

Cultivating Children's Participation



*Abridged version of 'Participation is a
virtue that must be cultivated'*



Save the Children
Sweden

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- which listens to children and learns
- where all children have hope and opportunity*

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ISBN: 978-91-7321-285-4
Code no: 10139

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This publication is partly financed by Sida (Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency). Sida has not taken part in its production and does not assume any responsibility for its content.

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Contents

Abbreviations and Acronyms	11
Overview	13
Save the Children Sweden's Study of their child participation working methods and materials	13
Methodology	13
Concepts of Children's Participation	15
Save the Children Sweden's promotion of children's right to be heard and to participate ..	15
Save the Children Sweden's work on child participation	16
Acceptance of child participation	17
Children's participation, protagonism and citizenship, and their connection with child protection	17
Key Recommendations	19
Child Participation and the Rights Based Approach	21
The impact of Child Rights Programming in promoting children's participation	22
Children's participation in the programme cycle and the promotion of children's rights to participate in society: emphasis in different regions	23
Which children are involved?	24
Key Recommendations	25
Key Strategies and Approaches	26
Mainstreaming	29
Capacity Building	30
Pilot projects and innovative approaches	32
Support for Child Led Organisations and Initiatives	36
Awareness-raising, networking and advocacy	38
Research and the Development of Materials	39
Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (PME)	43
Regional strategies and approaches to further children's participation	43
East and Central Africa	43
Suggestions to further child participation work	44
Europe	45
Suggestions for strengthening child participation work	46
Latin America	46
Suggestions for strengthening child participation work	48
Middle East and North Africa	48
Suggestions for strengthening child participation work	50
South and Central Asia	50
Suggestions to further child participation work	52
South East Asia and the Pacific	52
Suggestions to further child participation work	55
Southern Africa	55
Suggestions for furthering child participation work	56
West Africa	57
Suggestions for strengthening child participation work	58

Quality and Sustainability of Child Participation work	59
What does it mean to promote meaningful and ethical participation child participation process?	59
Improving Quality and Sustainability:A Key Challenge	60
What is still required to promote meaningful and ethical child participation?	60
Efforts to make children's participation sustainable	61
Balancing child participation at local, national, regional and international levels: Impact of international processes	61
Conclusion	63
Further Readings	65

Dear Reader,

It is a pleasure to share this publication with you about Save the Children Sweden's children's participation working methods and materials. This is part of the thematic development process of Save the Children Sweden to promote children's right to participate and presents the findings from an extensive global analysis.

For Save the Children Sweden it is important to ensure that children are recognised, capacitated and strengthened as rights holders and social actors who are able to bring about changes in their lives with the support from adults. The organisation has extensive experience on working with children and adults to strengthen the right to participation of boys and girls in various contexts throughout the world.

We believe that the learnings generated from this self reflective analysis should be useful for a wider audience. It is with this idea that Save the Children Sweden has produced the report *'Participation is a virtue that must be cultivated' – An analysis of children's participation working methods and material within Save the Children Sweden* of which this is the summary. It shares practices and learnings in order to inspire interested professionals and non-governmental organisations, donors and governments to advocate for the implementation of a child participatory approach and to strengthen their own work on children's participation.

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Acknowledgements

It has been a great pleasure for us to have been involved in this compilation and analysis of Save the Children Sweden's working methods and materials in relation to children's rights to participate. It has been a learning process for us and, we hope, for all involved. As mentioned by one of Save the Children's regional focal points 'this study was welcomed as a tool which could help us document what has been done so far but which will also help us work on our weaknesses.'¹

In undertaking this assignment we have appreciated and would like to acknowledge here the significant inputs by the regional and national focal points on children's participation, as well as key staff at the Head Office including Aisha Saeed and Muriel Saad (Middle East and Northern Africa), Blanca Nomura (Southern Africa), Elkane Mooh (West Africa), Gina Solari (Latin America), Henk van Beers (South East Asia and Pacific), Kedir Ali (Ethiopia), Samuel Mwangi (Southern Sudan and Kenya), Monika Sarajärvi (Europe), Ravi Karkara and Bandana Shrestha (South and Central Asia), Lena Karlsson, Vibeke Jorgensen, Patrik Olsson, Eva Clarhäll and Monica Lindvall (Head Office). We have also greatly appreciated the reflections and analysis shared by Alejandro Cussaniovich from the Latin America region. Thanks to all of you for your active contributions, reflections, sharing and feedback which have fundamentally shaped and enriched this report.

We would like to thank Neha Bhandari for compiling this abridged version.

We trust this document will serve as a useful analytical tool for recommendations and wider use within Save the Children Sweden and hopefully also beyond in the wider Save the Children family.

Claire O'Kane and Clare Feinstein (consultants), August 2007

1. E-mail response from regional focal point, December 2006.

Abbreviations and Acronyms

ACRWC	African Charter of the Rights and Welfare of the Child
CASE	Community Agency for Social Enquiry
CACD	Community Arms Collection and Destruction)
CRP	Child Rights Programming
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
NCCWD	National Commission on Child Welfare and Development
OAU	Organisation of African Unity
SEAP	South East Asia and the Pacific
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNGASS	UN Special Session on Children

Overview

Save the Children Sweden's Study of their child participation working methods and materials

Save the Children Sweden operates in Sweden and eight regions around the world, namely, East and Central Africa, Europe, Middle East and North Africa, Latin America, South and Central Asia, South East Asia and Pacific, Southern Africa and West Africa. In diverse locations, Save the Children Sweden is promoting children's right to be heard and to participate. The strategic work related to children's right to participate includes:

- Contributing to the conceptual understanding of children's participation,
- mainstreaming participation into all programme areas and projects,
- supporting innovative approaches and pilot projects,
- raising awareness and building capacity among key actors,
- supporting children's initiatives and organisations.

The Study contributes to the conceptual understanding of children's participation. The purpose of the Study was to go beyond listings and short annotations of materials to provide analysis of the concept of participation being promoted by Save the Children Sweden in diverse contexts, to explore any differences in participation work within or between regions and globally, and to share examples of good practice. In addition, the Study has included a focused analysis and brief assessments of selective materials, standards and tools being used by Save the Children Sweden in each region. Based upon this analysis, key recommendations to strengthen Save the Children Sweden's child participation work are made.

Methodology

The Study was guided and informed by collection of policy and strategy documents, guidelines and standards, tools and reports sharing child participation experiences on children's participation from Save the Children Sweden country programmes and regional offices. An analytical framework for the compilation and analysis of children's participation materials was developed. Interviews were held with key national, regional and global Save the Children Sweden child participation focal points. A rapid assessment of child participation materials was undertaken, with regards to which materials they found useful in promoting children's participation and cause for their effectiveness and to identify gaps in materials concerning children's participation and their reasons for their insufficiency. In addition, an e-discussion was facilitated on critical issues between Save the Children Sweden child participation practitioners to further debate and analysis.

The pages ahead, present briefly the key outcomes of the Study, encouraging practices, important lessons learned, key approaches, challenges and areas that need to be strengthened to promote children's participation work within Save the Children Sweden and beyond.

Concepts of Children's Participation

Save the Children Sweden's promotion of children's right to be heard and to participate

The basis of Save the Children Sweden's work is the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the United Nations' Declaration on Human Rights. These build on the principles that, all people are equal, children have special rights and everyone, particularly governments have the responsibility to fulfil children's rights.

Articles in the UNCRC with specific bearing on participation of children:

- Listening to children and respecting their views (Article 12)
- Expression of thoughts and ideas (Articles 13 and 14)
- Access to information (Articles 13 and 17)
- Gathering and dissemination of information (Article 13)
- Organisation of children (Article 15)

Children's right to be heard and to participate is clearly articulated in Save the Children Sweden's vision, which has been the vision of the International Save the Children Alliance since 1996:

Our vision is a world in which all children's rights are fulfilled:

- A world which respects and values each child.
- A world where all children participate and have influence.
- A world where all children have hope and opportunity.

Save the Children Sweden operates in eight regions around the world. Across the different regions, reinforced by strategic directives and guidance, Save the Children Sweden is promoting children's right to be heard and to participate, supporting increased opportunities for girls and boys to express their views, to be informed, to participate in decisions affecting them and to be heard – to have an influence. The emphasis on children's views having an influence (for example, on decisions, actions or policies affecting them) has become more prominent in recent years.

Save the Children Sweden interprets the UNCRC (Article 12) to mean that participation does not only imply a requirement that the child should freely be able to express his or her views, opinions, feelings and needs. The child should also be heard and respected and the views that the child advances should be taken into account and have an impact on decisions. This does not mean that children have all the answers themselves or that adults are deprived of their responsibilities for children's welfare, protection and safety. But the best interest of the child can be fully understood only by listening to the child.

Save the Children Sweden emphasises the right not to be discriminated and inclusion of the marginalised or excluded child. All children have the same rights to be heard.

Save the Children Sweden believes in the importance of engaging with babies from the earliest age to promote their participation in accordance with their age and maturity. Children's participation begins at home and in the daily life of the child. If young children are encouraged to explore, to think, to talk, ask questions and listen, to solve problems, to be caring and responsible from the early years, these qualities will remain within them. Promoting the involvement of young children and furthering efforts which enable a participatory learning environment are therefore intended to enhance children's participation in later years.

Over the years, Save the Children Sweden has developed a series of strategy papers and policy documents that provide clarity on the concept of children's influence and participation. Save the Children Sweden's policy indicates that 'influence' involves a process of dialogue over time and mutual trust between the child and concerned adults. This contributes to children's understanding of democracy and their competency to participate. Adults must be prepared to take children more seriously and to genuinely listen to their views. Children and young people can be strengthened, with the knowledge, skills and values to claim their rights and influence decisions affecting them.

Save the Children Sweden's work on child participation

Save the Children Sweden works to ensure an increase in influence of girls and boys because it is their right. In addition, giving children influence is seen to contribute to sustainable development; democracy; the personal development of the child; the generation of knowledge; increased quality activities and increased credibility of the organisation.

Save the Children Sweden's policy also articulates its belief that children's participation enhances self-respect and respect for others. This respect will, in turn, enhance awareness of and sensitivity to democratic values and human rights. Save the Children Sweden is convinced that the quality of decisions concerning children will improve by listening to children and taking their opinions and experiences into consideration.

Within the organisation, there is a growing recognition that children's participation needs to be understood and implemented in the local social, cultural and political context. There are different nuances of child participation between regions but all regions concur on the acceptance of the rights of children to participate. All regions formally accept the UNCRC and the exercise of participation through expressing opinions, consultations and dialogue. The concrete forms of participation reflect the particular socio-cultural political contexts of each region. (You can read more about, organisation of children's participation in different regions, in section on 'Regional Approaches to Child Participation')

There are increased efforts by Save the Children Sweden across each region to move beyond participation projects, to promote and sustain processes and structures

which support ongoing opportunities for children's meaningful participation. In addition, there are increased and ongoing efforts to mainstream children's participation in all areas of programming and to promote children's participation in society. Organisational efforts towards applying a right based approach have played a key role in strengthening the mainstreaming of children's participation.

Acceptance of child participation

In general, it is assumed that children's participation must happen gradually. Behind this assumption lie reservations, fears, resistance to capacitating children, social representations of childhood which are entrenched and which generate a resistance towards the participation of children in practice. Power relations between adults and children are deeply embedded and can take generations to transform.

In principle there is increased, widespread acceptance of the importance of children's participation among Save the Children Sweden staff and many partners. Many staff members have internalised the concept of child participation and have applied it in their private and professional lives. More broadly, the level of understanding and acceptance of the concept is varied among a number of Save the Children Sweden partners, particularly government partners. There is also recognition that while there may be acceptance of the principle of supporting and facilitating children's expression and participation in decision-making, when it comes to actual practice there is still reluctance among adults to really share power with children and to genuinely take account of their views. Adults also continue to under-estimate and undermine children's capacity to be involved. Greater efforts are required to ensure the practical translation of theory into practice within all levels of Save the Children Sweden and by all its partners.

Within and between regions and globally, there are different degrees of acceptance and realisation of the participation concept. Children's views and recommendations from participatory research and evaluations are often reflected in policies and decisions at regional and country levels, but are not systematically considered when making central policies/strategies. Two clear exceptions are the policy on children's work that involved consultations with children and the UN Study on Violence against Children. The challenge lies in ensuring that policy and decision making at each level (international, regional, country and local) considers diverse views from the field – both of children and adults.

Children's participation, protagonism and citizenship, and their connection with child protection

“Children can become true citizens only when they participate in social, economic, cultural and political fields.”

