

# Children in Focus— a Manual for Participatory Research with Children

*Edited by Jo Boyden and Judith Ennew*



**Rädda Barnen**

Save the Children Sweden



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## “ QUOTE

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“ Children help to shape society: their contributions cannot be unravelled until they are studied as individuals and not merely as members of the procession through childhood. ”

Pamela Reynolds, *Through the looking glass: participant observation with children in Southern Africa*, in Ross, J., & Bergum, V., *Through the looking glass: children and health promotion*, Ottawa, The Canadian Public Health Association 1990, p. 330.

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## PREFACE

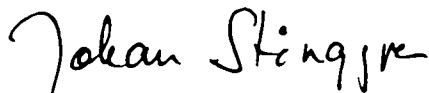
In order to monitor and promote the rights of the child there is an apparent need to describe, monitor and assess the situation of children in our societies. However, an overview of various forms of research has shown that there is a lack of practical, participatory and cost-effective research methods that can fulfill this need. Radda Barnen, with the participation of Save the Children Fund/UK, has therefore supported a project carried out by Dr. Jo Boyden and Dr. Judith Ennew to develop and test such methods.

'Children in Focus—a Manual for Participatory Research with Children' is one result of the project. It offers an alternative to traditional survey questionnaires. The authors question the role of the traditional researcher. They challenge some of the established perceptions of childhood, proposing a change in our approach and contact with children when conducting research.

The training manual is primarily intended for programme and project staff in child-oriented non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and research institutions. We hope that it will stimulate more practical studies and field research about children. This, in turn, can help us in developing and improving mechanisms for child-focused programmes and advocacy.

Although the values and ideas found in the manual reflect the views expressed by the editors and are not necessarily the views of Radda Barnen, we would particularly like to stress the manual's underlying philosophy of child participation. We firmly believe that the experiences, ideas and opinions of children are most essential when analyzing their situation and that child-participation in itself is a prerequisite for the realization of their rights.

Radda Barnen wants to encourage the use of practical and participatory research methods with children. Consequently, we will continue to develop and improve such methods. We look forward to further contacts and collaboration with organisations and institutions that are interested in these issues.



*Johan Stånggren*

*Director, International Programme Department*

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# 1 CHILDREN IN FOCUS: INTRODUCTION FOR PROGRAMME PLANNERS AND MANAGERS

*This introduction is intended for programme managers who plan to develop children-centred, participatory research as part of their programme planning. It explains why this kind of child research is needed, introduces the main principles underlying the participatory approach and describes the human resources that will be required.*

## 1.1 The need for child research

---

Until recently, children's welfare tended to be associated with the welfare of their families and households. Little attention was paid to children as a social category in either research or social interventions. This began to change in 1979, the United Nations International Year of the Child, which resulted in increased interest worldwide, among aid agencies, welfare and rights practitioners as well as researchers, in learning more about children's lives and the best ways of working for their welfare. One outcome of this was the drafting of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. This was adopted by the General Assembly in 1989 and came into force in 1990. Around the same time, UNICEF organised the World Summit for Children, which committed 159 nations to achieving a number of specific child welfare goals. In order to comply with the provisions of the Convention and to achieve the goals of the Summit, as well as of a new range of programmes and projects for children worldwide, more information is needed.

A good deal of evidence, much of it anecdotal, highlights the difficulties large numbers of children face in their daily lives. Particular concern is expressed for the well-being of certain especially disadvantaged groups, including children who are separated from their families, child workers and abused or neglected children. Research is being used increasingly as a means of learning more about these children, sometimes as the basis of programme and policy development.

In research terms, children present a special challenge. Adults have power over children in all known societies, which means that children are vulnerable to exploitation of many kinds, and insensitive research in itself can be exploitative. Another very different challenge is that children develop their own concepts, languages and cultures, through interaction with other children away from the influence of adults or because they do not yet fully understand the adult world. Often these are difficult for adults to access or interpret. Moreover, disadvantaged children are generally more isolated than all other groups from the culture and institutions of the wider society and can thus be very hard to reach in practical and linguistic terms.

This manual is part of an attempt by members of the International Save the Children Alliance to explore and disseminate ways of carrying out research with children that will answer these challenges. The aim is to develop methods that are not only scientifically satisfactory but that can also be used by project and programme staff and, most importantly, capture the realities of children's lives in ways that are appropriate to their levels of understanding as well as respecting their needs and vulnerabilities.

In 1996, surveys of international research about child exploitation and children affected by armed conflict, sponsored by Radda Barnen (Swedish Save the Children), revealed many shortcomings in this field (Boyden and Ennew, 1993). Much research about children relies on using formal, structured surveys and questionnaires with little reference to qualitative data either for designing surveys or analysing the results. The outcome is quantitative information that is divorced from its context. Such methods are poor ways of researching with children, because they reinforce adult power and preconceptions as well as failing to take children's own



ideas and language into account. In many cases, the informants are not children at all, but adults such as teachers and parents. It is seldom that children are asked about their own lives, much less consulted about the use that is to be made of research results. In addition, research about the lives of disadvantaged children tends to rely on small samples, rarely compared with control groups, and also fails to investigate changes over time through longitudinal studies. Thus the findings are usually of little significance.



#### QUOTE

*'It is inappropriate that international organisations, policy makers, social institutions and individuals who feel entitled to intervene in the lives of children with problems, do so on the basis of obviously unclear and arbitrary knowledge about the reality of these children's lives.'*

*Benno Glauser, Street children deconstructing a construct, in James, A., & Prout, A., (eds.), Constructing and reconstructing childhood contemporary issues in the sociological study of childhood, 1990, p. 144*

It is evident that there is a pressing need for appropriate and well planned research with children, both pure and applied. It is increasingly recognised that, as a social institution, childhood is intrinsically interesting in its own right, as well as for the light it sheds on the norms and values of adulthood. Research about children's lives is also essential if policies and programmes are to become more responsive and relevant to their concerns and needs. More important still is to find ways of doing research with children that provide valid, good quality information and also protect them from processes that fail to respect their ideas and integrity, exploit them or intrude into their privacy.

It is common within child welfare circles to assume that applied research is more worthy because it is directly related to child welfare and programmes for improving children's lives. Thus people often dismiss theoretical, or pure research as being of no consequence for children and having no importance in the 'real' world. This attitude could not be more incorrect. Good applied research depends upon theoretical work both at the stage of developing a research project and when results are being analysed. The approach taken by this manual could not have been developed without taking into consideration theoretical advances in pure research that opened up and justified new ways of thinking about children. These new approaches also interacted with novel ways of working with children in the field. Thus pure and applied research feed off each other and can never be totally separate. There is, therefore, no need to make a distinction between pure and applied research, because it is not possible to make plans for working with children without understanding the meanings and experiences of childhood. These stress the importance of understanding childhood as a stage in social life, as well as the roles of children as capable social actors in families and communities. Thus, many recent approaches in pure research underpin the ideas in this manual, including:

- New theories of childhood, showing that childhoods differ across different cultures as well as different historical times;
- Investigations of children's ideas and activities in their own right, as opposed to studies looking at children as incomplete human beings;
- Explorations of research methods that involve participants, whether children or adults;
- Examination of the special challenges of research with children;

- Ethical considerations about research with human subjects, especially vulnerable and powerless groups;
- Appreciation of the roles of powerless groups, such as children and women;
- Information about the experiences and needs of particularly disadvantaged children.

## **1.2 Research philosophy (methodology)**

---

This manual has been written with the explicit aim of encouraging pure and applied research with children. The call for more child research is accompanied by two vital questions:

- What does it mean to focus on children?
- Is work with children, including research, different from work with adults?

Many people make the mistake of thinking that to be ‘child focussed’ or ‘children-centred’ means concentrating either research or programmes exclusively on children. This is not the case. Even though children may be the specific target or priority, it should never be forgotten that they are integral to families, communities and nations. An approach that takes account of this will try to understand what childhood, family, community and nation mean to children, as well as the values placed on children and childhood by the adults who influence their lives. In earlier views of communities only men were in the foreground, with the blurred figures of women and children behind. Feminist research has brought women forward into focus, leaving the picture of nearly half the population still unclear. To be child focussed is to find ways of bringing children into the foreground, so that their lives can be as clearly seen as those of adults.

Finding ways to do this means examining the research and programme methods used for adults, to see if they are appropriate for use with immature human beings who are of low social status. In this process new methods have been discovered, derived from a research philosophy of respect for children. Thus the research philosophy, or ‘methodology’ on which this manual is based takes children’s rights as its basic framework.

## **1.3 Core principles of methodology in children-focused research**

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The following principles are basic to the approach taken in this manual:

- Research about the perceptions of children themselves as well as attitudes towards children should be ethical;
- To take an ethical research position seriously it is not enough to follow guidelines;
- Researchers should take context into account and anticipate and take responsibility for the effects of research;
- The views, ideas and perceptions of all human beings should be respected—including those of children;
- All experiences, perceptions and views have value and should be listened to with respect, regardless of status and qualifications;
- In learning processes, expertise is not limited to one person or group, everyone has skills to offer and can learn;

- Successful learning is usually based on practical experiences rather than lectures about theories;
- Successful learning does not depend on the academic qualifications of the learner;
- There is nothing that cannot be questioned.
- There is nothing that can be taken for granted.
- Participatory approaches, respecting and involving all relevant people (including children) are ethical, scientific and produce good quality, valid information.



#### QUOTE

*Out of confusion knowledge grows.*

*David Good*

### 1.4 Words are Important

Most manuals have a glossary, giving the specific meaning of key words at the end. This manual is different in this respect, because the core principles on which it is based entail a particular use of certain words. Without wanting to resort to jargon, it is important to signal here the ways in which some terms are used within the text:

- Terms such as 'The Child', 'The Girl Child', and 'The African Child' are avoided. 'A child' is used to refer to individuals and 'children' when discussing children as a group or special groups of children. No one stereotype is sufficient to capture the multiple realities of children in general, all girl children or all children in Africa. For example, even in the same country, there will be many differences between the well-protected daughters of wealthy parents who go to school every day and girls of the same age from poor families who have a heavy burden of household tasks and child care, who can only dream about what education might be like.
- 'Participation' is developmental and entails the growth of understanding and accumulation of new skills by everyone involved, as will be seen in Section 2. The manual describes a learning process, rather than a training course or capacity building process.

Participatory learning processes can be contrasted with prescriptive, authoritarian teaching. Thus:

- 'Facilitator' is used in preference to 'trainer' or 'teacher' in order to emphasise that this is a learning process in which there are no experts and everyone can both learn and teach;
- Likewise, 'participant', is preferred to 'trainee';
- And, when carrying out field research, 'informants' are referred to as 'respondents'.

Most importantly, 'research' means any process of finding out about social life, in this case the lives of children and the adults with whom they interact. Research can have many different aims, varying from satisfying curiosity, to testing ideas, planning actions and evaluating outcomes.

### **1.5 The Implications of children-centred learning**

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Programme planners and managers who are thinking of using this manual in order to incorporate research with children more fully into their work, should be aware of the institutional and personal challenges it presents. This learning programme aims to do more than simply provide knowledge about children and childhood or to impart tools and skills for conducting research. The objectives are to question underlying values and assumptions about children and to change attitudes towards children. It follows that it is not just a convenient additional element that deals with children's issues. Ideally it should be incorporated into a strategic planning process that considers the participation of everyone involved in a programme (staff, volunteers and beneficiaries). This means, of course, that all programmes can make use of this manual as part of their strategic planning and training processes, not just those that concentrate exclusively on children.

### **1.6 Characteristics of facilitators**

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Once the decision has been taken to use this manual, managers need to identify and collaborate with three to four people who can facilitate the learning process. Because of the challenging nature of this learning process, it is important for the facilitators to be supported by management throughout. The qualities needed for effective facilitation include:

- Understanding of and commitment to children's issues and children's rights;
- Some research experience, ideally with participatory methods;
- Flexibility and ability to think ahead;
- Good verbal and written communication skills;
- Energy;
- Non-authoritarian manner;
- Intellectual honesty;
- Ability to get on with a variety of people;
- Ability to manage difficult situations without panicking or loss of temper;
- Efficiency, good timekeeping and organisational skills;
- Planning skills.

Above all facilitators should have the ability to put people from all walks of life at their ease, to maintain a positive attitude and make learning fun.

Of course, the ideal facilitator should have all of these skills and qualities, but this is a tall order that few individuals could fulfil. In practice, two or three facilitators with complementary skills and experiences will be required, and the process will be a learning experience for everyone involved.

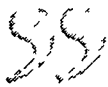
It is not a requirement for facilitators to be either highly qualified or 'experts', although the

lead facilitator should have experience of training. Ideally, facilitators should, between them, be able to communicate with all participants in their mother tongues.

### 1.7 The role of programme planners or managers

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- Read this manual;
- Ensure that the decision to adopt participatory research as part of the organisation's work with children is taken and understood by all relevant parties, within their own organisation as well as with any collaborating bodies;
- Identify and recruit facilitators;
- Support facilitators to draw up a plan for the learning process;
- With the facilitators, identify potential participants, including liaising with their organisations and securing the written support of their managers where necessary;
- Ensure that financial, material and administrative support for the learning process is adequate;
- Be prepared to iron out practical problems with other organisations or authorities during classroom and field-based learning;
- Take an interest in the process, including being present at key moments, such as the 'course opening', and showing how important it is for the organisation, for instance, by presenting participants with certificates at the end;
- Trust the facilitators;
- Plan follow up to the learning process and long-term commitment to children-focussed work within the organisation;
- Be prepared to respond to the results of research by making changes in programme work or the way the organisation functions.



#### QUOTE

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*The Radda Barnen resident representative in Ethiopia said that 'His long-term expectations for the training programme included. understanding of a common basic idea on how to conduct practical research, building consensus among training participants; and sharing these with other organisations and individuals—"to get it anchored". He strongly believes that research, especially action research, is extremely important to any programme working with children.'*

*Firew Kefyalew, The reality of child participation in research experience from a capacity-building programme, in Childhood, Volume 3, Number 2, 1996, p 204*

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## 1.8 The challenge

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Conducting participatory research with children presents many challenges, both institutional and personal, and many of these challenges will emerge during the course of the training programme. Facilitators need to acknowledge any difficulties faced by participating individuals and institutions and find ways of helping them overcome them.

This programme intends to do more than simply provide knowledge about children and childhood or to impart tools and skills for conducting research. It aims to question and re-evaluate underlying values and assumptions about children and to change attitudes for the better in relation to all children.

### QUOTE

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*"Previously I used to ignore children—thinking that they know nothing at all .. and cannot speak for themselves .. [The Course] has definitely helped me to accept children also as individuals "* (Suresh Pradhan)

*"I have become more analytical and critical about people's generalised statements, writing and opinions "* (Kum Kum Ghosh)

*"I have become conscious of the wrong notion that adults are the best judge for children "* (Junita Sharma)

*"Ever since I began my observations of children involved in the sex trade on Dhaka's streets, I find I cannot stop observing—I am seeing street children every time I go out, everywhere I go I guess I'll never stop observing now "* (Asif Munir)

*Source Responses to the learning process by participants in India, Nepal and Bangladesh*

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Change of any kind is disturbing, but changing attitudes can be particularly difficult and painful. Facilitators may at times meet with both resistance and confusion. Sometimes participants will feel more secure retreating into areas of understanding and experience that they feel they know about and are more comfortable with.

### QUOTE

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*"Now I can see that I am in a box. But I feel safer inside my box and don't feel ready yet to climb out of it "*

*Source Participant in UNICEF/Radda Barnen children's rights training Dhaka, May 1994*

---

It should be emphasised that doubt and confusion are a natural part of the learning process. Facilitators will need to be able to respond to and manage such feelings, by developing an atmosphere in which they are trusted by participants. Of course it helps if participants have a strong commitment to working with or learning about children before the learning process begins, but experience to date shows that a sense of commitment grows in all participants as the learning progresses, especially after the opportunity to test methods in the field.

**S U M M A R Y**

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- ***Children present a particular challenge to research because they:***
  - Are relatively powerless;
  - Do not fully understand the adult world;
  - Have ideas and use language that may be difficult for adults to interpret
  
- ***Children's voices are seldom heard in research and yet it is important to know what they think and do in order to plan effective interventions.***
  
- ***This manual is based on:***
  - New theories of childhood;
  - An integrated approach to children;
  - Exploration of innovative approaches to research that involve both child and adult respondents;
  - Examination of the special challenges of research with children;
  - Ethical considerations about research with powerless groups
  
- ***A children-centred approach implies:***
  - Institutional and personal challenges;
  - A participatory approach;
  - Willingness to change.

## 2 ABOUT THIS MANUAL

*This section is intended to guide facilitators and others planning a learning process in children-centred, participatory research. It outlines the structure and contents of the manual and suggests ways in which it can be used as well as giving advice about prior planning for a learning process. It is stressed that facilitators should be flexible and creative, customising learning processes so that they are appropriate for the cultural and educational backgrounds of participants.*

Training is often dull at the time and, in the long term, may add little to knowledge, understanding or practice. Training courses make a welcome change from day-to-day work but, once they are over, routine tasks take over, there is often no time or interest for sharing new ideas with colleagues and the file of training materials may join other similar documents on the shelf.

There can be a big difference between training and learning.

It is basic to this manual that learning should be fun and change people's attitudes and behaviour—not just their own but those of their colleagues and even their families. Learning about participatory research with children should change the way participants interact with children, not just the children they come into contact with in their work but also those in their own families.

It is also basic that the best way of learning is doing. Ideally, any learning process based on this manual should include opportunities to test the approach and methods in the field with children. At the very least, participants must have the chance to experience methods at first hand, as part of the 'classroom based' learning. That is where much of the fun comes in.

This manual is the outcome of experiences in three learning processes focusing on participatory research with children conducted with practitioners and researchers from several countries and sponsored by Radda Barnen and Save the Children Fund UK. The pilot, in which the content and methods were first developed, was conducted in Ethiopia. In learning processes held subsequently in India, Nepal and Bangladesh some adaptations were made and new materials and new components were introduced. The facilitators learned all the time, from each other, from participants and from children. That is why this manual has so many authors and also why it should be read not as a finished product, to be followed slavishly, but as a springboard to further learning by facilitators and participants in future learning processes.

### 2.1 Who is this manual for?

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Most people can benefit from learning more about children. In the main, this manual is intended as a guide for people planning a learning process in participatory research with children for researchers and field workers. So the principal readers will be:

- Programme planners who want to know more about the learning process and find out if it is relevant to the current plans and needs of their organisation;
- People who are facilitating learning processes in participatory research with children;
- Participants in these learning processes.



## 2.2 Contents

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The manual covers a number of core issues and principles that the authors consider are essential for good practice in research with children. However, the idea is not to prescribe in detail the structure and content of a course so much as offer a series of alternative ways of learning about each of these issues. So long as the core principles are adhered to, it is recommended that facilitators develop and adapt their own materials as much as possible. This means that the manual has not been laid out as a set of training sessions, but rather as a number of themes from which facilitators can build their own modules according to the experiences and learning needs of participants. It is strongly recommended that theoretical issues are not skipped in favour of practical modules. Good research is always based on understanding theoretical issues and it is not possible to carry out participatory work with children by following a set of rules without understanding the underlying principles. If theory is learned through the participatory methods outlined in this manual it is not only easy but also fun—which means that it will be remembered.

## 2.3 Structure

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This manual is divided into eleven sections. The first is an introduction. The second describes how to use the manual and how to begin planning the learning programme. The third focuses on the core philosophy behind the notion of participatory research with children and the key ethical concerns in research with children. These two thematic areas underpin and run throughout the whole learning programme. Section four explores a range of theoretical and conceptual issues to do with cultural and social constructions of childhood, children's rights and global understandings of childhood. Section five is an individual exercise. Section six examines the uses of and approaches to applied research. Section seven explores the research process and outlines a range of possible research methods. Section eight focuses on the processing, analysis, presentation and use of data. Section nine covers work in the field-based learning phase. Section ten provides advice on analysing data and section eleven considers future research plans.

## 2.4 How to use this manual

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The manual consists of a narrative text supported by illustrative material which can be read as general background information for facilitators. They can use the illustrative material during the learning process as:

- verbal material in their presentations;
- the basis of overhead transparencies or to write on flip charts;
- handouts for participants;
- ideas for activities.



### **LEARNING POINT**

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*Specific examples of learning materials highlight the key learning points in the programme and are intended for use by facilitators as a visual aid to verbal presentations made in plenary sessions with the whole learning group. The learning points can be reproduced on a flip chart or photocopied onto transparencies for use with an overhead projector. The materials presented in this form include drawings as well as written information.*



## EXERCISE

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*The learning process depends on interactive, participatory learning methods and relies on minimal use of formal presentations. Many of the sessions consist of exercises conducted in small groups of varying sizes. The exercises contain information about activities that have been used in the learning processes already carried out. Facilitators should be prepared to develop their own materials for exercises and to be able to adapt the exercises to different learning groups in varied situations. Facilitators should also be prepared to supplement and replace these exercises with learning exercises of their own.*



## QUOTE

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*Quotations taken from written sources or from verbal comments made by children, training participants, authorities on childhood research and others, are included in the quotations. These could be reproduced on a flip chart, photocopied onto a transparency for use with an overhead projector or simply quoted by the facilitator.*



## EXAMPLE

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*Where a point is made in the text that can be emphasised or illustrated by drawing on a specific experience, an example is used.*



## METHOD

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*Examples of specific research methods are provided as methods. These are particularly useful as handouts.*



## DATA

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*In the early stages, participants often express doubts that some of the methods introduced in the learning process will 'work' with children. It is helpful to be able to give examples from the data collected in field research. Data provide such examples, often drawn from the field experiences of participants in the pilot learning processes. These examples can be referred to by facilitators as supplementary information or copied onto a transparency or flip chart. They can be replaced by local examples gathered by the facilitators themselves.*

## 2.5 Planning the learning process

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### 2.5.1 Institutional support

While a growing number of aid organizations and research institutes are showing an interest in participatory research with children, many are not ready to provide the support or make the changes that are sometimes needed to respond appropriately to this work. At the very least, facilitators should conduct a planning mission with visits to each of the participants or participating organisations. The aim is to meet line managers or organization directors to seek full endorsement for the participation of their staff. The objectives and content of the programme

will need to be explained and questions asked about their expectations and concerns. A further point of contention can be fieldwork expenses. Clear guidelines and agreements on this should be drawn up well before fieldwork takes place. Ideally, contracts should be drawn up with participating organizations, to ensure that participants are freed from normal duties for the duration of the course and otherwise supported by their organisations.

Facilitators should also discuss the opportunities and constraints within the participating organizations in relation to the proposed training programme. They will need to explain how participatory research with children can result in major organizational changes. For example, while many organizations that work with children have very centralised decision-making structures, participatory research implies making decisions at a much more local level in accordance with the priorities and concerns of research respondents.

