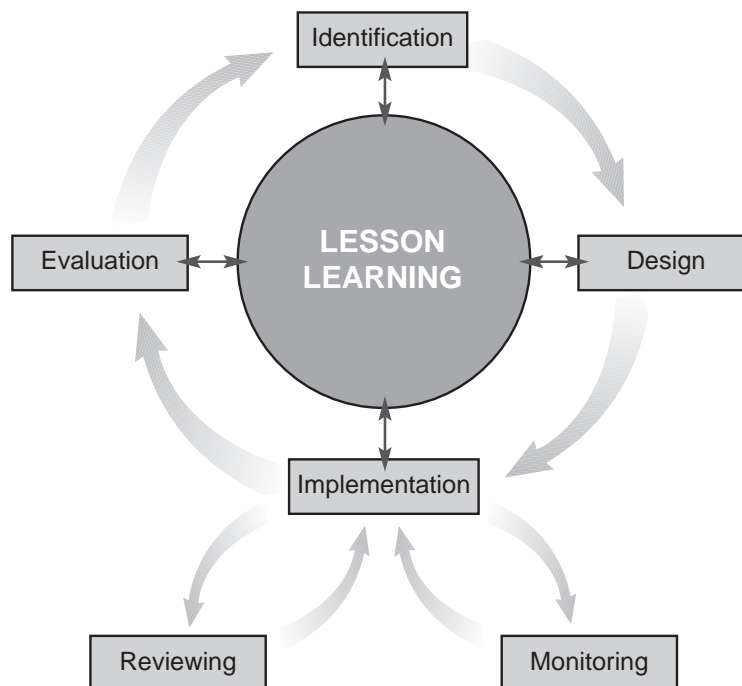


## 4

# Children's participation in the project cycle

The process of planning and managing projects can be drawn as a cycle. Each phase of the project leads to the next.



## Project identification

This involves carrying out a needs assessment to identify what the project will focus on.

## Project design

This involves carrying out further research into the people affected by the problem and how they are affected by it (the stakeholders), identifying the risks to the project and how the project's performance will be measured.

## Implementation and evaluation

During the implementation phase of the project the progress of the project should be monitored. Reviews should be carried out at regular intervals. Once the project is completed, an evaluation should be carried out in order to assess its long-term impact and sustainability.

## Lesson learning

The planning tools used during the project design phase should be repeated throughout the life of the project. This ensures that any changes that might affect project success are accounted for. Findings from monitoring, reviewing and evaluation exercises should be documented to benefit organisational learning in order to improve other projects.

Children should be involved as stakeholders in the project cycle, giving opinions, suggestions, information and taking part in the implementation and evaluation of the project.

Children could be encouraged to take the lead in defining their needs, designing the project and gathering the information needed. They can then be supported in carrying out and evaluating the project.

The following sub-sections focus on the different phases of the project cycle. They suggest ways in which child participation can be built into project planning and management.

## 4.1 Project identification

‘The first step in the project cycle is to identify needs that a development project could address. This is sometimes called a **needs assessment**. Needs assessment finds out what community needs are and whom they affect. Only when we know what people really want will we be able to develop an effective development project.’ *ROOTS 5: Project cycle management*

We may already have a good idea of local needs. However, past experience and project work in the community does not guarantee a complete understanding of the community’s needs. Many organisations do not include children as stakeholders in a needs assessment. This is because they may think that children:

- will not benefit directly from the project
- lack worthwhile experience, skills and knowledge.

Children are therefore often overlooked as key stakeholders even in projects that benefit them directly. A far greater challenge is to involve them in assessing broader community development needs. Children possess useful and important knowledge that no-one else in the community can provide.

Most needs assessment tools can be adapted for use with children. Some ideas are outlined below. Training in communicating with children, child development, and age and gender issues are essential if the techniques are to be used successfully.

### NEEDS ASSESSMENT TOOLS

The following tools are participatory activities which have been adapted for use with children.



#### Listening to children

Listening to children can be difficult for adults. It may also be challenging for adults to hear about the experiences of children in vulnerable situations. It is important to give the children plenty of time to describe their experiences and views.



### Dream trees

Mosoj Yan is an organisation that works with street and working girls in Cochabamba, Bolivia. As part of their project identification process, the older girls facilitate other girls in the drawing of a 'dream tree'. They ask the girls to identify what roots are needed to give them opportunities and protection in their lives, such as justice, love and equality. The girls then fill the trunk with the issues that they face at the moment, such as exploitation, isolation, discrimination and lack of education. The flowers or fruits on the tree represent the ideal situation they would like to see for themselves. For example, they might like to have better social networks or skills.



The landscape around the tree represents what they can do to make this happen. They prioritise these suggestions and then present them to the staff of Mosoj Yan. One suggestion led to the formation of 'cells' of working girls who organise themselves in different parts of the city to educate other working girls who cannot access Mosoj Yan's educational centre.



### Theatre for development

Many children enjoy drama. It can be used to explore issues that are important to them. To use theatre for development:

- identify important issues with a group of children
- select issues that the children want to concentrate on
- develop a drama based on these issues
- perform the drama to an audience
- encourage the audience to discuss issues raised by the drama.



### Transect walks

Children can teach adults a lot about their community by taking them for a walk around it. Children can point out:

- what is important to them and why
- what they are afraid of and why
- what they would like to change
- what they like and do not like about the community
- where vulnerable children live, such as those with disabilities.



### Mapping

Children are as good as adults at mapping their lives and their communities. It is an activity that they often find much more enjoyable than other needs assessment methods, such as interviews. Maps can be drawn on the ground using sticks, stones and other readily available local materials. Paper and pens can also be used. The children should not be given much direction about what to draw. Simply ask a question relating to an issue and allow them to draw a creative map that answers the question. Maps can be drawn to represent a number of things. For example:

- **MOBILITY** Where do the children go every day?
- **MIGRATION** (especially for street working and living children) Where do they come from?
- **COMMUNITY** What are the positive and negative aspects of the community?