(A boy, member of a children's organisation in Bangladesh²)

2. O'Kane, C. (2003) 'Children and Young People as Citizens: Partners for Social Change', Save the Children South and Central Asia.

Save the Children believes that children are full members of society and must be recognised as citizens of both today and tomorrow³. Rights based approaches to development support a shift in the concept of participation from emphasising the 'beneficiaries' involvement to approaches that stress children's rights to citizenship and good governance. 'The term children's protagonism, refers to the active participation of children where they can play a leading role.'⁴ Protagonism also means to assume responsibilities, to contribute and to build in a joint manner. It is therefore a concept of life and society.

Concepts of protagonism and citizenship remain largely unexplored within global Save the Children Sweden strategies and policy but are explored and promoted in some of the regions such as Latin America, West Africa and South Asia. The concept of protagonism is perhaps most developed and articulated in the Latin America region. Here, the approach is most developed within children's organisations as this concept promotes the child as a holder of rights in a collective or social way and not in an individual sense. The United Nations' Millennium Development Goals and the UN Special Session on Children also articulate role of children as citizens. This is also mentioned in the Save the Children Sweden's policy paper.

UN Millennium Development Goals

The Millennium goals emphasise the promotion of democracy and the need to strengthen the rule of law and the respect for all internationally recognized human rights and fundamental freedoms. The goals highlight the need to work collectively for more inclusive political processes, allowing genuine participation by all citizens in all countries.

The UN Special Session on Children 2002 (UNGASS)

The UNGASS Declaration emphasizes the need to listen to children and ensure their participation. Children and adolescents are viewed as resourceful citizens capable of helping to build a better future for all. The declaration requests member states to respect children's right to express them selves and to participate in all matters affecting them, in accordance with their age and maturity.

At the same time, Save the Children Sweden recognises that children's protagonism can often clash with children's protection. Risks and ethical issues in children's participation need to be kept at fore, when encouraging children's protagonism. Clear recognition needs to be given to the protection rights of children, while at the same time supporting their protagonism. It has also been acknowledged that tensions can arise while applying both concepts. In some contexts children's protagonism can intensify their exposure to risky situations. For example working children protesting against police violence; or children in an institutional care setting vocal-

3. Ibid.

4. Pilar Horno Castro, P. (2007) 'Easier to say than to do: Children's participation in events with adults'. [Translators note]. Save the Children Sweden.

ising the abuse they face at the hands of the care-takers. However, children's protagonism can also result in better protection of children. For example, a group of children negotiating with adults to prevent early child marriage or working children negotiating better treatment from the police.

Children and Organised Armed Violence in South Africa

Save the Children Sweden draws upon research that shows children in Cape Town have experience of Organised Armed Violence. Violence in the homes and lack of opportunities for the future push children to look for recognition in the gangs and the community. Being acknowledged by the community and their peers motivate children to involve in gangs. Relatives already involved in gangs serve as role models and encourage children to follow. From a children's participation perspective it is proposed that the negative aspects of children's participation can be transformed to positive opportunities through capacitating children, providing positive role models, ensuring protection and supporting children's organisations.

Key Recommendations

Save the Children Sweden should strengthen conceptual and practical links between children's participation, non-discrimination, the role of children's organisations in civil society and good governance, particularly in relation to its priority areas, which are, protection, education. and civil society for the rights of the child.

There should be conceptual reflections and analysis within Save the Children Sweden to determine how best to promote the inter-linkages between children's participation, protagonism and citizenship with respect to differences in socio-political cultural contexts. Organisational clarity should be developed on the results that Save the Children Sweden wants to achieve within specific time frames, with regards to children's participation, protagonism and citizenship. For example, need increased clarity on different objectives, results and outcomes Save the Children Sweden is seeking through its children's participation work for children of different backgrounds, age groups, abilities etc. For example, with regards to the objectives and results of children's participation – what changes for children do we want to bring about through their participation, what changes in the relations between children and adults? Are these changes and results measurable and verifiable through existing monitoring and evaluation instruments?

Children should be supported to identify and protect themselves from significant risks that they may face as a result of their protagonism. Adults need to play a supportive role in all processes and not be manipulative in either protection or participation.

Child Participation and the Rights Based Approach

The impact of Child Rights Programming in promoting children's participation

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Children (UNCRC) 1989 has been a powerful tool to promote children's rights and recognition of children as right holders. Children have rights to survival, protection, development and participation. These rights are universal, indivisible, inter-related and inter-dependent.

Children's participation rights should be recognised and promoted in their own right. In addition, the principle of children's participation should influence all areas of programming.

Efforts to move towards Child Rights Programming (CRP) have had an important and positive influence in promoting and mainstreaming children's participation both within and externally to Save the Children Sweden. CRP has played a significant role in allowing much more widespread support for and application of children's participation – so that rather than having a few stand alone child participation projects, children's participation is becoming integral to all programming.

Save the Children Sweden has made strategic efforts to promote an understanding and application of Child Rights Programming as the over-arching framework for all its work. As a result there is increased acceptance of this approach. Within the Save the Children Alliance, Save the Children Sweden is well known for its understanding and application of the rights based approach.

Training and education on Child Rights Programming has been undertaken in each region which has resulted in a good understanding of the rights based approach in the regional offices. There is also an emphasis on ensuring that participation is integrated into all programmes. Research and analysis on children's participation and children's "evolving capacity" has also been supported.

In West Africa, for instance, Child Rights Programming is sometimes an entry point for child participation and sometimes child participation is the entry point for Child Rights Programming. As a result, Child Rights Programming and child participation trainings are being increasingly combined into one package. Child Rights Programming is also used to mainstream child participation in all the programme areas. In addition, child-led organisations supported by Save the Children Sweden and partners are participating in almost all programme area activities.

The experience in the regions highlights that children should be engaged as key

actors within civil society and that child led organisations should be recognised as civil society organisations. Partnerships and networking with child led organisations increase opportunities for children to be involved in good governance and to monitor and promote the rights of the child. An understanding and application of the links between children's participation, citizenship and good governance need to be strengthened within Save the Children Sweden.

In each region, CRP has helped to promote children's rights to participate, both in terms of the principle of children's participation in programming and the goal of supporting children to assert their rights and participate in decision-making in all matters concerning them.

Children's participation in the programme cycle and the promotion of children's rights to participate in society: emphasis in different regions

In all regions, Save the Children Sweden is focusing both on the promotion of the principle of children's participation in the programme cycle, as well as promotion of children's rights to participate in society. In different regions of the world and in some cases within regions there is a difference in the emphasis given to either of these aspects. Let's take a look at some examples.

In Ethiopia, Save the Children Sweden partners have been encouraged to involve children in all stages of the programme cycle. Children's views must be evident in all their proposals. In addition, children are taking on various roles in programme implementation. For example, school children have engaged with the school management to have more books bought and to make reports on violation of their rights. They have also produced their own children's magazine. Within the HIV programme, children have been involved in HIV/AIDS prevention and care. Refugee children have also been involved in developing and implementing plans to prevent girls from dropping out of school. In the wider society, children in Ethiopia are involved in the Save the Children global campaign for education; Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper development; and the UN Study on Violence against Children. At more local levels, child rights clubs are also promoting and monitoring the rights of children.

In the Asian region (South East Asia and the Pacific [SEAP] and South and Central Asia), West Africa, as well as in the Middle East and North Africa region, children's right to participate in society is promoted along with their right to participate within the programme cycle.. Within SEAP region there are efforts to ensure that children's views (for example, from research and evaluations) inform different aspects of the programme cycle although children are not directly or physically involved in planning meetings. In Viet Nam and the Philippines there are some good examples of how children are involved with partner organisations as well as promoting their participation in schools, communities and local governance.

In the Middle East and North African (MENA) region, some countries have supported children to identify their own priorities in developing programmes and plan

actions to address such issues. In the wider society dimension there are efforts to help children express their views in schools and communities and on policies affecting them.

In some countries within the MENA region children have been part of the UN Study on Violence against Children process expressing their views about the forms of violence and abuse they are exposed to. Juvenile offenders in Aden gave testimonies on the forms of violence they are exposed to in police stations during a national sensitisation workshop held for the police. The children were protected by the juvenile justice system and were able to testify what had happened to them and how they had been illegally detained in police stations for long periods. The policemen's superiors attended the workshop and subsequently took action against the perpetrators of the violence and abuse. Aden's police stations are now free from violence against children. Girls and boys are no longer detained in police stations but are sent directly on remand to rehabilitation centres. The experience was documented and is now being replicated in other places in Yemen. In Palestine, a girl child project has capacitated girls to address child rights issues affecting them, gaining support from adults in their schools, families and society.

In West Africa, children's participation is promoted both as a crosscutting issue and a specific programme area to promote fulfilment of children's rights to participate and assert their rights. As a crosscutting issue children's participation is integrated in some aspects of the project cycle. It is sometimes an entry point and/or a key strategy of intervention. The main strategy for involving children in all stages of the programme cycle is their participation in Participatory Action Research which enables children to participate in all stages of the programme cycle.

As a specific programme area focusing on children's right to participate, the West African programme has developed projects such as support to working children's own associations, child rights clubs, Children's parliaments, child-to-child projects and theatre for development. Each of these initiatives enhances the opportunities of boys and girls to address issues affecting them, to participate in decision-making processes and to improve their lives. The major component of this programme area has been the capacity building of staff and partners as well as of children themselves, in particular members of child-led organisations.

However, overall children's participation in the programme cycle is not done in a systematic manner across all sector areas, or even within sectors. Rather, children are mostly involved in (preparatory) phases of planning, including situational assessments and research. There is some involvement of children in implementation, but less involvement of children in monitoring and evaluation. (Read more about it under the section 'Key Strategies and Approaches: Mainstreaming')

Which children are involved?

Many regions are struggling to engage the most marginalised children. Across most regions there is a need for increased efforts to involve children with disabilities, younger children and children from ethnic minority groups.

Within the Latin America region one of the key challenges has been how to pro-

mote children's participation in risk situations (for example, situations of abuse, exploitation, sexual abuse, children in conflict with the law), while at the same time ensuring children's protection. In the South East Asia and Pacific region reaching and involving the most marginalized groups of children is seen as a key challenge.

Dynamics in relation to gender are interesting to reflect upon. In many regions there has been quite a lot of work undertaken with regards to gender and participation to allow for the participation of both girls and boys. However, in some cultural contexts (for example, Southern Sudan, Afghanistan) widespread discrimination against girls and women in society has created increased barriers to promoting the participation of girls, particularly when school based children's clubs are the main strategy as many girls are excluded from schools. In contrast, in other cultural contexts such as Viet Nam, there is more active participation of girls compared with boys in the child friendly district work. Some regions including South and Central Asia, East and Central Africa, Southern Africa and Latin America are increasing efforts to engage with boys and young men as a means of exploring and addressing gender inequality, gender violence and HIV/AIDS transmission. This work has been given a certain impetus and focus as a result of Save the Children Sweden's role as lead agency for Save the Children in relation to the UN Study on Violence against Children and its follow up.

Key Recommendations

Ensure ongoing advocacy (internal and external) for the promotion of the participation rights of girls and boys of different ages and abilities, with a focus on quality, ethical, inclusive practice.

Increase efforts to mainstream children's rights to participate as integral to a rights based approach within Save the Children Sweden and partner organisations; ensuring an emphasis both on efforts to promote children's participation rights within society, as well as promoting the principle of children's participation within programming.

Save the Children Sweden, at each level, should undertake an organisational audit to identify organisational barriers to children's participation and to develop child friendly policies, processes and procedures. Efforts to develop child friendly materials which are accessible in local languages, including child friendly version of Save the Children Sweden strategies and policies, should be undertaken.