The timing of the learning process in relation to the development of a participating organization and its programme, is another decisive factor. Organizations in the early stages of a strategic planning process may be able to make better use of the programme than those who have already approved, and may be implementing, strategy plans.

The key question facilitators need to address is:

- Are participating organizations prepared to change the way they think and work, especially with children?

If the opportunity arises, facilitators can also meet with potential participants and learn about their previous experiences of working or researching with children as well as what their personal expectations of the programme are. Participants should be asked to fill in a simple questionnaire.



### **EXAMPLE**

#### **Survey of participants in Ethiopia by Rüdäa Barnen**

*Dear Respondent, The following are some questions on your social science research experience. Your response will be a useful input for the local research training in which you are involved. Please answer all questions.*

*Thank you for sharing your time.*

- I.
  1. Name
  2. Organization
  3. Position
  4. Educational qualifications
  
- II.
  1. Do you have any social science research experience?  
Yes/No
  
  2. If yes,
    - (a) What was your area of interest (target group)?
    - (b) What methods/instruments have you used in your research?
    - (c) What constraints have you faced while doing it?
  
  3. Have you ever tried to do research with children?  
Yes/No

**4. If yes,**

- (a). What kinds of children were your subjects (e.g. street children, institutionalised children...)?
- (b). What age group of children?
- (c). What methods have you used?
- (d). What constraints have you faced?

**5. Are you willing to share your research experiences with other participants as part of the course?**

Yes/ No

**EXAMPLE****Participants' expectations**

Before the learning process began in Bangladesh, participants were asked what information they needed and about their expectations of the course. These were some of their answers:

**What do we need to learn about children in order to make our programmes more effective in meeting children's needs?**

- What do children think about human rights?
- What do children think about adults?
- Why is state provision for children inadequate?
- What are the psychological needs of the children?
- Why are children's needs not fulfilled by society?
- What are families' perceptions of children?
- What is the socio-cultural, economic and environmental background of children?
- What are the children's perceptions of themselves?
- What can we learn about gender bias in childhood?
- What do children think about the programmes in which they are involved?

**What do we expect from this learning experience?**

- If it is relevant it could be very useful
- Improve my understandings about children.
- Organise my work
- Learn more about sectoral issues like health, education, shelter and food.
- Children's rights and child psychology.
- Improve my work with children
- Useful for programme staff to have a knowledge of research methods.
- Learn about applied research
- Learn about participatory research processes.
- Work better for children.
- Evaluate programmes efficiently
- Monitor programmes for children effectively
- Develop programmes that are more child-centred
- Teach children.
- Communicate with parents.
- Assist children's development.



## EXAMPLE

### **Participants' anxieties**

*Before the learning process began in Bangladesh, participants were asked to list their anxieties:*

*In many cases research is a waste of money*

*Research just creates careers for researchers.*

*Research without implementation is a waste of time.*

*What is the future of the research?*

*Will a full time guide be available?*

*What kind of support will we get during research period?*

*Will there be any follow-up?*

*Will the course be applicable to the field?*

*What are the differences between the standard and new research approaches?*

*May not be practical.*

*Wide range of experiences of participants.*

*Re-entry into my organisation.*

*Will both rural and urban settings be addressed?*

*Will the training be a delightful mix of theory and practice or lopsided in favour of one or the other?*

It is important to learn as much as possible about participants in advance of the programme in order to be able to meet their needs, experience and expectations as far as possible.

Participants with previous research experience relevant to the learning process should be invited to give presentations, or provide materials as and when appropriate.

### **2.5.2 Prior planning**

There are four phases to the learning process:

- **Facilitators' planning;**  
It is important that facilitators spend sufficient time together, working with the manual and deciding how to use it to develop the best possible learning process to meet the specific interests, experiences and expectations of the group of participants with whom they will be working;
- **Classroom-based, participatory learning, including planning individual research projects;**
- **Field-based learning, in which participants carry out a brief research project using the 'new' methods;**
- **Writing up phase, which may include actually writing papers based on the data collected in the field, discussing papers written beforehand, and discussing the results of research.**

#### **2.5.2.1 Where?**

Where should classroom-based learning take place?

Choice of venue for classroom-based learning is crucial. It should be located in an area where there is plenty of activity and there are plenty of people on the streets, whether a market, commercial centre or similar site. This is important for providing opportunities to test methods in 'real' situations as well as being necessary for some of the exercises used in the learning

process. Ideally participants should be resident in the venue for the duration of the course. This helps ensure good attendance and makes it possible for participants to spend time in social activities which helps build team spirit.

The venue for the classroom based learning should have one large room and at least one other room for working in groups. The rooms need to have plenty of natural light, electricity sockets and good ventilation. Preferably there should also be somewhere outside, whether a garden, yard or car park, for warm ups and other exercises. During the writing up phase of the process participants must have sufficient space and privacy to work individually.

### 2.5.2.2 What?

What materials are required?

Facilitators will need to plan in advance for the materials to be used in the course and decide who will be responsible for providing specific pieces of equipment or materials. It is important to be as detailed as possible and make sure that each facilitator has a copy of the list showing this division of labour.



### EXAMPLE

#### **Things to do and materials required: List made for the Bangladesh learning experience (1)**

**Local facilitator A to:**

1. Ask participants from Bangladesh to bring to the learning experience examples of traditional research instruments (questionnaires) that have been used in the country in studies with children.
2. Identify and book venue, ensure contracts have been distributed, secure necessary materials etc. Let international facilitator know if there are any materials (Bluetack, pens etc.) that cannot be purchased in Dhaka.
3. Ask Sri Lankan Save the Children Fund office to send some photos (5-10 good ones) of Sri Lankan children at work, in school, at home, in war zone etc. to Dhaka in advance of the learning programme. Since these may be copied onto transparencies, they should preferably be A4 size and good quality.
4. Distribute "assignment packs" six weeks before the learning process begins. These should contain
  - a photograph and instructions concerning what to do with it (photos to be supplied by local facilitator B);
  - details concerning dates of course/venue etc;
  - a request that all participants collect articles/photos of children from local publications (journals, newspapers, magazines etc) for one month prior to the learning process. These should be placed in an album and brought to the learning process venue;
  - reading materials, to be supplied by international facilitator;
  - a list of participants' identified research needs, and their expectations of and worries about the learning process, as identified in the pre-planning meeting.
5. Hire video camera and purchase four video tapes.

**EXAMPLE****Things to do and materials required: List made for the Bangladesh learning experience (2)****Supply:**

Training bags	21
Ball point pens	21
Pencils with erasers	21
Note books, ruled	21
Note pads, small, with spiral binding	21
Flip chart markers (dark colours)	5 dozen
White board markers (dark colours)	3 dozen
OHP markers	2 sets
Coloured drawing card (4 colours, A1 or A2 size)	25 sheets
Drawing pins	2 boxes
Glue stick	6
Glue Liquid	3
Plastic ruler	6
Scissors	3
OHP transparent sheet(s) (for photocopying)	1 box
OHP transparent sheet(s) (normal)	1 box
Spiral ring	30
Staples	2 boxes
Paper clips	2 boxes
Masking tape 1 1/2 inch	2
Masking tape 1 inch	1
Tape holder	1
Brown paper, large	50 sheets
Typing paper, 70 grams	3 reams
Photocopy paper, 80 grams	50 reams
Name tags	21
Computer ink cartridge	1
Computer diskettes	2
Computer + printer	
Flip chart frame and 5 pads of flip chart paper	
Film	4 reels

**Check availability at learning process venue of:**

Photocopying facilities (including for overhead transparencies)  
 White board  
 Television and video recorder  
 Film processing facilities  
 Electricity sockets, lights, air conditioning, toilets



### EXAMPLE

#### **Things to do and materials required: List made for the Bangladesh learning experience (3)**

##### **International facilitator A to:**

1. Purchase and bring four disposable cameras,
2. Send reading materials for photocopying in Dhaka and distribution to participants in their "assignment pack" prior to the learning programme,
3. Send regional facilitator copies of overheads on participatory rural appraisal;
4. Develop a session on "communicating with children" and share with regional facilitator;
5. Develop a very practical session on "construction of knowledge, processing, analysis and presentation of data",
6. Find a programme document for the 17.9 95 evening exercise,
- 7 Find some videos on children's rights/research issues;
- 8 Purchase and bring Bluetack

##### **Regional facilitator to:**

1. Collect and bring to Dhaka children's participatory rural appraisal drawings;
2. Bring the book *Listening to Smaller Voices* to Dhaka;
- 3 Collect and bring overheads of photos of children, depicting different age and ethnic groups, boys and girls, in a variety of situations.

##### **Local facilitator A-to:**

1. Obtain and read the report from Ethiopia on the classroom-based learning;
2. Prepare the photos and instructions for the "Introductions Through Pictures" exercise Base the exercise on the Radda Barnen/UNICEF training This material should be given to local facilitator B at least seven weeks before the learning programme so that he can distribute it to participants in the "assignment pack".
3. Prepare three scenarios for role plays on home, work, institution (an orphanage). Five characters each play Fax these to international facilitator A and regional facilitator for comment

##### **International facilitator B to:**

- 1 Bring still and video cameras and film;
2. Select and bring videos on children's participation, advocacy and other issues;
3. Bring selected written materials on research with children.

Facilitators will also need to ask participants to bring materials with them, including:

- Materials relating to previous research they have carried out or been involved in;
- Materials about their programme or organization that they wish to share;
- Reports or publications about children that they think are of interest;
- Specific materials related to planned exercises.





## EXERCISE

### **Programme preparation by participants: Images of childhood**

Ask participants to collect pictures and stories about children from magazines and newspapers that are readily available in the country. This should be done over a limited period of time, say for the week preceding training.

At an early stage in the learning process, ask participants to display these materials, (on display boards, walls or as a 'gallery walk' on the floor)

With participants sitting down, use a flip chart to record a brainstorm of words to describe the images of children that appear in these cuttings.

Finally, ask participants to categorise these words into groups.

What images of childhood are being portrayed in the media?

How do they relate to participants' experience of the national realities of childhood?

It is particularly useful to display these images and stories on display boards or walls throughout the course, so that they can be used as points of reference or examples by facilitators.

In India, free-standing display boards were kept outside the 'classroom'. Participants often gathered around the boards discussing the images, and they also attracted interest from other people at the venue, so that participants spent some time explaining the learning process.



## EXERCISE

### **Pre-programme assignment: feelings about childhood**

A selection is made of four colour photographs taken locally depicting children in different situations and doing different things—working, sleeping on the streets, studying, playing and so on

Each participant is sent in their assignment pack a copy of one of the photographs, together with two cards of different colours, pink and green. On the pink card they should comment on what they see in the photograph. On the green card they should note the feelings the photograph gives them. They should be asked to write on each card in large letters, with only one sentence per card. The photograph and the cards should be brought to the learning centre at the beginning of the programme

In Bangladesh the photographs were stuck to the wall on day one of the learning programme. Participants pinned their cards up under the appropriate photograph and afterwards read their comments out aloud. The photographs and accompanying cards remained on the wall throughout the classroom-based learning phase of the programme and were used in subsequent discussions about stereotypes, values and assumptions in relation to children, the nature of children's participation and the use of photographs in projective research methods. What emerged was an important reflection on participants' own assumptions.

Source based on an exercise in UNICEF and Radda Barnen Child Rights Training Manual *Whose Right? A Child's* by Kim Martens, Dhaka, Bangladesh 1995

### 2.5.2.3 *When?*

How long should the programme take?

There is no fixed length or prescribed course. The content of the learning process is presented in modules that can be adapted by facilitators to the needs of a variety of participants. The core principles are intended to remain the same for anyone using the manual but individual modules may be selected as appropriate to suit the specific circumstances and the learning group. Innovation is encouraged and, although examples of course content are given in the manual, facilitators are encouraged to develop their own materials based on the local situation.

A suggested format, in broad terms, is:

- Two week classroom based learning, covering all content areas of the programme;
- A period of up to two weeks full or part time conducting fieldwork, with supervision and support from the facilitators;
- One week in classroom setting, sharing and analysing the field experiences and learning about data processing, analysis, presentation and use;
- One week writing up the data from fieldwork, with supervision and support from the facilitators.

### 2.5.2.4 *How?*

What methods are used in participatory learning processes?

The programme uses a variety of methods, from more formal presentations made in plenary sessions to practical exercises in the field. Some of these methods are the same as those used in research with children, the idea being to facilitate learning through experience. Use of methods should be planned to give variety and change throughout the day. This will ensure that participants do not become bored and are able to sustain their concentration. Plenty of opportunity should be given for breaks, exercise and socialising, as well as for reading and individual study.

Days should be planned with maximum flexibility in order to respond to the needs of participants. An overall agenda, visible throughout the process, can provide a broad idea of what topics will be covered, but the precise content and activities for each day should be planned by facilitators during de-briefing and planning sessions each evening. Participants will need to have this process explained to them at the beginning of classroom-based learning to avoid feelings of anxiety. Otherwise they may assume that facilitators have not planned adequately.

Perhaps the most important aspect of planning is flexible teamwork between facilitators that takes account of the specific strengths, needs and responses of participants, as well as of group dynamics. It is essential for facilitators to make time to debrief together at the end of each day, giving each facilitator equal space to share his or her observations and comments. Time should also be set aside for evaluation of the day's events and discussions of the needs of individual participants, where appropriate. Plans for the following day can then be made on the basis of these shared and discussed experiences.



## EXAMPLE

### Learning experience timetable

The daily pattern is written on the left-hand side of a whiteboard, with 'today' on the right-hand side. This example is from Friday 20th January 1995 in Ethiopia.

Daily "Pattern"	Today
0900-1030 Session	0900 Warm up
1000-1100 Break	0910-0930 Rehearsal
1100-1230 Session	0930-1030 Role play presentations
1230-0200 Lunch	1030-1100 Break
0200-0330 Session	1100-1230 Role play presentations and summary
0330-0400 Break	1230-0200 Lunch
0400-0530+ Session	0200-0330 Interviews of role play characters
	0330-0400 Break
Evenings = informal activities and preparation for next day	0400-0530 Validity and relevance



## EXAMPLE

### Handout: Learning, Planning and Developing Programmes with Children, Dhaka

#### STAGE ONE: LEARNING ABOUT CHILDREN

**What is a child?**

What makes children different from adults? (needs and rights)?

When does childhood finish? (age thresholds)

**What does it mean to be a child in Bangladesh/Sri Lanka/Pakistan?**

Cultural conceptions of childhood

Contrast between cultural conceptions and global notion of childhood.

**How do different children experience childhood?**

Social differences based on gender, age, class, ethnicity and religion

**What are the contexts of childhood that concern us?**

Work, school, family, conflict, friends...

**What is our understanding of children's rights?**

#### STAGE TWO: APPLYING OUR UNDERSTANDING OF CHILDREN TO OUR WORK

**What do we need/want to know about children?**

information about their physical health, psycho-social wellbeing, spiritual life, economic contribution..

**How can we use research to help us in our work with children?**

The uses of applied research in programme planning, policy development and advocacy.

**How does adopting a child-centred approach affect our programmes and policies?**

Programme matrix indicating differences between and implications of community development, social targeting and so forth.

**STAGE THREE: RESEARCH METHODS AND ANALYSIS  
AND PRESENTATION OF DATA**

*Testing traditional research*

*The way forward Alternative methods of research*

*Research and planning sequence*

*Explaining (and field testing) the methods*

*Evaluation of research methods*

*Processing, analysing and presenting data*

*Programme of action to institutionalise our learning within our organizations*

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**EXAMPLE**

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**Handout: Learning, planning and developing programmes with children, Dhaka**

**Goal:**

- *To make our policies and programmes more responsive and relevant to the concerns and needs of children*

**Assumptions:**

- *We must know about and learn from children;*
- *Whenever possible, we should plan with children;*
- *We need to be flexible, innovative and participatory in the way we think and work;*
- *We should value other people's (children's) knowledge.*

**Specific aims:**

- *To understand what it means to be a child in different social and cultural contexts;*
  - *To learn how to do children-centred, participatory research;*
  - *To understand how children-centred, participatory research can be used in our work.*
- 

**2.5.2.4.1 Plenary sessions**

These may consist of:

- Verbal presentations supported by visual aids,
- Plenary discussion or brainstorming,
- Role play,
- Slide or video presentations.

Plenaries can be conducted sitting in a circle or by walking around the room and looking at and reflecting on materials pinned to the walls, or laid out on the floor ('gallery walk'). They can be conducted by the facilitators or by participants, who may particularly value the opportunity to share research experiences.

During plenaries facilitators may often make use of “brainstorming” as a method of eliciting information and discussion. Classic brainstorming technique is to encourage a rapid sequence of one word ideas to be provided by participants. Nevertheless, this is derived from Western notions of verbal communication and may not be appropriate for cultures in which ideas must be properly formulated and status determines the order of speaking. Facilitators need to be aware of and sensitive to culturally appropriate ways of communicating and ready not only to allow a slower pace for a brainstorm but also to provide considerably more time in the schedule.

#### 2.5.2.4.2 Group work

Group membership should be changed and group size varied as much as possible. Random selection of group membership can be interspersed with purposeful selection. The principles used for dividing groups vary according to the theme of the session and the dynamics within the group, as determined by the different personalities of participants.

#### 2.5.2.4.3 Individual work

Individual work includes participants reflecting on the implications of the learning process in their own programme or organisation, as well as preparation of research protocols, writing diaries and writing up data from research.

#### 2.5.2.4.4 Fieldwork

As the exercises in this manual show, participants have many opportunities to try out methods learned during the classroom-based period, but the main learning experience takes place when they develop and use their own research protocol, using some of these methods. Fieldwork can take place within their own project or programme or, if this is not possible or appropriate, in a setting of their own choosing. Problems can arise if they work within their own organisations, both conflict over research results and pressures by colleagues and managers to continue with their routine duties during the fieldwork period. Facilitators could well find themselves having to negotiate with participants’ line managers, emphasising the need for prior contact, explanation and ‘contracts’.

During fieldwork it is very important for morale and for the learning process for facilitators to visit participants, observe their work, give feedback and discuss how any problems encountered might be solved. Peer review meetings can also be helpful.



### EXAMPLE

#### **Part of a report of a visit by a facilitator to Sanjit Patnayak during his field research in Orissa**

*After spending about three hours in the village, Sanjit and I sat down to discuss the research.*

- I. Sanjit discussed the secondary material that he has collected so far. He was able to collect the district map; tribal area map, tribal demographic statistics; and village statistics. He felt that it would have been better if he could have had access to similar studies conducted elsewhere.*
- II Sanjit had done unstructured and structured observation. This will be followed by recall from children to cross-check on observation and then photographs. He had already talked to children regarding their willingness to use and take photographs and found them excited about it. A group for taking the photograph had been*

*formed and the theme decided: children in various activities - inside the house/ outside the house/in school/ in the fields etc. One problem that was envisaged was that, since the camera did not have flash, it would be difficult to take photographs inside the house. Two alternatives emerged: arrange for another camera or make the children do the role play and then take photographs.*

*III. We discussed the mechanics of how Sanjit will do the mobility map. where will the children assemble; what material will he use; etc. Since the village is compact but the fields were spread out over a large area we thought it would be a better idea to know the perception of children regarding the boundary of the village and hence Sanjit should also try to get the village map made by the children.*

*IV. On Focus Group Discussion we felt that with children the warm ups need to be more physical in nature. For parents it may require a cool down by singing etc. The recording of focus group discussion was to be done both by writing and tape recording.*

*Source Report of field visit by Amod Khanna, Facilitator, India*

There are five basic rules for facilitator support during fieldwork:

- Be punctual, informal and appropriately dressed;
- Make sure that children or other research subjects have given informed consent to your presence, and be prepared to be excluded if they do not wish you to be present;
- Do not intervene or take over the research process and try not to interact with children or draw attention to your presence—keep to the role of observer;
- Always begin feedback with positive comments;
- Find constructive ways to criticise.

#### *2.5.2.4.5 Warm ups and cool downs: The 'fun factor'*

It can greatly help the participatory atmosphere if sessions begin and end with brief, sometimes energetic, activities that involve all participants and facilitators. Most facilitators and participants will have their own favourites. As participatory research with children often includes warm up and cool down activities, most should be suitable for children in order to increase participants' range. Participants from different countries or regions may enjoy teaching each other local children's games and action songs. By the end of the classroom-based phase, warm ups should be largely conducted by participants.

Some warm ups and cool downs can be used to improve group solidarity. An activity in which each participant performs a simple action for which they receive unanimous applause can be helpful for soothing ruffled feelings after a heated debate, for example. In addition, the first activity of the learning process could be linked to shared meanings or cultural norms. In India, each participant and facilitator introduced him or herself to the group by names while lighting a candle, followed by a few moments in silence.

Nevertheless, warm up activities can also present problems unless they are handled with sensitivity. Participants who are accustomed to formal, lecture-like learning situations can find warm ups threatening and will need to be gently introduced to this type of activity. The basic rules of selecting warm ups should be made clear to all participants, especially to those who wish to lead a warm up session. Warm ups should be:

- Non-threatening;
- Culture, religion and gender appropriate;
- Non-competitive;
- Not include elements of mockery or loss of dignity;
- Inclusive, never exclusive;
- Within the physical capacities of all participants.

## **2.6 Final note**

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This manual is designed to be used as part of a learning process in children-centred, participatory research. It is assumed that facilitators will already have experience of training courses and be skilled in group dynamics as well as having some basic understanding of issues involving children and childhood.

## **S U M M A R Y**

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This manual is designed for a learning process, rather than a training course. The emphasis is on learning by doing.

The manual should be used creatively by facilitators, to meet the needs of specific groups of participants.

***There are four phases to the learning process for children-centred participatory research:***

- Facilitators' planning;
- Classroom-based learning;
- Field-based learning;
- Writing up.

***Planning for a learning process requires:***

- Ensuring institutional support for facilitators and participants;
- Surveying participants' institutions and participants themselves to find out as much as possible about the expectations and needs of both beforehand;
- Detailed prior planning by facilitators with respect to venue and materials;
- Some pre-programme assignments for participants.

### 3 PARTICIPATION

*This section examines the meaning of the word 'participation' in the context of child research. It is essential background reading for facilitators and should be used as the basis of classroom-based learning sessions on participation.*

One of the most common reactions to the idea that children should participate fully in society is scornful laughter:

'What, let my toddler have the vote? She can't even speak.'

'Children divorcing parents!'

'It would all end in chaos!'

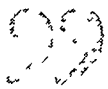
Many adults react with fear to the idea that small children might be allowed to take major decisions about their own and other people's lives. Although it is illogical, they imagine that giving children the opportunity to voice their opinion is the same thing as allowing them absolute control, letting them take over the world.