### Ranking

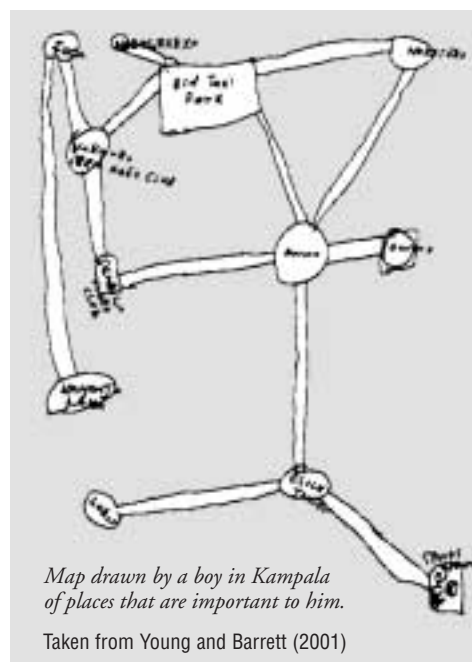
Ranking is used to show priorities. It can be used after a number of participatory exercises. For example, it could be used after children have mapped the positive and negative aspects of their community:

- Write or draw the positive aspects on the ground.
- Give ten bean or stone counters to each child. They can place as many counters as they want next to each aspect, according to how important they think they are. The more counters, the more important the aspect is to them. They may want to put all of their counters next to one aspect if they do not think the others are important to them.
- Repeat this exercise with the negative aspects.
- Encourage discussion of these findings, particularly the more negative aspects of the community.



### Child-to-child interviews

Child-to-child interviews help children to collect baseline information. The children can also be involved in analysing it. It is important to first train the children in interviewing techniques.



CASE STUDY  
Bhima Sangha

The Bimha Sangha Child Workers Union wanted to document the experiences of the *makkala panchayats*. They interviewed members of the *makkala panchayats*.

A technique used to open up the discussion was the 'fireball'. A coconut was passed around the circle. Someone was chosen to close his or her eyes and clap at a random moment. At the sound of the clap, whoever had the coconut had to answer a question.



Photo: Paul Stephenson

The children recorded the interviews on a cassette recorder and later wrote down what was said. This was then analysed. The findings were given to the Union to help them to plan their future work with the village *panchayats*.

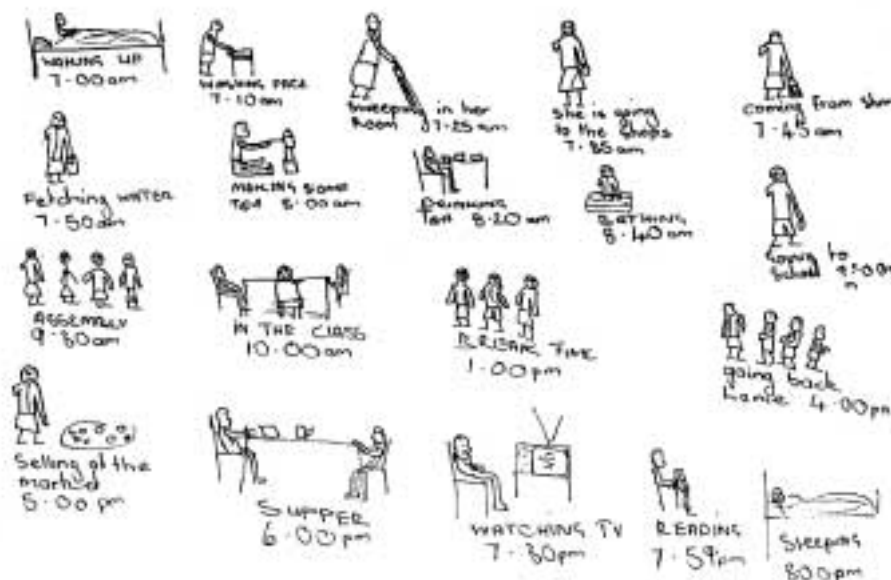


**Daily activities chart**

Ask children to make a record of their daily lives on a chart. This should involve pictures, but brief notes could also be written by older children. The charts can be analysed to see how much time children spend working, at school and playing. In rural areas, it can be interesting to ask children to draw charts for different seasons of the year to see how these compare.

- What do they do in a typical day?
- How many hours are spent on each task?

**EXAMPLE**  
of a daily  
activity chart of  
a disabled child  
McIvor (2001)





## Songs

In some cultures, songs sung by children can give an insight into their concerns and priorities. For example, children might use 'rap' songs to express their views. Daisy, a 17 year old girl displaced by the conflict in Colombia, composes rap songs about war, abuse and hopes for peace.

Daisy's rap

'Good day, good night, good afternoon, good evening.  
It's a very rainy day and we're going out to the fields, we're singing and talking about what's going to happen.  
We just thought about the future and the bad things we share.  
The strength and the tolerance despite the distance.  
We want no more war. Peace in the city and the fields.  
We are taking the hands of the children who are crying.  
We see women and men cry out, there's a healthier world to live in.  
Brothers and sisters, we need your help because children are dying in the streets.'



## Focus groups

Children may be more willing to talk in groups than in a one-to-one interview with an adult. Well-facilitated focus groups can produce excellent information.

