from people connected to the community.

For the first three months they work as volunteers. The field staff are given formal training, as well as put through an extensive on-the-job training (OJT) scheme, and they have to take part in

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discussions at regular meetings. The progress of the new field staff in terms of improvement in their practical knowledge and skills is monitored, and learning from other field staff is actively encouraged.

Content of Aasaman's field staff training

* Children's rights (3 days)
Aasaman's five principles: The definition of children, the development and behavior of children, rights and needs, children's rights, and action plans

* Social mobilization (3 days)
Aasaman's five principles: Helping to implement children's education at the village level, how to analyse the state of a community, ways to understand problems, and village stakeholders' roles and responsibilities

* The role and responsibilities of social mobilizers (3 days)

* How to teach children (School teachers are also trained at the same time, 5 days)
Definition of children: What children find easy to understand, checklist of how to teach in a way that children find easy to follow, analysis of case studies of first and second year elementary school children (there are an extremely large number of first and second year elementary school pupils), and discussion on corporal punishment

* High quality education (School teachers are also trained at the same time, 2 days)
The main elements of high quality education: Analysis of the causes of the inability to deliver high quality education, how to deliver high quality education

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Community: How can we change adults' views of children?

1-4 Acknowledging and accepting children's power

How do you go about making the major breakthrough that will start to change the way adults view children and get them to recognize and accept children's power?

It takes a considerable amount of time and patience to change adults' negative preconceptions of children and their harsh attitudes towards them.

How do you set about changing an adult's thinking, attitude and behaviour? Plan Bangladesh, SCJ and Aasaman have all had to deal with this problem. Adults are given one opportunity after another to know the opinions, ideas and actual achievements of children. The key is for adults to really feel that children have ability. Creating a suitable opportunity to see their abilities during the first stage of a project is one of the most important functions of the NGO in its role of process facilitator.

Showing concrete examples of children s participation in action

Get adults to understand that children are ready (to take part in activities or debates) by actually showing them children in action.

The above is a quote from Aasaman. As part of its promotion of children's participation, Aasaman presses school management committees to include student participation in their plans for improving schools.

However, after-school clubs have been set up for children and this is given as a reason why they cannot take part in the school management committee's planning process. "It can't be done," they say. Neither the children nor the school management committee have the will to set something up, and no preparations have been made. In such a case it would become participation in name only and would not succeed.

First, there needs to be some kind of campaign or a rally of school pupils, and the children and their clubs must gradually become more active. The children and their clubs talk about children's education and problems at their schools, make their own plans for action, and put them into practice. This includes activities such as helping to make the school campus look more beautiful (planting flower beds, etc.), working towards getting non-attendees to come to school, checking on the attendance of teachers, monitoring the corporal punishment of children in the classroom and reporting incidents to the protector of children's rights, and holding regular monthly meetings.

In this way children can show the adults around them that they are ready to perform various tasks and take part in debates. The adults on the school management committee will gradually deepen their understanding and acknowledge the importance of the participation of children.

"It was impressive how the children noticed things about improving the local community which the adults had overlooked."

"The result of the children's assessments and their club activities made me notice their abilities and potential."

These are comments from members of the Plan Bangladesh Community Development Forum. The adult members of the committee now respect the children's views and recognise that children can handle various tasks. But, as can be seen from the actual cases mentioned earlier, it took a long time for the adults to reach this position.

First the children used activities in their clubs to learn how to discuss, make decisions, formulate plans, and how to take responsibility for actions they initiate. This experience gave them more self-confidence, built up their concept of effort, and enhanced their positive self-images.

In the first community assessment, they had the chance to speak about the problems of the local community that they had discussed together. Some of the adults who heard the children's presentation felt that they had a good grasp of life in the community and that they had seen certain things that the adults had failed to notice. It was difficult for the adults and children to discuss together, but, because they shared the same views on certain subjects and topics, the assessment proved to be a useful device for changing how adults viewed and thought about children.

While the adult members are undergoing formal training in children's rights and participation, they also have a chance to see how the children are successfully working for their community. What's more, it seems that as they watch the children's presentations and activities, the adults feel keenly that even children can get things done, and they became prepared to accept children into their group. In fact, Children's Club members only began to take part in the community development forum several years after the forum was set up. Plan Bangladesh deliberately waited for the time when everyone involved was ready and prepared to accept the idea of the participation of children before they set up the first opportunity for discussion. By taking the time to prepare properly they nurtured an environment in which adults and children could work together.

Chapter 3 Part 2

Conducting Programs

Key Points for Promoting Children's Participation		
Preparation	Relationship with the community	Gradually get to know and work with the community. Search out those children and women who show an interest in community activities.
	Agreement regarding children's participation	Communicate the meaning and importance of children's participation via the adu... the community, gaining agreement on a project approach that includes children's participation.
	Having a common understanding	Develop a shared understanding among community members, NGO staff, and chil... concerning children's participation and project themes, through ongoing discussi... that start from the planning stage.
	Clarifying responsibilities	Promote children's participation and activities having clarified the various responsibilities of children, parents, teachers and schools.
	Organizing children	Begin activities through creating children's organizations at schools. Begin organ... the children of the community with these children at the core.
	Building systems to promote children's participation	Build local support systems to enable children's participation (local groups, school-related committees, etc.).
		Strengthen the local support system. Promote linkages between children and adu... as well as among adults.

