

# REVIEW OF CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION IN HUMANITARIAN PROGRAMMING



**Save the Children**

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Save the Children works in more than 120 countries.  
We save children's lives. We fight for their rights.  
We help them fulfil their potential.

This report was written by Claire O'Kane

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Cover photo: Hamzeh, a refugee from Syria, with a kite he made and decorated. He  
wrote the following message on his kite: "I want to return to my country." (Name  
changed to protect identity) (Photo: Chris de Bode/Save the Children)

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Within Save the Children UK's Humanitarian Technical Unit, a child-focused task team was initiated in 2012 "to ensure that a child focus is promoted in all dimensions of our humanitarian work." This team commissioned a consultancy to develop guidance on how to achieve safe, appropriate and meaningful participation for children in humanitarian programming. To inform the development of appropriate guidance, the first stage of the consultancy was to undertake a desk review, interviews among key head office humanitarian technical advisers and monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning (MEAL) staff, and a survey to seek the views and experiences of field staff regarding children's participation in the humanitarian response. Eighteen interviews were undertaken and 26 humanitarian staff completed the online survey.

During the review process, staff emphasised that children's participation is a principle of the organisation's child rights programming approach. Girls and boys (especially the most marginalised) should be supported to inform and influence each stage of humanitarian programming. While there is awareness on the principle of children's participation, meaningful children's participation in practice is not yet systematically implemented across Save the Children's humanitarian programming. Although there are more examples of children's participation in child protection (and to some extent in education) in emergencies programming, increased efforts are needed across sectors to improve the scope and quality of children's participation. There is least participation of children in the strategic planning and design of humanitarian programmes, and more opportunities for consultations with children while undertaking assessments and developing situation analyses. Consultations with children primarily take the form of focus group discussions, though there are some efforts to use more participatory tools (including PRA tools, stories and drawings). Consultations with children and some forms of collaborative participation are supported in implementation, monitoring, accountability mechanisms and evaluation in some programmes.

The survey results indicated that limited examples of child-led participation have been supported through our humanitarian programmes.

Humanitarian responses, particularly in sudden onset emergencies, are characterised by speed of delivery, large-scale need, precarious security and often highly-charged emotional contexts, which do create significant constraints towards ensuring safe and meaningful children's participation. Significant challenges regarding children's participation in humanitarian contexts (which are mutually reinforcing and linked) are: *pragmatic* (limited time, human and financial resources); *organisational* (lack of priority, insufficient staff training, participation is not embedded); *socio-cultural and attitudinal* (lack of value, and hesitancy and fear) and *ethical* (risks of doing harm, limited accountability, issues of inclusion).

Practical steps to prevent and overcome pragmatic, organisational, socio-cultural and ethical challenges include efforts to:

- Ensure that children's participation is reflected in Save the Children's humanitarian quality and accountability framework; and that this is emphasised in training of humanitarian managers.
- Ensure that the Save the Children humanitarian manual highlights the relevance of children's participation in the humanitarian response.
- Ensure that the sector and MEAL logframes, indicators, activities and budgets for the humanitarian response encompass a focus on children's participation.<sup>1</sup>
- Ensure that training for staff and partners on children's participation and psychological first aid is integrated into: emergency preparedness plans and budgets; core training of humanitarian managers and EOPs; ongoing development programme training of staff and partners.
- Work collaboratively with local staff (and partners) who have good awareness of the local and national socio-cultural, religious and political context.

- Extend partnerships with existing NGO partners and child/youth-led organisations by Save the Children country programmes to support the humanitarian response (as these organisations have existing networks, and staff/volunteers with skills in children's participation).
- Develop and disseminate brief guidelines on children's participation in emergency contexts which can be promptly applied by humanitarian managers and field staff.
- Understand and apply basic requirements in children's participation.
- Undertake risk assessments and risk mitigation to ensure safe participation of children, and/or to inform decision making about when children's participation may not be safe or appropriate in humanitarian programming.
- Apply a community based (or camp-based) approach to children's participation where parents/caregivers, community elders and other significant adult stakeholders are sensitised about the value of children's participation, and child-friendly approaches are used to engage with children.
- Engage and explain to community leaders, religious elders, parents and caregivers the benefits of listening to girls and boys (of different ages and backgrounds).
- Build upon existing good practice in children's participation that is underway in the community/country.
- Harness children's participation to reach the most marginalised children and to address exclusion and discrimination in the humanitarian response.

During the review there was a recurrent emphasis on the need to embed and integrate guidance on children's participation into core humanitarian

programming guidance and tools, so that meaningful children's participation practice becomes core to our humanitarian approach, rather than an optional 'add on'. There was a sense of excitement regarding opportunities to increase children's participation in different phases of the humanitarian programming flowchart. It was recognised that this would require a shift in attitudes, as well as changes and additions to existing guidance and programming tools. The increasing global humanitarian agenda and donor emphasis on accountability to beneficiaries has been identified as a driving force that can help increase Save the Children's participation and accountability processes during the humanitarian response. Thus, one key opportunity is to ensure that children's participation is integrated into MEAL standards, sector logframes, budgets, quality checklists and MEAL plans.

In the final section of this report, key recommendations to enhance strategic efforts by Save the Children to take forward children's participation are also outlined under seven key sub-headings:

- The responsibility of management to promote children's participation and accountability
- Applying basic requirements in children's participation
- Increasing training in children's participation
- Building upon opportunities through emergency preparedness
- Expanding partnerships with local NGOs and child-led organisations
- Addressing exclusion through children's participation
- Strengthening transitions into reconstruction and longer-term development programming





PHOTO: JENNI WARREN/SAVE THE CHILDREN

**An advocacy group from a primary school in South Sudan sings songs to an audience of more than a thousand people to mark Child Health Day.**

# I INTRODUCTION

Save the Children takes a child rights programming approach to all of its work in both development and humanitarian contexts. Children's participation is a core principle of child rights programming. It should therefore be integral within Save the Children's humanitarian programming.

Within Save the Children UK's Humanitarian Technical Unit, a child-focused task team was initiated in 2012 *"to define what a child focus means for the humanitarian department in Save the Children UK and to ensure that a child focus is promoted in all dimensions of our humanitarian work."* The child-focused task team, in collaboration with the global children's participation adviser, commissioned a consultancy to develop guidance on how to achieve safe, appropriate and meaningful participation for children in humanitarian programming, and to ensure that opportunities to achieve participation are integrated in to core tools for humanitarian programming. To inform the development of appropriate guidance, the first stage of the consultancy was to undertake a desk review, interviews among key head office humanitarian technical advisers and MEAL staff, and to undertake a survey to seek the views and experiences of field staff regarding children's participation in the humanitarian response.

This report outlines the review methodology and presents key findings from the review process. Information is shared in four key sections with good practice case examples integrated into each section:

- **Section 2** presents key findings from the *review of current practice*. It shares findings regarding: staff understanding of children's participation; the extent of children's participation in humanitarian programming supported by Save the Children;<sup>2</sup> and the extent to which participation is safe, relevant/ appropriate and meaningful. It also presents: key challenges and ethical issues concerning children's participation in humanitarian response; consideration of when children's participation

may not be appropriate; ideas to increase the focus on meaningful participation of marginalised children; and an identification of existing Save the Children humanitarian programming tools which can be reviewed to integrate a stronger focus on meaningful children's participation.

- **Section 3** explores *key opportunities to increase children's participation in humanitarian programming*. It begins by considering the importance of emergency preparedness, both in terms of opportunities to invest in capacity building of staff and the benefits of building upon children's participation in emergency preparedness efforts. The humanitarian response programming flowchart is then used as a key framework to consider how children's participation can be supported at different stages of the emergency response. There is a particular focus on promoting and supporting children's participation through MEAL, as whatever the level of participation we may have been able to achieve in initial months, the real-time evaluations and evaluations of humanitarian actions offer great opportunities to increase participation. Furthermore, the transition to recovery and longer-term programming phase is also considered, as there are key opportunities for children's participation in these areas.
- **Section 4** presents some *final reflections and recommendations* for moving forwards.

## OVERVIEW OF THE REVIEW METHODOLOGY

Key components of the review included: a desk review, interviews and an online survey. Elements of each of these key components are outlined below:

- **A desk review** of existing guidelines and documents relating to children's participation, particularly in humanitarian programming. A list of the documents reviewed is shared in Annex I. *Many of the case studies included in the review report are from existing publications.*



- **Interviews** with technical advisors across different sectors within the Save the Children UK humanitarian technical unit to identify sector-specific opportunities for children's participation. And interviews with integration team leaders and MEAL advisers to understand current practice, challenges and opportunities for children's participation throughout the humanitarian response process.

Eighteen interviews were undertaken with humanitarian technical advisers and managers.<sup>3</sup> Fifteen of these interviews were with Save the Children staff working on child protection, education, nutrition, shelter, WASH, DRR, participation, accountability and MEAL in humanitarian contexts. In addition, a UNICEF practitioner responsible for rapid child protection assessments; a former M&E manager; and an 'innovations' practitioner were interviewed. Inputs from colleagues working in Health and Food Security and Livelihoods were gained through the online survey.

The interview gathered qualitative information using eight open questions to explore: understandings of children's participation; the extent to which children's participation is supported in humanitarian programming; the appropriateness of children's participation in different contexts; main challenges or ethical issues faced; and opportunities for increasing children's participation, with a particular focus on reaching and involving the most marginalised children.

- **Online survey for field-based staff** using 'survey monkey', to seek field staff experiences and views regarding children's participation in humanitarian programming in order to identify current knowledge, practice, and learning examples.

Twenty six participants completed the survey,<sup>4</sup> including: six child protection staff, four education staff, four nutrition staff, three MEAL staff, two food security and livelihood staff (one of whom also advised on WASH), two health staff, two management staff and one finance and grants staff member. Twelve of these staff were members of Save the Children's emergency response team. Staff who responded are currently (or were) involved in humanitarian programmes in a range of diverse natural disaster and armed conflict emergency contexts, including: Afghanistan, DRC, Ethiopia/ the Horn of Africa/Kenya (Dadaab Refugee Camp), Lebanon, Libya, Myanmar, Pakistan, Philippines, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Sudan, Thailand, Vietnam, and Yemen.

The survey questions gathered quantitative and qualitative data concerning: the extent of children's participation in humanitarian sector programming; the nature of children's participation in different stages of the programme cycle – *not involved, consultative participation, collaborative participation or child-led participation*; the extent to which basic requirements/practice standards are applied to ensure safe, relevant, and meaningful participation; challenges and ethical concerns; opportunities for increasing meaningful participation; and the benefits of children's participation *on children, communities, Save the Children, and society*.



PHOTO: SAVE THE CHILDREN

Children living at a camp in Xiaohe Township, China, following the earthquake that struck Sichuan province in April 2013.

## 2 REVIEW OF CURRENT PRACTICE

### STAFF UNDERSTANDING OF CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION

Understanding of the concept of children's participation shared by humanitarian technical staff interviewed, reflected Save the Children's definition of children's participation:

#### SAVE THE CHILDREN DEFINITION<sup>5</sup>

**Participation** is about having the opportunity to express a view, influencing decision making and achieving change. Children's participation is an informed and willing involvement of all children, including the most marginalised and those of different ages and abilities in any matter concerning them directly or indirectly. Children's participation is a way of working and is an essential principle that cuts across all programmes, and takes place in all arenas, from homes to government and from local to international levels.

During the interviews staff emphasised that:

- Children's participation is a principle of our child rights programming approach, and girls and boys should be supported to inform and influence each stage of the programme cycle.
- Children's participation should be voluntary, safe and relevant. Children's evolving capacity should be considered and we should identify and minimise risks associated with their participation, especially in emergency contexts.
- Children's participation is crucial for child protection. We need to listen to girls' and boys' own concerns and perspectives in order to be able to effectively protect them. Children often have different perspectives from adults, and have substantive issues to share.
- If we do not understand the specific needs and concerns of children, it is difficult for us to design an appropriate response. We need to recognise and understand the diversity of children's experiences that may vary according to gender, age and ethnicity – to better understand different children's needs and to prioritise those needs in order to inform the design of programmes.
- We should take time and make increased efforts to reach and listen to the views of girls and boys (including children with disabilities, working children).
- Girls and boys should be encouraged and supported to express their views, concerns and ideas and to participate in decisions affecting them in families, schools, communities, refugee/IDP camps, etc. We should recognise and engage with children as social actors and potential agents of positive change.
- There are different forms of participation, from informal conversations and consultations with children, to support of child-led initiatives.
- We need to share transparent information and feedback with children, and establish structures and processes that enable us to seek and respond to children's feedback and complaints.
- Children's participation enhances quality programming and accountability.

## THE EXTENT OF CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION IN HUMANITARIAN PROGRAMMING SUPPORTED BY SAVE THE CHILDREN<sup>6</sup>

*“Overall in the humanitarian sector there is not really a focus on children’s participation. Where it is supported it is often more reliant on individuals who believe in children’s participation and have the skills to support it. In general it is still considered to be an ‘add on’, rather than integral to our programming.”*

(Humanitarian Adviser, Save the Children)

While there is awareness on the principle of children’s participation, in practice meaningful children’s participation is not yet systematically implemented across Save the Children’s humanitarian programming. While there are more examples of children’s participation in child protection (and to some extent in education) in emergencies programming, increased efforts are needed across sectors to improve the scope and quality of children’s participation.

*“In child protection programme I mainly saw child participation in the conduct of assessments, monitoring of specific activities, evaluation exercises, implementation of child-led activities and participation of the child in the development of a personal care plan (case management). However, I realise the participation sought is mostly at the consultative level.”*

(Child protection adviser)

As illustrated by the survey response, in humanitarian programming children’s participation is generally supported ‘to some extent’ (12/22 staff). Only one staff member felt that children’s participation was supported a lot;<sup>7</sup> and five of 22 felt children’s participation was supported very little.

As will be further discussed below in the section on challenges and ethical concerns, humanitarian responses, particularly in sudden onset emergencies, are characterised by speed of delivery, large-scale need, precarious security and often highly charged emotional contexts, which do create significant constraints towards ensuring safe and meaningful children’s participation.

*“The speed required for programme development and delivery, combined with security and logistic constraints, are the main factors hindering children’s participation.”*

(ERP adviser)

However, as will also be further discussed and illustrated in this review, despite the constraints faced in a sudden onset emergency, there are a variety of opportunities to increase staff capacity, skills and support for meaningful children’s participation during emergency preparedness. These opportunities can enhance meaningful children’s participation at different stages of the emergency response.

As illustrated by the survey results (see figure 2 opposite), there is least participation of children in the strategic planning and design of humanitarian

FIGURE 1. TO WHAT EXTENT HAS CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION IN HUMANITARIAN PROGRAMMING BEEN SUPPORTED IN YOUR HUMANITARIAN SECTOR RESPONSE?