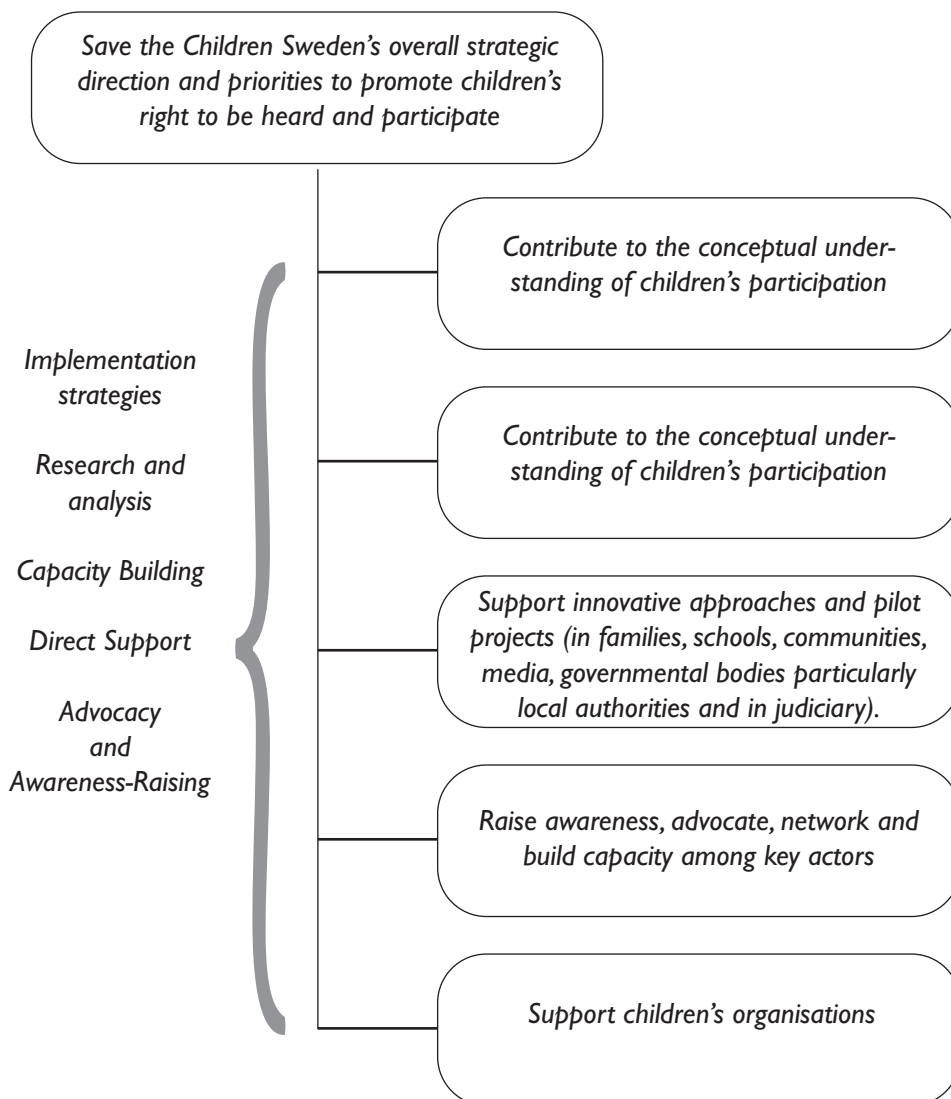
Increase analysis and strategic efforts, at all levels, to strengthen the most marginalised groups of children through their participation and/or organisation. Efforts to integrate work on non-discrimination and children's participation should increase; including direct work with children and adults on issues of diversity and discrimination to ensure patterns of power and exclusion are challenged, rather than strengthened through participatory initiatives.

Increase participatory work with younger children, children with disabilities and children from minority groups. Increase efforts to involve children in work, children without family support and children affected by armed conflict and disasters.

Continue efforts to support the development and strengthening of children's organisations in all regions.

Key Strategies and Approaches

While specific ‘entry points’ for developing and strengthening children’s rights to participate may be different within each country or region depending upon the socio-cultural political context, the following key strategies and approaches are being effectively implemented in each region as common strategies to promote children’s right to be heard and to participate.



This section presents an analysis of the following key strategies and approaches to further child participation:

- Mainstreaming
- Capacity building
- Pilot projects and support for innovative approaches

- Support for child led organizations and initiatives
- Awareness-raising, networking and advocacy
- Research and development of materials, tools and information
- Planning, monitoring and evaluation

Each sub-section presents examples of good practice, key reflections and recommendations.

Mainstreaming

The increasing emphasis on Child Rights Programming provides an opportunity for the principle of participation to be mainstreamed and to be put in focus at all stages of the programme cycle. Strategy and policy documents concerning children's influence and children's right to be heard and to participate have created a strong drive for mainstreaming children's participation work in the regions. While such efforts are underway, in some regions the mainstreaming is ad hoc, rather than systematic. Overall a lot more work in this direction is still needed, with investments in time and resources to ensure quality processes for meaningful, ethical participation.

For instance, in Southern Africa and South East Asia and Pacific children's views have mostly been taken into account in developing programmes by drawing upon the documented views of children from research and/or consultations rather than directly involving children in programming. However, greater efforts to support partners to more directly involve children in different aspects of the programme cycle are underway. In the Middle East and Northern Africa region strategies to mainstream children participation have been undertaken through discussions with partners working with children and assessment of current practices. Save the Children Sweden has succeeded in convincing some partners to involve children in identifying what issues they want to work on, how they want to do it and what the final product should be. A CRP checklist has also been developed (with points for each aspect of the programme cycle) which is being used to mainstream children participation in all projects.

In most regions child participation practitioners have been struggling in efforts to effectively monitor and evaluate the process and impact of children's participation⁵. In the South and Central Asia region there are some current initiatives to develop child led indicators and tools for monitoring and evaluation work with children⁶. In the Latin America region indicators for children's participation have been developed in consultation with children and partners.

The Study also highlights the important role of a supportive management to ensure the mainstreaming of children's participation. Allocation of human and

5. See section below on Monitoring and Evaluation.

6. See Nezam Uddin, A.F.M and Hassan Mahmood, G. (2007) Draft Discussion Paper on Children's Participation in Developing Indicators and Tools for Monitoring Reflections and Lesson Learned so far from Experiences of Bangladesh, India and Nepal. Save the Children Sweden South and Central Asia.

financial resources and adequate time are imperative to ensure meaningful participation processes. The Study reflects that having a designated person on children's participation at the global level has been crucial to ensure internal advocacy, to support communication and collaborative efforts within Save the Children Sweden and within Save the Children Alliance. Save the Children Sweden offices should consider the appointment of designated child participation advisers (where they do not already exist) at various levels (national to Head Office).

Meaningful children's participation requires organisations to change. Agencies have to develop new ways of working with children, build the capacity of staff, and establish an organisational environment, policies, processes and procedures that are conducive to children's participation. One way in which Save the Children Sweden tried to achieve this was by organising an annual meeting on children's participation, which proved to be a key strategy to support mainstreaming of children's participation.

The annual meetings have provided a space to identify and discuss critical issues (including the meaning and practice of mainstreaming), to exchange information and experiences, and to support each other in action planning and advocacy initiatives. In recent years, a network of Save the Children Sweden focal points has also been established to support inter-regional exchange of experience and information, as well as capacity building.

Overall, Save the Children Sweden's strongest work has been promoting children's participation in schools and/or in communities; and the weakest work identified in every region has been promoting children's participation in families. Programme efforts can be increased to promote and support children's participation in the family, for example through parenting education; increase the development and/or dissemination and sharing of materials and tools which enable children's participation in the family. In regions, where institutional care is commonly used, develop strategies to enable the voices of children within institutions to be heard and support programme efforts (as part of 'adult support') which enable better prevention work, de-institutional care efforts and alternative care options within the community. Children's participation in emergency work also requires strengthening. Programme efforts to support and promote the meaningful involvement of children in emergency work need to be increased, for example through links to 'Rewrite the Future'⁷.

Promising practice

An assessment of children's participation in the family in South Africa

In South Africa a systematic, informative assessment of children's participation in the family was undertaken over a five month period in 2006. The assessment was undertaken by the Community Agency for Social Enquiry (CASE). Some key findings from the study reveal that the level of interaction between children and caregivers is dependent on the context or issues at hand. Across the research sites, chil-

7. Rewrite the Future is Save the Children's global campaign to provide quality education for children affected by armed conflict. For more information, visit www.savethechildren.org/campaigns/rewrite-the-future/

dren tended to engage in discussion with their female caregivers more easily than their male caregivers. Child participation increased with age and was highest in decisions concerning education. Generally boys had more influence in decision-making than girls. In decisions concerning economic and household activities there appeared to be room for negotiations, for example children were expected to do chores, but may negotiate which chores they will do – though such chores tend to be clearly defined gender roles. Social decisions were the most likely to tend toward being an adult's decision after consultation with the child. There was also clear gender differences in the way boys and girls were able to participate in social decisions, with boys having more freedom and choice than girls.

Based on the findings from the assessment, key recommendations are outlined to promote child participation in the family context in South Africa. This includes efforts to address misconceptions about children's rights and child participation practice; undertake interventions at a number of levels including the school, community and possibly the legislative process; and the importance of drawing upon existing cultural norms that can be viewed as supporting participation (such as children taking on roles of responsibility in the household) when addressing this issue.

The Study recommends each regional office to develop a written strategy document for mainstreaming children's participation (both as a principle and as a right), with a designated budget for implementation of the strategy. Presently, systematic documented strategies for mainstreaming children's participation have only been developed in some regions or countries, such as South and Central Asia, Southern Sudan and Kenya, and Southern Africa. In addition, systematic efforts to strengthen capacity within Save the Children Sweden and its partners to promote and support children's participation have been undertaken and evaluated in the South East Asia and Pacific region.

Promising practice

Efforts to mainstream children's participation in Southern Sudan, Kenya and Latin America

Within the East and Central Africa region, particular efforts to mainstream children's participation have been developed in the Southern Sudan programme, which has internally prioritised work on both children's participation and education. The dedicated child participation adviser began with an assessment of staffs' understanding and capacity to promote children's participation. Based on the findings of this assessment, staff training has been organised, a range of tools for facilitating and monitoring children's participation have been developed and increased reporting mechanisms have been established. In addition, a draft written strategy for children's participation is being finalized for Southern Sudan and Kenya.

In the Latin America programme, the emphasis on mainstreaming is placed on

all programme officers, with one staff member taking on a focal point role. It took a lot of internal advocacy to convince the Programme Officers that it was feasible, possible and needed as part of each programme. Every programme area now has to take into consideration children's voices. For example, the work to end sexual exploitation of children and corporal punishment is based on research of what children have said about the issue. It has been recognised that training on children's participation is a necessity and that staff need to be in regular contact with children.

Capacity Building

Capacity building on children's participation involves both preparing adults (children's parents, teachers, community elders, policy makers among others) to listen to children and take their views seriously, while also building the capacities of children and young people to participate and influence decision making in matters that concern their lives.

Some regions (for example SEAP) have focused on capacity building with adults to create an enabling environment, but are now also increasing capacity building efforts with children and children's organisations; other regions (for example Latin America, South Asia) concentrated on capacity building of children and support for children's organisations, but are now increasing work with adult duty bearers to take children's views more seriously.

Promising practice

Strengthening Children's Participation in SEAP

In the South East Asia and Pacific region a three year strategy for strengthening children's participation (2001-2004) was developed building upon the findings of an initial assessment with Save the Children Sweden staff and partners in 2000. A regional child participation adviser and a national programme officer were appointed to ensure the systematic development and implementation of the strategy. Working in the local context, taking into account political, social, cultural and economic factors, the strategy highlighted the importance of preparing adults to create an enabling environment for children's participation. The initial focus was on in-house capacity building of Save the Children Sweden's management and staff to ensure a common understanding of and support for children's rights to participate, with a focus on meaningful opportunities for children. Staff was also supported to work with and build the capacity of their main partners, namely the Government and mass organisations. Capacity building emphasised the values, attitudes and behaviour of adults necessary to support genuine opportunities for girls and boys to participate, taking into account their evolving capacity. In addition, practical demonstration projects such as the Child Friendly Districts, Child Friendly Learning Environments and National Fora for Children were supported helping adults and children to work together on issues affecting them, and helping adults to recognise children's capacities.

The Study notes that capacity building needs to be developed in accordance with the local context and the particular duties of different actors. Capacity building should be more specialised and differentiated according to different needs and abilities of the children and young people as well as adults – for example, according to age, gender and culture. Capacity building should also be expanded to include Save the Children Sweden’s partners, including exchange visits to support the sustainable development of meaningful children’s participation processes.

Child participation training should also be included as part of the induction process for all Save the Children Sweden staff at all levels. At the same time, existing mechanisms such as, work on the use and application of the Save the Children’s practice standards in child participation (like in SEAP and Southern Africa) should be promoted.

Many regions also work to build the capacity of children and young people as resource persons so that they can train adults, as well as their peers, and with children’s organisations as partners. The most recognised ‘child’ partners are child led organisations and initiatives. In many regions there is a concern that SCS is not reaching enough people through its capacity building. The work needs to be expanded and the knowledge acquired disseminated more widely. In West Africa there is a focus on training of trainers together with the dissemination of tools and lessons learnt from past experiences. These are seen as key capacity building strategies to overcome challenges faced in children’s participation.