Adapted from Regional Working Group on Child Labour (2002)

Focus groups involve discussion about a particular subject, led by a facilitator. They are useful for exploring agreed ideas and attitudes. They are especially useful in early research in order to find out what questions to ask and what words to use in interviews and questionnaires. A focus group discussion requires:

- 8 to 15 participants with similar characteristics, such as a group of street working children
- a comfortable place with no interruptions or spectators
- enough space for everyone to sit down comfortably in a circle, with no tables or desks to block the space between them
- a set time for discussion (no less than one hour and not normally more than two hours)
- the list of ideas, questions or topics to be covered
- a skilled facilitator
- at least one person skilled in taking notes.

Be aware that:

- a few individuals can dominate focus groups.
- people who are not comfortable about speaking in public might be excluded.



## Consultations

Consultations are an effective way to generate ideas and agreement among children. They are different from focus groups, which are used to gain information. Consultations can bring together groups of children with similar concerns to address issues that affect them. They can also create an environment in which adult decision-makers can listen to children. For example, children displaced by conflict and violence in Colombia gathered together to develop recommendations for the representatives of countries participating in the United Nations General Assembly Special Session for Children.

### CASE STUDY

The National Movement of Working Children, India – For the children, by the children

Every country that has signed up to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is required to submit a report every five years on the steps taken by the government to implement the Convention. The UNCRC Committee also asks NGOs and other civil society organisations to report on the government's implementation of the Convention. The Committee then seeks a response from the government on the issues raised by those organisations.

The National Movement of Working Children (NMWC), a national alliance of working children's organisations in India, was a part of the Indian delegation of NGOs and civil society organisations invited to present their reports at the United Nations office in Geneva. The children of NMWC were the only child participants in the delegation.

Their report was prepared entirely by children and contains:

- information about how their rights are being upheld concerning their protection, the provision of services and infrastructure, and their right to participation
- details of their own initiatives which have helped to improve their lives and to realise their rights
- their review of the government of India's report
- their future suggestions for action to enable their rights to be met.

## Consultation checklist

### Preparing materials

- Allow time to develop and test the materials that will be used for the consultation.
- Keep the exercises simple and clear with a variety of activities.
- Gather comments from target groups and facilitators before finalising materials.
- If possible, talk to people who work with the children to get some ideas about the kinds of activities that will be successful.
- Put together a consultation pack for facilitators which includes guidelines, ideas for icebreakers and advice on how to adapt the exercises. Reference information could also be included, such as a copy of UNCRC and contact details for other useful organisations.
- Hold a meeting to brief all facilitators and share clearly the purpose of the consultation.
- Discuss the materials with the facilitators. Be open to new suggestions and ideas.



**Planning the consultation**

- Remember that the concentration levels and interest of children will vary depending on the children themselves, the group dynamic, and the environment in which the consultation takes place. The length and structure of the session and materials used should take this into account. Facilitators should monitor the energy level and change the activity to raise energy levels if necessary.
- Make sure that children from vulnerable groups are represented. Remember that they can be difficult to reach. Allow plenty of time for planning and build up a network of other contacts and groups in case any groups suddenly decide not to participate in the consultation.
- Make sure all facilitators follow good child protection practice.
- Ensure that an adult responsible for the group is present at all times. Never do a one-to-one interview with a child unless another adult is present.
- Be realistic about the size of the group. A good number of participants is six to ten. If the consultation is seeking information about very sensitive issues, then smaller groups are more appropriate.
- If possible, try to arrange some one-to-one interviews so that children are able to speak about personal issues that they may not want to discuss in front of other children.

**Delivering the consultation sessions**

- Try to start the session with a fun activity to get the children interested in the consultation.
- Spend a short time introducing each other and try to learn people's names or use badges.
- Make sure everyone knows the purpose of the consultation. Explain what will happen to the information that is gathered, what feedback they will get and what the law requires us to do if a child shares information about something illegal. Tell the children that any personal information they share will not be passed on to others unless illegal.
- Reach an agreement within the group that each individual should show respect to the others. Anyone causing offence will be asked to apologise or leave the consultation.
- Make sure the consultation is not carried out too fast or too slow or the children will lose interest.
- Children are not very good at sitting still for a long time. Activities should involve some variation in presentation style to keep their interest.
- At the end of the session thank the children for their contributions and remind them of how they will receive feedback.

**Recording the data**

- If possible, one of the facilitators should take notes throughout the consultation. Make sure quotes are noted down with details such as the gender, age and ethnic group of the child.
- Any information given during the consultation should be used responsibly.

Checklist adapted from Ritchie (1999)



**CASE STUDY**  
The Children  
of Kabul

In 2001, Save the Children, USA (SC/US) launched a major research project called 'The Children of Kabul', reviewing its work with children in Afghanistan. The research project aimed to encourage broad and open consultation with children, in which children and their carers would talk about their lives and identify issues of concern. SC/US planned to use this information to help develop new programmes with children in Kabul. The exercise was a baseline survey for the start of a new programme cycle on issues identified by children. It was also the start of increased children's participation in SC/US programmes generally.

The consultation took six months. More than 400 children aged between 7 and 18 were involved as well as over 200 carers. Focus groups consisted of about 12 children and met for a total of six discussions. The groups discussed issues such as family relationships, risks and dangers faced by children, children's work and responsibilities, and children's experiences and feelings. Key learning points were:

- The need to provide intensive support and training to the adult facilitators. Enabling children to express their views and opinions does not necessarily come naturally to adults. Adults may interpret children's words in ways that suit them.
- The benefit of participatory tools. All the focus groups used participatory research activities such as drawing, acting and story telling. These activities encouraged children to open up and to express complex ideas and concerns.
- In communities where SC/US were already working, the focus groups enabled trust to be built and allowed feedback on their existing and ongoing work.

Through analysis of the conversations, SC/US were able to identify some key areas for new programme activities. For example, children in Kabul were worried about road safety and injury from traffic accidents. On the basis of this information SC/US raised funds for developing child-focused road safety materials.