Most people will say that adolescents can participate in decision-making, but the same people often do not even allow their own teenage children to choose their own clothes.

On the other hand, many people cannot understand what the fuss is all about: 'But of course children participate in society. You see them everywhere, involved in all kinds of activity. After all, they drew the pictures I used in my research.'

One solution to the problem of defining children's participation lies in understanding the difference between:

- Participation in the sense of 'taking part in', or being present;
- and
- Participation in the sense of knowing that one's actions are taken note of and may be acted upon—which is sometimes called 'empowerment'.



#### QUOTE

*Participation 'is not a political campaign that puts children first, as children's liberation proposed, but a process of creating a society that is inclusive of young citizens'*

*Brian Milne, Children's rights and the changing face of work in the field, PLA Notes, 25  
February 1996, p. 41*

This manual uses the term 'participation' in the second sense, in which it is related to:

- New perspectives in the field of children's rights that have been given prominence by the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989);
- New considerations about ethical issues in research, that are particularly important in research with powerless groups;



- The capacities of children at different ages and stages of development;
- The development of participation as an element in research and programming, for which both adults and children need to acquire and use new skills and competencies.

If children participate in this sense, they may become less vulnerable to abuse and exploitation, for they will be able to talk about their concerns and have access to the knowledge and means to find solutions to their own problems. It does not mean that they should not be protected from harm by adults, or that they should have to shoulder responsibilities that are properly assumed by adults.

This chapter will begin by looking at the differences between children and adults as the subjects of research and then consider each of these aspects of participation in turn.

### 3.1 How is research with children different from research with adults?

Children and adults are different, in physical, psychological, legal and social ways. Sometimes it is necessary to make a difference between these two fundamental social groupings. But, if you are going to make differences in the ways you treat groups of people, you have to have good reasons for making the difference. In the case of children this is particularly difficult. They are growing all the time, not only in size but also in terms of abilities and capacities. It is also difficult to decide exactly when a child becomes an adult. Although the Convention on the Rights of the Child says this is at the age of 18, when people become eligible to vote in national elections, national legislation everywhere sets out different ages, both higher and lower than 18, at which they can go to work, get married, do military service and so on. And between cultures there are variations in ideas about what children can and should do at different ages.



#### QUOTE

*...while in many countries children are seen as dependent until well into their teens, in many others they are expected to be fully independent from an early age. The contrast between Britain and Peru, for example, is instructive. In the former it is illegal to leave infants and small children in the charge of juveniles under the age of 14. In the latter, on the other hand, the national census records a significant group of 6 to 14 year olds who are heads of households and as such are the principal breadwinners in the family, sometimes even the sole person in charge of the care of younger siblings.*

*Jo Boyden, 1990, 'Childhood and the policy makers', in James, A., and Prout, A (eds), Constructing and reconstructing childhood, Brighton, Falmer Press, p 198*

Social science research, whether in psychology, sociology or social anthropology, has tended to focus on adult populations. Until the 1960s, this tended to mean adult males, families that were assumed to be headed by adult males, and communities and governments in which activities were dominated, wholly or mainly, by men. Studies of women often emphasised weakness and, in the case of women-headed households for instance, to reflect the difficulties entailed by male absence. The emergence of feminist theories and women's studies has brought new insights, not only into women's situation in societies but also to data collection and analysis. The result has been a more complete picture of the ways in which cultures and societies

function, although this still concentrates on the world of adults, in which children appear only as attributes of institutions such as motherhood, families, households, health systems and schools.



### QUOTE

*If we wish to learn something about children themselves, it should be quite clear, first of all, that they should not be described and examined as a byproduct of other units (the family, for example), as is done to a great extent in current research and literature; on the contrary, children should be the unit of observation. Second, it must be stressed that we are not so much interested in the individual properties of children as in their aggregate properties. From a sociological point of view, we are concerned with children to the extent that they constitute a unit of analysis of a higher order, that is, childhood... Whereas children are the unit of observation, childhood should be the unit of analysis.*

*Angelo Saporiti, A methodology for making children count, in Qvortrup, J, Bardy, M, Sgritta, G, & Wintersberger, H (eds), Childhood Matters, Avebury & European Centre Vienna, 1994, p 193*

More recently, social scientists have begun to study children and childhood in both theory and practice.

Children had been studied in the past:

- In medicine and psychology.
- In studies of the way children become adults (socialisation);

Both these ways of studying children look at children in terms of the adults they will become, so that the process of childhood is seen as a means of reaching adulthood. This means looking at children as immature human beings who receive inputs from adults:

- In medicine, receivers of food, immunisation, medicine and other health care;
- In psychology, receivers of love, affection and intellectual stimulus, passing through a series of fixed developmental stages on the way to adulthood;
- In sociology, receivers of information about society and how to behave themselves, so that culture can continue into the next generation and they will be acceptable members of society.

The focus tends to be on factors that can go wrong, so that children do not survive to become adults or become abnormal adults who are disturbed, threatening or unable to function.

Whatever the case, childhood was represented as:

- A period of incapacity compared to adulthood;
- A difficult period in life that requires the advice and support of socially-recognised experts in childhood—be they ritual specialists, teachers, pediatricians or child psychologists—in order to ensure a successful outcome.

In the words of the sociologist Emile Durkheim, children were seen as 'human becomings', rather than human beings.

The methods used in these kinds of studies began from the things children cannot do, or cannot do properly. They often undervalued or devalued their capacities as research subjects, and certainly did not take into account their potential to participate in research processes as equal partners.



### EXAMPLE

#### **Speaking for and not listening to children**

*During interviews with staff of orphanages in Burma it was frequently claimed that children 'are too young to remember why they were sent here', or 'too young to understand what happened to them in the past' Attempts to interview the children in the presence of staff resulted in adults intervening to provide answers and explanations, on the basis that the children 'didn't know' about a particular issue or were not articulate enough to express themselves.*

*But informal interviews with boys and girls alone in several such institutions revealed a very different picture. The children were aged roughly between 8 and 15. All those who had entered the orphanages above the age of three or so could remember some aspect of their life beforehand, many in considerable detail. Most could give a fairly full explanation of why they were institutionalised, even if it was not the same as the explanation provided by the institution. One boy of about 13 described in great detail the day his father died and the day—possibly some months later—when his mother took him by truck to the institution. This being the only time he had ever travelled in a vehicle, he recalled the excitement of the journey. Even though he had not seen his mother since, he also recalled her promise that when she had saved enough money she would come to take him home. According to his records, he was 4 or under at the time.*

*Source: Boyden, field notes, Burma 1991 and 1992*

The tendency was to research **about** children, by asking adults such as parents or teachers, or by testing children through specially-designed sets of questions that assumed their inability to voice their own perspectives on their lives. Usually these research instruments failed entirely to reflect children's interests and concerns.



### EXAMPLE

#### **Conventional research about children**

*Behavioural checklist used for gathering information to build a 'child trauma profile', intended for use with adults **about** children, but not for use with children themselves:*

##### **Behaviour checklist**

*'Please fill out checklist according to child's behaviour (at home and at school) during the past month.*

*Don't know    Never    Sometimes    Always*

- 1. Difficulty sleeping/Nightmares*
- 2. Lack of energy*

- |     | Don't know | Never | Sometimes | Always |
|-----|------------|-------|-----------|--------|
| 3.  |            |       |           |        |
| 4.  |            |       |           |        |
| 5.  |            |       |           |        |
| 6.  |            |       |           |        |
| 7.  |            |       |           |        |
| 8.  |            |       |           |        |
| 9.  |            |       |           |        |
| 10. |            |       |           |        |
| 11. |            |       |           |        |
| 12. |            |       |           |        |
| 13. |            |       |           |        |
| 14. |            |       |           |        |
| 15. |            |       |           |        |
| 16. |            |       |           |        |
| 17. |            |       |           |        |
| 18. |            |       |           |        |

Other (Please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

*Boothby, N., Upton, P., & Sultan, A., Children of Mozambique. The cost of survival, US Committee for Refugees, Issue Paper, Washington DC, 1991*

In contrast, the current tendency is to research **with** children, using techniques that are designed to find out about their perspectives, while taking into account children's relative lack of power in society, the fact that they cannot yet use words as well as most adults (or use words differently, or invent their own words) and do not have so much experience of the world. This places children in the centre of the research process rather than relying on the perspectives of adult researchers. It means that children participate in research in a different way.

### QUOTE

*Most development projects treat children as passive targets or beneficiaries rather than as active participants in the development process. Children, however, are "social actors" in their own social, economic and cultural contributions to society. A child-centred approach builds on children's potential, capacity and capability and seeks to actively involve children in research, implementation, awareness raising and advocacy work.*

*Joachim Theis, Children and participatory appraisals: experiences from Vietnam, PLA Notes 25, February 1996, pp 70-71*

Participatory research with children has to find ways in which children's ideas and perceptions can be expressed in their own terms without being blocked or misrepresented by the ways adults think and talk. This has two consequences:

- Using techniques that are less dependent on words;
- Reducing the power relationships between children and adults in the research process.



## METHOD

### **Finding a way to communicate with children in research**

*'Children often did not respond when addressed directly by an adult. Using an intermediate medium, such as pen and paper, a diagram, pictures, a ball or a toy in communicating with children immediately broke down these inhibitions. The intermediate medium allowed the children to focus their attention away from the stranger and on a neutral and non-threatening object. One 12-year old girl, for example, sat quietly in a corner of her house and did not respond to the interviewer's question. She was, however, quite happy to write her daily activity schedule on a piece of paper. When the interviewer later tried to talk to the girl again, she stood up and left the room.'*

*Joachim Theis, Children and participatory appraisals: experiences from Vietnam, PLA Notes 25, February 1996, p. 72*

It is often argued that children are too shy, too inarticulate, too likely to lie or misrepresent the truth, or too unknowledgeable to be able to be useful research subjects in their own right. Using participatory techniques and methodology reveals that these observations are the result of adult-oriented research rather than reflections of children's potential. It can thus be argued that participatory research is also the best approach to use in research with adults who are less verbally articulate or less powerful than researchers—which means in almost all social science research entailing direct contact with human subjects.

### **3.2 New perspectives in the field of children's rights**

The new approach to research with children began at the same time as the Convention on the Rights of the Child was being drafted during the 1980s (see also Section 3). Before this time, ideas about children's rights were based on ideas about what adults have to do for children in terms of providing for their health and development and protecting them from harm.

The Convention recognises that children are strong as well as vulnerable and that they contribute a good deal to societies in their own right, not simply in terms of the adults they will become.

Children are thus seen as active participants in societies, not least by taking part in research.



## LEARNING POINT

### **Some of the rights listed in the Convention**

- *Children have the right to be with their family or with those who care for them best;*
- *Children have the right to enough food and clean water;*
- *Children have the right to health care;*
- *Disabled children have the right to special care and training;*
- *Children have the right to play;*
- *Children have the right to free education;*
- *Children have the right to be kept safe and not hurt or neglected;*
- *Children must not be used as cheap workers or as soldiers;*

- *Children must be allowed to speak their own language and practice their own religion and culture;*
- *Children have the right to express their own opinions and to meet together to express their views.*

*When a government has signed and ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child, these rights belong to all children (people under 18 years of age) in that country.*

*Adapted from UNICEF UK publication, 1990*

No one would question that children have rights to:

- Provision of food, shelter, clothing, health care and education so that they can survive and develop into adulthood;
- Protection from abuse, danger, violence and exploitation.

A novel feature of the Convention is that it extends these rights to include participation. The idea that children have a right to participate in decisions made on their behalf, particularly, but not limited to family matters, is based on the observation of the developing abilities of children as they grow from babies into young adults. The Convention makes it clear that the right to participation depends on the age and maturity of children.

Throughout the 1990s there has been considerable discussion about child participation, often without any very clear ideas about what it entails. It should mean children are at the least informed about and consulted in actions taken for their welfare, and may be involved in planning, implementing and evaluating these actions. Too often it means that children are displayed at public events to sing songs or give testimony, in order to justify adult projects for children.

To participate meaningfully, children need information about the reasons and the consequences of what they are doing, and the social skills for decision-making, debate and action. This need not be confined to teenagers, even pre-school children can participate if adults are willing to share power.



## QUOTE

### Article 12

1. *States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.*
2. *For this purpose, the child shall in particular be provided the opportunity to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting the child, either directly, or through a representative or an appropriate body, in a manner consistent with the procedural rules of national law.*

**Article 13**

1. *The child shall have the right to freedom of expression, this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of the child's choice.*
2. *The exercise of this right may be subject to certain restrictions, but these shall only be such as are provided by law and are necessary:*
  - (a) *For respect of the rights or reputations of others, or*
  - (b) *For the protection of national security or of public order (ordre public), or of public health or morals*

**Article 14**

1. *States Parties shall respect the right of the child to freedom of thought, conscience and religion*
2. *States Parties shall respect the rights and duties of the parents and, when applicable, legal guardians, to provide direction to the child in the exercise of his or her right in a manner consistent with the evolving capacities of the child.*
3. *Freedom to manifest one's religion or beliefs may be subject only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary to protect public safety, order, health or morals, or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others.*

**Article 15**

1. *States Parties recognize the rights of the child to freedom of association and to freedom of peaceful assembly.*
2. *No restrictions may be placed on the exercise of these rights other than those imposed in conformity with the law and which are necessary in a democratic society in the interests of national security or public safety, public order (ordre public), the protection of public health or morals or the protection of the rights and freedoms of others*

***E X E R C I S E***



***The rights of the child in my country***

*A group exercise, with the objective of stimulating discussion about the relevance of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in different cultural settings.*

*Divide participants into groups, along national lines if more than one country is represented, giving each group a flip chart sheet and copies of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in the national language. The task is to act as a drafting committee for a new Convention on the Rights of the Child, and to present the results to a plenary session, followed by plenary discussion.*



## EXERCISE

### **What would happen if children got the vote?**

A plenary session, using two facilitators, with the objective of encouraging participants to reflect on the reasons why children are not allowed to vote in national elections

The lead facilitator first reminds participants that the defining feature of 'the child' in Article 1 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child is that people under 18 years of age are not permitted to vote. The question 'What would happen if children got the vote?' is then used as the stimulus for a 'brainstorm', in which immediate responses are elicited by one facilitator while another records them on a flip chart.

Once the flip chart is full, the words can be categorised and the categories discussed.

Depending on the ideas raised during the brainstorm, facilitators might like to direct participant's attention to the following points during the discussion:

- Some of the reasons given for children's lack of capacity to vote also apply to many adults, and were formerly applied to women;
- One tendency is to imagine that if children were able to make political decisions the result would be chaos,
- In contrast, another tendency is to think that children would bring gentler, more peaceful values, and even fun, to the political process.

## EXERCISE

### **Role Play: Participation in programme settings**

This role play can be enacted by either the facilitators as a group, or by groups of participants. The objective is to reflect on the meaning of participation.

The group doing the role play is asked to act out a series of scenes in which participatory programme work is imposed within an international NGO, from headquarters to field level. The scenes are

- (i) Headquarters: HQ staff tells regional officer to begin or increase participatory work with children at regional level;
- (ii) Regional office: Regional officer passes on to a national officer the instruction to work in a participatory way with children at national level;
- (iii) National office: National officer passes on to country counterpart(s) the instruction to work in a participatory way with children;
- (iv) In the field: Staff of country counterpart organisation attempt participatory work with a group of children living and working in the street.

The role play(s) should be followed up with plenary discussion, to examine the meanings and understandings of the word 'participation'.

### **3.3 New considerations about ethical issues in research\***

The new perspectives have coincided with the development, in the social sciences in general, of participatory approaches to research. This is partly the result of developments in theories of knowledge and in women's studies. These stress the importance of making the role of

\*This section draws in part on G Fine and F Sandström 1988 "Knowing children, Participant observation with minors", Sage Publications, USA, UK, India



the researcher clear and ensuring that the people being researched are given more of a voice in the research process. It is also due to changes in approach within development aid activities, it is now seen as important to involve beneficiaries of projects at all stages of work, from planning to evaluation, because this seems to produce better project results. Greater value is now placed on the knowledge and understanding of community members in research, planning and evaluation. Field researchers in development have thus developed a participatory approach to research, with techniques such as those used in Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA). Meanwhile, academic researchers have been challenging conventional ways of carrying out research, particularly with vulnerable and powerless groups such as children. Thinking about the power relationships involved in this kind of research has led to new considerations about ethical issues in the research process.

Ethical issues are important before, after and during the research. Children's age should not diminish their rights, although their level of understanding must be taken into account in the explanations that are shared with them.



### LEARNING POINT

#### *Ethical issues in research with children*

##### *Ethical issues vary with:*

- *the child's age*
- *the child's developmental stage*
- *the child's experience and exposure*
- *the child's socio-cultural background*
- *the child's status*
- *the child's gender*

##### *and also with:*

- *the research topic*
- *the researcher's experience and exposure*
- *the research context*
- *the research method(s) used*

The rules of ethical conduct entail recognising children's rights:

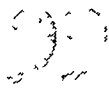
- To be informed about the research, how it will be used and its possible consequences;
- To consent (or dissent) to the research process.

Informed consent is especially important in research involving children because they are much less able than adults to exercise, or indeed even recognise, their right to refuse to participate. In order to consent or dissent to taking part in a research process children need to have skills in making decisions, to understand the consequences of what they are doing and to see real advantages from taking part. The benefit need not be direct. Many children will see the point of participating in research that may lead to actions that will help others in the future.

The decision making process is likely to take time, thus prolonging the time and costs of research. However, the benefit is not simply the satisfaction of acting ethically but also of knowing that results are likely to be more valid if children understand (or better, have helped to plan) the research.

Ethics also have to do with fulfilling adult responsibilities to children. This means:

- Ensuring that no child suffers harm as a result of the research;
- Recognising the moral obligation to protect a child that is placing itself at risk, even if intervening may alter the behaviour or situation being researched;
- Agreeing about whether or when researchers will intervene when children are at risk, do harm to others or break the law. Researchers risk losing access to and trust of children if they do intervene. Yet, with younger children particularly, they may lose credibility if they do not act in a manner expected of adults;
- Not telling children about things that they do not yet know, and are not ready to know about.



#### QUOTE

*'Children and researchers need to agree on confidentiality at the beginning of a project. It should be recognised that privacy may be important to the child's continued well-being. This may mean working in a place where children cannot be overheard by adults who may have power over them and ensuring that the children know that their real names need not be used. If children can only be assessed through institutions or at home where adults are present, adults can be made to feel important and distracted from the fact that the main focus of attention is on the children.*

*.. during the course of discussions children may reveal personal and social problems that the researcher is unable to deal with both at the time and, due to confidentiality, in the longer term. Incidents of child abuse [are] particularly difficult; appropriate training and action should be discussed by the research team prior to the research. Children must be protected should they disclose information of a personal nature implicating adults in any form of abuse and, where possible, referral information should be made available. [Nevertheless] researchers should be aware of their legal boundaries'*

*Victoria Johnson, Starting a dialogue on children's participation,  
PLA Notes, 25, February 1996, p 32*

It is important to be aware of the particular susceptibilities of especially disadvantaged children:

- It is not ethical to expose a child already vulnerable to any additional risk through an investigation that carries no benefit for that child. Interviews about painful subjects should be performed in accordance with the principle of 'least harm';
- Be careful to avoid exploiting the power imbalance inherent in relationships between children and adults. This imbalance may be exaggerated by differences in class, gender and other factors;

- Be alert to the fact that questioning children may sensitise them to issues of which they were previously innocent, thereby exposing them to further risk. It may also yield information that places the researcher at risk;
- Be aware that these children may be bearing a heavy burden of feelings that they cannot usually express. Giving them an opportunity to tell you about their lives may open the floodgates of emotions. You may have to take responsibility for, and deal with, difficult situations that may arise during research;
- Make it clear from the very beginning that children's secrets will be kept, and keep your promises.

As it is not always possible (or desirable) to interview children on their own, the presence of other adults (parents, teachers, employers, project or institution staff) must be carefully assessed, with particular reference to the power relationships between children and the adults with whom they interact on a day to day basis. One practical issue is the extent to which the presence of these adults may influence what children feel able to express in a research process. Children have a right to keep to themselves information that might put them in danger once the researcher has gone. They also have a right to be protected from inadvertently giving information that may put them at risk.

### 3.3.1 Dissemination of findings and reporting results

Ethical issues arise not only in the process of data collection but also through the dissemination of findings, which can harm children in several ways:

- those able to identify themselves may feel upset by the way in which they are portrayed;
- it may attract unwanted publicity to the research site or to the subjects;
- disclosure of information about research subjects may allow others to exploit them or may put their physical safety at risk;
- lack of control over dissemination may result in misperceptions or sensationalised issues and problems.

Researchers have a special responsibility to be transparent about the methods used and the practical obstacles encountered in research. Lack of transparency invalidates results.

- If based on small samples, findings should not be generalised.
- Findings and results should be shared with children.
- Adults have an obligation to ensure that children fully understand findings and analysis
- Children should give prior permission to publication of findings, knowing what the findings are and how they will be used.

## LEARNING POINT

### Checklist for ethical research with children

#### Are you

Intruding on children's privacy?

Protecting children's anonymity?

Acknowledging children have spoken or written the words or drawn the drawings?

**Absolutely sure** you have obtained informed consent?

Confident that you are not putting children at risk?

Really respecting children and keeping their secrets?

Prepared to take responsibility when children need support or protection?

These ethical considerations link new ideas about children's rights to participatory research methods, having much to do, not just with informed consent, but also with informed dissent—the right to say 'No' to taking part in research, at any stage in the research process.

## LEARNING POINT

### How voluntary is participation?

#### Especially with:

Children in schools or institutions

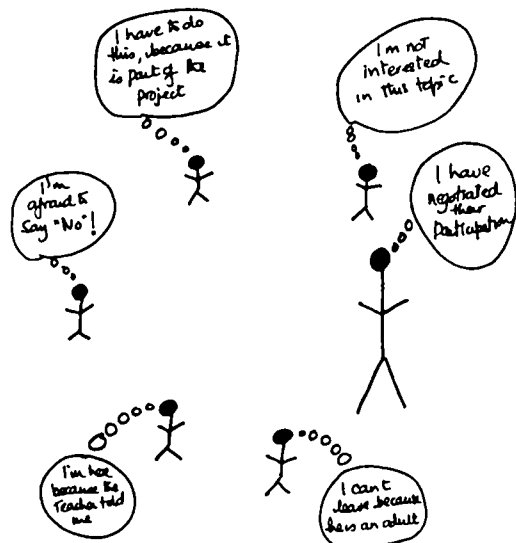
Children whose parents are taking part in the research

Project beneficiaries (adults or children).

#### Negotiation of participation

Can children say 'No'?

Has consent been brokered by a controlling adult (parent, teacher...)?