		Children and adults conduct surveys in the community.
Assessment		Share the results of these different surveys through joint meetings.
Implementation	Planning	Children's groups conduct discussions regarding the causes of community problems, utilizing participatory tools. Determine priorities for addressing community issues, based on local resources, funds available, and urgency.
		Children's organizations develop their own plans for activities.
	Catch phrases	When involving the community, use easy-to-understand catch phrases in the local language (creating catch phrases should be part of ongoing discussions with the community).
	Preserve meeting records	In order to not forget the voices of children, capture children's statements and proposals in documents (minutes of committee meetings, etc.).
	Sustaining activities	Hold regular meetings of the children's organization in order to promote the fostering and development of children's participation.
		Promote sustained activities by repeating the cycle in which children hold discussions, make decisions, create plans, and take responsibility for undertaking activities.
	Reflection	Children's organizations conduct annual reflections on their activities, and create plans for the next year.
	Participation in decision making	First, adults and children conduct their own activities. Once they are ready for cooperation (in terms of their understanding and attitude), create opportunities for children's representatives to participate directly in community decision-making (such as through participating in adult committees).

2-1. Preparation

Building Connections with the Community

Gradually get to know and work with the community. Search out those children and women who show an interest in community activities.

Before starting activity in a community, it is essential to develop a relationship of trust with community members.

The NGO calls this "immersion;" Plan Bangladesh staff spend several months developing friendly relations with local residents in order to get to know the character of the area. Further, the staff notify residents through the local government of any activities that they are to conduct in a community.

Several staff members visit the community about three times each week, gaining an understanding of the daily functioning of the community and identifying risks to children; they observe and chat with residents, gaining an understanding of their jobs and income-producing activities, as well as the power relationships among community members. They also spur interest in community development activities among the residents, and confirm which women and children show an interest in these activities.

When NGO Aasaman enters a village to collect information, it begins to build relationships with key persons in the political realm, teachers, community development committees, and members of governmental organizations, emphasizing the following points in meetings:

(1) That the support they will provide will focus on the education of children (without detailed explanations at this stage); (2) the time period of the support; (3) that support will be provided through schools and community development committees; (4) that the emphasis will be on community-led activities; (5) that they will focus on untouchable castes and marginalized people; and, (6) that Aasaman's activities are non-political. At this time, they also receive proposals for the location of the Aasaman office, which will serve as the base of their operations.

Next, similar community-level meetings are held with residents of the village, in order to conduct a baseline survey on the status of school attendance by children and other circumstances affecting the children and the community (for more information regarding surveys, see "preparing people and organizations").

Agreement regarding children s participation

First, communicate to adults in the community the meaning and importance of children s participation, and gain their assent to providing support activities that include children s participation.

A prerequisite for children to become active agents in projects, and for them to participate appropriately in decision-making, is the agreement of community leaders, parents and adults. In the case of male-dominated societies, it is absolutely essential that powerful local figures provide sufficient consent, and to not receive such support in advance would be a crucial mistake.

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Aasaman therefore works to first receive the approval of key persons in the community.

Having a common understanding

Develop a shared understanding among community members, NGO staff and children concerning children s participation and project themes, through ongoing discussions that start from the planning stage.

In working to raise the quality of education, it would be inappropriate to come suddenly from outside the community and emphasize something called "child-centered pedagogy," when the reality is that there are 100 children in one classroom. SCJ and Aasaman staff feel strongly that project goals can only be achieved when they are a reflection of the views and desires of the children and their parents. This is why they have made children's participation a focus of their project and believe in it so strongly.

Clarifying responsibilities

Promote children s participation and activities having clarified the various responsibilities of children, parents, teachers and schools.

When Aasaman was working to improve the quality of children's education, and sought to determine just what "quality of education" meant, a member of the Child Empowerment Center said, "The relationship between teachers and pupils is like that between doctors and patients. A doctor is not a good doctor if those she treats do not get well. In the same way, if a student cannot use the knowledge imparted by his teacher, you cannot say that the teacher is a good teacher. In order to realize a high quality of education, pupils, teachers, schools and parents all must fulfill their respective responsibilities."
The head of the SCJ Nepal office who heard this asked children what they thought these different responsibilities were:
Pupils (children): To attends school, to be attentive to their teacher, and to ask when there is something they do not understand.
Teachers: To properly report to work, and to present easy to understand lessons.
Parents: To provide children with basic stationery supplies, to have children do their homework before doing their chores, and to receive education themselves (which is necessary for them to help their children with homework).

SCJ and Aasaman staff were astonished by these statements, and at the same time were enlightened. While they had thought of educational quality as something based on advocacy and consciousness-raising, they realized that these were abstract notions. Children, on the other hand, were able to explain very clearly what needed to be done, and by whom, for them to achieve quality education.
There has been new vitality experienced among organizations in communities where Aasaman worked to clarify the responsibilities of those involved in this way (which conforms to the rights-based approach).

Organizing children

Begin activities through creating children's organizations at schools.

Begin organizing the children of the community with these children at the core.

In SCJ and Aasaman projects, schools and communities work to organize children. First, they work to create the school-based children's organizations stipulated in Nepal's educational policy, followed by organizations in the community.

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Process for organizing children (Aasaman's activities):

(1) Achieve agreement with the school (school principal, etc.)
regarding activities for cooperation.
(2) Conduct lessons for Grades 1 through 4 once each week
(concerning children's rights, children's issues, etc.).
(3) Propose organizing a children's organization in the school.
Work towards its establishment.
(4) When children are ready (after approximately 1 year), set up a
community Child Empowerment Center.
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First, Aasaman receives agreement from the school concerning strengthening the School's Management Committee and PTA and for support for the children's organization. Next, Aasaman's field staff conduct classes once a week for pupils in Grades 1 through 4 regarding Aasaman's activities, children's rights, children's issues, and especially concerning educational issues and the school environment.

After several sessions, the children are asked if they can do things themselves to improve certain issues, such as the problems of children who do not attend school. When the time is ripe, they also introduce the idea of the children's organization.

The members of the children's organization are selected based on nominations from the children and teachers. While teachers may nominate students with excellent academic records, these students may not always be keen to participate; Aasaman therefore does not make grades a requirement. Once a children's organization is established, it conducts meetings once a month and starts its activities.