SC/US also worked with children to identify local issues of concern. For example, in one community children were worried about the danger of open wells. In another community they were worried about dogs with rabies. In another, they were concerned about a rubbish dump. SC/US worked with these groups of children to mobilise community action to resolve these problems.

Once the children had prioritised the issues they wanted to work on and identified the root causes, they decided on an action plan to address the problem. They then involved their parents and local communities by raising awareness of the problem at local community meetings. They took action, sometimes with the financial support of SC/US and at other times using their own resources. Finally they evaluated their success in solving the problem.

Each phase of the project involved participatory activities to facilitate the process and the children's thinking. Through these phases SC/US was able to move from a level of consultation with children used in the research to a level of supporting children to take a leading role in solving problems in their communities.

## Using PLA with children with disabilities

Adapted from Yanni (2001)

Some Participatory Learning and Action tools may need to be further adapted for use with children with disabilities. The following ideas come from experience with blind people in Yemen.

- Explain the process and activities before they are carried out.
- During the activities, seeing people explain what is happening so that those who cannot see can be involved in discussions and presentations.
- During activities and discussions, everyone addresses people by their names, explains what they are doing in detail and uses spoken words rather than pointing at things.
- At the end of each activity have time for reflection about how the tools could be better adapted next time.
- For the activities that involve drawing, materials that can be touched can be used instead of pens, such as grains, grass and paper clips.

## Reflection

- In what ways has our organisation involved children in identifying their needs?
- What are the opportunities and constraints in increasing children's participation in project identification?
- What needs assessment activities do we currently use? How could these be adapted for use with children?
- Which ideas given in this section will we try?
- How might the tools in this section be adapted for use with children with disabilities? They might need to be adapted in different ways for children who cannot hear, see, move around and so on.

## 4.2 Project design

'Once a priority community need has been identified, we can start to think about how we will address it.' ROOTS 5: *Project cycle management*

During the project design stage, we need to collect further information about the problem identified by or with the children, and its context.

### STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS

Projects, particularly those specifically for children, should always include children as primary stakeholders. Children, like adults, are not all the same. Within any community, certain children will be less visible due to disability, gender, ethnicity, caste or because they are involved in income-generating activities. It is important to ensure that their voices are heard.

If a project is addressing a problem specifically related to children, we might want to select particular groups of children to participate. For example, the focus may be on child labour, or children involved in trafficking. The stakeholders might include child labourers, trafficked children, their parents, and representatives of government, non-government and international organisations.

Adapted from RWG-CL (2002)

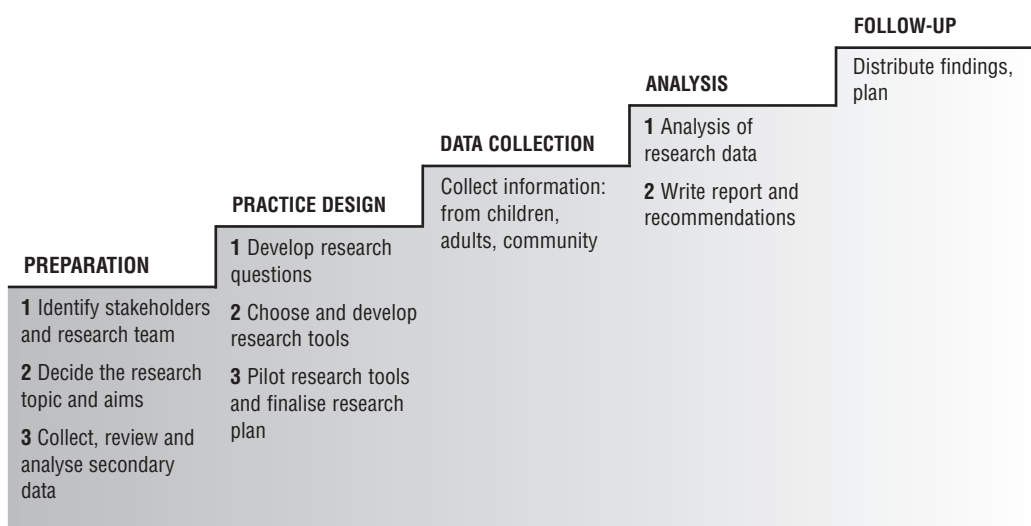
## RESEARCH WITH CHILDREN

Research is an important part of good project design. The project should be based on reliable, accurate information. Children’s participation in research is important because it:

- increases their sense of ownership of the project by enabling them to research the issues that are important to them
- affirms their right to express themselves, be heard and listened to
- develops their abilities to analyse information
- gives them confidence and independence
- develops their ability to protect themselves from things such as abuse
- changes the way adults view children
- changes the relationship between adults and children
- improves the quality of the research results because child researchers can access information that adult researchers cannot
- helps develop better policies and programmes for children.

Stages of the research process

Adapted from RWG-CL (2002)



The research process is made up of several stages. It is necessary to decide which stages of the research process children will be involved with and how. This should take into account:

- the time available to both the development organisation and the children
- the age and capacities of the children
- the nature of the research
- the children’s past experience of participating. Children who regularly take part in activities that build their participatory skills will be able to participate more at each stage.

Where possible, these decisions should be discussed with the children. They can be changed during the research process if necessary. It can be useful to draw and complete the following table.

**Children’s participation in project design**

Adapted from Kirby (1999)

STAGES IN THE DESIGN PROCESS	LEVEL OF INVOLVEMENT <sup>1</sup>	WHO WILL CARRY OUT THE TASKS?
Identify stakeholders and research team		
Decide the research topic and aims		
Collect, review and analyse secondary information		
Develop research questions		
Choose and develop research tools		
Test research tools and finalise research plan		
Collect information: from children, adults, community		
Analyse research data		
Write report and recommendations		
Distribute findings, plan		

<sup>1</sup> In the **LEVEL OF INVOLVEMENT** column write *None, Informed, Consultation, Collaboration or Leading role*. In the **WHO WILL CARRY OUT THE TASKS?** column write *Children, Programme staff or External consultant*.