## EXERCISE

### **Ethical dilemmas in work with children**

A group discussion to encourage participants to reflect on ethical issues in particular contexts

Divide into three groups, providing each group with one of the following statements for discussion during a 20-30 minute period. Each group should appoint a recorder to report back to a plenary for further discussion of the issues and conclusions by all participants

#### **Dilemma (I)**

In West African cultures, incest is believed to be a widely observed taboo, yet there are some indications that children, especially girls, are abused by older family members. To conduct research on this topic involves breaking a cultural taboo.

What is more important: to protect children against this abuse or to respect the culture?

#### **Dilemma (II)**

In India, the match industry is considered to produce one of the most hazardous workplaces possible for children. Undertaking research in this industry may result in children losing the employment on which their survival depends.

What is more important: to draw attention to the children's working conditions or to protect their livelihood?

#### **Dilemma (III)**

Medical research in the town of San Pedro accidentally reveals that over half a sample of 15 street boys are HIV positive.

What is more important: to carry out research to find out more about the extent of this problem or to protect children from emotional distress and possible stigmatisation by keeping the information totally confidential?

*Note* Ideally these statements should be customised with local place names and situations



## EXERCISE

### **Ethics in research with children on sensitive issues**

Divide participants into three groups, providing each group with one of the following statements for discussion during a 20-30 minute period. Each group should appoint a recorder to report back to a plenary for further discussion of the issues and conclusions by all participants.

**Problem (I)** You are running a shelter programme for street children, aged between five and nine years, most of whom have run away from home. One seven year old girl comes to you in great distress and tells you that she ran away because her father was accustomed to beat her brutally. You are concerned that there may be other children in the shelter with similar experiences and feel you should research to see if this is so. How will you obtain this information?

**Problem (II)** You have been providing health care and nutritional support for children in a refugee camp. Several of the children you work with appear listless and depressed. You have decided to carry out a baseline assessment of the need for psy-

*cho-social intervention* You want to find ways of obtaining information without causing further harm to the children. How will you go about this?

**Problem (III)** You are running a non-formal education programme for children in a town on the border between two countries. There is a high drop-out rate among girls in their early teens, there are rumours that girls are being trafficked across the border and that several important local people are involved. You want to learn more about the problem but are anxious about the safety of the children in your programme, the staff and research respondents. How can you carry out this research without putting others at risk?

---

### QUOTE

*'As a group, children are the least powerful members of human society. They are usually not expected to have useful ideas and insights of their own, and through the first years of life they are dependent upon others for all their basic psychological needs.*

*Thus it is necessary to be explicit about the probable limits of a programme's outcomes. Given their own vulnerability, children are likely to be sympathetic to a facilitator's open admission of a programme's constraints. Participation may indeed be an empowering process, but the limits of this power need to be acknowledged in order to make the potential for real achievements clear.'*

*Louise Chawla and Anne Trine Kjørholt, Children as special citizens, in PLA Notes 25, February 1996, p. 45*

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### 3.4 The capacities of children

In one sense, child development is universal. All human children begin as babies and go through certain physiological, psychological and social processes of growth and development, some of which are marked by social rituals, to reach a stage where they become adults.

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### QUOTE

#### **The seven ages of life**

*All the world's a stage,  
And all the men and women merely players;  
They have their exits and their entrances,  
And one man in his time plays many parts,  
His acts being seven ages. At first the infant,  
Mewling and puking in the nurse's arms.  
Then the whining school-boy, with his satchel  
And shining morning face, creeping like snail  
Unwillingly to school. And then the lover,  
Sighing like furnace, with a woeful ballad  
Made to his mistress' eyebrow. Then a soldier,  
Full of strange oaths and bearded like the bard,  
Jealous in honour, sudden and quick in quarrel,  
Seeking the bubble reputation,  
Even in the cannon's mouth; And then the justice,*

*In fair round belly with good capon lined,  
 With eyes severe and beard of formal cut,  
 Full of wise saws and modern instances;  
 And so he plays his part. The sixth age shifts  
 Into the lean and slipper'd pantaloon  
 With spectacles on nose and pouch on side  
 His youthful hose, well saved, a world too wide  
 For his shrunk shank: and his big manly voice,  
 Turning again toward childish treble, pipes  
 And whistles in his sound Last scene of all,  
 That ends this strange, eventful history,  
 Is second childishness and mere oblivion,  
 Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything*

*William Shakespeare As You Like It, Act II Scene vii*

Each stage is marked by recognition of certain capacities such as:

- Walking;
- Talking;
- Taking responsibilities for cleaning and caring for their own bodies;
- Being able to absorb and use social knowledge;
- Conforming to acceptable social behaviour;
- Puberty;
- Taking responsibility for their own support and maintenance;
- Taking responsibility for the support and maintenance of others;
- Being able to protect their own safety and interests;
- Taking decisions on behalf of the group.



#### QUOTE

*If children are old enough to collect fodder and fuel, look after siblings and work for waged labour, they are certainly old enough to consult about decisions which affect their development.*

*Victoria Johnson, 1996, p 34*

Clearly these stages have both biological and social aspects. The order is not fixed to any specific ages. Infancy, childhood, youth, adulthood and old age are recognised stages in all societies, sometimes overlapping, sometimes subdivided. The roles, responsibilities and expectations of each stage are different according to the social group. Quite often what it is expected that children should or could do is different even within the same social group, for girls and boys for example, or according to whether the children live in a town or in the countryside.



**EXAMPLE**

BOYS				
Name of stage	SISSIM Young of the tribe	GAYNAK Shepherds	PES Young people	WAYABANE Youth and adults
Age	8 to 11 years	12 to 18 years	19 to 26 years	27 to 35 years
Socialisation Activities	Education about what not to do	Preparation for circumcision	Circumcision, initiation	Marriage
GIRLS				
Name of stage	FU NDOG WE Young girls	NOG WE Adolescents	MUXOLARE Adults	
Age	7 to 10 years	11 to 18 years	19 to 26 years	
Socialisation Activities	Education through numerous prohibitions	Tattooing	Marriage, initiation	

Among the Sereer of West Africa, ages and stages in the process of becoming an adult are different for boys and girls.\*

The idea that children develop through a series of fixed stages is based on a metaphor of biological development. Thus, just as an acorn will develop into an oak tree given the correct inputs of sun and rain, so children will develop into the 'correct' kind of adult if given the right kind of inputs—psychological stimuli, food, socialisation, education, immunisation and so forth. The same metaphor is used with respect to the difference between developing and developed nations, in which case, according to modernisation theory, the inputs would be technical knowhow, capital and democratic practices. In the case of children in classic child development theory, and developing nations in modernisation theory, the incapacity of the child and the nation are given as reasons for intervention by paternalistic adults and nations, in order to control the development process.



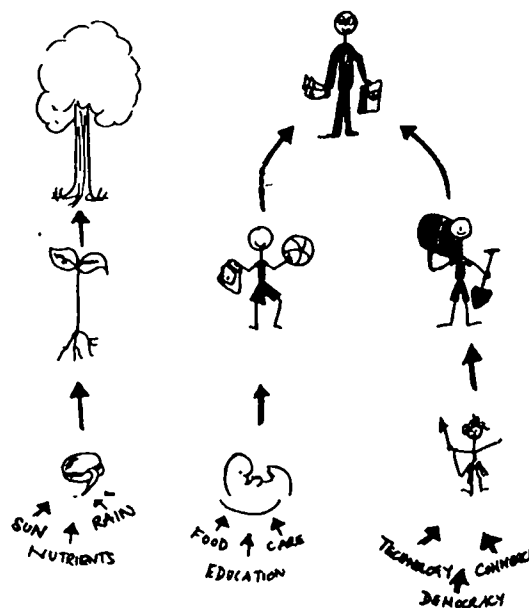
**LEARNING POINT**

**Development**

The word 'development' is based on an idea of biological growth. Seeds grow into seedlings and eventually into trees, provided nature makes available the right inputs.

Child development assumes that human foetuses, given the right inputs, will grow into children who go to school and play, and eventually into the correct kind of adults (businessmen).

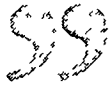
Applied to societies, the word development assumes a correct, and invariable growth from 'primitive' society through increasingly technical work into 'modern', commercial societies.



\*Gravrand, H. 1981, L'heritage spirituel Sereer: valeurs traditionnels d'hier, d'aujourd'hui et de demain, Ethiopiquest 31, 85-110



Much of what we know about children's capacities at different ages is derived from models of developmental psychology that are themselves based on work carried out in Western countries, principally in the United States and exported to other countries, where it does not necessarily apply. Western psychology researchers in Africa found this. They asked people to organise piles of food and household objects to show how 'a wise man' would do it. Each time they 'failed' the test, by not sorting things the way researchers expected, putting similar things together. In despair the researchers asked them 'how would a fool do this?' Then the people performed the task 'correctly'. For them, putting like things together was foolish. They were accustomed to sorting things according to the ways they were used, which the researchers could not recognise as valid (in Burman, 1994, p. 183).



### QUOTE

*The presentation of a general model which depicts development as unitary irrespective of culture, class, gender and history means that difference can be recognised only in terms of aberrations, deviations—that is, in terms of relative progress on a linear scale. The developmental psychology we know is tied to the culture which produced it.*

*Erica Burman, 1994, Deconstructing developmental psychology, London, Routledge, p. 183*



### EXERCISE

#### **What ages are children?**

*Beforehand: Prepare a paper for each participant with a table showing the numbers 0 to 18 on the left and a number of columns on the right. Mark up a flip chart sheet in the same way.*

#### **In the session:**

*(i) Hand out papers. Tell participants to name each of the right-hand columns with one of the words they use for people under 18 years of age and then block off the years to which each word refers in the appropriate column. No discussion. (10 minutes)*

*(ii) Divide participants into groups of three to discuss their tables and make a list of stages through which children pass. (10 minutes). If the participants come from different backgrounds, ethnic groups or different regions of the country, make sure that groups are not mixed (for example: different Ministries, different provinces, different ethnic groups, different training).*

*(iii) Once groups have decided on the stages in childhood, ask them to write down what they think children are able, and expected, to do in each stage.*

*(iv) Report back to plenary from each group. Record results on the flip chart. Use as the basis of a general discussion about childhood in the national/cultural context.*

Children's stage of development influences the choice of research methods. But it is important to remember that methods developed for use with children of a particular age in one society (especially Western societies) cannot be assumed to be appropriate for children of the same age in another society.

### 3.5 The development of participation

Participation has to be developed as an integral part of either research or programming. It cannot be achieved in a day. Both children and adults need to develop new understandings and dimensions of their relationship with each other, as well as new skills of communication and information processing.



#### LEARNING POINT

##### *Areas in which children's participation is now actively being sought*

- *In the research process at all stages—research with not on or about children;*
  - *In programme planning, implementation and evaluation,*
  - *In decision-making in children's own 'best interests';*
  - *In decision-making in social processes.*
- Families,*
- Communities,*
- Urban planning;*
- Environmental issues,*
- *In political processes to represent their 'own interests', for example organisations of street and working children,*
  - *In democratic processes, to represent 'children's interests' even in areas that do not target children.*



#### METHOD

##### *Children as environmental, urban planners*

*'Children were not only asked to draw the difficult circumstances of their lives, they were also asked to think about what might be done to change these situations, and what they could do themselves. Children in each of the three communities that served as sites for the research suggested projects and were then assisted to do the necessary preliminary investigations and to draw up fairly detailed proposals for realization of their ideas*

*In one community, children planned to create a different kind of gathering place for young people that would contrast sharply with the only facility then available—a kind of den where the young men from each neighbourhood congregated and drugs were freely available. In contrast, children identified a possible centre where young people of both sexes could meet for light refreshments, learn vocational skills and even be employed. With the support of the municipal authority, a suitable building was found and converted*

*Children's drawings and action plans were presented to their parents and other*

adults in a series of meetings designed to alert and involve the community in the children's activities. Using drawings and project proposals in this context triggered wide-ranging discussions of community problems and community needs among adults. Their concerns echoed those of the children and went beyond this to highlight additional issues with direct effects on children—divorce and school drop-out for example. Community meetings were also used to mobilize the support of parents and other adults for the children's action plans. Further support came as the outcome of a seminar of policy-makers, at which still more discussion of the children's drawings took place and specific plans for adult action were made.'

*Research carried out with children in Kenya by Roberta Mitusu and Fabio Dallape, described in Anderssen, S et al, The what, where and how book of using drawings in research with children, Trondheim, NOSEB, 1996 (draft)*



## QUOTE

*The children themselves are the experts: they know what their concerns are and how they see their future.*

*Mark Connolly, 1990, Surviving the streets, AIDS Action, Issue 11, London, AHRTAG*

Nevertheless, the definition of participation and understanding of the contexts in which children do, should or could participate are lacking. Participation takes many meanings in different contexts. Some people have called this the 'ladder of participation'



## EXERCISE

### **The ladder of participation**

*Before showing the ladder of participation (see following learning box), according to the background of participants, ask them to rank their research, project work or relationship to their own children on a scale of 0-10, where 0 is no participation and 10 is full participation.*

*Record the result in a graph on a flip chart.*

*Then show and discuss the ladder of participation (as an overhead or drawn on a long sheet of paper pinned to the wall).*

*Finally ask participants to rank their activities again, in view of the discussion of the 'ladder'.*

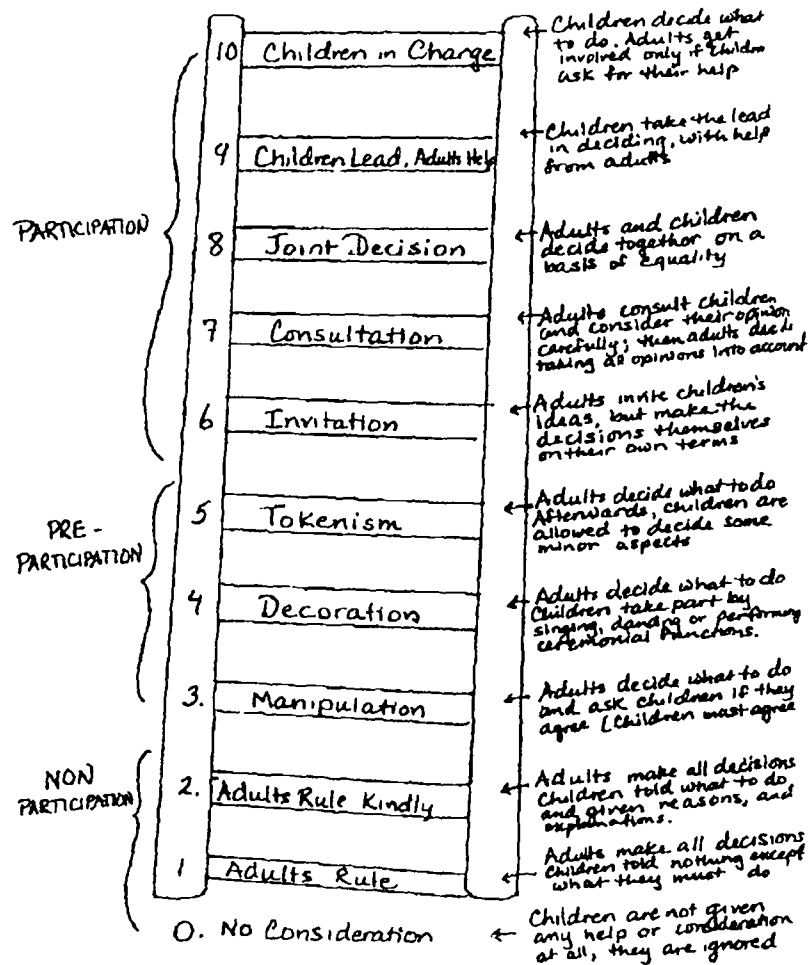
*Record the results once more. Discuss any differences.*



## LEARNING POINT

### The ladder of participation

#### THE LADDER OF PARTICIPATION IN MATTERS CONCERNING CHILDREN



Adapted by Barbara Franklin, of Radda Barmen, Vietnam, from a version developed by Roger Hart, in *Children's participation from tokenism to citizenship*, Innocenti Essays No 4, UNICEF, 1992



## LEARNING POINT

### Critical questions about children's participation

- Does children's participation mean the same as adult participation?
- Does it proceed in the same way?
- Do we need to develop special ways of facilitating children's participation?
- What might these be?
- How does children's participation relate to what is known about child development?



## EXERCISE

### **Critical questions about children's participation**

*Use the questions in the previous Learning Point as the basis of focus group discussions among groups of participants.*

Research methods that can be used in a participatory way with children include.

- Visual techniques, with groups or individuals, such as drawings, other plastic arts, diagrams such as maps and genealogies, photographs or films, which may be made by children, or used as stimuli for discussion;
- Role play and drama, usually improvised by children on themes suggested by them or by researchers;
- Group techniques, that reduce the adult/child power relationship and may include focus group discussion, group drawings or group activities such as ranking exercises;
- Children's writings, including essays, diaries, recall and observation schedules;
- Interviews: with children these should not be used until the research process is well under way and other methods have been used to develop children's confidence in themselves and the researcher; schedules and questionnaires should be avoided, it is better to use group interview techniques and encourage children to interview each other using tape recorders, or other children-friendly techniques.

All these methods will be explored in detail in Section 8.

The research skills required to use these techniques are primarily those required for good communication. They include:

- Knowledge of and commitment to children's rights;
- Respect for children as individuals;
- Appreciation of the different cultural contexts of childhood, which may differ within as well as between countries;
- Sensitivity to the differences between children's and adult's perspectives as well as recognition of the equal value of both;
- An ethical approach to research that does not privilege the researcher's knowledge and objectives, but shares the research aims, processes and results with research participants;
- The ability to listen and learn, rather than teach;
- The ability to talk with children as equals rather than talking to them using a patronising, 'special voice for children'.
- Practising ways of reducing adult power in research situations. In practical terms, this means reducing spatial differences, such as not sitting on a higher chair or behind a desk. In research terms, it means ensuring that informed consent is negotiated before and during research.



## DATA

### **Key points for ensuring the participation of boys and girls**

- *Listen to them, so that you understand what they are really saying;*
- *Take their experiences seriously—they are valid;*
- *Take their opinions seriously—they are valid;*
- *Don't put boys before girls;*
- *Let boys and girls choose their own activities, don't impose them according to gender,*
- *Develop a space in which they can come to their own decisions;*
- *Be a facilitator, not a teacher;*
- *Seek ways in which you can make them aware of their options;*
- *Seek methods for organising participative meetings of children;*
- *Never use children for decorating adult events*

*Save the Children Fund (UK) Street children programme, San Pedro Sula, Honduras*

In general terms, participatory research with children entails more than the simple use of different research techniques. For example, children's drawings have been used for many years by researchers, especially within psychology and social psychology, but this does not make this technique participatory except in the fact that children take part in the research by drawing pictures, just as they would take part by answering questions. Non-participatory visual methods usually entail researchers setting a drawing task for children, collecting the products and analysing the results. Using visual methods in a participatory way necessitates at least the following steps:

- Children set the research agenda, or agree to it, having first had an adequate explanation of research aims, methods and expected outcomes, including dissemination, and giving their consent. It is important to ensure that children feel able to refuse to take part and will have their refusal respected;
- The research activity takes place in an appropriate environment and on appropriate themes, so that children feel comfortable both physically and psychologically. Adult power is minimised. Drawings or other visual products are neither criticised nor praised. Children are asked for permission for their work to be taken away by the researcher, and used both in research and in dissemination of research results. This includes questions of whether or not authorship is assigned or anonymous, and whether the product is returned to children either as the original or as a reproduction.
- Research results and analysis are discussed with the children who have taken part, using appropriate techniques. Their comments are incorporated in final reports and their views on dissemination are respected.

- Further research plans with any group of children that has already taken part in research should be made with their collaboration and possible research assistance. Thus the research process should become fully participatory and entail a transfer of skills and knowledge.

It follows that participatory research is linked to an ethical approach based on respect for the human rights of research subjects that has broader scope than most of the ethical guidelines produced by professional bodies for use in research with human subjects. In any case, it is worth noting that ethical guidelines have a somewhat patchy application. They are mandatory only for members of some organisations or in some countries and there is no international body, nor international agreement, overseeing their application and use. This puts the ethical ball very firmly in the court of researchers and those who commission or design research, no more so than when the research subjects belong to the more powerless sections of society, such as prisoners, the mentally and physically ill, people with disabilities, members of disadvantaged communities such as the poor or certain ethnic groups, and, of course, children.

Children always lack power compared to adults. But the difference in power is often made worse by the fact that a child also belongs to a disadvantaged group. This makes it even more imperative to use a participatory approach and seek techniques that will minimise power inequalities and maximise empowerment of children, their families and communities. Moreover, it should be emphasised that training in participatory techniques should include learning, practising and *internalising* new kinds of interpersonal skills for communication with children.



## DATA

### **Interim statement of intent**

*As individuals who have participated in or facilitated the LRSP Course India/Nepal 1995, we have agreed that in all future research with children.*

- *We believe in, respect and support the rights of children as provided in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child,*
- *We will be dedicated to work for children's physical, psychological and social development,*
- *We will encourage children to speak, and listen to them;*
- *We will ask for informed consent of children, and their parents where appropriate, before involving them in research or in disseminating research information;*
- *We will honour children's priorities and interests,*
- *We will honour children's cultural values;*
- *We will treat children as adequate and capable social actors;*
- *We will not impose ourselves or our ideas on children,*
- *We will not use any form of abuse or exploitation for research purposes;*
- *We will not put children at risk for research purposes;*
- *We will not hide information from children;*
- *We will not discriminate against children on the basis of age, gender, socio-economic status, caste, religion, language, race, ethnicity, capacity,*
- *We will work towards the development of a clear concept of child participation;*

- *In research on issues directly relating to children we will endeavour to get children into identify the research problem, set objectives and be involved in data collection, analysis and conclusions,*
- *In issues indirectly relating to children we will obtain children's views on the research problem before writing any protocol;*
- *We will ensure that children's views are incorporated while developing research protocols;*
- *We will, wherever possible, try to involve children in conducting our research;*
- *We will ensure research report ownership to children or where appropriate their parents or other related persons;*
- *We will not use material without the informed consent from the participants;*
- *We will not give out real names of persons or organisations without informed consent; confidentiality of all sources will be maintained,*
- *We will not use material that we believe will be threatening to the children, even if they have given their informed consent;*
- *We will give appropriate weight and value to children's feelings;*
- *We will disseminate findings to the group(s) that contributed to the research, in media that they can understand;*
- *We will develop a network of LRSP colleagues;*
- *We will develop child-centred, participatory research networks within our own organisations;*
- *We will develop networks with any organisations that work specifically for the welfare of children, nationally and internationally;*
- *We will foster linkages between different categories of children, nationally and internationally,*
- *We will continuously develop our own capacity through reviewing, reading and sharing experiences;*
- *We will involve others who are committed to working with and for children in the child-centred, participatory research process;*
- *We will emphasise the ethical and conceptual aspects of the learning process while involved in capacity-building processes;*
- *We will work to raise awareness of individuals and organisations about child-centred, participatory approaches;*
- *We will acknowledge the materials and expertise of others;*
- *We will not teach methods of research in isolation from ethical and conceptual issues;*
- *We will not build capacity in child-centred, participatory research through classroom-based learning alone;*
- *We will not organise learning processes without explicit commitment to child-focussed activities on the part of the organisations and individuals involved;*
- *We believe that no one individual anywhere has sole copyright or ownership of materials developed out of shared experiences;*
- *We will give materials gathered from research participants back to the partici-*



*parts, keeping copies only with their informed consent;*

- *We will make every attempt to share the experiences of child-centred, participatory research as widely as possible;*
- *We will not copyright any materials developed out of shared LRSP experiences;*
- *We will take positive action to ensure that this statement is known and adhered to by other researchers.*

## **S U M M A R Y**

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The term 'participation' is used in this manual to mean 'empowerment' rather than simply 'taking part'.