Approximately one year after a children's organization is established in a school, members from the children's organizations from several schools meet together, and they are presented with the idea of creating a Child Empowerment Center. Around this time, children active with the children's organizations gain a deeper understanding of various children's issues, and have a heightened appreciation of those children's issues that cannot be solved at school. Aasaman never coerces anyone to participate. Their activities are predicated on the interests and desires of the children themselves. As a result, as seen in the case of the establishment of the Child Empowerment Center in Dhamaura VCD, it was children themselves who proposed to their parents and other adults in the community that a Child Empowerment Center be created.

Plan Bangladesh organized children in the community.

A children's organization first conducts a survey of the community, after which regular meetings are held, along with study sessions, with children deciding which actions they are able to take. Such children's organizations, "Children's Clubs," have been officially recognized as community development organizations a year or more after their establishment. Some of the rules they have set include that there may only be one child from each family, and that members be children nine to eighteen years old. As of January 2009, each organization had thirty to forty members, including

some who have been members since their inception. Asked about their motivations for joining, children have given the following explanations:

"Because I was interested," "I was invited by a friend," "My older brother was a member and I succeeded him," "Because my father was a committee member," "When I saw the group's activities (drama and singing), I wanted to join in," "I wanted to solve children's problems," "I wanted to improve communication with my parents," and "Because there were so many things I was not satisfied with."

Build systems to promote children s participation

Build local support systems to enable children s participation (local groups, school-related committees, etc.)

Strengthen the local support system. Promote linkages between children and adults, as well as among adults.

In order to promote effective children's participation within projects, it is vital not only that the children themselves are prepared, but also parents and other adults in the community need to be engaged from the time the organization is created.

At an early stage in the project, Aasaman works to build cooperative relations with central and local governmental authorities, and to build a community support system. This allows children to take action in a proactive manner, and it is key to the SCJ and Aasaman approach, which stresses that children tackle their own problems.

Specifically, different groups are established such that different members of the community, including children, women and youth, can have their own organizations, known as "forums." Organizations such as the School Management Committee, the PTA, the Teachers' Forum, and the Village Development Committee are linked through a community-wide forum for protecting children's rights. A system is also created to support children's education. In the above example of the Dhamaura Village Child Empowerment Center, in the course of implementing a literacy class, persistent efforts were made to persuade those parents who were not sending their children to class. In was said that in this context, cooperation with the women's organization and other parents was indispensable.

2-2. Assessment

Children and adults conduct surveys in the community.
Share the results of these surveys through joint meetings.

In order to assess and analyze the status of the community that is to be served, members of the local community conduct their own assessments.

In the case of activities by the NGO Plan Bangladesh, Situation Assessments were conducted separately by groups of children, men and women. Utilizing participatory tools, they identified the resources available and the issues that face the community, sharing their findings and views with each other regarding what problems confront the community, the causes of those problems, the

sorts of resources the community has, and where such resources are located. Afterwards, considering the resources in the community, funds that are available, and urgency, they determined priorities for taking action to address community issues. A meeting was held with the participation of other local residents, governmental authorities, NGOs and others, in order to share and confirm the results of the assessments; this not only resulted in greater reliability of the information, but also assisted in gaining the agreement of the community. Members of the community also learned about problems they previously were unaware of, and also realized from listening to the reports from the children's groups that children do indeed understand the community.

2-3. Implementation

Planning
Children s organizations develop their own plans for activities.

Members of the children's organization in the Bawniabadh slum, supported by Plan Bangladesh and based on their survey of the community, discussed which issues should be addressed and developed a plan to address these. They also created songs and plays to be used as part of awareness-raising activities. Now, after having accumulated considerable experience, and informed by reflections on their past activities, they are making further plans addressing what activities are needed in each block of the area.

Catch phrases
When involving the community, use easy-to-understand catch phrases in the local language (creating catch phrases should be part of ongoing discussions with the community).

Previously, SCJ and Aasaman had been active mainly in working to raise the school attendance rate in communities. Once during discussions concerning how to achieve the Aasaman principle[1] that child labor should be completely abolished and all children should attend school, a village woman said,

"So, this is about 'getting children out of work and into school, right?"

These words, which expressed the core of the project, were immediately adopted by SCJ and Aasaman as the catch phrase for the project. This catch phrase, which could be easily understood and agreed to by both children and adults, quickly permeated the community. The participants in the village campaigns for zero child labor and for school attendance conducted a variety of activities using this catch phrase. As the project progresses new sayings continue to emerge out of various discussions involving children and community members and these become catch phrases.

Preserve meeting records

In order to not forget the "voices" of the children, capture children s statements and proposals in documents (minutes of committee meetings, etc.)

The children's organization of Bawniabadh keeps records on large pieces of paper documenting the results of community surveys, the prioritization of community issues, and the organization's own activities, reflections and evaluations. These are also used when representatives of the children's organization present reports at the Community Development Forum (a committee of 4-6 people comprised of representatives of various committees and the children's organization). The Community Development Forum also holds monthly meetings. The chairs of each meeting are selected, and the children's representatives also serve as facilitators. Discussions follow the rules that those who wish to speak raise their hands, and the meeting chairperson selects who is to speak. In the meetings, after reports from the committees, there is discussion on themes selected for that month's discussion, and a record of the discussions from each meeting are kept in a notebook. The minutes record (1) the names of participants, (2) reports from each committee, (3) items discussed, and (4) items decided.

Sustaining activities

Hold regular meetings of the children s organization in order to foster the sustainability and development of children s participation.
Promote sustained activities by repeating the cycle in which children hold discussions, make decisions, create plans, and take responsibility for undertaking activities.

The Bawniabadh slum is divided into six blocks, with a children's organization and resident's organization for each block. The number of participants in each children's organization ranges from 25 to 40 children each, and if a given organization becomes particularly large, a second organization may be created. The organizations have achieved a gender balance, and there are even children's organizations where the majority of members are girls. Each organization has seven elected officials, such as the chairperson and vice chairperson, elected by the children themselves each year.