**Choosing a research team**

The children who participate in the research team should be chosen carefully, taking into account their age, gender and experience. Where possible, children should be involved in selecting research team members.

- If we work with a children’s club or youth group, we already have a group of potential researchers. The decision to select children from this group should be made with the children.
- For broad research issues, the choice of children can be wide. For example, if the issue of ‘access to water’ has been identified, the researchers could be ‘local children’. In order to understand the range of issues associated with access to water, we should try to involve both boys and girls of different ages in the research.

- For more specific research questions, children who represent the population being researched could be selected. For example, if the research looks at access to water affecting the attendance of girls at school, the majority of researchers could be girls of school age.

The support and involvement of adults is crucial. Training, experience, guidance, support and issues of protection and legality need to be taken into consideration.

### Setting objectives for research

Sometimes research objectives have already been decided by the project staff. However, children can be involved in setting objectives in the following ways:

**TAKING A LEADING ROLE** Children decide what issue they want to research and then write their own objectives

**CONSULTATION** Staff decide the research topic, then write the objectives in consultation with the children

**INFORMED** Staff decide the topic, write the objectives and ask children to review them

### Collecting information

**Secondary information** is information that other people have collected. For example, we could look at child-focused books, research reports, videos and statistical, policy or legal documents. Staff members, consultants or older children could be responsible for collecting secondary information. Information collected and analysis of such information should be shared with the children as they develop the research questions.

**Primary information** is information that we collect ourselves.

When considering which children to involve in collecting primary information, the following issues should be taken into account:

- literacy levels
- children's ability to express themselves verbally
- access for children with disabilities.

Participatory approaches, such as drawing and mapping, are appropriate ways of collecting information from children. Traditional interviews and questionnaires can also be an option, although the children's ability to use these methods should first be assessed. Some of the methods described on pages 30–35 are suitable for the research phase. The methods on the following pages can be used with children.

### Surveys and questionnaires

Surveys and questionnaires are useful when trying to gain an idea of patterns of behaviour, knowledge and attitudes of children. If sensitive issues are being researched, a written questionnaire can be used to enable children to provide information without being identified. However, written questionnaires can only be completed by children who can read and write. Spoken questionnaires can be used with children with few or no skills in reading and writing. Pictures or other visual aids can be used to make the questions clear.

#### CASE STUDY

Using questionnaires in schools – understanding sexual exploitation in high-risk areas of Sri Lanka

Miles (2000a)

In the high-risk beach areas of Sri Lanka a number of children were being sexually exploited, but the size of the problem was unclear. To find out this information it was decided that the children themselves should be asked. Face-to-face discussion with children about such a sensitive topic was considered to be unethical and inappropriate. However, as literacy rates were high, it was felt that a written questionnaire could be used. It was to be a confidential questionnaire and children could choose to take part.

After gaining permission from the authorities and schools, a questionnaire was designed. Questions were asked about whether children knew other children their age in their area who had been abused by adults. The children were also asked whether they could think of solutions. The questionnaire was tested with a group of children to ensure that the questions could be understood.

The results of the questionnaire gave an indication of the level of sexual exploitation in this high-risk area and children's views of it. For example, one boy said 'Children don't have sex with adults for pleasure'. The results were used when lobbying the government on the need to address the issue.

#### CASE STUDY

Using surveys in communities – understanding children's access to pornography in urban Cambodia

In Cambodia, there was concern about the access of children to pornography. In order to gain information from children who were unable to read, a simple survey was carried out which used drawings to show where such materials could be found. Focus groups were used to help develop the survey in order to ensure that good questions and appropriate language were used.

Children between 11–17 years old took part in the survey. The results were taken to a group of children the same age to get their views. They then helped to develop a youth theatre production about children's access to pornography, which was performed on International Children's Day.

The report was distributed to key stakeholders including government and NGOs. This helped to raise awareness of the issue. Much still needs to be done if laws are to be changed.



*One of the drawings used in the survey.*

## Reflection

- What survey techniques do we currently use? How could these be adapted for use by children?
- The survey in the Cambodian case study was used for theatre and advocacy. In what other ways could completed questionnaires and surveys be used?

**Visual methods**

Adapted from Boyden and Ennew (1997)

It can be easier and less threatening to use visual methods when collecting information from children. These methods include drawing, painting, making models, puppets, photography and video.

However, visual methods are not appropriate if:

- they are likely to bring up painful memories or thoughts that children will not be able to cope with
- children are not familiar with visual images
- using a pen or pencil or other equipment makes children feel uncomfortable
- some images used are not culturally appropriate
- researchers are not familiar with the way children see their world
- there is no opportunity for children to explain or interpret the images they have created
- the equipment used attracts too much public attention, such as cameras
- making a visual record could present a security risk for children and researchers.

**Drawing**

Children usually enjoy drawing. By asking children to draw, the researcher can reduce their own power and control and give the children more freedom of expression. In order to avoid drawings being misinterpreted, it is important that the researcher ensures that the interpretation is done by the children themselves. Permission to use or copy the drawings should be gained from the children who drew them.

Apart from drawing pictures, children could be asked to draw maps, diagrams and charts to explore their communities, relationships and use of time and space.



**CASE STUDY**

## Using pictures in Myanmar

Miles (2000b)

The following tool has been used with children in a variety of contexts:

- former child soldiers
- children in long-term orphanage care
- former child sex workers
- children whose parents have died from AIDS.

Children were asked to draw three pictures of themselves: one of the past, one of the present and one of the future. They were then invited to explain the pictures to adults. The adults were respectful, did not interrupt and encouraged the children as they shared their pictures. Children were invited to participate but they could leave if they felt uncomfortable at any time.