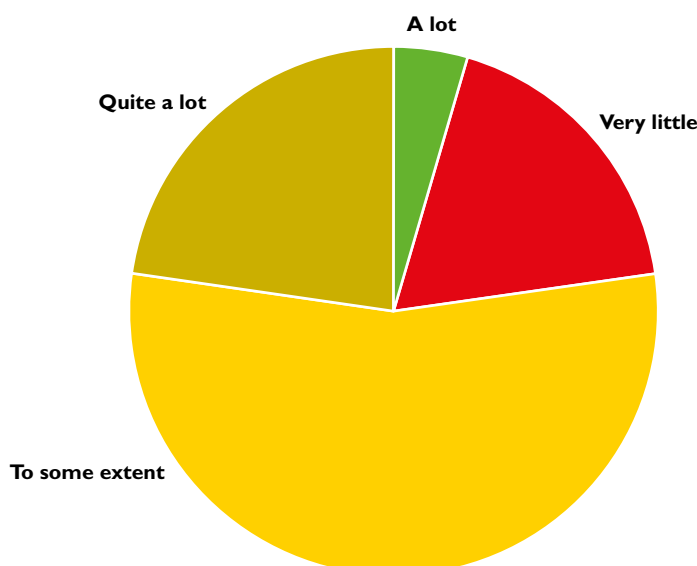
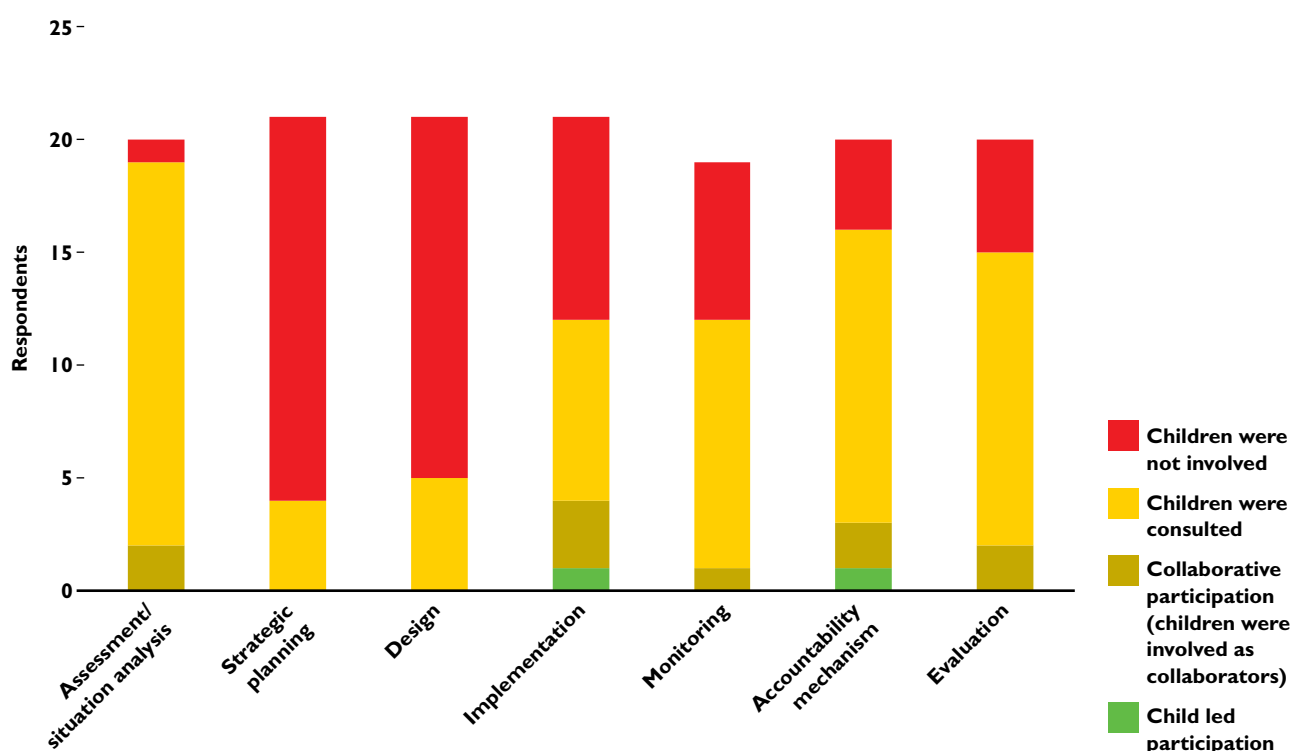


FIGURE 2. TO WHAT EXTENT WAS CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION SUPPORTED IN DIFFERENT STAGES OF THE HUMANITARIAN PROGRAMME CYCLE IN YOUR SECTOR?



programmes, and most opportunities for consultations with children in the assessments/situation analysis.

Consultations with children primarily take the form of focus group discussions, though there are some efforts to use more participatory tools (including PRA tools, stories and drawings). The extent to which findings from consultations with children in the assessment phase actually influence the design of strategies and programmes is variable (and often not clearly documented).

*“At the onset of the catastrophe, children were involved as respondents during rapid assessment through focus group discussions, telling their stories, and/or we asked them to draw and tell us what it’s all about.”*

(Food security and livelihood adviser, Horn of Africa response)

*“In participatory assessments in programme areas (eg, in child protection) some participatory tools, including participatory ranking exercises, have been used with children and young people, enabling their priorities to be identified. Such exercises (especially after two-three months of the initial response) are useful, as children and young people’s priorities and perspectives are often different from those of adults – and the findings can be used to inform more child-focused strategies and programme developments.”*

(Child protection adviser)

*“Mechanisms to feedback to children the outcomes of their participation are distinctly lacking. I have also seen little evidence of articulating where children’s participation has led to changes in programme policies or activities.”*

(MEAL adviser)

Consultations with children and some forms of collaborative participation are supported in implementation, monitoring, accountability mechanisms and evaluation in some programmes.

While the survey revealed limited examples of child-led participation in humanitarian programming being supported by Save the Children UK, the literature review revealed a number of good practice examples of child-led participation in humanitarian contexts. Thus, it is important for Save the Children to see how it can build upon partnerships with child-led groups and networks and better support child-led initiatives in humanitarian contexts, wherever their participation is safe.

In the survey responses, more practical examples of how children’s participation is implemented were provided by child protection staff. In particular, Child Friendly Spaces (CFS) provide access to children and young people on a regular basis, increasing opportunities for meaningful engagement and

empowering approaches with and by children and young people:

*"For rapid assessments, children are consulted for their views on the priorities, risks and programme ideas to influence the design. Children are involved in implementation, with some of the activities led by children though designed by agency staff. This includes children taking a lead in children's clubs activities and in organising CFS activities... Children also have access to feedback mechanisms... they can suggest changes and are given feedback."*

(Child protection coordinator, South Sudan)

*"We have Complaints Response Mechanisms (CRM) in our Child Friendly Spaces and education centre... We have Children's Clubs in the camp and we normally involve them a lot in our work."*

(Child protection officer, Dadaab Refugee camp, Kenya)

Examples of children's representation in committees (child protection, WASH) were also mentioned in the survey and in existing literature:

*"Initially children were participating in FSL project as they were part of the Committees formed in the village like the Village Agriculture Extension Committees."*

(MEAL manager, experience from Somalia)

However, in general, increased efforts are needed to support children's representation and meaningful

representation in community based committees and to ensure child-friendly feedback and accountability mechanisms.

*"I have not seen evidence that we have designed accountability or monitoring mechanisms based on input from children. In Dadaab, children's clubs and governance structures are engaged as a mechanism to feed children's views back to Save the Children but this seems to be a one-way flow of information away from children, rather than towards them."*

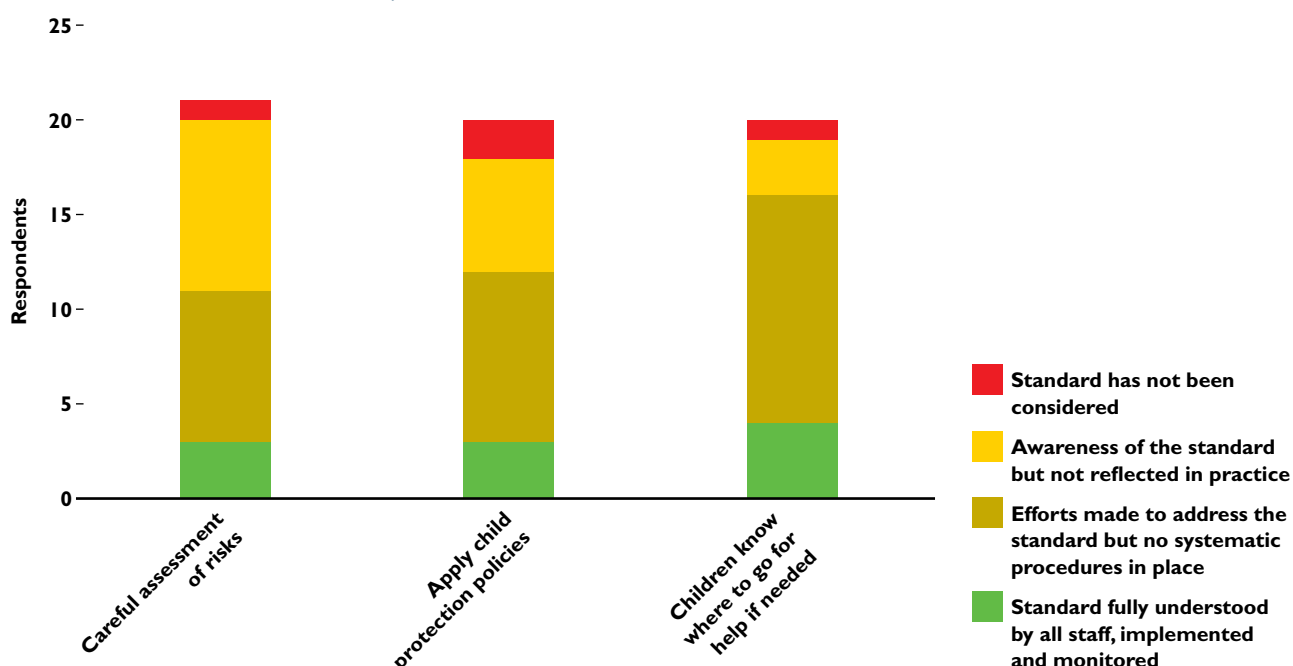
(MEAL adviser)

### TO WHAT EXTENT IS OUR CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION PRACTICE SAFE, RELEVANT, AND MEANINGFUL?

The survey also elicited analysis concerning the extent to which basic requirements (practice standards) for children's participation are considered and applied to ensure safe, relevant and meaningful children's participation (see Annex 3). As illustrated by the graphs below, the survey findings indicate that systematic efforts are not yet made to apply basic requirements in children's participation.

**Safe participation:** Safe participation ensures that children are safe while participating and are not put at risk or harm as a result of their participation. Indicators for safe participation are informed by the basic requirement that they are safe and sensitive to risks.

FIGURE 3. TO WHAT EXTENT DO YOU THINK THE CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION IN HUMANITARIAN PROGRAMMING WAS SAFE (CONSIDERING APPLICATION OF BASIC REQUIREMENTS/STANDARDS)?





This involves undertaking careful assessment of risks; efforts to minimise risks; applying child protection policies; and being aware of referral pathways for psychosocial support if needed. In many contexts there are insufficient efforts to analyse and minimise risks associated with children's participation, and there are insufficient efforts to really ensure that all staff and partners understand and apply codes of conduct and child safeguarding policies. But in general, increased efforts are made to ensure that children know who to report to if child protection or other forms of assistance are needed.

Some existing good practices in ensuring safe participation, such as the experiences shared by child protection staff working in Dadaab Refugee Camp, need to be more systematically applied in other contexts:

*"We have a standard form for risk assessment in place. We have a child safeguarding policy which we sign and are bound by. Children participating in Save the Children activities are made aware of their rights and where to report in case they are abused. Children's clubs are well-trained in child protection and life skills."*

(Child protection coordinator, Dadaab Refugee camp, Kenya)

**Relevant participation:** Relevant participation refers to opportunities for girls and boys to discuss, analyse and influence decision making on issues that are affecting their daily lives and are of direct

relevance to them. Indicators for relevant and appropriate participation are informed by a number of the *basic requirements*, including: whether the participation process focuses on issues that are *relevant* to children's lives; whether the participation process is supported by *trained staff*; whether *transparent information* is shared, enabling informed participation; whether children's own time, priorities and views are *respected*; and whether the ways of working build children's self esteem.

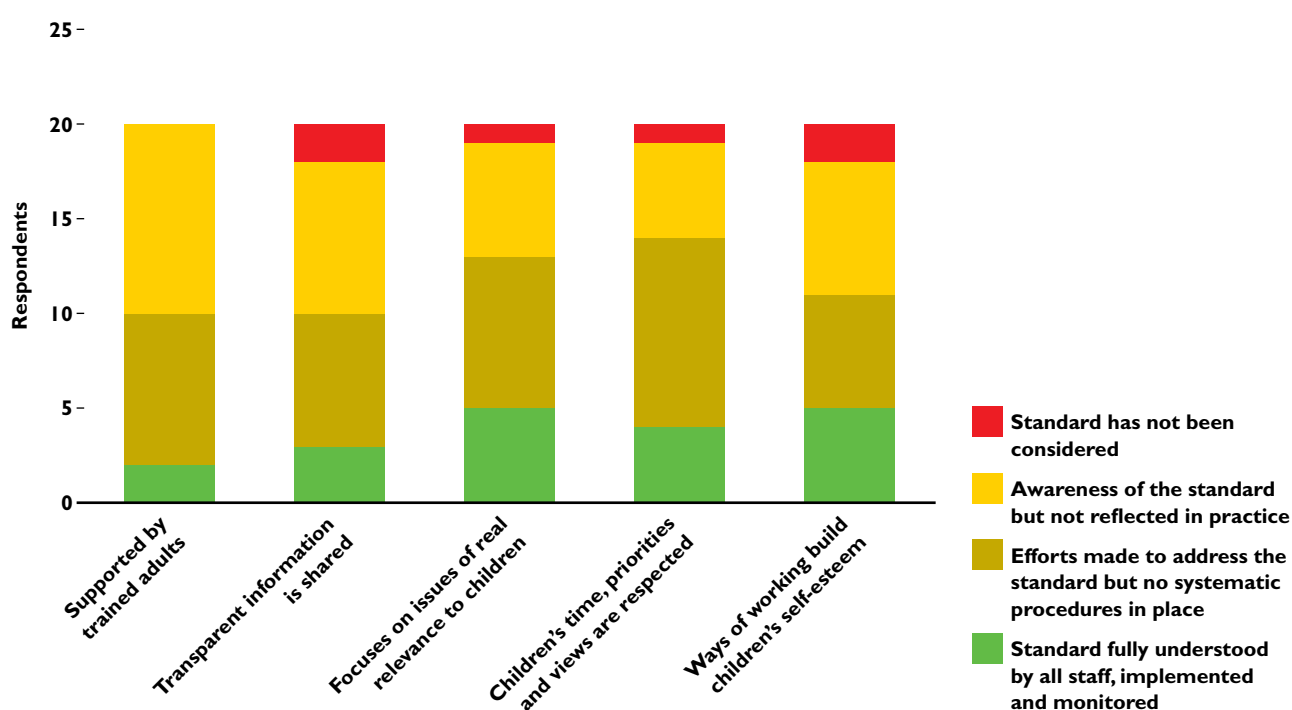
In some programmes children's participation is supported by trained staff and efforts are made to share transparent information with children, and to ensure processes which build children's self esteem and enable girls and boys to participate on issues that are most relevant to their own lives:

*"Children's views are respected, and their participation builds their self-esteem and confidence. Their priorities are considered – eg, participation is not prioritised during school days so that children do not have to miss classes in order to participate in programme work. Staff are also aware of the possibility of how children's participation can burden children and they consult them on the level of participation."*

(Child protection coordinator, South Sudan)

However, in many contexts increased training of staff and partners is required to ensure understanding and

FIGURE 4. TO WHAT EXTENT DO YOU THINK THE CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION IN HUMANITARIAN PROGRAMMING WAS RELEVANT/APPROPRIATE?



application of practice standards/basic requirements, and to increase knowledge and confidence in relevant child-friendly participatory processes and participatory tools.

*“There is often not enough time to train staff on child participation and we do not provide sufficient practical tips on how to guarantee child participation.”*

(Child protection adviser)

As will be discussed further in the challenges section, existing socio-cultural norms and expectations of children can make it difficult to facilitate meaningful children's participation; in some contexts girls and boys are actively discouraged from speaking up, expressing their views, or asking questions:

*“Many efforts are made to meet the standards, but there are obstacles to their full understanding and implementation, mainly because of cultural norms and general views on the child and his/her right to participate, be listened to, to speak.”*

(Child protection adviser)

**Meaningful participation:** Meaningful participation reflects sincere efforts to apply all the basic requirements. Indicators which were included in the survey included: participation being voluntary; using child-friendly approaches; supporting inclusive

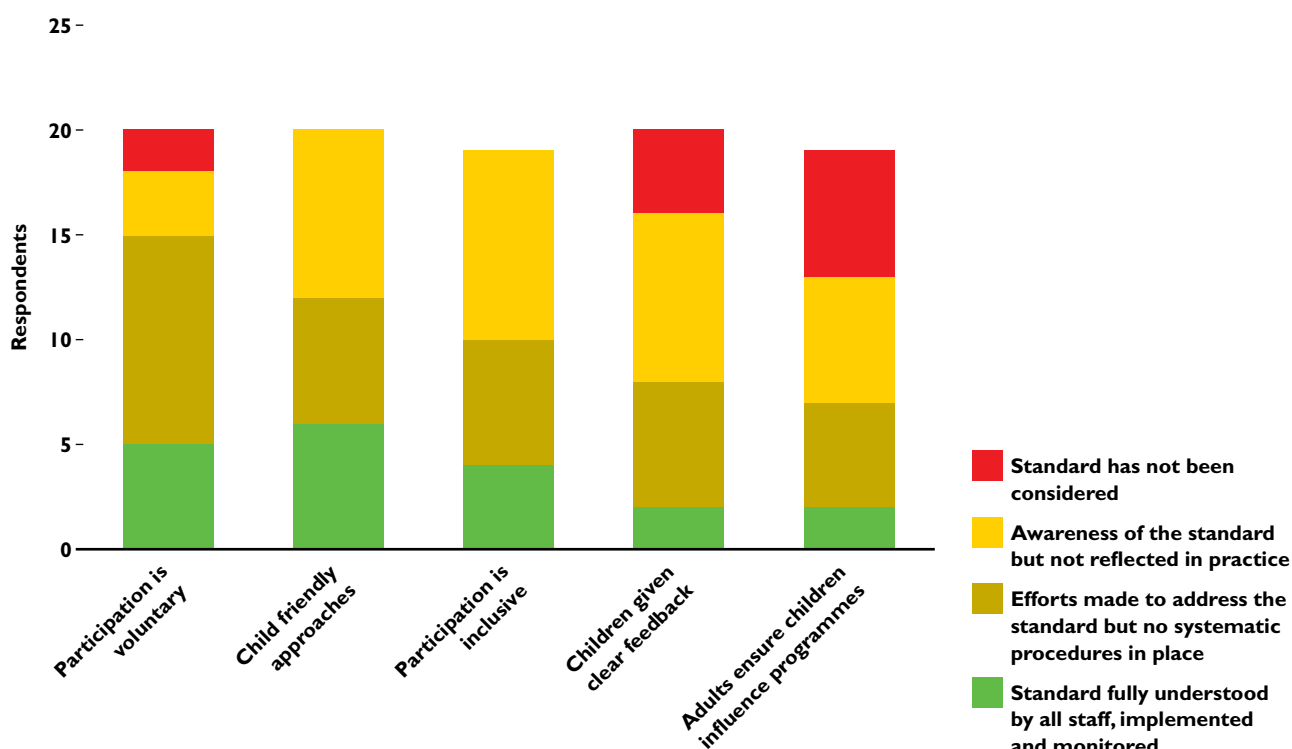
participation; and being accountable – providing feedback to children and ensuring that children's views influence programmes.

