

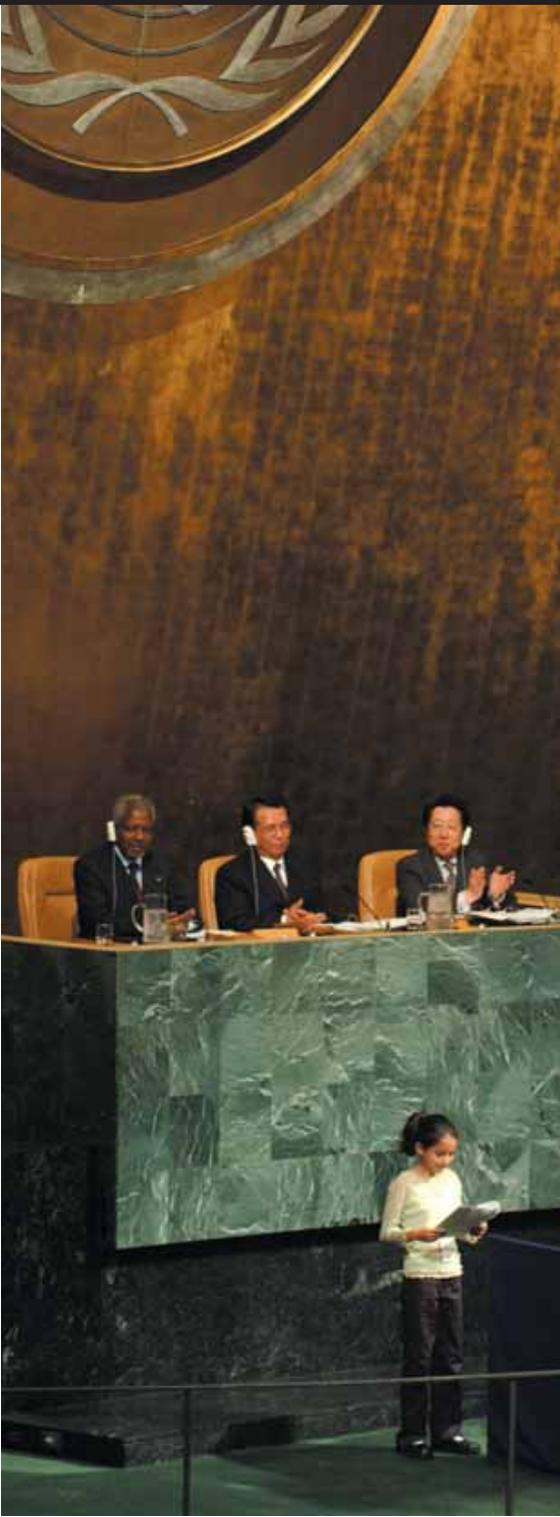
# Seen and Heard

Participation of  
children and young  
people in Southeast,  
East Asia and Pacific  
in events and  
forums leading to  
and following up on  
the United Nations  
General Assembly  
Special Session on  
Children, May 2002

Judith Ennew  
Yuli Hastadewi



**Save the Children**





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Save the Children fights for children's rights. We deliver immediate and lasting improvements to children's lives worldwide.

Save the Children works for:

- a world which respects and values each child
- a world which listens to children and learns
- a world where all children have hope and opportunity

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UNICEF/HQ02-0146/ SUSAN MARKISZ UNHQdigital 3008x1960020146F.JPG UNHQ, 8 May 2002. UNSS on Children Opening Plenary. Audrey Cheynut, 17, from Monaco, addresses the United Nations Special Session on Children. Together with Gabriela Azurduy Arrieta, 13, from Bolivia, she had been chosen by other delegates to the Children's Forum to present the recommendations of the Forum to the UN General Assembly. The Children's Forum took place at UN Headquarters and the Manhattan Center in New York City from 5 to 7 May. This is the first time in UN history that children addressed the General Assembly.

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# PREFACE

This report presents the results of a research evaluation of the participation of children in the Southeast, East Asia and Pacific region in events and processes connected to the United Nations General Assembly Special Session on Children in May 2002. The research covers the period from January 2000 to May 2003, and considers not only the Special Session but also the Fifth and Sixth Regional Ministerial Consultations including their preparatory processes.

The researchers used several methods of data collection – with children, young people and adults – in addition to consulting published and unpublished documents, including earlier evaluations.

Discussions about this evaluation began in a Regional Save the Children Alliance Steering Committee meeting in Hanoi in August 2002, with the realisation that Save the Children's role of actively involving children in the Special Session also provided an opportunity for reflection, before embarking on new processes of involving children in international meetings designed to promote their rights and welfare. It had already become clear to many of us that this task was more complicated than at first anticipated. It was therefore also pleasing to note, in one of the regional follow up meetings, that the children too wanted to evaluate their exposure to new thoughts and experiences as well as the future impact for them. With the support of funding from the Swedish Government, the research evaluation was set in motion.

Evaluation of children's participation in international meetings of adults is as much in its infancy as the participation itself. There are as many lessons to be learned from the research process as from analysis of data collected. The overall conclusions not only indicate the quality achievements of those who organised children's participation in the Special Session and the two Ministerial Consultations, they also locate a number of areas where we have to reflect more and in which improvements can be made. No matter whether 'results' are positive or negative, we need to listen to

what children are telling us and we learn, and become wiser on, how to do this if we ask honest and true questions. The findings in this report reflect what both adults and children told the research team and we hope you will find these reflections valuable to learn from.

*Britta Östrom*

*Regional Representative*

*Save the Children Sweden Southeast Asia*

*March 2004*

# FOREWORD

In February 2000, at a meeting of civil society organisations in New York convened by UNICEF, Save the Children accepted the responsibility to lead the work to maximise children and young people's participation in the UN General Assembly Special Session on Children. This reflected Save the Children's commitment to children and young people's right to participate, as well as the organisation's belief that the Special Session on Children offered an important opportunity for children themselves to influence the setting of a new agenda for children for the next decade.

The Special Session was clearly an important opportunity for children's voices to be heard on issues of vital concern to their own lives and to those of future generations. Many children and young people welcomed this opportunity and were eager to be involved. As a result, literally thousands of children around the world engaged in consultations around the drafts of the plan of action to be agreed at the Special Session. South Asia had its Under 18 'Change Makers' who engaged in dialogue at national and regional levels with governments, UN agencies and civil society. Guatemala was the setting for mini-summits in rural villages, which then came together in a national children's summit. Southeast, East Asia and the Pacific had, as this report outlines, Ministerial Consultations involving children from across the region. Into all these meetings children brought their views and priority concerns on what should be done to create a better world for them and their peers. In May 2002, many of the children involved in these national and regional preparatory processes came to the Special Session itself as members of the delegation of either their government or an NGO. They also brought with them ideas on what needed to be done next to fulfil the commitments made at the Special Session, including their involvement in the development of National Plans of Action for Children.

The preparatory process saw a steady improvement in the way in which adult-led organisations cooperated to try and ensure that the events and activities related to the Special Session on Children established the conditions for the genuine participation of children in what was essentially an adult-determined process. At the international level, Save the Children evaluated its own work on a regular basis, together with the children involved, and made considerable efforts to learn from, and build on, what went well, what had not worked and what could be done better. We recognised that promoting the meaningful participation of children in such a process was difficult, particularly since the Special Session on Children took place within the context and framework of a highly formalised United Nations process. It required creativity and innovation to help design a process that was sensitive to, and based on, the rights and interests of the children involved. Examples of this included work to address child protection issues, to produce children-friendly materials and to encourage more transparent and democratic selection processes for the children who attended events. Nevertheless, many aspects of the process remained outside Save the Children's – and others' – direct control.

No organisation involved in this historic process pretended that it had all the answers to achieving the meaningful and authentic participation of children. However, those who were privileged to work together with the participating children did witness many examples of genuine consultation with children at all levels – national, regional and international. Moreover, since the Special Session, it has become clear that this event played an important role in legitimising children's participation in public policy discussions and in demonstrating what 'good practice' in child participation means.

Since the Special Session, Save the Children has made considerable efforts to learn – and share – the lessons from its experience. This has included evaluating children's participation in the Second and Third Preparatory Committee meetings, the Children's Forum and the Special Session on Children itself together with the children involved; evaluating the original national and regional preparatory processes up to September 2001; preparing a report on 12 key lessons learnt from children's participation in the Special Session on Children; compiling the various frameworks and guidelines on good practice into a toolkit on consulting with children; developing practice standards on children's participation; and, through supporting children's participation in follow up at national level – in the development of National Plans of Action and other related

processes. Save the Children has also evaluated its experience in supporting children's participation in the Special Session on Children in different countries and regions.

This report is a welcome and important contribution to this process. It looks at some of the specific experiences of Save the Children and its partners in Southeast, East Asia and the Pacific and is based upon careful research with many of the children and adults directly involved in the process. It recognises the successes and failings of that regional process and identifies a number of ways in which better outcomes could be achieved in the future. We are sure that it will help support everyone involved in the task of further improving the quality of children's participation and ensuring that it becomes both an everyday reality and a high-quality, meaningful experience for every child and young person involved.

*Clare Feinstein*

*Child Participation Officer (Special Session on Children)*

*for Save the Children*

*April 2004*

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Thanks are also due to Mark Capaldi, Vipavee Charoensidhi and Thitikorn Trayaporn for their commitment to the project and their flexibility in providing administrative support during its implementation.

The research evaluation and the production of this Report were funded by the Swedish Government.

We are grateful to UNICEF for permission to use the historical photograph of a child addressing the United Nations General Assembly on the cover of this report.

Most of all we wish to thank the children, young people and adults who shared their experiences with us. In order to maintain the confidentiality that was part of research design we cannot name them here. But we hope

that this report is a valid reflection of their opinions and experiences. Any mistakes, omissions and errors are our responsibility. Likewise any opinions stated are our own, and do not necessarily reflect those of Save the Children Sweden, the International Save the Children Alliance, or any of their collaborating or partner organisations.

*Judith Ennew*

*Yuli Hastadewi*

*Dominique Pierre Plateau*

*Bangkok and Jakarta March 2004*

# NOTES ON TERMINOLOGY

The participation of children from Southeast, East Asia and Pacific in international meetings created considerable excitement in the region and developed a set of acronyms and shortened terms, which were clear to insiders, but not always to others. In addition, some ‘competing’ terms are in general use, and there is even a growing orthodoxy about which to use. This Report attempts to be consistent in the terminology it uses. The following notes are provided for clarification and explanation about the way some terms are used in this text.

## ***UNGASS/Special Session***

The United Nations General Assembly Special Session on Children was held in May 2002. Many of those involved in preparing for and attending this Session used, and continued to use, the acronym UNGASS. Others use – and seem now to be preferring – the term ‘Special Session’, possibly because, as child rights and welfare specialists, they are unaware of the many Special Sessions on other topics held by the United Nations at various times. In this Report, however, the term ‘Special Session’ is used to refer to the Special Session on Children, 2002, except in direct quotations from other sources using ‘UNGASS’.

## ***Forums***

‘Forums’ refers in this Report to 11 linked international meetings, which were the focus of the research evaluation. The Report uses a specific acronym for each forum, to avoid confusion, even though forums are often referred to in the region by the name of the town in which they took place (see also Table 2). The 11 forums, and their acronyms, are:

<b>Acronym</b>	<b>Forum location and date</b>
First Prepcom	(New York, May/June 2000)
Second Prepcom	(New York, January/February 2001)
CYP Prepcon I	(Bangkok, Thailand, February 2001)
CYP Forum I	(Jomtien, Thailand, April 2001)

Fifth Mincon	(Beijing, China, May 2001)
Third Prepcom	(New York, June 2001)
CYP Forum II	(Vientiane, Lao PDR, July 2001)
Special Session	(New York, May 2002)
CYP Forum III	(Seoul, South Korea, December 2002)
CYP Prepcon II	(Bangkok, Thailand, February 2003)
Sixth Mincon	(Sixth Ministerial Consultation, Bali, Indonesia, May 2003).

***Region: Southeast, East Asia and Pacific***

Children from the countries of Cambodia, China and Hong Kong, Fiji, Indonesia, Japan, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Palau, Papua New Guinea, The Philippines, South Korea, Thailand, Timor Leste, Tuvalu, Vanuatu and Vietnam all took part in one or more of the forums described in this Report. However, various organisations and organisers refer to different groups of countries at different times, particularly in the names of their various organisational structures in the region. For consistency, this Report refers to Southeast, East Asia and the Pacific as ‘the region’, except when using the proper names of organisations and forums.

***Coordinating Committee (regional)***

Children and Young People For a Coordinating Committee, founded in 2000 in the Southeast, East Asia and Pacific region, consisting of representation from the International Save the Children Alliance Regional Office, Alliance members in the region, UNICEF EAPRO, Plan International Regional Office, Thai National Committee for Child and Youth Development, World Vision International Regional Office, and later Child Workers in Asia and the Malaysian Child Resource Centre.

***Other terms with specific meaning in this Report are:***

<i>Bahasa</i>	Literally meaning ‘language’ in Indonesian, this term is the familiar word for the Indonesian language used in the case study in that country.
Chaperone	Adult accompanying a person less than 18 years of age who is a delegate to a meeting (national, regional or international). A chaperone has responsibility for all aspects of the child’s rights and welfare.
Child/children	A child is a person less than 18 years of age, although the term ‘youth’ is often confusingly used (including by

	forum organisers) to refer to teenagers in this category. Yet this, like the term ‘children and youth’, has been avoided as far as possible in this Report (See also CYP and C/YP).
Children-friendly	The term ‘children-friendly’ is used throughout this Report, rather than child-friendly, to show that more than one child is involved.
CRC	The acronym CRC has been used throughout in preference to UNCRC, because the former is in more general use in the region.
Forums	This more modern plural form of forum is used in this Report in preference to the Latin plural ‘fora’, which may be unfamiliar to regional readers.
Facilitator	In this Report, a facilitator is a person who is responsible for ‘facilitating’ or making easy, children’s capacity to express their views in public, using a variety of techniques.
Institutionalisation	Institutionalisation of children’s participation would entail that effective child participation in decision making is part of everyday life, from international meetings to families.
Mincon	Regional Ministerial Consultation (East Asia and Pacific region); sometimes written MINCON in the literature.
Organiser	Adults from various organisations working in Southeast, East Asia and Pacific with a responsibility for organising children’s participation in the forums – usually members of the Regional Coordinating Committee.
Participation	The term ‘participation’ is often used to mean involvement in decision making and planning, within activities, projects and programmes. However, in this Report it means ‘presence in a meeting’ regardless of the roles and responsibilities involved.
Prepcom	Preparatory Committee Meeting.
Prepcon	Preparatory Conference.
Protocol	Instruction manual designed for a specific piece of research and followed by all researchers.
Research evaluation	The research on which this Report is based.
Southeast, East Asia and Pacific	See ‘Region’

## **Acronyms**

ASEAN	Association of South East Asian Nations
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CRIN	Child Rights Information Network
CWA	Child Workers in Asia
CYP (C/YP)	Children and young people (less than 18 years of age)
DCI	Defence for Children International
EAPRO	East Asia and Pacific Regional Office (UNICEF)
ECPAT	ECPAT International
INGO	International Non Governmental Organisation
MINCON	Ministerial Consultation
HIV/AIDS	Human Immune Deficiency Virus/Autoimmune Deficiency Syndrome
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
NPA	National Plan of Action (for children)
RWG-CL	Regional Working Group on Child Labour
SEAP	Southeast Asia and Pacific (region – Save the Children Sweden)
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund



# SUMMARY

Between 2000 and 2003, children from Southeast, East Asia and Pacific joined adults in three major international forums. Their participation raised some important questions:

- which children participated?
- how were they chosen?
- were their rights respected?
- what were their experiences?
- what did they learn?
- what do they think adults could do differently?
- how does limited children's participation in these forums benefit other children?

Children and young people asked for answers to these questions. Save the Children Sweden Regional Office for Southeast Asia subsequently commissioned a research evaluation of the participation of children from 15 countries, focusing on the United Nations General Assembly Special Session on Children and the Fifth and Sixth Regional Ministerial Consultations on Children, together with eight preparatory regional meetings.

## Research process

In addition to examining documents relating to these forums, data were collected directly from children, young people and adults from 11 of the 15 countries included in the research evaluation, including a case study in Indonesia, which took place largely in *Bahasa*. A scientific research protocol included several methods of data collection. Child respondents included delegates, young facilitators and journalists who had been involved in the forums being studied, while adults who took part in the research had been regional and national organisers, facilitators, documenters or chaperones. In addition, the research included responses from small 'control groups' of both children and adults. As was to be expected, given the number and variety of the organisations and agencies involved in childrens participation

in these forums, some aspects of the processes had not been systematically documented and archived. Contacting both children and adults was time-consuming, frustrating and sometimes impossible within the resources available. Yet, despite constraints of time and the difficulty of contacting children, youth and adults who had moved on since their participation in the forums, direct data were collected on all 11 forums in the study.

## Overall results: Seen and heard

The agencies and individuals who organised children's participation were both visionary and pragmatic. They saw the forums as an opportunity to increase the profile of children's rights, and achieved a significant number of their goals, despite scarce resources. As one of the main organisers said in retrospect, they did not allow 'the ideal to be the enemy of the good', striving instead to develop and use good practices in situations that were often far from ideal. However, children's participation in adults' forums is relatively new; lessons need to be learned – not least by adults. At this stage, the fact that children were seen, heard and recognised as important players in international forums is a major achievement. Institutionalisation of their participation, so that effective child participation in decision making is part of everyday life, from international meetings to families, remains a goal for the future. Despite ongoing, lively debates on children's participation, there is still a risk that some adults may adopt an uncritical attitude, and that children only participate in relatively unconnected, special events.

During the research, the processes of collecting documents and of direct contact with research participants, as well as the actual data collected from individuals showed that:

- some lessons are being lost because documentation was not systematic
- skills learned by both adults and children are not subsequently being used to the maximum extent
- an 'elite' group of participating children tended to be developed, while others were excluded.

Some results were consistent throughout the data collected and the answers to the research questions above are summarized in Table 1.

**Table 1: Overall answers to research questions**

Which children participated?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• children already working with NGOs</li> <li>• in general, an educated elite</li> <li>• token representatives of excluded groups.</li> </ul>
How were they chosen?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• prior experience of NGOs was vital</li> <li>• selection processes varied considerably.</li> </ul>
Were their rights respected?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• protection rights were not always guaranteed</li> <li>• lack of funds may have put children at risk.</li> </ul>
What were their experiences?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• participating children increased self esteem, knowledge of the world and skills</li> <li>• some participants suffered from jealousy from children who had not been selected.</li> </ul>
What did they learn?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• understanding of other children, countries and cultures.</li> </ul>
What do they think adults could do differently?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• better training for adults – especially chaperones</li> <li>• increased support for follow-up.</li> </ul>
How does limited children's participation in these forums benefit other children?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• raising the profile of childhood</li> <li>• sensitising adults to children's rights</li> <li>• but marginalized children will have a long wait for improvements.</li> </ul>

## Indonesia case study: Becoming aware

In general, the overall results were repeated in the Indonesia case study, in which children and adults were interviewed in depth. The case study revealed:

- slow growth of government awareness of children's rights in general, and of participation in particular
- vested interests of non-governmental organisations (NGOs), rather than the best interests of children, may determine which children participate
- children's participation may benefit organisations rather than children
- jealousy and lack of transparency combined to stigmatise some children who were chosen to participate
- some children reported mistreatment by chaperones and other adults
- insufficient preparation
- disappointment about follow up
- numerous participatory processes, but little systematisation.

## Lessons learned and recommendations

The overall message from the research is that, although children were seen and heard in the forums being researched, they were not given a place at the decision-making table. Nevertheless, their presence raised awareness among adults about children's capacities, children's rights and making arrangements for children's presence at international, adult forums. Much has been learned, but some lessons are at risk of being lost or not put into practice. It has been difficult for organisers to ensure sustainability, not least because children become adults, with the result that their expertise may be lost. At this early stage of children's presence in international meetings, individual children benefit, but both children and adults in the research evaluation agree that commitment to participation now needs to be matched by institutionalisation of selection, participation and follow up, which should be based in local and even family structures. Although there have been considerable gains for children because of their presence in international forums, agreed standards and established systems for ensuring maximum participation and protection are now required, including:

- realistic budgets
- systematic preparation of both children and adults
- protection strategies
- adequate documentation and archiving
- methodical follow up
- retaining and using young people's expertise.

This leads to the conclusion that some questions need to be tackled now, in order to improve future participation of children in adults' forums:

- should children be selected as individual representatives, or elected as delegates?
- how and by whom should plans be made for children's participation in future international forums?
- how can a wider group of children be selected to participate?
- how to ensure effective follow up and continuity?

The recommendations from the research evaluation are that the International Save the Children Alliance and UNICEF in the Southeast, East Asia and Pacific Region, together with other partners should take action at four levels: institutionalisation, documentation, addressing children's rights issues and planning.

With respect to institutionalisation of children's participation in adult forums:

- use lessons learned to institutionalise children's participation
- establish the relative roles of duty-bearers
- establish ways for young people to support the next generation of child participants.

In order to improve documentation, so that lessons learned and information about good practices are not lost, along with the experience and skills of children who have participated in these forums:

- write more informative reports
- save information, including complete lists for contacting children
- improve dissemination
- centralise archives.

To address the children's rights issues highlighted in this research evaluation:

- establish and promote principles and processes for selection
- make detailed plans to protect children for each opportunity to participate in meetings
- improve information provided to children and adults
- check and monitor accompanying adults
- establish a children-friendly complaints procedure.

Finally, in order to prevent repeating the pattern of preparing for children's participation without adequate time, funding and other resources:

- develop a regional strategic plan for children's participation
- include follow up and reporting structures in the plan.



# A WORLD FIT FOR US

## **Children's Forum Message, Presented to the United Nations General Assembly Special Session on Children, 8 May, 2002**

We are the world's children.

We are the victims of exploitation and abuse.

We are street children.

We are the children of war.

We are the victims and orphans of HIV/AIDS.

We are denied good-quality education and health care.

We are victims of political, economic, cultural, religious and environmental discrimination.

We are children whose voices are not being heard: it is time we are taken into account.

We want A World Fit for Children, because a world fit for us is a world fit for everyone.

In this world:

We see respect for the rights of the child:

- governments and adults having a real and effective commitment to the principle of children's rights and applying the Convention on the Rights of the Child to all children,
- safe, secure and healthy environments for children in families, communities, and nations.

We see an end to exploitation, abuse and violence:

- laws that protect children from exploitation and abuse being implemented and respected by all,
- centres and programmes that help to rebuild the lives of victimised children.

We see an end to war:

- world leaders resolving conflict through peaceful dialogue instead of by using force,
- child refugees and child victims of war protected in every way and having the same opportunities as all other children,

- disarmament, elimination of the arms trade and an end to the use of child soldiers.

We see the provision of health care:

- affordable and accessible life-saving drugs and treatment for all children,
- strong and accountable partnerships established among all to promote better health for children.

We see the eradication of HIV/AIDS:

- educational systems that include HIV prevention programmes,
- free testing and counselling centres,
- information about HIV/AIDS freely available to the public,
- orphans of AIDS and children living with HIV/AIDS cared for and enjoying the same opportunities as all other children.

We see the protection of the environment:

- conservation and rescue of natural resources,
- awareness of the need to live in environments that are healthy and favourable to our development,
- accessible surroundings for children with special needs.

We see an end to the vicious cycle of poverty:

- anti-poverty committees that bring about transparency in expenditure and give attention to the needs of all children,
- cancellation of the debt that impedes progress for children.

We see the provision of education:

- equal opportunities and access to quality education that is free and compulsory,
- school environments in which children feel happy about learning,
- education for life that goes beyond the academic and includes lessons in understanding, human rights, peace, acceptance and active citizenship.

We see the active participation of children:

- raised awareness and respect among people of all ages about every child's right to full and meaningful participation, in the spirit of the Convention on the Rights of the Child,
- children actively involved in decision making at all levels and in planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating all matters affecting the rights of the child.

We pledge an equal partnership in this fight for children's rights. And while we promise to support the actions you take on behalf of children, we also ask for your commitment and support in the actions we are taking – because the children of the world are misunderstood.

We are not the sources of problems; we are the resources that are needed to solve them.

We are not expenses; we are investments.

We are not just young people; we are people and citizens of this world.

Until others accept their responsibility to us, we will fight for our rights.

We have the will, the knowledge, the sensitivity and the dedication.

We promise that as adults we will defend children's rights with the same passion that we have now as children.

We promise to treat each other with dignity and respect. We promise to be open and sensitive to our differences.

We are the children of the world, and despite our different backgrounds, we share a common reality.

We are united by our struggle to make the world a better place for all.

You call us the future, but we are also the present.

*Meeting of Under-18 Delegates to the United Nations Special Session on Children, New York 5-7 May 2002.*



# STRATEGY

**International Save the Children Alliance Strategy for children and young people's participation in the Special Session.**

## The Alliance's Goal

To maximise Children and Young People's Participation in the Special Session process so that the Special Session is both legitimised and enhanced by this participation and is an example for future participation.

## The Alliance's Objective

To demonstrate the Value, Necessity and Benefits of the Participation of Children and Young People, by working together with other like-minded agencies and organisations, to ensure Good Practice for participation.

## Alliance Indicators

- The rhetoric of the Special Session is backed up by a change in attitude towards children and young people with a greater number of actors taking them and their views seriously.
- The beginning or reinforcement of a dialogue between children and young people and policy makers which demonstrates the value, necessity and benefits of meaningful participation by children and young people.
- A wider acceptance that the participation of children and young people is part of an ongoing process of democracy, citizenship and governance.
- Structural changes which ensure that in the future children and young people become an indispensable part of formal consultations and decision-making processes at all levels (national, regional and international).

- The Special Session experience becomes a 'living document' so that everyone involved can benefit from the experience and lessons learned in order to inform, enrich and enhance future participation – setting the standard for the next decade.

*From 'Special Session Strategy for the International Save the Children Alliance', Alliance Monthly Update January 2001, unpublished.*

# HISTORY AND AIMS OF THE RESEARCH EVALUATION

Child participation is a global priority for the International Save the Children Alliance. When children's participation in the United Nations General Assembly Special Session on Children (Special Session) was first being planned, the International Save the Children Alliance is reported to have foreseen some specific challenges:

- How could governments best use this as an opportunity to involve the young citizens of their countries in a debate about the future national and international agenda for children?
- How could governments and NGOs ensure that a diversity of children's voices were heard, including the more marginalised and discriminated against, and that children themselves would be involved in the selection of their representatives?
- How could the Special Session itself – and other inter-governmental events held in the run up to the Special Session – be children-friendly events which would enable the children and young people present to actively engage with the proceedings?
- What sort of minimum standards for children's participation should be established – for example, around selection procedures, the sharing of information and the way meetings were run – to ensure that it was 'meaningful' and a positive experience for the children involved?
- What does it mean to give 'careful consideration' to child protection issues when involving children in policy and other consultations?
- How could the quality of children's participation in this process be evaluated?
- How could children continue to be supported in their work once the New York Special Session event was over and all the delegates returned to their home countries? (International Save the Children Alliance, 2003, 4).

In the Southeast, East Asia and Pacific region, preparation for the Special Session involved intense collaboration between Save the Children Alliance members, their partners and other regional organisations, including

governments. This led to mutually learning useful lessons about involving children in adult forums. The path-breaking experiences of these processes included working with children and young people in two major regional forums at which their rights and welfare were discussed – the Fifth and Sixth Regional Ministerial Consultations on Children. For the Fifth Ministerial Consultation in Beijing in 2001 and the Sixth in Bali in 2003, the participation of children from a total of 15 countries in the region<sup>1</sup> was enabled through a series of related events, forums and processes at local, national and international levels. Organisers based these activities on existing skills and processes, but were frequently faced with limited time for preparation, as well as the need to find new forms of collaboration with scarce resources. Working under pressure, while maintaining their ‘normal’ activities, there was little opportunity for the organisers to reflect on their experiences – much less to document them fully. Although a number of evaluations of global and national processes took place at the time, the regional experience needed to be documented and evaluated before memories fade, so that lessons can be learned and good practices identified. This regional research evaluation, commissioned by Save the Children Sweden Regional Office for Southeast Asia, concentrates on the period from January 2000 to May 2003 and the participation of children and young people in the Special Session, the Fifth and Sixth Regional Ministerial Consultations (Mincons), as well as eight preparatory meetings during this period. The full set of 11 meetings is referred to in this Report as ‘the forums’.

The participation of children from the region in international adults’ meetings did not begin and end with the Special Session and the Mincons. Indeed the achievements of these experiences may well have stimulated a greater demand for child participation at international meetings, without time to reflect on and consolidate the experiences of the past. Enthusiasm from organisers of international meetings often leads to requests at short notice to send a specific number of children to a particular forum, without understanding the time, money and human resources necessary for their presence to be effective and to fulfil their rights. Scarce resources and the speed of developments between 2000 and 2003, to say nothing of the slow growth of awareness of children’s participatory rights in some quarters, have combined, so that the institutionalisation of children’s participation is still in its infancy in the region. As understood in this Report, institutionalisation would mean that children’s right to participate fully in decisions made on their behalf, as

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<sup>1</sup> Cambodia, China and Hong Kong Fiji, Indonesia, Japan, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Mongolia, Palau, Papua New Guinea, The Philippines, Republic of Korea, Timor Leste, Tuvalu and Viet Nam.

well as the full range of their civil and political rights, would be implemented at all levels of society, from families to the international sphere. In practical terms, this would entail that mechanisms through which children would be consulted about their opinions would be in place, so that – for instance – their democratic representation and participation in schools, local administration and overall governance, would be automatically ensured. Children’s participation in international forums would thus no longer be organised on an event-by-event basis, and the opinions expressed by delegates would be representative of the full range of their peers, rather than of a small group. For many of those working in the region, and worldwide, to promote children’s participation, this is the ultimate goal. In the short term, however, there is no doubt that institutionalisation is a dream, rather than a reality.

This research evaluation aims to provide basic documentation and evaluation of past experiences, in order to make useful recommendations so that children’s rights to participate can be systematically implemented, while ensuring that all other rights are fulfilled during the processes involved. The researchers took the view of one commentator from South Asia about the institutional implications of children’s participation for Save the Children that, ‘Tools and systems for monitoring and evaluation need to be developed to guard against developing an uncritical attitude’ (Poudyal, 2003, 21). Much has been achieved, but much still remains to be built on the foundations of these achievements.

## **The research evaluation**

The term ‘participation’ is often used to mean involvement in decision making and planning, within activities, projects and programmes. However, for the purpose of this Report, as for the research evaluation, it means ‘presence in a meeting’ regardless of the roles and responsibilities involved. Indeed, one underlying intention of the research evaluation was to assess what this presence actually entailed. The evaluation sought the personal opinions and perspectives of children, young people and adult participants who had played various roles, in order to learn lessons to guide their future participation and collaboration with governments and civil society, as well as to inform the policies and plans of non-governmental organisations (NGOs), both local and international, of intergovernmental organisations and of donor agencies.

According to the Terms of Reference, the aim of the research evaluation was to assess the participation of children and young people in 'East Asia-Pacific' (see Notes on Terminology) in activities related to the United Nations Special Session on Children, May 2002, with particular attention to:

- the perspectives of children and young people
- fulfilment of their right to participate, within the overall framework of human rights and in particular the full range of rights provided in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
- benefits and disadvantages for participating children and young people
- systematic documentation of the processes
- lessons learned from both good and bad practices, which can guide future participation of children and young people in regional and international events.

## Researchers

The Research Coordinator (Yuli Hastadewi) was supported by a Technical Advisor (Judith Ennew) and the Programme Manager (Dominique Pierre Plateau), as well as by a research assistant, Abdul Quddus Salam, and Save the Children focal point in Indonesia, together with focal points in Hong Kong and The Philippines. Some data were also collected or contributed by Perlyn G. Bunyi, Victor P Karunan, Budi Rahardjo and Jay Wisecarver. All those who collected data followed the same protocol, including methods of seeking informed consent. All signed confidentiality undertakings.

## Research questions

The terms of reference for the research evaluation required that the following research questions should be addressed through the methods used:

- what are the views of children and young people who participated in these processes?
- what are the views of children and young people who did not participate in these processes?

- what selection processes were used to decide which children and young people took part?
- to what extent can these be said to be democratic?
- what is the profile of children and young people who participated, and was this representative?
- what were the arrangements for preparation, and how were they implemented?
- what were the arrangements for follow up and how were they implemented?
- what roles did adults take, and what did children and young people think about this?
- what roles did children and young people take, and what did they and adults think about this?
- to what extent were the forum environments children-friendly and empowering?
- what, if any, were the benefits of participation?
- what, if any, were the risks, disadvantages and violations of rights consequent on participation?
- what were the resource consequences and constraints of participation?

## Scope

The research covered the period from January 2000 to May 2003, focusing on the participation of children from 15 countries in the Southeast, East Asia and Pacific Region in three adult, international forums: the United Nations General Assembly Special Session on Children, which was eventually held in May 2002, and two East Asia and Pacific Regional Ministerial Consultations on Children, in Beijing in May 2001 (Fifth Mincon), and in Bali, Indonesia in May 2003 (Sixth Mincon). In order to gain a full picture of the processes involved, eight preparatory forums were also studied, particularly those in which children were chosen and/or prepared for participation in the adults' meetings (Table 2).