For many children this was the first time that adults had been prepared to listen to them. They were encouraged by the changes they had made from the past and their hopes for the future.

The adults realised that each child was unique. For example, although some adults had previously seen historical information about the children in files, they had not thought about the children as people with a future. The adults were able to gain a better understanding of how the children saw their own situation.

## Reflection

- Are we committed to listening to children in our work?
- Do we consider them as individuals with their own needs, hopes and fears?
- How can we listen to children more effectively?

**Photographs and video**

Children from all cultures quickly learn to use cameras and video equipment. They are popular and provide an opportunity to capture images from inside a child's world. They provide children with a creative tool to represent their lives in a positive way.

Cameras can be expensive to buy so it is important to consider how important the use of photographs might be. Disposable cameras could be used in situations where children need to take photographs without supervision.

**CASE STUDY**

## Photo diaries – children documenting their community life in southern India

Stephenson (1998a)

Children from the village children's club were given disposable cameras and training on how to use them. This was the first time that they had taken photographs. They were asked to document their daily lives, and to take pictures of what they thought was good and what was bad in their village. The children themselves made decisions about which children should take the photographs, and which pictures would be taken.

The photographs were analysed by all the children in the club. The children ranked the daily activities according to preference. They discussed the good and the bad things shown in the photographs, and agreed on the most important issues. These were used to create a plan of action for the children's club to carry out over the following year.

Video cameras are expensive. The technology can go wrong and editing can be time-consuming and complicated. Video cameras are best used as a tool to document an issue for advocacy or for raising awareness. Be prepared by having plenty of video tape and spare batteries.

### Role play and drama

Role play and drama can help children to explore sensitive and important issues. The use of puppets and masks can allow children to express their views on sensitive issues without initially having to talk about their own traumatic experiences.

#### CASE STUDY

Using role plays – understanding children's view of violence in Cambodia

Miles and Varin (2004)

Cambodia has a long history of violence. Most research has focused on the extreme cases rather than violence affecting the average child at home and in school. Children in Cambodia tend to be shy of adults. They are not used to being asked to give their opinions. However, role play is something that children enjoy. It can be used to gain an understanding of their views.

Children were invited to take part in role plays based on six drawings by a local artist. The role plays were recorded on video and were then played back to encourage discussion.

The children's willingness to open up and share views using this method was a surprise to the facilitators. There had been a concern that boys and girls would not work well together, but they did. There were ten children in a group, which meant that those children who did not want to take part did not have to.

The results of the role play exercise were used to develop a survey for school children which is currently being carried out throughout Cambodia.



*One of the drawings on which a role play was based.*

#### Reflection

- Why are role play and drama useful?
- What makes a good role play or drama?

### Recording information

**TAKING NOTES** Notes should be taken during any discussions that are held – interviews, focus groups and interpretations of role-plays and drawings – and about any observations made. Where possible, more than what is said should be written down. The dynamics of the discussions, body language and emotions should also be noted. It is important to ensure that details of dates, time, place and first names of participants are recorded.

**DOCUMENTS** Copies of the drawings, photographs and other maps and charts should be labelled and filed. If the maps or charts use local materials, a drawing on paper should be made to ensure that the details are recorded.

## Analysis and use of the research information

The information should be analysed with or by children. It can then be used in a number of ways:

- The findings can be used to design a community project that addresses the issues children face. The children should be involved in project design and implementation.
- A report or video documentary could be shown to government officials as part of advocacy work.
- A display of photography and drawings could be used to raise awareness and increase the profile of an organisation's work or a particular project.
- The information can be used by children for their own needs.

### CASE STUDY Chisomo Children's Club

The Chisomo Children's Club in Malawi is a good example of the use of participatory tools to help children identify and design projects.

Activities include:

- drawing maps showing the places of threat and opportunity to them
- drawing pictures of specific issues that they are concerned with, such as police harassment or family violence
- brainstorming and then ranking their problems
- analysing their use of time, using charts
- drawing seasonal calendars of their ill health
- drawing income-generation trees showing where they get money and how they spend it.

These methods enable children to understand the issues that face them and to work out solutions together. They have helped to choose the land for Chisomo's three centres and to design the buildings and identify their uses. The children are involved in advocacy, staff recruitment and project evaluation.



*A child explaining a chart that the children drew.*

Photo: Jim Loring

Once primary and secondary information have been collected, the children should be involved in designing the project. Older children may be able to help develop a logical framework and be involved in budgeting.

### Reflection

- When we ask a group of children to analyse the information they have provided or collected, how can we:
  - encourage quieter children to participate?
  - stop particular children dominating the conversation?
  - help resolve conflict that might occur?
  - ensure that we are drawing the ideas out of the children and not putting ideas into their heads?
- How can we involve children in project design?

### 4.3 Implementation and evaluation

Once children have been involved in project identification and design, they should be included in the implementation and evaluation of the project.

It is important to make sure that:

- children take a role in the organisational aspects of the project.
- children take on an active role in representing the project.
- children are involved in monitoring and reviewing the progress the project is making towards the objectives.
- children evaluate the impact of the project on their lives.

The following paragraphs look at these issues in more detail.

#### **Children take a role in the organisational aspects of the work**

In order to ensure that children can participate in the running of a project, make time for regular discussion of project decisions such as deciding on location and decoration of youth centres, hiring staff and agreeing budgets. This could involve a weekly or monthly meeting.

**EXAMPLES** **Monthly meetings** Mosoj Yan in Bolivia works with girls who live or work on the streets. The girls hold monthly meetings where they are involved in decisions about Mosoj Yan's projects and evaluating progress.

**Elected councils** Children at Namma Boomi, the Concerned for Working Children's training centre, elect a children's committee and president each year. The committee acts to improve the conditions and projects at the Centre.