The activities of the children's organization are based on annual plans drawn up by the children themselves. Activities include raising awareness through songs, dance and plays, and things such as monitoring birth records. Activities follow a well-established cycle of planning, implementation and reflection.

In the locations where SCJ and Aasaman operate, children's organizations at schools and village Child Empowerment Centers hold quarterly follow-up meetings in addition to the regular monthly meetings. In the meetings, participants discuss the status of activities and revisions to activity plans, and the Aasaman field staff monitor the children with respect to their knowledge, attitudes and activities.

Reflection

Children s organizations conduct annual reflections on their activities, and create plans for the next year.

The Community Development Forum for the Bawniabadh slum and the children's organization each conduct annual reflections on their activities. These reflections – on what has been accomplished, what changes have been observed, and what problems remain – are conducted utilizing various participatory analysis tools (such as radar charts2, H forms3, SWOT analysis, etc.) which allow for sharing information visually, with the results reflected in the following year's activity plans.

Participation in decision making

First, adults and children conduct their own activities. Once they are ready for cooperation (in terms of their understanding and attitude), create opportunities for children s representatives to participate directly in community decision making (such as through participating in adult committees).

By participating in the children's organization, children learn to take responsibility through joint discussions, decision making and planning. They acquire self-confidence through these activities, and gain feelings of empowerment and self affirmation.

At the same time, in order to alter the negative preconceptions and strict attitudes that adults may have toward children, it is important for children to demonstrate their attitude of engagement in their community, as well as their accomplishments.

At an appropriate time, when each side is prepared and has a receptive attitude, Plan creates opportunities for discussions together. Of course, simply because children participate in decision making discussions does not mean that everything goes smoothly at first; time, hard work, and patience are important.

One children's organization member said, "When children first participated in the meetings of the Community Development Forum, it seemed that their participation was just some formality. But as people heard the children express their opinions through the meetings, it reached the point where the adults came to acknowledge their role." Now, children feel that the Community Development Forum meetings are an important venue where their views, the voices of the children, will be properly heard.

A representative of the Community Development Forum said, "Cooperation between children and adults is really fostering the next generation, and a vital task for the community."

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[2]Radar chart: An evaluation technique that measures the degree to which different goals set at the planning stage of an activity have been achieved. Due to its appearance, it is also known as a "spider's web."

[3] H form: An analysis and evaluation technique in which a large letter "H" is drawn, and is used to analyze the strengths and weaknesses of the children's organization, assess the degree of achievement on different themes, and analyze underlying causes.

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Working with Children

Key Points for Promoting Children's Participation		
Through Trainings	Raising self esteem, and cultivating a sense of values	Hold regular workshops and training opportunities to allow children to develop their self-esteem and their abilities to communicate and cooperate as part of a group.
	Training facilitation	Children hear one another's views, thus gaining an awareness of issues and building a shared understanding that allows them to create plans for taking action.
	Adult participation	Have community members serve as resource persons and have host organizations participate in the workshops and training sessions for children.
		Create opportunities for adults and children to participate together in workshops.
	Training content	Before organizing children, provide sufficient time for children to learn about the rights of children, protection, children's participation, and the different roles for children and adults.
Through Activities	Participation levels	Begin with activities that children can do. It is not a bad thing if participation begins at a low level (see page11).
	Characteristics of activities	Activities for children are enjoyable and entertaining.
		Themes and content follow the children's interests.
		Give consideration to locations and times that make it easy for children to gather together.
	Facilitating activity processes	The key to facilitating activities is to "trust the process."
	Tools for discussion and analysis	Enliven discussions using visual, participatory tools that make it easy for everyone to join in.

-1. Through Trainings

Workshops and trainings provide opportunities for children to develop self-confidence and skills; also, by sparking awareness of various issues, they encourage children to be proactive in dealing with matters of concern. They can help participants improve their social skills, including, for example: developing rules for discussions that put participants at ease; listening well to one another; deciding who will play which roles in working groups (such as facilitator, timekeeper and reporter); determining priorities based on standards the group has set; organizing, analyzing and discussing information; making decisions; evaluating the group's outcomes; and other skills. Because the early workshops and trainings that children participate in not only develop skills, but can also instill in participants an appreciation of issues, such as children's rights and children's participation – while at the same time fostering their self-confidence, independence and respect for others – careful preparation is called for on the part of session organizers.

Raising self-esteem, and cultivating a sense of values
Hold regular workshops and trainings to allow children to raise their self-esteem and their abilities to communicate and cooperate as part of a group.

A good example of a program fostering children's values and attitudes is the Child Fund (CF), a program of World Vision (WV). This program, which aims to foster a sense of responsibility through active involvement in various aspects of society, including schools and the community, provides various opportunities for participation that supports children in developing a feeling of self-respect and positive self-awareness. Views expressed by children who participated in this program included "I gained self-confidence," "I respect other people," "I learned the importance of sharing," "I enjoyed participating," and "I learned that it is OK to have views that are different from the views of others." As the head of the Child Fund Center on the island of Guimaras in the Philippines has said, we should always keep in mind that change in children is something that takes place slowly and requires time. The features of the WV Life School and other self-awareness building programs that figure as part of comprehensive development programs are: (1) utilizing age-appropriate participation and play-method techniques; (2) content that builds upon what children have previously learned in a gradual and building-block manner; (4) fun and ease of participation; and, (5) high-quality facilitation.