**Table 2: Forums included in the research evaluation**

<p><b>Main forums</b></p>	<p><b>5th East Asia and Pacific Regional Ministerial Consultation, Beijing, China, 14-16 May 2001 (Fifth Mincon)</b></p>	<p><b>Special Session New York, May 8-10, 2002 (including East Asia and Pacific preparatory meeting 3-4 May, and the Children's Forum 5-7 May 2002) (Special Session)</b></p>	<p><b>6th East Asia and Pacific Region Ministerial Consultation, Bali, Indonesia, 5-7 May 2003 (Sixth Mincon)</b></p>
<p><b>Preparatory meetings</b>  (Note that there was considerable overlap between preparatory meetings and that the division between meetings implied in this table was not as clear in practice)</p>	<p>East Asia and Pacific Regional Children and Young People's Forum I, Jomtien, Thailand, 22-26 April 2001 <b>CYP Forum I</b></p>	<p>Preparatory Committee Meeting 1, New York 29 May-2 June 2000; <b>First Prepcom</b></p> <p>Preparatory Committee Meeting 2, New York, 29 Jan-2 Feb 2001; <b>Second Prepcom</b></p> <p>East Asia and Pacific Regional Planning Meeting Bangkok, Thailand, 28 Feb 2001 <b>CYP Prepcom I</b></p> <p>Preparatory Committee Meeting 3 New York, 11-15 June 2001 <b>Third Prepcom</b></p> <p>East Asia and Pacific Regional Children and Young People's Forum II Vientiane Lao PDR, 22-27 July 2001 <b>CYP Forum II</b></p>	<p>East Asia and Pacific Regional Children and Young People's Forum III, Seoul, Republic of South Korea, 9-13 December, 2002 <b>CYP Forum III</b></p> <p>Preparatory Consultation for the Sixth Ministerial Consultation, Bangkok, Thailand, 12-14 February 2003 <b>CYP Prepcom II</b></p>

Of course there was some overlap between these three processes; children were frequently involved in more than one meeting, with consistent links between some of the adults, children and organisations involved. The meetings were of varied size, ranging from the Special Session, with a total of 404 child participants, according to the UNICEF's Children's Forum Report (UNICEF, 2002a), to a preparation meeting in Bangkok in February 2003 for five children who were delegates to the Sixth Mincon. There was also considerable variation in meeting structures; from small numbers of children with no decision-making role (for example the Fifth Mincon) to specially-organised children's forums, designed so that children could discuss their own problems, develop statements to, and elect delegates for, a specific adult forum (for example, CYP Forum II in Vientiane in 2001). In the case of the Sixth Mincon there was a phased process, built explicitly on Special Session experiences and output; the children's forum in Seoul in December 2002 elected five delegates who met again in Bangkok in February 2003 in order to prepare for their participation in the Sixth Mincon in Bali in May 2003 (which itself included a prior meeting of child delegates). Supporting these main forums, a variety of other meetings and activities, usually at national level, selected and prepared children and adults, some already based on existing processes, others created specifically in connection with one of the larger forums. All children's meetings were supported or organised by adults in some way, including facilitation, chaperoning (accompanying) child delegates and translating. In a very few cases the facilitators were young people, who had previously been participants but had crossed the age barrier of 18 years into adulthood.

## Methods and their limitations

The resource base and time frame for this evaluation were limited, placing restrictions on the methods used, in particular the use of participatory methodology. Children requested the evaluation but, because the research population was scattered through 15 countries, it was not possible to include children in research design. In addition, the aim of completing a meaningful *post-facto* evaluation of varied processes that took place in so many countries and a number of different languages could be argued to be over-ambitious, regardless of the resources available.

The original plan was to work through Save the Children Alliance focal points in up to five countries, to contact children and youth who had participated in the forums, and organise focus group discussions and

individual interviews, carried out in local languages by either facilitators or trained youth researchers. The proposal was that the data collected through this process would be supplemented by information from self-completed questionnaires for children and adults in all countries. In addition, it was intended to reach children who had not been involved in the forums, but who might have heard about them, through various 'children's participation' email groups that have developed in the region since the Special Session.

When researchers began to design the research, they raised doubts about both the ethics and the scientific viability of such a process. If facilitators and focal points had been involved in the forums and would have access to children's responses either during data collection or during translation into English, both confidentiality and the quality of data might be compromised. In addition, with different processes taking place using untrained researchers, data would be likely to be either invalid for comparison or impossible to analyse. Moreover, in order to produce sound data as the basis of future programming it was important to avoid producing a report consisting solely of quotations from children, young people and adults. Therefore the decision was taken to concentrate on a smaller number of countries, including an in-depth case study of Indonesia using the local language (*Bahasa*). In the event, for a variety of reasons, the number of national focal points outside Indonesia was reduced to two, who – through no fault of their own – were able to do little more than identify the email addresses of potential child respondents. As will be explained later, this was symptomatic of the research process as a whole, indicating that, to a large extent, contacts with individual children and young people who had participated in the forums had been lost.

A research protocol (instruction manual for researchers) was designed. It included an ethical strategy, five different methods and standard observation sheets to ensure that data could be compared between different groups (principally adults and children), different forums and different countries. This protocol adhered to the following principles of scientific social research:

- ethical procedures must be followed at all times
- information provided by children and young people must not be influenced by adult researchers or by adults who took part in the processes being evaluated
- more than one form of data collection should be used and triangulation (cross-checking) must be used in the process of analysis

- for the purpose of scientific comparison between countries and groups, the tools used for data collection must be clearly defined, simple to use and meticulously followed at all times by all researchers.

The methods of data collection selected as the basis of research tools were secondary data collection, recall, unstructured interview, semi-structured interview and questionnaire-survey (Table 3). The sampling was defined as opportunistic, based on the research universe developed by researchers on the basis of lists of participants in the forums, which were provided by some of the main regional organisers of child participation. A more rigorous sampling approach had been envisaged at first but, as will be explained later, the development of this total research population proved to be a frustrating task that, like the attempts to contact children through focal points, revealed more through failure than success.

**Table 3: Methods used in the research evaluation**

Method	Description	Used when and how
<b>Secondary data</b>	Systematic collection of already existing data on processes and events (published and unpublished)	Collected throughout research from: Internet resources Publications Organisational archives
<b>Researcher recall</b>	Recall sheet for focal points and interviewers who had been involved in forums	Before using any other method - self-administered
<b>Unstructured interviews</b>	Unstructured interviews with adult regional organisers in English, and with Indonesian national organisers in <i>Bahasa</i>	Throughout research Face to face or by telephone
<b>Semi-structured interviews</b>	Semi-structured interviews with adults in English or <i>Bahasa</i>  Semi-structured interviews in <i>Bahasa</i> with children/young people	
<b>Questionnaires</b>	Self-completed questionnaires in English, for adults and children	Towards the end of research by email

With the exception of the case study in Indonesia, time and resources did not allow for translation. For other countries, researchers reluctantly limited respondents to those who speak or are literate in English. In Indonesia, the semi-structured interview and questionnaire schedules were translated, although without the added confidence provided by 'back-translation'. Nevertheless, the main interviewer had been involved in the design of the protocol. Data were analysed in the original *Bahasa* rather than being translated first into English. No interviews or questionnaires were administered through interpreters.

Two sources of bias remained possible, but these were minimised or eliminated by taking certain precautions in the protocol structure. In the first place, adults who had been involved in organising the forums might have influenced the answers of children and young people, consciously or unconsciously, during data collection. To diminish this, children and young people, like adult research respondents, were assured of confidentiality. All researchers and others involved in handling data signed a confidentiality undertaking that they would not discuss information or individuals except with other researchers, and would ensure that data were not available to be examined by casual readers. In addition, children and young people were interviewed as individuals and not in groups.

The second potential source of bias was that those researchers and focal points who were involved in some of the processes might have unconsciously reflected their opinions and experiences in recording data. To prevent this, a researcher recall tool was used as the first direct data collection method in the protocol (see Table 3). Researchers and focal points who had been involved in the forums completed this before carrying out any interviews and also completed questionnaires. This had the added advantage of collecting additional information.

## Ethical considerations

In all research with human subjects certain ethical principles must be observed, and informed consent must be sought. This is particularly important in research with vulnerable and powerless groups such as children and young people. The protocol included strategies and methods to ensure that the principles of voluntary participation – informed consent and confidentiality – were adhered to by all researchers at all times. Individuals are not named or otherwise identified in this Report, except where they are named in published documents.

## The aims of this report

As will be described briefly in the next chapter, the definition of children's participation is currently the topic of considerable debate, which means that there are no agreed indicators for monitoring or criteria for evaluation. Nevertheless, as will be seen later, some interesting descriptive evaluations have been written at global and regional and national levels about the forums examined in this Report. However, programme managers find it difficult to use descriptive information as the basis for sound planning. This Report provides not only description but also some numerical data on the issues outlined in research questions. The approach thus combines scientific research with the principle that evaluation is a tool for learning and empowerment, providing the following key information:

- if activities were appropriate
- if activities were being carried out correctly
- if there might have been better ways of carrying out activities.

Evaluation also includes assessing the influence of external events and attitudes, as well as of the activities of other agencies. One important intention of this research evaluation is to contribute to improved monitoring and evaluation of future programming for children's participation in the Southeast, East Asia and Pacific Region.

With this in mind, the research evaluation examined the processes, impacts and outcomes involved in children's participation in the region, within a rights-based framework. This Report begins by exploring some current debates about children's participation in adult forums, in order to contextualise subsequent data and discussion. The following three chapters examine information from three sources; first from secondary data, then from overall primary data sources and finally focus on the Indonesia case study. The last chapter compares and contrasts data from different sources and methods, reaching some conclusions on which to base recommendations for future planning for children's participation in the region. Throughout the Report, the focus is on children's participation from and within the region. Although some key documents from international sources are referred to, the main bodies of secondary and primary data are derived from regional sources and are analysed from a regional perspective.



# CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION IN ADULTS' MEETINGS: AN OVERVIEW

As already stated, for the purpose of the research evaluation, the term 'participation' means 'presence in a meeting' regardless of the roles and responsibilities involved. The aim of the research evaluation was not to define what participation means, but rather to find out what actually happened when children 'participated' in adults' meetings. Nevertheless, examination of some current debates about children's participation contextualises the research. Some actions taken by adults, as well as expectations of what might happen, and perceptions of what did happen, depended on how children's participation is constructed within different political and ideological perspectives.

The 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) is based on the recognition that children are human beings with the same rights as adults, rather than 'human becomings' who require socialisation before being regarded as full subjects of rights (see for example Qvortrup, 1991; Van Bueren, 1995). Sharing in the civil and political rights of all other human beings means that children have the right to participate in decisions made on their behalf, to freedom of expression and to peaceful assembly to represent their own interests (depending on their evolving capacities). The principles of participation were already in practice in some circles well before the drafting process for the CRC began in 1979; for example in organisations of working children, and even earlier in certain radical education and environmental planning activities as well as in the development of 'children's parliaments' in some European countries.

The right to participate in decisions made on their behalf is one of the bundle of civil and political rights provided in the CRC that are usually associated with liberal democracies. Because of their immaturity, children may need extra assistance in order to be able to exercise these rights, assistance that should be provided by duty-bearers. In addition, as the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and Youth commented in 1991, dialogue between adults and children is to a large extent limited by the absence of structures through which children can 'filter their opinions through to decision-making bodies' (Van Bueren, 1995, 131). Such filtering

mechanisms include not only institutional structures but also techniques. Geraldine Van Bueren claims that the intention of Article 12 (right to opinion) is to persuade states to adapt decision making to include children, but that when Article 13 (freedom of expression) is also considered, the emphasis shifts from what children are competent to do (at various ages and stages of maturity) to *how* to include them. The two questions are frequently confused, with the result that discussions of children's citizenship and empowerment can quickly lapse into descriptions of techniques and prescriptions for facilitating children's participation (Van Bueren, 1995). In much of the literature, the institutionalisation of participation as part of governance appears to be less of a problem (because it is seldom mentioned) than eliciting children's ideas in small groups, clubs and classrooms. Yet facilitation techniques are no great secret; commercial enterprises that market their products to children have long included participation in panels and focus groups as 'an accepted part of product development and sales' (Save the Children UK, 1995, 38). Because facilitation techniques, such as games and 'ice-breakers', are so often described in the literature, it can seem that the only obstacle to children's participation would be removed if adults learned these skills, whereas the main obstacles actually lie within political arenas. As pointed out in a publication of Save the Children Sweden Regional Office for South America:

Power structures, in general, only tolerate decorative and passive forms of participation that do not arise from personal initiative and do not affect the interest, institutions or structures of the established order (Cussianovich and Marquez, 2002, 11).

More than a decade after the adoption of the CRC there is an unprecedented demand for children's participation in adult forums. Yet some commentators also note a worldwide crisis in children's participation, which presents two fundamental challenges for organisations sharing the International Save the Children Alliance perspective on children's participation. The first is the need to institutionalise (or normalise) children's participation, and the second is to build political competence among children (Cussianovich and Marquez, 2002; Invernizzi and Milne, 2003).

Currently, children's competence in taking decisions affecting their lives seems to be sidelined in much of the literature, which tends to stress only the educational value of children taking part in debates. For example, the overall reasons given by adult respondents to a recent survey of organisations in Latin America showed that they tended 'to visualize the importance of participation as a cumulative experience for the *future* performance of

children as individuals' (Cussianovich and Marquez, 2002, 10). This mirrors the view that children's participation, envisaged principally as taking part at local level, is a means of teaching children about democracy in order to improve their future citizenship skills (Hart, 1997 for example). The counter claim is that participation is a human right, rather than an instrumental activity for reaching future goals.

The research evaluation did not attempt to examine adults' views on the deeper significance of children's participation in adult forums (interesting as this might be), although ideas of democracy and 'representativeness' appeared in comments some adult respondents made about selecting children to attend forums, as well as about the validity of any opinions they voiced. Lacking both the opportunity to collect baseline data and resources for longer-term data collection using more satisfactory methods, the research evaluation focused on the extent to which the forums in question achieved more meaningful participation than the all-too-frequent stereotype vividly described by Roger Hart:

For many adults, 'children's participation' conjures up an image of one or two well-groomed, verbally competent children sitting on a panel at a conference. The common result of such events is applause from the adults, who find the presentations cute and probably take a lot of photographs and even write newspaper articles about the event. No one is likely to give any of the children's ideas serious consideration. Nor should they, for these events are rarely well-prepared democratic attempts for children to represent the views of their peers. Conferences are simply the kind of thing that is done when people feel they ought to bring children into a project. More and more agencies feel the need these days to involve children in conferences, particularly when the subject of the conference is children. Furthermore, children's involvement in these events is commonly a last-minute affair that is not well thought out. The usual result is highly articulate and even moving testimony that has not emerged from the perspectives of any group of children but, rather, with a high degree of collaboration with the adults who are controlling the event. With such participation it is unlikely that any truly unique perspective will emerge from the children's commentaries. Even if it were, most of the adults would not believe it to be a representative statement, and the children themselves would know that it was not. Consequently, despite the flashing cameras, the thunderous applause, and the tears, the children's voices will have no substantial impact on the outcome of the conference. It is best thought of as a kind of therapy for the adult audience, a token event (Hart, 1997, 142-3).

The evidence collected for this Report indicates that adult organisers of regional children's participation between 2000 and 2003 in the 11 forums shared a common vision that participation should go beyond tokenism. Beyond the simple definition of participation as 'being there', this Report takes a practical, rather than a legal or ideological, standpoint, according to which the quality of participation should be judged in terms of what is possible in the circumstances: 'not...the token involvement of children, but how to incorporate their specific needs and views into decision-making processes within the context of what is possible institutionally and culturally' (Johnson and Ivan-Smith, 1998, 3).

## **The United Nations and children's participation**

On the global scene, children participated in several intergovernmental forums between 1979 and 2000, ranging from the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 to meetings of the Committee on the Rights of the Child. The difference between their appearance at the 1990 World Summit for Children in 1990 and the Special Session in 2002 is indicative of the distance that has been travelled with respect to their participation since the adoption of the CRC in 1989. David Woolcombe, from Peace Child International, wrote in 1998 that he saw a certain irony in the 1990 Summit, which:

... closed with the words 'I address myself particularly to the children here'....The speaker [being] the chair of the very committee that six months previously, had taken a decision not to allow any children to present their views at the summit. Many young people's organisations fought that decision fiercely (Woolcombe, 1998, 237).

According to Woolcombe, the gain from this battle was largely tokenistic participation:

After much negotiation, UNICEF organised a Children's Open Day to be held two days before [the Summit]... on an open-air stage outside the UN. Children sang, children danced, children made passionate appeals but nobody listened... When the heads of state arrived, two children were selected to meet two leaders [they] were told to 'make it quick'... Nervous and flustered the children gabbled their presentation, pushed their papers over the table and left feeling angry and betrayed. At the summit itself, children dressed up in national costumes and ushered their leaders to the stage where they signed the summit documents. Six of them read the summit declaration in the six UN languages (ibid).

In contrast, by 2002, UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan, stated in his Foreword to the UNICEF publication *The State of the World's Children 2003*, which focused on the Special Session, that:

The children's presence transformed the atmosphere of the United Nations. Into our usually measured and diplomatic discussions, they introduced their passions, questions, fears, challenges, enthusiasm and optimism. They brought us their ideas, hopes and dreams (UNICEF 2002b).

The contrast is clear. In 1990, children had read statements written by adults. They were seen – but not heard in anything other than a decorative sense. In 2002, they were not only seen but also 'introduced' their opinions and ideas. Yet it might still be argued that, particularly given the frequent reiteration of the phrase 'giving children a voice', this amounts to little more than giving voice to personal opinion and experience (Lim and Roch, 2000). If children's participation is to be associated with democracy and group representation – indeed if it is to be anything more than a decorative device – their 'passions, questions, fears, challenges, enthusiasm, optimism... ideas hopes and dreams' must not only be brought to the adult decision-making table and heard, they should also have an impact on the decisions taken. Nevertheless, as will be discussed in the conclusions of this Report, the same argument also applies to much adult representation in international meetings.

## **Save the Children experience**

The International Save the Children Alliance has amassed considerable experience worldwide in creating opportunities for children to make their opinions known in international meetings, through meetings between children, as well as between children and adults. This has not always been a smooth process, yet lessons have been learned. For example promoting children's participation in the International Conference on Child Labour, held in Oslo in October 1997, led to the conclusions that:

- participation at an official conference can change adult attitudes
- formal participation of children in conferences on equal terms with adults appears to have a greater impact than fringe meetings
- children as young as 13, who are experienced in discussing issues, are able to contribute meaningfully (Marcus, 1998, 242).

Recently the International Save the Children Alliance has produced a toolkit for consultation with children (International Save the Children Alliance, 2003) and taken a lead role with respect to children's participation in the United Nations Study on Violence Against Children. The Alliance Child Participation Working Group has also published a document on lessons learned during the Special Session process (International Save the Children Alliance, 2004). The Save the Children Special Session Update for May 2002 noted that: 'The International Save the Children Alliance has been working towards this event for the last two years and was a major participant in the proceedings in New York' (International Save the Children Alliance, 2002). In the same Update, it is reported that the 'key highlights of Save the Children work' in the preparation process included:

- ensuring the organisation of two preparatory workshops for Under 18s at the Second and Third prepscoms in New York
- playing a key role in ensuring children's participation in national and regional governmental meetings in the lead up to the Special Session
- joint planning with UNICEF, as part of the Under 18 Participation Task Force of the NGO Committee on UNICEF, to design the Children's Forum
- enabling youth facilitators to attend, providing staff members as a 'significant proportion' of the facilitators at the Children's Forum
- preparation of the initial guidelines on child protection, the role of accompanying adults and involving children in government delegations
- global consultation with 6,000 children in 14 countries in March/April 2002 on how they might be involved in the development of National Plans of Action
- organising five linked side events on children's participation at the Special Session (through the Under 18 Participation Task Force)
- feedback from the Children's Forum working groups (8 May)
- presentations from child-led organisations (9 May)
- presentations and reflections on 'Children's Participation: The next ten years' (10 May)
- presentation of consultations on involving children in National Plans of Action (9 May)
- media event on protection of children in the first phase of emergencies (10 May)
- together with Norwegian and Swedish governments and the Norwegian Forum for the CRC, organising the main official panel session on participation at the Special Session (ibid).

The Alliance was involved not only in the Special Session itself, but also in the Child Rights Caucus, Children's Forum, public-private sector dialogue, side events and the Child Rights Information Network (CRIN), which documented the process on its website ([www.crin.org](http://www.crin.org)). The global processes leading to children's participation in the Special Session up to the postponed original date in September 2001 were evaluated in a region-by-region document commissioned from Michael Etherton, who had been involved as a regional manager (Etherton, 2002). Etherton's report was conceived as part of the process of evaluating all preparatory events for the Special Session, including some country-level evaluations, as well as of the many publications produced afterwards.

Close collaboration between agencies at the international level was related to the Global Movement for Children: a 'coalition of organisations, sectors and individuals [sharing] a common vision of A World Fit for Children' (CRIN 2002b), the most successful activity of which was the 'Say Yes for Children Campaign', which collected pledges from around the world in support of a ten-point 'rallying call' ([www.gmfc.org](http://www.gmfc.org)).

## **In Southeast, East Asia and Pacific**

The Southeast, East Asia and Pacific region is particularly varied, consisting of nations that range from considerable poverty to relative wealth, and from command to market economies, with diverse structures of governance and political ideologies. The region is also characterized by considerable linguistic, religious and ethnic diversity, both between and among nations. Despite these disparities, UNICEF's Executive Director, Carole Bellamy, stated at the Fifth Mincon in Beijing in 2001 that 'The countries of East Asia and the Pacific have been among the leaders of the developing world in providing for children' with considerable improvements in traditional child welfare indicators (UNICEF, 2001c, 12). Nevertheless, the UNICEF Regional Director for East Asia and the Pacific, Mehr Khan, also noted that, in view of 'the capacity and promise of this region ... there is understandable disappointment that more of the [1990 Summit] goals were not achieved for more children in more countries' (ibid, 27). Ms Khan ended her presentation with the observation that 'we... need to become better skilled at listening to children and involving them in decisions that affect their lives' (ibid, 29).

An 18-year-old child rights activist from Vietnam writing on the UNICEF webpage 'Voices of Youth' in a reflection on the Special Session captured

the characteristics of the East Asian cultures of participation in the words:

Living in an Asian country with a very deep Asian culture where youth used to listen rather than speak, obey rather than opine, I have seen the lack of participation of youth and its consequence: gaps between generations and social gaps ([http://www.unicef.org/voy/cgi-bin/zdisc.cgi?show\\_profiles\\_date\\_all\\_all\\_2003-05](http://www.unicef.org/voy/cgi-bin/zdisc.cgi?show_profiles_date_all_all_2003-05)).

Because forms of national governance in the region are also varied, it is important to consider what can be achieved for children's participation within existing political structures. Over the past three decades, some countries have developed considerable experience in participation of children, particularly in national forums, both those in which children meet together, and those in which children participate in adults' meetings (see for example, ECPAT et al 1999). During data collection for the research evaluation, more than one regional organiser mentioned the importance of lessons learned in the process of preparing children in the region to participate in the Second World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in Yokohama, Japan, 17-20 December 2001. Although this meeting was not included in the research, it occurred within the same time frame. A total of twenty children and young people attended the Yokohama Congress. In the UNICEF East Asia and Pacific region, thirty young people had previously attended a preparatory consultation in Bangkok, 16-18 October, 2001, which involved some of the major organisational players in the 11 forums described in this Report, such as the International Save the Children Alliance, UNICEF EAPRO and ECPAT.

Southeast, East Asia and Pacific experiences of children's participation – some stretching back over two decades – include creating spaces for children's participation in families, schools, communities, media and local government, with 'events' such as national children's days. In addition, there are adult-directed organisations for children – scouts and guides, church and mosque groups, and national youth movements. In general, governments in the region are 'strong central governments of large polities', some of which do not welcome civil society activities. Children's participation in the region developed against these realities and, with the exception of nations such as The Philippines where children's participation is to a large extent institutionalised at least at some local levels, efficient coordination between adult agencies is probably the best that can be achieved at this stage (Etherton, 2002).

Etherton also comments that the region is notable for considerable 'theorising' and 'substantial insights' about best practice in children's participation, related to development of ideas about rights-based programming (ibid, 48). Indeed, he notes that:

There is some criticism that there may be too much theorising in East Asia [by both UNICEF and Save the Children] around the importance of the CRC as the basis for children and young people's participation. It is suggested that the insistence on learning about their rights may inhibit children taking initiatives on their own, outside of [sic] a legal or theoretical framework, to engage with civil society (ibid, 49).

He compares this with the 'autonomy' of children in South Asia, where children define their rights and responsibilities differently from 'the commentaries and training packages on the CRC produced by Save the Children and UNICEF' (ibid, 50). Children's active participation in South Asia can also be distinguished from the proactive 'protagonism' in Latin America (and parts of Europe such as Italy), as well as with the tendency in sub-Saharan Africa to see child participants as bearers of *both* rights and duties. In contrast, child participation in Southeast and East Asia tends to emphasise the need to empower children within essentially gerontocratic societies (Plateau, 2004).

## Evaluation of children's participation in other regions

Evaluation of children's participation is a procedure without agreed standards, but with taken-for-granted assumptions about what children's participation should be within different ideological circles. When criteria are listed they tend to be statements of values, rather than definitions that might easily yield measurable indicators, as in the following example:

- children have opportunities for acquiring experience of democratic decision making amongst themselves
- children play an increasing role in identifying and pursuing their own concerns and initiatives
- participation is voluntary and children are able to give their personal and informed consent to participate, and their consent is regularly assessed

- organisations and facilitators are accountable to children for the commitments and decisions they make and their accountability is known to children
- children have the opportunity to participate in assessing the initiative against their agreed aims
- children are able to use the assessment process to adapt and shape future activities
- children feel that their aims have been fully or partially achieved (UNICEF, ROSA, n/d).

Evaluation literature sometimes appears to have a tendency to accentuate the positive, without providing specific evidence. According to the records of small group discussions organised by Save the Children among adult practitioners in South Asia, positive impacts of participation were said to be that children are empowered to address violation of rights and to claim their rights, there is greater respect from parents and community members for children's views and rights; children experience and learn to value democracy; a space is made for children in structures of governance (from schools to central government); children have opportunities to participate in planning and decision making; there is increased media coverage of children's rights issues; and children form their own networks (O'Kane, 2003).

Similarly, the advantages of participation, according to the South American survey of adults cited earlier, seemed to be educational gains for individual children in developing self-esteem, self-control and self-expression; improving interpersonal relations – dialogue with adults, conflict management, perception of reality and critical understanding; reinforcing solidarity among children and their role as actors; developing the ability to assume responsibility; and increasing their knowledge of rights. In focus group discussions in the same Latin American survey, 90 children and 20 adolescents referred to the need to overcome fear and insecurity, and tended to see participation as a 'concession from adults' rather than as a right. A few seemed to see participation as a value to cultivate – a 'spiritual excellence' somewhat like happiness, which is worth pursuing but cannot be gained absolutely (Cussianovich and Marquez, 2002, 20).

As the data presented in this Report will show, both children and adults in Southeast, East Asia and Pacific listed comparable positive outcomes of attending international forums. At this point in time, the gains for children as a group seem to be limited to raising the profile of

childhood and awareness of children's rights rather than any clear changes for the better in children's rights and welfare, particularly for vulnerable and excluded groups. The impacts of child participation, at least in the short run, may be limited to changes in adult attitudes and to effects on the lives of individual children.

Organising agencies in other regions have not denied any negative impacts, although these do not tend to appear with such frequency in lists produced from small-scale research – possibly because of the questions asked and the assumptions of agencies promoting participation that it is a priori 'a good thing', with respect to the impact on children, without considering the possible negative effects of insensitive implementation of this right. This is not always the case, however. UNICEF's discussion of children's participation in adults' meetings in *The State of the World's Children 2003* includes the statement that 'In its worst manifestations, child participation can be repressive, exploitative or abusive' (UNICEF, 2002b, 56). The problems that can result from children's relative lack of power are said to be that:

In public meetings, children may be treated as window-dressing, tokens of child participation; they may be treated as though they are representative of their peers when they are not; adolescents may be considered to speak for young children when they are in fact close to adulthood. They may become part of a new elite through frequent participation in international meetings and lose the confidence of the groups that nominated them (ibid).

At the local level, examples of negative outcomes of participation and citizenship in South and Central Asia have also been recorded by the Regional Office of the Save the Children Alliance:

- children are involved in service activities but not in related decision making
- participation takes place 'in a box' – within the organisational context only and 'children remain isolated within the wider community'
- children's complaints of abuse are not taken seriously
- expectations are raised that cannot be fulfilled
- only some, more elite children participate (Poudyal, 2003).

The elaboration of this final point is worth quoting in full, because it is replicated in the results of the research evaluation:

A tendency in participatory initiatives is for the most vocal, articulate, English speaking or photogenic children to have more opportunities to participate and represent their peers. This reinforces existing patterns of discrimination. Domination by a few and the sidelining of minority views is still a challenge to overcome. Issues are raised of the 'same faces' always being seen and of 'false democracy' (Poudyal, 2003, 13).

UNICEF also points to the 'graver dangers' that child 'participants' may run in unstable or repressive countries: 'In societies where it is hazardous for their parents to speak their minds, children should not be tossed into the breach' (UNICEF, 2002b, 56). This is also highlighted by Michael Etherton, quoting John Parry-Williams who, at the time of interview, was Social Welfare Advisor in the Regional Office of Save the Children UK in East Asia and the Pacific. Adequate child protection policies need to be in place, not just to protect children from the abusive acts of adults but also to recognise the 'political dangers children and young people face when they effectively work together to achieve social change' against a background of resistance and vested interests. Parry-Williams queried whether adults who support children to claim rights that have been vigorously denied them 'really understand where this might lead' (Etherton, 2002, 58).

## Summing up

Measurable standards for evaluating children's participation have not yet been generally established, despite the exponential growth of literature on the topic. Even the definitions and understandings of participation vary between organisations and according to ideologies. Differences between regions, in terms of background situations, processes and outcomes have been observed, but there is no developed literature as yet that links the forms taken by children's participation to political, economic, social and cultural realities. The consequence for any attempt to evaluate children's participation in regional and international forums is that the process must inevitably be more an explorative assessment than an evaluation. This Report takes the pragmatic view that the processes leading up to children from the Southeast, East Asia and Pacific Region participating in the Special Session and related forums are best evaluated against the standards of what was possible, than against ideological or ideal models.

# ON THE RECORD: EXAMINING THE DOCUMENTS

Research makes a distinction between primary data, collected during a particular research process, and secondary data, which already exist (RWG-CL, 2003a). This chapter concentrates on describing and analysing secondary data collected during the research evaluation. These included published and unpublished reports, communications within and between organisations, information from the Internet, CD-Rom publications, media articles and photographs. The analysis follows three related approaches:

1. examination of the characteristics of available documents; including how they were stored and archived
2. the story that can be reassembled from the documentation about the participation of the region's children in the 11 forums
3. content analysis of particular ideas and themes in the documents – both explicit and implicit.

## **Examining documents**

The documents collected and analysed for this research were assembled from two main sources:

- official documents of various organisations (particularly the United Nations and NGOs) published in hardcopy form and/or on the Internet
- unpublished documents relating to the forums under review, including lists of participants, communications between agencies, planning and meeting records, reports from the various forums (including related national or local forums), and evaluations, all of which were either provided directly by respondents who were organisers of children's participation in the region, or were available on open shelves in the offices of agencies consulted.

Like Michael Etherton, the researchers found that national-level documents were not always easily obtained. He commented that, in the region:

Only selective information is available concerning the national events that contributed to the larger processes. Thailand and The Philippines have an active NGO and [community-based organisation] sector that enables young people to participate in civil society. Malaysia, Indonesia and China held national events before April. Vietnam held a national event in August. In September, Myanmar held a Global Movement for Children Fair (Etherton, 2002, 53).

Although some agencies did not respond to request for information at all, despite reminders, researchers felt that the fact that detailed documentation of national events was not forthcoming does not indicate either unwillingness or lack of transparency on the part of organisations. All agencies and individuals that responded to requests for information and support were remarkably helpful. Resources did not permit researchers to carry out in-depth document search, but the secondary data collected were probably representative of the materials available; archives tended to contain a repetitive range of documents – as would be expected from agencies working in close collaboration.

One clear indication of a lack of resources among organising agencies was lack of systematic or centralised archiving. When it came to developing a comprehensive 'research universe' (or full directory of the children and young people who had attended the various forums) the lists of participants provided (often archived on hard disk and/or available in electronic form) were seldom complete. As will be shown in the next chapter, this made it difficult to contact both children and adults. However, in the case of children, contact details had often not been recorded. Children were sometimes listed with no address at all, or 'care of' an organisation, which could not provide information to researchers, or under the name of an adult, who later proved to be untraceable.

Some agencies visited by researchers had made attempts to collect and archive materials relating to the Special Session – including materials relating to the three East Asia and Pacific children's forums. But these consisted largely of collections of forum materials assembled at the time by individual adult participants. Typically these were archived as loose papers in box files so that it was often difficult to date or source a text. In addition, even intergovernmental agencies often neither date internal documents or

publications, nor provide references to sources. These records are thus (frustratingly) not particularly useful for research purposes. While every effort was made during research to establish the correct dates and sources for documents cited in this chapter (see Bibliography: Unpublished documents), a substantial body of material had to be discarded because there was no indication, either on or in the documents, about the date or source of information.