In general there are more efforts to ensure voluntary participation, and some efforts to promote inclusive participation and use child-friendly approaches. However, increased efforts are needed to ensure voluntary and inclusive participation. Significantly greater effort is required to provide feedback to children and young people, and to make genuine efforts to see how children's views and priorities can influence strategies and programmes. Furthermore, increased effort is needed to reach and involve children with disabilities, and other marginalised groups of children.

*“We are still doing children's participation in the most basic way possible – or not doing it at all. Therefore, the level of accountability is very low; ideally, we should do this, but first of all we have to get the basics right. From my experience children's participation happens by asking the local leader or head teacher to gather some children together. There is not much, if any, effort to include particularly vulnerable groups... I don't think the concept of 'voluntary' is always explained to children and perhaps does not translate so clearly into some of the cultures we work in.”*

(MEAL adviser)

FIGURE 5. TO WHAT EXTENT DO YOU THINK THE CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION IN HUMANITARIAN PROGRAMMING WAS MEANINGFUL?



## SOME ISSUES TO CONSIDER WHEN INVOLVING CHILDREN IN EMERGENCIES WORK<sup>8</sup>

- Identify risks concerning children's participation and ensure strategies to minimise risks and 'do no harm' to children.
- Wherever safe opportunities allow, rapid assessments should seek the views of girls and boys (from different age groups and backgrounds).
- Share information with children so that they understand clearly what their involvement will entail and what they can expect it will lead to, and factor in their willingness to take part, their availability and the feelings of their parents/guardians.
- Encourage inclusive approaches to children's participation.
- Recognise the diversity of childhoods. Children's roles and responsibilities may be different according to age, gender, disability, culture, religion and ethnicity.
- Take every opportunity to respect children as competent social actors and as active citizens.
- Do not assume that what adults tell you about the community covers children's issues.
- Acknowledging and appreciating what children have done and can do, and listening to them, are forms of allowing children to participate.
- Validate self-efficacy and decision making ability of girls and boys in the affected communities.
- Encourage ongoing processes for children's participation and citizenship – preparing adults and empowering children – especially the most marginalised.
- To bring about shifts in the mind-set of most adults, the local culture, philosophy and customs must be understood and respected.
- Sensitise adults to appreciate and involve girls and boys.
- Remember that all assistance should create self-reliance and resilience among the survivors, and not dependency.

## CHALLENGES AND ENSURING AN ETHICAL APPROACH TO CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION IN THE HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE

This sub-section identifies key challenges as well as some practical steps that can be taken by Save the Children to meet such challenges, in order to increase support for meaningful children's participation in humanitarian programming. Further, this sub-section will determine specific contexts when it is not safe or appropriate for children's participation.

Significant challenges and ethical concerns regarding children's participation in humanitarian contexts were raised by staff during the interviews and survey process. The challenges (which are mutually reinforcing and linked) are:

- **Pragmatic:** limited time, human and financial resources
- **Organisational:** lack of priority, insufficient staff training, participation is not embedded
- **Socio-cultural and attitudinal:** lack of value, and hesitancy and fear
- **Ethical:** risks of doing harm, limited accountability, issues of inclusion

### Pragmatic challenges: limited time, human and financial resources

In a humanitarian disaster (natural or man-made), particularly in a large-scale 'sudden onset emergency', the humanitarian imperative is to respond urgently and at scale to ensure humanitarian assistance wherever it is needed. Due to the urgency of the response, children's participation is generally not prioritised, especially as time for preparation and commitment to process is generally one of the ingredients for meaningful participation. Moreover, in many sudden onset emergencies, there are insufficient staff available with the relevant skill set and confidence to facilitate meaningful children's participation.

*"Pressure of delivering humanitarian assistance tends to preclude meaningful participation of children, because the time and resources are not there to ensure children's safety and to make it meaningful for them."*

(Humanitarian adviser)

Practical steps to prevent and overcome pragmatic challenges include efforts to:

- Ensure that the Save the Children humanitarian manual highlights the relevance of children's participation in the humanitarian response.

- Ensure that training for staff and partners on children's participation is included in emergency preparedness plans and strategies; that the training is budgeted for and implemented.
- Extend partnerships with existing NGO partners and child/youth led organisations by Save the Children country programmes to support the humanitarian response (as these organisations have existing networks, and staff/volunteers with skills in children's participation).
- Develop and disseminate brief guidelines on children's participation in emergency contexts which can be promptly applied by humanitarian managers and field staff.

**Organisational challenges: lack of priority, insufficient staff training, participation is not embedded**

Save the Children is a large agency with real ambition to become the leading humanitarian response agency for children, and a 'top 3' humanitarian response agency in any emergency.<sup>9</sup> The organisational focus is on speed of response, to deliver at scale to assist as many children as possible wherever there is a need.<sup>10</sup>

In recent years there has been a strong organisational and management focus on ambition, reach, income and branding for Save the Children's humanitarian response. There has been relatively less focus on quality and impact, particularly in relation to a child rights programming approach to humanitarian practice. Thus, children's participation in humanitarian programming has not been an organisational or management priority.

However, with the development of Save the Children's Accountability and Quality Framework, and a stronger donor agenda on accountability to beneficiaries, there will be increasing focus on quality, including a stronger focus on human capacity development and resources for participation and accountability in the humanitarian response. Yet competing priorities and influences will remain within the organisation, which makes it hard to support all necessary capacity building needs regarding Save the Children benchmarks and quality programming approaches – and with the transition to Save the Children International, that will take time. Thus, increased efforts are needed to ensure that clear communication channels are in place to share

coherent messages and approaches, and to ensure meaningful participation in humanitarian programmes.

Due to the current lack of organisational focus on children's participation in the humanitarian response, guidance on children's participation is not yet sufficiently embedded in humanitarian programming tools or capacity building initiatives. As a result there is currently insufficient human and material capacity to support meaningful children's participation in the humanitarian response. Many humanitarian staff are not aware of basic requirements in children's participation and lack confidence, knowledge, skills and tools for facilitating meaningful children's participation. Furthermore, children's participation in strategy and programme design is limited, as are plans, budgets and indicators concerning children's participation in proposals and logframes for humanitarian programming.

While child protection, education and MEAL staff tend to work directly with children, thus increasing opportunities for establishing good relations between adults and children and supporting processes for meaningful children's participation, other sectors including health, nutrition, WASH and shelter tend to work more closely with parents, caregivers or adults and do less direct work with children and young people. However, as part of our child focus, opportunities to increase direct work with children and young people as social actors and potential agents of change can enhance the design and development of relevant sector programmes.

Perhaps due to earlier organisational divides within Save the Children between development and emergency programmes, in some countries affected by disasters or conflict there has been insufficient attention to the possibilities of working with existing NGO partners and child/youth led organisations and their networks in emergency responses. Such NGOs and child/youth led groups are more likely to have the skills and existing relationships in the national and local contexts to engage with children and young people and to meaningfully support their participation. With Save the Children's dual mandate, and an increasing focus on emergency preparedness and contingency planning, opportunities for improved partnerships in the humanitarian response can be improved.

## TIME FOR INTROSPECTION<sup>11</sup>

When your agency identifies constraints for local participation, ask yourself: are they real constraints or do they signal:

- Lack of political will?
- Inter-agency competition and rivalry?
- Hiding programme faults?
- Thinking from the perspective of one's own organisation?
- Leaning to donors instead of local recipients?
- Lack of motivation from programme staff?
- Resulting from cultural bias, prejudice or racism?
- A mind-set emphasising speed, control and logistics even when the emergency is over?

Practical steps to prevent and overcome organisational challenges include efforts to:

- Ensure that children's participation is reflected in Save the Children's humanitarian quality and accountability framework; and that this is highlighted in training of humanitarian managers.
- Ensure that training on children's participation is integrated into core training of humanitarian managers, EOPs and field staff; (and as above) that country programmes include training for field staff in children's participation and psychological first aid in their emergency preparedness plans.
- Ensure that the sector and MEAL logframes, indicators, activities and budgets for the humanitarian response encompass a focus on children's participation.<sup>12</sup>

### Socio-cultural and attitudinal: lack of value, and hesitancy and fear

In many societies in different parts of the world, prevailing socio-cultural attitudes towards children are not conducive to children's participation. Children (especially girls) are expected to obey adults, not to ask questions or to express their views. Thus, challenges are faced in explaining the relevance and value of listening to girls and boys within their own communities or family settings.

*"We face challenges on how to integrate child participation in contexts where this concept barely exists. I refer to contexts where children have no right to a say, to lead something, and acceptance of child*

*participation can be difficult for the community and for the NGO staff (eg, local social workers not talking directly to the child as they do not think a child can take any decision or express an opinion on his/her own situation)."*

(Child protection adviser)

Apprehension among Save the Children staff and partners to facilitate children's participation in a humanitarian response is also a key stumbling block. Many staff are hesitant and fearful about how to go about talking and listening to children in the aftermath of a disaster or during armed conflict. There is a fear that they do not have the necessary skills to work with children who may be upset or traumatised; and there is a fear that they may place children at risk through their participation. It is crucial to ensure ethical and safe participation of children; however, it is also important that, as a child-focused humanitarian agency, we equip our staff with the skills and confidence to effectively communicate with children and support children in emotional distress.

Practical steps to prevent and overcome socio-cultural challenges include efforts to:

- Engage with and explain to community leaders, religious elders, parents and caregivers the benefits of listening to girls and boys (of different ages and backgrounds).
- Ensure that staff and partners have access to training on children's participation and psychological first aid as an integral part of training of humanitarian staff, and/or as part of emergency preparedness or ongoing development programming.

### Ethical challenges: risks of doing harm, limited accountability, issues of inclusion

An ethical approach ensures a focus on risk assessment and mitigation to ensure that children do not face harm as a result of their participation. It requires awareness and consideration of the local and national socio-cultural, religious and political context. An ethical approach also recognises the power imbalance between children and adults (and/or between different groups of children and young people) and develops strategies to address this. It means that care is taken to ensure that adults do not impose their own views on children, and that children's contributions are appreciated whatever their age, ability, background, etc.



Significant ethical concerns regarding the potential 'harm' of involving children in programmes in emergency contexts and the need to make decisions in the 'best interests of the child' were highlighted by staff during the interviews and survey. Issues raised included:

- Ethical reasons not to involve children in the initial rapid assessment as they may be emotionally distressed due to the sudden onset emergency, and staff may not be able to respond to the concerns they raise and/or may not be able to provide feedback to them.
- Security and/or protection risks of speaking out in some cultural and/or socio-political contexts (especially in situation of armed conflict, military control, or political instability). *An example was shared from Dadaab Refugee camp where children were beaten by adults for talking to 'outsiders' who were undertaking the assessment.*
- Children may raise more sensitive issues than adults (who might 'filter' what they share). Thus, we need to be careful that children do not face risks as a result of what they share/reveal.
- Concerns about discussing sensitive issues with children, such as sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, and recruitment of children.
- Risks in bringing together children of different ethnic groups in a post-conflict or sensitive context – perceptions and risks of harm from adults if they are seen together. We need to understand the power and social dynamics and risks.
- Risks children and young people may face if they are actively involved in an assessment – for example, if they are moving around to share or gather information (eg, sexual harassment, landmines, etc., – *risks vary depending on the context*).
- Concerns that we may not reach or involve the most marginalised children, and that participation of 'better-off children' may increase discrimination or exclusion of the most marginalised.

Practical steps to prevent and overcome ethical challenges include efforts to:

- Work collaboratively with local staff (and partners) who have good awareness of the local and national socio-cultural, religious and political context.
- Understand and apply basic requirements in children's participation.
- Undertake risk assessments and risk mitigation to ensure safe participation of children and/or to inform decision making about when children's participation may not be safe or appropriate in humanitarian programming (see below).
- Ensure staff training on children's participation and psychological first aid.
- Apply a community based (or camp-based) approach to children's participation where parents/ caregivers, community elders and other significant adult stakeholders are sensitised about the value of children's participation, and child-friendly approaches are used to engage with children.
- Build upon existing good practice in children's participation that is underway in the community/ country.
- Harness children's participation to reach the most marginalised children and to address exclusion and discrimination in the humanitarian response.

#### WHEN CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION MAY NOT BE APPROPRIATE IN HUMANITARIAN PROGRAMMING

*"We should carefully consider the principles of 'do no harm' and children's best interests. If there are risks that children may face harm as a result of their participation then it may not be appropriate to encourage their participation... However, in general there are usually safe ways that children can be involved in some way along a spectrum – at minimum, for example we can share information with children and keep them informed, and where safe we can enable more full participation."*

(Humanitarian adviser)

While seeking to apply the principle of children's participation to enable children's voices to be heard and to influence decisions that affect them, other child rights and humanitarian principles, including the principle of the child's best interests and the principle of 'do no harm', may over-ride the principle of children's participation in some contexts. Every context is unique. Thus, a good understanding of the local context (socio-political, cultural, religious, geographic situation, etc.) and of risk assessments and risk mitigation in relation to different types of children's participation, is required in order to inform decision making about when and how children's participation may or may not be appropriate.

Examples of when children's participation may not be appropriate shared by staff included:

- **In the rapid assessment in a sudden onset emergency IF qualified staff with skills and confidence to facilitate meaningful participation and to provide psychosocial support are not available.** Furthermore, as participatory assessments take time, it was suggested that they are not the most suitable methodology for a rapid assessment, as it would take too long to gather sufficient qualitative data from a reasonable sample. *However, engaging children and young people and use of qualitative participatory processes and tools can be very useful and appropriate in later, more detailed assessments. Furthermore, where experienced staff are available, it was still recognised that children's participation in the initial assessment can provide valuable insights and triangulation of information from other data sources regarding the protection concerns most affecting girls and boys in an emergency context.*
- In some child-focused DRR work, children and young people have been part of 'search and rescue' committees and have received training on search and rescue. However, in the immediate response to an earthquake or natural disaster, children and young people will face increased risk of harm through their involvement in such activities. Thus, it **may not be appropriate for children and young people to be part of search and rescue.**
- **Children should not participate in construction (eg, shelter, schools, etc.) or food distribution if it is heavy or exploitative** as it can be a form of child labour. However, children can partake in safe and age-appropriate activities, and contributions by children towards reconstruction can enable psychosocial benefits, giving children a sense of purpose, community and hope. Again, we must carry out risk assessments and decision making in the best interests of the child, considering children's own views and feelings.
- **It may not be appropriate to include children and young people in global-level meetings on sensitive issues, if their participation may be symbolic rather than substantive,** and if it may place them at risk: *"In child protection work relating to monitoring and reporting mechanisms (MRM) we had a good discussion on whether to include children in a high-level meeting in New York. However, as the MRM is a sensitive issue, there was a lot of caution, and it was seen as more symbolic than meaningful."* (Child protection adviser).

## ENSURING STAFF COMPETENCY TO SUPPORT PARTICIPATION

**The inter-agency child protection rapid assessment guide**<sup>13</sup> purposely excludes valuable methodology for direct interviews with children for the following reasons: *"While child participation can contribute to better understanding of the situation of children in a post-emergency context, in most cases it is unlikely that trained staff are available to conduct such highly sensitive interviews. Inexperienced assessors may unintentionally put children in harm's*

*way, which is a violation of the humanitarian principle of "do no harm."* Therefore, direct interview with children is discouraged within the context of a child protection rapid assessment, unless a cadre of highly skilled assessors is already in place. If there is access to assessors with experience in dealing responsibly with children, adolescents of 15 to 18 years of age could be interviewed as key informants. For younger children, other methodologies might be more appropriate."<sup>14</sup> (p.11)

## INCREASING THE FOCUS ON MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION OF MARGINALISED CHILDREN

*“There is an overall need to increase a focus on reaching the most marginalised in our humanitarian programming. We need a deliberate focus on inclusion and we need to be willing to ‘go the extra mile.’”*

(Humanitarian adviser)

Key practical suggestions to increase our reach and focus on ensuring the participation of the most marginalised children and young people (including children with disabilities, displaced or refugee children, out of school working children, children from ethnic minority groups, etc.) included:

- Ensuring analysis of issues of exclusion and marginalisation as part of the assessment process.
- Applying the Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action, INEE, Sphere and HAP standards, which encompass a key focus on reaching and involving the most marginalised children.
- Actively engaging children and young people to identify and reach the most marginalised children.
- Collaboration between Save the Children and disabled people's organisations.
- Consulting with children with disabilities and their caregivers (and other marginalised groups) to better understand their needs to ensure accessible shelter, schools, child-friendly space, etc.
- Ensuring disaggregated data collection as part of programme monitoring; and including monitoring questions about which children are/are not participating.