#### **Children take on an active role in representing the project**

Development organisations often receive visitors such as donors and government officials. A common approach to welcoming them is to make the children sing or dance for them. The visit then continues with adults showing adults what is being done for the children. Think about how the children themselves can put together a welcome programme. This could include presenting the project to donors and other visitors. This may challenge the perceptions of children by staff, donors and visitors.

At conferences, organisations working with children are normally represented by adult staff. Think about the possibility of selecting children to attend the conference with members of staff.

**EXAMPLES** **MANTHOC, Lima, Peru** Children from the Working Children's Movement greet visitors to MANTHOC. The children then take them around the neighbourhood and answer questions about the programme. An adult representative from MANTHOC is with the children at all times, but makes no attempt to control the conversation.

**Bhima Sangha, India** Children from the Working Children's Union Bhima Sangha regularly represent the Union at international conferences. These children are selected by the other children to present the Union's concerns and ideas. Adults from the Concerned for Working Children accompany the children and provide support, translation and guidance.

### **Children are involved in monitoring and reviewing the progress the project is making towards objectives**

**Monitoring** is done continuously to make sure that the project is on track. Organised children's assemblies or councils can ensure monitoring takes place. A monthly meeting to discuss progress can ensure that the activities are being carried out as planned.

**Reviewing** is done occasionally to see whether each level of objectives in the logical framework leads to the next one and whether any changes need to be made to the project plans. For example, a review could take place every six months.

#### **CASE STUDY**

Reviewing the identity and purpose of a children's club in Malawi

'Chisomo is a children's organisation that helps children to have a better future; to know their future and provide for their own needs.'

This was how children from the streets of Blantyre, Malawi, described Chisomo Children's Club during a participatory review they carried out with staff in 2002. The children established Chisomo's identity when the club began in 1998. However, there was a chance that over time, the club might evolve into an organisation run by adults, with little input from the children. The review in 2002 was therefore carried out in order to clarify Chisomo's mission, purpose and values.

The review looked at what Chisomo is, what it is for and what makes it different from other organisations. This involved asking children who had been there at the beginning to tell their stories of how it was named, what they had done, and who had made the decisions. As the review was carried out, Chisomo began to redefine itself as a children's organisation. The children emphasised that they were not just given things, but could meet their own needs and develop their own skills and knowledge for the future. They were pleased that the project was based on God's word and prayer, and helped them escape abuse.

**EXAMPLE**  
Reviewing the activities of a church education programme

Lifestream Ministries in the Philippines works with children from poor urban communities. Its programmes provide health, learning, social, emotional, physical and spiritual support to over 580 children. In 2001, Lifestream Ministries began to teach the children about the Convention on the Rights of the Child and to take seriously the principle of participation in their planning and evaluation activities.

An annual review process enables children to help develop the yearly plan of activities. They are also asked to review the activities of the previous year and assess the performance of the teachers. The children selected representatives to attend a two-day workshop.

Activities the children carried out at the workshop included:

- thinking about why it was important to assess what happened in the past year.
- looking back at the past year and assessing their personal lives: what they did well, mistakes made, what they had learnt and applied to their lives, how their lives had changed and what their relationship with God and with others was like. The children were given a notebook in which to write down their self-assessment.
- reviewing the plan for the past year. Four pieces of paper of different colours were used. Each piece of paper represented part of the rating scale to show whether implementation of each activity had been done. The rating scale was 'well done', 'done', 'partially done' or 'not done'. The participants individually wrote the activities on the pieces of paper according to how they felt each activity had been done.
- assessing the performance of teachers. To do this, a set of indicators was developed by the teachers and volunteers. The indicators were written on a chart with boxes according to whether the indicator was met fully, partly, poorly or not at all. A copy was given to each class. Each child in the class was asked to rate their teacher according to how well they had met each performance indicator. They placed a sticker in the relevant box. In classes of younger children, the facilitator would read the indicator to be rated and explain the meaning. The results of the review were analysed by the children and staff and presented to the teachers. A performance improvement plan was developed by the teachers to respond to the results of the review.

Many things were learnt during this process:

#### **The children:**

- increased their ability to express their ideas, make suggestions, ask questions and share problems.
- gained confidence
- increased their ability to evaluate the performance of Lifestream Ministries and their teachers.
- became more aware of the standards of performance required of their teachers.
- became more aware of the value of assessing plans and their teachers and contributing to the overall improvement of the programme.

#### **The teachers:**

- became more aware of their need to be accountable to the children – to deliver good quality teaching and to serve as role models.
- realised that children can give meaningful feedback and rank their preferences.

**Lifestream Ministries:**

- decided to make the children part of the process of assessment and evaluation, not only of their teachers but of all the processes undertaken in the programme.
- decided to adapt the tools further for use with younger children.

**Children evaluate the impact of the project on their lives**

Unlike monitoring and reviewing, evaluation is done at the end of the project to assess its impact. A participatory evaluation enables the primary stakeholders to assess whether the purpose and goal of the project have been achieved, and to suggest major changes in strategy and future work. The methods used should reflect the age and experience of the children involved in the evaluation.

**CASE STUDY**  
Empowering street children in Myanmar through participatory evaluation

Dorning and O'Shaughnessy (2001)

World Vision's Street and Working Children's project in Yangon and Mandalay in Myanmar seeks to improve the quality of life and status of street and working children, and to reintegrate them into society. It also aims to address the issues that push children onto the streets in Yangon.