The relative confusion of available unpublished documents does not necessarily indicate either carelessness or inefficiency on the part of organisers. Welfare and rights organisations seldom have the resources to employ an archivist; history usually remains in individual memories while organisations suffer from institutional amnesia. The documents themselves indicate human resource constraints, as staff shouldered the burden of further responsibilities in response to external demands not only to 'find' children to participate in international meetings, but also to organise their travel and accommodation and locate the funds to pay for it all. Archiving documents is unlikely to appear to be a priority in the face of more urgent issues. Yet documents are the raw material of the often-sought 'good practice' and 'lessons learned'. In addition, children have the right to information under Article 17 of the CRC, including information about past events in which other children have participated

The difficulty of locating documents could be argued to be a symptom of the lack of adequate opportunities for the organising agencies in the region to engage in long-term strategy planning as well as to provide information for children. Although the degree of planning and collaboration that did take place with respect to the Special Session was remarkable, it was forced to focus on somewhat short-term goals.

## The texts

As Michael Etherton comments in his evaluation of processes leading up to children's participation the Special Session, the documentation of their participation in the forums in Southeast, East Asia and Pacific tends to be unspecific with respect to 'how to' bring about effective child participation in decision making (Etherton, 2002). The documentation often concentrates on describing icebreaking exercises and cultural events, content to list the results of group work in bullet points and record expressions of solidarity, rather than describing how decisions were reached or consensus achieved. One major gap in almost all documentation is detailed description of how children were selected or elected to take

part; another is the absence of records on what happened after the events or meetings, their impact and explanation of how different events and meetings are related to each other.

Reports of the various forums vary in style and content. The official report of the Children's Forum at the Special Session is long on photographs and short on description of process; the details of actual discussions among children have not been documented (UNICEF, 2002a). CYP Forum reports, on the other hand, give more information about process, particularly those in which children have clearly had input to the work of documenters (Forum II, 2001; Chakraborty, 2002; 2003). Documentation of meetings in which children participate can perhaps be described as an art in its infancy, requiring greater shared vision about aims and readership.

From the documents gathered in various organisational archives it seems that children-friendly documents were prepared (See Bibliography), particularly versions of *A World Fit for Children* and explanations about the Special Session itself. Researchers found a few examples in organisational archives, stored with other miscellaneous documents from specific forums. These were clear descriptions in plain English of the facts about the Special Session, and *A World Fit for Children*. They were produced by UNICEF and Save the Children, with contributions from other NGOs. The UNICEF document was designed as 'A Guide for Young People' and also available on the UNICEF Voices of Youth web page, in English, French and Spanish.

Researchers did not find evidence that these had been pre-tested, translated into Asian languages or used with children – or information about how they were used, or evaluated by children of different ages. This does not mean that these processes did not happen – but it is evidence that they were not systematically documented nor was such documentation archived. As the next chapter will show, children did not often mention these documents.

The preparation of children-friendly documents is frequently mentioned in discussions of children's participation, and some examples do exist. However, the parameters of what makes a document 'children-friendly' seem not to have been established. Nor is there any easily-accessed archive of documents available for future use as the basis of information for children new to participation in international forums, or as examples of what a children-friendly document might look like. Etherton quotes a Chinese girl who attended a national forum, two Regional CYP forums,

the Fifth Mincon and the Third Prepcom in New York, making critical comments about the ‘child-friendly’ version of the ‘Outcome Document’ (although Etherton does not state which one): ‘She observed that native English speakers thought that it did not reflect the official document properly and they preferred to read the original one, even though it was more difficult and boring’ (Etherton 2002, p. 55). The children-influenced reports of CYP Forum III and CYP Prepcom II, on the other hand, are clear and easy to read for both older children and adults (Chakraborty, 2002; 2003), despite their relatively sparse content, while adults’ reports of the same kind of forums tend to be less satisfactory descriptions.

## **The participation story**

The narrative in this section has been extracted from documents relating to the 11 forums and concentrates on information about children’s participation rather than on issues of welfare, rights and policy. This is the story told in documents only – rather than in the memories of children and adults who experienced the forums, which will be examined in the next two chapters on the basis of primary data. The evidence from both kinds of data will then be compared and contrasted in the final chapter

As the previous chapter showed, children’s participation in international meetings did not begin with the Special Session, but this event provided a showcase opportunity for those who wished to highlight the benefits of children’s input to policies made on their behalf, as well as for trying to ensure that their opinions were indeed taken into account.

The Special Session had its origins in follow up to the September 1990 World Summit for Children in New York, which called on governments to prepare National Plans of Action with clear-cut, time-bound goals. One hundred and fifty five countries did this, implementing their plans ‘to certain degrees’ (CRIN, 2002a). The World Summit Global Plan of Action also requested any regional meetings of all agencies to include on their agendas the Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children, and Plan of Action.

The decision to hold a United Nations General Assembly Special Session on children was taken in 1996 in Resolution 51/186, after the mid-decade review of progress towards Summit goals. This was followed in 1999 by another Resolution (54/93) scheduling the event for September 2001, although the tragic events of 11 September 2001 in New York caused the

Special Session to be postponed to May 2002. The 1999 resolution set the process properly in motion, outlining the process of preparation, establishing an open-ended, preparatory committee and calling on UNICEF to assist in preparation. Yet the preparations for the Special Session had begun in the previous year, as UNICEF worked to develop a Global Agenda for children, which it shared with NGOs in 2000 (CRIN, 2002a). A Preparatory Committee was established by the General Assembly, guided by a five-member Bureau with UNICEF as the 'substantive secretariat'.

The end-decade World Summit reporting process was 'intensive' and 'various efforts were also made to encourage participation by children, notably 'through children's and youth parliaments, forums and opinion polls' (CRIN, 2002a). By the end of April 2001, 130 national reports had been received, together with 15 from United Nations agencies. UNICEF was responsible for preparing the summary and global end-decade review of follow up to the 1990 Summit, *We the Children*, which was presented to the United Nations General Assembly by Secretary General Kofi Annan in 2001 (United Nations 2001). In the previous year, the report of the Special Session Preparatory Committee 2000: *Emerging Issues for Children in the Twenty-first Century* was also presented to the General Assembly. This report mentioned 'creating space' where children can be listened to, but did not specifically mention creating space at the Special Session, even though it commented that one global challenge was 'enhancing' children's participation as central to both child development and socio-economic development (United Nations 2000, paras 61-62 and 82-88). Given this assumption that children's participation is important more for the benefits it brings than as a right in itself, one major achievement of all the agencies and individuals devoted to children's participation in decision making as a right is that children were in fact such prominent participants in the Special Session and related international meetings of decision-makers. One factor in this achievement was the work of the Child Rights Caucus, created early in 2000 to 'serve as an NGO lobby group pressing for a strong child rights-based approach' to the Special Session and acting throughout the preparatory period and during the Special Session itself as the main NGO lobbying group (CRIN, 2002b).

According to the UNICEF Special Session web pages, the 'essential' outcomes of the Special Session were expected to be:

- best possible start in life for all children
- good quality, basic education for all children
- the opportunity for all children, especially adolescents, for meaningful participation in their communities ([www.unicef.org/specialsession/pre-process/](http://www.unicef.org/specialsession/pre-process/)).

These are very broad and arguably unachievable outcomes for just one meeting. However the final proposed outcome in this list is especially interesting. In the first place, participation is listed alongside survival and development (health and education) outcomes, while protection rights are not mentioned – a cause for considerable concern within the Child Rights Caucus. But it is also interesting to note that adolescents are particularly emphasised, while their sphere of participation is limited to communities. This conforms to two tendencies within debates on participation: the assumption that only older children have sufficiently evolved capacity to participate in adult discussions, and the limiting of children's sphere of participation to local communities.

***First Prepcom: Preparatory meeting for Special Session 1, New York, 29 May to 2 June 2000***

One thousand government representatives and UN bodies and 235 NGOs (local, national and international) attended the first preparatory meeting for the Special Session, in which there was limited, but high profile, presence of children and young people. The main objective was to consider overall progress towards the Summit goals set a decade earlier, as well as the topics that should be addressed in the Special Session. UNICEF was requested to produce the first draft of an outcome document (later *A World Fit for Children*) by November 2000, to be discussed at the Second Prepcom, after consultation with governments (CRIN, 2002a).

It was agreed during this Prepcom that children and young people should have a 'substantial' involvement in the Special Session but, as a later Child Rights Information Network (CRIN) publication puts it, 'the exact nature of [their proposed involvement] was unclear' (CRIN 2002a). Nevertheless, preparation for children's participation became more 'official' at this point:

Regional and subregional institutions have been encouraged to organise appropriate processes to build partnerships for and with children and contribute to preparations for the Special Session. The wide range of regional processes set in motion attests to the enthusiastic response ([www.unicef.org/specialsession/pre-process/](http://www.unicef.org/specialsession/pre-process/)).

By November 2000, the International Save the Children Alliance had drafted a concept paper on 'Strategy for children and young people's participation in the Special Session on children', based on several documents produced earlier that year, which was discussed in a meeting of the Alliance Steering Group for the Special Session (International Save the Children Alliance, 2000). This draft stressed the need for clear planning – with objectives for each stage – as well as 'the possible constraints on genuine participation by children and young people'. It included the injunction 'Do not settle for parallel sessions or activities. The Special Session should be about, for and with children and young people' (International Save the Children Alliance, 2000, 6). Suggestions included a five-day children's forum immediately before the Special Session for all children and young people included in NGO and government delegations, as well as two days of evaluation and de-briefing. It was proposed that the children attending the Special Session might report back interactively to wider groups of children in 'regional hubs' (ibid).

The draft concept paper of 2000 mentioned experiences and activities already under way in the Southeast, East Asia and Pacific region. The draft of an agenda for a meeting, held 12-13 December 2000 to organise regional input into the Special Session process, shows that a creative ferment had been produced. Documents relating to planning for the Special Session were offered in electronic form to people invited to attend (two to three 'key people leading children's participation in each country') who might not yet have received them (Agenda, 2000). A paper prepared after the meeting provided information about the key structures in the preparations for the Special Session, showing the way the Fifth and Sixth Regional Ministerial Consultations would feed into and out of both the global meeting in New York and national processes. Two Regional 'Youth' Forums were proposed for May and July 2001, to prepare for children and youth participation in the Fifth Ministerial Consultation (Mincon) and the Special Session, as well as a post-Special Session 'Youth' forum was planned for 2001-2 (Wisecarver, 2001b). This schedule – although complex – was clear-sighted, becoming effectively the plan that was followed, with the exception that the follow-up forum (in 2002) also fed into the Sixth Regional Ministerial Consultation. It was a simple and effective structure that held firm throughout the period 2000 to 2003 and provided considerable continuity.

A 'Children and Young People Fora Coordinating Committee' was formed (referred to as 'Coordinating Committee' in this Report), members including the International Save the Children Alliance Regional Office, Alliance

members from the region, UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Regional Office, Plan International Regional Office, the National Council for Child and Youth Development in Thailand, and the regional office of World Vision International. A child/youth representative, described as 'past forum participant' in the documents, was actually 'a young woman who [had been] a participant at the Fourth East Asia and Pacific Ministerial Consultation' although, according to Etherton, she 'did not participate thereafter' (Etherton, 2002, 45). The Coordinating Committee later expanded its membership to include Child Workers in Asia and the Malaysia Child Resource Centre.

By January 2001, activities were reported to be under way in 14 countries in the region (this number included Australia and New Zealand). Actions ranged from preliminary discussions to well-advanced plans for national meetings. By this time, the objectives of the first proposed Children and Young People Forum (CYP Forum I) had been expanded from exclusive focus on preparation for the Fifth Ministerial Consultation in Beijing to discussing a regional agenda based on the draft of *A World Fit for Children*. The Coordinating Committee realised that, in some countries, ongoing processes were in place at national level that would feed in to both objectives and make it possible to 'quickly mobilize youth'. In other countries, mobilisation was expected to take several months, despite building on existing work of NGOs and other partners. It was also recognised that several countries would not be ready to participate in CYP Forum I.

Etherton suggests that this 'detailed structuring of the process [leading up to the Special Session] by the Alliance in East Asia and the Pacific' was in 'marked contrast' to the more autonomous approaches in Latin America and South Asia, where children's organisations were 'already so advanced' that they questioned the coordinating role of international NGOs (Etherton, 2002, 50). Certainly, minutes of various meetings in the region show determined, and generally successful, attempts to keep track of, and continue to motivate, a variety of different processes in over 20 countries, with wide differences in size of population, degree of economic development and political structures (see for example Wisecarver, 2001b). In an attachment to one set of minutes, it is stressed that this should not be a one-off effort' and also that a common framework was needed 'to ensure preparations with young people will be consistent from area to area, district to district and country to country' (Wisecarver, 2001c). Thus guiding principles for ensuring the best interests

of children were provided, including:

- children and their families should be assisted to make informed decisions about whether or not to participate
- training for facilitators
- applying the principle of the best interests of children
- awareness of and attention to child protection issues (for example, with respect to chaperones)
- preparing and debriefing children and adults
- translator training (ibid).

***Second Prepcom: Preparatory Meeting for Special Session 2, New York, 29 January to 2 February 2001***

Decisions about the participation of children in the Special Session and development of a proposal for a children's forum prior to the Special Session were postponed to the Third (and last) New York Prepcom (CRIN, 2002a). According to reports from regional adult participants, the Second Prepcom was better organised than the First, but it seemed as if governments were sending either junior representatives or UN Ambassadors already resident in New York. Of greater concern was the low representation of children from the region

It is worth noting that the conditions for NGO participation in the Special Session, which were discussed at the Second Prepcom, were already the subject of controversy – with some governments (and, it has to be admitted, certain United Nations agencies) trying to control NGO access to the Special Session. Nevertheless, NGO activity was intense during this Prepcom. Parallel NGO Caucuses on girls, health, children and violence and the Child Rights Caucus were linked in daily meetings. With respect to children's participation it is noteworthy that the Youth Caucus (people aged 12 to 25/26 years) became split over debates about whom this Caucus represented, with some delegates walking out.

***CYP Prepcan: East Asia and Pacific Regional Planning Meeting, Bangkok, Thailand, 26-28 February 2001***

It might be argued that at this regional planning meeting, which prepared for the Fifth Ministerial Consultation in Beijing, the regional organisers of children's participation really got into their stride, although this does not

mean that children and young people were present in strength. Nevertheless, their presence was part of proactive planning.

The meeting included adult country delegations from some 20 countries – although some consisted of staff of Bangkok-based embassies, and most were government representatives. Nevertheless, UNICEF was joined by eight NGOs (from the Coordinating Committee) supporting four children and young people (two from Thailand, one from The Philippines and one from Cambodia). Country presentations gave briefings on progress towards meeting 1990 Summit goals, and were largely intended as preparation for the Fifth Ministerial Consultation. The presence of the four children was a matter of official record. They made a presentation and they were able to use the information and experience in feedback to their peers in CYP Forum I two months later (Oebanda et al, 2001). In a preparatory meeting before this forum, the four young participants, all of whom already had, by their own account, ‘extensive experience on children’s issues’ in the region as well as in their own countries, reviewed and discussed ‘a grand total of 73 issues’, which they summarized into 11 main points that, in their opinion, required attention in the region. This summary was the basis of their presentation at this forum (ibid) and make an interesting comparison with the ten concurrent points of the Global Movement for Children (Table 4).

Among many contrasts between these two lists, the most interesting for this Report is a nuanced difference between the two ‘participation’ priorities. The children who met in Bangkok refer first to the need to translate the ‘CRC right to participate’ into ways in which children can participate ‘peacefully’ within regional cultures, also mentioning the right to information. They conclude that ‘It is essential to have child participation in all process [sic]. Children should be able to participate in identifying problems, making decision [sic] and implementing and monitoring the action’ (ibid, 31). In the Global Movement formulation, on the other hand, children’s participation appears to be a tool to aid adult action: ‘Everyone must respect the right of children and young people to express themselves and to participate in decisions that affect them, consistent with their evolving capacities. And we [adults] must listen and act.’ On this account, regional children’s expectations of the purpose for and outcomes of their participation seem to be more wide-ranging than those of adults.

**Table 4: Comparing regional priorities of children with the priorities in the Global Movement for children**

Children’s priorities presented at the East Asia and Pacific Regional Planning Meeting, Bangkok, Thailand, 26-28 February 2001	Global Movement for Children priorities
Economic poverty	Leave no Child out
Public services	Put children first
Health	Care for every child
HIV/AIDS	Fight HIV/AIDS
Education	Stop harming and exploiting children
Birth certificates and Nationality	Listen to children
Child abuse	Educate every child
Child sexual exploitation	Protect children from war
Child Labour	Protect the earth for children
Media	Fight poverty: Invest in children
Child participation	

***CYP Forum I: East Asia and Pacific Regional Children and Young People’s Forum I, Jomtien, Thailand, 22-26 April 2001<sup>2</sup>***

The first regional Children and Young People’s Forum was held in Thailand alongside an NGO forum, demonstrating the close relationship between promotion of children’s participation and NGO activity. Both were organised to prepare for the Fifth Ministerial Consultation in Beijing, and the explicit intention was for NGOs to incorporate the views of children and young people in their discussions as well as in their regional presentation to the Fifth Mincon where children had less representation. The NGO forum also selected a regional NGO delegation to attend the Fifth Mincon. Children attending the children’s forum in Thailand had been selected using a variety of processes. Children and NGO representatives stayed in the same accommodation to give a message about equal partnership (Minutes 16.01.01).

The participants’ list for this meeting records a total of 60 persons, of whom 42 were children and young people, with an additional nine support staff. Participants included people from ten countries, local NGOs and schools, plus Alliance members, government, Plan International, World Vision International, and Christian Children’s Fund.

<sup>2</sup> This Forum was held in Jomtien, which is in Chonburi Province, and also very close to Bangkok, thus in the documents it is sometime confusingly referred to as ‘Chonburi’ or ‘Bangkok’ rather than ‘Jomtien’ (see ‘Notes on Terminology’)

One child reported:

It was very hot in Bangkok in April, but it was beautiful here [at the seaside]. During the days from 23 to 26 April 2001, 'Children and Young People Regional Forum: Developing the Future with Children' is held at this wonderful place in Jomtien. We children from ten countries of the East Asia and Pacific region join together. Although we come from different places, we have different languages, different cultures, we depended on each other, we tried our best to play together, to discuss together, to work together, just for one reason – to design our future! After four days of hard work we finally made our regional report (Jomtien 2001a).

During CYP Forum I, children and young people listed what they saw as the basic issues and problems in the region: health, child abuse and exploitation, basic needs and services, child protection, legislative and political constraints, child participation, education, information technology and communications, gender, cultural and geographical inequality, and the environment. Their final report describes their 'dreams', for each of these issues – each beginning with the words 'We want...'. With respect to child participation, for which the problems had been identified as 'token participation' and 'no laws promoting child participation', the document states that 'We want to be respected and understood then we can do anything. Let's have our opinions and perspectives so our voice can be heard in decision making'. The obstacles to achieving these dreams are listed as poverty, low budget for children's concerns, government corruption, political crises and changes in government policies, armed conflicts, slow and weak law enforcement, inequality in society, children not knowing their rights, lack of attention to children's issues, lack of value for the environment, and globalization. On participation, the CYP Forum I final statement says that 'we believe there should be a child in the House of Representatives'. Indeed, recommendations on participation include a clear call for institutionalisation:

The government should support and give opportunity to children to talk, to participate and to act. Children should be allowed to form youth groups or a form of youth cultural centres with their own initiative. The children's organisations will play a supportive role to all kinds of children's activities at family, school and both local and national levels. The government should avoid control/influence over the administration of the children's organisation but rather provide financial support. Moreover, it is suggested that the set up of a children's committee to

have regular meeting with relevant government policy makers and to raise awareness on child rights is necessary so that children know what their rights are. Participation of children in all governments and NGOs undergoing consultation and dialogues affecting children means that children have rights to express their needs which are listened to (Jomtien, 2001a).

A press release was produced towards the end of the meeting stating that 'One recommendation...crosses every other one...Let us be part of your decision-making process. Whenever you make laws, allocate budgets, define campaigns or do anything to improve our situation: let us be there to inform and advise you. Our output document shows you that we are quite capable of doing that'. The press release also included a list of 12 questions for governments, including 'Will you keep your promises?' and 'What do you think about child participation?' (Jomtien, 2001b).

A brief but incisive evaluation by Nikki Antonette M. De Vera, who was an NGO-sponsored child representative on the delegation from The Philippines, provides information about both selection and preparatory processes as well as about the Jomtien meeting. She states that CYP Forum I was 'a good beginning' although 'It will just need improvement with regard to technical issues and solutions to some of the other problems', stating that 'The facilitators were good in handling the activities and plenary discussions but they need more patience in handling the children' (a comment repeated twice in her evaluation). De Vera also criticises time management and the gender distribution of delegates (From the participants' list it appears that three boys and one girl were selected from The Philippines to go to CYP Forum I). According to De Vera, the documents reviewed in the meeting:

Did not really gave [sic] full comprehension of how to solve the children's problems. It may only serve to be a framework but we all know how easy it is to write something and just discuss about it than to do action for it. It also has data that are not really going to be relevant about the Filipino child. It should be stressed that it is the government's major task to provide basic needs for children and not just frameworks that in some way, gives [sic] the responsibility to others (Vera, n/d).

This evaluation also mentions problems during preparation for the trip: miscommunication about who was responsible for documents (such as passports), inadequate briefing or information about travel requirements,

preparations cut short because of Holy Week (the week before Easter, which is a holiday in The Philippines), no orientation for the group presentation before the trip, and lack of clarity about the role of the government representative. To correct these problems, De Vera suggests there should be a preparatory briefing note, a central contact number, longer preparation, and better coordination. Her comments on CYP Forum I are brief compared with those on the process in The Philippines, for which she praises the use of different facilitation techniques 'to encourage participation among the participants even with language barriers'. Two problems she highlights in her account of CYP Forum I are the presentation of the country report and choosing a Filipino representative for the election of six delegates to go to the Fifth Ministerial Consultation (although this representative in fact received the highest number of votes in the election).

***Fifth Mincon: Fifth East Asia and Pacific Regional Ministerial Consultation on Children, Beijing, China, 14-16 May 2001***

The Regional Ministerial Consultations on Children were established as part of the follow up to the World Summit on Children, the first taking place in Bangkok in 1991, followed at roughly two-year intervals by meetings in Manila (1993), Hanoi (1995) and again in Bangkok (1998). Entitled *Shaping the Future for Children*, the objective was to assess the implementation of the CRC in the ten member states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and form the basis for joint planning of regional actions by the ASEAN Secretariat and UNICEF. The final Declaration on Commitments for Children for 2001-2010 was adopted by delegates from 21 countries, more than twice the number of ASEAN countries originally included in these consultations (UNICEF 2001 a, b and c).

The Fifth Mincon was hosted by the Government of China and described in the official report as 'significantly different from its predecessors', not least because 'for the first time ever, young people themselves actively participated in the meeting' – speaking at the Opening Session, attending as delegates and giving input to the Beijing Declaration, from the statement they had prepared in Jomtien (UNICEF, 2001c, 1).

Two girls and four boys, aged between 15 and 18 years, had been elected by their peers in CYP Forum I – from Cambodia, China, Malaysia, Mongolia, The Philippines and Vietnam. They attended along with one 'accompanying adult'; two translators, and five NGO representatives

(seemingly, from the children's respective countries of origin) who also acted as 'accompanying adults', as well as three support staff. This ratio of four adults for every three children has two implications. First, it shows the additional budget required to ensure that children are appropriately supported when they attend international conferences. Second, the fact that five NGO representatives apparently had the additional task of accompanying children shows the burden assumed by the non-governmental sector in this regard. And this also raises the question of whether children are in fact best protected by possibly over-stretched and under-prepared adults, however good their intentions may be.

Children's views were presented at this Mincon in two forms. In the first, an adult UNICEF representative communicated the results of an opinion survey of 10,000 nine-to-17 year olds in 17 countries in the region and published as *Speaking out: Voices of children and adolescents in East Asia and the Pacific*. This was referred to as 'representative of the opinions of some 300 million children and adolescents' and providing 'a unique insight into the thoughts and ideas of the region's young people' (UNICEF, 2001b, 19 and 20).

Secondly, the six young people made a half-hour presentation of their views, based on the Statement from CYP Forum I, in which they referred to 'challenging problems', such as low-quality education, health problems, HIV/AIDS and substance abuse, as well as rights violations such as child labour and trafficking. Their statement located the source of these problems in poverty and inequality, globalisation, inadequate budget provision and armed conflicts. As in the final statement from Jomtien, they referred to their 'dreams and hopes' for basic needs to be met, for free, quality education, for a better environment, as well as for protection from abuse and exploitation and children-friendly justice systems. The need for greater child participation was highlighted in the official report of presentations, using direct quotations:

the world is still reluctant to listen to children and allows them only token participation in affairs that affect their lives: Em Chan Makara (Cambodia)

if children are to be protected from abuse, exploitation and discrimination ...we need to know our rights and we need our voices to be heard in decision making about issues that affect our lives: Manduul Altangerel (Mongolia)

children should ... participate in local and national governance, and in events such as peace talks. Governments and NGOs can provide the financial and technical support to make this possible and can assist in the formation of independent children's groups and organisations initiated by children themselves: Nikki Antonette M. De Vera (The Philippines) (UNICEF, 2001c, 22-4).

In contrast, only two of the government reports and commitments published in the official report mentioned children's participation. The Mongolian presentation states that the 'Key to government is the active participation of children' and gives some details about national preparation for the Special Session:

From 1998-2000, the UN Country Team helped organise a series of national workshops to review progress. These gave children a chance to take part in the social affairs of the country and speak out freely, and led to the establishment of One World, an NGO that has become a children's forum. A national children's forum will be held in anticipation of the Special Session (UNICEF, 2001c, 32).

The delegation from The Philippines also described a national process, which has some similarities with Mongolia, despite different political histories:

To increase child participation, the year 2000 saw more than 500 children's associations around the country come together with 28 child conveners in the provinces to stage the First National Summit on Children, at which children presented their agenda to the President (UNICEF, 2001c, 38).

The children who had attended the Fifth Mincon reported back to their peers on the experience, later in the same year at the Children and Young People's Forum II, in Vientiane:

It was the first time that we attended a high-level meeting involving high-level officials. I saw that all the Ministers were pleased with the presentation from the [child] delegates. We hope that in future Mincons children will continue to be involved.

During the Mincon discussions, I saw that there were very few children talking, mostly adults, so I decided to say something. I mustered the courage to speak in front of all those 'big' people and I felt that they appreciated my views.

I saw that they all worked very hard to help us with our agenda, and even if the meeting was about different countries, we all have similar problems and I hope we can attain our similar objectives. Also, we are the representatives for our region so we have to do our best.

Our presentations made a great impression on the Ministers. Our participation encourages other children to participate in similar events.

Our greatest joy was that throughout the events, from Jomtien to the Mincons, we all worked together (Forum II, 2001).

The Beijing Declaration was presented to the General Assembly of the United Nations in April 2002 by the Chair of the Preparatory Committee of the Special Session, along with reviews of achievements since the World Summit from other regions (United Nations, 2002b). In the introduction, the Declaration refers to the progress made since the World Summit, as well as to the ‘challenges and opportunities offered by the 21st century’, which ‘necessitate a new global agenda for children’, building on the lessons and achievements of the past. In the third paragraph, the Declaration urges the Special Session ‘to take into account our concerns and views and those expressed by the children of this region’ (UNICEF, 2001a, para 3). Children’s participation is listed among ‘Challenges and tasks’ for the coming decade; ‘Ensuring the active and full participation of children and youth in decisions affecting them’ and ‘a need for greater participation of children in decision making’ (UNICEF, 2001a, paras 13 and 8). Commitments include ‘strengthening mechanisms for the empowerment of children and adolescents’ in expressing their concerns and formulating policies, ‘fully involving children and their communities’, and ‘inputs from children’ in indicators and monitoring systems’ (United Nations, 2002b, paras 29, 33 and 39).

### ***Third Prepcom: Preparatory Committee Meeting 3, New York, 11-15 June 2001***

The Third Prepcom was notable for the participation of NGOs – what Defence for Children International (DCI) called ‘a staggering total’ of NGOs (3,683) had passed through the accreditation process and received invitations (DCI, 2001), although other sources note that almost 870 representatives of 387 NGOs attended, along with 145 delegates under the age of 18 years (Summary Report Draft 21 June 2001). The focus from the NGO perspective was on producing an outcome document for

the Special Session 'to get world leaders to recommit themselves to an agenda for children for the coming decade' (DCI, 2001). One main item of business for this meeting was to consider the report *We the Children* (United Nations, 2001), which showed considerable progress in some areas since 1990, but limited or no progress in others. Fourteen NGOs, 79 government representatives and ten UN agencies made statements on this report, giving 'almost unanimous support' for its findings as a convincing basis for the Special Session (Summary Report Draft, 21 June 2001).

Thirty five children were present in a total of 14 government delegations, and 110 as members of NGO delegations. One hundred and twenty attended the Pre-Prepcom workshop, held in UNICEF House on 10-11 June, organised by UNICEF and the NGO Steering Committee's 'Under-18 Participation Task Force', to help them to prepare for participation in official meetings and side events. There was also a panel discussion between two children (not from the Southeast, East Asia and Pacific region), Carol Bellamy and Thomas Hammarberg, and a 'live web debate between 17 children, moderated by the UNICEF webpage Voices of Youth. Under-18-year-olds were also involved in some of the Caucus events and as journalists. The involvement of child delegates in the Special Session was also decided at this Prepcom.

A revised version of *A World Fit for Children* was considered, with greater consensus reached on the text than had been the case during the Second Prepcom, especially on strengthening children's rights, including 'stronger language on child participation'. But not all changes in this draft of *A World Fit for Children* were agreed; certain obstacles or 'contentious issues' emerged at the meetings (and side meetings):

- resources
- status of the CRC as a framework for action
- reproductive health
- references to Israel, Palestine and Iraq
- child labour (CRIN, 2002c).

Such debates were fated to continue until almost the last hours of the Special Session itself in May 2002, before agreement was reached on the final text (UNICEF, 2002c).

***CYP Forum II: East Asia and Pacific Regional Children and Young People's Forum II, Vientiane, Lao PDR, 22-27 July 2001***

According to the introduction to the main report, the Forum in Lao PDR, three months after the Jomtien meeting, two months after the Ministerial Consultation in Beijing and just over a month after the Third prepcom in New York, 'capped' the preparations for the Special Session and 'came up with critical data and output which truly gives voice to the needs, aspirations and dreams of children in East Asia and the Pacific' (Forum II, 2001, 2). The broad goals were to:

- follow up on the results of the Fifth Ministerial Consultation
- prepare messages for the children and young people from the region to take to the Special Session
- select delegates for the Special Session
- prepare suggestions on how to plan and organise follow up to the Special Session (ibid, 3).

The meeting outcomes were in the form of responses to both the Beijing Declaration and the draft of *A World Fit for Children*, together with a guide for governments on selecting and briefing children and young people for the Special Session, a regional delegation of children to attend the Session and 'road maps for taking the goals of [the Special Session] forward' (ibid). The report indicates that the original planning of the Coordinating Committee was holding firm: 'Ultimately, this forum is part of a series ... tentatively, culminating on a Forum III after the [Special Session]' (ibid, 5).

The formal opening was followed by a performance in which 'Laotian children and young people in colourful costumes and ethnic regalia delighted the audience with their renditions of traditional songs and dances, not to mention some modern dances and pop tunes' (ibid, 4). One objective was for children to learn about each other's countries, another for them to understand that their problems had regional rather than national scope – they should not perceive themselves to be uniquely alone in their troubles. This exchange of information was facilitated through 'participatory activities' rather than formal presentations, activities that are described in this report in more detail than in reports of Forums I and III.

The regional survey of young people's opinions was presented formally, however, and child delegates to the Beijing Ministerial Consultation shared the highlights of their presentations, as well as the outcomes of CYP Forum I. Response from CYP Forum II to the Beijing Declaration was organised by four facilitators through group work, producing reports from six groups, four of which mentioned participation issues, which children considered should be added to the Beijing Declaration (ibid, 36-7). Group work was followed by a plenary discussion and an activity through which children could share their responses to a children-friendly version of the draft of *A World Fit for Children*. 'Unsettled issues' raised by the children included corporal and capital punishment, juvenile justice, reproductive health for children and youth, provision of resources by donor countries, sexual exploitation, the environment, recreational opportunities within education, a suggestion to change the phrase 'culture of peace' to 'human values', and assistance for AIDS-infected children and AIDS orphans (ibid).

Perhaps the most interesting part of this meeting, from the point of view of the research evaluation, was the consultative process of developing guidelines for governments for selecting child participants for the Special Session. In these guidelines, governments were advised to start with selection of children by children at the community level, with further rounds of selection at provincial and national levels. The guidelines also included consideration of an issue that can be recognised from the De Vera report on CYP Forum I; the relationships between government and NGO delegates and delegations, an issue repeatedly raised in both secondary and primary data in this research evaluation:

- support of NGO and government representatives
- recognition of NGO support and role
- shared ideas between NGO and government delegations, to improve joint lobbying
- children from NGO and government delegations should also meet and share.

The penultimate day of the Vientiane Forum consisted of selecting regional delegates for the Special Session. The election excluded children who had already been appointed national representatives by their governments. Four children (from China, Indonesia, Lao PDR and Vietnam) were selected to go to the Special Session, with four others

(from Hong Kong, Mongolia, The Philippines and Thailand) standing by if further 'accreditation slots' and funding could be found. In the event, all eight were ready to attend the scheduled Special Session in September. The meeting ended with a preparation and orientation session for elected delegates, while other children made organised visits around Vientiane.