The Study also highlights the need to develop and disseminate child friendly materials and information, to develop capacities of children. At the same time, there should be access to existing children’s participation materials within and across the regions. This would entail adapting, translating and disseminating materials into local languages.

Pilot projects and innovative approaches

Well planned practical demonstration or pilot projects have been strategically developed and implemented within regions as the most effective strategy to help adults to understand and support children’s participation, while at the same time supporting children and young people to develop their confidence and skills. A reason why these pilot projects have worked is because they build upon the strengths of local socio-cultural practices and traditional structures so that the initiatives are embedded in the local context.

Promising practices

Children’s participation in the budget-making process in Brazil

In Brazil, Save the Children Sweden supports a project on ‘Public budget and Childhood’, which is run by the partner, CEDECA in the city of Ceará in northern Brazil. The project involves training educators to be able to present the technical aspects of the budget to the children in a child-friendly way and using participatory method-

ology with the children such as field visits to help them understand issues related to public budget. Thereafter children were supported to develop proposals to be presented to the Municipality and continue their advocacy with the parliamentarians to get an approval for their proposals. Media was involved to help gain interest and support of policy makers, so that they recognised the capacities of children and the importance of their proposals.

The children proposed 11 amendments to the Public Budget. They were successful in gaining three such amendments in relation to concerns facing children in risky situations; need for psychological help to victims of violence; and the need for initiatives to address the sexual exploitation of children. The project with children was continued to ensure careful monitoring and advocacy to ensure that these results are accomplished.

Media Project in South Africa

In South Africa, Save the Children Sweden supports a media monitoring project run by an NGO working with journalists. This group of journalists were interested in monitoring children's rights in media messages. Journalists were trained on child rights and supported to monitor media messages. Children were also trained and supported to do their own child rights monitoring of the media. Peer-to-peer training is also encouraged. Once children have made their analysis of media articles, they are supported to visit the media/newspaper offices by the adult journalists. The adult journalists (who received training) have been able to facilitate wider discussions and interactions between the children and other journalists within mainstream media offices and bureaus. As a result of which journalists have been able to directly discuss with the children, what media is doing on children's rights and children's issues. The children have also been able to voice their concerns and recommendations.

The project is still in its pilot stage.

Children participate in communities in Southern Sudan

Save the Children Sweden directly implements its programme in Southern Sudan as the civil society and the government is very weak. The organisation has made efforts to create space for children to participate in the community. The first stage in such efforts has been preparing and sensitising adults to allow girls and boys to express their views, and to recognise the benefits of listening to and acting upon children's views. Save the Children Sweden has a big team of community 'mobilisers' who are in key positions to facilitate children's participation and to establish support at the community level with local leaders such as chiefs, parents, Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) and other members of the community.

Approaches to encourage children to express their views and to increase space for children to participate in decisions affecting them include use of sports and games to help children gain confidence and get organised; development of children's clubs

in schools to look into child protection issues; linking Children's Clubs and the 'parent-teachers- associations' (PTAs) and while also connecting Children's Clubs with the local governance.

Supporting boys' groups in Ethiopia

In 2005, two boys' groups were established in different vulnerable communities in Addis Ababa through collaboration with two local partner organisations. Formation of boys' groups provides a forum for boys and young men to discuss issues surrounding gender inequality, gender based violence and the transmission of HIV/AIDS and to promote the idea of positive change within their communities. In a short time, the groups have been able to capacitate their members. They have enhanced their members' knowledge of sexual reproductive health and promoted positive attitudes towards risk free practices. They have encouraged boys and girls to speak out about how they feel about gender based inequalities and violence. The members have increased self-confidence in expressing themselves, the knowledge and skills needed to act as agents of change within their community and fostered tolerance and respect towards other members of the group.

However, there is a need to create within the groups, a greater understanding and application of fundamental concepts concerning gender equality and power relations. The groups also need access to age-appropriate materials on these issues. The groups would also benefit by involving out of school children and young people. Younger children would benefit by having their own groups. Getting the groups connected with the other community members would help to increase the impact of group discussions.

One of the biggest challenges facing the groups is ensuring that the programmes attain sustainability. Greater efforts are needed to strengthen partnerships between the boys groups and relevant authorities and other duty bearers. Safe, affordable places need to be identified for the boys and young men to meet. Better systems of monitoring and evaluation need to be in place.

The learnings from the region highlight the need for systematic documentation, monitoring and evaluation of pilot projects which can inform advocacy efforts for scale up. At the same time, support should be provided to cross-regional analysis and documentation of pilot projects which share common characteristics, such as school based child clubs, partnerships with men and boys, support to working children's movement – to inform lessons learnt for scale up in diverse contexts.

Support for Child Led Organisations and Initiatives

There is an increased focus on support to child led organisations and initiatives both at the global and regional levels, as a key strategy to promote children's right to participation. Strengthening the organisational development of child led organisations is also one of the central approaches to strengthen civil society and good governance.

Long standing support to movements of working children have contributed to Save the Children's learning and strategic support to other child led initiatives and child participation processes in both West Africa and Latin America, and to some extent in South Asia.

Promising practices

MOLACNATs – A regional organisation of working children in Latin America

In Latin America, MOLACNATs – the Latin America and Caribbean movement of children and adolescent workers – supports eight national movements including Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Guatemala, Mexico, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Peru and Venezuela. The objective of MOLACNATs is to support the work of national movements and develop joint actions to promote children and adolescent workers participation at the regional level. The national organisations are very varied and have their own limitations based on different factors. This makes it difficult to achieve the objectives of the MOLACNATs, but this diversity is also a source of richness and a great challenge. MOLACNATs has to constantly strive to maintain a balance between communal goals and values.

Children's organisations in West Africa

In Senegal, Save the Children Sweden supports three types of children's organisations: children's association of working children, child clubs in schools, and a children's parliament. All children's organisations work together with adults. For example the Child Clubs have campaigned for the right for all children to register for school. Save the Children Sweden has assisted them in their efforts to organise themselves, to gain adult support (for example from teachers, Ministers) and to run their campaign. These school based clubs have also been supported to include children who are not in school as such efforts can support school enrolment.

Moreover, Save the Children Sweden has supported the training of working children's associations from six countries in the region. Presently 58 national associations (and some of their local NGO partners) are being supported. The Working Children's Movement has base groups in the communities who elect members to the national association which is also run by children. While children run their own associations and networks, members of adult NGOs are often involved in supporting their finances.

The Children's Parliament is a government initiative, which took birth when the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) adopted a resolution in 1992, urging member states to increase children participation in matters concerning them in line with the African Charter of the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC). Almost all the governments in the region have created or encouraged the creation of children's parliament to fulfil this commitment.

Initially the Children's Parliament involved children from elite backgrounds and communities. Save the Children Sweden therefore became engaged with the gov-

ernment to monitor the quality of the participation process and the achievements of the Children's Parliament. The government accepted and supported this role and has taken into account criteria described by Save the Children Sweden for quality participation. The Children's Parliament is now an open parliament enabling the participation of girls and boys from all categories of society.

Children's Parliament in Yemen, Middle East

In 2002, Democracy School, an NGO partner of Save the Children Sweden, initiated elections in all schools in Yemen for a children's parliament. By 2005, the Children's Parliament was approaching its second term. Save the Children Sweden and UNICEF saw this as a window of opportunity. 'Democracy School' was encouraged to organise more inclusive election processes, not just for elite children but also for marginalised and disabled children, including street child sweepers. Opportunities for girls' participation in Yemen have been limited, yet 10 out of the 36 seats were reserved for girls. This parliament is now run by children. Every session has a theme – such as justice, trafficking, child labour. The session held in August 2005 included discussion on the UNCRC, with a particular focus on corporal punishment, birth registration and violence. UNICEF and Save the Children Sweden have supported processes of follow up, including plans to publish the results for all involved with children's rights to further discussions and action to respond to children's views. Media journalists, including TV journalists, have also covered some of the sessions, creating important advocacy opportunities to promote both the participation of girls and boys and the responses by concerned duty bearers to their issues.

The Children's Parliament also called on Ministers and other government officials to discuss the Committee on the Rights of the Child Concluding Observations in relation to the country report submitted to the Committee. The Children's Parliament also writes reports which feed into the alternative report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child. In addition, the Children's Parliament has documented on CDs the cases of children abused by their caregivers or parents and has followed up the issue with the Ministry of the Interior and the Higher Council for Motherhood and Childhood.

Children's groups in Afghanistan

In Afghanistan, Save the Children Sweden has supported the development and strengthening of children's groups, as part of a broader Global Movement for Children (GMC). Children's groups involving 2500 boys and girls have been supported in different parts of the country, in the capital city Kabul, in camps for displaced families in Kandahar in the South, and in the North in villages and towns. Children have formed their own committees or groups – different groups involve children in schools and/or out of school children. While both boys and girls are involved, cultural barriers make it more difficult to involve girls. Therefore, overall there is less

participation of girls compared with the boys.

In Kabul, there are over 320 child groups who are trained on the UNCRC and are active in promoting awareness and action on their rights. In Kandahar – in a camp for internally displaced people - more than 250 children are organised in children's groups, and have made significant contributions to developing a model camp. The children also have their own media, developing newsletters and/or developing radio programmes.

In some contexts, such as the internally displaced people (IDP) camp children have direct involvement in adult community meetings where they bring up children's issues, especially issues of corporal punishment. In some places the children have monthly meetings with the authorities to find solutions to various issues. Concerns raised by children such as: the renting of porn movies in a video shop and the building of school libraries have been addressed.

Meetings with children's representatives from different children's groups/ committees have also been supported, including a national meeting of children during which they met with President Karzai.

A variety of child led organisations and initiatives are being supported by Save the Children Sweden (across different regions) including: working children's associations and movement; school based clubs and school councils; children's parliaments; and community based children's groups and committees, including boys groups and girls groups.

Children's media initiatives (print, radio, TV, film) are also supported contributing to efforts to raise the status and amplify the reach of children's voices, allow the dissemination of children's views and messages and contribute to the development of child friendly materials.

In many contexts, child led organisations continue to face challenges and constraints including concerns relating to inclusion and fair representation, graduation issues, difficulties in legal recognition which create difficulties for partnerships and funding arrangements, weaknesses in organisational development and lack of finances, resources and support.

In almost all the regions (except for parts of Latin America and West Africa) the spaces for children's participation are still largely managed and directed by adults. There is a slow change to provide more space and support for child led initiatives, child led organisations and children's own protagonism so that children can raise and address their own issues. Enabling agendas and processes to be shaped and driven by children requires time and a willingness to change frameworks and processes.

There is a need to increase strategic efforts which support the development and strengthening of child led initiatives, child led organisations and genuine partnerships with adults. Children's organisations should be recognised and engaged as key actors in civil society.

Create enabling environments by preparing adults (parents, teachers, government officials etc) to share power and provide support to children to assert their rights in

respectful ways is important. Adults (at various levels) also need to be responsive to children's agendas.

Children need to be involved in earliest stages of programming, while organisations need to engage with children and child led organisations as partners. Existing children's organisations need to be supported to increase their reflection on inclusion and democratic representation. Encourage use of the Spider Tool⁸ with and by child led organisations and initiatives to help them assess and plan how to strengthen their organisations and initiatives, including a focus on issues of inclusion, non-discrimination, and wider partnerships. Share more tools, guidelines and materials which support the organisational development of child led organisations.

Save the Children Sweden and partner organisations need to increase capacity building and support to child led organisations. There is also a need to adapt existing policies, planning and reporting (including financial) procedures and structures to become more child friendly. Moreover, there needs to be identification, documentation, dissemination and incorporation of key lessons learned by Save the Children Sweden from partnering with working children's associations to inform strategic developments and partnerships with child led organisations.

Save the Children Sweden needs to become more responsive to children's own agenda issues and requests for support. Opportunities for children to directly invite and involve adults in their own organisational structures and decision-making processes also need to be further explored.

Awareness-raising, networking and advocacy

Awareness-raising, networking and joint advocacy with the government and other strategic actors to involve children in practice and policy development processes (at different levels) is an important part of Save the Children Sweden work in all the regions, and is often carried out collectively as the Save the Children Alliance.

Global processes such as the UN Study on Violence against Children have been used as key opportunities to strengthen networks, to raise awareness and to systematically support advocacy with and by children (from local to global levels).