In 2001, an evaluation of the programme was carried out. The evaluation aimed to assess the impact of the programme and to identify ways in which the children and staff could evaluate and improve it in the future. Until the evaluation, there was limited children's participation in the project. The evaluation took the following steps:

- 1 ELECTION OF EVALUATION TEAM** Children elected 16 children to be on the evaluation team.
- 2 INITIAL MEETINGS** Staff and children met together to brainstorm a list of questions. Primary stakeholders were identified and meetings held with them.
- 3 QUESTIONS** Questions were developed for each stakeholder group that focused on their specific motivations and interests.
- 4 CHOOSING QUESTIONS** From the lists, eight major questions were selected.
- 5 PLANNING THE INTERVIEWS** The evaluation team planned the interviews in detail, deciding who would do what, how, where and when. The questions were grouped according to particular focus groups.
- 6 QUESTION GUIDES** A guidebook was developed for the interviewers, to give them advice about time, participants, and note-taking.
- 7 TRAINING** Children volunteered to be interviewers and were trained to facilitate focus groups.
- 8 IMPLEMENTATION** The interview teams were formed, and schedules and question guides drawn up. Focus groups and interviews were carried out. Secondary information about the project was gathered from office records.
- 9 RESULTS** The evaluation team held a three-day workshop. The findings were presented in participatory and visual ways. A SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) was done using the information from focus groups.
- 10 RECOMMENDATIONS** The workshop ended with key recommendations for the project including a step-by-step process to achieve some of them.



**Evaluation tools**

The focus groups and interviews used by World Vision Myanmar are key evaluation tools. Many of the participatory tools already mentioned in this book can also be adapted for evaluation purposes. Two other tools are described in the box below.

**Confidence and evaluation lines**

**Confidence lines** show how a person's self-confidence has changed over time, such as over the course of a project. Participants draw their 'confidence line' on the graph below. Where the line dips or peaks, they are asked to indicate what specific event caused these changes. The confidence line provides the basis for discussion with the facilitator.



**The evaluation line** can be used as an evaluation tool with older children. Participants are asked to think about a question, such as 'How successfully have you met your objectives?' They score their success on a line ranging from 'not at all' to 'completely'. They are then asked to note down all the reasons why they have or have not met these objectives. After discussing the responses and issues arising, participants note down possible actions that could help achieve these objectives. This method works well with groups of 10–20 people.

**Reflection**

- How can we enable children to take a role in the organisational aspects of our work?
- How do we involve children when visitors come to visit a project?
- How do we think our projects would be improved if we involved children in monitoring and reviewing the progress that is being made?
- What changes would we need to make to enable children to review, monitor and evaluate the impact of the project on their lives?

## 4.4 Celebrating and documenting lessons learned

Children know how to celebrate! A spirit of fun and playfulness should be a feature of all work with children. Adults tend to be more focused on the outputs and results, whereas children enjoy the process. Everyone wants a good result, and opportunities should be created to celebrate success and learn from mistakes.

Celebrations offer a chance for creativity and cultural expression. Rwandan refugees in Tanzania celebrated the end of a project cycle facilitated by Tearfund's Disaster Response Team using dance, song and handicrafts that expressed the different activities they were involved in. Drawings, paintings and photographs can be displayed in the community. Sketches can be presented that show the good and bad points of the project.

'Unfortunately, both debates and research about children's participation lack systematic documentation. We need records of how things were done, not just of what was done, including learning from mistakes.' *Ennew* (2002)

Few organisations document what has been learned from projects. This is especially true with what has been learned about children's participation. We could decide to:

- write a newsletter with children that describes what has been achieved. For example, Bhima Sangha developed a 'wall journal' which was designed and written by the children. The paper was posted on walls around the villages. It contains information for children and adults about health and local issues. This involves cartoons and articles.
- write a document outlining what has been learned about the interaction between children and adults.
- encourage the children to document their own experience and learning. For example, the children from Bhima Sangha recorded their own history and experiences in order to represent the true meaning of their lives.

Children grow up! The participatory approaches and culture learned by one generation of children should be shared with the next generation. Documentation of what has been done and learned can be shared with new children that our organisation works with, as the case study below shows.

**CASE STUDY**  
Timeline

Stephenson (1998b) and *Footsteps* 58 pages 8–9

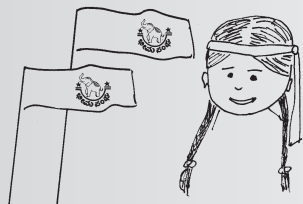
The children from Bhima Sangha, India wanted a tool that they could use to document what they had achieved over the past eight years. They decided to create a large mural on paper with drawings of significant events.


- STEP ONE** Several members of Bhima Sangha were selected by other children to draw the timeline.
- STEP TWO** The selected children found all the documents about their history and decided which events should be shown on the timeline
- STEP THREE** They pasted several large sheets of paper together and began to sketch out the mural
- STEP FOUR** As they drew, they invited other members of Bhima Sangha to join them to check the content, make suggestions and help with the drawing
- STEP FIVE** The mural was completed and used to orientate new Bhima Sangha members.

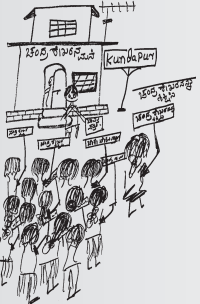
The timeline was so successful that Bhima Sangha decided to copy it onto a large cloth and add new events every six months. The cloth is used to orientate visitors and new members and to raise awareness about the Union. Another version of the timeline has been painted on a specially-built wall in the training centre.

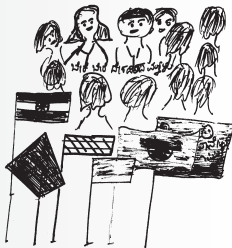
**SOME OF THE DRAWINGS USED IN THE BHIMA SANGHA TIMELINE**


- 1** Belonging to Bhima Sangha


- 2** Walkathon


- 3** Ayodhya Hotel incident


- 4** 1996 Regional consultation


- 5** Building programme


- 6** Makkala panchayats (children's councils)