Some of the comments children made in their end-of-meeting evaluation of Forum II are printed in the report, and repeated in Etherton's evaluation:

- I felt very honoured to be with the delegates from other countries
- I loved making friends and learning about issues facing children in other countries
- I'm happy to hear from the experience of other participants in forums such as the Mincons
- I'm glad to learn some new languages and I'm so pleased that the adults here are very nice to us compared to the adults in our country
- It was exciting to learn new games
- I'm happy to learn new things from other countries that I could bring to my country
- I feel that my understanding of the CRC has deepened
- We're happy to see everyone act like a real family
- We thank our adult friends who have been very caring and helpful
- Life is very long so I'm sure we will meet again (Forum II, 2001; Etherton, 2002, 47).

As Etherton comments, these quotations (which, given the number of children listed as attending Forum II, are probably selections from a larger list) 'seem to reflect an appreciation of the immediate experience: personal growth, friendship and inclusion'. He speculates whether children might have had 'a deeper recognition... of the regionally arranged participation process' (Etherton, 2002, 47). A further question would be why there is little mention in these quotations of the main objectives of the meeting. This post-meeting 'evaluation' provides only a superficial account showing that children had clearly enjoyed themselves, but is more an evaluation of feelings about the meeting and whether or not it was children-friendly, than an evaluation of children's participation in debates, much less in decision making.

***Special Session: United Nations General Assembly Special Session on Children, New York, 8-10 May 2002, together with preparatory meeting for children from East Asia and the Pacific, 3-4 May, and Children's Forum, 5-7 May***

More time passed between CYP Forum II and the Special Session than had been anticipated. Many children and adults had been poised for travel to New York when the events of September 11, 2001 caused the immediate postponement of the Session for security reasons. There was then a period of uncertainty before the date was rescheduled for May 2002.

Children's participation in the postponed Special Session included:

- presence of government and NGO child delegates at the Special Session
- Children's Forum 5-7 May 2002
- addressing the United Nations General Assembly
- addressing each of the three official Round Tables
- addressing the Forum on Women's Leadership for Children, and other side events
- attending children-centred events staged by UNICEF and NGOs (CRIN, 2002b).

In its Special Session Update for May 2002, the International Save the Children Alliance stated that:

...this event was an important landmark in terms of young people's participation and their ability to enter into dialogue with national and international decision-makers. For three days children and young people from across the world were able to be present in the same meetings and to be represented directly on the same high-level panels as government delegates, heads of states, celebrities and United Nations officials (International Save the Children Alliance, 2002).

Unlike other regions, the Southeast, East Asia and Pacific organisers held a Children's Special Session Preparatory meeting (3-4 May 2002) before the Children's Forum (5-7 May 2002). This was intended to bring together children from the region who were attending as members of government and NGO delegations – 41 children and young people from 14 different countries<sup>3</sup>, aged between 11 years and 'over 19 years', with most aged 15 years and over (Table 5). One youth, who had crossed the age barrier

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<sup>3</sup> These numbers and the figures in Tables 5 and 6 are taken from an advance list of participants, another lists only 11 countries, and the post-Special Session attendance figures given in UNICEF 2003 (and Table 7) gives 19 countries, which illustrates the problems of deriving a research universe. The advance list has been used for Tables 5 and 6 because it shows children selected to attend, which may be more indicative of age and gender distribution for the region.

**Table 5: Ages of children from Southeast Asia, East Asia and the Pacific attending the Special Session in May 2002**

Age in years	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19+	Total
Number of Children in Government delegation	0	0	1	3	7	3	7	6	0	27
Number of Children in NGO delegation	1	0	0	1	1	4	1	2	1	11
Total	1	0	1	4	8	7	8	8	1	38

Source advance participants list, 24 April 2002 (data on age not available for three participants)

into adulthood, was present as a facilitator as well as a delegate and had been a youth participant/facilitator in earlier forums.

The gender mix was more or less equal on both government and NGO delegations (Table 6). In addition to children and young people, the Southeast, East Asia and Pacific group at this orientation meeting included

**Table 6: Gender of children from Southeast, East Asia and Pacific attending the Special Session in May 2002**

	Female	Male	Total
Number of children in a Government delegations	15	15	30
Number of children in NGO delegations	5	6	11
Total	20	21	41

Source advance participants list, 24 April 2002

16 accompanying adults ('chaperones') in government delegations and nine in the NGO delegation, as well as five members of the regional Coordinating Committee.

The global Children's Forum was held for the three days immediately before the Special Session and is reported to have included 242 girls and 162 boys, aged eight to 18 years, according to one UNICEF report, and 'as young as 10', according to another (UNICEF, 2002, a and b). The gender balance thus favoured girls overall, in contrast to the equal representation from the Southeast, East Asia and Pacific region. Two thirds were members of government delegations from 148 countries, while 141 were members of the 106 NGO delegations (UNICEF, 2002a, 2). According to

the International Save the Children Alliance May Update on the Special Session:

During the Forum, members of the Task Group on Participation, regional contact people and other Save the Children participation staff played key roles in the core group of facilitators, in the international facilitation team, as resource persons, in the committee of rapporteurs, in the organisation of interpreters and in the evaluation committee (International Save the Children Alliance, 2002).

The spectacular opening ceremony was based in a large marquee on the lawn of the United Nations building, with 500 performers (adults and children) and was attended by Nelson Mandela and Graça Machel, who presented 94 million pledges from the 'Say Yes' campaign to the President of the General Assembly Dr Han Seung-Soo (subsequently, a 12 year-old presented the 'tally' to Nelson Mandela and Graça Machel at the United Nations Headquarters on 7 May).

The Children's Forum itself took place in the United Nations building, in the typically formal UN setting. The aim of the Children's Forum was 'to prepare young delegates for their participation in the formal proceedings, as well as discuss the role that they can play in the follow-up actions'. Outside plenary sessions, children met first in regional groups, and then in 'priority' groups, which discussed the eight key issues that had been identified by them from the slightly longer adult-written challenges in the *Rallying Call of the Global Movement for Children* and the 'Say Yes for Children' campaign (UNICEF, 2002a). This is sometimes reported to be eight priorities identified by children, without noting the limits placed on their choices. The eight 'priority groups' elected rapporteurs, as well as a group to draft the common statement, *A World Fit for Us*, which was read by girls from Bolivia and Monaco at the Special Session; 'the first time that children addressed a formal session of the UN' (UNICEF, 2002a, 14; see also cover photograph). *A World Fit for Us* suggests that leaders should enact policies for participation, create and support children's organisations, incorporate children's participation in national law and plans of action as well as school curricula, and also calls on the United Nations to 'set up an organisation or committee made up of children to discuss and influence the issues that affect them' (See page 7 and UNICEF, 2002a, 14).

The Special Session, held from 8 to 10 May 2002, was notable not only for the active presence of children but also for NGO activities through the various Caucuses. Governments from 19 Southeast, East Asia and Pacific countries sent delegations, 12 of which included child delegates (Table 7). During the Special Session, in a side event, heads of state or government from 11 Asian countries took part in a ‘Dialogue with Children in Asia’ in which 38 children from 29 countries took part, with five children among the moderators (UNICEF EAPRO, 2003b, 15).

**Table 7: Presence of Southeast, East Asia and Pacific children in delegations to the Special Session, according to country**

Children in Government delegations	Children in NGO delegation	Children in both Government and NGO delegations	No children
Fiji Kiribati Timor Leste Tuvalu Vanuatu	Cambodia	China Indonesia Lao PDR Malaysia Mongolia The Philippines Thailand Vietnam	Marshall Islands Micronesia Palau Papua New Guinea Solomon Islands

Source: UNICEF EAPRO, 2003b, 14 Figure 1.2.1.

The International Save the Children Alliance reported that it ‘continued to play a strategic role’, channelling lobbying activities about the final version of *A World Fit for Children* through the Child Rights Caucus. Several sources refer to tense negotiations during the three-day meeting. ‘As governments and regional blocs argued over the most contentious elements’, which included some issues carried over from the prepcoms:

- the status of the Convention on the Rights of the Child
- reproductive and sexual health rights
- access to populations to deliver humanitarian assistance
- the definition of the family
- the use of the death penalty and life imprisonment for those committing offences while under the age of 18 years
- child labour (CRIN, 2002c).

The text of *A World Fit for Children* had been amended during informal government negotiations in September 2001, before the originally planned Session. Around 23 paragraphs were added, but negotiations ceased for a while after the Special Session was postponed to May 2002. This left a number of key issues still undecided (CRIN, 2002b). A revised text was circulated by the Chair of the Special Session Preparatory Committee in March 2002, and governments resumed negotiations in late April (ibid). However, the International Save the Children Alliance Update for May 2002 refers to 'the intense frustration of those managing the negotiation process' with the slow progress made by regional and other country blocs, resulting in consensus being reached only by lunchtime on the final day (International Save the Children Alliance, 2002).

In addition to child delegates, 40 young journalists attended the Special Session, some receiving training in the week before the Session. The International Save the Children Alliance objectives for supporting the presence of child journalists for the Special Session were:

- empowerment of children and young people through facilitating communication and exchange of information
- enabling children to work alongside mainstream media
- facilitate distribution of articles written by young people to the global media
- provide positive experiences for young people including 'an atmosphere where young people recognise that their voices count and are important'
- develop an international network of young journalists (ibid).

*On the Record for Children*, a daily newspaper about the Special Session, was written almost entirely by child journalists and distributed in hard copy and through the Internet. The young journalists appear to have been drawn largely from developed countries, and the content was reviewed before publication by an editorial advisory group of the NGO Committee on UNICEF.

Immediately after the Special Session, young delegates from Southeast, East Asia and Pacific were asked by Save the Children for:

- a high point or most interesting/exciting thing in the session
- a key concern and what this means for the region
- suggestions for follow-up action.

A compilation of their answers was made by interns from Save the Children Alliance and UNICEF regional offices to use during CYP Forum III in Seoul, which was scheduled for December 2002. Analysis showed that children said they had learned about children and young people in other countries – including exploitation, different government solutions, and ways in which children and young people were becoming empowered. They also said that the Special Session was an opportunity for personal growth. Reported high points were the Session itself and the opportunity to meet and create solidarity with other children from all over the world, as well as listening to, or in some cases meeting, world leaders such as Nelson Mandela and Kofi Annan. The relatively few low points included problems with translation, food, costs, and disappointments related to their interactions with adults (Chakraborty and Dragila, 2002).

### ***CYP Forum III: East Asia and Pacific Regional Children and Young People's Forum III, Seoul, South Korea, 9-13 December 2002***

The idea of holding a regional post-Special Session forum for children and young people was mentioned in 2000 in the first plan of the regional Coordinating Committee as a follow up to the Special Session, but it also became a preparatory meeting for the Sixth Mincon. Plans for this began in earnest in August 2002. The general idea was to review the outcomes of the Special Session, discuss the final version of *A World Fit for Children*, review the regional situation country by country, reflect on National Plans of Action and outcomes of the Fifth Mincon and strategise for the future. As several of the regional Special Session delegates were by then over the age of 18 years, it was suggested that they should become facilitators.

The report of this Forum is notable for the details of activities published in appendices (Chakraborty, 2002). Through facilitated group work, the 54 children from 15 countries<sup>4</sup> who gathered in Seoul compared the texts of *A World Fit for Us* and *A World Fit for Children*, coming up with some interesting differences (Table 8), emphasising that the Children's Forum had outlined a broader view of participation than is found in the adult document. They also concentrated on the issue of participation in their final declaration, the Seoul Resolution:

Kindly urge governments, NGOs and civil society to support child participation in the process of creating *A World Fit for Us*.

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<sup>4</sup> Cambodia, China, Fiji, Indonesia, Japan, Lao PDR, Republic of Korea, Malaysia, Mongolia, The Philippines, Thailand, Timor Leste, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, and Viet Nam

Children have historically been seen and not heard. We are now moving to a world where the governments are having concrete plans to promote children's rights; NGOs are actively supporting children's movements and the civil society taking responsibility for the children. The Convention on the Rights of the Child emphasises that children have the right to genuine participation. This is simply because we have a better understanding and knowledge regarding our own issues. Our full potential, creativity and leadership skills can only be realised if given the opportunity.

Children should have the opportunity to participate in the planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating of local, national and international events. Children should have the opportunity to participate in all levels of participation especially in government agencies, NGOs and civil society concerning us.

We would like governments, non-governmental organisations and the civil society to fully support children by:

- facilitating capacity building of children in participation skills
- accepting the issues and views forwarded by the children at local, national and international events regarding children
- including children's issues and views in the outcome document of all local, national and international events regarding us.

With all due respect, we urge that you would take into consideration and to act upon the proposal that the children have put forward and that you will support the movement for A World Fit for Us (Seoul Resolution: Chakraborty, 2002, 16).

CYP Forum III was a preparation for the Sixth Ministerial Consultation in Bali, Indonesia in 2003, and five children were elected as delegates (with two 'back-up' delegates), using criteria almost identical to those drawn up in Vientiane at CYP Forum II. At the Forum itself they 'were able to learn about individual country situation [sic] and looked at Enabling and Disabling factors that promoted or hindered children's participation' (Chakraborty, 2003, 2). They also:

- assessed national follow-up actions since the Special Session, including opportunities for children to participate

**Table 8: Children’s comparison between ‘A World Fit for Children’ (WFFC) and ‘A World Fit for Us’ (WFFU) during CYP Forum III**

Similarities	Differences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Respect for the rights of the child</li> <li>• To end/prevent exploitation, abuse and violence by implementing existing laws</li> <li>• Programmes and centres to rebuild victims</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To end war and resolve conflicts through peaceful dialogue                     <p>Victims of war – We the children want all CYP, including those who are victims of war, to have same opportunities. But the WFFC just promotes better life, instead of equality amongst other children. The focus on the governments is just to help them, but the CYP want them to be equal with other children.</p> <p>Elimination of armed trades – We the children want confiscation of all weapons. But the adults state that peace talks and dialogue is the best way to deal with those who have weapons. CYP said that by just talking, weapons still remain in the world and children can still get hurt. So we first need to get rid of all the weapons.</p> </li> <li>• Health care                     <p>We the children want to ensure that all drugs in need are accessible and affordable for everyone. WFFC is silent on the affordability of drugs.</p> </li> <li>• Eradication of HIV/AIDS                     <p>We the children want CYP with HIV/AIDS to be given equal opportunities, and that all CYP are treated equally, and not discriminated against. WFFC is silent on the issue of equality.</p> </li> <li>• Education                     <p>We the children want school to be free and compulsory (secondary and elementary education to be free). But the WFFC says that there should be a minimum cost for basic education.</p> <p>We the children want a happy learning environment, with child-friendly teachers, schools, etc. WFFC is silent on the issue of holistic education.</p> </li> <li>• Participation                     <p>We the children should be included in all processes that affect us, from planning to implementation to monitoring. WFFC says that CYP should be participants in only the consultation and planning processes.</p> </li> </ul>

- went on field visits
- participated in the launch of UNICEF's *State of the World's Children 2003*, presenting the problems of children in the region
- participated in training exercises to improve their leadership and advocacy skills (Chakraborty, 2002).

***CYP Prepcon II: Preparatory Consultation for the Sixth Ministerial Consultation, Bangkok, Thailand, 12-14 February, 2003***

The five children chosen in Seoul to be delegates for the Sixth Mincon came from China, Fiji, Japan, Lao PDR and the Republic of Korea. Teenagers who between them had considerable experience of international meetings, they met to prepare in Bangkok for two days, proud that 'As a result of our advocacy efforts the upcoming Mincon will have C/YP delegates on both government and NGO delegations...and a Children's Forum... will take place immediately before the Mincon'. They also explained that their intention was to 'voice out the concerns of children in...[the] region', 'to support the movement for children' and 'to build a stronger relationship with government, NGOs, and other organisations. We also want to urge Government to make actual actions other than listening to children' (Chakraborty, 2003. 1 and 2). This last point might be judged to be somewhat optimistic, given that unpublished email correspondence between the Coordinating Committee members shows that negotiations were necessary for children to be involved in the Sixth Mincon, despite the success of children's participation in the Fifth Mincon in Beijing. This may indicate that children's participation is not yet considered to be an integral part of all adults' meeting at which children's issues are discussed.

The report of this meeting contains an important statement on children's definition of participation – conceived as 'partnership' and presented in a joint session with adults:

Partnership is being able to participate in all processes with adults, where adults and children respect each other as human beings. In a genuine partnership, adults and children work together as equals, learning from each other. Children need to have partnerships with governments, NGOs, private sectors and any other organisations (Chakraborty, 2003, 3).

***Sixth Mincon: Sixth East Asia and Pacific Regional Ministerial Consultation, Bali, Indonesia, 5-6 May 2003***

At the Sixth Mincon, 25 countries from the region – considerably more than the ten ASEAN nations – focused on the commercial sexual exploitation of children and trafficking ([www.unicef.org/newsline/200303nn33bali.htm](http://www.unicef.org/newsline/200303nn33bali.htm)). During the meeting, the first UNICEF awards for youth leadership were presented to two girls and a boy, aged 14-15, two from Indonesia and one from Papua New Guinea, chosen from a list of 16 nominated by NGOs and government agencies.

For the children selected in CYP Forum III, who had prepared in Bangkok for this Mincon:

The point of the Ministerial Consultation in Bali is to focus on children's issues. If we are not part of the delegation our voices will not be heard, so the conclusions of Mincon will not reflect our needs and concerns. We need to influence and monitor the Mincon process because we need to make sure the results of Mincon will actually be fit for us (Chakraborty, 2003, 5).

A report by Lee Sang-Don, a young delegate from the Republic of Korea, so impressed the Chinese adult delegation that it was published in the official (English language) Government of China/UNICEF report on the Sixth Mincon. Lee said that this meeting differed from both CYP Forum III and CYP Prepcon II, in which children 'had more equal participation status with the other adult participants' (Lee, 2003, 30).

For children, the Mincon began with a preparatory day before the opening ceremony and ended with a pledge-signing event, prepared by child delegates. The actual pledge document is a large board, which includes a map, national flags and other illustrations in addition to signatures, and now decorates a wall in the UNICEF Regional Office for East Asia and Pacific in Bangkok.

A children's report, compiled during the preparatory day, was presented in PowerPoint form on the first day of the official session, by three child representatives – after which, Lee writes, 'each one of us had their turn to read one recommendation after another to the plenary through a microphone'. He added, 'Considering the fact that it was impossible for everyone to participate more within the allotted time, our presentation was very well done' (ibid, 33).

Lee praises some aspects of the Mincon, particularly the commitment of high-level adult delegates and media interest, but admits:

I am not saying that there are no obstacles left to overcome. Despite the ministers' warmth and caring, I felt still some barriers between them and us children. It was somewhat difficult to approach them because they were so high ranked officials. Not only to the ministers, but to everyone including people from UNICEF, we weren't supposed to talk whatever we wanted to talk, like the way we do with our friends. Even though we were treated very well with hospitality, we were not quite treated as the equal participants as with the ministers and other adult delegates. I think that was an obstacle against our full participation (Lee, 2003, 34).

Despite these reservations, in his final comments Lee rates participation in the Sixth Mincon at 90 per cent.

The main published outcomes from the Sixth Mincon are UNICEF documents produced in advance of the Consultation, as background documents – *A Future for all our children*, *Towards a Region Fit for Children*, and *The Bali Consensus* (UNICEF EAPRO, 2003 a and b). Although these set up regional priorities as follow up to the Special Session, and refer to children's participation in New York, there is no mention of children's participation as a future priority in the region. The Bali Consensus, which was the main outcome of the Sixth Mincon discussions, follows much of the same priorities as in these UNICEF documents, as 'focus areas for regional cooperation'. Partnership with children is mentioned in only one paragraph of the prologue to the Consensus. The remaining 'overarching issues' and 'focus areas' are poverty reduction, education, gender equality, family protection and support, HIV/AIDS, child trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation of children, maternal and neonatal mortality and malnutrition – a set of issues that bears little resemblance to the regional list of priorities provided by children for the Fifth Mincon.

## Where the story ends?

The Sixth Mincon resulted in only a Consensus statement from governments, with no published reports or statements available from children that researchers could locate, other than Lee Sang-Don's report. Documents gathered before the end of 2003 do not mention a plan for future CYP Forums, or a long-term plan for build up to the Seventh

Mincon. In 2004, the Coordinating Committee no longer operates as such, although members do continue to meet to discuss children's participation in future forums. Documents show that demands from various quarters continue to be made for children to be 'identified' or 'selected' for special events on the international scene. Although UNICEF's web page Voices of Youth, insists that 'The Special Session lives on', it might not be altogether cynical to argue, on the basis of documents, that it remains alive only in the memories of young adults who went to New York in 2002, when they were still children.

Does this mean that the Special Session was a one-off, perhaps decorative example of children's participation producing interesting activities in the Southeast, East Asia and Pacific region, which failed to take root? Researchers are not in a position to comment on this, nor is there any convincing proof in available documents. However, unpublished materials, in correspondence and Internet interchanges, do seem to indicate a tendency towards reflection and debate on what this Report calls 'institutionalisation' of children's participation, as well as some actual moves in this direction within the agencies that collaborated in the Coordinating Committee, some of which are exploring the institutionalisation of children's participation in their own work (See for example CWA, 2004).

## **Content analysis**

This section is ordered more or less according to the headings that will be used for analysis of primary data – selection, preparation, accompanying adults, decision making, follow up – with the addition of considering resource issues.

### **Selection, competition or election?**

Organisers and children consistently admitted to selection dilemmas. Organisers began with pragmatic decisions to base their work on international strategy statements on the one hand, and on the other the experiences already gained through working with regional children. 'Reading between the lines' of all regional documents consulted, the international aim that 'children should be involved in the selection of their [own] spokespeople' (International Save the Children Alliance, 2000) appears to have been the overall vision.

Documents frequently refer to obstacles caused by UN formal procedures – including the ‘always late’ arrival of information and guidelines (Wisecarver in Etherton, 2002, 52). The truth of this can be judged from the fact that, at the end of June 2001 with only a few weeks left before the scheduled Special Session in September of that year, UNICEF New York Headquarters circulated a communication about the Children’s Forum for delegates of government and NGOs under the age of 18 (UNICEF, 2001d). This was intended to share ‘some background information and lessons learned on children’s participation in conferences’, together with aims, expected outcomes, structure of the Children’s Forum, proposed guidelines on participation and selection of participants, ‘the role and responsibility of accompanying adults’ and registration forms. This left very little time for selecting and preparing children for taking part in an international conference, particularly in the months in which the international staff of international organisations tend to be on annual leave (UNICEF, 2001d). The success of organisers in ensuring that regional children joined NGO delegations to the Special Session was due to the extensive forward planning, which had begun almost two years earlier.

According to one organiser’s questionnaire response to Etherton, ‘in practice’ selection depended upon the country. In some countries, a national, participatory process was held. In some countries, attempts were made at same, but it ended up with more of the normal than at-risk children and young people. In a few countries, children were selected by INGOs or NGOs and governments’ (Wisecarver quoted in Etherton, 2002, 51).

One article published in *On the Record for Children* bore the headline ‘The Bumpy Road to the Special Session’ and the byline of a 17-year-old Vietnamese girl and an 18-year-old youth from Guyana. Apart from telling the personal stories of two other children, they report on some of the obstacles to arriving in New York as well as some experiences of and opinions on selection:

For many, getting to New York was a stressful experience full of politics and red tape. Many volunteer child rights activists could not get the funding and support necessary to come and speak about what affects them and the people with whom they work ...

Some delegates were not selected on the basis of their knowledge of the UNGASS, but due to their relations with government or NGO

officers. Some have no idea why they were selected. For these children, being in the Big Apple is an all expenses paid vacation.

A number of children at the conference have raised the question of whether child delegates should be chosen through democratic elections by the children of their known countries, since they will represent their views of their peers.

Australian delegate Emily thinks that is a bad idea. She feels that NGOs and governments should nominate the children. If children elect their representatives, she says, they will select the 'popular ones', not those who understand the issues to be discussed (*On the Record for Children*, New York, 9 May 2002, 5).

Various methods of selection are listed in documents from different agencies, including:

- a child's name is specified in the invitation or requested by the organiser
- a child is assigned by organisation
- a child is consulted and asked if s/he wants to participate
- a child is elected by other children, using various methods
- a child is picked by drawing lots
- a child volunteers, with or without endorsement from others
- a child is picked by adults, because of participation in an earlier process
- a child is selected through national competition.

Lists of selection criteria abound in the documents from different sources, some being contradictory. A UNICEF document, entitled *Proposed guidelines on the participation & selection of Under-18 Delegates to the Special Session ...* states that 'key considerations' might include:

- existing active involvement in 'participation'
- special interest or expertise (for example HIV/AIDS, environment)
- ability to speak on behalf of a broad cross-section of children
- part of existing peer groups
- working knowledge of a UN language or accompanied by a delegate who can interpret (UNICEF, 2001d).

In contrast, a list of selection criteria from The Philippines, where Save the Children and partners have considerable experience in children's participation, suggests that it is important not to over-emphasise

language skills, NGO affiliations, ‘star status’ of certain ‘professional conference personalities’ and the importance of realising that ‘gender balance does not necessarily mean equal numbers of boys and girls’ (Save the Children UK Philippines, 2002, 13). In her report on CYP Forum I, De Vera describes the process by which she and three other delegates were selected to represent The Philippines:

The criteria also came from the participants thru [sic] a criteria wall [facilitation technique not described]. We agreed to have 3 representatives from Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao and an extra vote to which we are free to choose from any region. The process was through a secret balloting vote (Vera, n/d).

This describes a process similar to the pyramidal structure of selection suggested as guidelines for governments at CYP II, which was also commented on in the report of that meeting:

The suggested process is also useful for events beyond [the Special Session] and in other international gatherings where children are involved. This process intends to make sure that children’s participation is organised from the local level (community), to the province/district, and to the national and regional level. During this process, it is critical that local input is maximized to ensure that whoever is chosen truly represents the issues of children. However, this process should still be refined and improved in future children’s workshops in order to ensure its effectiveness and appropriateness to local realities (Forum II, 2001, 15).

Children and young people themselves, as already mentioned, drew up fairly consistent, practical criteria for their own elections of child delegates (Forum II, 2001; Chakraborty, 2002). These tend to describe qualities and skills of delegates as much as selection procedures, but consistently stress issues of representation. Table 9, which uses researcher-imposed categories, compares the list of criteria from CYP Forums I and III, which are remarkably similar. Etherton also reports young people’s concerns about extending participation to a wider group of children (Etherton, 2002, 54). Children in CYP Prepcon II put it bluntly – more bluntly than adults might have done:

We need to develop a system where we can monitor the selection of children on government delegations. We see a lot of children on these delegations that are not fit for the job, and do not know the issues (Chakraborty, 2003, 6).

On the topic of inclusion or exclusion of particular groups of children and young people, organiser Jay Wisecarver commented in his responses to Etherton’s questionnaire:

- *Girls* – some of the cultural overlays had some girls speaking out less than the boys
- *Disability related* – translation was from sign into local language and the reverse
- *Non-English/English speakers* – English speakers tended to take over as the process sometimes moved quickly. Slowing down was hard (Etherton, 2002, 52).

**Table 9: Criteria for selection of child delegates drawn up in CYP Forums II and III**

Category or Quality	CYP Forum II (Forum II, 2001, 16)	CYP Forum III (Chakraborty, 2002, 17)
Selection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• he/she should be selected by children themselves</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The selection should not be based on a popularity basis</li> </ul>
Representation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• should represent children from the rural and urban areas</li> <li>• he/she must be under 18</li> <li>• there should be no discrimination based on nationality and regional location</li> <li>• there should be no discrimination in terms of gender, economic background, ethnicity, and education as well as language</li> <li>• special consideration should be given to children with disabilities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• only those who are below 18 years old can participate in the Prepcom (those who have their 18th birthday after the Prepcom (the whole thing) are eligible</li> <li>• the group should be diverse and should include indigenous and street children</li> <li>• respect and relate to other issues (he/she must represent the region, not just himself, or just one issue)</li> <li>• should represent each geographical region in the EAP (Pacific, East Asia, Southeast Asia)</li> <li>• equal geographical representation</li> <li>• gender equality (male, female representation)</li> </ul>

**Table 9: Continued**

Category or Quality	CYP Forum II (Forum II, 2001, 16)	CYP Forum III (Chakraborty, 2002, 17)
Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• have experienced and fully participated in previous children's events in the community/country; has actively participated and/or led in national activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• have experience in international conferences</li> <li>• active in the past workshop processes (someone that has been active at active at least CYP Forum III</li> <li>• included in the past activities related to Prepcom (like CYP Forums I, II and III</li> <li>• those that have attended past events</li> </ul>
Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ability to lead and implement activities in the country after the [Special Session] meeting (or other regional and international events)</li> <li>• awareness of his/her responsibility as a youth/child leader. Energetic and able to encourage other children/youth</li> <li>• demonstrate leadership qualities as well as capacity to lead</li> <li>• should have the ability to articulate the children's perspective/opinions, needs, problems, etc</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• leadership qualities</li> <li>• responsible for the future reporting</li> </ul>
Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• understands and appreciates the issues of children in their own community</li> <li>• must possess a strong awareness and understanding of children's issues and CRC</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• good knowledge and involvement and interest in children's issues and activities</li> </ul>
Personality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• respects others and listens to others</li> <li>• active and brave. Brave enough to stand up and express ideas with adults</li> <li>• open, flexible and appreciates other cultures</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• active and honest</li> <li>• self confidence</li> <li>• understanding (kind)</li> <li>• good confidence and friendly</li> </ul>

## Preparation

As already noted, children from two countries in Southeast, East Asia and Pacific, – Mongolia and The Philippines – were particularly well prepared for participation in the Special Session. In The Philippines, a Save the Children research survey including review of documents and direct information from 13 children and young people, as well as an ‘enrichment workshop’, sought to document and learn lessons from national experiences in local consultation, CYP Forum I, the Fifth Mincon, CYP Forum II and other related local and international conferences. Of the 13 young people, 11 completed the survey form and eight attended the workshop. The lessons learned included how to contact children in the first instance, the form of invitation and what personal details to request. The difficulties of contacting children living in remote areas and the importance of having sufficient time to prepare for children’s participation were noted: for local and national conferences two to three weeks notice, for international conferences up to three months. The report also includes the comment that organisers need to take into account children’s other activities – most crucially the risks for children of missing school lessons and examinations. The need to establish the legitimacy of invitations and accountability of organisations for protecting children from abuse and exploitation are stressed. Children’s right to be able to receive (and have the skills to assess) information about the invitations is also stated to be an issue:

When it comes to information, children are always at the receiving end. There is a need to build capacities of children to access the information themselves rather than always being recipients.

In most cases it’s not impressed upon the child that while s/he has the right to participate, s/he also has the right not to participate. Withdrawing this information puts the child in a dead end that leaves him/her no other choice but to participate. This is something that must be made clear so that the child truly see his/her options and decide for her/himself (Save the Children UK Philippines 2002, 10 and 11).

The four children who represented the region at CYP Prepcon I, 26-28 February 2001, described a weekend of preparation, which took place in the CWA offices in Bangkok, during which they prioritized the ten Global Movement points listed in Table 4:

Several NGO staff were there to help us with our meeting by translation, documentation and most especially serving lunch and coffee during the breaks...

A very kind UNICEF Consultant also gave us a very clear and informative talk about the Prepcon, and Beijing Ministerial Conference, and UNGASS among many other things. And we would also like to thank the very kind Regional Advisor who let us borrow her laptop to prepare our presentation (Oebenda et al, 2002 28).

The equality – adults serving while children work – is notable, and obviously appreciated, as are the information and equipment provided. Yet, while thanks are always appreciated, in a rights-based atmosphere children should perhaps be clearer that they should have all these by right, not only as the result of adult kindness.

Preparation also includes travel arrangements and obtaining documents such as passports and visas. For the Special Session, UN bureaucracy had to deal with some unfamiliar factors relating to persons under the age of 18 years. This caused organisers some frustrations with ‘UN red-tape’ as well as considerable extra work, particularly for NGO staff in addition to their normal duties. The only documents relating to this accessed during the research were found in the archive of one NGO – an incomplete set of emails concerning one young person, who attended the Special Session from the region. The documents include correspondence about selection, contact with the child and accompanying adult, and funding, as well as UN forms for attending the Children’s Forum. The latter include a pre-registration form (including name and contact details of accompanying adult); a personal profile form (including how the child had been selected); and consent forms (with instructions that they should be translated so that parents understood what they were signing) for parent/guardian for children to attend the Special Session ‘and ancillary events’, for a specific named chaperone to accompany and be responsible for the child, and for use of images and recordings by the media (owned by UNICEF). As a result of these consent forms, the image on the cover of this Report was obtained from UNICEF New York, rather than from Audrey Cheynut or her parents. This is normal procedure with respect to photographs; however it is notable that, according to these UN documents, at no time was Audrey’s voluntary, informed consent sought for any part of her participation.

## Accompanying adults

The rules for the Children's Forum were that both NGO and government delegations could only nominate a maximum of two children. Interpreters if required for languages other than English/Spanish/French would have to be official members of the delegation (for NGOs no more than four members total). Children's events also required facilitators and chaperones. Included in materials for the December 2000 preparation meeting are an *Action paper: Children's/Youth Voices in the UN General Assembly Special session Process: Events in 2001 (and beyond)* (Wisecarver, 2001b) and 'Common Framework for Children and Young People's Discussions' (Wisecarver 2001c), which make it clear that the regional framework is rights-based in this respect. CRC Articles 1, 2, 3 and 12 are particularly highlighted, as well as child protection in general:

When children are going to other areas, the best interests of the children apply!

- awareness and attention to child protection issues are a must (chaperones, etc.)
- there must be preparation before leaving and some type [of] support available upon re-entry after the event. It has been suggested that where not already available, additional structures and mechanisms be put in place (with the appropriate persons and resources allocated) before the children go to events
- translators who work with the children must be trained to insure [sic] they reflect the speakers' words, not what the translators think should be said or heard (Wisecarver, 2001c).