At a national level, Save the Children Sweden (as part of Save the Children Alliance and with other strategic allies) have supported children's participation in a range of policy processes including the UN Special Session on Children and National Plan of Action developments, Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers, peer reviews, review of Millennium Development Goals, as well as consultations on specific policy developments concerning education, child protection, HIV/AIDS and other issues.

Partnerships with academia are helping the generation of local research on the understanding of diverse childhoods and children's participation in various contexts. At the same time, networks among child led organisations can make significant contributions to efforts to develop practices and policies which contribute to the realisation of children's rights.

8. Spider Tool is a self assessment and planning tool for child led initiatives and organisations. For more information and documents on Spider Tool, visit www.rb.se/bookshop

Promising practices

Children's Participation initiative to involve children in EU decision-making

In April 2006, Save the Children member organisations in Europe launched a child participation initiative to support and influence the European Union decision making process. A key aspect of this was to build understanding and capacity among key EU staff to undertake activities linked to EU policy, strategy and communications to support children's participation. As part of this initiative, Save the Children has supported consultations with children on ways in which the EU can better communicate with its citizens. This included a live web chat in Brussels with Commissioner Wallstrom and children and young people across Europe. Consultations with children on a draft communication 'Towards an EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child' including presentations at a European Parliament Hearing were held. Training for the EU staff was conducted by young trainers from Save the Children youth organisations.

These Brussels-initiated activities are a goal in themselves but they also serve to contribute to the child participation work of the Save the Children national members engaged in the initiative, including Save the Children Sweden. One impact of this initiative has been the direct involvement of Save the Children youth organisations, including their inputs into the next strategy and planning period of the Save the Children Europe group.

As illustrated by the promising practice below, efforts to support networking among child led organisations can also significantly contribute to efforts to develop practices and policies which contribute to the realisation of children's rights.

Associations of working children fight against trafficking in West Africa

In 2003, 36 working children from eight countries, members of the African Movement of working children and Youth met together to discuss the issue of trafficking in children in West Africa. PLAN, UNICEF and Save the Children Sweden supported this initiative. Through a participatory action research, children presented the situation in their countries and adopted an action plan to fight trafficking. As a result of which, these children have sensitised the population of many villages exposed to trafficking on the risks involved. Many villages exposed to trafficking, have now developed community-based initiatives including children, for the reintegration and rehabilitation of victims. Many children who are victims of trafficking are members of the association of working children and through this network they can claim their right to reparation. Moreover, working children are members of the National Committee on Trafficking set up by the governments of their countries. They are considered as key actors in the fight against trafficking. Many local radio channels have launched special programmes on trafficking and working children are the main animators of these programmes.

The real impact of this work seems to be the recognition of working children as key actors in the fight against trafficking both by the governments of the region and

the civil society including their communities. This know how developed by working children has increased the understanding of children's participation in West Africa. The ILO who was still negative to the Movement of Working Children has joined to support this initiative in some countries. Working children have become member of the National boarding committee of IPEC and received funds for the implementation of the plan of action.

In addition, the African Movement of Working Children is a member of the regional working group on trafficking together with the ILO, UNICEF; UNODC, PLAN and SCS. This working group refers to the children for any matter concerning children's participation. They will be also involved in the follow up to the UN Study on Violence against Children.

Save the Children Sweden's Children's Participation Network

Within Save the Children Sweden efforts to develop and formalise its own network on children's participation have also been undertaken. The role of the Children's Participation Network has included providing advice, giving support to training, capacity building and assessment in children's participation – with a particular focus on children's participation as integral to CRP – and promoting the development and application of practice standards on children's participation.

At a global level, Save the Children Sweden has been a member of the Save the Children Alliance Professional Exchange Network on Children's Participation (PEN-CHP). The PEN-CHP supports information sharing and collaborative efforts among Save the Children Alliance members at different levels to enhance and support strategic opportunities for meaningful, ethical children's participation.

Within Save the Children Sweden efforts have been made to formalise its own network on children's participation. The network supports efforts to mainstream children's participation, to strengthen capacity, to pilot and document innovative approaches and to support evidence based advocacy. Networking amongst Save the Children practitioners within and beyond the Save the Children Alliance to promote information and experience sharing, reflection and analysis, and collective advocacy towards the promotion of meaningful children's participation, should be encouraged

Networking amongst child led organisations should be supported, particularly at local, district and national levels. Moreover, Save the Children Sweden youth organisations should continue to network with other Save the Children youth organisations and networks, through the Brussels project, the Nordic initiative among others.

Research and the Development of Materials

As mentioned earlier, the formalisation of the children's participation network are key mechanisms to enhance sharing of experiences and materials on children's participation within Save the Children Sweden. In addition, the full Study report includes analysis of materials and compiled annotated bibliographies of children's

participation materials. However, sustained systematic efforts, including practical efforts to set up and maintain the Save the Children Sweden portal on children's participation, are still required to ensure effective sharing of existing documentation via the Children's Participation Network.

Undertaking research and documentation on children's participation to inform practice, policy and advocacy efforts is being supported in most regions. For example, within the South and Central Asia region research has included a focus on: the participation of younger children, the participation of children in families, and non-discrimination. In Southern Africa, Save the Children Sweden has undertaken research on children's participation within diverse family contexts, including a focus on the use of corporal punishment. Similarly, in Latin America a regional study about Parenting Styles which aims to contribute to children's holistic development is being carried out. In the South East Asia and Pacific region, research is currently being undertaken to understand legislation affecting children's rights to participation.

The Study suggests support to research and documentation in under-developed areas of children's participation such as children's participation in institutions and the role of adult supporters; children's participation in emergency contexts; children's participation in contexts of organised violence; the participation of younger children; and the participation of children with disabilities (and how they can address discrimination and violence against them) to inform and strengthen strategic priorities.

In addition, research and documentation of the approaches and methods used to promote children's participation in the education sector could be supported to inform programme learning and advocacy as part of 'Rewrite the Future'.

Support should be provided to members of child led organisations and initiatives to develop and disseminate their own documentation to share their experiences and as a means of amplifying their perspectives. The development of child (age and diversity) friendly information and materials, in particular materials that support the participation of younger children, children with disabilities, and other groups of marginalised children, should be increased.

Moreover, efforts to document and disseminate processes, tools and outcomes of children's participation in each region should be supported, while ensuring systematic mechanisms for the exchange of documents between regions. The use of regular e-discussion should be facilitated as an effective mechanism amongst Save the Children Sweden focal persons on children's participation to enhance sharing, reflection and analysis on critical issues. Above all, there should be promotion of exchange of experiences at different levels between the regions prioritising the use of internet tools.

Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (PME)

At each level (from local to global levels) increased efforts are needed to enhance planning, monitoring and evaluation of children's participation, with a particular focus on quality meaningful processes and opportunities for children to influence

decision-making. In order to increase accountability to children, it is essential that increased efforts are made to strengthen children's participation in PME.

Within Save the Children Sweden most evaluations of children's participation have focused on the process of participation rather than on outcomes. What and how to evaluate depend on the purpose of the evaluation and the projects, activities or processes that are being assessed. In every situation it is necessary to identify what information is needed and the kind of process that is most likely to fulfil the evaluation's aims.

Southern Sudan plan to use the practice standards as a tool to assess children's involvement and the impact of their participation. They will also be guided and informed by planning documents such as operational plans, proposals and action plans. In MENA, the impact of children's participation is assessed through discussions with partners and field visits to their projects, reading their reports and through discussions with children to see the level of their involvement. Some examples to involve children in monitoring and evaluation from the SEAP region include efforts to involve children in the mid term review of the child friendly districts project (Vietnam) and, in Cambodia an evaluation of child clubs is being undertaken with the direct involvement of the club members. They are involved in developing the research questions and tools, analysing the information and contributing to the report.

Promising practice

Indicators for children and adolescent participation in projects in Latin America

In Latin America, indicators for the participation of children and adolescents in projects were developed by a group of adults together with the children. The study first focused on developing a framework to get a consensus on children's participation. In order to make the concept of children's participation operational, all social actors who are involved in the projects were identified. Conditions that favoured children's participation were identified as knowledge, capacities and abilities. These had to be measured in an interactive process, under the immediate responsibility of the social actors. Thus efforts to measure such conditions were undertaken in different 'spaces and spheres of action' including family, school, children's organisations, organisations working with children, organisations in the local community, private institutions and public institutions; and social and cultural context.

Thereafter, general and specific indicators were developed to demonstrate capacities for exercising, fostering and encouraging effective participation and for relationships that develop effective participation of children and adolescents. At the same time, a series of instruments were developed to analyse the projects in light of the proposed indicators.

The Latin American team put these proposed indicators into practice. They invited six of their partners to be part of the validation process for the indicators. As a result they made some advances in terms of setting conditions and requirements to effectively use the indicators, such as choosing a project where they will be implemented, forming a team, committing time required to participate, being able to assume the costs of carrying out the evaluation process among others.

Good monitoring, evaluation and impact assessment have not really been done in a systematic way in most regions or at the global level. Work on systems, mechanisms and tools to monitor and evaluate children's participation are being developed within the regions (particularly in Latin America and South Asia) and at the Head Office, but require strengthening and effective implementation.

Supporting children's participation in CRC monitoring and reporting (both government and alternative reports) is an effective strategy to promote children's participation rights and focus on accountability. Mechanisms need to be strengthened to allow children's diverse experiences and views to influence Save the Children Sweden policy, strategy and programme development at all levels. At the same time, there needs to be a focus on development and dissemination of effective guidelines for involving children in planning, monitoring and evaluation; and for increasing accountability to children.

This needs to be supported by development and sharing of effective tools and systems for planning, monitoring and evaluating the process and impact of children's participation at all levels, including participatory mechanisms which support children's participation in planning, monitoring and evaluation. The aim should be to recognise successes and challenges in working towards the desired goals and outcomes of participatory work.

Regional strategies and approaches to further children's participation

This section provides a brief capsule of key strategies and approaches used in each region where Save the Children Sweden works. While regional and national experiences can read throughout the document, here you will be read a short summary analysis of each region which can also help to perform a comparative analysis across the regions.

East and Central Africa

In the East and Central Africa region, Save the Children Sweden works in Sudan, Kenya and Ethiopia. The main focus of work is on children's participation in schools, communities and the media, with some promotion of children's participation in families, and in policy developments. The main challenges to work in this region have been the existing socio-cultural norms and attitudes towards children. Although there are some promising legislative changes promoting children's participation in matters such as divorce, custody and adoption. Children in conflict with the law also have a right to be heard under the criminal procedure code in Ethiopia. Weak civil society and the negative impact of conflict have also had an adverse impact in regions such as Southern Sudan.

The region works towards implementing its child participation in the following ways.

Management support and resources

The national Children's Participation Adviser appointed in Southern Sudan and Kenya have supported capacity building efforts; initiated the development of a written strategy to promote children's participation; and developed practical tools to enhance quality participation work with children in their school and community settings. A dedicated person for this work, has been central for this success.

Mainstreaming

Efforts to mainstream children's participation processes within all programmes are underway, including efforts to promote participation in education, sexual and reproductive health and HIV/AIDS prevention, children in conflict with the law and other protection sectors. This requires work with several social actors, while promoting the concept of children's rights and their responsibilities.

Efforts to improve children's participation in the education sector in conflict affected Southern Sudan are also contributing to Rewrite the Future. Links to school governance and wider local governance structures are being developed to enhance opportunities for adults to listen and respond to children's concerns.

Pilot projects and support for innovative approaches

Within Ethiopia, an innovative pilot project supporting the development of boys groups has been established in poor communities as a means to challenge gender equality, gender based violence and transmission of HIV.

Support for child led organisations and initiatives

Support for child led organisations, in particular transforming school based clubs to child led organisations are one of the main vehicles (and ‘key entry points’) to promote children’s participation rights.

Awareness-raising, networking and advocacy

Together with Save the Children Alliance members and UNICEF, Save the Children Sweden is lobbying with the government and other strategic actors to involve children in decision-making processes, plans, and programmes in Ethiopia and Sudan. Efforts to support children’s participation in national policy initiatives relating to the UN Special Session on Children, the development of National Plans of Action and the UN Study on Violence against Children have been supported. Children were effectively involved in the ‘Sudan fit for Children’ planning process, and have been involved in national campaigns and policy consultations in Ethiopia. Lessons from such experiences are being drawn upon as models for future child participation processes. There are also some efforts to involve children in CRC monitoring and reporting.

Documentation and capacity building

Recent efforts to document the programmes in the region are encouraging. In Ethiopia, duty bearers in the education section have increased their understanding on the importance of children’s participation. Various trainings on CRP have taken place in Ethiopia and Sudan. Staff members have been trained and tools developed for capacity building.