How well children learn is directly dependent on the learning environment. [2] It is important to create an environment in which participants feel a sense of security and in which everyone sets and shares certain rules guiding discussions, such as: "We will listen to everyone's views," "We will not criticize others," and "We don't have to say things we do not want to say (we can pass on participating if we want)." It can be good to write up and display the rules for discussion, such as on a wall, so that the children can refer back to them as needed. Having this sense of security is one

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[2]   Global Teacher, Global Learner   1997   David Selby, Graham Pike
Global Teacher, Global Learner, (1997) by David Selby and Graham Pike, Translated by Nakagawa Kiyoko, Akashi Shoten.

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factor that leads to fostering children's self-esteem. Various studies have shown that children that have high self-esteem are more likely to be proactive, compared to children with lower self-esteem. As this demonstrates, building children's self-esteem is very important for building their self-confidence. Self-esteem is comprised of five elements2: (1) Security; (2) Selfhood; (3) Affiliation; (4) Mission; and, (5) Competence. What is more, "Security; (a sense of safety and security)" is the most basic foundation for cultivating self-esteem and is a prerequisite for the other four elements. For this reason, the first thing that should be sought is to create a learning space that provides children with a sense of safety and security, and which can serve as the shared foundation for bringing children together.

Training facilitation

Children hear one another's views, thus gaining an awareness of issues and building a shared understanding that allows them to create plans for action.

"The medium is the message."[3] Different forms of media are methods to convey information, but each medium (method) conveys its own inherent message, apart from the content. In other words, workshops not only convey content, there is a significant impact on children based solely on the attitude of the facilitator and the learning environment itself. Facilitation with an open and receptive attitude that demonstrates respect for each child not only provides children with a sense of security, but also becomes a model for behavior. The World Vision Life School requires that teachers that work with children have these qualities (See page 28,29).

The Regional Center for the Children's Fund places emphasises that the staff working with children having a strong commitment, as well as a belief in the value of the self-development program. The staff all share the conviction that as a result of the program, children will develop a renewed and positive sense of values. Staff continually conduct practice trainings among themselves to develop effective facilitation styles, and engage in reflection sessions to evaluate their performance. In the self-development workshops, the facilitators often ask children questions. Such questioning enlivens the discussions among the children, making the exchanges deeper and more wide-ranging. Done in a manner appropriate to the developmental stage of the children, this enriches the children's understanding of problems and issues in the world around them, leading to positive action, which in turn is important for developing ongoing programs and positive activities.

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[3] "Each medium, independent of the content it mediates, has its own intrinsic effects which are its unique message." Marshall McLuhan. http://www.marshallmcluhan.com/main.html

Adult participation

Have community members serve as resource persons and have organizations host workshops and trainings for children.

Create opportunities for adults and children to participate together in workshops.

It can be very effective to involve members of the community as resource persons, not just NGO staff, when conducting learning and action activities for children's organizations. Members of the community have taken a lead role in managing the Life School for Transformational Development (LSTD), which has been active for more than 10 years in Kerala, India. An LSTD executive committee is led by community leaders, school teachers, members of a youth club, and NGO staff. Various committees are set up to deal with all of the preparations and for running the five days of the session itself, including accounting, publicity, and entertainment, as well as for choosing the location, planning the budget, registering participants, selecting teachers, securing funding, and conducting outreach to the community. Because cooperation with local governmental organizations is indispensable, their representatives serve as members of the LSTD executive committee when possible. In this way, the community is actively engaged with the LSTD functions, making it possible for the LSTD to continue to operate the community.

In order to deepen what children learn through the CF self-development program, members of the community also serve as trainers and resource persons in areas of their expertise. The following is an example of such a case. In a series of workshops children were able to learn about the importance of the local environment and about environmental conservation; in order to take action, a plan was developed for making compost. CF called in as trainers some local community members who in past projects had received training in making compost, who in turn trained the children how to compost. In another case, girls had learned the importance of caring for their family members and one had wanted to nurse her ailing father, but did not have money to purchase the medicine he needed. A plan was developed to brew some medicinal herbs that would help his condition. In response, five women worked with the children to teach them how to distinguish the proper medicinal herbs, and how to properly brew them.

Training content

Before organizing children, provide sufficient time for children to learn--about the rights of children, protection, children s participation, and the different roles for children and adults.

In planning workshops and trainings, consider the content, themes, goals and timing, as well as the age of the participants, and other elements. To prepare them for their own participation, it is important for children to have the opportunity to learn about children's rights; the meaning, value and need for children's participation; the roles and responsibilities of children and adults; and related issues. Before the children's organization was established, Aasaman's field staff spent six months to one year diligently conducting preparations, teaching the children about children's rights, protection, and the different roles of children and adults, through trainings and meetings. The self-development programs of CF are tailored to match the developmental levels of the children

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participating, with content addressing their mental and emotional needs, as well as the social, cultural and other needs of the respective age groups.

Give consideration to locations and times that make it easy for children to gather together.
Regularly held workshops and trainings need to be held at times of the day, days of the week, and for lengths of time and in locations where it is easy for children to gather.
The World Vision Life School is conducted over a five-day period during the school summer holiday, and is held in an open area in the village so that it is not necessary for children to spend the night away from their homes overnight. Because it is held in an open area, it is easy for other members of the community to join in the activities.

The workshops held for children by the Children's Fund are held regularly on weekends. The schedule is also flexible, in order to avoid meeting on days when other community events are held. Large-scale workshops, in which adults can also join, are held at times when it is easy for everyone to participate, such as in December, before the start of school, or during the summer holiday. Open spaces in the community that are convenient to transportation are used, such as community plazas and basketball courts.

3 – 2. Through Activities

The activities of the children's organization provide children with valuable opportunities to gain skills and experiences they cannot gain elsewhere. In particular, as children work together and cooperate with their peers, they develop self-identity, as well as a sense of belonging. "Children are able to serve themselves and their communities only when they have a sense of belonging." It is also important that NGOs give full consideration to the issue of child protection in conducting the activities of the children's organization.

Participation levels
Begin with activities that children can do. It is not a bad thing if participation begins at a low level (see page 11).