- Applying the basic requirements in children's participation and Save the Children's global indicator on voluntary, safe and inclusive children's participation.
- Encouraging reflection and action planning among children and young people about issues of inclusion and exclusion in their participation initiatives.

As part of the assessment process it is important to analyse and understand the context and which groups of children or families may be marginalised (for different reasons). We should identify which children and families are accessing and not accessing services. Identification of 'exclusion' factors and direct observation can be very useful. In some contexts it may be helpful to have focus group discussions FGDs with separate groups (as long as it does not put them at risk). Understanding of the local context is crucial.

*“We need to focus on the identification of the most vulnerable groups, the causes of marginalisation and what we can do to remove the obstacles to participation. Activities should also be tailored to specific age and gender groups.”*

(Humanitarian adviser)

Humanitarian standards (Sphere, HAP) and Minimum Standards for Child Protection<sup>15</sup> and education, including the INEE Pocket book on inclusive education, can support efforts to assess, understand and respond to issues of exclusion and marginalisation.

Children can inform the identification of beneficiaries, especially the most marginalised. For example, in shelter programmes discussions with girls and boys may help identify unaccompanied children, child headed

### INEE POCKET BOOK ON INCLUSION: FINDING OUT ABOUT ISSUES WHICH AFFECT INCLUSION<sup>16</sup>

As well as asking *who* is excluded from education now and before the emergency, we need to ask *why* they are not participating and learning. Where security permits, (geographically) hard-to-reach areas should be included in the assessment. Consult security and logistics officers to get a greater understanding of: the topography of the affected areas; security issues that may contribute to exclusion for some children; and the general

demographics of the area, to see whether exclusion is an issue for certain groups. When collecting and analysing data, consider the extent to which the population was fragmented before or during the emergency, and the extent to which this may impact on the willingness of the population to mix with or support other groups. To what extent might this have reduced willingness to mix with or support other groups?

## CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION IN COMMUNITY EDUCATION COUNCILS AS PART OF THE EARTHQUAKE RESPONSE, PAKISTAN<sup>17</sup>

After the Pakistan earthquake in 2005, Save the Children Sweden's team set up community education councils linked to each rehabilitated school. Each council had at least two children on board. Children would report who wasn't in school and why they thought these children were absent. Often girls and children with disabilities were kept at home because their families thought going to school was not safe, or that they would not benefit from education. Once these children had been identified, the community education council was asked to come up with a plan for making it easier for them to get to school and to have a positive experience once there.

### Ideas to apply learning in other contexts

When community based committees are established to support implementation or monitoring of humanitarian sector responses, humanitarian staff should advocate for space and facilitate opportunities for children's participation and representation within such committees. To ensure genuine participation, it can be effective to support girls and boys to come together in child groups and to identify representatives from their child groups who can be part of community based committees/councils.

households, children living with elderly caregivers/ single parents, or caregivers who are ill or disabled. During beneficiary identification and distribution we need to be aware of referral mechanisms to encourage and refer people to access relevant basic services. In distribution we also need to ensure additional mechanisms and process for safe and effective distribution of materials to the most marginalised households, including young children living with elderly caregivers, child headed households, etc.

Collaboration between Save the Children and Handicap International or national and local people's disability organisations can help to increase understanding of issues related to and the ability of organisations to reach children with disabilities. At a global level Save the Children UK has developed a concept note to take forward a collaborative piece of work with Handicap International on how to better reach, involve and respond to the needs of children and adults with disabilities. Community mobilisation and sensitisation of parents, caregivers and community elders about the rights of children with disabilities may increase support for their inclusion and active engagement in child participatory processes. Furthermore, when designing programmes we need to consult children with disabilities and their caregivers (and other marginalised groups) to better understand their needs, to ensure accessible shelter, schools, child friendly space, etc.

In monitoring we need to ensure disaggregated data collection (according to age, gender, disability, ethnicity, religion and other key diversity factors) as part of programme monitoring, and we need to analyse who is not reached. As part of programme monitoring it is important to always ask ourselves questions about whether our programmes are accessible and are reaching the most marginalised children and families. For example, are CFSs accessible to children with disabilities and are they reaching other marginalised groups of children (eg, working children)? Include monitoring questions about which girls and boys are/are not participating and why. And how can we ensure inclusion and active participation of the most marginalised girls and boys?

Applying the basic requirements in children's participation when planning, monitoring and evaluating children's participation processes and outcomes ensures a key focus on issues of inclusion and non-discrimination. Furthermore, Save the Children's global indicator on children's participation focuses on that which is voluntary, safe and inclusive. Our data analysis on issues of exclusion must be used to inform improvements, and to provide feedback and accountability to concerned stakeholders.

## IDENTIFICATION OF EXISTING SAVE THE CHILDREN HUMANITARIAN PROGRAMMING TOOLS FOR REVIEW

### HUMANITARIAN PROGRAMMING TOOLS WHICH CAN BE REVIEWED TO INTEGRATE A STRONGER FOCUS ON CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION

Sector	Tool	Comments/notes
Humanitarian process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>MS-IRA guidance and tool</li> <li>JD for ERPs</li> <li>Integration Toolkit</li> <li>Management Operating Standards and Standard Operating Procedures</li> <li>Humanitarian manual (CD)</li> </ul>	<i>The Humanitarian manual is planned but not yet drafted. However, it would be crucial to ensure that guidance on children's participation is embedded.</i>
MEAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Quality and Accountability Framework</li> <li>MEAL standards</li> <li>Sector logframe menus</li> <li>Master budget</li> <li>Sector quality checklists</li> <li>Guidance on child satisfaction measurement</li> </ul>	<i>A review and inputs of these tools is underway.</i>
Child protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ACE Toolkit (Alternative Care in Emergencies)</li> <li>New Minimum standards for child protection in humanitarian action</li> <li>CPiE rapid assessment tool</li> </ul>	<i>The Minimum Standards for Child Protection are fairly new and already include a focus on the principle of children's participation</i>
WASH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>They have a series of WASH technical guidance notes</li> </ul>	<i>Another innovation piece of work will be undertaken in 2013 to review and develop guidance for child-focused WASH.</i>
Training pack for humanitarian staff	<p>The planned humanitarian manual will also link to the <b>training pack</b> for capacity building of staff. A focus on children's participation should be integrated into core modules for entry, mid and senior-level managers. For example, training for: entry level could include guidance for meaningful participation in assessments; mid level could include a focus on how to ensure children's participation in programme planning; senior level could include matrices indicating how children's participation can be integrated</p>	



### 3 KEY OPPORTUNITIES TO INCREASE CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION IN HUMANITARIAN PROGRAMMING

*“Save the Children needs to be bolder in promoting and supporting article 12 in our humanitarian work. We need to ensure better understanding and application of meaningful children’s participation and we need to ensure that it is built into proposals.”*

(Humanitarian adviser)

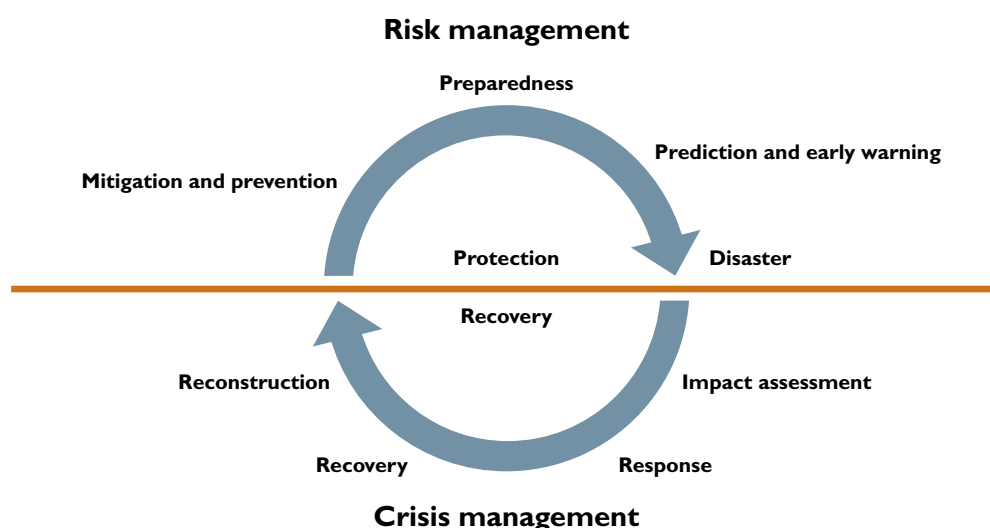
There was a sense of excitement regarding opportunities to increase children’s participation in humanitarian programming that was communicated by many of the humanitarian staff who were interviewed as part of the review process. Furthermore, there was a recurrent emphasis on the need to embed and integrate guidance on children’s participation into core programming guidance and tools, so that meaningful children’s participation practice becomes

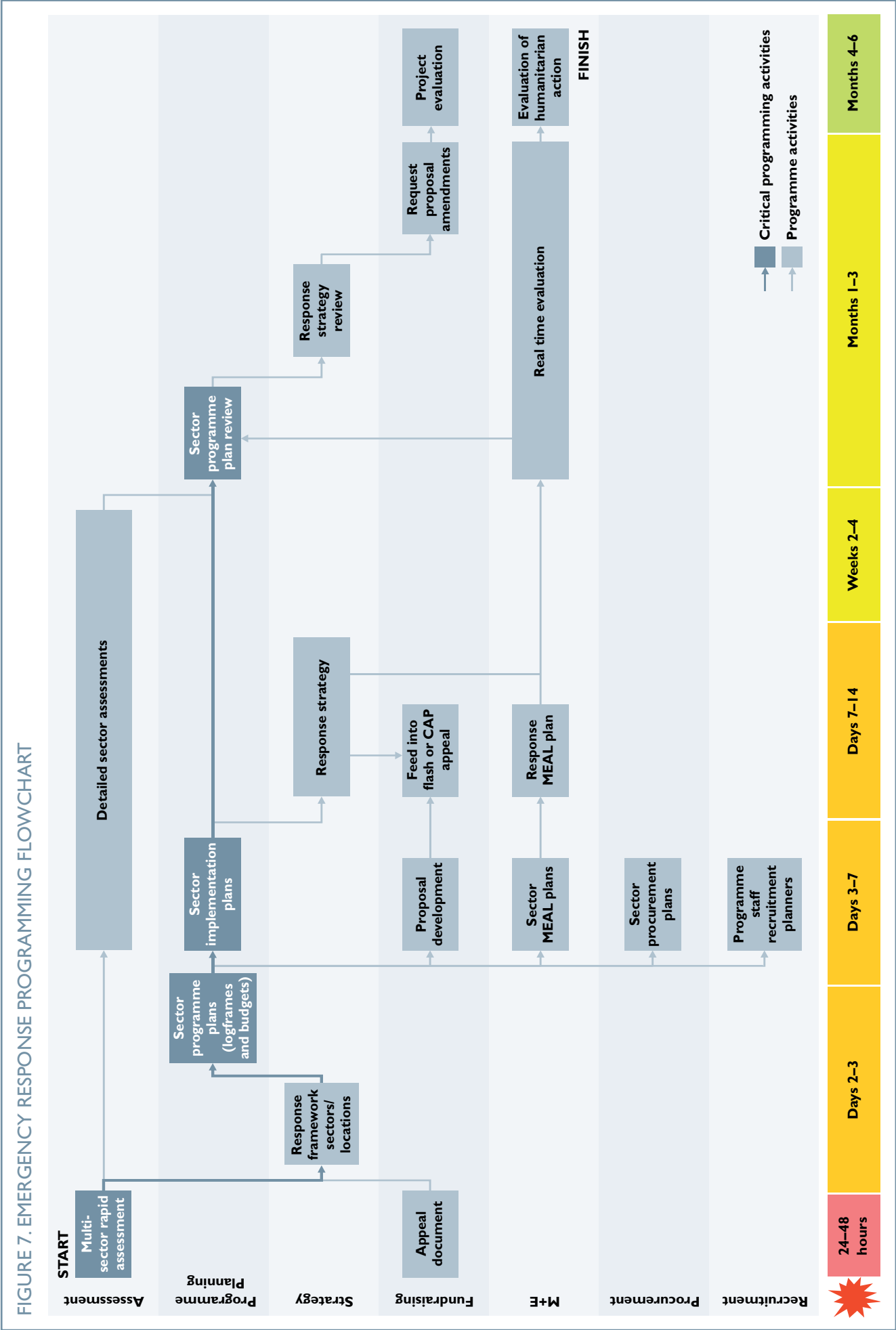
core to our humanitarian approach, rather than an optional ‘add on’. It was recognised that this would require a shift in attitudes, as well as changes and additions to existing guidance and programming tools.

Save the Children’s emergency response programming flowchart (see overleaf) is used as a key framework to consider when and how children’s participation can be supported at different stages of the emergency response.

However, broader processes of emergency preparedness, disaster risk reduction, response, recovery and reconstruction are also considered. If we have existing programming or partnerships that involve children’s participation and this has been factored in to emergency preparedness planning and

FIGURE 6. DISASTER MANAGEMENT CYCLE





disaster risk reduction, then the scope for children's participation is much greater from the outset of an emergency response.

Furthermore, there are key opportunities for promoting children's participation in the transition to recovery and longer-term programming. In particular, there is a key focus on promoting and strengthening children's participation through MEAL, as whatever the level of participation we may have been able to achieve in initial months, the real time evaluations and evaluations of humanitarian actions offer great opportunities to increase participation.

*Thus, key opportunities for increasing children's participation may be described under four key headings:*

- Integrating children's participation in emergency preparedness
- Strengthening children's participation in key stages of emergency response programming:
  - Initial rapid assessment (*limited opportunities in initial 24–48 hours*)
  - Rapid response planning phase (*days 2–7*): *ensure plans, budgets and indicators on children's participation are integrated into response strategies, sector proposals and MEAL plans*
  - Detailed sector assessments (*weeks 1–4*)
  - Sector programme plans and implementation, response strategy review and proposal amendments (*months 1–3*)
- Integrating children's participation into Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL) including in real time evaluation (*months 1–3*), project evaluations and evaluation of humanitarian action (*months 4–6*)
- Strengthening children's participation in transition planning (*months 6–9*) *from emergency response to recovery and reconstruction 'build back better' programming, phase out and/or development programming.*

## INTEGRATING CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION IN EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Children's participation in humanitarian programming can be strengthened by increasing children's participation in emergency preparedness. With Save the Children's dual mandate and the transition to Save the Children International, there is new impetus for good emergency preparedness, the development of good emergency preparedness plans (EPPs) and DRR work. Save the Children International have recently

developed a Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation Strategy: 2012–2015.<sup>18</sup> A child-centred DRR and CCA strategy is articulated placing children at the centre of planning and implementation, and “*recognising and drawing on the rights, needs and capacities of children in reducing risk and enhancing the resilience of communities and nations.*” (p2). The DRR and CCA strategy emphasises work at all levels, with all sectors in humanitarian and development programmes with a focus on achieving lasting change at scale.

Children's participation in emergency preparedness can enhance children's and community resilience. It is recognised that in countries where there is existing good practice in children's participation, and local staff and partners with skills in facilitating meaningful children's participation, then it is easier for them to support meaningful children's participation in emergency preparedness and humanitarian response.

As part of our emergency preparedness and EPPs, Save the Children needs to ensure capacity building and programming where Save the Children staff and partners' staff develop the **skills, knowledge, values and confidence to facilitate and support meaningful participation** of children (especially the most marginalised children, reaching girls and boys of different ages and backgrounds) before, during and following the emergency response.

*“We should ensure that capacity to facilitate and support meaningful children's participation is built into teams (country teams, ERP and global roster staff) in advance prior to emergencies, as otherwise we are usually left with a very limited choice during emergencies either to not involve children or to involve children in tokenistic ways.”*

(Child protection adviser)

Furthermore, ongoing efforts to strengthen and scale up child-centred DRR and CCA programmes, particularly through collaborative partnerships with child and youth-led organisations, child-focused NGOs and government duty bearers, are required. Capacity building of existing civil society partners (NGOs and child/youth-led groups) on emergency preparedness can increase support for children's participation and association during emergency programme interventions. Especially during the emergency preparedness phase, there may be more time to support quality participatory processes with children and adults in communities, ensuring identification and involvement of the most marginalised children and families to increase

CHILDREN'S NEIGHBOURHOOD PARLIAMENTS AND THE TSUNAMI: INDIA<sup>19</sup>

In Southern India a local NGO (The Voluntary Health Association of Kanyakumari – VHAK) had supported children to develop children's neighbourhood parliaments to support their role in community action. Neighbourhood parliaments aim to organise children to help themselves and to motivate the elders in addressing civic rights, community issues and personal problems, and in the process to get empowered. The children involved include girls and boys aged 6–18 years from different backgrounds. In accordance with local governance structures, and in addition to forming neighbourhood parliaments, children are encouraged to form federations of children's representatives at different levels: the village, sub-district and district.