### ***Children's participation in research is based on:***

- The participation articles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child;
- An ethical position that respects children's privacy and their right to consent to or dissent from taking part in research;
- Considering children's abilities at different stages of maturity, rather than defining children by what they cannot do;
- Understanding that people (including children) need to develop skills in order to be able to participate meaningfully.

### ***Research with children implies:***

- Taking children as the unit of observation and childhood as the unit of analysis;
- Putting children at the centre of the research process;
- Finding out about children's perspectives and views, using methods that take into account:

*Their relative lack of power in families and communities;*

*Their different use of and understanding of words;*

*Their relative lack of experience.*

## 4 WHAT IS CHILDHOOD?

*The focus of this section is childhood. Facilitators will find the information necessary as background material for plenary sessions and exercises on the ideas about childhood in different cultures. It is essential that participants understand that there are many varieties of childhood experiences, in time and place as well as according to culture, gender, class and ethnicity. In particular, it will be necessary to stress that the ideal (or globalised) childhood, which lies at the foundation of many psychological theories and welfare programmes, is a modern idea in Europe and North America and is not typical of most childhoods there, even at the end of the twentieth century. It is likely that this will need to be reinforced several times during the learning process.*

The new theories about childhood discussed in the previous section challenge some common assumptions. It is now widely recognised that the ideas on which many policies and programmes for children have been based during this century have their origins in quite recent history. Historians have provided evidence that protected childhood, clearly separated from adult life is relatively modern. Anthropological data show that what it means to be a child differs both between and within cultures:

- As shown in the last section, childhood is different even for boys and girls from the same social group.
- Poor children everywhere have brief childhoods, take on adult responsibility early and are vulnerable to exploitation.
- Wealthier children everywhere, and most children in richer countries, spend longer learning to be adults, playing and going to school. This is the ideal image of childhood, which is not true of the vast majority of children in developing countries.

Nevertheless, programmes and policies tend to work on the basis of this ideal, which has been exported from Western contexts to countries where it may have little relevance. It has become a global ideal through the history of colonialism and imperialism. The process by which it has come to be thought of as natural and universal, despite its recent history, is sometimes referred to as 'the globalisation of childhood'.

### 4.1 The globalisation of childhood

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The global notion of childhood is an idea, rather than a fact. The childhoods experienced by actual children, Western and Non-Western, are extremely varied. Research with them about their lives has to cut through the myths and assumptions of global childhood and find out about the realities of their existence.

The global notion of childhood makes certain claims about the characteristics of children. It assumes that:

- There is a natural and universal division between adults and children, based on biological and psychological features, that are taken for granted and not questioned;

- Children are characterised by being smaller and weaker and defined by things they cannot do;
- Children develop through scientifically established stages, for which there is a normal route and timetable;
- The global model is superior to all other childhoods.



### QUOTE

*'Children's needs' have been constructed as part of a standardised model in which childhood is a period of dependency, defined by protectionist adult-child relationships in which adults are dominant providers and children are passive consumers. This standardised model is underpinned by separation of young humanity from later life-phases, as a distinctive status.. Euro-American developmental psychology has provided the conceptual rationale for standardised childhoods, in ways which at best draw attention away from the diversity of developmental pathways, and at worst pathologise deviations. 'Child development experts' have promoted normative images of how 'child development' can best be promoted within the specialised ecology of the conventional family or kindergarten, under the watchful eye of mothers, nursery nurses and teachers, endowed and/or trained in sensitivity and responsiveness.*

*Martin Woodhead, forthcoming, "Beyond 'children's needs'", postscript to *Psychology and the Cultural Construction of Children's Needs*, in James A and Prout A (eds ), *Constructing and Reconstructing Childhood*, (Second Edition), Brighton, Falmer Press*

There is very little evidence for the assumptions of the global model of childhood. As far as research is concerned, this model has certain consequences:

- It has led to the design and use of inappropriate research instruments;
- Children whose lives do not fit the global model are likely to be defined as abnormal;
- It is assumed that children's needs are already known and need not be researched;
- It is assumed that children do not know about their own lives and cannot provide information, so adults are asked instead.



### EXERCISE

#### **What is childhood in my country?**

A group drawing activity, with the following aims:

- To demonstrate the way in which drawings can be used to generate data;
- To further develop group work skills;
- To establish the existence of different skills among participants;
- To reflect on the nature of childhood in the national setting.

Depending on whether participants are from one national group or several they should either be divided into three groups by the numbering off method or into national groupings. Each group is given a piece of flip chart paper together with some coloured felt tip pens and asked to represent childhood (and different types of childhoods) in their country through drawings. The results are shared in plenary.



## EXAMPLE

### **Exercise: What is a child in Ethiopia?**

Participants initially began to write on their notepads, rather than draw. Their notebooks were "confiscated", after which they began to draw with increasing enthusiasm and laughter. Before the report back session it was pointed out to them by facilitators that they are tied to written modes of communication. One group rapporteur commented that the exercise had made them discover new skills of one group member.

The drawings produced were explained thus (points made in discussion included):

(i) Rural and urban childhoods were contrasted—a shepherd boy was depicted, together with his displacement to the city and conversion into a street child. The urban child has a lot of problems. Families cannot satisfy their children's needs. This does not just apply to rural displaced families but also the urban dwellers. The group stated that they had made this distinction between rural and urban children in order to show the differences in conditions. There is no census of rural children, but they do lack services. Parents of rural children demand child work from them, which disadvantages the children because parents do not wish to send them to school.

(ii) This told a story, that started with rural parents with lots of children because of a lack of family planning and the fact that children are seen as an asset. The rigid division of labour based on gender, and early marriage for girls were depicted. It was shown that the entire adult population has the right and duty to punish children. It was also shown that children flock to urban areas and that there are push and pull factors that lead to the street.

(iii) This group depicted rural childhood in which children were mostly working, but also drew pictures of recreation (swimming in the river). This was contrasted with urban life with children sleeping at a bus stop, car washing and suffering car accidents because of the dangerous places they play. The privileged attend school, but the student teacher ratio can be as high as 100:1 and facilities are poor. Children go with their mothers to work.

It was pointed out that a good deal of information had been gathered through a 20 minute exercise, that this was through group consensus rather than individual interviews for example, but that it is still data. In a sense this was a group essay on childhood in Ethiopia.

Two pairs of contrasts in all drawings were noted: urban:rural and work:play. The former may have been due to leading comments made by the facilitator when the task was described. Gender was only strongly mentioned in one group, but other repeated themes were work responsibilities, lack of access to education and punishment.

The global model of childhood is based on a set of values and assumptions according to which children are vulnerable, dependent, passive and incapable. This means that children should be at home or in school where they can benefit from the care, nurture and instruction of their parents and teachers. Children who act independently, those who work or those living on the streets, for example, are regarded either as victims or deviants.

Facilitators should give participants ample opportunity to think about the values and assumptions behind the global model, and to examine how far these differ from the values and assumptions applied to children and childhood in their own country, as well as the realities children experience. They should also think about whether the global model really is best for children's welfare. It may be that local child rearing practices and local attitudes towards children are better.



### EXERCISE

#### **Comparison of global and national childhoods**

*This exercise consists of a series of discussions, in pairs, groups and plenary, using coloured cards, with the aim of reinforcing ideas about the contrast between the global notion of childhood and national realities.*

*Divide participants into pairs, and then number the pairs off into three groups. Each group should be given a set of differently-coloured cards and a topic to discuss (for example, work=blue, green=education, pink=punishment).*

*For the first 20 minutes, participants work in pairs, discussing the differences between the global notion of childhood and national childhoods with respect to their allotted topic. Using black felt-tip pens and large letters, they should write down the ideas they discuss on the cards, on one side only and with only one idea on each card*

*Then the pairs should meet in groups, to discuss the ideas. Finally the cards from each group are spread on the floor and the entire group of participants gathers around each set of cards for further discussion.*

The global notion of childhood has set a 'universal agenda for children' which puts pressure on social planners, decision-makers, child welfare workers, teachers, psychologists and parents in many parts of the world. It is taken for granted by international and national agencies alike, especially as people are becoming more aware of the problems faced by children who work, children in war and natural disasters, and children abused and exploited by adults, including their parents.

Participants should be asked to consider the influence of the universal agenda for children on agencies that work with children in their own country.



### EXERCISE

#### **Critique of global influence on programmes**

*Before the learning process begins, facilitators should select three examples of the publications of local programmes. These could be publicity materials, annual reports or newspaper accounts, and should not exceed four or five pages in length. At the end of a day's work participants should be divided into three groups, each group being provided with sufficient copies of one of the publications to ensure all its members have access.*

*Participants are asked to read the material provided for their group overnight. In the morning they are asked to discuss the material in their group for 30 minutes, with a rapporteur recording the discussion and reporting to a plenary session, for further debate.*

*Note Facilitators may need to ensure that this exercise results in comparisons between global and national ideas, rather than a critique of the programmes. It is important that the examples chosen for analysis are not programmes of participants in the learning process*

In order to ensure that participants think not only about the potential advantages of the universal agenda for children but also about the strengths of their own cultures, facilitators may want to lead a brainstorm in plenary on the following theme:

Reflecting on the differences between global and local concepts of childhood, do participants feel that their own cultures have something to offer in relation to child welfare that might be more effective than the universal agenda?

#### **4.2 Introduction to children's rights**

The first international declaration of the Rights of the Child (called the Declaration of Geneva) was drafted by Eglantyne Jebb, for the Save the Children Union, which sponsored its approval by the League of Nations in 1924. After the demise of the League, a fuller draft was adopted as the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of the Child in 1959.

The Declaration was no more than an agreement between member nations of the United Nations that children's rights are worth pursuing. A Convention, on the other hand, is legally binding once ratified. Member states signal their intention to adhere to the standards set out in a convention by first signing and later ratifying, when they will bring their own legislation into line with the principles of the Convention. After this, other member states can intervene to ensure that the rights are secured.

On the eve of the United Nations' International Year of the Child in 1979, the Polish government proposed that a Convention on the Rights of the Child should be drafted. Between 1979 and the adoption of the Convention in 1989, a Working Group met annually for one week, under the aegis of the UN Commission on Human Rights, to draft this document. In the early years, developing countries were notable by their absence, and the Convention can still be argued to incorporate largely the views of Northern countries. UNICEF took a low profile until 1988 and much of the early lobbying and organisational background work was carried out by non-governmental organisations.



#### **LEARNING POINT**

##### **History of the Convention on the Rights of the Child**

1919/21	Declaration of Geneva
1930s	Declaration of the Rights of the Child (League of Nations)
1959	Declaration of the Rights of the Child (United Nations)
1979	International Year of the Child
1979-89	Drafting process
1989	Convention on the Rights of the Child adopted by the United Nations General Assembly
[1990	World Summit for Children]

The Convention consists of 50 articles, one of which established a Committee of 10 (soon to be 18) international experts to receive reports from ratifying countries, in the first instance two years after ratification and thereafter at five year intervals. These reports are intended to show the measures adopted and progress made in the enjoyment of rights set out in the Convention. UNICEF is specifically highlighted as having a role in giving expert advice on the implementation of the Convention.



### LEARNING POINT

#### **Procedures of the Convention on the Rights of the Child**

*Adoption of the Convention by the UN General Assembly.*

*Committee of 10 experts established, with periodical elections in rota, working through the Human Rights Commission in Geneva, and meeting at least twice a year.*

*Countries sign and ratify, to become 'states party' to the Convention.*

*Country reports to the Committee:*

*Preliminary reports two years after the country has ratified;*

*At five year intervals thereafter*

*Consideration of reports by the Committee:*

*Committee puts written questions to country representatives,*

*Country representatives provide verbal answers while the Committee is in session,*

*Alternative reports from NGOs,*

*Reports and record of session published by the Human Rights Commission.*

*Note According to the provisions of the Convention, all national reports should be widely available. How available are the national reports for participants' countries?*

The Convention has been notable for the swift uptake by the members of the United Nations. A factor in this was the UN World Summit for Children, attended by heads of state of 71 countries less than a year after the Convention was adopted. This encouraged further ratifications and established a number of interim goals for child survival, protection and development for the 1990s. These goals, which are reprinted in the widely-distributed UNICEF publication *First Call for Children*, are sometimes confused with the articles of the Convention.



### EXERCISE

#### **Getting to know the Convention**

*If participants have not already done so, they should read the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and then discuss in groups the following questions*

- *What terms in the Convention need further definition?*
- *What articles in the Convention are most relevant in their country context?*
- *What articles are least relevant?*

By May 1996 the Convention had entered into force in 187 countries and the Committee had received a total of 55 preliminary country reports. Many countries are now beginning to prepare their five year reports, the first of which are due in 1997. The preliminary reports are of varying quality and it is acknowledged that standards of reporting and methods of data collection need much improvement. This has led to considerable interest in finding new ways of

researching children's lives. One interesting feature of the reporting process has been the extent to which the Committee welcomes 'alternative' reports from the non-governmental sector, which are discussed separately. In some countries, coalitions of non-governmental organisations have formed to produce these reports and for general advocacy on children's rights. Child research has never been more important.

### 4.3 Divisions and power within childhood

One result of the influence of the global notion of childhood is a tendency to ignore differences between groups of children and talk about 'The Child', 'The Girl Child' or 'The African Child'. Research with children requires sensitivity to the differences between children that result from such factors as gender, ethnicity, age, religion and geography.



#### **E X E R C I S E**

##### **Who is 'The Child'?**

*A plenary exercise using transparencies and an overhead projector. About a dozen photographs of children from different parts of the world, male and female, rich and poor, depicted in various contrasting activities should be photocopied beforehand on to overhead transparencies. The images should be as varied as possible and might include wealthy children in school or at play, working children in rural and urban settings, street children and child soldiers.*

*A facilitator shows these images to participants, with little comment except to ask of each image 'Is this 'The Child'? The aim is to cause participants to reflect on the fact that most children do not experience global childhood and to become more observant and analytical when researching children and childhood*

*This activity also introduces the idea that visual images are valid means of reflecting reality*



#### **E X E R C I S E**

##### **Role play on divisions and power within childhood**

*The objective of this exercise is to explore and highlight the patterns of difference within childhood in national settings, together with the consequently different life experiences and power relations between children.*

*Participants should be divided into pairs, each of which is given a note on which is written two contrasting categories of children and allowed 25 minutes to design a short role-play. In the role-play the pair is expected to develop a typical scenario highlighting the differences, and type of interaction, between the two children.*

*The role-plays should take approximately five minutes each. When all the scenarios have been seen each pair is asked, in turn, to explain what key issues/situations they had intended to depict. These explanations should then be followed by a discussion in which participants' views and comments are drawn out by a facilitator.*

*This activity also gives all participants the opportunity to experience role play.*





### EXAMPLE

Contrasting 'pairs' of children used for role play on 'divisions and power in childhood' in two learning processes

<i>Ethiopia</i>	<i>India/Nepal</i>
<i>urban child/rural child,</i>	<i>urban child/rural child,</i>
<i>elder sister/younger brother,</i>	<i>elder sister/younger brother,</i>
<i>able-bodied child/disabled child,</i>	<i>girl child/boy child,</i>
<i>girl child/boy child,</i>	<i>older brother/younger brother,</i>
<i>older brother/younger brother,</i>	<i>working child/school-going child,</i>
<i>rich child/poor child,</i>	<i>Muslim child/non-Muslim child,</i>
<i>literate child/illiterate child,</i>	<i>rich child/poor child,</i>
<i>European child/non-European child,</i>	<i>literate child/illiterate child,</i>
<i>non-Christian child/Christian child</i>	<i>high caste child/low caste child</i>

### SUMMARY

The model of childhood used by most welfare programmes, as well as implicit in much research, is based on a recent Western ideal.

This ideal, sometimes called the 'global model', is not experienced by many children, even in the West. The great majority of children in developing countries have very different childhoods.

The way childhood is experienced differs according to history, culture, wealth, gender and ethnic group. It is thus not possible to talk of 'The Child', or even 'The Girl Child' or 'The Indian (or African) Child'.

It is important for both research and programming that the divisions between groups of children are taken into account.

## 5 CHILDREN IN DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES

*After theoretical work on participation and childhood it is useful for participants to use these new perspectives to reflect on their own daily programme work. This is done through an individual exercise.*



### **E X E R C I S E**

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#### **Children in development programmes**

*Participants are given five handouts exploring a range of options in relation to the programmes and approaches of aid, welfare and rights organizations that work with children. Facilitators should distribute the handouts and explain the task carefully before participants begin. When participants fill in the handouts, providing details about their organisation and work, in the relevant boxes and columns, it is possible to find out about the values, assumptions, strategies and models that guide their own thinking. It is also helpful to establish just how much participants and their organizations actually know about the children they work with and how clear the strategies, activities and objectives of their programmes really are. Participants should be encouraged to give as much detail as possible, adding information on spare sheets of paper if necessary.*

*Each handout concentrates on a different aspect of programme planning and development:*

- *I & II are concerned with exploring the baseline information or knowledge of the organization about the children with whom it works.*
- *III examines the factors that led participants' organizations to become involved in work with children. Many interventions are driven not by sound knowledge and understanding of children's problems, priorities and needs but by other, often external sometimes inappropriate, factors such as pressure from government or the general public.*
- *IV involves an analysis of participants' work, in terms of the overall objectives and approaches and the specific activities. This handout takes the form of a table so that each activity (lefthand vertical column) can be located in the appropriate box according to its overall objective or approach (top horizontal column). Participants should be asked to give details about the activities—what supplies or services do they provide, for example, or what advocacy campaigns do they run?*
- *V also a table, aims to identify the institutional context within which participants' organizations work. People and agencies who have a particular interest in the situation one way or another are sometimes called 'stakeholders'. In work with children, the primary stakeholders are the children themselves. Others may include their families or the communities in which they live, the staff of schools and orphanages, children's employers, their peer groups, religious leaders and so on. Thus, one purpose of the exercise is to identify the stakeholders in participants' own programmes.*

**EXERCISE**

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**Programme analysis I: Which group(s) of children does your organisation work with?**

*This provides an opportunity for participants to identify in very general terms the situation or circumstance of the children they work with:*

- *Children separated from their families;*
  - *Sexually exploited children;*
  - *Abused children (physically, sexually, emotionally);*
  - *School children;*
  - *Working children;*
  - *School drop outs;*
  - *Children defined as delinquent,*
  - *Refugee children;*
  - *Children affected by armed conflict;*
  - *Children affected by environmental disaster;*
  - *Children with physical or mental disabilities;*
  - *Children with nutritional or health problems;*
  - *Other group(s) of children (describe).*
- 

**EXERCISE**

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**Programme analysis II: What do you know about the children your organisation works with?**

*In this handout, participants are asked to give more details about the children, including their social characteristics and the degree to which they participate in the programme.*

- *How many children are affected by your programme?*
- *Is their involvement with the programme intensive or intermittent?*
- *What age groups of children are involved in your programme?*
- *Does the programme include children of both sexes? If so, in what proportion? If not, why not?*
- *Does your programme work with children of particular ethnic or religious groups? If so, in what proportion(s)?*
- *Does your programme work with urban children, rural children or both? If both, in what proportions?*



**E X E R C I S E**

**Programme analysis III: What were the factors that motivated your organisation to work with these children?**

- Number of children affected by a particular problem?
- Effects of the problem on children?
- Relative ease of solving problem?
- Donor pressure?
- Public interest and concern?
- Governmental or inter-governmental organisation priorities?
- Priorities of children, communities or programme partners?
- 'Visibility' of children's problems?
- Others?



**E X E R C I S E**

**Programme analysis IV: What programme activities does your programme carry out? What are the aims of these activities?**

	<i>Survival</i>	<i>Development</i>	<i>Protection</i>	<i>Participation</i>	<i>Correction</i>
<i>Supplies</i>					
<i>Service provision</i>					
<i>Advocacy</i>					
<i>Legal literacy</i>					
<i>Research, monitoring</i>					
<i>Legislative changes</i>					
<i>Capacity building, training</i>					
<i>Technical assistance</i>					
<i>Social mobilization</i>					



**E X E R C I S E**

**Programme analysis V: What are the role and influence of key individuals and organisations in the implementation of your work?**

	Donor	Staff	Volunteer	Client	Other
Children					
Families					
Community					
Children's institutions					
Religious groups					
Private sector					
Local government					
State or provincial government					
National government					
Inter-Government					
Agency					
NGO					
Community Based Organization					
Significant individuals					



**E X E R C I S E**

**Research needs for evaluating performance**

After thinking about their own programmes individually, participants can be encouraged to consider what they might need to know in order to evaluate the way their programme functions.

Participants are divided into small groups and given three tasks:

- Share the main points arising from the individual exercise on programme analysis;
- Discuss the key information they might need to assess programme performance, in the light of the children they work with and the type of programme;
- Discuss possible opportunities and limitations in carrying out evaluations of one's own programme (including the roles of various stakeholders in supporting or obstructing programmes).

Each group should record its discussion on cards or a flip chart sheet to be shared with others in a plenary session.

Facilitators will need to complete this session by leading a plenary discussion reflecting on its main purpose. Having completed the organizational and institutional analysis and identified possible information needs in relation to assessing the performance of their organizations, participants will have gained some insights into possible applications of research in their work. The two main applications are:

- as an aid to programme planning and development  
and
- as a tool for advocacy with stakeholders who have a special  
interest in their work.

These insights may prove especially useful for participants who for their pilot research projects in the field choose to appraise the work of either their organization or that of a colleague. Thus, for example, it is possible to assess whether a particular programme activity run by a particular agency really is participatory or protective with regard to children. Likewise, it is possible to learn about the views of various stakeholders—children and adults—on the progress or impact of a particular programme. All participants should benefit from the session by learning something about the assumptions behind their work and where there are major information gaps in their organizations in terms of the children they work with or the programmes they run. This will also be useful for facilitators throughout the learning process, but especially during field-based learning.