An Aasaman leader said that the organization strives to match its activities to the children's levels and interests. Children gain a sense of achievement by planning and implementing their own activities, such as campaigns and rallies to promote school attendance. Repeatedly feeling this sense of achievement leads to feelings of self-confidence. "By striving, and by taking action, one gains the sense that there is hope that you can change your surrounding environment; this feeling of self-confidence is called empowerment.' Empowerment is a feeling of competence, and can even be called belief in oneself." [4] When promoting children's participation, it is very important for children to feel this sense of empowerment. The stronger the sense of empowerment, the greater

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[4] *Jiko Gakushu Noryoku wo Sodateru – Gakko no Atarashi Yakuwari*, 1980, Giyoo Hatano ed., Tokyo Daigaku Shuppankai, UP selection 207.

children's desire will have be to participate in activities. In the Bawniabadh slum, a key factor in creating an environment where children and adults cooperate in a spirit of partnership has been the fact that children have gained a strong sense of empowerment as a result of their participation in activities of the children's organization.

Characteristics of activities
Activities for children are enjoyable and entertaining.
Themes and content follow the children s interests.

For children to develop a desire to participate, and to continue participating, it is important that activities be not only worthwhile but also that they be enjoyable. Even if activities are meaningful, if children participate only out of a sense of obligation, they will not continue their involvement for very long, and new children are less likely to join as members. Making activities entertaining has the added benefit of drawing in the largest number of adults and children in the community.

For example, the Children's Organization of Bawniabadh makes use of community festivals and other opportunities to present performances of songs, dancing and plays for the local residents. These performances address actual issues faced by children in the area, such as the problem of early child marriages, the impacts on children of corporal punishment at school, malnourishment, and family problems. For example, in a play addressing the affects of corporal punishment, one teacher scolds and hits children then another listens well to the views of students, in alternating scenes; the story shows a girl who had been temporarily out of school to nurse a family member but who builds up her courage to go back to school, only to be reprimanded and beaten by a harsh teacher, with the result that she does not return. The live performance has no dialogue, only sound effects. At the end, the child who ends up not going to school displays to the audience a large red piece of cloth, and the curtain falls. It reads, "I want to go to school. But…"

In the slum, which has few diversions, the songs, dances and plays carefully prepared by the members of the children's organization are a great pleasure for the local residents. When

entering songs, dance and theatre are used as awareness-raising methods, it is easy for messages to be transmitted to adults and children alike.

Nevertheless, expressing these types of messages in these ways certainly requires prudence. An implementation report by Plan Bangladesh notes, "If adults do not share the same level of understanding concerning the changes such advocacy efforts aim to achieve, friction may arise, putting children at risk. … The observational powers of children can bring to the surface issues that have been concealed, and when proposed solutions are disadvantageous for adults, it is necessary to fully consider the safety and protection of children in the community, as well as measures to deal with adults." For instance, considering the position of teachers, it may be best to finesse the portrayal of the teacher regularly engaging in corporal punishment, rather than approaching the issue too directly, and this may challenge the abilities of facilitators.

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Facilitating activities

The key to facilitating activities is to "trust the process."

The basics are the same as mentioned above in connection with the "facilitation of trainings." While it depends on the proficiency of the children themselves, the basic attitude taken toward the facilitation of activities by Plan Bangladesh is to trust children with the process. The key is to support what happens as children themselves choose what they would like to be involved in as members of their community and what activities they would like to undertake. As more children accumulate experience, the less intervention is required of Plan Bangladesh. Plan's role is also to facilitate the overall process, including supporting other adults in the community to provide appropriate support to children's activities. In the end, all of this is linked to fostering the cooperation of children and adults in securing funding and resources for their community, while working to solve problems in an independent and ongoing manner.

Tools for discussion and analysis

Enliven discussions using visual, participatory tools that make it easy for everyone to join in.

For discussions involving large numbers of people, not only children, discussions can be more open and meaningful when using participatory tools, and by making issues easy to visualize. What is important is to make children feel at ease and able to express their own thoughts and opinions freely. One method to facilitate this is to use participatory-style tools. When thinking about what should be discussed during planning and reflections, give consideration to the age and experience of the children, and to the discussion topics. Be careful to not use just any tools, but match them to the particular needs.

When working to gain an understanding of the situation in a community, Plan Bangladesh staff work to draw out the opinions and views of children, and utilize participatory tools to organize and analyze the issues that have been raised. One tool used is "community resource mapping." A map of the community is drawn on a large sheet of paper, indicating the location of schools and other community facilities, such as wells and toilets, along with human resources such as traditional midwives and doctors. Participants discuss the status of these resources and transfer the information to the map. The map also reflects the results of household economic condition surveys conducted by the children, with color-coding indicating "economic-level rankings." The map thus comes to depict the state of the village as viewed by the children. Children also discuss and analyze community issues, as well as their causes, impacts, interrelationships and importance, by using tools such as the "problem tree" [5] and the "ladder game. [6]" The outputs of the community

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[5] Problem tree: A tool in which a problem is represented as the trunk of a large tree, with the causes of the problem drawn as the roots of the tree, and the impacts and effects of the problem shown as the tree's spreading branches and leaves.

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mapping, problem trees and other tools are displayed on the walls of the building where meetings are held, with new points and clarifications added as needed when they emerge in later discussions.

Hints for lively discussions[7]

Have something in your hand: prepare something that children can actually hold and use, such as a photograph, a card, or a box.

Clarify issues: Clearly indicate "what" to do and "how."

Use small groups: The smaller a group is the more participants can feel at ease and express their own views.

Choose issues with room for disagreement: Select issues on which viewpoints are likely to differ. Also, assign children to represent different viewpoints, since the expression of different views will help the natural flow of discussions.

Join forces: Choose topics where children will need to listen to one another's opinions and help each other out.