During the Asian Tsunami in 2004, one of the female representatives from a village-level federation was rolled over by the waves during the tsunami. When on her feet, she saw children dazed and in danger of being pulled into the sea with nobody around to help. She quickly gathered her courage and wits and collected 20 children. She led them to a bus, informed the parish and the police and took them out of danger and ensured that miscreants did not take advantage of the situation and exploit them. During an interview she reflected upon her role and stated that *'if I wasn't in this parliament it wouldn't have been possible to help so many children – they wouldn't have trusted me so much'*.

In the post-tsunami scenario, neighbourhood parliaments worked as forums to provide relief, to provide additional nutrition support and psychosocial care to children, and to encourage children to take charge of children's rights. Children undertook a child rights mapping and child rights specific Participatory Learning Action (PLA). Child groups also contributed to the community based child protection mechanisms, raising child protection issues through the village protection or watch-dog committees.

### Ideas to apply learning in other contexts

Many Save the Children country programmes have existing good experience in working with and through NGO partners to support children's participation and child group. As part of Save the Children's emergency preparedness plans (EPPs), increased efforts should be made to integrate DRR training for NGO partners, and for children as part of their child group/participation activities. Furthermore, in a humanitarian response, managers should explore whether partnerships with existing NGOs and child groups are functioning in geographic areas affected by the emergency and whether 'partnerships' with the NGOs and with the child groups may be extended to support the humanitarian response. As such, NGOs and child groups have existing skills and children's participation initiatives that may be effectively built upon.

resilience and to reduce vulnerability. Once empowered and mobilised, children, communities and partners (civil society and government) will be better prepared to save lives, and to reduce loss and vulnerability during a sudden onset emergency. Key actors (including girls and boys) will also be more prepared and skilled to meaningfully participate in the emergency response.

*"If children's participation is embedded in community based DRR and emergency preparedness, local people (children and adults) will be more knowledgeable about what to do when a disaster happens. Community based groups and structures may also already be in place that we can coordinate with and support in their active participation during the emergency response, especially with a focus on reaching the most marginalised children and families."*

(Humanitarian adviser)

## PROTECTION THROUGH CHILDREN'S INVOLVEMENT IN PREPAREDNESS PLANNING: LATIN AMERICA<sup>20</sup>

In Cuba, Bolivia and Costa Rica, school teaching about hazards and safety is integrated into environmental studies. Costa Rican teachers develop lessons based on local hazards and vulnerability. Students participate in their learning by collecting local information and mapping hazards. The decentralised curriculum in Costa Rica and in other countries helps children to develop an understanding of local hazards, which then enables them to participate in preparation and planning for emergencies.

In El Salvador, Peru and Nicaragua, children participate in school brigades that are effectively part of the civil defence structure for emergencies. In El Salvador, these 'solidarity brigades' are part

of a broader involvement of children in emergency preparation that includes simulations and risk mapping. Child-to-child teaching is also used in El Salvador. A Nicaraguan manual on disaster prevention and response emphasises coordination with adolescents and youth groups for building up emotional support and helping young people recuperate.

### **Ideas to apply learning in other contexts**

Through the educator sector advocate for integration of emergency preparedness in the school curricula. Across all sectors, support children's participation in community-based emergency preparedness mechanisms.

## CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION IN DISASTER RISK REDUCTION AND CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION: ASIA

Many countries in South East Asia are prone to natural disasters (tsunami, cyclone, floods, earthquakes, etc). Save the Children is including children at all stages of disaster management and resilience building in their communities. Child-centred DRR activities in Thailand, Philippines, Vietnam, Indonesia and Myanmar encompass community and school-based DRR reduction initiatives, with and by children. Among these are advocacy with state and provincial authorities to include child-centred DRR in the school curricula or after-school activities; orientation of community members, parents, school directors and teachers on child-centred DRR; building children's capacity in DRR; supporting children to develop risk and resource maps in their communities; and supporting action planning by children to minimise risks and better prepare for emergencies. Practical skills such as first-aid, swimming and monitoring a rain gauge are also taught. In addition, emergency drills in schools and communities are carried out involving

children so that they are better prepared to respond to emergencies.

Within the region, Save the Children has learned that child-centred DRR activities lay the foundation for activities to reduce the impacts of climate change. Several children participating in DRR observed changes in temperature, seasons and rainfall in their areas, which affect their lives at different levels. Based on the knowledge they have gained from DRR activities, children initiated their own activities such as recycling, campaigning on reduction of plastic usage and re-planting trees.

### **Ideas to apply learning in other contexts:**

Support children's participation in DRR and climate change adaptation initiatives. Ensure that adults are sensitised about the value of children's contributions so that their views and contributions are taken seriously and are acted upon by concerned duty bearers.



## STRENGTHENING CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION IN KEY STAGES OF EMERGENCY RESPONSE PROGRAMMING

To be effective, meaningful children's participation should be supported from the earliest opportunity where it is safe for children to participate and should be embedded throughout the humanitarian response process (see Emergency Response Programming Flowchart on p. 18). Children's participation should be integrated into core humanitarian programming tools to support integration of children's participation in the initial stages of assessment and programme design, as well as in implementation, and in monitoring and evaluation of programmes.

### INITIAL RAPID ASSESSMENT

*(limited opportunities in initial 24–48 hours)*

The HTU Assessment Task Team has developed a Save the Children-specific multi-sector initial rapid assessment tool (SC MS-IRA) that incorporates all seven sectors of a Save the Children humanitarian response. This assessment process is critical to defining the needs and vulnerabilities of children and in establishing a programme strategy that addresses these holistically through integrated programming. If trained practitioners (field staff with training and skills in communicating with children and providing psychosocial support<sup>21</sup>) are members of the assessment team, the views of girls and boys may be sensitively elicited as part of the rapid assessment (that usually take place within 24–48 hours).

Furthermore, there may be opportunities to involve children and young people in more active ways in the rapid assessment depending on the scale of the emergency, the nature of the disaster, and young people's previous knowledge and experience. For example, if children and young people have been actively involved in DRR processes and express interest and readiness to inform rapid assessments, it may be appropriate to involve them. However, **it is crucial that a rapid assessment of the risks and risk mitigation options is undertaken to determine if it is safe enough to consult and/or involve children and young people.**<sup>22</sup>

As described earlier, in a sudden onset emergency children will be distressed in the immediate aftermath of the disaster/armed conflict, and thus only staff and partners who are equipped with skills to effectively

communicate with children and are able to provide culturally appropriate psychosocial support should be given the task to undertake interviews or consultation activities with children during the initial rapid assessment. However, in all contexts, observation by assessment team members of children's situations must be carried out. Assessment team members should observe the situation of girls and boys (of different ages and abilities), including observing and recording the roles and responsibilities undertaken by girls and boys of different ages and backgrounds.

In some emergency contexts, children and young people are themselves taking the initiative to respond to emergencies and to support immediate relief efforts. Such local initiatives, including initiatives of child and youth-led organisations, should be recognised and supported, and efforts to ensure the safety and protection of children and young people should be increased.

### RAPID RESPONSE PLANNING PHASE

*(days 2–7): ensure plans, budgets and indicators on children's participation are integrated into response strategies, sector proposals and MEAL plans.*

It has been acknowledged by humanitarian staff that the first six weeks of a sudden onset emergency response are generally hectic and may not be conducive to meaningful children's participation and/or community participation processes; there is great pressure to rapidly assess and to respond. However, in order to design and implement effective humanitarian programmes which reach and respond to the needs of the most marginalised children and families, it remains crucial to find strategies to consult and involve community members (women, men, girls and boys). Early engagement of children and young people with a focus on sensitive and meaningful engagement can be incredibly valuable, contributing to children's psychosocial well-being and the effectiveness and quality of programmes, including efforts to identify and respond to the most marginalised children and families.

*“Save the Children needs to ensure that children's participation, community participation and accountability are on the agenda from the beginning, that they are reflected in concept notes, in proposals, in activities and budgets... We need a paradigm shift where we plan with children and communities, rather than imposing our plans on them.”*

*(Accountability adviser)*

## THE ROLE OF THE AFRICAN MOVEMENT OF WORKING CHILDREN AND YOUTH (AMWCY) IN RESPONDING TO THE EMERGENCY IN CÔTE D'IVOIRE<sup>23</sup>

In late November 2010 Côte d'Ivoire plunged into a political-military crisis during the political election process. The National Coordination of the Working Children and Youth Associations of Côte d'Ivoire (NC-WCYAs-CI) started their actions before the violence and the socio-economic and political situation escalated. The working children and youth associations (which are part of a wider African movement of working children and youth) also carried out humanitarian and solidarity actions in strategic villages where the working children and youth associations are based.

In the pre-election phase, members of working children's associations raised awareness among children and youth to prevent violence in the cities of Aboisso, Adiaké, Bonoua and Bassam and in neighbouring villages. They organised awareness on the theme '*NO to VIOLENCE in solving the conflicts BETWEEN GROUPS of the two camps (political parties)*'. To reinforce these violence-prevention actions, WCYA also supported leisure activities – such as organising a football tournament and encouraging youth to sign a '*non-violence commitment protocol*'. The working children and youth associations also broadcast messages of peace and tolerance on local radio stations.

In the post-election phase during civil conflict in their country, the working children and youth associations were active in the humanitarian response. With its scarce financial means, the WCYAs supported people facing difficulties. Many affected families were displaced and turned to the Coordination for help. The displaced people were accommodated by families and friends among WCY members. For example, more than 150 children and youth were identified and placed with families in Bassam and Bonoua by WCY. The WCYA also organised sports and leisure activities to support children's psychosocial well-being.

### Ideas to apply learning in other contexts

The African Movement of Working Children and Youth has more than 300 working children and youth associations and more than 3000 grass-root groups of working children across 23 countries in Africa. Similar networks and associations of working children and youth exist in Latin America and the Caribbean, and in some countries in Asia. Save the Children has links with working children's associations in these regions and humanitarian responders should be encouraged to collaborate with such associations and networks to support the child-focused humanitarian response.

## CHILDREN'S ORGANISATION RESPONDING TO SLUM FIRE: BANGLADESH<sup>24</sup>

A fire in a Dhaka slum in 2004 affected an estimated 10,000 people – 4,000 of them children. Child Brigade, a local children-run organisation (primarily of street and working children) responded to the blaze and realised there were children locked in or fleeing and not knowing where to go. Child Brigade organised a meeting place and members found children and brought them there. They went on to provide medical care, distribute food, locate

families, make needs assessments and liaise with non-government and other organisations.

### Ideas to apply learning in other contexts

Humanitarian responders should talk to national staff about the existence of children's organisations and networks, especially in areas that were affected by the emergency.

## CHILDREN'S ROLE IN SITUATION ASSESSMENT DURING FLOODS IN NEPAL<sup>25</sup>

Floods and landslides in Nepal in 2004 affected more than 300,000 people in 25 districts. In the Tarai region, children who were members of the Junior Red Cross Circle participated in situation assessment, surveys and identification of the affected people and their families. Children's participation resulted in a realistic assessment of the situation that helped avoid duplication and exaggeration of the situation in order to get more funds to the affected villages. In addition, it helped to avoid negative political influence so that the direct relief materials were distributed to those most in need.

### Ideas to apply learning in other contexts

Identify whether child-led or youth-led organisations exist and are functioning in geographic areas affected by the emergency. Determine whether it is safe and appropriate for the child/youth groups to be actively involved in the assessments (for example, use the risk assessment format on p. 00 to inform the decision). If it is considered appropriate, include child/youth representatives and their adult supporters (eg, from NGO partner) in practical training on assessment information gathering.

## PARTNERING WITH CHILD-LED ORGANISATIONS IN THE EMERGENCY RESPONSE IN PERU<sup>26</sup>

In Save the Children's response to the earthquake in Peru in 2007, crucial partners were their child-focused civil society partner CODEH-Ica and the Movimiento Nacional de Niños, Niñas y Adolescentes Trabajadores (NNAT). This is a national movement for child and adolescent workers with a regional group based in Ica of 16 groups each consisting of 30 working children. CODEH-Ica and Save the Children in Peru had been working with them for three years before the earthquake. The earthquake damaged their houses and affected their ability to earn a living as well as their educational opportunities. The groups from NNAT participated actively in planning and implementing the emergency response. They conducted a needs assessment of the damage done to housing and schools and children who were particularly badly affected. They helped to deliver

humanitarian assistance and to organise children in their communities to participate in psychosocial and recreational activities. Children and young people raised awareness and supported children's psychosocial recovery through a child-led drama initiative, 'Total Eclipse'. The groups from NNAT also advocated with the authorities and community leaders to authorise safe play areas.

### Ideas to apply learning in other contexts

(As above) Identify whether child-led or youth-led organisations exist and are functioning in geographic areas affected by the emergency. Determine whether it is safe and appropriate for their involvement, and identify how to provide relevant training and support towards their meaningful participation in the humanitarian response.

When sector programme plans (logframes, budgets and implementation plans) are being developed in the initial phase of the response (*often within the first week*) it is important to ensure inclusion of plans and budgets for children's participation processes, and wherever possible to include an indicator on children's participation in the sector logframe. The MEAL plan by each sector provides another key opportunity to develop child-sensitive indicators and to ensure processes and activities to involve children and young people in monitoring, evaluation and accountability processes (subject to their interest and

informed consent). Furthermore, within proposals submitted to donors, a note can be integrated that creates space for future revisions based on children and young people's views and priorities. [eg, 'Note: *this proposal has been developed as part of the rapid response. Subject to participatory planning processes with affected children, young people and community members in the next 1–2 months, we seek donor cooperation in allowing us to submit a revised logframe, budget and work plan to ensure responsive and effective programming concerning children's needs and rights in the emergency.*']

## DETAILED SECTOR ASSESSMENTS

(weeks 1–4)

Children and young people may be consulted and/or actively involved in detailed sector assessments that are relevant to them. A commitment to process, preparation and application of the basic requirements (see Annex 3) is required to ensure ethical, safe and meaningful participation.

The views and experiences of girls and boys of different ages concerning sector issues (eg, education, protection, nutrition, health, livelihoods, shelter, WASH, etc.) can be sought through interviews and/or Focus Group Discussions. Wherever feasible, sector assessment methodologies may also encompass use of participatory tools (participative ranking methods, body mapping and creative communication methods (eg, drawing, drama)) which may be more conducive to encouraging children's interest, engagement, perspectives and priorities to be reflected.

### THE GLOBAL EDUCATION CLUSTER (2010) THE JOINT EDUCATION NEEDS ASSESSMENT TOOLKIT

This encourages children and youth participation in assessment and provides some guidance that may be relevant to education and other sectors: *“A primary focus of assessment efforts is to strengthen institutions that support children and youth. Whenever possible – given ethical considerations, the nature of the emergency, time and resources – children and youth should be meaningfully included in the assessment process. The most common way is to ensure that they participate in focus group discussions. However, they can also be a part of advocacy, outreach and the dissemination of findings.”* (p10)

## SECTOR PROGRAMME PLANS AND IMPLEMENTATION, RESPONSE STRATEGY REVIEW AND PROPOSAL AMENDMENTS

(months 1–3)

*“The optimum time to consult children and support their participation may be around 2–3 months after the emergency (in sudden onset emergency contexts) as this is the time we can have increased focus on quality programming. The movement of people is often more stabilised and children and adults may be more able to access services on a more regular basis. It is also usually a more stable time for Save the Children response teams, so they should be better able to listen and to respond to children's views.”*

(Child protection adviser)

After the initial 4–6 weeks of the sudden onset emergency response, opportunities for children's participation in programme planning and implementation start to increase in contexts where the situation has become more stable. Especially in contexts where children and families are living in their own communities, and/or in established refugee or IDP camps, there may be increased opportunities for community based work and regular interactions with children and community members. This will provide a basis for meaningful participatory processes supporting collaborative and/or child-led initiatives.

As part of sector programme planning and implementation there may be opportunities to increase children's access to information and to support consultative, collaborative and/or child-led participation (see table overleaf).