## 6 WHAT IS WRONG WITH CONVENTIONAL RESEARCH?

*This section examines the way in which conventional research instruments, such as questionnaires and surveys, are used and shows how some of the problems they present for research with children can be examined in the learning process through a series of role play exercises.*

In this modern world the white-coated scientist in his laboratory is the ultimate expert on life. Many social researchers aim to use the same precise methods, numerical data and logical analysis, even though social research cannot usually take place in a laboratory and it is difficult to treat people as if they are atoms or molecules because they think, speak, have feelings and become part of the research process. Moreover, social researchers cannot be entirely objective observers for they are also human beings, who cannot help but get involved in the research activity. Even if researchers only stay a short while they affect the events and people around them. The kind of answers they receive to their questions depends to a large extent on the kind of person they are.

Social researchers who have realised this are now using participatory research approaches. They realise that people are the experts on their own lives and this means the research process is less a matter of asking questions and more a matter of listening to what people want to say. Nevertheless, participatory research meets with some resistance. There are two main arguments:

- Participatory research provides only qualitative data, which is very useful for background information, but cannot give scientifically valid answers to research questions;
- Conventional research instruments, such as questionnaires and surveys, are the only scientific way of gathering data.

Both these arguments require some exploration.

### 6.1 Qualitative versus quantitative

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Qualitative data are often contrasted with quantitative data as if they cannot be used together and as if quantitative data were somehow superior.

The popular image of science is that it reaches its answers by means of numbers and calculations. This makes quantitative data appear to be more important than qualitative data. But scientists in laboratories rely on observation of all kinds of qualities, such as heat and colour, for developing questions and arriving at solutions. Doctors, also, will concentrate on many kinds of observation and physical examination before they begin to use tests with numerical answers to make a diagnosis. In any kind of science, numbers are only useful if there is qualitative information to provide the context of both questions and answers. However sophisticated the calculations, numbers by themselves make little sense, unless we know what they are about.

Even though numbers have to be set in context, many people still refer to quantitative data as 'hard' or more reliable, and qualitative data as 'soft' or not scientific. Nevertheless, hard data may be very unreliable if they are not well collected, and systematic collection of qualitative data can provide very good numerical results. Children's drawings, in particular have proved to be very useful in producing hard, numerical information.



## EXAMPLE

### **Turning soft data into hard: Social scaling in children's family drawings**

To investigate whether Western psychology tests can be used universally, Sven Andersson asked 262 children in Tanzania, South Africa and Sweden to draw 'my future family'. The drawings were analysed to look at social scaling (such as distances between parents and children and relative size of figures). Social scaling can be measured and coded for use in computer analysis.

The study found cultural differences in terms of spatial relationships but overall similarities in the way boys focused on fathers and girls on mothers.

Sven Andersson, 1994, *Social scaling and children's graphic strategies, A comparative study of children's drawings in three cultures*, Linköping, Linköping University Press, pp 101-122

Observation provides the initial questions for social research, leading to questions such as 'What kind of families do street children come from?' or 'What are the effects of conflict on children's emotional health?'

These questions need to be investigated through a number of different techniques, in order to find out more about surrounding factors and variables. What is the local meaning of 'street child?' Do 'street children' all live away from their families? What type of families do other children live in?

Numerical tests are only needed when a researcher is fairly sure of the answers, as a final check—just as doctors will only ask for laboratory tests when they are pretty sure they know what illness a patient has.

The analysis of numerical answers depends on the knowledge of the topic already gained by the researcher. The simple presentation of tables full of numbers is only one step towards the answer, not an answer in itself.

## 6.2 Surveys and questionnaires

Participatory and qualitative research methods are sometimes difficult for researchers to use because of the dominance of surveys and questionnaires in social science. In the eyes of many researchers, and in the popular image of social science, questionnaires and surveys are the legitimate form of research. To do 'real' research you have to have a questionnaire, which is made scientific by the use of correct sampling procedures and computer analysis. Researchers who try to use other methods may be regarded with suspicion or accused of not doing scientific research.



## QUOTE

...resistance was mounted to the fact that I did not have a schedule of questions with a copy given in advance; my open ended questions would sometimes disturb people for they felt this was not the way to do proper research.

Neera Burra, 1987, *A report on child labour in the lock industry of Aligarh, Uttar Pradesh, India*, Unpublished report for UNICEF, New Delhi



Of course survey work with questionnaires is valid and has its place in the research process. But it is not obligatory and should be carried out at the end of the process rather than at the beginning. Surveys need not use questionnaires and, if they do, the questions must be based on considerable prior investigation to establish the context, to develop research questions, and to find out what the important issues are for the respondents concerned. An extensive stage of development is necessary in order to discover how relevant the researcher's chosen 'problem' is to the people concerned, what words and ideas they use to talk about it, and what are the practical, social and cultural factors that affect it. These principles are fundamental to social science research, but they are not always practised in the field. This is perhaps more true of research with children than investigations of adult populations, because children are likely to be less confident about questioning the assumptions behind and language used in a questionnaire.

Acknowledging this problem, many researchers rely on 'open ended' questions (see Section 7), which give the children more freedom to express themselves in their own words. But children, even more than adults, find it difficult to use words in the same way as researchers.



#### QUOTE

*Some people start their contact with street children with a survey...It could satisfy our curiosity. It is useful for university theses that students in sociology or social work have to prepare...Is it useful for the children themselves? No! The children don't believe in those surveys, because they have been approached by so many students and people and police who have questioned them about their street life. We don't believe in such external surveys either, since we already know the answer to most of the questions we put in the questionnaires. They are in fact written in all the books dealing with street children and delinquent youths; libraries are full of such books.*

*The children, fortunately, don't take a survey seriously and so don't have false expectations. Children don't care to answer survey questions correctly. In fact, they rarely give correct answers to your questions whether you are a foreigner or a local.*

*Fabio Dallape, 1988, An experience with street children, Nairobi, Undugu Society of Kenya, p 24*

### 6.3 Experiencing conventional research instruments

Much social research, especially when it focuses on programme work, tends to rely on questionnaires, surveys and interviews. Even when interviews are relatively unstructured and aim to gather 'in-depth' information or case studies, they seldom pay special attention to the particular challenges posed by research with children. In many cases research about children fails to take into account children's knowledge about their own lives and simply asks adults, such as parents and teachers. In addition, much social research fails to follow proper procedures of sampling and using control groups, and does not take into consideration differences of language and culture. Large-scale research often uses poorly-trained research assistants, who know little about either the research respondents or the research itself.

The exercises in this section aim to examine some of the problems posed by conventional research methods, using role play so that participants experience the difficulties first hand, not only as 'researchers' but also as 'respondents'. Child respondents are not used in these exercises for three reasons:

- To give participants an opportunity to feel what it is like to be the respondent to a questionnaire designed for child research;

- To give respondents additional experience of role play;
- Because using children could be exploitative.

Before carrying out these exercises, facilitators will need to research some of the conventional research instruments, such as questionnaires and behaviour checklists that have recently been employed to research children's lives in their own national context, and chose three or four examples that can be used in the role plays.

The object of these exercises is not to mock questionnaire and survey methods but rather to help participants develop an awareness of the problems that can be encountered in the uncritical use of conventional research instruments in research with children.



### **E X E R C I S E**

#### **Role plays on 'children and society'**

*These role plays have the double function of exploring ideas about children's roles in society and forming the basis of subsequent role plays using conventional research instruments. They also provide further experience of role play for participants.*

*At the end of one day's work, participants should be divided into groups of around five to eight people, each of which has to take responsibility for presenting a brief drama to the rest of the participants the following morning. Each drama should focus on some aspect of children's lives in typical national settings, such as family, school, orphanage, workplace or street. The scenario and/or characters may be formulated first by facilitators (see following box).*

*After each role play, the actors should be asked what it was they were attempting to portray, as the basis for a general discussion on children's lives in the national context.*



### **E X E R C I S E**

#### **Role plays on 'children and society'**

*These role plays can be successfully stimulated either by giving participants written scenarios, or by suggesting sets of characters they might play, based on stories and characters that are recognisable or typical in the local context:*

##### **Ethiopia: stories**

*For the Ethiopia learning process, local facilitators prepared 'typical' stories of children's lives, to stimulate role play. The scenes were family, orphanage, street. For example.*

##### **Family**

*It is a family of six people—two parents and the rest children. The maximum income of the family, including what the mother earns by baking enjera (flat bread) in three or four households, is 70 Birr a month. The father is a daily labourer. This is usually referred to as a model family for other poor families in the area, because it is self-contained and there have been no quarrels or disagreements among family members. Aster is an 11-year-old, second-born girl, currently living with the family. She dropped out of school in Grade Three, due to lack of money. Her responsibility is to cook food to be sold on the streets by her younger siblings. In addition she cooks the family dinner and helps her mother whenever necessary. Aster does not have time to*

*play and, even when she does have time, has difficulties getting along with agemates because, for example, she does not know the games that are common for her age. She is seen doing some chores, caring for her siblings and immersed in an adult-like meditation.*

**India/Nepal: characters**

*For the role plays on 'children in society' in the India/Nepal learning process each group was assigned a situation and set of characters (chosen by local facilitators) and asked to rehearse a scene to show a typical situation involving children, to be acted in front of the entire group the following day. The resulting dramas, in Hindi, English or a mixture of both, were entertaining and also provided ample material for discussion of children's lives as well as the basis for subsequent role plays on the use of conventional research instruments.*

**SCHOOL**

*Headteacher; teacher, school inspector; boys and girls*

**FAMILY**

*Grandmother; mother; father; brothers and sisters*

**ORPHANAGE**

*Director; psychologist; social worker; orphan boys and girls*

**STREET**

*Street educator; dada (man who wields power over street children); policeman; street boys and girls*

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During the first role plays, facilitators should note participants who are particularly good at keeping in role, and ask if they would take part in a second role play in which they are interviewed, still in their role, using one of the conventional research instruments already selected by facilitators. The interviewer in each case may be either a participant or a facilitator. The second role plays should take place in plenary and be followed by general discussion.

Ideally the research instruments chosen for these role plays should have been developed for use in the type of setting (family, orphanage and so forth) depicted in the role plays. The character interviewed can be an adult or a child and discussion should include questions to both 'interviewer' and 'respondent' about how they felt during the interview.

This exercise takes time, because questionnaires are often very long. Facilitators should not be concerned if the audience appears to become bored, because this will reflect the way a respondent might feel during an interview.



## DATA

### **Some comments from the flip chart record of discussion of the use of conventional instruments in role plays in India**

- Objective not clear
- No rapport or trust
- Unsuitable words/language
- Lack of communication
- Questions not relevant—"stupid"
- Interviewers not experienced or clear about the questions
- Limited by the questionnaire
- Questions at the wrong level
- Too structured—inflexible*
- Questionnaire too long for anyone (especially children)
- Insensitive questions
- Extractive not participatory
- Prepared by people not familiar with the context
- Interviewers not honest about the time it would take
- Sampling problems
- Interviewees see the questionnaire is ill-prepared
- Interviewer/programme sets the priorities
- Inappropriate interviewer characteristics
- Status differences affect the situation
- Culturally inappropriate behaviour (lack of respect)
- Pre-conceptions being confirmed
- No prior observation or research
- Interviewees were being used for reasons they did not understand
- Inappropriate rating scales
- Consent of interviewee not always free
- Reasons for asking the obvious ?
- Did not know the answers/information
- Alien questions can disturb—make interviewees feel inadequate
- Terms not defined culturally
- Trying to give the "right" answers—fear of consequences
- Not sufficient time for child to express her feelings
- Adult interference in children's answers
- Validity of information not cross-checked
- Interviewers—Leading questions—"Led" the answers
- No (scope/space) for additional information
- The wrong information was collected
- The purpose of the questionnaire was not explained
- Other factors/people interfering with the questionnaire process (especially with children )
- Interviewees uncomfortable—answering without thinking
- Clipboards—answers written so interviewees could not read
- No relevance to the interviewees lives
- Computer driven
- Questions are not always a culturally appropriate mode of communication

Finally facilitators should sum up the critique of conventional methods in a plenary session.



### **LEARNING POINT**

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#### **What is wrong with conventional methods? (1)**

##### **The Problem**

- *Belongs to researchers and donors*
- *Assumes western childhood*
- *Is inappropriate to the situation or culture*
- *May not be a priority to 'informants'*

##### **The Instruments**

- *Assume Western childhood*
  - *Use unfamiliar words and ideas*
  - *Do not respect 'informants'*
  - *Are intrusive*
  - *May be badly translated or adapted*
  - *May not have been properly piloted*
  - *May not have been used with a control group*
- 



### **LEARNING POINT**

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#### **What is wrong with conventional methods? (2)**

##### **The Researchers**

- *Don't make rapport with informants*
- *May be more powerful than informants*
- *Are often poorly trained*
- *Don't always use the instruments well*
- *May not have been involved in designing the instruments*
- *May raise unrealistic expectations in 'informants'*
- *May not respect or understand 'informants'*
- *May have inappropriate characteristics*

##### **The 'Informants'**

- *May be adults rather than children*
- *May not understand the questions*
- *May lie*
- *May say what they think the researcher wants to hear*
- *May have unrealistic expectations*

- *May be intimidated*
  - *May find the researcher naive*
  - *May be inarticulate*
  - *May be unfamiliar with words and ideas*
  - *May be shy*
- 



### **LEARNING POINT**

#### ***What is wrong with conventional research? (3)***

##### ***The Results***

- *Poorly analysed*
  - *Poorly presented*
  - *Not cross-checked ('triangulated')*
  - *Not shared*
  - *Not transparent*
- 

#### **6.4 Some common problems**

Finally, facilitators should discuss with participants ways in which conventional research instruments can be used in child research. This can be summed up in three main points.

- Spend time using other methods in order to define the problem, ask the questions and use the language that are appropriate to the children involved;
- Work with children to design the questionnaire and frame the questions, as well as in administering the questionnaire if at all possible;
- Ask children's advice and opinion about the findings and analysis.



### **LEARNING POINT**

#### ***Appropriate research with children***

- *The main barrier is our own attitudes*
- *The main resources are the children, their families and communities*
- *The main elements are:  
Ideas, knowledge and attitudes of children, families and communities,  
The information you really need for planning, implementing and evaluating*

*Research should be related to children's concerns and interests and to action on their behalf in ways they think are appropriate.*

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## QUOTE

*Make a survey with them about themselves and their areas of origin. Since you ask them to help to make a study on an area which happens to be theirs, you should pay them for their services. Make a deal and respect it .. The survey must be prepared beforehand with them: they must all know the type of information you need. They should even be aware of the reasons for such a survey: you want to know more about their area so that you can discuss with them afterwards what can be done.. Organize a seminar to discuss the findings with them.*

*Fabio Dallape, 1988, An experience with street children, Nairobi, Undugu Society of Kenya, p 28*



## EXAMPLE

### **Researchers can use a questionnaire as a learning process for themselves**

*Two middle-class, female social-psychology students carried out a survey of street children in their own city in Brazil. The preparation included observation in the area, piloting and refining the questionnaire and training interviewers. Because they knew little about the children's world the work of exploring the environment and identifying children to interview became an educational exercise for both students and interviewers.*

*Interviewers were trained using role play before the first version of the questionnaire was tested on 10 children. Particular attention was paid to children's reactions to the questions, so that they could be made more interesting and thus result in more detailed answers. There was extensive discussion among researchers about paying children. During the pilot phase there was no payment, but respondents still showed considerable enthusiasm about taking part. During the actual research each child was given five cruzeiros, which was less than they would have earned in the time taken by the interview but a gesture that was well received.*

*First contacts were made on the city square, where both children and interviewers could see and be seen. Confidence and trust had to be built up on both sides. A simple mode of personal introduction was used. The interviewers gave their names and explained what they were doing, but children's names were only recorded to ensure that they were not surveyed more than once. News of what was going on spread by word of mouth. The interviews were conducted in the open, which meant that both interruptions and cooperation from other people took place, providing supplementary information.*

*The researchers learned a good deal, became at ease with the task and the respondents, as well as recognising that the administration of a survey is an interpersonal, social event; less a neutral occurrence in the lives of interviewers and respondents than an important learning process in its own right.*

*Source account given in Gunther, H, 1991, Interviewing street children in a Brazilian city, in *The Journal of Social Psychology*, 132 (3), 359-367*

## **S U M M A R Y**

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Social science is not limited to questionnaires and surveys.

Valid work with questionnaires and surveys is:

- Based on information from prior qualitative research;
- Asks questions that are relevant to respondents;
- Uses ideas and words that respondents themselves use for the issues involved;
- Bases analysis on information from qualitative research;
- Discusses results with respondents wherever possible.

Questionnaires and surveys can be participatory.





## 7 THE BACKGROUND TO ALL METHODS

*This section provides information about the rules that underlie all good social research with children. This is the background to all the specific methods that will be introduced in section 8.*

*Facilitators should refer to this section throughout the learning process and reinforce the points made here when working with participants on all methods, in both classroom-based and field-based learning.*



### QUOTE

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*The greatest lessons of life, if we would but stoop and humble ourselves, we would learn not from grown-up learned men, but from the so-called ignorant children.*

*Mahatma Gandhi*

*It is not only a matter of asking the child; we must question ourselves.*

*Paulo Freire, 1987, Paulo Freire and the street educators, Bogota, UNICEF, p 29*

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No method is inherently participatory: it is largely through its application that research becomes participatory; even methods that are defined as participatory can be disempowering and excluding for respondents if used with the wrong group, in the wrong situation or the wrong way. Researcher-led activities are not participatory, although they may be used to supplement participatory research. Children can participate in research by:

- Choosing or selecting themes and topics;
- Providing and collecting data;
- Interpreting or explaining the data;
- Being involved in analysis;
- Using the data to disseminate research results.

All methods can be adapted to different groups of children, as well as to varied research issues and situations. A good researcher is creative and flexible and does not follow instructions slavishly. It is important to follow the Rules for Making Rules:



### LEARNING POINT

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#### **The Rules for Making Rules**

- *Discover your own ignorance*
  - *Look before you leap*
  - *Respect children*
  - *Do nothing without permission*
  - *Do no harm*
  - *Be prepared to change*
-

### 7.1 Some rules underlie all methods

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- Discover your own ignorance  
Find out what is already known (secondary information)  
Be critical of the methods of data collection and analysis used in this secondary information (see Section 8).
  
- Look before you leap  
Do not rush to ask questions or use methods—observe and listen before deciding what the questions and problems are.
  
- Respect children  
Act with humility, respect children as well as adults who are involved in the research process.  
Do not privilege adult ideas and priorities.  
Do not impose your own ideas and values.  
Reduce adult/child power relations.  
Follow the ethical principles—how do they apply to *this* group of children in *this* situation?  
Be sensitive to language and culture.  
Make sure everyone is comfortable with the research method:
  - Physically at ease;
  - Secure;
  - Knowing what will happen;
  - Free from interruptions.Consider the researcher's role:
  - Appearance;
  - Language;
  - Personal conduct.
  
- Do nothing without permission  
Obtain informed consent for all stages of the research process.  
Never put pressure on anyone to:
  - Take part in research;
  - Answer questions;
  - Continue if they become distressed;
  - Draw, write or act;
  - Hand over materials they have produced;
  - Be photographed, filmed or tape recorded.

- Do no harm  
Avoid situations in which children or adults might become distressed.  
Be prepared to deal with distress (including your own).  
Take responsibility for the effects of research.
- Be prepared to change  
Examine your own attitudes—be prepared to learn and to change the way you think and behave.  
Be flexible about the research process.

These rules should be emphasised throughout the learning process with respect to each method so that they become basic to participants' research thinking.

## 7.2 Planning research

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Successful research with children depends to a large extent on good planning, respect, trust and confidence. Good advance planning includes thinking about how to create the right background for any method, working out how to involve children and at what stages and being flexible and creative. It also means being patient and systematic and paying attention to detail. Each research event needs to be planned individually. Planning a drawing session, for example, entails:

- Finding an environment that has sufficient light, space and drawing surfaces. Minimise noise, distractions and interruptions.
- Ensuring that children have enough time to draw and will not have to leave before they finish. Make sure that others do not disrupt or interfere with the process by looking over children's shoulders or commenting.
- Considering whether you want to work with individual children or groups. Think about how many children you can deal with in a single drawing session, including having time and private space to listen to what they have to say about their drawing.  
Give clear instructions.



### EXAMPLE

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#### **Checklist for planning collection of data with children**

*Activity planned:*

*Date:*

*Place:*

*Time:*

*Researcher(s) name(s):*

*Children's name(s):*

*Aim:*

*Objectives:*

*Methods:*

*Other activities:*

*Time management:*

*Roles of researchers:*

*Materials required:*

*How and when will place, time, topic etc be negotiated with the children?*

*Will you need to ask permission, or give explanations to other adults? If so, when and how will you do this?*

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Good planning also means incorporating into the research process procedures for monitoring progress. It is important to keep a check on how individual methods are applied, how children respond to methods used in different ways and in different circumstances and the kind of data that are generated.



### **EXAMPLE**

#### **Self-evaluation of a drawing session**

- *Were your instructions clear? Can they be reproduced for another group?*
  - *Did you and your colleague(s) have clearly-defined roles agreed through dialogue? Did you stick to these roles?*
  - *Do you have an adequate record of the context in which data collection took place? (Date, time, place, people, context, process, feelings/reactions etc)?*
  - *Were children allowed to draw without interference or surveillance?*
  - *Did the children have sufficient time to finish their drawings?*
  - *Did you avoid praising some children and not others?*
  - *Did children see each other's drawings and make value comments?*
  - *How did you end the session?*
  - *What other activities took place in the session—were these related to the objectives of visual data collection?*
- 

The attitudes, behaviour, manner of dress and tone of voice of a researcher play a crucial part in creating the right environment for research. Every effort should be made to reduce the inherent power imbalance between adult researcher and child respondents.