During the meeting of the Coordinating Committee in January 2001, the 'load on translators' was mentioned. In Vientiane in July 2001, in response to the comment that translators cannot always 'fully articulate the child's thoughts, feelings and ideas', selection criteria for a translator were proposed:

- understands the CRC be sensitive to the needs, values and culture of children
- empathises with the feelings and thought of children
- must have the ability to translate clearly and to describe emotions shared with the thoughts (Forum II, 2001).

Translators themselves were also aware of the importance of their role, as can be seen from the notes from one of the daily meetings of translators during CYP I:

- translators are also facilitators [they] facilitate by communicating with children
- give feedback to facilitators on children's reactions and feelings
- can participate in discussion during synthesis
- are the main persons responsible for monitoring children and reminding them of meetings rules
- should inform facilitators if the opinion they give is theirs or the children's
- should translate instructions before group work
- should know where children are and what they are doing
- should select a child for preparing 'dialogue'
- prepare at least one game or icebreaker (Translators' meeting, 2001).

Accompanying adults (unlike translators) were not members of delegations, but were a UN requirement 'for reasons of safety and security'. 'Chaperones', as they were often called, were to accompany the child to and from the Children's Forum and Special Session, but not to participate or attend (UNICEF 2001d). Criteria for selection were provided, although these included no checks on police records (which might have occurred of course during visa formalities). When they arrived in New York they were given a briefing by the UN. The International Save the Children Alliance has a child protection policy, which includes the commitment to 'include checks on suitability for working with young people' in recruitment procedures (International Save the Children Alliance, 2003), but researchers did not find evidence of this policy being applied in the case of chaperones. Indeed the policy does not specify checking references or police records (always supposing this would be feasible in developing countries), or provide criteria of 'suitability'. However, this is clearly an issue of ongoing concern within the Alliance, as can be seen by the way it is considered in recent documents (International Save the Children Alliance, 2003; 2004).

Although it was recognised consistently in documents that facilitators needed guidance, the document search did not reveal any criteria or guidelines in the region – which does not mean that none existed or none were used. Personal supervision and advice was clearly available, as will

be seen from primary data. In addition, the South and Central Asia Regional Alliance had developed 'guiding principles' at a meeting on 'Children, citizenship and governance' in July 2000, which were revised later in the same year (Save the Children Regional Alliance for South and Central Asia, 2000). While facilitation techniques are often referred to in publications about 'how to' do children's participation, the skills and personal qualities of a facilitator may also be mentioned; for example in a list attributed to Save the Children Norway – love for children, fluency in their language, communication skills, 'warmth, joy and playfulness' (Mukasa and Gfrist-Wanyoto, 1998, 280). In contrast, Alliance South Asia refers (with respect to facilitating children's organisations) to the 'rigidity' of some adult facilitators and possible lack of contextual knowledge – which might be the case in a multi-country group of children. One solution suggested is peer facilitation.

Facilitators are regarded as key persons in children's participation, bridging the gap between children and adults. Their task is stated to be 'giving children a voice', yet this phrase is not without ambiguity as it implies that participation is a privilege 'given' rather than a right, and also that perhaps children had no voice of their own before encountering the facilitator. The risk is that they will be given an 'official' or acceptable voice, authenticated by adults. If they do not agree with adults then their voice may be discounted. Facilitation should be 'making expression of opinions easy' (or fulfilling Article 13 of the CRC), so that facilitators act as conduits or channels for opinions. However, Save the Children experience shows that, in some instances, facilitators contribute their own opinions through suggestion or manipulation. At the 1997 child labour conference in Oslo, for example:

Despite clarification at the beginning of the meeting that adults should support the children, giving explanations where necessary, but not attempting to influence their views, many of the accompanying adults strayed across the boundary, which is, of course, difficult to define. The fear of missing opportunities presented by an international conference to promote both children's participation and particular views ...may well have pushed several adults into the strong influencing role observed (Marcus, 1998, 242).

On the basis of such experience it was realised in the region that facilitators need preparation for international conferences, just as children do, that they should meet before events and that they require training (Wisecarver, 2001c). Nevertheless, none of the documents collected in the research

provided details of either meetings or training, with the exception of some mention of training for youth facilitators in basic information provided during the early life of the Coordinating Committee (Wisecarver, 2001a and c) together with a series of activities to help facilitators and organisers to prepare young people and to facilitate the early stages of selection process, specifically for the pre-prepcon workshop before the Second Special Session Prepcom (January 2001 in New York).

## Decision making

In the early stages of planning for the Special Session, as already mentioned, the International Save the Children Alliance was keen not to settle for parallel events. But it is the principle of partnership rather than actual timing that counts, as shown in UNICEF's somewhat disingenuous comment that because 'children want to take part in mainstream events and not just in parallel activities' the Children's Forum was being held '*prior to*' the Special Session (UNICEF 2001d). The status of the Forum with respect to actual decision making could be judged by its frequent description as a 'side' or 'ancillary' event in official documents (see for example United Nations document A/AC.256/L.14/). UNICEF suggested the development of an action kit for helping children to make decisions based on the ten points of the Global Movement for Children and the Say Yes for Children Campaign (UNICEF 2001d). In addition, ten discussion groups through Voices of Youth were proposed, to solicit 'ideas from children' through the Internet, adding that children 'who do not have access to the Internet can write their ideas and fax them' (ibid).

The final text of *A World Fit for Children* was reported by the International Save the Children Alliance to show 'the [Child Rights] Caucus success in broadening the scope of the document to encompass the full range of children's rights', rather than being limited to health and education issues, as had been the case with the Declaration of the 1990 World Summit for Children (International Save the Children Alliance, 2002). Nevertheless, *A World Fit for Children* does not place the same degree of emphasis on 'protection issues' as is the case in *A World Fit for Us*, and neither document reflects exactly the regional emphases taken from Forum II by delegates from Southeast, East Asia and the Pacific, and the Fifth Ministerial Consultation in Beijing (Table 10). The comparison attempted in Table 10 is based on documents of different lengths and with different structures, but the differences in emphasis, between adults and children, and between regional and global declarations is notable.

This leads to doubts about whether the regional-global and child-adult processes in fact correspond to real, rather than superficial, consultation. As already noted, this lack of fit between children’s priorities and those of adults was identified by regional children in the CYP Forum III with respect to *A World Fit for Us* and *A World Fit for Children* (Table 8).

**Table 10: Comparison of issues raised in regional and international meetings associated with the UN Special Session on Children, May 2002**

*Rights categories imposed on original documents by researchers to aid comparison*

Right category	SEAP Region		Global	
	Adults	Children		Adults
	List of challenges raised in the Fifth Ministerial Consultation in Beijing	Supplementary ‘unsettled’ issues added to Beijing and SS draft by children in Children and Youth Forum II, Vientiane	<i>A World Fit for Us</i>  Children’s Forum outcome document	<i>A World Fit for Children</i>  Special Session outcome document
Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maternal mortality</li> <li>• Malnutrition</li> <li>• Sanitation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sustainability of health programmes</li> <li>• Sexual health education</li> <li>• Reproductive health</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Affordable, accessible drugs and treatment</li> <li>• Strong and accountable partnerships to promote better health for children</li> <li>• Healthy environments</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduction of child and maternal mortality rates, child malnutrition</li> <li>• Perinatal care</li> <li>• Better sanitation</li> <li>• Breastfeeding</li> <li>• Early childhood development</li> <li>• Adolescent health (including reproductive health)</li> <li>• Primary health care</li> <li>• Eradicate certain diseases</li> <li>• Improve nutrition, supplementary feeding</li> <li>• Strengthen health systems</li> <li>• Accident prevention</li> <li>• Mental health</li> <li>• Access issues</li> </ul>

Table 10: Continued

Right category	SEAP Region		Global	
	Adults	Children		Adults
	List of challenges raised in the Fifth Ministerial Consultation in Beijing	Supplementary 'unsettled' issues added to Beijing and SS draft by children in Children and Youth Forum II, Vientiane	<i>A World Fit for Us</i> Children's Forum outcome document	<i>A World Fit for Children</i> Special Session outcome document
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Early childhood education</li> <li>• Quality basic education (primary school enrolment is said to be 'almost universal')</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve schools in rural areas</li> <li>• Children-oriented teacher training</li> <li>• Children-oriented education systems and curricula</li> <li>• Teaching about rights</li> <li>• Increase teacher salaries</li> <li>• Better teaching</li> <li>• Empower parents in education</li> <li>• Include recreation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Equal opportunities for boys and girls</li> <li>• Quality, free, compulsory education for all</li> <li>• Education for life</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthen education systems</li> <li>• Quality education</li> <li>• Early childhood education</li> <li>• Improved enrolment</li> <li>• Life skills</li> <li>• Access female education</li> <li>• Recreation Information and communication technology</li> </ul>
Protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Girls Discrimination</li> <li>• Child labourers</li> <li>• Trafficking</li> <li>• Victims of crime</li> <li>• Sexual exploitation</li> <li>• Stateless children</li> <li>• Armed conflict</li> <li>• HIV</li> <li>• Conflict with the law</li> <li>• Disabilities</li> <li>• Poor children</li> <li>• Street children</li> <li>• Refugee children</li> <li>• Abuse</li> <li>• Drugs</li> <li>• Refugees</li> <li>• Displaced</li> <li>• Migrants</li> <li>• Ethnic minorities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• From landmines and unexploded bombs</li> <li>• Child prostitution</li> <li>• Street children/ domestic violence</li> <li>• Child labour</li> <li>• Early and forced marriage</li> <li>• Address abortion</li> <li>• Trafficking</li> <li>• Substance abuse</li> <li>• Child sexual abuse</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• From exploitation and abuse</li> <li>• Rehabilitation</li> <li>• End to war</li> <li>• Protection of child victims of war and refugees</li> <li>• Disarmament</li> <li>• End the use of child soldiers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Abuse, exploitation and violence</li> <li>• Armed conflict</li> <li>• Sexual exploitation</li> <li>• Trafficking</li> <li>• Worst forms of child labour</li> <li>• Discrimination</li> <li>• Legal reform</li> <li>• Prevention and rehabilitation</li> <li>• Harmful customs Illegal adoption and fostering</li> <li>• Kidnapping</li> <li>• Substance abuse</li> <li>• Women and child refugees</li> <li>• Natural disasters</li> <li>• Internet harm</li> <li>• Armed conflict (various issues, including girls)</li> <li>• Recruitment as soldiers</li> </ul>

**Table 10: Continued**

Right category	SEAP Region		Global	
	Adults	Children		Adults
	List of challenges raised in the Fifth Ministerial Consultation in Beijing	Supplementary 'unsettled' issues added to Beijing and SS draft by children in Children and Youth Forum II, Vientiane	<i>A World Fit for Us</i> Children's Forum outcome document	<i>A World Fit for Children</i> Special Session outcome document
Participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Full participation of children and youth in decisions affecting them</li> <li>• Global movement for children</li> <li>• Child friendly society</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children's networks</li> <li>• Combat discrimination</li> <li>• Support children with disabilities</li> <li>• Support indigenous children</li> <li>• Respect children's right to privacy</li> <li>• Involve children in decision making at all levels;</li> <li>• Involve children in monitoring implementation of CRC</li> <li>• Inclusion in debates about globalisation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Active involvement in decision making at all levels</li> <li>• Improved awareness of and respect for children's rights</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Free expression of views</li> </ul>
Other concerns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Asian Economic Crisis</li> <li>• HIV/AIDS Peace</li> <li>• Anti-poverty</li> <li>• Natural disasters</li> <li>• Community planning</li> <li>• Child rights</li> <li>• Mainstream planning for children</li> <li>• Strong information base</li> <li>• Monitoring systems</li> <li>• Good governance</li> <li>• 20 percent of budget</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Better government allocation to education and basic services</li> <li>• Human values (peace)</li> <li>• Environment</li> <li>• Support systems for children in conflict with the law</li> <li>• Better parent child relationships</li> <li>• More community provision for children</li> <li>• Access to information – especially Internet in rural areas</li> <li>• No to corporal and capital punishment</li> <li>• More support from donor countries</li> <li>• Assistance to children orphaned or affected by AIDS</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eradication of AIDS, prevention and testing, information and non-discrimination</li> <li>• Environment</li> <li>• Anti-poverty campaigns</li> <li>• Debt cancellation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Birth registration</li> <li>• HIV/AIDS</li> <li>• Better global mobilisation of resources for children</li> </ul>

None of the documents consulted for the research evaluation provide insights into the extent to which the text of *A World Fit for Us*, or the interventions of children and young people during Special Session activities, influenced the final drafting of *A World Fit for Children*. It seems as if the children were seen, and heard, but with little concrete effect on policies, even though Kofi Annan and others recognized that their presence ‘transformed the atmosphere’, ‘introduced their passions, questions, fears, challenges, enthusiasm and optimism’ and brought ‘their ideas, hopes and dreams’ (UNICEF, 2002a). It could be that this was all that could be pragmatically hoped for, but it is interesting to note, as will be seen in the next two chapters, that most of the children interviewed for the research evaluation claimed that they were taking decisions equally with adults. Indeed, children in The Philippines evaluation workshop also commented briefly on their involvement in decision-making processes, saying that they were happy that ‘Outcome documents are used to push our policy agenda (e.g. documents became reference material for the letter of support pushing for passage of ILO 182)’ and that they ‘Drafted or [were] able to draft documents that promote children’s rights’ (Save the Children UK The Philippines, 2002, 37).

## Afterwards

Regional child delegates’ suggestions for follow up to the Special Session included more national and regional level forums; ‘In terms of national follow up, almost all of the [children and young people] felt that a combination of education, leadership and advocacy, media recognition of children’s rights, and political action by governments and NGOs, as well as adults and [children and young people], would begin the process of promoting children’s rights and the respect for children at home’ (Chakraborty and Dragila 2002, 5). They had a number of related suggestions for action by adult agencies, but also stated their own intentions to create or work within existing children’s organisations, share their experiences widely with children and adults, write articles for the media, and become involved in national decision-making processes (ibid).

During CYP Forum III, children identified key trends in follow up to the Special Session in the region:

- media advocacy: There was an increase in youth media promoting CRC; government began covering CRC in media
- laws: There was often an introduction of new laws on protection or reinforcement of old laws; in some countries police now have to have CRC training

- NPA (National Plans of Action) for children: Governments were often more aware of the need to include C/YP in NPAs; many governments had sessions with NGO and C/YP to plan ahead for the next 10 years:
- campaigns: Campaigns on child advocacy generally increased
- conferences: National and international conferences on children's rights either increased or received more attention; conferences by and/or for children either increased or received more attention
- children's participation: Participation has generally increased; many C/YP are speaking in government assemblies to promote CRC; children's parliaments are being established.
- education: Many countries have included basic human rights in curriculum; increased establishment of child-friendly schools
- services: An increase in child-friendly hospitals; increase in C/YP community centres/specialized centres (for street youth, for example) (Chakraborty, 2002, 10).

Even by 2001, considerable concern was being expressed about follow up. Later, The Philippines 'Validation and Enrichment' report made three suggestions:

- monitoring of action plans – especially by children
- feedback mechanisms to keep people informed and updated
- time-bound resolutions (Save the Children UK, The Philippines, 2002).

These suggestions are both sensible and impractical, as is so often the case with evaluations. There are no structures in place, much less resources, for carrying out any one of them. Thus it is not surprising that one of Etherton's conclusions in 2002 was:

... there has been very little ordered follow up, certainly at regional level. Even young participants who may have been on a report distribution list either did not receive the report of the meeting they had attended; or, if they did, they were unable to deal with it because it was so linguistically inaccessible to them. This would argue for a very wide circulation eventually of the child-friendly version of *A World Fit for Children*. The responses of children and young people who attended the Third prepcom showed that they had they had received this document and really appreciated it (Etherton 2002 p. 56).

In addition, it was already being noted in 2002 that ‘children and young people who do keep in touch and who do become involved in follow up are those who have access to email and the Internet’ (Etherton, 2002, 57). Moreover, Etherton made two points in relation to East Asia and the Pacific that needed to be taken into account in future planning:

- children’s own initiatives are important and must be enabled
- adequate child protection policies are required (Etherton, 2002, 57).

Without an enabling environment, he says, ‘children’s participation will forever be dependent on the initiatives being taken by sympathetic adults with appropriate skills in facilitation’ (Etherton, *ibid*).

One source of follow-up material is the UNICEF ‘Voices of Youth’ web page, described as ‘A global website for young people to explore, discuss and take action on issues that affect them.’ When consulted in November 2003, regional content included leadership profiles of a boy from Fiji, and a girl from Vietnam. The profile of the Vietnamese girl, Thi Lan Ahn Ha aged 18 years, written one year after the Special Session, details a considerable number of follow-up activities by this girl, who had been a child rights activist from the age of 13 years, helped to prepare for the government presentation at the Special Session and, at the time when this notice was posted on the web page, was youth advisor to the government Committee for Family, Population and Children. However, there is no concrete information about follow-up activities, although this is probably a reflection of the kind of information used on web pages rather than an indication that no follow up was taking place ([http://www.unicef.org/voy/cgi-bin/zdisc.cgi?show\\_profiles\\_date\\_all\\_all\\_2003-05](http://www.unicef.org/voy/cgi-bin/zdisc.cgi?show_profiles_date_all_all_2003-05)).

In another section of the same webpage, ‘The Special Session lives on....’ some children (who seem to be youth journalists) were asked by UNICEF to ‘reflect on’ their experiences. Answers are posted from eight children to the questions ‘How might the experience have changed your life?’ (six answers) ‘What is your best memory of the Special Session on Children’ (four answers) and ‘What activities related to the Special Session have you been involved in since you returned to your country?’ (five answers). The East Asian girl on this part of the webpage is not among those who had detailed her post-Special Session activities, although she is eloquent about the change the experience had made in her personal view of life ([http://www.unicef.org/why/why\\_lives\\_on.htm](http://www.unicef.org/why/why_lives_on.htm)).

The negative effects of conference stress if children are not prepared for travel, new cultures and foods, being with strangers, and performing well in public are described in the analysis of The Philippines evaluation workshop, as well as being mentioned in some of the direct quotations from children. One child mentioned the negative behaviour of teachers once the conference is over and a child returns to school 'they seem to be insecure that the children are gaining more knowledge and experience from their participation in activities outside the school' (Save the Children UK The Philippines, 2002, 36).

### What did it cost?<sup>5</sup>

A financial assessment was not part of the terms of reference for the research evaluation, and yet the review of documentary evidence seems to indicate that this is a crucial factor (not least because 'time is money'). Because the process of preparing for children's participation was a collaborative effort between various NGOs and UNICEF, with some delegates sent by governments, no financial records were kept that could give a picture of the entire process. Researchers also suspected that a great deal of the resources NGOs put into the processes were voluntary work, or 'in kind' contributions, or made possible by people accepting low or symbolic fees.

One of the comments most frequently quoted by Etherton with respect to the East Asia and Pacific region seems to be Jay Wisecarver's call for 'more time, more money'. This included complaints about money not being available early enough, or in sufficient quantity: 'If not more [money], then a clear commitment early in the process' and 'Everyone knew the [Save the Children] commitment was made by February 2000, but not much action and no real financial commitment until over a year later' (Wisecarver in Etherton, 2002, 52 and 53).

Concern about financial resources was expressed from the start of planning for the Special Session, with international strategy suggesting setting up a trust fund, with contributions from governments, INGOS and NGOs, to help finance the participation of children from developing countries (International Save the Children Alliance, 2000). In 2001 it seemed to the regional Coordinating Committee as if money could be found from the embassies of Northern countries, and possible private sector support was mentioned (Minutes 18.01.01). The CYP Forum II guidelines for governments included a six point list of 'required support':

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<sup>5</sup> Information in this section is regarded as confidential, which means that, in general, references to documents are not given.

a regional pool of resources contributed to by every country and greater government commitment to support child participants in international forums (Forum II, 2). Minutes of various meetings reveal small sums being raised from a variety of sources, rather than a fundraising strategy. Money was 'found' somehow – a task with which small NGOs are all too familiar. But this was also probably at the cost of NGOs' own effective participation as organisations (compared to individuals from organisations who accompanied children).

The amounts of money required are both relatively modest and cripplingly expensive, depending on the way the accounts are conceptualised. For one child and an accompanying adult to travel from a Southeast Asian country to New York to attend the Children's Forum and Special Session, just under US\$6,000 was requested from the local UNICEF office, which included fares, visas, accommodation and per diem, but not medical insurance. For the actual meeting of CYP Forum I in Jomtien the total expenses were US\$14,348.68, an amount that does not take into consideration either preparatory activities, the expenses of which were borne by organisations selecting and sponsoring child delegates, or international travel expenses. Forum II appears on one set of accounts to have cost US\$19,502.56, but once again the travel and preparation costs are not included. Total airfare estimate for CYP Forum III at one point was \$80,000 with funds expected from private sector sources. Donors for this Forum included the regional Coordinating Committee (presumably from internal sources of members), UNICEF, Save the Children Australia, Norway, UK, but not the anticipated support from Northern embassies.

Because expenses were frequently shared between international organisations, or 'found' from discretionary sources, it is not possible to provide a clear account of the cost of children's participation in any of the 11 forums researched. There is no doubt that it must be more expensive for a child (with translator and chaperone) to attend an international meeting than it is for most adults. To the direct costs of attendance (which should include visas, travel insurance) must be added, as a minimum:

- preparatory processes – including selection of children
- recruitment and training of translators and chaperones
- preparation of children (including children-friendly materials)
- costs of specific children's forum before, during or after the adult meeting
- support for follow-up processes through which children can report back to their constituencies.

## Reflections

Descriptions of children's participation in adult forums tend to concentrate on the processes of facilitation, rather than on decision making, to note results and final statements, without describing discussions, and to list the positive outcomes in general terms. Exceptions occur in the children-influenced or written texts, which do record more details of discussions and methods of facilitation (CYP II, 2001, Oebanda et al, 2001, Chakraborty, 2002, 2003, Lee, 2003).

This analysis of secondary data has focused on disparities between child and adult declarations, in order to examine the influence children's opinions actually had on adult policy making. This consideration raised questions such as: What weight is given – or should be given to children's policy input? What if adults decide that children's input is ill-informed or unrepresentative or even use the pejorative term 'childish', implying that their capacities, in CRC terms, have not evolved sufficiently for their opinions to be taken seriously? In reality, according to these documents on international forums, adults tend to influence children's decision making, not only by limiting the knowledge of choices but also by deciding beforehand:

- what ideas or options children have to choose from
- what things children say that they listen to
- the criteria for children's competence.

Adult decision-makers (and others) appear to act as gatekeepers excluding certain views as well as certain children.

However, according to evidence from the data presented in this chapter, children seem to realise that policies made at the international level are less important than their implementation at national and local levels. Their requests tend to be directed less at 'world leaders' than at their own governments. It might then be argued (as one of the respondents who will be quoted in the next chapter suggests) that it is more important first to organise children's participation at the local level – where policy hits the ground – than to spend considerable time and effort ensuring their presence at high-profile international meetings.

Another question for reflection is 'If participation in the Fifth Mincon and Special Session was successful – as the formal outcome documents

claim – why was it necessary to negotiate space for children to participate in the Sixth Mincon?’ Or in other words, ‘When the planning had been so consistent, why does it seem that the wheel continued to be reinvented?’

The final reflection from this chapter is picked up from documents written by children from Southeast, East Asia and the Pacific themselves, in which they seem to feel obliged to thank adults for being ‘very kind’ and to ask them ‘respectfully’ to be granted access to rights enshrined in international law. It seems that children in this region, like their peers in Latin America, tend to see participation as a ‘concession from adults’ rather than as a right, a ‘spiritual excellence’ somewhat like happiness, which is worth pursuing but cannot be gained absolutely.



# OFF THE RECORD: PRIMARY DATA FROM THE RESEARCH

Data were collected directly from adults and children using five different methods, the choice of which owed more to the need to collect and analyse information from a variety of scattered sources than to any participatory methodology. All methods used focused on issues of organisation, selection, preparation, views of children and adults and their experiences during forums, as well as outcomes, decision making and follow up. Like the preceding chapter, this chapter is organised according to the answers obtained under these headings from adults and children using different research tools. Table 11 shows the amount of data collected from adults and children using the different research tools. As three adults participated in two different research tools, the total number of adults in the research was 37, of whom three were ‘controls’ from outside the region who had been involved in the Special Session in some way, and three from within the region whose work involves children’s participation but who had not been involved directly in any of the 11 forums. Four of the children were ‘controls’ who had not attended any of the 11 forums, but had attended others, two from the Indonesia case study and two from Malaysia. This chapter begins by describing how the development of a large sample was limited by the nature of secondary data available about forum participation by children.

**Table 11: Data collected using different research tools**

Research tool	Number of pieces of data	Collected from	
		Adults	Children
Recall sheet	3	3	0
Semi-Structured interviews	27	16	11
Questionnaires	26	14	12
Unstructured interviews	6	6	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>23</b>

## Samples

As already mentioned, attempts to develop a research universe of all children and young people who had taken part in all 11 forums were in themselves revealing (Table 12). Lack of accuracy about numbers of children attending forums and how to contact them is notable in all secondary data. Even the official number of 404 children said by UNICEF to have attended the Special Session was challenged by one regional organiser who reviewed a draft of this Report, suggesting that the figure should have been larger (perhaps because youth journalists would have been counted in this total). Documents relating to CYP Forum II illustrate this tendency to imprecision, despite being more detailed than reports from other forums. According to the introduction to the report, CYP Forum II was attended by an unspecified number of children and young people from nine countries<sup>9</sup>. According to the press release appended to the same report, 34 children from 10 countries attended. The participants' list at the end of the report gives the names of 48 'participants and accompanying adults', four facilitators (at least one of whom researchers know to have been around 18-19 years of age), eight support staff and 10 organisers (at least two of whom probably did not attend this Forum). This total of 70 persons does not match the list in the electronic file 'final contacts list', which was provided to researchers by three different organisers and lists 62 people, with no indication about ages or role in the Forum.

Table 12, which also shows the response rate for questionnaires, is an interesting datum in its own right. It demonstrates that many of the 152 children from around the region who attended the 11 forums between 2000 and 2003 could not be contacted at the end of 2003, even with considerable effort. In Indonesia alone, three local researchers spent a month trying to carry out interviews, only to find that 11 children out of 27 (two-fifths) had apparently vanished (Appendix 1). There are various reasons for this, but the main contributing factor is that organisations, which had sent these children as national delegates to international high-level forums, had simply not kept in contact.

Another significant factor is the number of children on the participants' lists who had personal email addresses. This indicates access to a computer and/or the Internet, which could be through an Internet café but certainly gave the advantage to urban, literate, English-speaking children. As other data reveal, the child delegates in general were an educationally

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<sup>9</sup> Cambodia, PR China, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Mongolia, The Philippines, Republic of Korea and Viet Nam

**Table 12: Universe of child delegates, by country, questionnaires sent and responses**

Country	Total number of child delegates to the 11 forums <sup>a</sup>	Number of questionnaires				
		Sent by mail	Not delivered	Delivered	Returned completed	Not returned
Cambodia	7	4	0	4	0	4
China	11	10	8	2	1	1
Hong Kong	5	4	0	4	2	2
Indonesia	27(16) <sup>c</sup>	4	4	0	0	0
Japan	6	2	0	2	1	1
Lao PDR	11	5	1	4 <sup>d</sup>	0	4
Malaysia	20	10	5	5	4	1
Mongolia	10	5	4	1	1	0
Pacific Islands <sup>b</sup>	12	6	5	1	1	0
The Philippines	12	6	6	0	0	0
Republic of Korea	9	4	3	2	1	1
Thailand	11	3	2	1	1	0
Timor Leste	3	0	0	0	0	0
Viet Nam	8	4	3	1	0	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>152 (141)</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>10 (12) <sup>e</sup></b>	<b>15</b>

a. Not including Myanmar, for which no information was available about whether people named as attending forums were adults or children;

b. Fiji, Palau, Papua New Guinea, and Tuvalu;

c. Of the 27 child delegates in Indonesia, 11 were interviewed and 12 could not be traced, see Appendix 1;

d. Only one questionnaire was sent to a child's personal email address; the remainder were sent to Save the Children (which had been named on forum lists as the contact) and no response of any kind was received;

e. One questionnaire contained a non-repairable virus and could not be opened, subsequent attempts to contact the child were not successful; in another case, the focal point sent the interview form instead of the questionnaire, so the return was analysed with interviews rather than with questionnaires.

and socially 'elite' group. Indeed, some respondents replied to researchers from English-speaking countries outside Asia, where they were following university degree courses.

A further factor, which is of particularly poignant significance in view of the 'lost' group of children, was the high response rate from those child delegates and former delegates whom it was possible to contact: more than two fifths returned completed questionnaires (a good response for postal/email questionnaires) and some spontaneously offered to answer additional questions from researchers.

Research results do not always come about through successful analysis of collected data; they are also the product of reflecting on why data could not be collected. Some conclusions of this Report are related to the frustrations of seeking respondents. There had been no comprehensive or centralised documentation of child participants to the forums. The process of developing national lists of child participants for the research took a month rather than the anticipated couple of days; involving researchers, focal points and respondents. Children were not always named adequately, or their addresses were provided care of an adult in an organisation, who might be a temporary consultant rather than a member of staff. In several cases, the email messages sent to an adult or organisation, with a child's name in the subject line, elicited no response at all; in others the child's own email address was no longer valid. Some children appear to have kept in contact with each other (by email in several cases), but adults have not consistently kept in contact with children – even those children who had been specifically groomed for participation or facilitation. As already stated, children who had outgrown childhood were often discovered at university addresses. Adults in organisations that had organised children's involvement could not always organise contacts for the researchers.

Gender was not always given in the lists of participants, so it is not possible to state if the gender ratio of children who responded reflects the gender distribution for participation in forums. However, regional organisers were not only transparent in interviews and questionnaires about the fact that they tended to select children they already knew, or had had contact with, they were also clear that they made every effort to ensure gender parity. In some cases this was not easy. The status of girls in the region remains lower than that of boys. Girls are less likely to be in school, or to

**Table 13: Gender of children and adults participating in the research**

	Male	Female	Total
Children	10	14	24
Adults	15	16	31
<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>55</b>

remain there after primary levels. If recruitment took place in schools this has to be seen as a factor. All the evidence gathered in this research points to the tendency for educated, urban boys to be easier to identify as participants. Organisers were clear that they had to make definite efforts to seek out not only girls, but also children from excluded groups, such as child workers or children with disabilities. It was not uncommon for a girl participant also to be the bearer of other exclusion factors – rural-dwelling, working, with disability for example. Therefore it is interesting to note that there were more girls than boys among the children and young people responding to the research. This is explained by looking at the breakdown according to the type of research tool. Boys were easier to trace through email addresses – they were probably more likely to have personal email addresses and access to the Internet, so they predominate among questionnaire respondents. This is likely to reflect higher economic status, as well as the greater access to technology and education among males. However, among the children interviewed, most were girls. As these interviews took place in Indonesia this reflects the greater ease of tracing girls, who are less mobile than boys because they do not go away from home to study or work.

This tends to confirm the data on gender from secondary sources. According to Etherton, at the regional level [for meetings up to September 2001] just over half the young participants involved in the process were girls; exactly half at the international level – meaning Special Session – although other secondary data shows two thirds of overall New York participants to have been girls. Approximately 5 per cent were under 15 years of age at the regional level, which then rose to 15 per cent at the international level. There was an urban bias at the regional level that rose to 70 per cent at the international level. Very few children with disabilities participated at the regional level and their numbers declined further in New York (Etherton, 2002).

## Ages and roles of respondents

Of the 23 children in the total sample, 11 were delegates, two facilitators and two youth journalists. One of the child delegates had also become a youth facilitator for later forums in the series, after passing the age of 18 years. In fact, at the time of the research (although not at the time of their participation in the forums) ten of these children were adults. Of the remaining 11 for whom age data were available, one was aged 14 years, two 15 years, five 16 years and three 17 years. The largest single national group was the 11 who were part of the Indonesian case study and included the two youth journalists and two from the control group. The remaining children were from China and Hong Kong (three), Malaysia (one, plus two control group), Mongolia (one), Pacific islands (one), Republic of Korea (two) and Thailand (one). With the exception of the children and young people in the Indonesian case study, with whom communication took place in *Bahasa*, the children and young people were English-speaking and accessible by email.

The adults who took part in unstructured and semi-structured interviews or answered questionnaires were chaperones, facilitators, delegates, documenters or organisers. Two of the chaperones also had roles in different meetings as facilitators and organisers. Indeed multiple roles and responsibilities seem to have been typical of adult involvement in these forums and it is often not possible to categorise respondents exactly. Organisers had both regional and national roles, which occasionally overlapped, particularly in the case of regional staff based in Thailand who might also be involved in Thai national processes. Adults came from various agencies: 17 from international, five from local NGOs, four from donor agencies and two from government. Only one of the adults was under 30 years of age at the time of the research, the remainder were more or less evenly split between people in their thirties (12) and those over 40 years of age (13). Adults were sometimes not nationals of Southeast, East Asia and Pacific countries nor, if they were from the region, were they always nationals of the country in which they worked. They were based in Cambodia, Indonesia, The Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam.