## DIFFERENT TYPES OF CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION

Consultation	Collaborative participation	Child-led participation
<p>Consultations on various issues affecting them: <i>protection concerns, education, health, hygiene, nutrition, family livelihoods, shelter, views/ feedback on the programme.</i></p> <p>Consultations with children to help identify and reach the most marginalised children and families.</p> <p>Consult individual children to inform the development of their care plan (individual case management).</p>	<p>Peer education – eg, <i>on child rights, child protection, WASH, health, nutrition, HIV, accountability, etc.</i></p> <p>Children's representation in community based committees (eg, <i>child protection, WASH, education/school management, village development, etc.</i>)</p> <p>Children's representation in refugee/ IDP camp governance and/or in community governance processes.</p> <p>Collaborative processes with children and young people to design, implement and monitor Child Friendly Space activities and other sector responses including: school improvements; community health and hygiene; community based protection, etc.</p> <p>Support children's participation in monitoring and reporting on abuse and exploitation.</p> <p>Collaborative processes to seek and respond to children's feedback and complaints.</p> <p>Participative ranking methods can be used to involve children to identify their views and priorities to influence the strategy review and programme plans updates.</p>	<p>Formation and/or strengthening of Child Groups and networks including training or capacity building for children on child rights, child protection, life skills and other relevant issues (identified by girls and boys).</p> <p>Support child-led awareness raising and action initiatives (eg, <i>through children's radio broadcasts, newspapers, posters, drama groups, etc.</i>).</p> <p>Support child-led disaster risk reduction – eg, <i>support children's participation in community based risk and resource mapping and action planning on their priorities.</i></p>

### INEE (2004) MINIMUM STANDARDS FOR EDUCATION IN EMERGENCIES<sup>27</sup> PROMOTE CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION IN EDUCATION ACTIVITIES

The minimum standards emphasise children's right to participate in matters affecting their lives. Education and training for children as part of the education in emergency response should support children's capacity to participate constructively and initiate positive change. Children's views and suggestions can help make improvements to school activities, and can enable the reporting of and prevention of abuse within the learning environment.

Children's views, perspectives and priorities, which are elicited through sector and/or MEAL programme staff around 2–3 months after the sudden onset emergency, can also be used to inform and influence the response sector review, sector programme plans and requests for proposal amendments. Space and processes should enable girls and boys (especially the most marginalised) to inform the development of child-sensitive indicators for monitoring and evaluating outcomes and changes in children's lives resulting from the humanitarian sector interventions. Inclusion of child-sensitive indicators and indicators on children's participation will increase ongoing opportunities for more meaningful engagement of children in monitoring. Furthermore, plans and budgets for children's participation can be reviewed and updated based on girls and boys suggestions.



## CHILDREN'S DRAWINGS TO INFLUENCE PLANS, HAITI<sup>28</sup>

Following the January 2010 earthquake in Haiti, UNICEF supported youth facilitators to consult children regarding reconstruction planning. Youth facilitators encouraged children to draw how they want their community or new school to look and to explain their drawings. The drawings were used as a **tool for developing proposals**. For example, some of the children suggest projects to clean up the trash in the camps for the displaced, while others want to band together to improve security where lighting isn't adequate for girls to feel safe at night. One 14 year-old girl suggested that giving children flashlights was a good way to protect them from gender-based violence. UNICEF followed up on such practical suggestions.

### Ideas to apply learning in other contexts

Drawings can be an easy tool to use with girls and boys of different ages to explore their views, experiences and suggestions regarding the emergency responses, reconstruction 'build back better' and/or peace building processes. It is crucial to ask children to explain what their drawing means to them. Strategic efforts by Save the Children to advocate for and to ensure opportunities for children's participation in reconstruction and peace processes are also recommended (see pp. 00–00).

Children's individual views, feelings and suggestions should always be elicited and taken into account in **case management** relating to child protection, social welfare and related needs (education, health and nature). To ensure an effective and appropriate care and/or protection response, children's views and feelings need to be heard. Children may face increased risks if they are not listened to. *Tips for interviewing children and to encourage them to express themselves, and tips for communicating with distressed children, are included in the ARC foundation module on participation and inclusion.*<sup>29</sup>

*"Children's meaningful participation is crucial when developing programmes for their protection and recovery. Boys and girls are less vulnerable to abuse if they have skills to keep themselves safer, and if they have higher levels of confidence and self-esteem, and the ability to articulate and explain their wishes, together with a range of coping skills. All of these skills and attitudes can be taught prior to an emergency, and can be reinforced during the relief and recovery efforts."*

(Save the Children, p.26)<sup>30</sup>

In **Child Friendly Spaces** girls and boys tend to come together in a common space on a regular basis with staff who have a focus on child-friendly communication. Thus, CFS interventions by the child protection sector should also be considered as a crucial 'space' by other sectors (education, health,

nutrition, WASH, etc.) as the CFS provides space to support meaningful consultations, collaborations with children, and support for child-led initiatives. Children and young people of different ages and backgrounds can be involved in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of CFS. Children and young people can also inform the development of rules for the day-to-day running of CFS, and activity plans and schedules.

Through CFS activities, child-led initiatives and peer education can be supported (eg, peer education on child rights, child protection, WASH, health, nutrition, hygiene, accountability). CFS can also be used more strategically to support 'transformational' children and youth empowerment initiatives. However, efforts to reach out beyond the CFS centre-based approach may be required to reach and empower the most marginalised children in communities (including children with disabilities, children from ethnic minorities, working children and/or children from child or elderly headed households, etc.).

There are also opportunities for children's participation processes in refugee and/or IDP camps. Children's participation in camp governance models have enabled more effective humanitarian response to the specific needs of girls and boys, and have contributed to new ways of perceiving and engaging with girls and boys in families, schools and communities.

## SUPPORTING CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION AND CHILD GROUPS THROUGH CHILD FRIENDLY SPACES, YEMEN<sup>31</sup>

As part of the community based child protection in the emergency context in Yemen, IDP girls and boys aged 5–18 years participated in Child Friendly Space activities. Children were involved in designing the CFS activity plans. The CFS were also used to support formation and strengthening of Children's Clubs. Members of Children's Clubs received training in child protection and were actively involved in mapping out protection risks in the community and implementing their own action plans. Children and young people were also involved as facilitators and respondents in the project evaluation. In the transition of the emergency project, the Children's Clubs were followed up and supported through the schools, and ongoing efforts are underway to continue children's involvement in identifying and addressing child protection concerns affecting them. A key lesson learned

was that genuine participation can only be realised when both the children and their staff working with them understand the aim of the process. The process of forming children's clubs in Haradh became much easier once the staff had been taken through training on child participation.

### Ideas to apply learning in other contexts

Child Friendly Spaces provide regular access to children and can be a useful space in which to support the formation of Child Groups, training of children, and support for children's participation in awareness-raising and/or action initiatives on a range of issues affecting them. Different sectors (child protection, education, health, nutrition, WASH, livelihoods) should consider integrated programming initiatives to support children's empowerment and participation through CFS activities.

## AFGHAN GIRLS' AND BOYS' PARTICIPATION IN REFUGEE CAMP GOVERNANCE, PAKISTAN<sup>32</sup>

Kotkai refugee camp in the North West Frontier Province of Pakistan was established in November 2001 to accommodate 15,000 Afghan refugees who were fleeing the conflict in Afghanistan. Save the Children's co-operation with Social Welfare Cell helped establish mechanisms for refugee community participation in planning and implementing the social delivery system so that the rights of children, women and men could be more effectively addressed. Child-to-child groups were developed as part of the overall strategy and children (as well as youth, women and men) participated in 'reflect-action' circles using participatory visual activities to identify the problems they faced, to analyse their causes and potential solutions, and to communicate with the concerned camp officials through fortnightly meetings, to have these issues addressed. The impact was very positive for both children and adults. For example, during the meeting girls as young as five mentioned that they were being subjected to physical violence by the security

guards. The agency administrators promised to follow it up to ensure their protection. The children also raised issues about the scarcity of school books and the absence of a water tank in their school. The concerned NGOs provided the necessary books the very next day and a water tank was also installed. Furthermore, a schedule was developed for the administrators to visit the school twice a week and talk with the children to make sure that things were progressing well.

### Ideas to apply learning in other contexts

Children's participation and representation in camp governance can enable girls and boys to identify and raise concerns affecting them in IDP or refugee camps. Their participation can improve good governance and child rights within the camps. Save the Children country staff working in Child Rights Governance and/or child protection may be able to support humanitarian staff in facilitating children's participation in camp governance.

More recent innovative participatory work with children in refugee camps supported by Save the Children and UNHCR has enabled the development of practical guidance and creative methods to support the registration of refugee children, and to develop services that respond to their protection concerns.

## INTEGRATING CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION INTO MEAL

*“Externally there is increased focus on accountability through the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) and the Steering Committee of Humanitarian Agencies. Thus, this provides a push for Save the Children to increase its accountability to children and communities.”*

(Humanitarian manager)

*“We have paid lip service to children's participation, but have not implemented it effectively. Now, with the 'transformative agenda' and a greater push towards accountability, there is a greater push for necessary change of practice and attitudes.”*

(Humanitarian child protection adviser)

The increasing global humanitarian agenda and donor emphasis on accountability to beneficiaries has been identified as a driving force that can help increase Save the Children's participation and accountability processes during the humanitarian response. Save the Children International is in the process of finalising its Accountability and Quality Framework. Thus, one key opportunity is to ensure that **children's participation and a rights-based approach is integrated into the benchmarks and standards of Save the Children's accountability and**

## INNOVATION THROUGH REFUGEE CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION<sup>33</sup>

A project supported by GIZ, UNHCR and Save the Children was undertaken to work with refugee children as innovators in a protracted refugee settlement in Uganda (Kyaka II), to explore what might constitute a more child-friendly, child-specific and participatory refugee protection process for children. This was done through participatory workshops with groups of refugee children (aged 6–10 and 11–16) to map out their broad perspectives, as well as to focus on specific points (arrival, registration, best interest determination) and aspects (environment, child/adult interaction, information) of the refugee protection process. Observation of protection interviews with refugee children and interviews with humanitarian practitioners will feed into the innovation process.

### Challenge(s) addressed

- Children (0–18 years) are a significant part of the refugee population world-wide. Nearly 50% of UNHCR's global caseload is children and children represent the majority of many refugee camp populations. UNHCR has a mandate for the protection of refugees and collaborates with organisations such as GIZ and Save the Children to achieve this. However, evaluations

and indicators show that, operationally, the mainstream refugee protection process inadequately engages refugee children or addresses their specific protection concerns.

- Children face different protection risks, have different protection needs and communicate differently about their protection concerns to adults. Whilst 'child friendly spaces' and complaints reporting mechanisms (CRM) for children exist in some refugee camps, the refugee protection process itself is not necessarily participatory or child-friendly in practice. The danger is that child participation takes place 'in a box' and refugee children do not feel able to participate or voice their concerns throughout the protection process.

### Ideas to apply learning in other contexts

As a result of this project, alternative and age-appropriate child-friendly protection process(es) and methodologies have been developed. See: UN High Commissioner for Refugees, *Listen and Learn: Participatory Assessment with Children and Adolescents*, July 2012, available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/pdfid/4fffe4af2.pdf>

**quality framework** – so that it becomes mainstream and core to what we do. Furthermore, integrating a strong focus on children's participation into MEAL standards and guidance to be applied by each sector is seen as a key entry point to embed and increase children's participation in the humanitarian response.

The Save the Children International Quality and Accountability Framework outlines standards for monitoring & evaluation, accountability & learning (MEAL), which encompass ethical standards and stakeholder participation:

*1. Ethical standards:* all data-collection processes (baseline, monitoring, evaluation, research) adhere to recognised ethical standards and the best interests of the child. These should include the following:

- Information collection is necessary and justified
- Adopt informed consent and voluntary participation procedures
- Adopt appropriate confidentiality procedures, sensitive to children's needs
- Ensure that the costs to children of participating in activity do not outweigh the benefits, and ensure their safety at all times
- Be consultative
- Be sensible and prepared
- Respect the dignity and autonomy of those participating in the activity
- Be accountable

*2. Stakeholder participation:* Country Office projects/ programmes include the appropriate, relevant and meaningful participation of children, partners and other stakeholders in all aspects of design, monitoring, and evaluation.

- The programme should conduct stakeholder mapping to ensure that power dynamics within the community are understood and that all vulnerable groups are enabled to participate.
- The programme should document how they ensured that a balanced cross-section of affected communities (including children) are able to participate and influence the programme in all parts of the programme cycle, including: assessment, planning, implementation, and monitoring & evaluation.

- At field level:
  - An appropriate environment is created and methodologies developed to promote the participation of different stakeholders. Child-friendly approaches, language and tools must be used to enable meaningful child participation.
  - Monitoring activities promote community participation (including children) and reflect diversity – particularly gender – within communities.

As part of this assignment, key MEAL guidance is being reviewed to further support:

- Integration of children's participation indicators and child-sensitive indicators into sector logframes, MEAL plans, and the output tracker.
- Integration of budgets for children's participation in the master budgets.
- The development of guidance and child-friendly tools for measurement of children's satisfaction in relation to humanitarian sector responses. *The MEAL team have included a specific indicator on child satisfaction. [The percentage of children who report satisfaction with the response.] Guidance needs to further define and break down what 'child satisfaction' may mean and we need to develop child-friendly tools and processes for gathering data from children on this indicator.*
- Participation of children in pre- and post-distribution surveys to assess the child impact of such distributions.
- The design and implementation of child-friendly accessible complaints and response mechanisms.
- Participation of girls and boys in ongoing monitoring and evaluation processes, including guidance for using child-friendly participatory M&E tools (eg, *photography, videos, child friendly PRA tools – body mapping, drawings, stories, radio programmes, mobile phones or social media, etc*).
- Participation of children in real-time evaluations, project evaluations, and the evaluation of humanitarian action.

*“Regular monitoring seeking children's views can inform planning. Also, evaluations can be used to inform the future design of programmes. We can include child-focused indicators, and outline child-friendly participatory tools that enable children to share feedback/information regarding the outcomes of humanitarian interventions.”*

(MEAL adviser)

## CHILDREN'S FEEDBACK THROUGH COMPLAINTS AND RESPONSE MECHANISMS IN DADAAB REFUGEE CAMP, KENYA<sup>34</sup>

In humanitarian practice in recent years there has been increased emphasis on the importance of accountability to beneficiaries and applying HAP standards to establish Complaints and Response Mechanisms (CRMs). Children's access to CRMs has been piloted by Save the Children in Dadaab Refugee Camp in Kenya. Dadaab Refugee Camp is one of the oldest and largest refugee camps in the world. Established in 1991, the camps were designed to house 90,000 refugees. In July 2011 the Dadaab camps hosted more than 300,000 refugees.

To form the design of the CRM, Save the Children organised Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with children. Two FGDs were conducted for boys and girls separately. Fourteen boys and ten girls were purposefully selected from various sections of the camp to share their views and ideas about appropriate mechanisms for them to most easily provide feedback and/or to complain. Children described their preferred CRM as one that: provides face-to-face reporting; is situated in child-friendly locations; is child-targeted in terms of set up, information/messaging; and promotes participation and inclusivity – so is flexible and includes younger and non-school going children. Based on such consultations with children, Save the Children agreed to call them 'information or feedback desks' rather than 'feedback and complaints desks', as within the community in Dadaab there were negative attitudes about children complaining to organisations. If a caregiver hears his/her child complain they assume something bad has happened to them.

Setting up the CRM was piloted in one camp and then rolled out to two other camps and host

communities. The information or feedback desks were set up in all Child Friendly Spaces (CFS) in the camp and in the host community at the new arrival registration point and in the Save the Children camp offices. In addition to the information desks, other measures to proactively solicit and give feedback to adult and child beneficiaries were also introduced, including the establishment of 'Beneficiary Reference Groups' among adults; and using group discussions with girls and boys in CFSs, through children's club meetings, feedback boards and drawing competitions. The use of child-to-child approaches proved to be effective in awareness creation on the CRM – as a result of children telling their friends and families, more children and adults visited the information and feedback desks. Allowing for anonymous complaints was also encouraged. Children may often complain on behalf of a friend, or on behalf of a child of the same age or gender.

### Ideas to apply learning in other contexts

Child-friendly Complaints and Response Mechanisms can be established in IDP or refugee camp settings and/or in host communities. To ensure effective running of feedback and complaints handling requires staff who can communicate effectively with children and who have time to dedicate to running the CRM. Referral systems also need to be in place so that those staff managing the CRMs know where to refer to, in order to get a timely and appropriate response. Children require a prompt and honest response to their concerns, to explain clearly and honestly what can be done and what cannot be done. Having ready answers in the form of FAQs at every information desk is essential.



## CHILDREN TRAINED IN SURVEY METHODS FOR MONITORING RELIEF RESPONSE, INDIA<sup>35</sup>

In Tamil Nadu, India, just after the 2004 tsunami, Plan International involved children in a monitoring task to ensure that vulnerable groups were not left out of relief work. Children were trained in survey methods, the taking and use of digital photographs, analysing results and presenting findings. They surveyed more than 700 people, drew conclusions and summarised their findings.