### **LEARNING POINT**

#### **Doing research with children**

- **Introducing yourself**  
*Plan beforehand How will you explain who you are and what you are doing? Use simple language.*
- **Time**  
*Make sure you have enough time. Don't risk arousing strong emotions in children and then leaving, without helping them regain control over their feelings.*
- **Privacy**  
*Prepare adults for the fact that you will be talking with children. Make sure that*

*you have adequate privacy. If other people are present, make sure they are trusted by the children. Don't overwhelm a single child with several adult researchers.*

- **Appropriate behaviour**  
*Different cultures have different customs about how children and adults should behave when talking together. Make sure you do not embarrass children.*
- **Be sensitive to a child's mood and state**  
*Exhausted, hungry, ill or frightened children need to have their problems acknowledged or dealt with before they can start talking with you. Don't press them for information or leave them with a sense of failure because they have not answered your questions*
- **Recording**  
*Explain why and how the conversation will be recorded. Don't let recording be intrusive. Give your full attention to children.*
- **Clarify—don't interrupt**  
*Interrupting will often silence children, who fear they have said something 'wrong'. Wait for a natural pause if you need to clarify points or ask for further information.*
- **Confidentiality**  
*Children must know that their identities will not be revealed, that secrets will be kept.*
- **Lies**  
*When children lie they usually have good reasons to do so. If you find they are lying don't show anger, press for the truth or interrogate them.*
- **Ending**  
*Try not to end abruptly. Sum up the conversation, thank children for participating and ask them how they have experienced the conversation. Let them know if you will see them again, but never make promises you cannot fulfil*

*Adapted from Reaching children through dialogue, by Elisabeth and Pål Jareg, 1994, London, Macmillan, pp 44-49*

Choose the location and context of the research with care—to put the children at ease. Unless the respondents themselves indicate that they want to go somewhere else, try to conduct the research close to where they would normally be, but make sure this is quiet and secure. Avoid interruptions and distractions from others, bearing in mind that this can be a particular problem with research conducted in public places with collective methods, which tend to attract large numbers of children.



## EXAMPLE

### **"Crowd control" in Masaka District, Uganda**

*In a participatory planning exercise with children, men and women from Kayakatebe village, Redd Barna Uganda and the International Institute for Environment and Development asked children to gather near the swamp to draw daily routine diagrams.*

*"At 3.15 pm we met with the afternoon group, comprising more than 150 children. We divided the children into three groups after singing a few songs with the children to arouse interest and more participation.*

*There were more than 150 children - many more than we had anticipated. This made an average of 50 children per group, too big for two of us to manage effectively. The roles that we had originally assigned to ourselves could not be adhered to... We had to perform several roles. The size of the group limited effective participation of all children. Some of the young children started playing before the end of the exercise."*

*(Guijt, Fuglesang and Kisadha 1994, It is the young trees that make a thick forest, Redd Barna and International Institute for Environment and Development, Kampala and London, pp 19-20*

In many cases it is not possible, or may not be desirable, for the researcher to be alone with individual children. Adults in a position of responsibility or control in relation to the child may insist on being, or need to be, present. Trusted adults can provide emotional support for children in difficult situations. However, if other people are present, this may distort the information, especially if just by being there they act as censors. Children may feel inhibited in the presence of parents, teachers or employers. It is important to protect children from abuse or exploitation by not asking questions that anger observers, or make them suspicious.

Children are often extremely busy. In the case of working children, time devoted to the research may lead to a significant loss of income. This may mean working out a research timetable that suits children's needs to work or go to school. It also means thinking about compensating them with money for the time they spend helping with research.



## LEARNING POINT

### **The question of compensation**

*Working children may lose income if they spend time with researchers. Yet the question of paying them to compensate for lost earnings raises both ethical and practical problems*

#### **For**

- *Paying children to take part in research respects their time and contribution.*
- *Not paying may mean that children will suffer directly as a result of taking part in research, because they may be punished, lose their employment or not have enough money to buy food.*
- *Not paying may influence the research sample, because some children will not be able to take part.*

#### **Against**

- *Paying for children to take part in research is not ethical, because it increases the power relationship between a researcher and a child.*
- *Paying children to compensate for lost earnings is encouraging child labour.*
- *Paying for information creates a bias in research, because children may take part only to receive money and then give false answers.*

Research should not be a burden to respondents. Young children and children who work or are poorly nourished have a shorter concentration span than adults. Allow for conversational intervals and other breaks and for recreation, play and refreshments, as and when appropriate.



## METHOD

### **Research with street girls**

*Ethiopia Haile, a participant in the Ethiopian learning programme, chose to research adolescent girls living on the street in her field-based study. Observation showed that the streets offered the girls no privacy and so a local school was chosen as the research site, the research exercises being conducted in a classroom. It proved difficult to sustain the research process as the girls could not concentrate for very long and were extremely tired, falling asleep after short intervals. They were keen to use the school facilities for a wash and so were provided with soap. They would periodically drift out into the yard to sit in the sun, wash at the tap and chat with friends. When they became bored with a matrix ranking exercise they began to decorate each others' nails and hands with a myriad of colours drawn in intricate patterns using the pens provided by the researcher. A lunch of injera (flat bread) was brought in at midday and the girls ate with gusto.*

Researcher conduct crucially affects the research process:

- It is essential that the children have really understood what the research is about and what the research process entails. They also need to know that they can stop taking part in research at any stage. Researchers must introduce and explain themselves and seek the child's informed consent in simple words that are appropriate to the respondent's age and developmental level.
- What a researcher wears must be appropriate to the culture and situation. Women researchers in particular must be careful to avoid offending local codes of dress. Formal clothes, expensive watches and jewelry can create barriers but clothes that are too informal may not show sufficient respect.



## QUOTE

*Traditional professional speech and manners will not find pathways into the heart and soul of the street children's world. An illustration of this is the case of a well-known Brazilian psychiatrist who recently approached me to request some guidance about the lack of response by subjects on an innovative research project he and colleagues had designed with street children. They were having some difficulty gathering information despite the merit and worthiness of their project. As we explored what had happened he told me about his visit to a street shelter to gather information, going directly from his office wearing his typical workday clothing, a tie and sports coat. Along with his clothing he carried the same implicit expectations about street children that he had for his clients, believing that they would respond to him with respect for his role and position.*

*Fred Bemak, Street researchers, in Childhood, Volume 3 No 2 1996, p 152.*

If researchers feel their belongings may be stolen in the field they should leave them at home. It is offensive to show people you think they may be thieves. If you allow people to see you take off your watch and put it away before you start working with them, perhaps you should stay at home yourself.



## EXAMPLE

### **Safeguarding expensive equipment**

*Researchers are sometimes wary of using methods that require equipment for fear of theft. This anxiety applies especially to research with street children because of their supposed lack of moral codes. Disregarding researchers' usual stereotypes, Tobias Hecht conducted "radio workshops" with street children in Brazil, in which the children interviewed each other using a microphone and tape recorder and Firew Kefyalew gave street children in Addis Ababa a camera so that they could make their own photographic essays. The experience of Rachel Baker, Catherine Panter-Brick and Alison Todd with children in Kathmandu is particularly instructive. The boys were given expensive scientific equipment—a black plastic band containing a transmitter fitted across the chest and a large watch that records minute-by-minute heart rate - which was to be worn for one or several 24-hour periods.*

*'We took precautions, for example placing the attractive recording watch in a cloth pouch pinned to clothing and taping its control buttons...Among homeless boys, the method had several major drawbacks. We lost two heart rate monitors to boys who sold them to contacts on the street and pretended to have had them stolen. Interestingly enough, it was then a matter of honour for other boys to wear the monitors and return them intact to us. One boy was threatened by an older gang who asked him to surrender the watch. In order to reduce the risk to children participating and to the equipment, we could not fit monitors to boys sleeping in the street at night...'*

*Baker, Panter-Brick and Todd 1996 Methods used in Research with Street Children in Nepal in Childhood pp 179-180*

It may sometimes be necessary to travel to a research area in a vehicle with a driver, but this can create unnecessary distance between researchers and children. Avoid what is sometimes called 'landrover research' in which researchers arrive in a car with their equipment, carry out a research procedure and then drive off again. It takes time to create rapport and get good research data. The driver's conduct is important too!

- **Never:**
  - Talk down to children;
  - Lecture them like a teacher;
  - Stand while they sit, or sit on a higher chair, or sit on a chair while they sit on the floor;
  - Make disparaging comments about children;
  - Compare children unfavourably with each other;
  - Praise some children and not others.



### 7.3 Listening and communicating

The communication skills of a researcher are vital to successful outcome. Listening and observing are as important as verbal communication—if not more so. Researchers need to be aware of the unspoken messages children are conveying to them, as well as communicating their own ideas and feelings in ways the children can understand.



#### QUOTE

*"Are you a "good listener"? Do you feel you have enough patience to put yourself in the position of listening? Or do you find that you have a tendency to interrupt people?"*

*Are you able to listen to people/children telling about painful feelings without trying to avoid this?*

*Are you able to deal with a child crying in a natural way, without feeling embarrassed or making the child feel embarrassed?*

*What about your own attitudes to children: do you accept that they have their own feelings and ideas about things that they have experienced?*

*Can you take children seriously? Do you like children, do you feel comfortable talking to and being with them?*

*It is a good idea to think through the above issues, or discuss them with a group of people, to make you aware of your own capabilities and limitations."*

*Source Jareg et al 1989 Some Guidelines to Listening and Talking with Children who are Psychologically Distressed, Unpublished paper, Redd Barna, Oslo, pp 1-2*



#### METHOD

##### Listening and communicating

*Good listening and talking with children involves:*

- *A genuine wish to support children and families. ...without taking over parental roles or creating dependency;*
- *Concentration; make yourself available to the child;*
- *Full acceptance of what a child is expressing;*
- *Being able to identify with—but not be overwhelmed by—a child's expression of his/her feelings. Differentiate between a child's feelings and your own; but it is natural and alright to let your own feelings show to some extent;*
- *Patience; children who are shy, distressed or small take time sometimes to find words, to formulate ideas. Give them time to do this without conveying through words or your own 'body language' that you are impatient;*
- *'Reading' the expressions on a child's face which reflect very often very clearly what a child is thinking, and his/her 'body language' in general;*
- *Match your conversation to the age and emotional/physical state of the child;*
- *Learn to tolerate pauses, tears, anger. They are valuable and necessary parts of the communication between yourself and a child;*
- *Prepare yourself for strong expressions of emotions from children; you cannot take away such feelings from a child, or 'make her/him forget', but you can share these feelings, be a sounding-board, help a child with the meaning of the feelings, help*

*to correct a child's poor self-image, to reexamine guilt feelings... and perhaps arrive at a more realistic interpretation.*

*Source adapted from Jareg et al 1989 Some Guidelines to Listening and Talking with Children who are Psychologically Distressed, unpublished paper Redd Barna, Oslo*

- Use words with which children are familiar. It may not be enough to make sure researchers can speak the children's mother tongue. The children may use a local, or less formal version. It may take prior research to find out exactly what words children use to talk about the research topic. Children often have their own slang.
- Remember that methods dependent on written communication disadvantage illiterate children.
- Visual methods that use images with which children are unfamiliar can also make them feel inadequate.
- For children who have never been to school, pencils, crayons and even paper may be unfamiliar and put them at a disadvantage.
- Abstract ideas and concepts are difficult for young children to understand. What appears concrete or obvious to an adult may be obscure to children. Children may not understand the concept of 'work', for example. Even if they do so, they may not identify the activities they undertake as work.



#### QUOTE

*...the researchers spent... time with a class of 10-12 year old children discussing with them what they meant by 'work' and finding out more details about the type of household they lived in and what tasks they were expected to do Only one child in this class described himself as 'working' in the sense of earning an income (as a street vendor), but all other children described themselves as making an economic contribution to the household by performing tasks so that adults were free to earn, or by helping in the preparation of goods for sale. In addition to this class, a further group of children who were identified by teachers as employed, were interviewed individually and were extremely cooperative in discussing their hours, wages and conditions of employment and drawing up genealogies.*

*Judith Ennew, 1985, Juvenile street workers in Lima, Peru, Anti-Slavery Society unpublished report, p 78*

- What is not said, or how a thing is said, is as important as what is said—if not more so. Research plans should include systematic ways of recording body language, facial expressions and general atmosphere.



## LEARNING POINT

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### Helpful research attitudes

- **Critical self-learning:**  
*Learning to accept doubt;  
'I can be wrong'*
- **Embrace error:**  
*Acknowledging, accepting and learning from mistakes.*
- **Overcome power attitudes:**  
*Sitting on the floor;  
Coming out from behind the desk.*
- **Listen**  
*With respect for and interest in children's, women's and men's knowledge,  
experience, analysis, feelings and thinking.*
- **Don't lecture:**  
*"Handing over the stick", not wagging the finger!*
- **Create trust and equality**  
*Share information and knowledge.*
- **Submit rather than dominate**  
*Through verbal communication, body language, attitudes.*
- **Demonstrating patience**  
*Do not rush, resist the temptation to prescribe remedies or provide answers.*
- **Don't interrupt.**

*Source Based on a presentation about Participatory Rural Appraisal,  
Farhana Faruqi, Bangladesh learning experience*

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## LEARNING POINT

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### Unhelpful research attitudes

- *I know best*
  - *My values are better*
  - *These children (or women or men) are ignorant*
  - *These children (or women or men) are delinquents*
  - *My time is more important than theirs*
  - *I know what the problem is*
  - *I know the solution*
  - *This place is too dirty for me to sit down*
-



## LEARNING POINT

### **First things to learn**

*Recognising ourselves and our knowledge (perceptions, assumptions, values, interpretations, analyses) as part of the problem and*

*Recognising 'them' and their knowledge (ideas, concepts, perceptions, attitudes, priorities, analyses) as part of the solution.*

### **How can we achieve this?**

*By starting*

*Stumbling*

*Self-correcting*

*Sharing*

*Learning humility.*

*Source adapted from a presentation by Farhana Faruqi, Bangladesh learning experience*

Sometimes researchers can evoke powerful feelings in their child respondents, even when they are not dealing with sensitive issues. Sometimes researchers work with children who are very distressed. It is important to handle distress in children in a sensitive and appropriate manner.



## LEARNING POINT

### **Dealing with distress**

*Participation in research can be therapeutic for children, but it can also be intrusive. Researchers need to be able to manage distress in children.*

- *Keep the sessions short: half an hour to one and a half hours, depending on the age of the child. It is better to stop and plan a second session if you notice signs of restlessness or unease.*
- *Starting with an activity, such as a story or game can help the children feel relaxed.*
- *The risk of causing distress can be reduced by starting the research process with neutral subjects and gradually introducing more difficult ones.*
- *Researchers should not negate or dismiss children's feelings and should respond to these feelings naturally. Acknowledgment and acceptance of children's thoughts and feelings is vital, even if these are distressing to the researcher (for example with expressions of resentment or revenge).*
- *It is important not to raise false expectations in children. This can be especially difficult in situations where children are not used to being listened to and taken seriously, or where researchers belong to an aid agency which supports programmes in the research area.*
- *Only give advice and reassurance that is practical and realistic.*
- *End the interview or other research process on a positive note, do not leave a child in distress.*

*Sources adapted from Jareg et al 1989 Some Guidelines to Listening and Talking with Children who are Psychologically Distressed, unpublished paper Redd Barna, Oslo, Jareg, E., & Jareg, P., 1994 Reaching Children through Dialogue London, Redd Barna & Macmillan*

### 7.4 The use of questions in research

All social research begins with some kind of hypothesis or some kind of question, however general and vague. In more participatory research processes children are involved in formulating these questions. Initial questions in research with children might be something like:

Why do these children work?

What are these children's experiences of school?

What are the consequences for these children of being separated from their families?

What is the incidence of abuse and neglect among children living in this community?

People from aid agencies may be particularly interested in asking questions about how their work affects children, such as:

How do the children involved in our programme perceive the work we do?

What is the impact of our programmes on the children we work with?

These initial questions are broad and general and need to be qualified by a series of more specific questions if they are to be useful for research. For example, a question about programme impact needs more definition, such as what kind of impact—psychosocial, physical or material and so on—and whether the concern is with impact in the medium or long term.

Many researchers also use questions as a fundamental tool of inquiry—as a means of eliciting information. However, it is not essential to use direct questions as a research method; how and when to use questions has to be a conscious decision. Certainly questions can be an important aid to communication, but they can obstruct the flow of a conversation or make respondents feel uncomfortable. They can also be posed in ways that confuse rather than clarify a situation. How a question is phrased is a major determinant of the nature of the response. When questions are to be employed, they should be listed in the research instrument of each of the methods used.

There are several kinds of questions used in research, depending on the type of method. They can range from formal, 'closed' questions used in questionnaires, with a choice of possible answers, to unstructured, open questions that occur in the course of what some researchers have called 'a conversation with a purpose', in which researchers have an idea of the topics they wish to cover, and control the overall flow of the conversation. The open nature of the questions, which will be suggested by the way the respondent treats the topic, should allow for new and unexpected information to come to light. If other children are present they may contribute their own comments, helping to reinforce or enrich the information and to provide a context for the theme under discussion.



## LEARNING POINT

### **Closed, open and other kinds of questions**

*Closed questions are those that require simple answers, such as 'Yes', 'No', or 'I don't know.'*

- *Closed questions:*

*Discourage free expression;*

*Make it easier to obtain numerical data;*

*May be necessary to standardise answers*

*Open questions do not presuppose any particular response, so that respondents are encouraged to think about and find answers that are appropriate to them. An example of an open question would be 'What do you feel about...?'*

- *Open questions:*

*Give voices to hidden spheres of experience;*

*Can be time consuming with a confident child;*

*May result in very brief remarks from a shy child;*

*Make it more difficult to compare the records of different interviews.*

- *Open and closed questions are often mixed in the same interview.*

*Some interviews use 'prompting, or probing, questions' in order to encourage respondents to add more information or clarify answers. But these can have an undue influence on the response if they are not carefully phrased and recorded.*

*Always avoid using 'leading questions'. These may presuppose:*

*A particular answer: 'You want to go home don't you?'*

*A particular situation, thought or behaviour: 'When did you last sniff glue?'*

## SUMMARY

The comments in this section relate to all social research with adults as well as children, regardless of whether it seeks to be participatory.

### **Research should be based on:**

- Prior planning;
- Finding out about the background:
  - What is already known, written about the topic;
  - The cultural context;
  - Ideas and words used;
  - Local customs and beliefs about dress and behaviour.
- Respect for respondents time, ideas and customs;
- Being prepared to change your own ideas and behaviour;
- Listening to respondents.

## **8 CLASSROOM-BASED LEARNING ABOUT PARTICIPATORY, CHILDREN-FOCUSED RESEARCH METHODS**

*This section contains the main body of information and learning materials for both classroom-based and field-based learning. The section begins with a description of ways in which learning materials can be used and is structured so that facilitators can introduce each method in turn. It is recommended that the order in which the methods are presented in this manual should be used in the classroom phase.*

*There are two parts to this section. The first part, on research methods, begins with a consideration of observation as a method and continues by describing methods based on information collected on the basis of individual respondents: recall, role play, children's writing and visual methods. Then collective methods are described, concentrating on focus groups discussion and the collective visual methods that have been developed in Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA). The second part describes issues of recording and organising data, most of which are common to all methods.*

In this part of the learning process, classroom-based learning in theory is combined with practical exercises, in the classroom and in the field. This manual does not include all methods that might be used in research with children. Medical examinations are not included because they require specialist skills and have a fairly limited role in social research. Behaviour checklists, which are used extensively in psychological research, have been excluded because they do not meet the ethical criteria outlined in Section 3.

There are three ways research methods can be categorised:

The people:

- Research with individuals on a one-to-one basis;
- Research with groups.

The method:

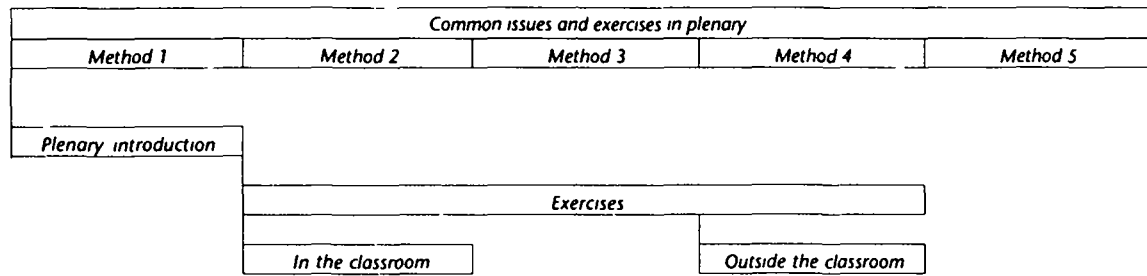
- Observation;
- Communication.

The data:

- Oral;
- Written;
- Visual.

Whatever methods are introduced, facilitators will need to begin by addressing in plenary some key issues common to all research with children and then outlining the underlying principles and techniques of each research method. Group exercises are used to address specific issues and questions arising out of the methods and individual work helps each participant reflect on the utility of research and applicability of the various methods in his or her work. The methods are then field tested by participants in pairs or individually, with feedback in the classroom on their experiences.

Figure 1. The structure of classroom-based learning process for research methods



**8.1 Observation**

Observation is the foundation of all scientific work, whether in the physical or social sciences. In the social sciences it is the first method used in field research and should continue throughout fieldwork. Observations should be recorded continuously, as the basis of a research diary which also includes researcher’s ideas, thoughts and feelings. This diary is an important reference point for developing further research questions, as well as for identifying and cross-checking issues during data analysis (see Section 8 for more information on research diaries and recording methods).

Figure 2: Types of observation

	<i>Non-interactive</i>	<i>Participant</i>	<i>Structured</i>
<b>Participation</b>	<i>Non participatory</i>	<i>Participatory, with ethical dilemmas, with respect to researcher’s role</i>	<i>Can be non-participatory, but can also be carried out by children</i>
<b>Recording methods</b>	<i>Written record, may be verbal or with pictures or diagrams, at the scene or recalled</i>		<i>Specially-designed recording schedules</i>
<b>When to use</b>	<i>Throughout, but especially in the early stages</i>	<i>After negotiation, throughout research process</i>	<i>After other methods have revealed the themes, times and places where measured observations should take place</i>

There are three ways of approaching observation:

- Unstructured, non-interactive, observation of children’s activities, their conversations and other forms of communication and the general atmosphere made continuously throughout field work, which are recorded regularly (at least daily) in a research diary, or while observing.
- Unstructured participant observation, in which an observer (researcher) becomes ‘part of’, or an actor in, the events that he/she is studying. The aim is as far as possible to become an entirely familiar presence in the lives of the people you are studying, to become invisible—to cease to have a major influence on the shape of events, on the interactions between people or their feelings, attitudes and behaviour generally.





## QUOTE

*The early field situation resembles childhood in many respects. We are in a strange world where we are in the process of learning the language and the rules, learning how to live. Much of our previous experience seems useless, unhelpful or downright contradictory. We are dependent upon others to guide us: pseudoparental figures such as interpreters, field guides, the persons we live with, the friends we make in the field. We are as children during the time when we are learning the culture. As we acquire knowledge and experience, we have a sense of growth, of adolescence, of maturation, much as children do.*

*Our field notes reflect this cultural childhood. They are written attempts to impose order on the external world of our research as well as on our personal lives in the field, to grow up through understanding the culture we are studying. .*

*Simon Ottenberg, Thirty years of fieldnotes changing relationships to the text in Sanjek, R., (ed.), *Fieldnotes. the makings of anthropology*, Ithaca and London, Cornell University Press, p. 141*

- Structured, non-interactive observation, in which the researcher does not attempt to participate in events but observes and records events on a regular basis. Structured observations can be made: at regular intervals over a set period of time; at set times of the day or night, or by monitoring the activities and experiences of a set group of children or a particular child.