Planning, monitoring and evaluation

Children are participating to some extent in PME procedures.

Suggestions to further child participation work

The region should continue to develop and disseminate practical tools on planning, monitoring and evaluation. They should increase efforts to evaluate and document experiences and lessons learned on mainstreaming children’s participation within different sector work within the region, in addition to documenting and learning from their work supporting child clubs in schools. They would also benefit by developing and disseminating child friendly materials and advocacy tools.

Europe

Save the Children Sweden supports children's participation work within Sweden itself, among Swedish children, refugees and asylum seekers. It also supports other Save the Children members and their partner programmes in Baltic States, Moldova and Romania.

The Europe programme promotes work on child participation in the following ways.

Supporting children's initiatives and innovative projects in different arenas

- Within Sweden, one key initiative has been support for the establishment of 'SCS Youth'. Its members are between 7 and 26 years of age, most of them are from secondary schools and participate in local groups in the community.
- effekt.rb.se is a website hosted by Save the Children Sweden where young people can express and debate their own experiences. The information gathered from the site will be analysed and forwarded to decision-makers and politicians in Sweden.
- An annual hearing of Swedish parliamentarians is organised by the organisation and other child oriented NGO's during which young boys and girls can participate and raise questions to Swedish politicians.
- The 'Ellen project' has also supported girls to form self help groups to increase their confidence and self-esteem. The project has also been replicated in Palestine. Recently the 'Allan project' for boys has been initiated in Sweden.
- 'Voices of 100 children' was a project in which children living in institutions and in family care in Sweden shared their views and experiences. Their views were submitted to a parliamentary committee to inform revisions on the national plan for institutional and family care of children.
- 'Article 12' is another project, enabling children and young people (especially young children, children with disabilities and children with immigrant background) to influence decisions taken by local municipalities in Sweden.

Encouraging child participation of separated children

Participatory work with separated children in Sweden, as part of a regional Save the Children Alliance 'Separated Children in Europe' programme, has been supported. Within this programme, children in migration are a key priority. Workshops with separated children were organised in three countries to build capacity within the network of NGOs, to strengthen young separated children and to develop a collective analysis of their situation. In Sweden a consultation was organised with 13 children (from Afghanistan, Somalia, Iran, Congo and Iraq) in 2003. The children were involved in making a film which was used both to document and advocate on issues identified by the children and young people.

Use of existing material on child participation

The Europe programme mainly uses capacity building material which already exists in other regions instead of producing new material. The production of child friendly material is felt to be a current weak point which needs strengthening.

Involvement of children as peer educators to promote child protection

As part of the UN Study on Violence against Children, in Lithuania, Save the Children Sweden's partners have established 47 anti-bullying groups which are active in schools across the country. In Romania, Save the Children has concentrated its efforts on making the public aware of the new law on child protection which includes an explicit ban on physical punishment and humiliating treatment. A key element of this work is the involvement of children as peer educators.

The 'adults first' approach to working on child participation

The Europe programme considers involvement and sensitisation of adults as being key to children's participation. Adults need to be advocates for ensuring the increased participation of children in the areas which have the greatest impact on children's daily lives.

Save the Children Sweden is also a member of the Save the Children Europe group and has actively participated in the current Save the Children Europe child participation initiative. The Europe group provides an interesting dimension to the work as 12 Save the Children national organisations have come together to provide impetus to child participation in the region. Some of the national organisations involved also implement programmes or work with partners in other countries in the region. This makes the Europe region slightly different from the other regions where Save the Children – and Save the Children Sweden – works. Brussels-based and coordinated activities by the Europe group can be considered as a goal in themselves but they are also an add-on to what national Save the Children and partner organisations do in their respective countries.

Suggestions for strengthening child participation work

The region acknowledges that the development and dissemination of diverse child friendly resources would be a good outcome for future work at the European level and supported by Save the Children Sweden through its Europe programme.

Latin America

In the Latin America region, Save the Children Sweden is strongly connected with the promotion of children's rights to participate and association. This has been achieved with the following approach:

Mainstreaming

Children's participation is being mainstreamed into all programme areas such as violence, adult support, education and civil society. Important lessons have also been learned from the region's coordinated emergency responses, including the importance of children's and communities' participation in emergencies and emergency preparedness. Support for children's participation in all aspects of the programme cycle has necessitated increased capacity building of Save the Children and partner staff, particularly in relation to tools to involve children in each aspect of the programme cycle. Recently, research into parenting styles has also been initiated to strengthen work around children's participation in their families.

Adult support for children's participation

Given the lack of conceptual understanding among adults on children's participation, the region is now increasing its efforts to build the capacity of parents and teachers in order to create and strengthen child friendly environments. One way this has been done is through incorporation of children's participation in the teachers' training curricula.

Support for child led organisations and initiatives

Formation of student councils and children's involvement in school management, municipalities and local level budget developments has been supported. Children's participation in national, regional and global level processes such as the UN Special Session on Children and the UN Study on Violence against Children have also been supported. In addition, networking and exchanges between child led organisations has been encouraged to support coordination, mutual learning and joint advocacy initiatives. Moreover, student organisations in six countries have been supported to interact with and learn from the working children's movement

Strengthening social movements of working children

Save the Children Sweden has supported the formation and strengthening of working children's associations and the social movement of working children across the region. This includes promoting the organisation of national movements of working children in countries where they do not exist, supporting the organisational development of MOLACNATs (regional movement of working children) and its links to other regional movements.

Promoting participation of girls and boys in Save the Children Sweden's and partners programme decision making

Children are regularly and in a systematic way consulted within the organisation and their voices are heard in matters affecting them in local, regional and global arenas. For instance, in consultation with children, indicators for monitoring children's par-

ticipation have been developed in the region. In Latin America documents concerning children's protagonism and experiences on children's participation in various settings have been produced and disseminated. Capacity building of programme staff on child participation and CRP, methods, tools and best practices is also undertaken.

Supporting children's opinion to be taken into account at public decision making level

Support is provided for preparation and dissemination of tools and experiences of children in the region advocating for their rights during electoral campaigns. Save the Children Sweden also promotes children's participation in monitoring of political agreements, public budgets and policies at the local, national and regional levels.

Suggestions for strengthening child participation work

Given the socio-cultural situation in Latin America, it is recommended that a strategy for violence, non-discrimination and child participatory approaches be developed further with a particular focus on children in organised armed violence.

Middle East and North Africa

Save the Children Sweden's work in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) includes programme work in Lebanon, Occupied Palestinian Territories and Yemen, with some outreach in Egypt, Jordan and Syria. The MENA programme has suffered from a major armed conflict in Lebanon during the past year. Given the political crisis and socio-cultural context in the region, the programme uses a varied range of implementation strategies to further its child participation work, which are as follows:

Capacity building

Capacity building of staff and partners on meaningful and ethical participation and CRP, contributes to the conceptual understanding of children's participation, puts it into practice and mainstreams it into the programme. This is important to promote a holistic understanding of children's participation.

Working on child participation at local, national, regional and global levels

This includes linking with the UN and other relevant regional organisations to jointly work on child participation issues. At a regional level there have been a number of joint activities with UNICEF and other key stakeholders including joint work to support children's participation in National Plans of Action's, organisation of a regional seminar on National Youth Policies and support for children's voices to be included in a UNRWA (United Nations Relief and Works Agency) report. The region has also supported children's participation in the UN Study on Violence against Children. It is also involved in reviewing existing national legislation and

policies in the light of children's participation. The region is also working on alternative child rights country reports that address the issue of children's participation. The Higher Council for Childhood and other organisations have also been supported to integrate children's participation in their programmes.

Working with different social actors

For example, developing channels for involving parents and community committees' involvement in children's programmes and providing training to journalists on children's issues.

Review of policies

Encouraging a review of Save the Children's policies and decision-making frameworks vis-à-vis children's participation.

Supporting children's initiatives and organisations

This includes innovative and pilot projects. The region has undertaken capacity building work with children in prisons to ensure that they are aware of their rights and have channels to voice their concerns and participate in decision-making. Support is provided for child to child groups and associations in schools with children from Palestine and in Yemen. Children's Parliament in Yemen and a pilot youth-led organisation in Lebanon 'Development for People and Nature Association' are being supported. Work with youth and municipalities in Lebanon is another promising project, where the youth are informed and capacitated to nominate themselves for election to the municipal boards. A joint summer camp on disability, rights and participation has also been supported.

Networking

Strategic efforts to form a Children's Participation Consortium in Lebanon have furthered networking for capacity building and advocacy for children's participation. The Consortium was established by a core group of six NGOs, to promote meaningful children's participation in the Lebanese and Palestinian communities in Lebanon. The core group invited 13 NGOs, INGO's and government offices, working on participation to share their understanding and identify potential steps towards addressing the subsequent priority areas. The group agreed to develop a Children's Participation Consortium to further advocacy and lobbying, awareness-raising, training and capacity building.

In order to implement these strategies, Save the Children Sweden mainly provides coordination, technical expertise, enlists the support of researchers and trainers and provides seed funding for relevant innovative pilot initiatives.

Suggestions for strengthening child participation work

The region should develop and disseminate its strategy for children's participation, as well as Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation tools and any guidelines developed for work in the specific socio-cultural political context in the region, particularly its work in the context of emergency and conflict. Child friendly materials and advocacy tools should also be developed. In addition, increased evaluation, documentation and dissemination of existing children's participation work (in different sectors) should be undertaken. Increased capacity building on the concept of genuine meaningful children's participation, and tools and guidance to create genuine space and opportunities for children's participation are needed. Technical support material in Arabic (training manuals, teaching aids, videos of success stories among others) is lacking. Efforts to strengthen the pool of local trainers are needed, and the few children's organisations that have emerged need to be supported and strengthened as pilots which can inspire others.

The region should link children's participation work with the conflict perspective as well as a non discriminatory approach. It is also valuable for Save the Children to learn what kind of child participation is created from war and conflict situations.

South and Central Asia

In the South and Central Asia region, Save the Children Sweden works in Bangladesh, Afghanistan and Pakistan at the country level, supported by a regional programme, based in Nepal. In the current regional strategy, children's participation is one of six key components (within the over-arching framework of CRP) which seeks to bring about positive changes in the lives of girls and boys in the areas of violence against girls and boys and child protection in emergencies. Save the Children Sweden also seeks to build strong linkages between participation, accountability and non-discrimination in the region. It aims to do so using the following approach:

Mainstreaming

There have been increased efforts to mainstream and institutionalise children's participation across the region and within the countries. Capacity building, awareness-raising and extensive advocacy (internal and external) are used to address and achieve meaningful and ethical child participation. Save the Children Sweden has also been actively involved in emergency response in Pakistan following the earthquake. Interesting lessons have been learned with regards to a community based approach, including a focus on child participation.

Networking and forming partnerships

Save the Children Sweden has been successful in bringing children's participation agenda to the forefront of Save the Children members through its pro-active support to the regional Save the Children Alliance Children Citizenship and Gover-

nance programme. The programme has resulted in a ripple effect on other organisations outside Save the Children family recognising children as important actors in social change. At the regional level, strategic partnerships with UNICEF, UNESCO, South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), Plan International and others key agencies have been fostered. Academic partnerships on children's rights and participation have also been developed.

Capacity building, working with adults and children

Increasingly children are being consulted by governments while developing National Plans of Actions for Children. However their recommendations are not always taken into consideration while finalising and implementing these plans. Save the Children Sweden is working with adults, to create safe and child friendly structures and mechanisms for promoting the ethical and quality participation of all children. At the same time, children's capacities are being in media related skills, for instance, to raise their voices.

Information creation and dissemination to further knowledge and advocacy on child participation

The region has produced a number of tools and materials on child participation and has functioned as a global resource for capacity building trainings. Over 40 publications, targeting grass root agencies, INGOs and donor organisations, policy makers, caregivers, teachers and children have been developed and disseminated.

Keeping diversity in the centre

The regional focus includes promotion of children's participation from a diversity lens, in order to combat discrimination and promote all children's right to participate. For example, there is an increased focus in the region on participatory work and partnerships with boys and men within the region to address gender based violence, masculinity and sexuality rights.

Children's own organisations and initiatives

Children's own organisations and initiatives are promoted and supported at local, national and regional levels. The use of media is also promoted as a tool for children to make rights violations visible and for influencing key duty bearers to take actions to address these issues.