## Coverage of forums

A total of 52 respondents completed either the semi-structured interview or the questionnaire (in slightly different versions for adults and children) (Table 13). All had attended one or more of the 11 forums in the study, with the exception of four children and three adults, who had experience of attending national and/or international forums in the region other than those that were the focus of the research evaluation. Control group adults from outside the region had been to the Special Session, including one who had attended all three Prepcoms. Sixteen adults were interviewed using the semi-structured interview schedule, and between them they had attended all the forums. At least two had been present at each of the other forums, five in the Special Session itself and six at the Sixth Ministerial Consultation in Bali. At least one of the adults who responded to the questionnaire had attended all meetings except CYP Forum II, four were at the Special Session, and 12 were involved in follow-up activities with children. Unstructured interviews were also held with some key organisers, some of whom also responded to the semi-structured interview, the recall method or the questionnaire. This made it possible to approach the same topic from different angles with some of the adults who had been involved most intensely over the entire time period.

All 11 children interviewed were from Indonesia and were interviewed in *Bahasa*. They included two youth journalists and two 'controls' who had attended forums other than those in the research evaluation. Of the eight children interviewed who had been delegates at forums in the research evaluation, all had also attended national forums. Only one had been to the Special Session and one to each of the Regional Ministerial Consultations. In addition, one had attended CYP Forum I, one CYP II and four CYP III.

As Table 11 shows, twelve children responded to the email questionnaire in English, including two controls who had attended other international forums since the Sixth Ministerial Consultation in Bali. Four had been at CYP Forum I, three in the Fifth Mincon, five at the Special Session, three at CYP Forum II, five at CYP Forum III, one at the CYP Prepcom in Bangkok and two at the Sixth Mincon Bali. Two had considerable international experience during the period 2001 to 2003, having been delegates to a total of four meetings (CYP Forums I, II and III, the Fifth Mincon and the Special Session). This means that, in spite of there being only a small number of responses from child delegates, the spread of experience represented by the data is large (Table 12).

**Table 14: Forums attended by child and adult respondents**

Name and date of forum	Number of research participants (semi-structured interviews and questionnaires) who attended	
	Children	Adults
Preparatory Meeting 1, New York, 2000	0	2
Preparatory Meeting 2, New York, 2000	0	5
East Asia Pacific Regional planning meeting, Bangkok, Thailand, 2001	0	7
East Asia Pacific Regional Children and Young People Forum 1, Jomtien, Thailand, 2001	4	13
5 <sup>th</sup> East Asia Pacific Regional Ministerial Consultation, Beijing, PR China, 2001	3	5
Preparatory Meeting 3, New York, 2001	0	3
East Asia Pacific Children and Young People Forum 2, Vientiane, Lao PDR, 2001	8	4
Special Session, New York, 2002	6	6
East Asia Pacific Children and Young People Forum 3, Seoul, South Korea	10	4
Preparatory Conference for the 6 <sup>th</sup> Ministerial Consultation, Bangkok, Thailand, 2003	1	6
6 <sup>th</sup> East Asia Ministerial Consultation, Bali, Indonesia, 2003	5	10

Note: Some adults, but no children, attended all 11 Forums

## Organisation

Primary data about how the processes of children’s participation in the forums began and developed in the region came largely from organisers in unstructured interviews, recall sheets, semi-structured interviews and questionnaires. Perhaps the degree of collaboration enjoyed by people from different organisations and countries (Asian and non-Asian) can be judged from the high level of agreement between responses from all respondents and all research tools. There seems to have been general agreement that the entire experience had been a learning process. ‘adults and children [were] learning together’. Looking back, in an unstructured interview, to the beginning in 2000, one organiser described the approach as highly pragmatic:

'OK', we said, 'We have no resources available and we don't know where to start'. So we started with the forum we were going to hold anyway...and that's where I saw how possible it is for children to participate and understand their opportunities and how they could, and would like to, participate and the issues they would like to bring up.

Confirming impressions from secondary data, another organiser said:

We were finding out as we went along and documenting as we went along. There were reports after every meeting, plus the Yahoo groups [Internet communication], but some documents were deleted. Notes from meetings were especially useful, because we did not have to keep rehashing and people travelling [unable to attend a meeting] could still report...In the three CYP Forums young people were involved in documenting and this recorded *their* feelings.

According to the same respondent, processes in this region were triggered by two factors: In the first place 'NGOs pushing for it challenged UNICEF'. But, rising to the challenge, 'UNICEF worked well with NGOs and meetings' even though at the national-level UNICEF support varied from country to country and 'that affected things'. In the second place:

[The Coordinating Committee] was a meeting of minds from the first get together. Everyone agreed from the start on the importance of participation, but also the importance of participation in the Special Session not being 'one-off'. A two-year programme with sustainability was the vision.

The Committee, which had almost the same composition throughout the three-year period, began relatively informally, gaining its awkward name because, as one member said, 'we could not find the right [one]'. But the name was less important than the 'chemistry' – a key feature of which was 'we decided against tokenism'.

Organisers also agreed that structure was important in ensuring that the regional Coordinating Committee was effective. One agency, Save the Children, took the lead and acted as facilitator, in close collaboration with the regional office of UNICEF; 'There was someone who continually brought it all together' and there was continuity of individuals working from this focal point and from within all institutional members. Meetings were well planned in advance, a feature commented on by organising adults, corroborated by documentary evidence from minutes and

supporting documents. In addition, it was important that all the major international organisations were represented, including local voices through their partners, providing an impressive breadth of experience, variety of approaches to children's participation and access to people at many levels across the region.

The organising group wanted child participation to be 'unavoidable'. The general environment in the region was conducive – an 'enabling environment' – because of existing networks and partnerships. The first objective was to prepare children better through national forums before CYP Forum I: 'What we did [then] laid the groundwork for open-ended, participatory work'. For example 'the Mongolia National Forum came up with their own criteria for selecting the delegates to Jomtien'. Although 'Malaysia consistently sent young people, but not apparently as the result of national processes', 'Mongolia was well prepared on the basis of national forums, basically due to personal input of agency staff, individuals who pushed strongly'.

By 2001, according to organisers' memories, most countries had recognisable national processes and the Special Session was an opportunity to present two years of experience. East Asia and the Pacific (regions were named during the Special Session according to UNICEF regional offices) was the only region that had a two-day preparatory meeting in New York, or to have a debriefing meeting afterwards. And one organiser reminded researchers that 'in Seoul in December 2002 was part of the original plan'. According to another organiser's observations of the Special Session, prior organisation was the reason solidarity as a regional group developed, rather than 'a set of NGO delegations'; 'Asia Pacific is usually unprepared', but the children, some of whom already knew each other from previous meetings, 'were very strong'. The Pacific countries according to this respondent 'just picked up on the Special Session – Pacific did not want to be a separate region'. Regional differences were also underlined by another factor, in the memory of an organiser from an African country, who commented that 'children could not meet across countries or regions at UNGASS unless they spoke English'.

## **Selection**

With respect to selection of delegates, the primary data reveal the same concerns as those described repeatedly in documents. The Southeast, East Asia and Pacific region was not alone in this. The African

NGO-based organiser referred to a similar range of problems. In her country, the process began with the 'Say Yes for Children' campaign, through which committees were formed nationwide, with endorsement from the Head of State providing credibility. Committees selected children, using guidelines that children had helped to draw up. But selection took place largely in schools, which meant that teachers, who did not understand participation, tended to seize control and select boys. Yet a number of different organisations were involved, including health service personal, 'who had great outreach'. The children selected by these means met as a group several times to learn about the Special Session and child participation, as well as to rank the Global Movement rallying calls.

Similarly both one organiser and one child participant identified existing structures as part of the enabling environment in the Southeast, East Asia and Pacific region. The participatory meeting for CYP Forum I was already being planned as input to the Fifth Mincon when the Coordinating Committee began to plan for the Special Session, ongoing work that provided a good foundation. A series of culture camps organised by Child Workers in Asia had a double advantage; they were meetings at which child leaders who were possible delegates were identified, as well as opportunities for both adults and children to experience and learn about participation. Despite the anti-tokenism consensus and a vision of democratic, non-discriminatory elections by children or children, organisers were forced to deal with a reality in which children's participation is little recognised and certainly not institutionalised. Government and NGO processes for selecting children were bound to be different – even after the government guidelines drawn up at CYP Forum II. From the beginning, and throughout the process, NGO organisers were obliged to do what they could to maintain their principles, while not allowing these to get in the way of actual representation of regional children at the Special Session. Fair representation was maintained as far as possible by a set of largely implicit ground rules, summed up in interview by an organiser as trying to ensure equal representation by country, by gender, and of excluded groups, as well as encouraging the selection of children who were leaders of their peer group and had had prior exposure to participation in adults' meetings at national level.

Six of the adults who were interviewed using the semi-structured interviews had been directly involved in at least one selection process for the forums. They were given a list of descriptions to choose from, with possible answers indicating a variety of processes, from adult selection

to democratic election. They replied according to all the processes they had been involved in, each of which might have included more than one method. In total they had had direct experience of 41 selection processes. The most common form, over a quarter of those mentioned (11), had relied on children’s prior membership of an organisation, close to half (18) had depended on adult decisions, although ‘democratic election’ processes were referred to 12 times (Table 15).

**Table 15: Selection processes experienced by six adult interviewees**

Selection process	Number of mentions
Adults selected children and young people without consultation	6
Adults selected children and young people with consultation	8
Adults advised children and young people about selection from within a small group	4
Adults and children/young people arranged a democratic selection process together	4
Children and young people organised a democratic selection process together	8
Children and young people were members of an organisation that already had a delegate/representative for such an event/process	11

Table 15 tends to confirm the evidence from secondary data that that there was very little coherence in the selection process from country to country or for different forums. Unstructured interviews and recall sheets showed that some children were selected because they had already experience of being delegates; although not necessarily democratically selected they had experience of regional/national forums. One former child delegate responding to a questionnaire confirmed this. After being selected by his school for a national forum ‘because I spoke the best English in my school’, he was subsequently selected as a delegate for CYP Forum III, where he was elected to participate in the Sixth Mincon, first experiencing CYP Prepcon II. Another boy said that he was chosen by teachers at school and then ‘step by step by UNICEF’. This mix identification and selection by adults followed by election by children is not uncommon in the data. Children might be said to have ‘participation careers’.

The recognition of children’s increasing capacity as they attend more forums is also a criterion mentioned in the children’s selection list from CYP Forums II and III. According to one adult respondent to the recall sheet, children seldom had much input to early planning but, by the time

they reached the forums they had increasing input in planning 'day by day'. Comments in data from another method, but from the same respondent, describe 'active key' children who 'were representatives of each country delegation who sat in briefing and debriefing meetings' and were of considerable assistance to meeting processes.

Child interviewees and respondents to questionnaires were more explicit about the selection processes than adults, although here again they provided a variety of answers. All forms of selection, from adult selection with no consultation, to children who were already delegates of organisations, were given more or less equal mention. Children's comments, however, were more revealing – and occasionally disturbing. One claimed never to have been involved in any selection process, another stated that 'There were only two candidates that could meet the criteria, and one candidate was leaving so there was only me who became a candidate. No children's meeting was required for this'. Two others described more structured forms of selection:

We are selected by [two international NGOs]. With two representatives from each. I was selected in the child forum of [one of the NGOs];

Using the [national] Children's Congress the delegates divided into four discussion groups and each group proposed criteria for electing children. Then there was a big plenary and candidates were selected using a voting system. From ten candidates five were selected for the Bali Ministerial Consultation.

Others refer to the reasons why they were selected; because of child rights activism, including with government: 'chosen at the first national children's forum 'due to my better performance'. Researchers asked one organiser in an unstructured interview why all the representatives from a particular country were girls and received the answer that 'it just happened', but 'girls are more vocal and active'. Children in control groups, who had not been involved in the 11 forums in the research evaluation, told similar stories. One reported being chosen through being involved with an NGO, with other contacts and actions at national level following, stating that prior preparation boosted confidence; 'It opened my eyes and in some aspects touched my heart'. Another reported being chosen as a government delegate because of prior experience with NGOs and involvement in the National Plan of Action. Regional organisers were aware of the fact that some child participants: 'were an exclusive bunch, not representative of the region – we were concerned about this'.

But this tendency was not restricted to Southeast, East Asia and the Pacific. The African organiser interviewed had a similar story to tell. In her country, 'UNICEF selected two children from international schools and wealthier background, who were 'eloquent in English'. Other children asked how and why they were selected because they were 'not representative of us', but these confident, articulate children tended to dominate the national group during the Special Session.

When children are chosen by adults for their 'superior' qualities or because of parental contacts, this can make even their elite peers feel excluded. One girl who was chosen said:

When I heard that other children are not chosen it feels bad...Like just going and participating in international events because his or her mama, papa works there or something...They're just going there to have fun...It is really bad.

Adults and children commented on the exclusion of children from certain groups, for example, organising adults who responded as an institutional group to the questionnaire commented that:

A lot of children victimised by commercial sex were sidelined [in CYP Forum I, CYP Prepcon II, Sixth Mincon] by more forward, direct and articulate western [sic] children. More qualified facilitators could improve the level and quality of child participation.

Perhaps it is not surprising that some children not only answered the questions about forms of selection, but also chose to remark on selection in the open-ended section for comments at the end of both interview and questionnaire:

Do not only chose clever children or students, because there are a lot of children who were uneducated in [country]. If the clever children attend the forums they will be cleverer than before and the others will be left behind.

I am talented, so I was selected as a delegate. I was never involved in any selection process. Children should be involved in selection for international meetings; that would enable us to learn more.

They should follow a selection process – not just appoint a child to be a delegate.

## Preparation

Once children have been selected to take part in a meeting, and have given their consent, it is clearly important for them to be informed about what to expect. Indeed, they should properly be informed about what the meeting is about and what their role is expected to be, before giving their consent. With respect to the Special Session, one organiser from the region commented in interview, ‘there were guidelines for NGOs but we still got delegates who were not prepared. There were 20 from [country] who had very little idea what was going to happen’. One complicating factor for the organisers was that, because children’s participation in international meetings is in its infancy, many adults also did not know what to expect. Recalling the situation in 2001, another organiser wrote,

we were still trying to understand what the [Special Session] process was, so [children] did not understand at all. We still did not know what questions needed answering. [We] needed to be involved in a longer process, but [did not have] time to be able to accommodate.

Researchers, likewise, did not have clear notions about what children and adults would need to know, and have done, before travelling to another country and taking part in a meeting that would, in all likelihood, take place in an unaccustomed environment both physically and organisationally, and probably in another language, which they could only understand through interpretation. All research tools included lists of aspects related to preparation, with questions about whether these had been included in children’s preparation. Children were asked directly if these had been part of their pre-forum experiences (including a space for any other preparatory aspects to be specified), and adults if ‘to their knowledge’ children had been prepared in each of these respects. Both children and adults were also asked, in separate questions, about practical arrangements made before travelling:

- information and guidance about travel
- information and guidance about culture and food
- information about safety
- background information about the event/process
- information about the Agenda
- information about the other participants
- information about the organisation and process
- information about children’s participation
- practice at public speaking (including use of microphones)

- capacity-building about behaviour in meetings
- how, and by whom, were arrangements for tickets, passports and visas made for children's participation in international meetings
- were children covered by health insurance during travel and meetings.

As experience developed, preparation improved. According to one organiser's recall form, before CYP Forum I, children received almost no briefing, limited only to some aspects of the event. For all forums, the preparation, according to these accounts, seemed not to be standardised.

Eleven out of the 12 adults interviewed using the semi-structured interview said that children had been briefed before attending forums. Of the nine who answered in detail about the content of briefings all stated that children were informed about travel and about children's participation. In two cases these adults said that there was no guidance about different cultures or food, and in two no briefing about safety issues or how to behave in meetings. Three said that children were not given any help beforehand about public speaking (including use of microphones). Background information about the meeting, the agenda, other participants and organisational processes were also said to be missing by one respondent in each case. The greatest deficiency in preparation was mentioned by an NGO chaperone who reported that, for the meeting she attended, children were only briefed on travel, safety and children's participation. Judging by these responses, children might arrive disempowered at meetings. Sometimes it appears that adults thought children needed little preparation: 'I get the impression that all children who have attended regional events have attended national or regional events so they were already familiar with the processes'.

Eight of the children who had attended forums said during interviews that they were given some information beforehand; seven about travel and safety, six about culture and food, background information about the meeting and children's participation, five were provided with information about the agenda as well as about public speaking, but only four about the organisation and process of the meeting and how to behave. The preparation for one included taking English lessons, and another was informed about the problems of children from other countries who would attend the meeting. Children responding to questionnaires all mentioned preparation on the background to meetings, and all but one mentioned being briefed on children's rights, three quarters on travel and children's

participation and the agenda, and eight on safety, with other issues mentioned less frequently. One mentioned the UNICEF website as a prior source of information. Between Forum III and the Sixth Mincon, child delegates and others were updated through the regional electronic network set up by organisers towards the end of the period.

Only seven out of 11 adults responding to the query about whether health insurance was arranged were sure that children were covered by health insurance (recommended by UNICEF New York) when attending meetings, two definitely said that they were not and another two did not know. Seven of the eight children responding to this question said that they were covered by health insurance, but did not provide information about who paid for this. Travel arrangements were made by sponsoring organisations, with the exception of one child whose arrangements were made by his own family. The time required to obtain official documents, especially for children who might not have birth certificates, was mentioned as a problem by both children and adults in responses to various research instruments, and some children reported cases in which children were unable to travel because these arrangements had not or could not be made. Regional organisers might possibly agree with their African colleague who said that the postponement of the Special Session was 'a blessing in disguise'. Poor birth registration, she stated was 'an impediment' to obtaining passports – 'visas were easier'.

## **Experiences in forums**

Various sections in the research instruments were designed to explore whether children and adults felt the forums were 'children-friendly', creating an enabling environment in which children were empowered to express their opinions with confidence. In addition, both children and adults were asked about their perception of their performance during meetings.

As Roger Hart has written,

The typical conference is not ideal for adult participation and is particularly ill-suited to pre-adolescent children. Meeting with people for extended periods of time and using words as the primary medium of communication may work for some articulate teenagers but it is not an optimum structure for the participation of most young people, particularly pre-adolescents (Hart, 1997, 143).

One recall form respondent wrote that, at one forum, he was struck by ‘Chinese children in business suits’ who, he thought, ‘looked embarrassed/uncomfortable’. Other children wore national dress to forums, which according to another respondent, speaking in an unstructured interview, ‘They had not been asked to bring... they just did’. However, she added that during one cultural event ‘there was one girl with an elaborate dress from a privileged background, whose elaborate costume was an expression of wealth...the media latched on to this, which detracted from the message’. Poor children were limited to wearing their school uniforms, creating differences between children that might make them feel uncomfortable. Information about appropriate dress style, she suggested, might be part of preparation. At least one regional NGO made sure that children had warm clothes for the cooler air of New York in May, a consideration also mentioned by the African organiser. Children were, in some cases, provided with backpacks in which they could carry meeting documents. But the African organiser wondered if this kind of preparation might create unrealistic expectations. Echoing some feelings expressed by organisers in the Southeast, East Asia and Pacific region, she commented that, in this, as so many other aspects of organisation, ‘We kept asking ourselves “are we doing the right thing?”’

It is not surprising that some children referred to their diffidence while attending forums. For example, ‘Adult stiffness made us very stiff also’. Unless briefed beforehand about their role in the meeting – whether they were able to speak, be included in decisions or simply be observers – children could feel at the least puzzled, at the worst rejected. In unstructured interview, one organiser referred to children becoming ‘lost’ and said ‘they got mad, floating around not knowing what to do or what was their role’.

In the Fifth Mincon, as both an adult and a child recalled separately, children were not part of the drafting committee, they were invited into the press conference as audience only, and the atmosphere was very formal, not helped by the fact that children who were part of government representatives sat with their delegation, rather than with their peers who were sponsored by NGOs.

Although many of the children were from elite groups in society, they were still children and thus not always confident when dealing with adults:

In the [Sixth] MINCON we weren’t able to participate fully, or equally, with governmental participants...due to the fact that the government

officials we had to face were very high-ranked officials, and we children were nervous and shy in front of them [boy then 15 years old].

Adults and children reported that adults were not considerate in discussions ‘speaking too fast, mostly deciding without giving children a chance to give their input’. Interpreters were not always available. Confidence was also potentially diminished by the fact that, when they attended adults’ meetings, children were few in number compared to adults, which almost certainly prompted Lee Sang-Don’s comments that child forums are more participatory than events such as the Sixth Mincon. In Bali, nevertheless, one adult recalled that children were located together in a block near the Chair of the meeting, which meant that a message was given about child solidarity. They could easily be seen if they raised their hands, even though they were behind the government delegates, and also had two cordless microphones to use, although an unspoken, much resented ‘message’ was given by the fact that adults were provided with bottles of water, while children were not. This illustrates the need to prepare adults who organise and attend adults’ forums where children are present. Children complained that adults were bad at presenting material in forums; they used adult language. As one adult also commented in interview ‘...in general often underestimated children’s capacity – whereas what was lacking was their own ability to understand and deal with children’s participation.’ Even if they did try to accommodate children’s presence with changes in their own meeting behaviour, poor comprehension of children’s abilities might still act as an obstacle. One adult commented that some adult delegates were ‘patronising’ using ‘words for small children’, so that child speakers ‘did not know where to pitch their language’.

Outside the meeting halls, there were almost no complaints about accommodation or food, which were reported to be always the same as adults. One Muslim child complained about having to look for food in restaurants outside the Special Session, and said that it was difficult to find out if the meat being served was pork. Another said that rice was served ‘one by one to the children, like in a jail’, and ‘sometimes I was not happy with the food’. However, the fact that children and adults were left largely to their own devices searching for suitable food in New York restaurants was reported by one adult in a semi-structured interview to have promoted solidarity between the two age groups. Participants from the region often made comments similar to the statement of the African organiser, that ‘New York was overwhelming’, but ‘exciting’.

## Performance of children and adults during meetings

Each forum provided learning opportunities, which often seem to have been based on adults and children observing and assessing and learning from each others' behaviour. In the Sixth Mincon, for example, one child observed that adults relaxed after a while, 'they leaned back a little and let us express our views and control the movement of the meeting'. But the same child also judged that some children 'were a bit too quiet'. In interviews and questionnaires, adults and children were asked to rank certain aspects of the performance of both adults and children during meetings, as 'good', 'average' or 'poor'. Although the wording varied slightly between the research tools used with adult and children, they were all asked to rank the following aspects of the meeting, with respect to the performance of adults and children:

- knowledge of the issues
- attention/concentration
- paying attention to meeting rules
- quality of presentations
- quality of interventions
- listening to adults
- listening to children
- quality of final report.

Children were more self-critical than adults about some aspects, such as keeping to meeting rules and listening to each other, but thought they had more knowledge, better concentration and listened to adults better: 'We listen to adults depending on how they presented. If they were interesting children were motivated to follow what they were saying and pay attention'. One child commented that adults did not seem to take them seriously and made humorous comments to other adults – 'children's forums were better'. Another child said that in adult forums 'we only sit and listen...we only give an opinion in children's forums'.

Not all adult interviewees answered this question, and it is worth remembering that adult and children perceptions of good and bad performances differ; as other researchers have pointed out, 'Children are judged by adults more on their performance (style and articulation) than on the content of what they say' (Invernizzi and Milne, 2002, 417). Nevertheless some of the replies are interesting. Adults often rated children's performance higher than their own – on knowledge of the issues, concentration, quality of presentations and interventions, and

especially in listening to adults and to each other. They rated both adults and children equally highly in terms of attention to meeting rules and often added comments to their ranking:

Children were highly committed and motivated, they appeared significantly knowledgeable on topics, the purpose of the meeting, their inputs were meaningful, and they made powerful statements and clearly desired to follow up.

One adult revealed a sympathetic attitude towards children's different ways of working, 'They played to work. That is a good way for children to openly express their thinking'.

Adult respondents to questionnaires rated their own knowledge, attention, listening skills and presentation higher than children did, but they also rated children's knowledge, attention, presentations, interventions, listening skills and attention to meeting rules higher than children did themselves. Organisers in particular noted that children frequently impressed adult delegates with their ability to contribute in their own ways to the meeting. The 'commitment board', which all delegates signed at the end of the Sixth Mincon, according to one adult's written recall:

Was a product of a brainstorming session very much praised by all delegates; the children's report was truly a collective endeavour of the children; from putting into concrete sentences what they wanted to say to critiquing the draft text, revising it and approving the final text (with facilitator facilitating debates on certain words or statements and technically putting text in PowerPoint presentation form) the children were ingenious at confronting the limitation that at most three children can be accommodated to do the report.

This organiser also confirmed Lee Sang-Don's observation that, although the report was primarily presented by three children selected by the group, it was also the child delegates' idea to 'have each child say something to match their photos on the PowerPoint screen'.

At the same meeting, due to the fact that children 'persisted' in their interventions, as one child commented, 'adults sat up and paid attention'. In other adult forums, several respondents, both children and adults, noted that adult government delegates congratulated children on their

presentations and interventions and as a result, in one case, official presentation of a country report was shared between a child delegate and adult head of delegation.

As Kofi Annan commented in *The State of the World's Children 2003*, adults were impressed by the energy of children's interventions within the formal UN setting. But one adult also shared doubts, about the long-term impact, in response to a questionnaire:

Children worked very hard planning, organising and performing ...They often worked right through the night to perfect their presentation. Their messages were always clear and strong, and the children always did an excellent job. They were very satisfied after performing and took great pride in their performance. [Yet] Most adults did the 'Aww, how cute/nice/pretty' thing. They watched and participated in the children's presentation. But did they take the children's messages to heart? Not really.

In fact, adult opinions on this varied. In the final comments section of a questionnaire, another adult wrote that children's participation in the forums overall was a 'huge success' and 'first class' – 'it is remarkable how young people have managed to form solidarity in different forums ... adults had their eyes opened' and young people stopped adults 'from being too abstract'. Other adults expressed doubts:

[meeting organisers] tried to make participation visual so that it could easily become tokenism

By giving children these responsibilities maybe we diminish the value of childhood experiences

There was no time to orient adult delegates on how to work with children – although an atmosphere of respect was created; but adults did not do the same with their own processes; children from remote or poor backgrounds found continuing difficulties afterwards.

## **Facilitators, chaperones and translators**

Children's participation in international meetings, whether these are adult forums or children's meetings, is mediated not only by the adults who organise their attendance in various ways, but also by other adults who

facilitate their participation, accompany them for their protection and, where necessary, translate for them. An adult organiser recalled that, at the CYP Forum II, lessons were still being learned about these vital aspects – ‘still sorting out’ accompanying adults and translators and finding ‘how to get them best to support the CYP’. Adult facilitators were reported to learn from ‘hands on’ experience of facilitating children’s contributions. Another organiser commented in unstructured interview that children’s feedback on facilitation after one of the Prepcoms in New York was negative – ‘the children were frustrated’ – so changes were made for the Special Session.

Preparation for facilitators seems to have relied to a large extent on the considerable amount of information available from key organisers in continuous, often intense, interchanges, frequently through email. One facilitator regretted the lack of time available to train a particular child facilitator, but did not elaborate on the consequences. However in a later forum the same issue came up, there were ‘high expectations for child facilitators but ... insufficient time to meet and prepare prior to [the] forum’. Young facilitators were described as performing their roles effectively in another workshop, including leading discussion of complex issues, but another organiser said in an unstructured interview ‘We did not provide enough opportunities for young people to be facilitators and we did not really know what to do, so young people ended up doing smaller tasks’.

Direct questions were put to all respondents about whether facilitation made it easier for children to participate or was ‘obstructive’. Few children or adults gave negative feedback. Only one child said the facilitator was ‘obstructive’. In all cases, children had already met facilitators before travelling to forums, or knew a facilitator from a previous forum, and found them helpful. Adults answering semi-structured interviews tended to praise facilitators as ‘effective’ with only one using the term ‘obstructive’, and another stating that ‘they made assumptions about what children should be saying and what they meant’. One organiser offered the opinion in unstructured interview that

one facilitator had a particular national style which some people liked, while others did not...we felt we were being entertained all the time. It was a bit juvenile and people got frustrated. We need to draw on other methods of facilitation that are not theatrical. It was very touchy-feely, which is not typical of the region and looked odd in New York, where other regions were more businesslike. We need a roster [of facilitators] and more training.

As already commented in this Report, secondary data often lack detailed description of exactly how facilitators facilitate, or evaluation of the techniques they use. Responses to various research tools, from children and adults, provided some general descriptions of facilitation methods:

- non-threatening and creative approaches
- variety of activities
- not limited to verbal communication
- small group workshops
- gallery reporting by child reporter from each group
- sitting in circles rather than rows
- outputs posted on walls as visual aids
- sharing national songs and games as ‘energizers’.

Creation of an enabling environment also required children and an adult facilitator meeting some time in the day, before and after adult meetings, for feedback and ‘bonding’, as well as meetings with supportive translators. An important aspect, mentioned by five adults and two children, is that children attending adult forums should have their own ‘space’, with sufficient documents available and access to computers and the Internet, in order to prepare their own documents and presentations.

Comments on adults who accompanied children to forums were more varied. Chaperones and translators ‘sometimes overstepped the mark’ according to one adult questionnaire respondent. Another commented that they had a tendency to ‘shut off and mix with adults in the break times’. Similarly, one child commented that Special Session chaperones needed training and that ‘they had a lot of time for doing nothing after the Children’s Forum’.

Organisers were clearly concerned about chaperones – providing briefings, debriefings and guidelines for behaviour. Nevertheless, one organiser admitted that ‘there were some poor selections from some agencies, also some politics involved in selection’. It was interesting to note that one organiser from the region referred to her own double role as a chaperone to one forum as being a ‘nanny...making sure they ate and slept that we knew where they were and helping them to get their planning done’, while the African organiser referred to a chaperone who ‘took on a motherly (grandma) role’. Unstructured interviews in particular revealed some uncertainty among chaperones about what their role should be, which may relate as much to the ambiguity of the role designated by the United

Nations in New York as to inadequate preparation – at least with respect to the Special Session: ‘Chaperones were also new to New York. They were uncertain of the process, they did not know what to do, and they had difficulty guiding the children’.

In interviews and questionnaires, respondents were asked to tick terms in a list of 12 if, in their opinion, they described chaperone behaviour. The list of terms was mixed in the order in which they were presented in research tools, but consisted of three sets, which were categorised by researchers as:

- Negative effects on participation/empowerment
  - Domineering
  - Manipulative
  - Patronising
  - Over-protective
  
- Protection issues
  - Uncaring
  - Careless
  - Lazy
  - Uninterested
  - Put children at risk
  
- Positive terms
  - Sympathetic
  - Supportive
  - Facilitative

Given that more negative than positive terms were provided it is particularly notable that positive words were more frequently selected by respondents. Although chaperones were overwhelmingly said to be sympathetic and supportive, as well as mostly facilitative, negative aspects were noted by other adults, one ticking all unhelpful behaviour with the exception of ‘domineering’.

Four of these terms can be grouped under behaviour that disempowers children – when chaperones are domineering, manipulative, patronising or over-protective. The last two descriptions were ticked by four out of the seven non-chaperoning adults who answered this question. Some organisers said chaperones were patronising and that overprotection was a problem ‘not that they did not care but that they cared too much’.

Children’s assessments of chaperone behaviour, provided in interviews and questionnaires, were also generally positive (Table 16). The relatively low response to the term ‘facilitative’ may be due to this being an unfamiliar word to child respondents. The child giving the highest number of negative answers had been to four of the forums, including the Special Session. The children reporting being put at risk had both attended CYP Forum III. Chaperones seemed to be unable to step in at times to protect children: ‘We were really tired and we brought the tiredness home with us’.

**Table 16: Children’s assessment of chaperone behaviour, in interviews and questionnaires**

Negative words			Positive words		
Participation/empowerment			Word	Yes	Valid Answers
Word	Yes	Valid Answers			
			Sympathetic	14	19
Domineering	3	19	Supportive	17	19
Manipulative	1	19	Facilitative	11	19
Patronising	5	19			
Over-protective	5	19			
Protection					
Uncaring	0	19			
Careless	3	18			
Lazy	2	19			
Uninterested	2	19			
Put children at risk	4	15			

For the relatively elite group of accustomed meeting attenders who answered the questionnaire by email, the behaviour of chaperones did not prove to be such a problem as it did for the non-English speaking children interviewed in Indonesia, data from whom will be examined in the next chapter. However, one wrote that,

Chaperones usually gave us opinions and asked us to bring them up. Government officials that go with us usually tell us what to say to ‘guide’ interaction. We all speak of child rights when we were overseas but still are treated very much like babies.

The qualities of translators were not examined through formal questions during the research, but unstructured interviews and open-ended questions in semi-structured interviews and questionnaires elicited some comments. An adult wrote 'Translation not always available consistently... Children found it difficult to listen to translation, but high attention to children's presentations and the presentations of adults', while another criticised translation as 'inadequate'. However, descriptions refer to specific forums. An organiser recalled that simultaneous translation helped the smooth facilitation of the day of preparation for children before the Fifth Mincon.

## Decision making

For researchers, decision making was perhaps the most difficult aspect of the forums to assess. In closed questions in both interviews and questionnaires, children and adults were asked to mark any of the following forms of decision-making style that they had experienced or observed during forums:

- Children were visibly present but did not make decisions
- Adults controlled the decisions and opinions of children
- Children were taking decisions but not equally with adults
- Children were taking decisions equally with adults
- Other (please specify).

The responses were of course subjective, and the options do not cover all eventualities. However, both adults and children tended to chose 'Children were taking decisions but not equally with adults'. Additional comments, both under the category of 'other' and in final comments in semi-structured interviews and questionnaires, as well as during unstructured interviews, showed some differences between adult and child impressions of decision making.