### Ideas to apply learning in other contexts

Humanitarian staff (especially MEAL staff) are encouraged to identify opportunities to support

children's active participation in monitoring the relief response. Especially 1–3 months after an onset emergency, children's participation in monitoring may provide findings and insights that can help inform the response strategy review, proposal amendments and updates to sector program plans. As illustrated by this brief case example, if children can be provided with training in simple monitoring tools, given access to cameras, and supported by adults to be directly involved in analysis, they are very able to identify their own conclusions which can inform improved relief efforts.

## CHILDREN'S COMMITTEES FOR EVALUATION AND ACCOUNTABILITY, ZIMBABWE<sup>36</sup>

A 2003 survey on the distribution of food aid in Zimbabwe's 'hungry season', from November to April, revealed that children whose parents had died or were absent often were not included during the registration process. Many child-headed households did not know of their entitlements. Complaints were not made for fear that food aid might be terminated. In response, Save the Children established a Children's Committee to collect feedback, complaints and suggestions for improvement. By April 2004, seven committees were established in seven communities. Children raised issues on the allocation of food, including within households, and the marginalising of orphans by caregivers. They also reported cases of child abuse. Child representatives on the committees had been trained in information-gathering skills, accountability and documentation. Parents and community leaders were also involved in the setting-up phase in detailed discussions to gain their permission and agreement with the process. The mechanism was considered a success. The local management board *"generally believes that this intervention has provided information of a nature and quality that may not have*

*been possible through the normal post-distribution monitoring visits conducted by international NGOs."* (McIvor, 2004: 3) However, it also threatened some established interests. *"As one councillor remarked, it is a short step from promoting the accountability of food aid deliveries to demands for greater accountability among elected office holders."* (McIvor, 2004: 4)

### Ideas to apply learning in other contexts

As in other case examples, this case illustrates the benefits of involving children in feedback and complaints mechanisms to inform efforts to reach the most marginalised children in Save the Children's relief efforts. The importance of involving and sensitising key adults (parents, caregivers, community elders, local officials) to gain their permission and support for children's participation is also evident, as is the need to provide children with access to training in information gathering, reporting and accountability. Clear knowledge and systems for child protection reporting and response also need to be in place when establishing complaints and/or accountability mechanisms.

Children's participation can be supported in **real time reviews (RTR)** – in internal and technical reviews and in the **Evaluation of Humanitarian Action (EHA)** (external). There should be opportunities for collaborative initiatives to actively involve children and young people in evaluation teams, and to support some child-led evaluation initiatives, in addition to consulting children in evaluations.

## STRENGTHENING CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION IN TRANSITION PLANNING

*Transition planning (months 6–9) from emergency response to recovery and reconstruction; 'build back better' programming, phase out and/or development programming.*

The timing of the '**transition phase**' varies according to the scale of the disaster and the response. However, generally around 4–9 months after a sudden onset emergency some of the emergency response interventions are either phased out, 'handed over' to local authorities or local groups and/or transitioned

## CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION IN EXTERNAL EVALUATION OF SAVE THE CHILDREN'S RESPONSE TO CYCLONE NARGIS, MYANMAR

When Cyclone Nargis struck the Ayeyarwaddy and Yangon regions in Myanmar in May 2008, nearly 140,000 people were either killed or missing and 2.4 million people were affected. In February 2009 a multi-disciplinary team undertook an external evaluation of the Save the Children emergency response to the cyclone. One consultant who was part of the team had a special focus on supporting the meaningful participation of children, both by supporting other evaluation team members to communicate with children, and facilitating workshops with children.

The evaluation team visited 16 villages across the West and East Delta region, where they had interviews and FGDs with various stakeholders. In both the West and East Deltas, one-day children's feedback workshops were facilitated on non-school days, to provide children with a space to share their views and experiences. Pre-workshop briefings ensured informed consent from children and necessary permission from adults. Participatory methods like icebreaker games, the development of a visual time line of Save the Children activities, the use of a body map to explore changes in children's lives before and after Save the Children activities, drama, songs and drawings were used during the workshops.

Among the activities evaluated by the children were child-friendly spaces; food distribution and

livelihood support for their families; repairing schools; building latrines and health education; and minimising corporal punishment. The children suggested that more efforts are needed to reach the poorest households, involve working children in child-friendly space activities and to inform and involve children in decisions about the closure or transition of child-friendly spaces. A child-friendly version of the evaluation findings, *Young Voices, Big Impressions*, was published using cartoons and visuals. The report in Myanmar language was distributed to children and communities in and beyond areas where the evaluation was undertaken, to increase accountability.

### Ideas to apply learning in other contexts

Consider whether a staff member or consultant can be involved in the review/evaluation team with a specific focus on supporting children's participation in the review. This person can sensitise and support other members of the evaluation team to communicate effectively with children, and to adapt their questions or research methods to be more child friendly. Where time and budget allows, consider building in one-day children's workshops. Furthermore, ensure that a user-friendly summary report is prepared that can be translated and disseminated back to children and adults in communities (especially to those that participated in the review process).

into longer-term reconstruction or development programming interventions. This 'transition' phase is an important part of programming, where children's voices, participation and accountability mechanisms are crucial. At minimum, children and young people need to be informed in a timely and transparent manner about which interventions will end and why. Opportunities to consult and to collaborate with children and young people so that their views and priorities influence transition planning are ideal, especially as the transition phase may provide opportunities to strengthen structures, systems and processes that increase realisation of children's rights. *For example, children and young people should be involved in the phase out and/or transition of Child Friendly Spaces*

*which could potentially be transitioned into community run centres, 'Child/Youth Group' centres and/or ECCD centres.*

There are important opportunities for **supporting children's participation as active citizens in reconstruction, transitional justice, peace building and development processes**. In post-disaster/post-conflict scenarios government, donors, UN and INGOs may be more obliged to listen to those affected, and children and young people can be powerful advocates, especially when speaking from their own direct experiences and analysis. Children and young people can be effective advocates and can inform strategies, plans and budgets to 'build back better' and to better address and realise children's rights.

## LISTENING TO CHILDREN'S VOICES IN RECONSTRUCTION PLANNING PROCESSES, HAITI<sup>37</sup>

Following the earthquake in Haiti in January 2010, the Global Movement for Children – involving Save the Children, Plan, World Vision, UNICEF and other agencies – worked towards a common vision to build “a Haiti fit for children”, which involved supporting children's participation in the reconstruction process and working with the Haitian government to put children's issues at the core of post-earthquake reconstruction.

Plan International, in partnership with UNICEF, initiated a consultation process with close to 1,000 children and youth throughout Haiti, to hear their ideas and priorities for the country's reconstruction. Their views were gathered with the purpose of feeding into the PDNA. Local facilitators, experienced in working with children and youth, conducted 54 focus group consultations in nine departments. A publication was developed by Plan<sup>38</sup> presenting the key findings from the consultations with the children and youth; as well as recommendations in five areas: participation, education, protection, inclusion and gender equality, that need to be incorporated into Haiti's new development strategy.

Significant contributions were made by children and young people to influence 'build back better' reconstruction processes. Children and youth recommendations encompassed improved child rights infrastructure (mechanisms for children's participation in governance and accountability; access to child/youth-friendly information – including on disaster preparedness); and increased non-discriminatory access to quality basic services (education, health, protection). Children and youth were also concerned about security and environmental sustainability issues.

### Ideas to apply learning in other contexts

Save the Children should more strategically engage in opportunities to support children's participation in reconstruction processes. Collaboration between humanitarian and CRG staff may support such processes, as children's participation in reconstruction and peace-building processes provide strategic opportunities for children to exercise their civil rights and freedoms and to improve child rights infrastructure.

In advocacy work we need to ensure that children's involvement is not just symbolic or tokenistic, but that we support meaningful processes of participation and advocacy among children, especially those most affected and/or marginalised. Furthermore, ongoing

efforts to ensure feedback and accountability to children are needed. Save the Children has existing good practice experience in supporting children's participation in transitional justice and peace building that can be built upon.

## CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION IN THE FORMAL PEACE TALK AGENDA ISSUES, UGANDA, 2007<sup>39</sup>

The peace process between the government of Uganda and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) has been taking place in Juba since July 2006. Children's representatives from associations and peace clubs in Northern Uganda have highlighted the importance of children's participation in the formal peace talks – as children's perspectives are vital, they can help push forward the peace talks, and may support the release of children who remain in captivity.

NGOs (Concerned Parents Association, Trans-cultural Psychosocial Organisation, Save the Children in Uganda) and UNICEF took the opportunity to engage children and youth in civil society consultations on agenda 3 of the formal peace talks concerning accountability and reconciliation. In September 2007 more than 200 children and young people from four districts of Northern Uganda and Teso region were consulted on reconciliation and accountability – agenda item 3 of the formal peace talks taking place in Juba. Ethical guidelines on children's participation were shared with all concerned agencies. The methodology was designed to be child-friendly and participatory, and trained counsellors were on hand during the workshops.

Some of the main messages from children and youth included:

- finding a process for forgiveness and reconciliation
- The importance of children's involvement in the process
- The benefits of using traditional justice mechanisms, which will help revive culture and tradition in their communities as part of post-conflict community building.

The outcomes of the consultations were presented to government representatives who were involved in the peace talks. The government officials also met directly with children's representatives to gain further insight into children's perspectives. In the emerging agreement on agenda 3 between the government of the Republic of Uganda and the Lord's Resistance Army, there is a clear section on children which includes the need to 'recognise and consider the experiences, views and concerns of children', 'to protect the dignity, privacy and security of children in any accountability and reconciliation proceedings', to 'ensure that children are not subjected to criminal justice proceedings, but may participate in reconciliation processes', and to 'encourage and facilitate the participation of children in the processes for implementing this agreement'.

### Ideas to apply learning in other contexts

Save the Children Norway has a lot of experience supporting children's participation in peace building, which can be applied in countries that have been affected by conflict and/or insecurity. Various tools and guidance are available on: [http://tn.reddbarna.no/default.asp?V\\_ITEM\\_ID=10963](http://tn.reddbarna.no/default.asp?V_ITEM_ID=10963)

**Participatory research with and by children and young people** can also be supported in post-conflict and post-disaster contexts to better understand and respond to their needs, roles and rights. For example, Plan supported participatory research

*with youth on their perspectives on the East Timor Crisis in 2007. Furthermore, in Yemen, Save the Children has supported research about adolescent girls' participation in the Pro Democratic Movement and the relations with Save the Children's empowering projects.*

## CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION IN THE ASIAN TSUNAMI, 2004<sup>40</sup>

As the experience with the 2004 tsunami revealed, children and young people can make important contributions to the emergency response. During and after that particular disaster, children and young people:

- Rescued others, saved lives and provided first aid;
- Concerned themselves with hygienic standards and keeping communal areas clean;
- Informed the coordination of relief distribution;
- Provided care and psychosocial support for younger children, peers and adults;
- Taught other children in formal and non-formal classes;
- Learned about emergency issues and response and took on roles and responsibilities;
- Promoted resilience through their participation in community activities and by organising children's and young people's groups, thus providing their own psychosocial support;
- Set up businesses and took a lead in community renewal.

Children and young people expressed interest to be actively involved. Being part of the action helps them feel valued and is an antidote to depression, frustration and boredom. Children's participation in relief, recovery and rehabilitation enhances children's psychosocial recovery and well-being. Harnessing children's contributions helps better coordinate action and improves the reach and effectiveness of relief work.

### Ideas to apply learning in other contexts

As a dual mandate organisation Save the Children can explore ways to sustain and strengthen children's participation in the humanitarian response, recovery and/or reconstruction programmes through development programmes and emergency preparedness. Agencies need to more adequately identify and build upon the efforts of existing local NGOs partners and children's own initiatives.



# 4 FINDINGS AND KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

As part of this review process core humanitarian programming tools and MEAL tools<sup>41</sup> have been reviewed to further embed guidance on children's participation, as an integral part of the humanitarian response. The review process is also informing the development of guidance and training materials to support meaningful children's participation in humanitarian programming. Overall, there are some key recommendations for Save the Children to take strategic steps forward to enhance children's participation in ongoing humanitarian practice.

## FINDINGS THAT INFORM THE DEVELOPMENT OF PRACTICAL GUIDELINES AND TRAINING MATERIALS

During the interview and survey process some practical suggestions which may inform the development of the guidelines and training materials were shared, including:

- Increase efforts to support children's participation from the outset, in assessments, programme design and planning, including ensuring plans, budgets, activities and indicators on children's participation in concept notes and proposals.
- Design training on children's participation in humanitarian programming that can be embedded into the Academy, distance learning EOP, and ERP training. Also, ensure that training on children's participation for country staff and partners is integrated into emergency preparedness plans.
- Integrate a focus on meaningful children's participation into job descriptions, recruitment questions, staff orientation/training and performance reviews.
- Ensure field staff have practical knowledge on tools and methodologies and resources, not just theory and policy. A children's participation training package is needed that includes practice standards/basic requirements, child-friendly methodologies, ideas and tools to support children's participation in sector programmes and MEAL activities, and how to better link children's participation, protection and safeguarding.
- Programme guidance could be developed that draws upon the existing ARC module on participation, and that includes:
  - Key messages ('sound bites') convincing staff about the value of children's participation in the humanitarian response – why and how?
  - Indicators on children's participation
  - Budgeting for children's participation
  - Practical tips and approaches which help people overcome their fears and hesitancy, including a focus on risk assessment and child protection to ensure safe participation. Identify cross-cutting principles and approaches
  - Examples of how children can participate in each stage of the programme cycle
  - Examples of practical child-friendly participatory tools
  - Good practice examples that show what is possible (including short films)
  - Checklists to apply Practice Standards/basic requirement/HAP benchmark on participation
- Encourage practitioners to start, to do, to reflect, to learn and to improve children's participation programming. Encourage innovation, documentation, learning and increased knowledge management in children's participation in humanitarian practice within and across regions. *[Explore whether an innovation award on children's participation in humanitarian programming can be established.]*
- Develop guidance for implementing a 'child satisfaction measurement' on Save the Children's humanitarian response and ensure feedback to children.<sup>42</sup>

## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Key recommendations are explained under seven sub-headings:

1. The responsibility of management to promote children's participation and accountability
2. Applying basic requirements in children's participation
3. Increasing training in children's participation
4. Building upon opportunities through emergency preparedness
5. Expanding partnerships with local NGOs and child-led organisations
6. Addressing exclusion through children's participation
7. Strengthening transitions into reconstruction and longer-term development programming

### 1. THE RESPONSIBILITY OF MANAGEMENT TO PROMOTE CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

In line with its organisational mandate, vision, mission and theory of change, Save the Children management has a responsibility to promote children's participation in humanitarian programming. Management needs to understand, value and promote meaningful participation of children as integral to Save the Children's humanitarian response. As part of its efforts to be the leading child-focused agency in emergencies, we need to demonstrate that the organisation has the capacity to support meaningful children's participation so that the voices of the most affected girls and boys are heard and acted upon in every emergency. The increasing global humanitarian agenda and donor emphasis on accountability to beneficiaries has been identified as a driving force that can help increase Save the Children's participation and accountability processes during the humanitarian response. Save the Children's commitment to the principles of children's participation and accountability need to be more clearly prioritised and applied in practice by: increasing training on children's participation and accountability; including support for children's participation and accountability to children in humanitarian staff job descriptions, work plans, and performance reviews; ensuring children's participation and accountability to children is reflected in sector and MEAL proposals, logframes, indicators and budgets; encouraging safe and meaningful children's participation at each stage of the programme cycle; ensuring feedback to children; and advocating for children's participation in emergency preparedness, emergency response, recovery, reconstruction and peace processes in external forums (cluster meetings, inter-agency coordination, donor meetings, etc.).

### 2. APPLYING BASIC REQUIREMENTS IN CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION

Save the Children staff and partners need to be aware of, and trained to apply, internationally recognised 'basic requirements' in children's participation. The nine basic requirements which were included in the Child Rights Committee general comment on a child's right to be heard (2009)<sup>43</sup> build upon Save the Children's (2005) Practice Standards in children's participation. The nine requirements focus on participation that is: 1) transparent and informative, 2) voluntary, 3) respectful, 4) relevant, 5) child friendly, 6) inclusive, 7) supported by training for adults, 8) safe and sensitive to risk, and 9) accountable. Applying these basic requirements when planning, monitoring and evaluating children's participation helps to ensure participation that is safe, appropriate and meaningful in humanitarian contexts.

### 3. THE IMPORTANCE OF INCREASED TRAINING IN CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION:

The review process identified that many humanitarian staff are hesitant and lack confidence to support children's participation, particularly in humanitarian contexts that may be characterised by instability, distress, and loss. Thus, Save the Children needs to scale up training opportunities for staff and partners to gain necessary knowledge and skills in children's participation, and staff must be encouraged to apply their learning. Training for managers should equip them with an understanding of meaningful children's participation (basic requirements) and accountability to children; and should reiterate Save the Children's mandate to ensure children's participation in humanitarian programming (indicating its presence in the Quality and Accountability Framework, SoPs, mission, vision, theory of change, humanitarian manual, etc.). Training for field staff should cover: understanding and application of meaningful children's participation and practical participatory tools and approaches to children's participation that can be applied at different stages of the emergency programming flowchart. Training should also encompass practical approaches to risk assessment and risk mitigation, and the training should be carefully linked to other relevant training sessions on psychological first aid, and accountability to children. Training on children's participation needs to be embedded in all core training programmes for humanitarian staff, including: the Humanitarian and Leadership Academy; online EOP training; ERPs training; and emergency preparedness training.