Research to inform advocacy

To strengthen the work, research on younger children's participation and on children's participation in the family is being carried out and will be used to inform programme developments and advocacy work. Efforts to develop child friendly indicators and to develop tools and processes to assess the impact of children's participation have been undertaken.

With regard to counties, in Bangladesh, focus has been on CRP training with children's rights to participation as a strong component, including support for child led organisations and initiatives. There are ongoing efforts in Bangladesh to support the meaningful involvement of children in National Plan of Action processes. In Pakistan, there has been a focus on children's involvement in research and training activities, for example on corporal punishment and juvenile justice. Increased efforts are underway to mainstream children's participation in violence, adult support and education. In collaboration with UNICEF and NCCWD (National Commission on Child Welfare and Development), Save the Children Sweden is supporting children's involvement in processes to revise the National Plan of Action on child sexual abuse and exploitation.

In Afghanistan, children's participation is being mainstreamed across programme areas including Rewrite the Future activities to improve quality education for children affected by armed conflict. Strategic developments to support children's groups and networks have built upon follow up processes to what started as a 'Children's Consultation Project' implemented with UNICEF in 2002-2003. Children's groups and committees are supported in different parts of Afghanistan in rural, urban and IDP camp settings. The children are involved in monitoring child rights issues and taking action to improve their situation.

Suggestions to further child participation work

The region should continue to disseminate the (theoretical and practical) materials and advocacy tools from the region. It should encourage piloting of partnering with boys and young men to end violence among themselves and girls. The linkage between children's participation and non-discrimination should be fostered further, with a particular focus on violence, adult support and within the Rewrite the Future initiative.

South East Asia and the Pacific

In the South East Asia and the Pacific (SEAP) region there have been systematic efforts to build the capacity of Save the Children Sweden staff, partners, including government officials to promote and sustain genuine opportunities for children's participation. Children's participation work is supported in Cambodia, East Timor, Fiji, Hong Kong, Laos, Malaysia, New Zealand, Philippines, South Korea, Thailand and Vietnam.

The child participation implementation strategy in the region is informed by the findings of the assessment of the capacity building programme on children's participation carried out in 2004. The key approaches are as follows:

Mainstreaming and institutionalisation of children's participation

Across each programme, there are increased efforts to consider children's views in research, situation analyses, prioritisation of measures, project design, implementa-

tion, monitoring and evaluation. Children's participation is mainstreamed in programmes relating to the UN Study on Violence against Children (developing mechanisms for meaningful and ethical participation); working children (involving working children in research); children with HIV/AIDS (ensuring children are consulted in the counselling process and can raise their voice); child rights education and child friendly schools (children set criteria on what child friendly schools mean and children play active roles in implementing and monitoring school development); child Rights and media (ensure children's voices reflected in media); UNCRC and CRP training (ensure duty bearers know about and are more accountable to children's rights to participation); child friendly district (ensure children are involved in planning, implementation and monitoring/evaluation of the development of the district) and juvenile justice (ensure children are respected and protected by law enforcement bodies).

Save the Children Sweden together with other international organisations and local associations has contributed to the alternative report on the optional protocol on children in armed conflict in Vietnam. The organisation is also giving technical support to the alternative report in Indonesia with a specific focus on child participation.

In its effort to 'institutionalise' children's participation, Save the Children Sweden is moving away from occasional consultations involving children, and instead moving towards a structure which ensures regular interaction and exchange of ideas between children and policy makers at local and national level. An assessment of children's participation work in the region has focused on the need to ensure that children's participation is embedded in local ideas and initiatives, systems of governance and civil society. The child friendly district in Vietnam is considered to be a good example for children's involvement in local government and its experiences need to be built upon. Promoting child friendly learning environments has resulted in comprehensive programmes for child friendly schools that need to be expanded and embedded within the teaching profession and educational structures. Children's organisations (to varying degrees run by children) have started to play more prominent roles in the region, and they are being supported to strengthen their organisational development.

Cooperation at regional level between key child focused international organisations and UNICEF to develop and implement minimum standards for children's involvement in the UN Study on Violence against Children have also been one opportunity to start institutionalising children's participation in at least some of the SEAP countries. Moreover, the capacity building programme on children's participation actively contributes to all these developments.

The regional programme continues to play a very important role in the development of methods around CRP and emergency education. Save the Children Sweden contributed towards a child rights perspective in the Aceh programme focusing on emergency education and adult support (parent education at village level). Interesting work on child centered disaster risk reduction and community based child-focused disaster preparedness plans have also been undertaken, including the production of handbooks for child facilitators in Philippines.

Involving children in consultations and planning processes

A good example of this is the acceptance of governments that children can be involved in the Ministerial Consultations that take place every two years in the region. The government of Malaysia has also embarked on involvement of children in their National Plans of Action.

Creating conceptual understanding of child participation

Work on awareness raising and capacity building on children's participation in the region continues to improve understanding of children's participation as a human right.

Support to innovative approaches and pilot projects

In Vietnam, Save the Children Sweden is promoting participatory learning in primary and secondary education and in teacher training colleges. It also works with the faculty of journalism to promote more child focused and child friendly journalism which takes children's views into account and to have this as part of the training for journalists. There has also been development of a child friendly district in Vietnam, with an increased focus on including marginalised boys and girls. Moreover, a pilot research on legislation with respect to children's participation is being undertaken in Vietnam and will be extended to the region in subsequent years.

Raising awareness, advocacy, networking and building capacities

Save the Children Sweden is working to institutionalise capacity building in children's participation by creating enabling environments, and basing the work on local ideas and initiatives. Global toolkits and manuals on children's participation will continue to be standardised for local, practical understanding and the application of children's participation in the region. In addition, there are increased efforts to support children's organisations and networks through capacity building, organisational development and financial support. Capacity building on children's participation is reflected in every budget that has components that deal with the involvement of children and the enhancement of skills and overall capacity to deal with children's participation.

Monitoring

Monitoring the implementation of children's participation in the region is being promoted at different levels. The child participation advisor is in charge of monitoring the regional implementation.

Suggestions to further child participation work

The region should develop and disseminate its own written strategy on children's participation rights. The region would benefit from investigating local conceptualisations and understanding of children's participation and discrimination from various cultural, religious and geographical contexts. A closer linkage between children's participation and a non-discriminatory approach could benefit the programme, especially since SEAP has developed considerable knowledge and expertise in child participatory approaches. The region should document ongoing practices on child participation and particularly children's recommendations and opinions, within protection, education and civil society. In addition, advocacy tools on children's participation should be disseminated, as well as any other child friendly materials developed.

Southern Africa

Within the Southern Africa region, Save the Children Sweden is supporting children's participation work in South Africa, Zambia, Angola and Swaziland. In a national children's opinion poll carried out by Save the Children Sweden in South Africa in 2002, children expressed the right to participation - to take part, to be heard and listened to - as the third most violated right in their lives (the right to protection against violence and abuse and to a safe environment were considered to be the most violated). Across the region, children's participation is a very new concept, even within the human rights sector. Save the Children Sweden's work to promote children's participation in this region has been in its infancy, but has gained significant momentum in recent years. The region promotes its work on child participation in the following ways:

Mainstreaming

Programme work on children's participation is closely related to violence, education, adult support and strengthening civil society. Efforts to strengthen child rights clubs in schools and to institutionalise children's participation in school governance are contributing to efforts to develop safe schools. The systematic study on children's participation in families and corporal punishment is being used to inform programme and advocacy initiatives to strengthen children's participation, good parenting and positive discipline. The Southern Africa programme is also developing its capacity and knowledge addressing gender based violence and HIV/AIDS prevention and awareness through collaboration with boys and young men. Interesting work in relation to children affected by organised violence in Cape Town is also being supported.

Encouraging development

Encouraging the development of effective children's participation models and approaches.

Supporting the establishment and strengthening of child led organisations

Child led organisations that are able to engage and influence key decision makers at different levels are being supported by facilitating discussions and consultations with civil society organisations in the region to develop concepts, methods and guidelines for ethical children's participation. Moreover, children are being enabled to apply democratic principles in their own organisations. Save the Children Sweden is also assisting in development and capacity building of school clubs in Angola and Zambia. In this regard, advocacy is directed towards the Ministries of Education to ensure these school clubs become part of the school curriculum and school governing bodies.

Assisting and facilitating consultations with children

This is done to ensure that their voices are heard on matters that affect them. Consultations with children in connection with processes and decision-making at all levels (local, provincial national, regional and global) have increased significantly in recent years. Children have been heard and their views have been disseminated on the local environment, child poverty, child labour, child migration, child legislation, the implementation of the UNCRC, UN Special Session on Children process and the UN Study on Violence against Children.

In Zambia and South Africa, Save the Children Sweden also continues to support children's participation in the media through children monitoring how media reports on children, and children themselves producing media for their peers and adults. Various opinions polls have also been conducted on children's views on corporal punishment in Zambia, Swaziland and South Africa.

In the region, there is emphasis placed on commitments of time and human and financial resources that are required to support meaningful and ethical processes. A recent assessment of children's participation in the Southern Africa programme has informed strategic developments to strengthen these efforts.

Suggestions for furthering child participation work

There is a need for further documentation and learning from the work within school clubs and the education sector. Effort needs to be placed to develop tools for monitoring and evaluation. Lessons learned in the study on children's participation in families with different socio-cultural religious backgrounds needs to be brought forth. In addition, it is recommended that a regional strategy for mainstreaming children's participation is developed and clarified in order to increase and enhance systematic efforts to take on board children's recommendations in all working areas and to support evidence based advocacy. The region should also develop and disseminate any tools used to promote children's participation rights.

West Africa

In the West Africa region, the work on children's participation is focused within the child protection sector. This has included work on issues relating to child labour, trafficking, child begging, corporal punishment and sexual abuse, but also in sectors concerning health, HIV/AIDS, education and children affected by armed conflict and disasters. There have also been efforts to support children's participation in the peace keeping. Save the Children Sweden is also actively involved in the 'Rewrite the Future' education programme in Côte d'Ivoire. Geographically, this work is being supported in Mali, Senegal, Cote d'Ivoire, the Gambia and Togo.

West Africa supports separate projects which promote children's rights to participation - such as, support to child led organisations – while also mainstreaming of children's participation in all programming efforts, for instance, through training of staff and partners on participatory methods and approaches, integrating the CRP framework among others. Key elements of the strategy are listed below.

Research and analysis

Documentation and assessment of experiences of child led organisation (such as children's parliaments, child clubs and working children's associations) have taken place in Mali, Senegal and Côte d'Ivoire.

Direct support

Support is being provided to child-led organisations' activities in Côte d'Ivoire, Senegal and the Gambia, focusing on formal or/and alternative education and improving working conditions for children and initiatives which support the rehabilitation and reintegration of children victim of exploitation and abuse.

Advocacy, Knowledge dissemination and capacity building

The programme is working towards strengthening capacities of children and local partners in participatory working methods. Networking among children and local partners, using existing networks such as Working Children's Network and Child Clubs also aids dissemination of information and knowledge. Within the regional programme, there is also an important focus on advocacy towards governments and regional organisations such as ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States), UNICEF, ILO and IOM (International Organisation for Migration).

Promoting clear linkages between past and new programmes

This is done by using past successful methods and tools in the new programme.

Strengthening child led organisations

This is very central to the strategic participation work within the region. The main partners and actors include the African Movement of Working Children and Youth, child clubs in Senegal, the Gambia, Côte d'Ivoire and Togo, children's parliaments in Senegal, Mali and Côte d'Ivoire and community-based networks in Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire and the Gambia. Child led organisations' engagement with national parliaments in Senegal, Mali and Côte d'Ivoire, in regional groups and networks including the NGO network on trafficking, and the regional Working Group on exploitation and abuse are also supported.

With these partners Save the Children Sweden strengthens the capacities of children and adults in participatory approaches, supports them to claim their rights and advocates for the recognition of children's participation.

Working with the government

The programme works with the governments to strengthen children's participation in practice and policy developments on matters affecting them. Work with governments has included capacity building for government officials, training and technical support to CACD (Community Arms Collection and Destruction) committees and children's groups, developing strategies for children participation in peace-keeping/military training, support for children's participation in peer reviews and PRSP processes, support for children's participation in processes related to the UN Special Session on children and the UN Study Violence against Children and support for quality processes in Children's Parliaments. At least 10 countries within the region have created Children's Parliaments, and child-led organisations of 8 countries have adopted national plans of actions to fight trafficking.

Capturing and applying lessons learned

There has been some documentation of lessons learned from existing children's participation experiences within the region. Lessons learned will be further disseminated among partners to further strengthen children's participation in the regional programme.