Engage the eyes: Don't rely solely on words – utilize items that communicate without words, such as photographs, drawings, posters, charts, etc.

Arrange and compare: Prepare various items that can be compared. Have children arrange and select items, giving their reasons.

Experience, then share: For instance, after first conducting a game that does not use any words, ask children to share "what happened?", "what did you feel?", "what did you learn?", and share their views.

Not too difficult, not too easy: Always choose topics that will make children stretch – but don't make things so difficult they lose interest.

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[6]Ladder game: Used in Plan Bangladesh activities; a ladder is drawn on a large sheet of paper, with three spaces, one each at the bottom, the center and the top. The condition of the community three years ago is written in the lower portion; the center portion is the current situation; in the upper portion is written the circumstances that children would like to see three years from now.

[7] *"World Studies 8-13: A Teacher's Handbook",* 1993, Simon Fisher and Dave Hicks, Schools Council.

A Facility for Children (Children's Plaza)

How to promote children's participation?

Imagine an NGO project to set up a facility for children, the "Children's Plaza." Think through the ways that children could participate, the preparations that would be needed, and other ideas.

Project overview

Assume you are in a country where the quality of school education is low and the dropout rate is about 30%.

You wanted to create a "Children's Plaza," a place where any child is free to participate; a place that provides child care; a location where children can benefit from creative enrichment programs and cultural instruction not available in school. It is managed by the local government and supported by NGOs.

At first, parents came to take their children back home to help with chores, but children were able to learn dancing and other activities, and it became accepted as a place where children can learn.

Issues

While dancing and other activities were popular, and the play activities of children were diversified, classes about cultural activities became routine and lost their appeal, and attendance stopped increasing. Problems arose when it became difficult to raise operating funds and staff lost interest in developing their expertise.

What steps do you think could be taken in order to simultaneously reinvigorate both children's participation and the "Children's Plaza" itself?

Children's Plaza

Targets: Elementary and junior high school students

Activities: Cultural activities (arts and crafts, folk music, dance, drama, etc.), sports activities, outdoor gatherings involving games, literary activities (loaning books, reading aloud, storytelling with pictures), awareness-raising activities (educating people in the village about hygiene through games and skits).

Operating hours: Outside of school hours (weekday evenings and during the day on
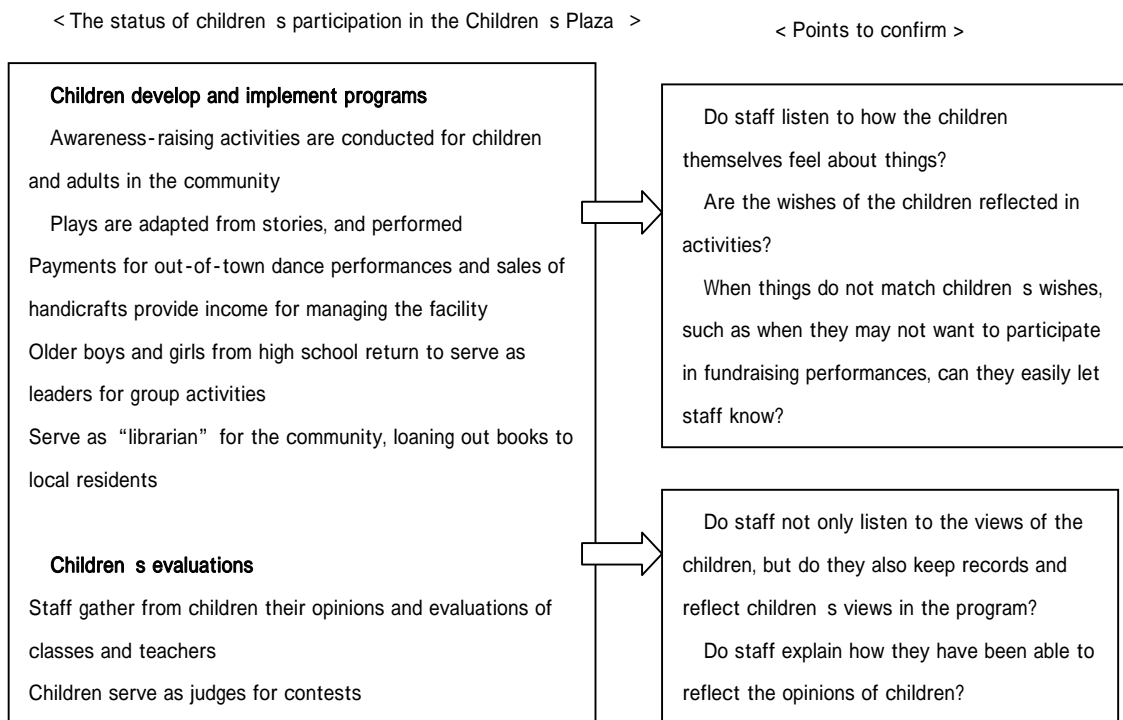
Management: Local government

Adults involved: Staff (officials), teachers (local residents)

Activity 1

Reconsider things from the viewpoint of children s participation

The Children's Plaza has worked so far to promote children's participation, and children are engaged in various roles within the program.

First, establish the degree to which children currently participate, and take stock of the current status of the management (the local government and on-site staff) and support personnel (NGOs). Keep records of evaluations by children of the cultural activities and teachers, reflecting their feedback in activities and sharing the information with supporters. By making children the focus, you can help influence other similar "children's plazas" through sharing experiences, and when children gain a sense of empowerment, their desire to participate will grow.

The status of children s participation in the Children s Plaza

< Points to confirm >

Children develop and implement programs Awareness-raising activities are conducted for children and adults in the community Plays are adapted from stories, and performed Payments for out-of-town dance performances and sales of handicrafts provide income for managing the facility Older boys and girls from high school return to serve as leaders for group activities Serve as "librarian" for the community, loaning out books to local residents **Children s evaluations** Staff gather from children their opinions and evaluations of classes and teachers Children serve as judges for contests

Do staff listen to how the children themselves feel about things? Are the wishes of the children reflected in activities? When things do not match children s wishes, such as when they may not want to participate in fundraising performances, can they easily let staff know?