#### 4. BUILDING UPON OPPORTUNITIES THROUGH EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Children's participation in humanitarian programming can be strengthened by increasing children's participation in emergency preparedness. With Save the Children's dual mandate and the transition to Save the Children International there is new impetus for good emergency preparedness, the development of good emergency preparedness plans (EPPs) and DRR work. Children's participation in DRR saves lives and enhances children's resilience, coping and positive roles during an emergency response (eg, as children know where to go and what to do in an emergency). Furthermore, it is recognised that in countries where there is existing good practice in children's participation and local staff and partners with existing competencies in facilitating meaningful children's participation, it is easier for them to support meaningful children's participation in a sudden onset emergency response. Furthermore, emergency preparedness planning provides critical opportunities to support increased training of staff and partners in children's participation and psychological first aid while more time is available.

#### 5. EXPANDING PARTNERSHIPS WITH LOCAL NGOS AND CHILD-LED ORGANISATIONS

In many countries Save the Children has partnerships with local NGOs and/or child-led organisations (CLOs), which are supporting children's participation and various initiatives for children to claim their rights. In humanitarian contexts increased efforts should be made by humanitarian managers and staff to identify and review whether there is the potential to extend or expand partnerships with NGOs and child (or youth) led organisations to support the humanitarian response. Capacity building for NGO and CLOs on emergency preparedness and emergency response planning can also be included in Save the Children emergency preparedness plans. The Child Rights Governance global initiative is developing guidance to support civil society organisation engagement prior to, during and after emergencies, including a focus on supporting children's participation in the humanitarian response which could support efforts to take this recommendation forwards.

#### 6. ADDRESSING EXCLUSION THROUGH CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION:

Save the Children's humanitarian programmes should reach and benefit children and families that are most affected by the crisis, especially the most

marginalised children and their families. Learning from existing practice in children's participation indicates that children themselves can be very effective in identifying and helping agencies to reach the most marginalised children and their families. Thus, supporting children's participation in beneficiary selection, in community based committees, in monitoring, evaluation and accountability mechanisms and processes will help Save the Children address exclusion and discrimination concerns. Furthermore, ongoing efforts are needed to reach and involve the most marginalised girls and boys (including children with disabilities, out-of-school working children, children from ethnic minorities, etc.) in participatory processes. Children and young people should be encouraged to reflect on issues of inclusion and exclusion in their participation initiatives – to analyse and address issues of exclusion and discrimination.

#### 7. STRENGTHENING TRANSITIONS INTO RECONSTRUCTION AND LONGER-TERM DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMING:

Save the Children's humanitarian staff tend to have a strong focus on the first six months of an emergency response, and some focus on transitions around 6–9 months. However, strategically it would be beneficial if Save the Children could invest more time and effort to support quality transitions from emergency response to recovery, reconstruction and/or peace building processes. There are often crucial strategic opportunities for increasing realisation of children's rights during such processes, and important opportunities to support children's participation as active citizens in reconstruction, transitional justice, peace building and development processes at local, sub-national and national levels. In post-disaster/post-conflict scenarios government, donors, UN and INGOs may be more obliged to listen to those affected, and children and young people can be effective advocates and can inform strategies, plans and budgets to 'build back better' and to better address and realise children's rights. The Child Rights Governance sector can be harnessed to support such transitions and children's roles as citizens in macro processes concerning reconstruction, peace and development. The Global GI on CRG has already developed various training materials that can support such processes, which will be included in the Humanitarian and Leadership Academy.

# ANNEXES

## ANNEX I: DOCUMENTS REVIEWED ON CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION AND HUMANITARIAN PROGRAMMING

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## ANNEX 2: LIST OF PARTICIPANTS WHO WERE PART OF INTERVIEWS AND/OR THE SURVEY

With thanks and appreciation for sharing your insights

<b>Name</b>	<b>Job description (with Save the Children UK unless otherwise specified)</b>	<b>Participation in interview and/or online survey</b>
1. Katharine Williamson	Humanitarian Child Protection Adviser	Interview, online survey and feedback during assignment
2. Hannah Mehta	Child Participation Adviser	Interview and feedback
3. Burcu Munyas	Accountability Adviser	Interview
4. Adam Berthoud	Head of Humanitarian Technical Unit	Interview
5. Jennifer Morgan	Senior Humanitarian Child Protection Adviser	Interview
6. Nabila Hameed	Humanitarian MEAL Adviser	Interview
7. Karen Pesjak	Humanitarian Learning Manager	Interview & online survey
8. Charlotte Balfour Poole	Senior Humanitarian Education Adviser (& Assessment Task Team Lead)	Interview
9. Mark Buttle	Senior Humanitarian WASH Adviser	Interview
10. Julien Mulliez	Senior Humanitarian Shelter Adviser	Interview
11. Ali MacLaine	Senior Humanitarian Nutrition Adviser	Interview
12. Nick Hall	Head of DRR	Interview
13. Minja Peuschel	Child Protection In Emergency Senior Advisor (Save the Children Sweden)	Interview
14. Lucy Batchelor	Child Protection Adviser (Save the Children US)	Interview
15. Hani Mansourian	CPWG Rapid Response Team Member (UNICEF)	Interview
16. Sophie Martin Simpson	MEAL Adviser	Interview & online survey
17. Anna Skeels	Researcher, Humanitarian Innovation Fund	Interview
18. Raza Hassan	Former Save the Children M&E Manager (Save the Children Myanmar)	Interview
19. Kate Nolan	Emergency Response Personnel – Project Coordinator	Online survey
20. Laetitia Lemaistre	Humanitarian Education Adviser	Online survey
21. Rachael Cummings	Humanitarian Health Advisor	Online survey
22. Shona McKenna	Shelter ERP	Online survey

<b>Name</b>	<b>Job description (with Save the Children UK unless otherwise specified)</b>	<b>Participation in interview and/or online survey</b>
23. Jessa Serna	ERP Food, Security and Livelihoods Adviser	Online survey
24. Elena Giannini	ERP Child Protection Advisor	Online survey
25. Victoria Palmer	MEAL ERP	Online survey
26. Sandy Biggar	Acting Area Representative, Puntland	Online survey
27. Pieterella Teeuwen	Emergency Response Coordinator	Online survey
28. Jemal Seid Mohammed	Senior Nutrition Advisor-ERP	Online survey
29. Kiross Tefera	Nutrition Adviser	Online survey
30. Caroline Keenan	Education In Emergencies Advisor	Online survey
31. Fanny Verwoerd	ERP Education Coordinator	Online survey
32. Linet Alivitsa	ERP Finance & Grants Manager	Online survey
33. Geraldine Le Cuziat	Humanitarian Nutrition Advisor	Online survey
34. Omar Ali Ugas	MEAL Manager	Online survey
35. Giovanna Vio	ERP Child Protection	Online survey
36. Chiara Ceriotti	Child Protection Advisor	Online survey
37. Yvonne Agengo	Child Protection Coordinator – ERP	Online survey
38. Risper Omondi	Child Protection Coordinator	Online survey
39. Esther	Child Protection Officer	Online survey
40. Santa Tamang	ERP, Senior Health Advisor	Online survey
41. Hilde Neels	Humanitarian Child Protection Trainee	Coordination & feedback

# ANNEX 3: BASIC REQUIREMENTS IN CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION

Nine basic requirements for meaningful children's participation are outlined in the CRC General Comment on Article 12.<sup>44</sup> These requirements can be used by programme staff to plan, monitor and evaluate children's participation in humanitarian practice:

Basic requirement	Key questions to help apply the basic requirement
1. Participation is transparent and informative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do children have enough information about the humanitarian programme to make an informed decision about whether and how they may participate?</li> <li>Is information shared with children in child-friendly formats and languages that they understand?</li> </ul> <p><i>Efforts to meet this requirement also contribute to efforts to meet HAP standards.</i></p>
2. Participation is voluntary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is children's participation voluntary?</li> <li>Have children been given enough information and time to make a decision about whether or not they want to participate?</li> <li>Can children withdraw (stop participating) at any time they wish?</li> </ul>
3. Participation is respectful	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are children's own time-commitments (to study, work, play) respected and take into consideration?</li> <li>Has support from key adults in children's lives (eg, parents, carers, teachers) been gained to ensure respect for children's participation?</li> </ul>
4. Participation is relevant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are the issues being discussed and addressed of real relevance to children's own lives?</li> <li>Do children feel any pressure from adults to participate in activities that are not relevant to them?</li> </ul>
5. Participation is child-friendly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are child-friendly approaches and methods used?</li> <li>Do the ways of working build children's self-confidence/self-esteem among girls and boys of different ages and abilities?</li> <li>Are child-friendly meeting places used? Are such places accessible to children with disabilities?</li> </ul>
6. Participation is inclusive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are girls and boys of different ages and backgrounds, including younger children, children with disabilities, children from different ethnic groups, etc, given opportunities to participate?</li> <li>Are parents encouraged to allow children with disabilities to participate?</li> <li>Are children encouraged to address discrimination through their participation?</li> </ul>
7. Participation is supported by training for adults	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Have staff been provided with training on child rights, participation, safeguarding children, child-friendly communication and participatory tools?</li> <li>Do staff have confidence to facilitate children's participation?</li> </ul>
8. Participation is safe and sensitive to risk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are the principles of 'do no harm' and 'best interests of the child' applied?</li> <li>Have risks been identified and have efforts been taken to minimise them?</li> <li>Are child safeguarding policies applied?</li> <li>Do children feel safe when they participate?</li> <li>Are referrals established for psychosocial support to children if needed?</li> </ul>
9. Participation is accountable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are children supported to participate in follow-up and evaluation processes?</li> <li>Do adults take children's views and suggestions seriously and act upon their suggestions?</li> <li>Are children given feedback from Save the Children about any requested support needs and follow up?</li> </ul> <p><i>Efforts to meet this requirement also contribute to efforts to meet HAP standards.</i></p>

# ENDNOTES

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

<sup>1</sup> As part of this review, the logframes from each sector and for MEAL were reviewed and feedback was shared with the MEAL team on how various sectors could strengthen their logframes, indicators, activities and budgets to increase opportunities for meaningful participation of children in the humanitarian response. For example, child sensitive/led/informed indicators are essential, and activities and budgets for children's participation should be included in logframes.

## I INTRODUCTION

<sup>2</sup> With a particular focus on programming supported by Save the Children UK.

<sup>3</sup> See Annex 2 – list of participants who were part of interviews and/or the survey.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

## 2 REVIEW OF CURRENT PRACTICE

<sup>5</sup> Save the Children (2005) Practice Standards in Children's Participation.

<sup>6</sup> With a particular focus on programming supported by Save the Children UK.

<sup>7</sup> And this staff member was a finance and grants manager who was not involved in direct field work with children.

<sup>8</sup> Builds upon information from 'emergencies' chapter in Save the Children (2010) Putting Children at the Centre: A Practical Guide to Children's Participation.

<sup>9</sup> Save the Children (October 7th 2011) Save the Children Humanitarian Review and Strategy. Mike Penrose, Emergency Director, SCI.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Hilhorst, T. and Jansen, B. Paper 3 "Participation and Humanitarian Aid: Biting Realities" in PSO 'You Never Walk Alone: Participation, Partnership and Coordination in Humanitarian Aid'.

<sup>12</sup> As part of this review, the logframes from each sector and for MEAL were reviewed and feedback was shared with the MEAL team on how various sectors could strengthen their logframes, indicators, activities and budgets in order to increase opportunities for meaningful participation of children in the humanitarian response. For example, child sensitive/child informed indicators, activities and budgets for children's participation are essential.

<sup>13</sup> The Global Protection Cluster (May 2012) Child Protection Rapid Assessment Guide.

<sup>14</sup> One of the recommended methodologies for interviewing children is Participative Ranking Methodology (PRM).

<sup>15</sup> CPWG (2012) Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action.

<sup>16</sup> INEE (2009) Education in Emergencies: Including Everyone. INEE Pocket guide to inclusive education.

<sup>17</sup> INEE (2009) Education in Emergencies: Including Everyone.

## 3 KEY OPPORTUNITIES TO INCREASE CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION IN HUMANITARIAN PROGRAMMING

<sup>18</sup> Save the Children (September 2012) Save the Children International Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation Strategy: 2012–2015.

<sup>19</sup> Save the Children (2006) Child Rights Perspective in Response to Natural Disasters in South Asia: A Retrospective Study.

<sup>20</sup> Wisner, B. (2006) Let Our Children Teach Us: A review of the role of education and knowledge in disaster risk reduction.

<sup>21</sup> For example training in psychological first aid.

<sup>22</sup> See risk assessment and risk mitigation table shared on page 00 of this report.

<sup>23</sup> CALAO Express (January 2011). Monthly Internet edition of the African Movement of Working Children and Youth (AMWCY).

<sup>24</sup> UNICEF (2007) The Participation of Children and Young People in Emergencies: A guide for relief agencies, based largely on experiences in the Asian tsunami response.

<sup>25</sup> Save the Children (2006) Child Rights Perspective in Response to Natural Disasters in South Asia: A Retrospective Study.

<sup>26</sup> Save the Children Sweden (2009) Catalysts for Change: A thematic review of Save the Children Sweden's collaboration with civil society in emergencies. By Frances Sheahan.

<sup>27</sup> INEE (2004) Minimum Standards for Education in Emergencies, Chronic Crises and Early Reconstruction.

<sup>28</sup> <http://www.unicefusa.org/news/news-from-the-field/building-a-haiti-fit-for-children.html>.

<sup>29</sup> Action on the Rights of the Child (2009) ARC Resource Pack: Module on Children's Participation and Inclusion. Save the Children et al.

<sup>30</sup> Save the Children (2007) Child Protection in Emergencies: Priorities, Principles and Practices.

<sup>31</sup> Information shared by Save the Children child protection trainee, Yemen.

<sup>32</sup> O'Kane, C. (2003) Children and Young People as Citizens: Partners for Social Change. Save the Children South and Central Asia.

<sup>33</sup> <http://www.humanitarianinnovation.org/projects/small-grants/CMPR> by Anna Skeels, Centre for Migration Policy Research (CMPR), Swansea University.

<sup>34</sup> Save the Children (July 2011) Guide for setting up child friendly complaints and response mechanisms (CRMs): Lessons learnt from Save the Children's CRMs in Dadaab Refugee Camp.

<sup>35</sup> UNICEF (2007) The Participation of Children and Young People in Emergencies: A guide for relief agencies, based largely on experiences in the Asian tsunami response.

<sup>36</sup> McIvor, C. (2005) Children's feedback committees in Zimbabwe. Save the Children.

<sup>37</sup> Plan (2010) Anticipating the future: Children and young people's voices in Haiti's Post Disaster Needs Assessment.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.



<sup>39</sup> See Save the Children Norway (2007) Information and Advocacy Newsletter: Armed Conflict and Peace-building; and Concerned Parents Association (2007) Accountability and Reconciliation: Perspectives from Children and Youth in Northern and Eastern Uganda. With TPO, Save the Children and UNICEF.

<sup>40</sup> UNICEF (2007) The Participation of Children and Young People in Emergencies: A guide for relief agencies, based largely on experiences in the Asian tsunami response.

#### 4 FINDINGS AND KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

<sup>41</sup> Core humanitarian tools reviewed included: Draft Quality and Accountability Framework; SOP on stakeholder participation; Sector logframes, indicators, activities and master budgets (for 7 sectors and MEAL); Save the Children MEAL standards; Quality Checklists for sectors; output tracker; ToR for evaluations of the humanitarian response; the draft Integration Handbook; ACE Toolkit (Alternative Care in Emergencies); Minimum Standards for child protection in humanitarian action; CPiE rapid assessment tool.

<sup>42</sup> This child-friendly child satisfaction measurement is being developed for piloting.

<sup>43</sup> CRC (2009) General Comment No:12: The right of the child to be heard. CRC/C/GC/12.

#### ANNEXES

<sup>44</sup> Committee on the Rights of the Child General Comment No.12, The Right of the Child to be Heard, CRC/C/GC/12, July 2009. These basic requirements are, in large part, based on the Save the Children practice standards which were published in 2005.

# REVIEW OF CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION IN HUMANITARIAN PROGRAMMING

This report shares findings from an online survey, interviews and a desk review about the scope and quality of children's participation in Save the Children's humanitarian programming.

While children's participation is recognised as a key principle of Save the Children's programming approach, increased systematic efforts are needed to ensure children's participation in humanitarian programming.

This review puts forward strategic recommendations and practical steps to prevent and overcome pragmatic, organisational, socio-cultural and ethical challenges to children's participation. It aims to help ensure that meaningful, safe and inclusive children's participation can be more systematically supported in humanitarian programming.

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