Adults tended to be more guarded than children, 'in the end, a child's vote will never be equal to government', 'they were equal representatives, but the governments make the decision'; and the perceptive comment that 'children were taking the same role as NGO adults, they took decisions but not equally with governments'. However, children's attempts to influence official decisions were praised by one organiser: 'in official forums the decision-makers were definitely adults but adults

were not controlling the opinions of children, which are articulate, clearer than adults...If children had not been there, governments would have been more conservative. They were challenged’.

Children’s views of the style of children’s participation in decision making varied as widely as those of adults, although few children answered this question at all. Researchers suspected that they either did not fully understand the descriptions provided, or perhaps did not have expectations about being involved in decision making. An adult comment written on a questionnaire reflected on this issue:

They felt that they were being listened to, and this made them feel good about their representation. But, at the same time, they were almost unaware how adults had directed their answers, the agenda and so forth. They were made to feel they genuinely participated, but really they did not. In forum 3, children really learned a lot from this experience, they learned about other children and how participation worked in other countries. They felt more confident about their knowledge and a lot of them went home with more motivation and stronger advocacy skills.

It was also claimed that ‘Adults organised a space for children’s preparation at the conference, controlled the topics to be discussed, time limits...’. An adult from outside the region who had attended the Special Session and all three Prepcoms in New York, was of the opinion that children in the Special Session itself took decisions, but not equally with adults; but that the situation differed in children’s preparation meetings: ‘children and young people were very much given the space to influence the process and outcomes’. The benefit of this was that ‘children had an opportunity to recognise that they can take action on their rights at different levels’. However, he added the caution that, for the Special Session,

The approach was good but the mechanisms for introducing their input into the process were fraught with difficulties. There is a disconnection between enabling children to be involved as full participants, and the format of UN meetings, which are more suited to adult political negotiations.

There is a tendency for children themselves to become politicised by the process, or become pawns of the ideological stances of the institutions that support their attendance. I felt that the children with

the most authentic voice were those who were involved in exemplary participatory processes in their own countries. The children are subject to the social and ideological conditioning by their patron agencies...Organisations that support the participation of children need to be able to create a critically reflective environment in which the children can reach their own conclusions about issues that reflect their lives. This can equip children to participate meaningfully in such processes. To have groups of children that simply parallel the fractious political infighting of adults undermines the whole purpose of children's participation.

## Follow up

Varied evidence from different sources indicates that many of the region's children – whether or not they had been involved in forums – are actively involved in developing National Plans of Action based on commitments to *A World Fit for Children*. This section, however, concentrates on direct follow up from the forums. One organiser provided a region-wide list of activities taking place:

- setting up youth organisations in Lao PDR, Fiji and Cambodia
- developing youth-initiated and led projects on HIV/AIDS, the commercial sexual exploitation of children and media advocacy
- establishing a network among children and young people in the region
- linking up with other youth organisations and networks in the region and elsewhere
- contributing ideas and opinions with other youth – through 'Voices of Youth'
- providing input and advice to UNICEF and partner organisations in developing national child/youth participation strategies and programming
- in some cases, setting up 'youth advisory groups' for UNICEF programmes.

This list was supplemented by the comment that:

Although majority of initiatives in the countries and region as a whole were event-based, in the past year or so a gradual shift has taken place to involve and integrate child/youth participation in policy advocacy and programming. It is through participation in events/

meetings – as a first step – that children and young people acquire the knowledge and skills to more effectively participate in decision-making for social change.

However, both adults and children tended to comment on disappointments with respect to follow up, most of which seem to be due to scarcity of resources, which limits the scope of follow up activities. Children from excluded groups, according to another organiser ‘Found continuity of follow up difficult. They are very reliant on NGOs for translation and documents’ which means that they remain ‘peripheral’. ‘Much children’s participation’ commented one adult in a questionnaire response, ‘is aimed at influencing the policies of governments as duty bearers. However, there is poor (if any) follow up on monitoring actions taken by duty bearers to respond to children’s views raised in the events’.

All children had reported back in some way to other children in their own countries, although this was often limited to their school, organisation or community, for example:

- a forum conducted to make *A World Fit for Children* known. It was also sent to various agencies
- input to organisational web sites
- giving speeches and media interviews
- reporting back to national children’s conference
- reporting to a government assembly.

However, many children expressed disappointment – even disillusionment:

- no action – just talk
- network created not maintained
- nothing solid and the end result opens up opportunities but without proper support network and resources
- now after [the Special Session] it is so quiet, what happens now? Waiting for the next one before we all do something again?
- what next? I laud the effort of the organisers of the event, but upon returning to my country, a fire burns within to spread the knowledge. The government and NGOs are doing something but ‘sometimes we can’t help but be impatient.’ ‘The sky is the limit, but who says we can’t reach for the stars?’
- young people look at matters at a different perspective ... Give me a chance and I will not let you down.

According to all the data from children responding through email questionnaires, contacts between children after forums depend heavily on the use of the Internet. However, as researchers discovered, many email addresses no longer function. The challenge, identified by many respondents in various ways, is to mainstream or institutionalise children's participation. To quote one organiser in interview: 'We did not make as much effort to get beyond our own constituencies – to mainstream, but it was still a good basis – now the challenge is how to broaden it, how to have institutionalised relationships with young people's organisations. It cannot be ad hoc.'

Institutionalisation can only proceed at the pace allowed by cultural and political realities. In a response similar to John Parry-Williams' interview with Michael Etherton, one organiser reflected on the potential dangers of follow up, especially in countries with mass youth organisations or internal armed conflicts. Adults have a responsibility to see that:

- children do not suffer negative consequences from opposing 'the authorities'
- children do not get recruited by other groups (for example terrorists, non-governmental armed groups)
- adults are accountable and responsible in not exposing children to dangers and protecting them for any negative consequences.

## **Outcomes – for children**

In addition to follow up, researchers were interested in the impact of attending forums on children. Direct questions in interviews and questionnaires asked about benefits and disadvantages, as well as what worked and did not work about children's participation. These last considerations also formed the basis of most of the unstructured interviews.

According to all adult respondents, children benefited from the experience of attending forums; in interviews and questionnaires they said that children benefited from participation in meetings, actively participated in the whole process, seemed to enjoy it, and increased their confidence and skills. Their responses were similar, and tended to be specific:

- self esteem but 'did not bring as big benefits as hoped'
- making connections with other young people; meeting other children from around the world; more friends
- learning how decisions are made
- had fun
- children's confidence increased
- youth facilitators learned skills
- deeper understanding of the issues that affect them
- skills (leadership, advocacy)
- belonging and unity/solidarity; shared vision for the world's children
- feeling part of the solution
- partnership with adults
- sense of self-direction.

Other comments from adults tended to note the same beneficial outcomes: 'Through attending events, children learn how policies are made, how decisions are made and how conflicts are solved. Thus they become more democratic in their own work and understanding of citizenship'. However, these are subjective appraisals, and it is difficult to be sure that such evaluations have any basis in objective reality, or even to be sure what terms such as 'self-esteem' actually mean in Southeast, East Asia and Pacific societies.

One form of cross-check on outcomes is comparison between adult and child responses. All children interviewed said that attending forums had been the source of good experiences: they learned about other children, shared and discussed experiences, although there was one complaint about too many forums and the clash with educational requirements. In written responses to questionnaires, children commented

- it was a rare chance to help ministers establish the best policies for us
- we practiced children's participation
- we could establish a network with other children who were interested about children's rights
- lots of interest from the media helped child rights advocacy.

Six children mentioned negative experiences: linguistic (English) problems and difficulties with a different culture, 'different culture and discipline', 'overconfidence' of some child delegates, tiredness, and, with respect to [the Special Session], the grouping of children by region

so that African and Asian children, for example, could not mix easily. As will be explained further in the next chapter, children also had negative experiences outside the meetings, due to the jealousy of other children, who had not been selected as delegates. Children also faced considerable media attention on their return home; it was reported by an organiser that one girl commented that this 'is a very big challenge for a growing-up girl'. Other complaints included comments about the forums themselves:

- children had to work too hard and were interrupted by adult VIPs
- there was so much work that children became tired
- the forum was relatively boring, so felt tired in the last couple of days
- some meetings 'too long and tiring'
- meetings are too frequent and children miss school
- [the Special Session] was too big and confusing.

## Reflections

Researchers invited all respondents, but organisers in particular, to reflect what might be done differently in the future, given lessons learned through the intense activities of the years 2000 to 2003. Lessons learned according to organisers included:

- we should have zeroed in on a team/two teams to support and facilitate. Children want an impact and some results – we should have focused more on the agenda
- we need more explicit links with youth organisations rather than leaving it as a loose network
- because the processes were focused on events, English-speaking, articulate or 'excluded groups' were selected to participate...but this left out the bulk of children. We were more interested in country and regional balance. This was a weakness picked on by governments in particular, although one could throw back this challenge to governments to request them to mainstream/institutionalise children's participation, as the selection mechanisms are already in place
- national and international forums have been an effective way to get children's participation on the agenda with government (international) and non-governmental organisations and children who participated in these events may have benefited personally from these experiences.

However, it has led to too much emphasis on having children physically present in (inter)national adults' meeting and events without much consideration for the quality of their involvement or even the usefulness of such approaches. There are serious concerns regarding quality for children's involvement, ethical issues, such as having children flown to literally other worlds, child protection dealing with press, lack of follow up, their actual involvement during the meetings (limited preparation, unavailability of child friendly information, limitations in language and interpretation, non-preparation of adult participants in the meetings, non-consideration of adult facilitators, unsuitable methods of conducting meetings (speeches, plenaries), ignoring (and not preparing children for) the powers of politics and dirty tricks that inevitably play a key role in international meetings, and making children believe that such meetings are actually democratic forums where decisions are made by all). The harsh reality of politics during high-profile international meetings has led to a lot of frustration and disillusionment among young participants.

In these clear expressions of the need for institutionalisation, the challenges were said to be:

- sustain networks, including key players, provide information, develop skills
- link with other groups, such as youth parliament processes
- focus on ethnic minorities, children with disabilities, children who are not articulate
- children have had their hopes raised. The task is for the adults to get our acts together and implement what we have promised.

Observing that 'the quality of participation decreases as we go up', an organiser commented that investment in children's participation should take place principally at community level, rather than being oriented to forums: 'It is not translated on the ground: it all depends on the roots for the flower to grow'. Echoing the botanical metaphor, another organiser said that 'Child participation is a very noble undertaking but, like a plant, needs to be nurtured and cared for. Constant adult support is needed for child participation to grow and flourish'. Organisers and other adult consistently identified the need to build children's participation in national and community programmes, rather than regional and international events. From a regional perspective, this means:

We are going to realise that all agencies need a policy to support and integrate children's participation in organisational structures, a major shift for senior management to realise that children's participation provides quality input to strategic thinking. We can build up good partnerships on equal terms with children, but this has to be seen by senior management. A remaining grey area for them is how to involve children in programming and in implementation. The organisations' bureaucracy is an impediment in its lack of flexibility – not being very creative. There is capacity within organisations to respond to children's raised expectations. We now have a critical mass of children and we are not tapping that resource. We could lose a lot in just a year.



# MAKING PEOPLE AWARE: INDONESIA CASE STUDY

The evaluation of children's participation in Southeast Asia, East Asia and the Pacific has already been argued in this Report to be valid only if set against the background of what is possible within any given cultural and political context. The case study of Indonesia is particularly interesting as this scattered and populous nation is currently undergoing immense changes in a process referred to as '*Reformasi*', in which the participation of all citizens is becoming an increasing reality. Children's participation is thus an extremely interesting focus of activity within a broader national picture, as indeed it is in many other rapidly changing countries in the region. This chapter describes the implementation of child participation in Indonesia with respect to the 11 forums in the research evaluation, based on secondary data as well as interviews and questionnaires with both children and adults.

Child participation in Indonesia is a focus for local and international NGOs, Government and UNICEF, which support children to attend some international and regional meetings. UNICEF supports child participation by making partnerships with NGOs, mainly through 22 *lembaga perlindungan anak* (LPA or NGOs) led by the *Komisi Nasional Perlindungan Anak/Komnas PA* (National Committee for Child Protection). Those institutions were established in 1997 to implement CRC commitments. The National Commission has the role of coordinating preparation and selection processes for child delegates, through collaboration with local and international NGOs, child protection institutions and UNICEF. The main international NGOs working in child participation in Indonesia are Plan International, Save the Children UK and World Vision. *Departemen Sosial* (Social Welfare Department), *Departemen Kesehatan* (Health Department), and *Kementrian Negara Pemberdayaan Perempuan/Meneg PP* (The State Department of Women's Empowerment) are the leading government agencies for child protection, including child participation, working together with UNICEF and NGOs to support the implementation of various models of child participation.

Children's participation activities include initiating child forums at national and district levels (or even at sub district or village level) in some cases in partnership with local NGOs such as *Yayasan Kakak* (Older Siblings Foundation) in Solo, and *Yayasan Kesejahteraan Anak Indonesia* (Indonesia Child Welfare Foundation), which organise regular opportunities for children to meet and to arrange their own activities. Both local and international NGOs implement child participation, and in some cases the international NGOs work together with local NGOs to develop child forums.

## Data collection

The data for the Indonesian case study were gathered between October and December 2003 using semi-structured interviews, questionnaires, some unstructured interviews and secondary data analysis. The sample of respondents for this study was taken opportunistically from the population (universe) list of Indonesian participants who attended forums or meetings at international and regional levels between January 2000 and May 2003. Not all adults in the sample were Indonesian nationals, but most interviews took place in *Bahasa* (Table 17). Three researchers conducted the interviews either face-to-face or by telephone and the questionnaire was sent using email and post. Respondents were based in Jakarta, Surabaya, Solo, Tulungagung, Makassar, Sanggau and Ambon.

**Table 17: Gender composition of population and sample (Indonesia)**

Age categories	Population			Sample		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Children	18	15	33	9	11	20
Adults	13	19	32	11	14	25
TOTAL	31	34	65	20	25	45

Data collection was a frustrating experience (See Appendix 1). The process of collecting data during November and December in Jakarta was disrupted by Ramadan and Eid. In November, the effective time for collecting data was two weeks, and one week before Eid most people were travelling home, to return on 5 December. Another barrier to reaching the children was that some telephone numbers in participants' lists from forums were no longer valid and no further information was

forthcoming. In an attempt to resolve this problem, the researchers sent questionnaires by email, but none were returned, possibly because the children had changed their email addresses. In Solo, the researcher had to wait until one child came back from a meeting in India, and then find a mutually convenient time to meet. For adult respondents, the difficulty of finding time to meet or even have a phone conversation was even greater, and none responded to emails. Only two young journalists were reached, once again because they did not have the time to meet researchers. On the other hand, it was difficult to reach children in Tulungagung because they had already moved to another town for work. One respondent in Jakarta could not be reached because she had moved from the institution as the result of conflicts at work, and this meant that contact with the child was lost at the same time.

The process of collecting data, especially secondary data, continued into the second week of January 2004. However, these data are also incomplete because documents had not been systematically archived. Where possible, researchers cross-checked on some sensitive issues, or where information appeared contradictory, during the third week of January, through telephone, and email communication, as well as further review of secondary data.

## **Indonesian children's participation in forums**

During the period January 20002 to May 2003, children from Indonesia participated in several of the 11 forums as well as in a number of child forums held and supported by INGOs, such as *Forum Anak* (Children's Forum) supported by Plan International, and *Temu Anak* (Children's Meeting) supported by World Vision, including regular monthly children's meetings that were facilitated by *Yayasan Kakak* (Older Sibling Foundation), *Yayasan Kesejahteraan Anak Indonesia* (Indonesia Child Welfare Foundation), *Yayasan Dinamika Indonesia* (Dinamika Indonesia Foundation), *Yayasan Kompak*, *Komite Pendidikan Akak-Anak Kreatif*, (Education Committee for Indonesian Creative Child Labour Foundation) and other local NGOs (Appendix 2). However, lack of funds often meant that the meetings could not be held routinely as planned.

The National Commission for Child Protection lists a number of children's forums, both international and national (Appendix 2). In July 2000, the National Commission for Child Protection conducted the first national children's congress in Cibubur. *Kongres Anak Indonesia* (Indonesia

Children's Congress I) became the first forum in which children selected other children as delegates. Child Ambassadors (*duta anak*) are five to ten children selected to represent Indonesian children in regional meetings on five different themes: special protection, education, health, child participation and networking. In *Kongres Anak Indonesia*, children participated fully in every activity, including the opening ceremonies. The CYP Forum I in Jomtien, April 2001, was the first regional meeting in which child delegates from Indonesia participated, but no Indonesian child representatives were selected to attend the Fifth Ministerial Consultation in Beijing, although the Government later chose one child to attend without using *Kongres Anak* or any selection process – an appointment that was criticised in some circles, including by government agencies.

The Second Indonesian Children's Congress (*Kongres Anak Indonesia II*) was held in July 2001. Children selected children's ambassadors for 2001 and gave recommendations about education, culture, participation, drugs, environment, conflict, child protection and children's rights. The Government, represented by Ministry of Women's Empowerment – the Deputy for Child Protection and Welfare – opened and attended this meeting for the National Commission and other parties. This was a sign of government recognition of children's participation in Indonesia. It was at this meeting that Indonesian child delegates were chosen for both CYP Forum II in Vientiane and the Special Session. However, some of the children chosen were unable to attend because they had passed the 18-years-old barrier and become adults. The Embassy of the United States in Indonesia classified them as adults and said that they had to apply for a visa a month before their departure. As they had received information about their departure only a week before the Special Session was held, this made the trip impossible.

In July 2002, the National Commission of Child Protection, together with the Social Welfare Ministry, held *Forum Anak dan Remaja* (Child and Youth Forum) to celebrate *Hari Anak Nasional 2002* (National Children's Day 2002) together with the Indonesian President. Child representatives from all provinces in Indonesia attended that forum.

Child representatives from Indonesia attended the CYP Forum III in Seoul, but none were selected as regional child representatives for the Sixth Ministerial Consultation in Bali. There was some controversy in Indonesia about the mandate of the children who went to Seoul; the Government and the National Committee considered that they were not national

representatives, because they had been appointed directly by donors, rather than by the Government.

Four months before the Bali Mincon in 2003, the National Commission facilitated *Kongres Anak Indonesia III* (Children's Congress III), also held in Bali. This forum resulted in an Indonesian Children's Declaration and an Indonesian Children's Peace Resolution, as well as selecting five Child Ambassadors for 2002/2003, who would be representatives in the Sixth Ministerial Consultation. Over 200 children from 30 provinces attended this Congress, which was opened by the Health Minister, representing the Indonesian Vice President, and attended by other ministers, providing political support for the idea of children's participation.

The five Child Ambassadors worked at the Sixth Ministerial Consultation, together with child representatives from other counties, towards the Bali Consensus, focusing on planning for the next two years on issues of neonatal and maternal mortality, malnutrition, and HIV/AIDS. In this forum, awards were presented by UNICEF to child leaders, the first international awards of their kind. Youth journalists were also involved in the meetings, publishing their reports in several national newspapers and children's magazines.

In June 2003, a forum called the Draft Agreement of a National Programme for Indonesian Children, attended by 15 Child Ambassadors, gave recommendations for the planning of *Program Nasional Bagi Anak Indonesia* (the National Plan of Action or Indonesian response to *A World Fit for Children*, incorporating the Millennium Development Goals), which focused on issues of health, education, protection, and HIV/AIDS.

In June 2003 at Jimbaran in Bali, the World Tourism Organisation held a Regional Consultation on the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation in Tourism. Indonesia sent five Child Ambassadors to this meeting, the only country to do so.

*Forum Anak dan Remaja 2003* (Child and Youth Forum 2003), which was part of celebrations for Indonesian Children's Day in that year, was held in Jakarta in July, with participation by child representatives from various parts of Indonesia, who declared the Indonesian Children's Resolution, focusing on issues of special protection, education, health and HIV/AIDS.

The *Forum Anak dan Remaja*, (Child and Youth Forum) was held again in December 2003 simultaneously with National Health Day 2003. As was

the case in the previous meeting, it was also attended by child representatives from various parts of Indonesia as well as by the Indonesian President, HE Megawati Sukarnoputri. The forum, which was held in Bogor Palace, chose a national Children's Ambassador on health, Ucok Abdul Haris Agam, and declared 'Children Voices: Towards a Healthy Indonesia by 2010' targeting reproductive health, drugs, and HIV/AIDS.

Finally, *Kongres Anak Indonesia IV* (Indonesian Children's Congress IV) was held in Yogyakarta in February 2004, on the theme 'Listening to the hopes, opinions and views of children', with the objective of producing an Indonesian Children's Declaration and choosing Child Ambassadors for that year.

Thus, according to the National Commission of Child Protection, during the period 2000 to 2004, a total of six international and regional-level meetings were attended by Indonesian child representatives and seven national forums were held. In addition, according to interview and questionnaire data, several other international and regional meetings were attended by children from Indonesia in the same period, including Global NAC Planning 2002 in The Philippines, Child Workers in Asia Forum in Bangkok, Inter-Country Workshop on ARH for East Asia and South East Asia and the Pacific, Pattaya, Thailand, 2000, and the UNESCO Thirty-Seventh International Youth Camp in South Korea, 2002. Although children were referred to as 'national representatives' in these forums, a better description might be 'representatives of organisations and institutions'.

At national and provincial levels, meetings included Future Search Conference, National Forum of the National Commission of Child Protection, provincial-level child forums, and *Kongres Anak Pinggir* (Congress for Marginalised Children).

## Selection

According to the formal records, the attendance of child representatives from Indonesia in several meetings at regional and international level was seen as the implementation of child participation. Children were selected by their peers through democratic processes during the Indonesian Children's Congresses at national level to be delegates at regional and international forums. At these forums, children discussed the criteria for

selection, including candidates being able to understand child issues, having high self-confidence, being fair and articulate. But, in contrast, when children were not involved, some parts of some selection processes did not appear to be democratic. In the case of the CYP Forum I in Jomtien, the Indonesian children were selected by their organisation without being given any information. The national office of their organisation sent information to its branch office and the branch offices sought information about the children in their region. The biographical details of some children were then sent to the central office and the final selection made there. This raised questions and jealousy from other children, and the delegates also criticised it as an unfair process, while the organisation explained that this was the result of very limited time being available for selection processes.

One 16-year-old girl said in interview that she was selected to attend a regional forum without any previous information being given to her or to other children. She received information about being a delegate from the institution that asked her to prepare for going to the meeting, and she did not know how or why she was selected. Her friends wondered why she had been chosen, but some of the children said that it must have been on merit. However, she still felt uncomfortable, saying, 'It should be the children themselves who choose in order to make it fair. I knew nothing about the process, but suddenly I was chosen. I felt uncomfortable with my friends who asked about it'.

The same procedure seems to have occurred in the selection process for the Youth Leadership Awards in the Sixth Ministerial Consultation in Bali. The selection process was not adequately explained to some organisations, which chose not to participate.

The selection of youth journalists also attracted questions from children. A 16-year-old boy related his confusion about being involved as a youth journalist in a regional meeting. He was invited by a funding agency and told about his main role at that event. He said that it was a wonderful experience for him since he made new friends, met with officials from ministries, understood children's issues more, learned to be more sensitive towards other children and was proud of having represented other children. Yet he felt that actually he was not the right person for the role, 'I was questioning "Why me?" There were children who have better capacity than me. There should be an open competition. Open competition would be able to screen more children and facilitate more confidence to children'.

Two further cases of 'top-down' selection processes were reported to have occurred with respect to the Fifth Mincon in Beijing and CYP Forum III in Seoul. For Beijing, the Government had chosen a child to be a delegate based on his good English language skills. But this invited criticism and questions about whether this child, who did not have an Indonesian passport, could represent either the country or children from excluded groups. Moreover, there was little adequate support from the Government or the institution for the practical details of travel and accommodation, which were arranged and paid for by the child's parents. This developed into an uncomfortable situation for the child, who claimed to have been stigmatised as a result. In his opinion, child delegates should have been chosen through a selection process: 'Don't just ask a child to be delegate', even though he stated that the experience of being a delegate had made him more aware of national children's issues and encouraged him to learn more.

For CYP Forum III there was donor intervention according to some respondents, who stated that funding agencies directly asked some children from NGOs to be delegates, without considering inputs from the Government and the National Commission. Based on this, the National Commission and Government claimed that there were no official Indonesian child representatives in that meeting. Children who attended that meeting were seen as the donor agency's representatives (Government of Indonesia, 2004, 1).

The main reason why children were not involved in the selection process appears to have been time constraints. Institutions received information about child participation in the meetings at the very last moment, with the result that they did not have sufficient time to facilitate children to conduct meetings and selection processes. Another reason was that there was no children's forum, especially at local level, which could be used as a means of arranging a selection process by children. Additional factors were programme deadlines and the lack of capacity of field officers at provincial or district levels to facilitate participatory selection processes.

An adult stated in an interview that, in the Sixth Mincon in Bali, inadequate coordination meant that neither national nor international NGOs received sufficient information about the selection process used by the Governments, and for this they blamed poor communication from the donor agency supporting children's participation, which they claimed acted more like an implementing organisation than a donor.

These factors are negative for children in two ways. In the first place they show examples of bad practice and unfair processes. In the second place, they receive negative feedback from their peers who are not selected. They felt that they had to 'prove' to other children that they had the qualities necessary to be representatives.

Selection is an area in which some lessons appear not to have been learned. The same problems arose with respect to the Sixth Mincon as had occurred in earlier forums. Respondents also referred to the 'vested interest' some organisations had in supporting their 'own' children in order to raise their institutional profiles. Respondents made it clear that some adults lobbied – by themselves or through children – in order to 'win' their children a place in selection processes. They mobilised support for children who had a background of working their organisations, and this blocked the selection of other children. Organisations regarded the involvement of 'their' children as an achievement resulting in a good organisational image and other benefits, rather than as fulfilment of children's rights. Of course, the negative consequences of these hidden conflicts between institutions were felt by children rather than adults. Nevertheless, this tendency has been perceived, with the result that local and international NGOs have collaborated on a situation analysis and in writing a planning handbook to measure children's participation in Indonesia.

Despite these problems in selection for international forums, both children and adults seemed to think that the selection process for national level forums were fair, because they were conducted through children in children's organisations taking responsibility for choosing their own representatives, whether the organisations were child-led, child focused or simply child-oriented. However, it was still reported that adults tended to intervene if there was insufficient time to prepare or conduct children's meetings. Some respondents also reported that selection processes did not reach children in remote areas of this scattered island nation. Field officers of organisations find it difficult to maintain contact with children in such areas, and were reported to take the easiest way out by choosing other children.

## **Preparation**

Some NGOs appear to have been unhappy about the information they received before events. One adult organiser stated that briefing for

children’s participation consisted of ‘brief documents’ from UNICEF. After selection as delegates, children followed a preparation process. They appear to have received variable information about how, and for what, they had been selected (Table 18), but they were given opportunities to discuss children’s issues in Indonesia before leaving to take part in forums. Preparation for children’s participation in forums was facilitated by NGOs or other institutions, together with the National Committee and donors. The National Committee and donor agencies also took a role in providing materials given to children, which covered topics that were to be discussed in forums, training in behaviour expected during and following the forums, preparation for encountering cultural differences and travel and other logistics.

As shown in Table 18, according to information from adults, five types of information were not consistently given to children: culture and food, safety, information about children’s participation, practice at public

**Table 18: Adult and child reports about information given to Indonesian children in preparation for participating in forums**

Type of information/ preparation	Adults N=7			Children N=7		
	Yes	No	Don't know	Yes	No	Don't know
Information and guidance about travel	5	0	2	6	1	0
Information about culture and food	3	2	2	5	2	0
Information about safety	4	1	2	6	1	0
Information and guidance about the event/processes	4	1	2	5	2	0
Information about the agenda	4	1	2	4	2	1
Information about the other participants	4	1	2	4	2	1
Information about the organisation and processes	5	0	2	3	3	1
Information about children's participation	3	2	2	5	2	0
Practice at public speaking	3	2	2	5	1	1
Capacity building/how to behave in meetings	2	3	2	4	1	2

Semi-structured interviews and questionnaires

speaking, and how to behave in meetings. Two adults had no idea about what had been provided as preparation. Children's answers vary considerably from those given by adults, which may indicate that preparation for forums varied to an equal extent. Some children said that they had not been given (or were not sure if they had been given) information in all the categories mentioned in the research.

## **Perceptions of each other**

This section discusses the views of children and adults from Indonesia about their relative levels of performance during forums. In both semi-structured interviews and questionnaires each age group was asked to rate their own performance and that of the others, as 'good', 'average' or 'poor', according to a list of performance areas, such as 'knowledge of the issues' or 'paying attention to meeting rules'. The results from both semi-structured interviews and questionnaires, including control groups and child journalists, are presented in Tables 19 to 22, in which the number of valid answers varies considerably between performance areas, so that no numerical ranking can be derived for total performance. Nevertheless, the rankings for each area provide some interesting insights into the perceptions of both adults and children have of themselves and one another. First, it is noticeable that the two groups have high views of each others' performance overall.

Only small numbers of adults rated two aspects of children's performance in forums as 'poor'; knowledge of the issues, and listening to other children. They rated their listening to adults highest, which may indicate that children are more accustomed to listen to and respect adults than to listen to their peers. Adults also rated children's attention to meeting rules highly, along with their presentations (Table 19). As noted in the previous chapter, adult perception of children's presentations may be heavily influenced by style rather than substance. But it is also clear from supplementary comments of adults and children that children's presentations were well-rehearsed, and may also have conveyed messages of adults rather than those of children. Children's interventions, or questions, were relatively poorly rated by adults (Table 19), possibly due to the difficulties children had in overcoming their hesitancy about making an intervention. Translation made no difference in Indonesia because the adults and the children in the case study shared a common language.

**Table 19: Adults’ views of children’s performance in meetings (Indonesian case study, all methods combined)**

Performance area (valid answers)	Rating		
	Good	Average	Poor
Knowledge of the issues (13)	9	2	2
Attention/concentration (13)	7	6	0
Paying attention to meeting rules (12)	11	1	0
Quality of presentations (12)	10	2	0
Quality of interventions (12)	7	5	0
Listening to adults (12)	12	0	0
Listening to other children (8)	4	3	1

**Table 20: Children’s views of children’s performance in forums (Indonesian case study, all methods combined)**

Performance area (valid answers)	Rating		
	Good	Average	Poor
Knowledge of the issues (9)	5	3	1
Attention/concentration (9)	7	2	0
Paying attention to meeting rules (9)	8	1	0
Children’s speeches/presentations (7)	7	0	0
Children’s questions/quality of intervention(6)	5	1	0
Listening to adults (7)	6	1	0
Listening to other children (9)	6	2	1

Although the number of responses from children about other children’s performance is small, they seem to be more critical than adults of their ability to listen to other children. They rate their powers of concentration somewhat higher than adults do, while having a high opinion of their ability to follow meeting rules and make presentations. (Table 20), They are more critical than adults of their own ability to listen to adults, which may indicate (even though the numbers are very small) that they only appear to be listening (a trick that some children learn in school).

Adults seem not to be impressed by the quality of final reports, and indeed they may have more experience of meetings than children and thus a larger selection of reports to compare with those from the forums in the research (Tables 21 and 22). However, some adults said during

**Table 21: Adults' views of adults' performance in forums (Indonesian case study all methods combined)**

Performance area (valid answers)	Rating		
	Good	Average	Poor
Knowledge of the issues (14)	10	3	1
Attention/concentration (10)	6	4	0
Paying attention to meeting rules (12)	9	3	0
Quality of presentations (11)	7	4	0
Quality of interventions (9)	5	4	0
Listening to other adults (10)	8	1	1
Listening to children (12)	5	5	2
Quality of final report (9)	3	6	0

**Table 22: Children's views of adults' performance in forums (Indonesian case study all methods combined)**

Performance area (valid answers)	Rating		
	Good	Average	Poor
Knowledge of the issues (7)	5	2	0
Attention/concentration (6)	4	2	0
Paying attention to meeting rules (7)	7	0	0
Adults' speeches (5)	4	1	0
Adults' questions (5)	4	1	0
Listening to other adults (6)	3	3	0
Listening to children (7)	4	2	1
Quality of final report from the meeting (6)	4	2	0

interviews that children were able to deliver impressive reports, far beyond what might have been expected for their age. Not all adults are confident about their knowledge of the issue, their ability to listen to children, or their attention to meeting rules (on the last of which children rated them very highly – Table 22).

Some children's relatively negative views of their own ability to listen to adults (Table 20) may be related to their limited enthusiasm for adult knowledge, speeches and questions (Table 22). They are also not totally impressed by adult ability to listen to children, nor by the quality of the final report. Nevertheless, four children out of six who responded to this item on the rating scale said that the final report was 'good', which may

indicate less need for children-friendly reports than adults anticipate. As was seen earlier, at least one child participant preferred to read the adult meeting report rather than the children-friendly version. Research in other areas has, after all, shown that children are more capable than adults tend to think.

## Chaperones

Children also said that attending the forums was beneficial and that it was important to involve children in such international or regional meetings. Children and adults all rated facilitation as ‘effective’. Most respondents rated chaperone behaviour in a positive ways, but, for a few children, chaperone behaviour affected their comfort during and after forums. Individual responses show that a particular chaperone can be rated positive in some aspects and negative in others, by both children and adults (Tables 23 and 24).