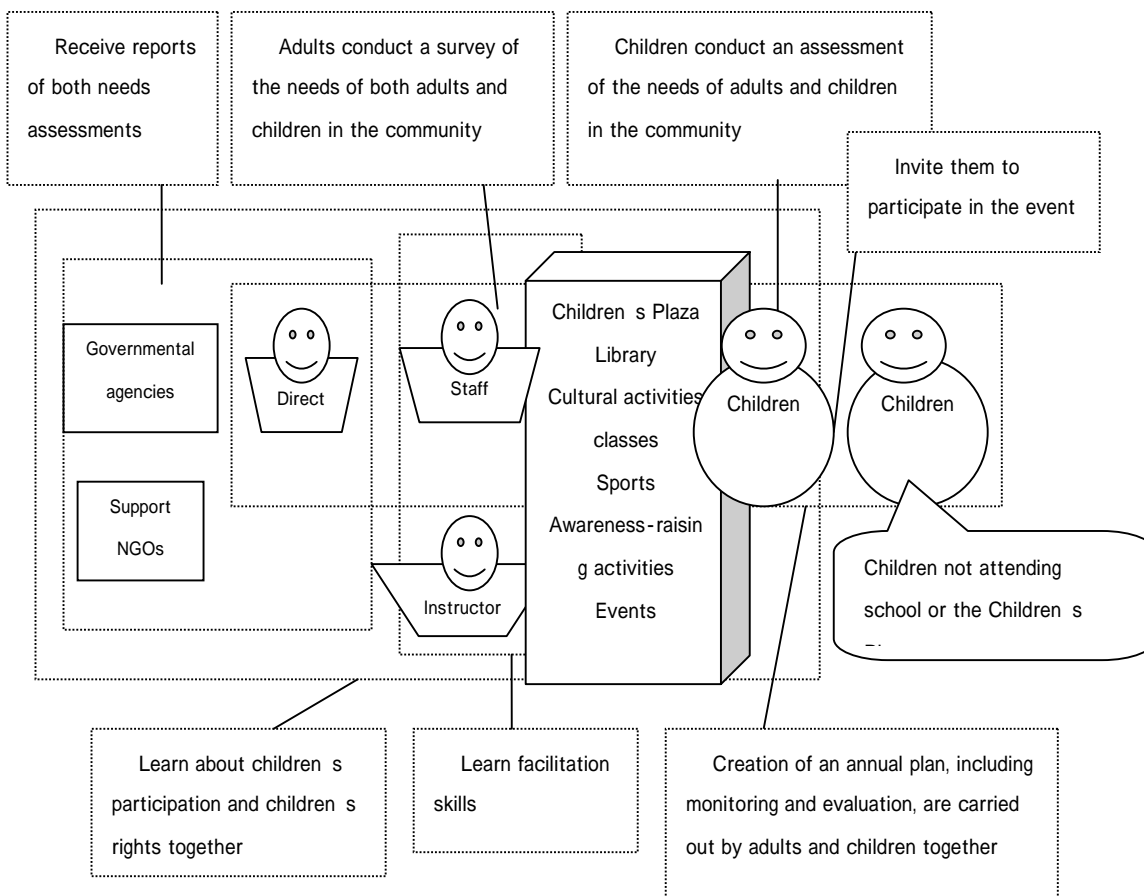| |
|---|
| Do staff not only listen to the views of the children, but do they also keep records and reflect children s views in the program?
Do staff explain how they have been able to reflect the opinions of children? |

Activity 2

A technique for having children involve other children

The following new idea, explained in items 1-6, can be pursued over a period of time (3 to 5 years).

The adults and children involved in the Children's Plaza (from elementary school students through high school level alumni of the program) learn together (or separately) about children's rights and children participation. The Children's Plaza comes to be seen as a place open to all children, and where they can have fun (and develop their character).

Example of an idea to enhance activities to promote children's participation

Receive reports of both needs assessments	Adults conduct a survey of the needs of both adults and children in the community	Children conduct an assessment of the needs of adults and children in the community

Invite them to participate in the event

Governmental agencies

Direct

Staff

Children's Plaza
Library
Cultural activities
classes
Sports
Awareness-raising activities
Events

Children

Children

Support NGOs

Instructor

Children not attending school or the Children's

Learn about children's participation and children's rights together

Learn facilitation skills

Creation of an annual plan, including monitoring and evaluation, are carried out by adults and children together

Staff and instructors working directly with children to develop expertise in how to assist children to express their views easily.

Children and adults (staff) of the Children's Plaza collect the views of people in the community (children and parents) regarding their expectations for the Children's Plaza and how children should develop. . Staff develop strong ownership of their vision for the Children's Plaza through a process that builds children's desire to participate and through which children provide good inspiration.

Based on the opinions collected, the director responsible for the Children's Plaza meets with representatives of children-related governmental agencies, and engages support organizations (such as NGOs) to make children's participation a key focus.

As a true demonstration of children's participation, the children participating in the Children's Plaza reach out to bring in those children not attending school, having them join the Children's Plaza's events, daily activities, classes, etc.

As children participate more, and at a stage when adults acknowledge the abilities of children, the children can take on some of the management responsibilities of the Children's Plaza, including through participating in annual planning processes, raising funds, and evaluating activities.

New approaches for your own organization to try

As shown in cases described above, working to realize children's participation can be very difficult. Because of this difficulty, it is important to conduct ongoing monitoring, evaluation and follow-up activities. Successful experiences, however small, will give encouragement to the people involved. Why not have your organization try new activities and approaches to realize children's participation?

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