Suggestions for strengthening child participation work

The consequent focus on both mainstreaming and piloting models combined with the conducive environment for involving child led initiatives and coalitions should be further strengthened. Children's participation also needs to be linked with non-discrimination. The West Africa region should continue to document and disseminate practical toolkits and lessons learned from their participatory work with children, including participatory action research with marginalised groups of children, support for child led organisations, networks and movements. Advocacy tools and child friendly materials developed within the region should also be shared.

Quality and Sustainability of Child Participation work

What does it mean to promote meaningful and ethical participation child participation process?

There is a need for Save the Children Sweden to better articulate what it means by meaningful, ethical participation. All efforts must be made to ensure Save the Children Sweden promotes and implements meaningful, ethical participation in practice.

Ethical considerations raised when applying the ‘meaningful and ethical’ include:

- the importance of being transparent and honest as children are at a formative stage of their lives and they are learning mainly through example; informing children before they participate;
- allowing children to design the processes in which they participate, to set the agenda and to determine how they would like to participate;
- participation being relevant and voluntary;
- enabling all children to be involved in equal ways;
- child protection, follow up and taking into account the relevance of age.

The Save the Children Alliance Practice Standards on Children’s Participation⁹ have played a key role in ensuring a focus on quality and provide a framework within which Save the Children Sweden can work. However, it was also highlighted that the practice standards need to be adjusted by children and NGO partners in the specific context where they are going to be used. In South and Central Asia, some partners such as Terre des Hommes and UNICEF have adopted the practice standards. In South East Asia Pacific, minimum standards on children’s participation (building upon aspects of the practice standards) have been adopted by the Inter-Agency Group on Children’s Participation, established in 2005¹⁰. In Latin America, in addition to the practice standards, tools based on children’s indicators developed during the ‘Exercise of Shared Power’ study are being applied by the partners to improve quality of children’s participation.

9. It can be downloaded from www.rb.se/bookshop

10. The inter-agency group built upon former inter-agency collaboration during preparations for children’s participation in the United Nations Special Session on Children.

Improving Quality and Sustainability: A Key Challenge

West Africa views improving quality and sustainability of children's participation as a key challenge in the region. The region feels the only limit to child participation is when their involvement is against their best interest. This can be understood in the context of children's involvement in the regional consultation linked to the UN Study on Violence against Children in May 2005. The consultation took place two weeks before the summer exams and child members of the regional Steering Committee lobbied for a change of dates to enable children and young people to participate. When it was explained that the dates could not be changed, the children and young people initially recommended that they and their representatives would not be able to participate. After a long discussion a consensus was reached between child and adult members of the Committee. Only children not involved in summer exams would be selected to participate. For those children selected it was a meaningful process – they selected their own representatives and they participated at all levels of the consultation including being involved in the final recommendations drafting committee.

West Africa recognises that it can advocate for quality children's participation and train partners and children but cannot act as a regional censor or monitor. Interestingly, more children and young people are at the forefront of lobbying for meaningful and ethical participation. For example, on 12th June during the Day against Child Labour, working children refused to participate in ceremonies in Dakar, Abidjan and Bamako as they felt it the participation was tokenistic. They were not involved in the preparation process, in agenda discussions or discussions on the theme of the day with ILO. The children issued statements complaining about the linking of their associations with the ceremony.

What is still required to promote meaningful and ethical child participation?

- Better application of the practice standards.
- Integration of practice standards within child protection and education programmes.
- Organisations' increasing their accountability towards children.
- Children and young people themselves can be strong advocates to ensure processes which allow their meaningful and safe participation.
- Application of tools and approaches such as capacity building of adults and children before involving children and availability of child friendly and gender sensitive information, material and methods. At the same, providing children with information and the freedom to choose if they would like to participate or not. This is an element of the practice standards but has been re-emphasised to highlight the fact that children's involvement is meaningful if they are informed about their rights and how to exercise them.
- Concentrating on the settings closest to children's lives (families and schools) and on the issues very close to them. This may suggest less focus on children as inter-

national social actors unless good, strong local and national processes allow children to more easily engage in processes that are further away from their daily lives (regional and global) although still on issues of relevance to them.

Efforts to make children's participation sustainable

Working with the government to ensure that processes and spaces for children's participation are integrated into local institutional structures (For instance, schools and local government) is widely seen as a key to ensuring sustainability. In addition, working with the government to ensure that they listen to children and take their issues into account in policy and decision making is seen as important in tackling some of the key issues that children face. Good relations with partners within communities, schools and/or with the national or local government are crucial.

In the SEAP region, there is a current focus on strengthening the organisational development of children's organisations, especially supporting them to be autonomous. In Latin America experiences of school municipalities and school councils have been scaled up to national level in at least six countries. They have also been institutionalised by the education laws in these countries. Teachers and principals in the schools have been sensitised and trained to support these organisations and materials have been published and disseminated to support this work. In Ethiopia, Save the Children Sweden is trying to develop guidelines with government to institutionalise child participation in schools. In MENA region, the children's parliament initiative in Yemen has been scaled up to be part of governance structures. These experiences highlight that in order to institutionalise and scale up children's participation initiatives, systematic documentation of good practices are required globally.

The South and Central Asia region is also actively trying to create synergies between the culture of child rights and human rights. In addition, a focus on girls' and boys' rights must be included when addressing women's and men's rights.

Efforts to promote children's participation in global initiatives such as the UN Special Session on Children and the UN Study on Violence against Children have had a significant impact in changing thinking and expectations about how children can and should be involved in policy developments. This has helped to contribute to sustainable changes in the space offered to children and in the quality of processes. The impact assessment of children's participation in the UN Study on Violence against Children shows how children's participation in work to stop violence against children can be mainstreamed and strengthened at all levels.

Balancing child participation at local, national, regional and international levels: Impact of international processes

Efforts to support children's participation in international processes such as the UN Special Session on Children, and more recently the UN Study on Violence on Children, have had an impact on child participation work at local, national and regional levels. This has been both positive and negative. If international processes are participatory enough and can ensure that children and young people can influence

processes and outcomes then they can be favourable. By linking the global to the regional, national, local and sub-levels in between, children are helped to connect with each other and with policy makers. They get ideas from other children and can work on these back home. In addition, as a result of efforts (for example, during the UNGASS) governments now include children more readily, more easily and more meaningfully (within their delegations and/or in meetings). However, meaningful participation in international processes which responds to and enhances protagonism needs resources, time and good conditions. Support during the process and genuine follow up (at all levels) is crucial and must be strengthened.

In an example from Latin America, children have been involved in developing and monitoring National Plans of Action (NPAs) following the UN Special Session on Children. In West Africa, some special events or processes like the ECOWAS peers review, UNGASS and the UN Study on Violence against Children have been good opportunities for advocacy. Three child-led organisations in West Africa; the African Movement of Working children and youth (AMWCY), child clubs in schools and members of children parliament were involved in these processes. Children's contributions to these processes have a great impact on the acceptance of their participation. Moreover Save the Children Sweden has received increased requests from other agencies and from some governments to support them in supporting children's participation.

In the Southern Africa region international processes relating to UN Study on Violence against Children have had a positive impact at the local level and to some extent at national level. The region feels that that the process of child participation was a vast improvement on past initiatives, with regard to the promotion of ethical and meaningful participation. However, in contrast to some other regions where national child participatory processes were stronger in the Southern Africa region the weakness of national processes often resulted in more top down or tokenistic approaches. Children who participated at the global level were therefore not always able to feedback to their peers, communities and governments. Future efforts therefore need to focus more on building sustainable national capacities that then feed into regional and international processes. There could also be increased support for children to access and make use of modern technology as an additional means for children to have a voice within countries and globally.

The child participation process linked to the regional consultations for Eastern and Southern Africa (UN Study on Violence against Children) proved to be very difficult and Save the Children Sweden ultimately withdrew as coordinator of the child participation process when they felt that ethical standards could not be upheld. A crucial lesson here was the importance of taking a stand when things go in the wrong direction and where the organisation's own minimum standards are not being met.

Within Save the Children Sweden, key lessons learned from children's participation in the UN Special Session on Children and the UN Study Violence against Children are also being used to inform the organisations current work to support children's participation in 'Rewrite the Future'.

Save the Children Sweden is now actively engaged in supporting more meaningful opportunities for children's participation in the SC Alliance 'Global Challenge' - 'Rewrite the Future' - initiative to further the realisation of education rights to children in conflict affected countries.

Conclusion

Save the Children Sweden endeavours in each region to promote children's participation over many years is bearing fruit. Save the Children Sweden has set out a common set of principles to support work to children's right to participation, which have been adapted by countries and regions to fit their own contexts, resources and capacities. This diversity of approaches, working methods and entry points are a source of richness and strength for current and future work and should be further encouraged, nurtured and built upon. Save the Children Sweden would however benefit from increased conceptual reflections and analysis to determine how best to de-mystify and promote the inter-linkages between children's participation, protagonism and citizenship with respect to differences in socio-political cultural contexts.

Child Rights Programming has also played a significant role in allowing much more widespread support for and application of children's participation, and promotion of children's rights to participation. Increased management support and investments in human and financial resources are however needed, at each level, to systematise mainstreaming of children's participation with a focus on quality processes, including increased efforts to engage the most marginalised children.

Save the Children Sweden children's participation practitioners have a strong commitment to promoting quality and ethical practice. The Save the Children Alliance Practice Standards on Children's Participation are being used by Save the Children Sweden as one key tool to ensure a focus on quality work.

Save the Children Sweden has documented a variety of examples of good practice in promoting children's participation in schools and communities in diverse socio-cultural political contexts. Work to promote children's participation in families, institutions and emergencies is just gaining momentum – recent research and programme developments in these areas should be built upon and scaled up.

Its long standing support to movements of working children has provided Save the Children Sweden with a base for learning and for strategic support to other child led initiatives and child participation processes. The increased focus on support to child led organisations and initiatives both at Head Office level and across regions is welcomed. Organisationally, Save the Children Sweden needs to strengthen the conceptual and practical links between children's participation, non-discrimination, the role of children's organisations in civil society and good governance, particularly in relation to protection,, education and civil society for the rights of the child which are Save the Children Sweden's priority areas.

Save the Children Sweden should also consider ways of more systematically sharing its working methods – and materials – with other Save the Children members, including their child participation networks as well as with child participation networks within other organisations and agencies.

The range and diversity of good practice examples contained in this document provide testimony to and inspiration as to what can be done to achieve change when children's participation rights are supported and realised. Ongoing documentation and exchange of learning and materials should therefore continue to be supported.

Further Readings

For a deeper analysis, read the full Study report, which is accompanied by the following material, as separate publications:

- 1 Annotated bibliography of materials on child participation
- 2 Discussion paper on of the structured interviews as part of the Study (A longer analysis)
- 3 Discussion paper on critical issues on children's participation (A brief version).
- 4 simple format for conducting a rapid assessment of children's participation materials to determine their usefulness in terms of clarity of concept/approach, provision of practical standards and/or practical tools for capacity building/research/programme developments.

As an outcome of the Study, and Save the Children Sweden's commitment to feed back and follow up with the children involved, the organisation has produced a booklet on child participation for children aged 11 years and upwards. The booklet explains the basic concepts of child participation, its benefits, highlighting the ways in which children can get involved. It also has a section for adults – parents, teachers, and other caregivers – explaining the merits of supporting children's participation.

This material is available at www.bookshop.rb.se

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

What is the book about?

This book is an abridged version of Save the Children Sweden's analysis of its children's participation working methods and materials across the world. The analysis is a result of a Study conducted by Save the Children Sweden, which helps it to strengthen and develop its own work on child participation.

Here you will read about how Save the Children Sweden in different countries and regions promote children's participation, the approaches used to do this, the lessons learned, gaps in working methods and/or materials and recommendations for moving forward. In short, this book is an analytical tool of children's participation working methods and materials within Save the Children Sweden.

Who is this book for?

This book is for all development organisations and professionals that are involved with children, directly and indirectly. This book is especially for child participation practitioners and also for those who incorporate child participation as an important approach in their programmes and projects. Those who want to expand their understanding of child participation and its working methods and approaches, will also benefit from this book.

How will this book help me?

The book will present to you an understanding of Save the Children Sweden's work on child participation, which is an integral approach in all its programmes and projects.

The book will also help you learn from Save the Children Sweden's experience on child participation, through which you can strengthen your own work with children. You will be able to use the presented learnings, reflections and recommendations as ideas to expand, integrate and sustain child participation in your own work.



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