Indonesian children did not rate any chaperones as domineering, manipulative or uncaring, indeed their perceptions were overwhelmingly of sympathetic, facilitative and supportive adults accompanying them (Table 23). Some also spontaneously described helpful and friendly chaperone behaviour, such as support with translation, or accompanying children whenever they were required. However, even though the numbers are small some children did mark negative terms such as patronising,

**Table 23: Children’s views of chaperone behaviour (Indonesia case study, all methods combined)**

Term	Yes	No
<b>Negative term</b>		
Domineering	0	8
Manipulative	0	8
Patronising	2	4
Uncaring	0	8
Over-protective	1	7
Careless	1	6
Lazy	1	7
Uninterested	2	6
Put Children at risk	2	6
<b>Positive term</b>		
Sympathetic	7	1
Facilitative	9	0
Supportive	7	1

over-protective, careless, lazy, uninterested and putting children at risk. Even given that the negative answers may have come from only one or two children, this is still one or two cases too many.

In case of negative behaviour, a 16-year-old girl said in interview that the chaperones tend to pay special attention to their 'own children', and give them more encouragement. She added that some chaperones seemed to act as if there were a competition between children and they wanted 'their child to win', rather than supporting all children equally. An adult also reported, in a semi-structured interview, receiving information from a child who had felt excluded by the chaperone, saying that he felt the chaperone hated him, and that this made him cry and 'feel sad for a long time'. This adult commented, 'Just imagine, he hid his feelings for a long time without being able to express them. It was really bad for the child psychologically – they should get positive feedback rather than an environment like that'.

Adult responses to this question show relatively few negative adjectives being applied to observed chaperone behaviour although noting, unlike the children, one example of behaviour that could be described as 'domineering' and certainly some examples of chaperone behaviour that are not ideal (Table 24).

There seems to have been a lack of comprehension about child participation among some accompanying adults, which sometimes led to

**Table 24: Adult's views of chaperone behaviour (Indonesia case study, all methods combined)**

Term	Yes	No
<b>Negative term</b>		
Domineering	1	5
Manipulative	0	6
Patronising	2	4
Uncaring	1	5
Over-protective	2	4
Careless	2	4
Lazy	1	4
Uninterested	0	5
Put Children at risk	0	5
<b>Positive term</b>		
Sympathetic	6	0
Supportive	6	0
Facilitative	4	1

children feeling uncomfortable, being overburdened, or even mistreated. One chaperone reported in a semi-structured interview that sometimes adults encouraged children to copy bad-mannered adult behaviour by shouting, standing on a table or pointing at people with their fingers. She reported witnessing another female chaperone making threats to children and not allowing them to express their own opinions. Subsequent discussion among chaperones to this forum apparently resulted in a group decision that failure to prepare adults for child participation could be described as 'violence against children'.

## **Decision making**

In the Indonesian case study, the topics included in 'decision-making' covered the selection of representatives, decisions made during the forums, and processes of selecting children for subsequent forums. As already seen, some children reported that they were selected directly by adults, without any consultation with other children. Other children said that there were only a limited number of children that met the criteria, so there was no need for children to make decisions. In another case, a child complained that there was no opportunity for children to select delegates.

With respect to decision making during forums, some adults said in unstructured interviews that children did not have the chance to make decisions because of lack of time and limited experience of involving children among organisations.

As shown in Table 25, in general children classified their participation in forums as an opportunity for them to take decisions, but not on equal terms with adults, much the same as in the overall regional sample. For other children, forums were seen as an ideal medium to express their opinions and take decisions equally with adults. The children did not see there was adult role in controlling their opinion. But, in one case, a child reported no opportunity for participation in decision making.

Table 26, on the other hand, shows that adults did not agree with children, rating their participation lower. The difference may be due to differences in interpreting the term 'decision making'.

**Table 25: Children's reports of participation in forums (Indonesia Case Study)**

Forms of children's participation	Totals from all research tools used with children	
	Yes	No
Children were visibly present but did not make decisions	1	11
Adults controlled the decisions and opinions of children	0	12
Children were taking decisions but not equally with adults	7	5
Children were taking decisions equally with adults	4	8

**Table 26: Adults' reports of participation in forums (Indonesia Case Study)**

Forms of children's participation	Totals from all research tools used with adults	
	Yes	No
Children were visibly present but did not make decisions	7	6
Adults controlled the decisions and opinions of children	2	11
Children were taking decisions but not equally with adults	6	7
Children were taking decisions equally with adults	3	10

## Impacts and follow up

Despite barriers and limitations there were clear positive benefits for children who attended forums at national, regional and international levels. Some children reported that they felt their social skills had been increased; they became more assertive, able to accept cultural differences, show greater respect to both adults and children and more willing to support other children.

A sixteen-year-old girl said that she was impressed with the introductory and discussion sessions of the forum she attended, which allowed her to make friends and learn more about children's problems in other places, saying 'It was the most enjoyable time for me. We could talk about many things and share experiences'. She hoped to be able to establish a child forum in her region, as a medium for communication between children. Another girl of the same age said that involving children in forums really empowered them; children had an opportunity to tell others about their

problems and make friends, 'It was positive, we could listen to other children and we could share with each other. Children know better than adults about their own problems, which is why the forum is so valuable for us'. Possibly encouraged by enthusiasm from making contact with another child in the forum, this girl sent a follow-up email to the researcher, asking for the other child's telephone number.

The process of preparing children for forums also enabled children to learn positive attitudes about excluded groups, which are sometimes missing in families and communities. One adult reported that a child ragpicker had appeared at first to be 'wild' and 'difficult to handle'. After preparation and involvement in forums he socialised with other children, showed significant achievements and gained respect from adults because of his abilities in public speaking and leadership. Forums can thus be seen as opportunities for exploring children's potential.

In most of the forums, children were not asked to make written reports but wrote diaries at the end of each session, except in the case of the Sixth Mincon, where the chaperone asked children to make written reports and they also learned how to make a press release. Reporting back was not described as a positive activity by children in response to any research tool. However, nine out of ten children said that they reported back to their own group about the results of the meeting (usually using their institution's routine meetings or at the National Children Congress). In rural areas, children who had attended forums said they were disappointed with lack of follow up, reporting no further communication after attending the forums, because communication with rural areas is difficult.

## **Summary and reflections**

The Indonesian experience of children's participation is increasing awareness at all levels about this aspect of children's rights. One of the main messages from the Indonesian case study is a lesson learned from all activities of child participation – participation takes time, it is a process in which both adults and children have to learn to work together (RWG-CL, 2003b). In the case of participation in the 11 forums, inadequate preparation sometimes limited children's participation. One reason for this was that information about the forums reached NGOs and

other institutions somewhat late in the day, leaving little time for preparation. Even national-level forums were not always well organised, and some miscommunications between the organising agency, facilitator and children were noted. Child/youth facilitators, likewise, were not fully briefed or trained. In addition, there was wide variation in understanding children's participation (and other rights), as well as in experience of children's participation, between the different organising agencies involved.

In spite of some uncomfortable experiences during the forums, all children said that these were meaningful experiences, which raised their knowledge and social skills. Mistreatment by accompanying adults was recognised as a problem that requires further thought and better preparation and training. Deciding on how children should be involved, and what events they should attend, can be a problem, as is reaching children in remote areas and organising of selection processes as a whole – although steps are being taken to improve this.

It should be noted that almost all the child respondents were attending school, which they saw as limitation on their participation, because of pressures of studying and examinations. Some also suggested involving out-of-school children in regional forums in order to build their capacity: 'If only students were selected to be delegates, they would be more clever and clever again, and the uneducated children would be left behind'.



# DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS: SEEN AND HEARD

In the absence of baseline data, and of agreed indicators for monitoring the impact of child participation, there is no way of assessing the regional impact of children's presence in international meetings. Yet the fact that spaces for children had to be negotiated in the Sixth Mincon indicates that their presence as a right at the decision-making table is not yet established. However, even though impact cannot be measured, some conclusions can still be drawn about the processes involved when Southeast, East Asia and the Pacific region children participated in the Special Session and related forums, as well as their outcomes. The samples achieved in the research evaluation were not ideal and no statistical significance can be placed on the data presented in this report. However, the fact that the samples were small does lead to important conclusions. Moreover, some themes are present across all data.

Children's presence in the 11 forums must be seen as the initial step in a far longer process. The success of extraordinary efforts made by a large number of regional organisers, in what might be argued to have been an unprecedented example of inter-agency collaboration to ensure that children and young people participated in international forums between 2000 and 2003, is summed up in Jay Wisecarver's comments in an interview with Michael Etherton on CYP Forum I and the Beijing Ministerial Consultation:

1. They were there!
2. People listened
3. They were there and adults listened! (Etherton, 2002, 52).

In the words of Kofi Annan and others, children brought their hopes, dreams and passions to these meetings. They were certainly seen and heard, which was a vast improvement on the old adage that children should be 'seen and not heard', but it is possible, on the evidence presented in this report, that while the voices were those of children, the ears were those of adults – who heard, but maybe did not listen (Hart, 1997).

## Democracy and representation

The research attempted to answer questions about the way children were selected to take part in forums:

- what selection processes were used to decide which children and young people took part?
- to what extent can these be said to be democratic?
- what is the profile of children and young people who participated, and was this representative?

Leaving aside one organiser's rueful comment that 'governments selected without consultation – and NGOs filled in the gap', the research shows that organisers in the region were visionary. They saw that the Special Session in particular was a unique opportunity. One of the key lessons learned in the run up to the Special Session was to go ahead with children's participation, even if the conditions do not meet the ideal described by child participation experts such as Roger Hart:

If the conference is truly meant to include the perspectives of children, then it needs to specify clearly which children's perspectives are to be represented and, from this, how to go about selecting representatives of these children. At a minimum, it must be a process that everyone understands (Hart, 1997, 143).

In fact, according to the documentary evidence, the regional process of selection of children as delegates to the Special Session came close, despite imperfections, to meeting this ideal, especially when already-existing national processes, as in Mongolia The Philippines and Thailand, could be harnessed.

It is worth making a comparison between child and adult presence at international forums. The description of adult attendance at the Special Session does not provide information about grass-roots, democratic selection. Apart from the over 60 heads of state and government and more than 250 parliamentary leaders (some of whom would be there as part of their role as elected spokespeople and decision makers), the list provided in the Save the Children Update for May 2002, is 'business leaders, chieftains, cultural figures, Nobel Laureates, religious leaders, experts on child-related issues and leading activists for children' (International Save the Children Alliance 2002). Presumably these adults attended by invitation or appointment – with possibly less democratic selection

involved than was the case for the children and young people who attended. Adults are represented at the UN by an educated elite, who are not necessarily elected representatives. Indeed the mechanisms by which they come to the UN table are not transparent – in the sense of being made known and readily understood. The mode of selection in different nations is different, varying according to forms of governance and the structures of relationships between state and civil society.

Yet differences in selection and the lack of ‘democratic procedures’ makes it all too easy for those opposed to children’s participation to make charges of manipulation:

What adults and children probably share is the dependence on others to organise their travel, documentation, administration and such matters’, for children this can be used to fuel accusations of ‘manipulation’, for adults it is ‘par for the course’ (Invernizzi and Milne, 2002, 417).

The demand for greater ‘democracy’ may perhaps be part of resistance to listening to children’s views, because they are not ‘representative’. In this sense, it may be that to question the legitimacy of the selection processes for children’s representation at the UN – or indeed at Ministerial Consultations – because they are not fully democratic may be incorrect, or at least premature. To dismiss children’s presence at international forums because it is not ‘democratic’ is an easy option for those who are opposed to their presence. On the other hand, to call for more representative representation for children may be a step on the right path, not only for children’s participation but also for general improvements in governance for the benefit of all citizens everywhere. Over 400 children were present in New York for the Special Session in May 2002, facing disruptions to their lives and schooling. This was not an occasion when ‘The Child’ was simply symbolically present. If questions are being asked about exclusion, this is healthy for world governance as a whole.

Nevertheless, at this stage in the Southeast, East Asia and Pacific region, when children’s participation is being demanded in an increasing number of international meetings, one of the most urgent priorities is to institutionalise their participation at the national level, which includes family and community levels, so that structures for meaningful ‘selection’ are in place for all eventualities.

## Preparation

Researchers also sought to answer the question:

- what were the arrangements for preparing for forums, and how were they implemented?

The preparation of children – although inadequate in some cases – was often impressive. And it is important to remember that many accompanying adults probably needed as much preparation as children. They might never have been out of Asia before, or to New York – much less to a highly-formalised, confusing environment such as the United Nations Headquarters.

In general, children received information about materials, other participants, background of the meeting, results of previous meetings, a short course on English if required, practice in public speaking, training in using materials for presentation, and meeting behaviour. However, information tended to be missing about the agenda and other basic information about what to expect in forums, often due to late arrival of materials.

## Follow up and continuity

The question about follow up was similar to that about preparation:

- what were the arrangements for follow up and how were they implemented?

Once again, Roger Hart summarises the problems neatly:

Conferences by and for children can be a valuable part of an ongoing programme of children's participation. When they are designed as single events, however, without building on current work with children and with no plans for genuine follow up, then one should be suspicious of their value and intent (Hart, 1997, 143).

The process of this research evaluation led to one disappointing conclusion: children and their experiences were lost after the forums. There was inadequate documentation and recording of activities, which meant that limited continuity and less sustainability were achieved because of failure

to update children's personal information and contact addresses. Better documentation is required – and this takes funds for documentation and dissemination. Documents collected as secondary data showed that far too often reports are bullet-pointed, largely self-congratulatory accounts that seem to concentrate on games and social events

Follow up activities were clearly influenced by budget limitations, as well as by lack of adequate planning. Organisations have not institutionalized children's participation, staff are inadequately supported and funds for supporting participation in international forums were often not available. Children's participation tends to be financed from existing funds, rather than new resources. The result is that budget allocation for participation in forums (as for follow-up activities) has shifted from attendance of NGOs to attendance of children, which is expensive given the need for additional adults as translators and chaperones – up to three times more expensive in fact.

Whatever the reasons, and whatever adult perceptions are of follow up, children's comments to researchers show considerable disappointment about the support they have received in follow up, They consistently requested governments and other adult organisations to fulfil their promises. In addition, structured opportunities should be found for 'participating children' who pass into adulthood to use their experiences to support the current generation of children.

## **The roles of children and adults**

Researchers tried to discover what children and adults thought of the roles they took during participation in the 11 forums:

- what roles did adults take, and what did children and young people think about this?
- what roles did children and young people take, and what did they and adults think about this?

The results from the various tools through which these questions were asked in research are far from conclusive – nor could they be anything more than indicative given the variety of forums and small number of respondents. However, in general researchers found that adults are more critical of 'democratic procedures' and more questioning of children's role in decision making, while children are more critical of adult performance.

Adult organisers are honest and transparent about lessons learned, but some children witnessed failures to protect them, and experienced disempowerment. They also complained about disappointments in follow up and instances of stigmatisation as the result of adult incapacities.

How, if at all, were children included in decision making? They were triumphantly seen and heard; they made an impressive contribution. It was not chaos. But were they duped? For example, if they were called to stand next to government delegations when they presented to the forum, were they there as decoration? Some children reported that they made decisions as equals with adults, in a 'two way process', but these decisions had a narrow basis in adults' pre-formed agendas.

More scientific ways need to be found and used in evaluations of experiences such as the 11 forums. At the end of CYP Forum II, young participants, according to Etherton, 'gave appositive and enthusiastic evaluation' (Etherton, 2002, 47). Yet, while these are expressions of enjoyment and appreciation, they were probably collected through the kind of loosely-worded evaluation form with which NGO meetings tend to collect feedback at the end of a meeting. There is no evidence in these comments that children felt the primary objective of the meeting had to do with participation in decision making – even in this children's forum. Indeed the comments that 'It was exciting to learn new games' may indicate that at least one participant was more caught up in the facilitation activities than in the substance of the meeting. Etherton asks 'Was there a deeper recognition...of the regionally arranged participation process, closely coordinated by INGOs, UNICEF and governments?' Children's comments on the need for improved regional coordination are consistent throughout both primary and secondary data in this research. However, a more pertinent question might be how to ensure that evaluation of forums in which children participate is systematic, scientific and according to agreed criteria, so that a meeting evaluation is not mistaken for evaluation of children's participation.

According to both adults and children, children as individuals benefited from the experience, but it is equally clear that children as a group did not benefit directly. Although the profile of childhood, and the idea of children's rights, may have been raised among adults, it did not seem to be the case that children had any real influence on decision making – even though they seemed to think that they did. The high rating given by children to the idea that they took decisions equally with adults is belied by the fact that (probably unknown to them) options and choices had

already been considerably restricted prior to being placed before them, as well as by the complaints children made about the frustrations of adult meeting processes. The conclusion is that although children were seen and heard at these meetings they did not have a seat at the decision-making table. Given the need for raising adult awareness of children's capacities and human rights, this was probably inevitable. Participation, as all the gurus say, is a process that requires mutual learning and adjustments. The danger is, however, that the participation of children in the Special Session will become used as a model of good practice rather than seen for what it was, a very, very first step.

Too much enthusiasm was often overburdening for children, who became tired and/or bored, either because the subject matter was too complex or unrelated to their daily lives, or because it was not children-friendly, or (paradoxically) because there was too much children-friendliness – far too many activities – even though they enjoyed the 'fun' provided by facilitators. Many adult respondents emphasised that the mistaken belief that children need to be physically present in international discussions of their welfare, which diverts attention from where children's participation should really start and be grounded – in communities, schools and families.

## **Rights and Risks**

Of particular concern to organisations promoting children's participation and developing policies in this respect are the rights issues involved. In the first place, researchers sought information about the extent to which forums were children friendly and empowering. In addition, they looked for the benefits and disadvantages of participation, including possible risks, disadvantages and violations of rights. These questions are best answered according to specific groups of rights – participation, protection, survival and development, and information

## **Participation**

As already seen, children tended to be selected rather than delegated by their peers. Methods of selection were variable and often not documented, which opens a wide gap through which children's input to forums can be discounted by adults. This also resulted in discrimination against certain groups, through the over-representation of wealthy, urban elites, and under representation of excluded groups. Although the research found no

clear evidence of discrimination based on gender, there was a clear under-representation of younger children. Children's voluntary, informed consent seems to be either sidelined as an issue or not to be an issue at all, which is a clear violation of CRC Articles 12.

## Protection

Despite awareness on the part of organisers, and considerable evidence about guidelines and briefings given to accompanying adults, the research showed that children are inadequately protected against abuse. One factor in this is the lack of resources – time, money and expertise – for recruiting, training and monitoring adults who facilitate, chaperone or translate in forums where children are present. Routine checks do not seem to be made on adults who take on these roles, even though this is part of the protection policies of organisations within the International Save the Children Alliance, their partners and other international welfare organisations.

## Survival and development

Several children complained that attending forums interfered with their schooling, which may be a cogent argument for decreasing the frequency of international events (or at least children's participation in them) and increasing institutionalised opportunities for children to participate at community, project and school levels.

Although many children also said that they became tired by the forums, and it seems that they were often allowed to work preparing presentations throughout the night, this is unlikely to have caused any long-term health problems. Maybe the final word about the effects on long term development could rest with Lee Sang-Don, whose description of the Bali Mincon so impressed his adult Chinese colleagues. Talking about discussions during the children's preparatory session, he wrote:

When the discussion did not seem to end hours after hours, I got very tired, but I also felt very glad and hopeful that my colleagues continued to try hard to focus on what we could do with this rare opportunity to let our thoughts be known to the people who could actually lead the changes. I felt reassured that we could participate successfully with this passion (Lee, 2003, 31).

Of more concern is the fact that pre-registration parental consent forms for the Children's Forum at the Special Session and 'ancillary events' handed over their responsibilities to chaperones, including 'In particular ...[making] decisions concerning any medical treatment', and affirming 'that arrangements for medical insurance to cover [the child] during this trip have been made or will be made, in consultation with the delegation of which [the child] is a member'. Children did not give their signed informed consent to anything, and evidence that children were actually covered (or covered adequately) for medical care when outside their parents' care, is equivocal. This may be another area in which lack of adequate resources may be putting children at risk.

## Information

Article 17 of the CRC illustrates that a crucial aspect of participation and citizenship alike is having a basis of information, which can be used to decide between different courses of action, such as whether or not to attend a forum or to accept a particular person as an accompanying adult. Children's preparation for attending forums appears to have been very variable – indeed the same appears to be true of some accompanying adults. Information is described as frequently arriving too late to be useful. Moreover the research found that, although some children-friendly materials are mentioned, there is no evidence that they have been tested, that they are adequate for different age groups, or that they are accessible. There seems to be an important gap in provision for participation to be filled in this respect.

## Final words

Overall results from the data are that the regional organisers were visionary in that, especially with respect to the Special Session, the opportunity was grasped with both hands, despite scarce resources that created certain problems in selecting children to take part in forums. Selection processes were very varied; the children selected were very frequently those who were already working with NGOs (indeed NGO experience was crucial to the processes taking place at all). The result in Southeast, East Asia and Pacific, as in other regions, was that an educated, urban elite group of children tended to predominate, with only token representation of vulnerable groups. This raises the issue of whether children's participation should be by appointment or through representative democracy. The

expectations of, and burden upon, child participation in forums and decision-making processes appear to be greater than they are for adult participation.

Being seen and heard by people who have not previously been exposed to children's participation may in the long run foster a place at the table for children. It was perhaps inevitable that forums often appeared to be discourses on participation rather than examples of participation in practice – demonstration rather than implementation. The risk is that this kind of participation is all that children are allowed – bringing their 'dreams' – rather than a stage in the process of developing equal partnership. Follow up, or rather a reported lack of follow up, seems to indicate that this is the case.

Allied to this was the tendency among adults and children to see the process of attending forums as a means of advancing knowledge of children's rights – as if this was the main aim – rather than implementation of children's right to participate, with the aim of including their agendas and opinions in overall decision-making processes.

Countries in the Southeast, East Asia and Pacific region were, not unexpectedly, at different levels of preparedness. NGO involvement was vital and generously provided on the basis of prior experiences (in some cases over several years). Nevertheless, collaboration needs to continue and roles need to be worked out, not least between NGOs and governments. It can be argued that 'children are the new NGOs': existing funds were shifted from NGO participation to children's participation, rather than new funds being made available. But planning for the future is impeded because there is little information available about what children's participation could – or should – cost.

By starting with the children they already knew, organisers in Southeast, East Asia and the Pacific of children's participation in the 11 forums made a pragmatic decision, guided by existing resources and the brief time frame available. Time of course stretches if funds are available and, in this case, organisers tended to root around creatively for small amounts of money that could be pressed into service. The lessons learned here are not new. Child participation takes time, and is expensive in terms of financial resources required to send not only a child but also an accompanying adult (or maybe two if a translator is required as well as a chaperone) to an international forum, but also in terms of human resources – who may not be adequately prepared – and material resources in terms of children-friendly materials for children to be adequately

prepared before, during and after the forum to fulfil their role as representatives. The lack of funds disempowers children and may also put them at risk.

Children and adults reported benefits gained from the forums, such as raised self-confidence, increased skills in organising and participating in forums, learning about democracy, but these are only opinions and further research is required to substantiate these claims. In addition, forums were said to enable children to understand other cultures and make networks and contacts with children from different backgrounds, raising their knowledge and enabling them to explore their talents. But, because these networks were not institutionalised, gains were lost through inadequate follow up.

Individual children benefited from the experience, despite concerns about their safety and genuine empowerment, but children as a group did not benefit – as seen in the narrow range of follow-up activities and the disappointment expressed by some child delegates. They did not lose their enthusiasm but:

It is a long road we started and hope to continue to make the gains.  
The danger is still there that adults don't listen.



# RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations from the research evaluation are that the International Save the Children Alliance and UNICEF in the Southeast, East Asia and Pacific region, together with other partners, should take action at four levels: institutionalisation, documentation, addressing children's rights issues and planning.

With respect to institutionalisation of children's participation in adult forums:

- use lessons learned to institutionalise children's participation
- establish the relative roles of duty-bearers
- establish ways for young people to support the next generation of child participants.

In order to improve documentation, so that lessons learned and information about good practices are not lost, along with the experience and skills of children who have participated in these forums:

- write more informative reports
- save information, including complete lists for contacting children
- improve dissemination
- centralise archives.

To address the children's rights issues highlighted in this research evaluation:

- establish and promote principles and processes for selection
- make detailed plans to protect children for each opportunity for participation
- improve information provided to children and adults
- check and monitor accompanying adults
- establish a children-friendly complaints procedure.

Finally, in order to prevent repeating the pattern of preparing for children's participation without adequate time, funding and other resources:

- develop a regional strategic plan for children's participation
- include follow-up and reporting structures in the plan.

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## **'Children-friendly' documents**

### **a. Collected in the Southeast, East Asia and Pacific region in the course of the research evaluation**

Child-friendly version of a revised draft outcome document *A World Fit for Children*, 'This document was produced by Save the Children, with contributions from other organisations such as Plan International, International Planned Parenthood Federation and Peace Child International'; 'Child Friendly Version of the revised outcome document 'A World Fit for Children (issued in March 2001) THIS IS NOT AN OFFICIAL DOCUMENT.

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**b. Children-friendly documents produced by Save the Children internationally, but not found in regional archives consulted, included:**

Versions of *A World Fit for Children*, updated as the process continued, including a dictionary to explain jargon and technical terms

A version of *We the children*

A guide for young people.

# APPENDIX I:

## DETAILS OF EFFORTS TO REACH RESPONDENTS IN INDONESIAN CASE STUDY

Location	Status	Sample	Methods used	Results	Causes
Jakarta	Children	6 (case group)	6 interview	1 (case group) could not be reached 5 complete	Failed in accessing the contact number
		1 (control)	1 interview	Could not be reached	The respondent had moved without any further contact with the institution
	Adult	10 (case group)	8 interview 2 questionnaire	1 interview failed 8 complete 2 questionnaires complete	Failed in adjusting the schedule
		2 (control)	1 interview 1 questionnaire	1 interview failed 1 interview complete	Failed in adjusting the schedule
Surabaya	Children	1 (case group)	1 interview	-	-
		3 (control)	3 interview	2 interview failed 1 interview complete	Failed in adjusting the schedule
	Adult	1 (case group)	2 questionnaire (email) 8 interview	2 questionnaires complete 1 Interview failed	Failed in adjusting the schedule
		7 (control)	1 questionnaire 6 interview	6 interview failed 1 interview complete	No time to contact respondent
Solo	Children	1 (case group)	1 interview	Complete	-
	Adult	1 (case group)	1 interview	Complete	-
Bogor	Children	1 (case group)	1 interview	Complete	-
	Adult	-	-	-	-
Bekasi	Children	-	-	-	-
	Adult	1 (control group)	1 email questionnaire	Not returned	No reply Email bounced

## Seen and Heard

Location	Status	Sample	Methods used	Results	Causes
Tulungagung	Children	1 (control group)	2 interview	2 interview failed	The children moved to another town for working
	Adult	1 (control group)	1 questionnaire	Complete	-
Bandung	Children	1 (case group)	1 interview	1 interview failed	Too limited time to go to the respondent's home
	Adult	-	-	-	-
Makasar	Children	1 (case group)	1 email questionnaire	Not returned	No reply. No reponse also from the adult
	Adult	1 (case group)	1 email questionnaire	Not returned	No reply.
Medan	Children	-	-	-	-
	Adult	1 (control group)	1 email questionnaire	Not returned	No reply. There was a contact with the researcher for informing an event, but not answering questionnaire
Ambon	Children	1 (case group)	1 interview by phone	Complete	-
	Adult	-	-	-	-
Sanggau	Children	1 (control group)	1 interview by phone	Complete	-
	Adult	-	-	-	-
Alor, NTT	Children	1 (case group)	1 email questionnaire	Not returned	Not reply. The repondent had moved without any further contact with the organisation
	Adult	-	-	-	-

## APPENDIX II: PARTICIPATION OF INDONESIAN CHILDREN IN FORUMS BETWEEN 1990 AND 2004

Time and Place	Activities	Level	Children Participation
1990, New York	Word Summit for Children	International	No child participation
1992,1994, 1996, 1998 in many countries in East Asia and Pacific Region	South East Asia Pacific (SEAP) Ministerial Consultation I-IV	Regional	No child participation
July 2000, Cibubur	Kongres Anak Indonesia I	National	It was the first national child participation moment that was opened by the children themselves
April 2001, Jomtien Thailand	EAP Children and Youth Forum I	Regional	Indonesia attended the forum and sent youth ambassadors that were selected in Kongres Anak I as child delegates
July 2001, Jakarta	Kongres Anak Indonesia II	National	This forum was attracted the government's attention. The Deputy of Child Protection and Welfare of the Ministry of Women Empowerment, Mrs. Sumarni Dawan Rahardjo, opening the forum.
May 2001, Beijing-China	SEAP Ministerial Consultation V	Regional	The forum was attended by one child from Indonesia as delegate
August 2001, Vientiane	EAP Children and Youth Forum II	Regional	Indonesia sent child delegates that were selected in Kongres Anak II. At that meeting, children from Indonesia were selected for attending the Special Session
May 2002, New York	UN General Assembly Special Session on Children	International	Attended by 3 Indonesia Youth Ambassadors 2001 that had been selected in Kongres Anak Indonesia II
23 July 2002, Jakarta	Forum Anak don Remaja Hari Anak Nasional (HAN) 2002	National	Was attended by all children representatives from various parts of Indonesia

Seen and Heard

Time and Place	Activities	Level	Children Participation
December 2002, Seoul	EAP Children and Youth Forum III	Regional	Indonesia did not send child delegates. The children who attended the forum were classified as the institution's delegates, not representing the country. There was no Indonesian child selected as delegate for the next regional forum
January 2003, Denpasar – Bali	Kongres Anak II	National	215 children from various parts of Indonesia attended it, and the Health Minister as representative of the Indonesia government did the opening ceremony.
February 2003, Bangkok – Thailand	Preparatory Committee Meeting for the 6 <sup>th</sup> Ministerial Consultation	Regional	No child delegates from Indonesia
May 2003, Nasa Dua – Bali	6 <sup>th</sup> SEAP Ministerial Consultation	Regional	Attended by 5 Indonesia Child Delegates, that were selected in Kongres Anak III
15-17 June 2003, Jakarta	The Draft Arrangement of National Program for Indonesia Children 2015	National	Attended by 15 Indonesia Child Ambassadors that represented various issues
26-27 June 2003, Jimbaran – Bali	World Tourism Organisation (WTO) Regional Consultation on the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation in Tourism	Regional	Attended by 5 Indonesia Child Ambassadors
23 July 2003, Jakarta	Forum Anak dan Remaja Hari Anak Nasional 2003	National	Attended by all Indonesia children representatives
13-19 December 2003, Jakarta and Bogor	Forum Anak dan Remaja Hari Kesehatan Nasional 2003	National	Attended by all children representatives. At this meeting, a National Child Ambassador for Health was chosen
February 2004, Yogyakarta	Kongres Anak IV	National	Not yet

Source: National Commission of Child Protection Report, 2003

# ABOUT THE AUTHORS

## **Judith Ennew**

Judith Ennew is a social anthropologist by training and is currently Senior Research Associate in the Centre for Family Research, University of Cambridge. She has been an activist and researcher in children's rights since 1979, specialising in issues concerning child workers, 'street children' and child sexual exploitation, with respect to both research and programme planning. Her publications in this field include *The sexual exploitation of children* (1986), *Children in focus* (with Jo Boyden, Save the Children Sweden, 1997) and *Street and working children: A guide to planning* (Save the Children UK, 1995, reprinted 2000). She has worked in Latin America, Africa, South and Southeast Asia and Eastern Europe on children's rights and child labour issues, but has been based Thailand since 2000, working largely in Indonesia, The Philippines and Viet Nam.

## **Yuli Hastadewi**

Yuli Hastadewi, the chief researcher and research coordinator, who also took overall responsibility for the Indonesian case study, is an Indonesian researcher, based in Malang and working with JARAK (the NGO Network for Child Labour Elimination in Indonesia). She has coordinated research and evaluation projects for UNICEF, on child labour, and for the World Bank, evaluating community-level micro-credit, as well as for the Indonesian organisations SPEKTRA (Centre for Economic and Social Development) and LPKP (Institute of Social and Development Studies).

## **Dominique Pierre Plateau**

Dominique Pierre Plateau is based in Bangkok as Non Violence and Child Labour Regional Coordinator for Save the Children Sweden Southeast Asia. From 1998 until mid 2003 he was Coordinator of the Bangkok-based Secretariat of the Regional Working Group on Child Labour (RWG-CL), managing projects in South, Southeast and East Asia and the Pacific. After beginning his career in the Geneva office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, he began working in Southeast Asia in 1988, initially with the UNHCR, then in the office of the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General (OSRSG, Land Mine Awareness Program) and also in the private sector, in marketing communications. Publications include *Child labour: Getting the message across* (with Judith Ennew, 2001), a manual on the production and strategic use of information about child labour in Asia.



Save the Children fights for children's rights. We deliver immediate and lasting improvements to children's lives worldwide.

Save the Children works for:

- a world which respects and values each child
- a world which listens to children and learns
- a world where all children have hope and opportunity.

Children's participation is increasingly demanded in international meetings about their rights and welfare. Save the Children and other organisations have built a considerable body of experience on children's participation, which has formed the basis for a number of exploratory evaluations of both processes and outcomes. As a contribution to current debates, this Report presents the results of a research evaluation of the participation of children from Southeast, East Asia and the Pacific in events and processes connected to the United Nations General Assembly Special Session on Children in May 2002, examining some of the specific experiences of Save the Children and its partners in the region.

The research covered the period from January 2000 to May 2003, and considers not only the Special Session but also the Fifth and Sixth Regional Ministerial Consultations including preparatory processes, concentrating particularly on the views of children who attended these high level meetings. The results and conclusions contribute to current knowledge and provide suggestions for all those involved in the task of further improving the quality of children's participation. The information in this Report will assist regional efforts to ensure that children's participation becomes both an everyday reality and a high-quality, meaningful experience for the children involved.

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