## QUOTE

*Systematic observation of the sort used by psychologists (where action is recorded every five minutes over a one- or two-hour period and where conversation, interaction, mood and related activities are noted) provided the most reliable and comprehensive records of children's work. It was the only way to capture context. Relationships between those who gave orders or requests for tasks to be performed and those who received and carried out the work could be noted. Rules for avoiding work, generosity in assuming another's task, and the manner in which children cared for the elderly and the young were observed. The technique allowed for the recording of multiple task performance. one girl, for example, was in charge of a toddler while she prepared relish for the evening meal and watched over water heating for her father's bath...*

*Changu, a ten-year-old girl, was interviewed on her activities during the previous 24 hours. She said that after lunch on the previous day she had played with friends at home until 4 p.m. She had then taken plates to the stream to wash. At 7.p m. she had eaten supper. It happened that I had observed her that afternoon between 4 and 6.p.m. I noted that she had performed eight discrete tasks (though each was to do with water) for the one that she had recalled.*

*Pamela Reynolds, 1991, *Dance civet cat. child labour in the Zambezi valley*, London, Zed Books Ltd & Athens, Ohio University Press, p. 76*

Observation can be used:

- To generate initial research questions;
- To verify or cross-check information obtained from other methods and sources;
- To develop rough initial indicators for people or events a researcher wants to assess that can then be tested using other methods.



### LEARNING POINT

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#### **What to observe**

*Content: What is happening in children's lives*

- *Activities (working, education, play)*
- *Places (home, street, workplace)*
- *Conversations (topics, words, ideas)*

*Process: How children act and interact*

- *Ways of talking (order of speaking, tone of voice, volume, speed)*
  - *Non-verbal communication (gestures, body language, expression)*
  - *Behaviour (relationships of caring, protection, dominance, confidence ..)*
- 



### EXERCISE

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#### **Reflecting on observation**

*Objective: to reflect on key practical and ethical issues associated with observation.*

*Follow the presentation of the major types of observation with group discussions, on some or all of the following questions:*

- *Can an adult be a participant observer in children's lives?*
- *When an observer participates, does this affect objectivity?*
- *How can a researcher obtain the consent of the people being observed?*
- *Would it be dangerous to "hang out" at night in places where street children congregate? What can a researcher do to keep safe?*
- *If researchers see children taking drugs, what should they do?*

*Groups should present their ideas to a plenary session, with further discussion.*

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### EXERCISE

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#### **Field observation**

*Objectives: to develop sensitivity to the complexity of both observation and recording, and to gain experience in role play to underpin subsequent learning.*

*Pairs of participants choose a location in the surrounding community where they will spend up to two hours observing children's activities and behaviour. Each pair should decide on a role for themselves which attracts minimum attention from peo-*

ple in the area. Participants may talk to one another while conducting the exercise, but only about matters unrelated to their observations. They must not discuss what they see.

On returning to the classroom venue, each participant should write down what has been observed, without conferring and then compare the two records.

Each pair then prepares a brief role play, in order to show some aspect of what they have seen to the whole group. Final plenary discussion follows, with facilitators encouraging comments on:

- The difference between seeing and observing,
  - The content of observations,
  - Differences in perception,
  - Advantages and constraints of roles assumed when observing,
  - Memory and the recording process.
- 

Research observation differs from everyday perception, being more focused and concentrated as well as requiring enhanced skills of noting and recording. Detail is all important. Nothing is trivial.

People who are accustomed to think of research as asking questions may not be prepared to concentrate on observation, fail to record sufficient detail or claim that 'there was nothing to observe'. Facilitators can suggest that to improve observation and recording skills participants should make a habit of watching television programmes as active rather than passive observers, with a notebook to hand, either making a record at the time, or soon afterwards. This will also be an important skill to develop for recording interviews.

During the classroom-based phase, it should be repeated that observation is an integral part of all methods and skills. Participants should be given the task of observing and recording exercises on other methods, particularly role play and focus group discussion.



### **EXAMPLE**

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#### **Observation**

- *May be Structured*
- *Purposeful*
- *Specific*
- *Organised*
- *Time Limit*
- *Passive*
- *Qualitative and Quantitative*
- *Need background information*
- *Contextual*
- *Continuous—longer process*
- *Doesn't give totality of facts*
- *Influenced by observer's bias/presence/attitude,*

- *Use as a cross-check*
- *Convenient—does not disrupt*
- *Should not be generalised*
- *Observer may run into risk*
- *Objective of observation may be needed*
- *No pre-conceived notion about the subject*
- *Unstructured*
- *No direct relationship between observer and observed*
- *Use eyes/ears/touch/nose—be open to all impressions*

*From a flipchart 'brainstorm', India/Nepal Learning Process*

## 8.2 Other methods

The following chart is one way of classifying the methods that can be used in social research.

	<i>Individual</i>	<i>Collective (Group)</i>
<i>Oral</i>	<i>Role play Puppetry</i>	
		<i>Drama Street theatre</i>
	<i>Oral testimony Oral history Life history Interview</i>	<i>Focus group discussion Group interview</i>
<i>Visual</i>	<i>Gestalt</i>	<i>Mapping Ranking Pie/bar charts</i>
	<i>Drawings and paintings Sculpture, collage and other plastic arts Photographs and videos</i>	
<i>Written</i>	<i>Time lines</i>	
	<i>Use of secondary data Essays Diaries Recall Questionnaires</i>	

No one method is 'best', or sufficient in itself. Every research situation, or group being researched, will require a different combination of methods' the results of which will need to be compared in order to check and verify conclusions (see later sections on planning and analysis). Individual researchers will probably find that they are happier using one method rather than another because good research is based on two-way communication and we all have preferences for and skills in different kinds of communication.

### 8.2.1 Recall

In recall methods, respondents are asked to remember past events, by writing them down or by telling a researcher. Because of the nature of recall, the first exercise begins before the plenary presentation.

## EXERCISE

### Recall

*Objective: to demonstrate differences in the type and quality of information generated by instant and delayed recall.*

*Without giving the principles of recall, and at least two days before the plenary presentation, the participants should be divided into two groups at the end of one day's work. Group One is asked to leave the room. Group Two is given an exercise which they are asked to do individually, without consulting each other and keep a secret from Group One.*

- *keep a diary record of all their spare time activities in the course of the next two days during their spare time. This diary should be brought to the plenary presentation.*

*On the morning of the presentation on recall, before the training session begins, (for example, over breakfast) participants in Group One should be asked to write down what they have done in their spare time during the preceding two days.*

*At the start of the presentation on recall, three members of each group are asked to volunteer to read out the records they have kept. Then all participants are asked to reflect on differences in the type and quality of information that have been recorded by the two groups.*

*Facilitators should stress that:*

- *Records made a short time after an event tend to recall specific times and details;*
- *Records made a longer time after will be more likely to lose detail, but record feelings, impressions or moods*

As the term itself suggests, recall generates information about feelings, situations, events and activities through the memories of respondents. These memories can be recorded periodically, at set intervals or on a single occasion, immediately or some time after the event(s). There are three main categories of recall:

- **Instant recall:**  
Immediate records, focused on specific topics, made regularly;
- **Period recall:**  
Records of a defined period, usually from 24 hours to a year:  
Shorter periods are best for recording general topics;  
Longer periods can be used for specific topics, such as illnesses;
- **Time line:**  
Often used in Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) to record key events in the history of an individual, a family or a community (see later, under 'Collective methods').

Children usually enjoy using recall methods and can keep accurate records of their own or others' activities.

Recall is a very flexible method. It is a particularly useful way of recording routine activities, such as work, social interactions or diet and is often used to research illness episodes.

One advantage of recall is that it is easy to use and can be conducted by several people in several places at the same time. It also provides specific descriptive information which is easily

quantified and can be represented in a straightforward manner in visual form. A possible disadvantage is that it does not readily yield qualitative information, although this can be gathered by other methods or by discussing records or results with respondents.



## EXAMPLE

### Using recall methods

*Pamela Reynolds studied children's work and their contribution to family survival in a rural subsistence economy in Zimbabwe. She wrote that:*

*"My main method of enquiry was that of participant observation. However, systematic records over time of labour activities of more than a few persons cannot be kept using this method I employed two villagers as enumerators and they recorded the activities of members of twelve families using two recording techniques: the Twenty-Four Hour Recall and Instant Records .. Each family was visited once in an eight day cycle. The twelve families were subjected to close scrutiny through a battery of recording techniques that covered health, diet, income and expenditure, agricultural activities and leisure pursuits. The children who could write kept diaries and helped me to compile lists of local species of flora and fauna and of plants used as wild relish and medicines We collected stories, riddles, proverbs and songs."*

*Reynolds, P 1986 Through the Looking Glass Participant Observation with Children in Southern Africa Paper delivered at the Ethnography of Childhood Workshop, King's College, Cambridge, July pp 13-14*



## EXAMPLE

### Comparison of diary and instant recall

<i>Diary recall</i>	<i>Instant recall</i>
<i>Detailed times and activities</i>	<i>Only records major events</i>
<i>Time specific</i>	<i>Gives context</i>
<i>Gives usual routine activities</i>	<i>Timing depends on pressure</i>
<i>Does not give detailed context</i>	<i>Qualitative</i>
<i>Conscious</i>	<i>General</i>
<i>Quantitative</i>	<i>Sequential</i>
<i>Individualistic</i>	<i>Possible gaps</i>
<i>Informed</i>	<i>Has conclusions</i>
<i>Continuous</i>	<i>Gives feelings and opinions</i>
<i>No conclusions</i>	<i>Selective information</i>
<i>Selective information</i>	<i>Purposeful</i>
<i>Purposeful</i>	
<i>Shows commitment to research</i>	
<i>Depends on the time scale (weekly, daily, hourly )</i>	
<i>Choice</i>	
<i>Useful for literate people</i>	
<i>Colour codes and pictures can be used for non-literate people</i>	
<i>Like a laboratory routine</i>	
<b>Conclusion 'Methods affect the results'</b>	

*From plenary discussion, recorded on flip chart, India/Nepal learning experience*

### 8.2.2 Role play

Before plenary presentation of role play, participants will already have had practice in drama activities during the learning process, in the critique of conventional methods and as part of the observation exercise. They should thus already be aware of the fun element in this method and be experienced in using role play as the basis of discussion.

Role play methods include individual or group mimes or improvisations, as well as plays written for performance by children themselves, by others or using puppets. It is usually enjoyable and interesting for children and can be an excellent stimulus for other research activities, especially focus group discussion (see later under 'Collective methods').

Many children find it easier to communicate through drama than by answering direct questions in interviews.

- It can be empowering for a group of children to perform a role play for a single adult.
- Role play enables children to tell adults about sensitive issues without having to enter into areas of personal distress. Puppets can be particularly useful for exploring children's traumatic experiences.

#### QUOTE

*Puppets are a traditional medium used in many countries for social comment. Puppets can say and do things that actors would find it difficult because the puppet is detached from the person using it. In spite of this, the audience becomes involved with the characters at a feeling as well as a thinking level. This may make puppets particularly useful for raising AIDS issues which are embarrassing or frightening. They are also good at portraying stereotypes which could come into a story aimed at examining how stereotyping and 'risk groups' lead to stigmatisation and denial.*

*Gill Gordon and Tony Klouda, 1988, Preventing a crisis: AIDS and family planning work, London, International Planned Parenthood Federation, p. 70  
Puppets, Jill Gordon*

- Drama and role play can also allow children to express opinions or tell about behaviour without fear of punishment. This applies particularly with respect to forbidden or illegal activities as well as to finding out about children's perspectives on adults.

#### DATA

##### **Role play among street children**

*'I told them in advance (the day before) to prepare for the role play and they told me the roles they wanted to play and I recorded that.*

*There was a lot of disturbance from outside [the hut where role play took place] from children who were not included and wanted to see, and shouted through any hole they found, peeping in and throwing stones on the roof. I went outside and called the boys who were 'leaders' and asked them to prevent others from causing a disturbance. This was very successful. .*

*Role play took between two and three hours. The children and I enjoyed it enormously, and I got good feedback. During role play there was singing, by girls especially. In discussion intervals, as relaxation, boys were singing and dancing. This served as a warm up exercise ..*

*With respect to discipline, they expressed through role play that their teacher insulted them and beat them and they said that teachers have no time to give advice.'*

*Adapted from Konjit Kiftew, Attitudes and Level of Involvement In the Rehabilitation Project for Street Children, Gender perspectives, research report from Ethiopia learning process*

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- In the initial stages of research, role play can be useful for finding out about the words and concepts used by children, as well as for observing body language and customs.
- Role play can also be used to obtain comments about the research process and for disseminating results, either to research respondents or to a wider audience.

Role play has been used widely in many countries for creating awareness (especially about health issues), problem-solving and disseminating research. Street theatre has long been used as a means of political discovery and expression.

Drama and other performance arts are cultural products, so it is important to find out about local modes of dramatic expression with which children are familiar. It may be the case that dramatic narrative is not a local cultural form. Children may be able to learn how to improvise plays over time, and this can be useful for a researcher who has a long-term relationship with a specific group of children, but, in the short term, some children may be happier to use another form of dramatic expression, such as narrative songs, to which they are accustomed. In other cultures, drama may be formal, with a set number of well-known characters. This may be too inflexible for children to improvise so that researchers cannot learn about their activities or feelings, but it may still provide valuable cultural background about expected behaviours and values, as well as stimulus for discussion.



## **METHOD**

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### **Collecting songs in Nepal**

*In 1994, a team of ActionAid researchers used various methods from the Participatory Rural Appraisal techniques while researching child work and labour in rural Nepal. Children, especially girls, were shy of using role play, because they were unused to drama as a cultural form of expression. Improvised singing, however, is enjoyed and children were happy to make up songs for researchers, who began a systematic collection of songs as data*

*Verbal communication, Victoria Johnson*

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The potential of role play as a research method has not yet been systematically exploited, yet participants in the pilot learning processes found it to be a valuable research tool.



**EXAMPLE**

**SWOT on role play**

After all methods had been field tested, Ethiopian participants discussed the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) of each method. The following table, made on a flip chart, was the result with respect to role play:

Note. These participants found difficulty at first in separating out the functions of role play in communication and therapy from its use as a research tool.

<p><b>Strengths</b>  <i>Enjoyable, easy to assume roles, very informative, good for dissemination, creative, recreational, facilitates expression of deep feelings, reflective, personal traits, attitudes, language, behaviour, cheap</i></p>	<p><b>Weaknesses</b>  <i>Needs clear guidance and instruction, needs space and time, cultural restraints need to be taken into account, may convey information that is harmful to children, people may think that a person in a role is playing their true self, distortions from under- or over acting, or selfconsciousness, may reflect bias</i></p>
<p><b>Opportunities</b>  <i>Reveals talents and increases confidence, which can be empowering, can be revealing, attractive compared to other methods, especially for dissemination, may reveal unconscious feelings, may influence audience or players for the good</i></p>	<p><b>Threats</b>  <i>May make people feel uncomfortable or reveal unconscious feelings (may need counselling back-up), knowledge is dangerous—may increase vulnerabilities of players or audience, may influence audience or players for the bad</i></p>

**8.2.3 Written methods**

Learning to write gives children a powerful way of expressing themselves, through which they can also take an active part in research. Like drawing and role play, writing places a child at the centre of the research process as an acting subject. This means that what is expressed is a reflection of a child's own feelings and experiences, capturing more aspects than a researcher might have imagined and freeing the child from the researcher's preconceived frameworks.

Children do not have to be expert writers in order to be able to take part effectively in this kind of research. They can write lists, fill in recall forms or questionnaire schedules. But the most productive form of written research with children is collecting essays on specific topics. If essays are written in school settings, researchers can collect large quantities of data in a very short space of time. These data can be used for both qualitative and quantitative purposes.

**QUOTE**

Virginia asked children who finished their essays early to list what they thought children's rights should be, without explaining the concept of rights or mentioning the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Over 60 children, ranging in age from 11 to 16 years responded to this task. The data revealed a similar reflection of lived experiences, and also the feeling many children seem to have of smarting under injustices... Above all, the voice that resounds through these essays is one that feels it is seldom heard and, if heard, usually discounted. The right to be heard, to be consulted, features very little in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and yet, on this evidence at least, appears to be felt as the greatest injustice. Adults not only 'boss children

around' according to one boy, they are also 'hypocrites' who 'tell you off for something and then do it themselves (11 year old boy). These children would like to be able to 'go to the headteacher and put sensible suggestions to her or him' (13 year old girl), or to have 'a right to say something in family decisions' (13 year old girl). They ask for 'decent' teachers 'who will take your word (12 year old boy), the right to 'stick up for ourselves against our parents and not get told off for doing so' (13 year old girl) 'We are people too... And shouldn't be treated like low life because we are younger...(12 year old girl).

Judith Ennew & Virginia Morrow, 1944, 'Out of the mouths of babes' in Verhellen, E., & Spiesschaert, F., (eds), *Children's rights monitoring issues*, Gent, Mys & Breesch, pp 76- 82



## DATA

### **Essay on school punishment, by a 17 year old Ethiopian schoolboy**

'First, I thank you for offering me this chance.. I do not know how to explain it. Teachers are said to be educated. To my thinking, they know the subject matter, but they are unfamiliar with the ethics of teaching and discipline. They do not respect the rights of students. They do not attend to our interests. They tell us their rights of earning money even without working. Don't we have the right to learn? There are many teachers who cannot think of this. To teach a child who is not matured physically and mentally, ability, patience and interest seem to me necessary. Most of the teachers do not seem to fulfil these criteria.

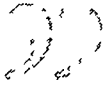
Children commit mistakes knowingly or unknowingly. Nowadays, due to free access to many things (video, pornography, magazines etc) youths transgress cultural norms. There are many offences that need either punitive or corrective measures like showing disrespect to teachers, class disturbances, destruction of school materials etc.

When such offences are committed, the culprits should be advised and made to learn. It is not right to beat like a donkey (in other countries, donkeys have rights). Causing injuries in the different parts of the body is unacceptable. In our country beating has become part of our culture. In order to get rid of this atrocious act, those who claim to be educated are expected to teach others.

Children of today must not be beaten like the children of the past old days. I do not support the use of force. Advise them! Teach them! Do not take any other measure.'

*Note* Essay collected and translated from the original Amharic by Belay Zeleleke, participant in the Ethiopia learning experience. This essay is one of a set collected from a group of Grade 10 boys in a public secondary school in Addis Ababa in which corporal punishment was widely used. It is by no means unusual for children, even those younger than this boy, to be able to express themselves so well, if they are, as this boy says, 'offered the chance'

Many children enjoy writing and may spontaneously produce accounts of their lives. Like adults they often find it helpful to write at times when they are under stress, or dealing with difficult feelings. Qualitative data to illustrate particular situations or used as case studies are frequently found in research about children in war, or about street children. **The Diary of Anne Frank** is the most famous example of the way in which children can use writing to express their inner feelings.


**QUOTE**


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*We ran away from home  
We do not know why  
We only know we were not loved  
We ran away from home.*

*We had no idea of what destiny awaited us  
Wandering aimlessly around Bombay  
No food, no shelter.*

*Eating, whatever we could find  
Sleeping wherever we found a place  
...When we ran away from home*

*People resented us  
thief, 'mavali', 'gonda', beggars were the  
names they gave us  
And in our wandering we met a traveller  
We learnt its name was YUVA  
I had run away from home.*

*I moved into a shelter  
Its name was Ghar Ho To Aisa  
Here I found love  
Plenty to learn and play  
All the children considered it their home  
...When I ran away from home*

*Source Poems by street children, Bombay, Youth United for Voluntary Action (YUVA)*

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## DATA

Story told by John Barnaba Loki, an unaccompanied refugee boy from Sudan when he was in Kakuma camp, Kenya.

The researchers wanted to learn about mental distress in unaccompanied children in order to plan how to help them. Boys between 10 and 18 in the camp were asked to write about their journey from Sudan to Kakuma. They worked on their compositions in pairs, assisting each other to remember significant issues. Some, not wishing to be reminded of their experiences chose not to participate.

Subject: Story

P.O box 48  
Kakuma  
09th April 1994

I am didinga by tribes

What I am write here is short story.  
When I was a child, I looked after <sup>the</sup> cows.

Of sometime my father sent me  
to go and collect some building material,

like thornys trees for cows shed.  
And also I took care of small kids because  
of the Eagles.

In 1989 my father told me to go to  
school that was on the 15th April 1989.

Because enemies was took all our cows  
that was why I went to school.

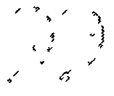
I would not going to school, I am sure;  
When our cows was not taken by the enemies.

Because I am the one who chosen to be  
the shepherd.

And then we were nom from monito plain  
to the nahichod hill, because of the enemies  
And then we were stayed <sup>there</sup> for 3 years

In 1993 I came here in Kakuma Refugee camp.

I left my father and mother from the Dallege



## QUOTE

*In hiding from the German occupiers of the Netherlands, Anne Frank wrote in her diary about her pen, which that day had been accidentally destroyed in the fire:*

*'My fountain pen has always been one of my most priceless possessions; I value it highly, especially for its thick nib, for I can only really write neatly with a thick nib. My fountain pen has had a very long and interesting pen-life, which I shall briefly tell you about.*

*When I was nine, my fountain pen arrived in a packet (wrapped in cotton wool) as 'sample without value' all the way from Aceh, where my Grandmother, the kind donor, used to live. I was in bed with flu, while February winds howled round the house. The glorious fountain pen had a red leather case and was at once shown around to all my friends on the first day I, Anne Frank, the proud owner of a fountain pen!*

*When I was ten the pen was allowed to go to school with me and the mistress went so far as to permit me to write with it. When I was eleven, however, my treasure had to be put away again, because the mistress in the 6th form only allowed us to use school pens and inkpots. When I was twelve and went to the Jewish Lyceum, my fountain pen received a new case in honour of the great occasion; it could take a pencil as well, and as it closed with a zipper looked much more impressive. At thirteen the fountain pen came with us to the 'Secret Annexe' where it has raced through countless diaries and compositions for me. Now I am fourteen, we have spent our last year together. . .'*

11 November, 1943

Anne Frank, *The diary of Anne Frank*, London, Macmillan

Systematic collection of children's writing, usually in classroom settings, requires considerable prior planning:

- Chose schools carefully to ensure that the children will be representative of the situations, events or experiences being researched;
- Get permission and consent from:  
Education authorities,  
Head teachers,  
Class teachers,  
Parents,  
And **not least**, children;
- Make sure that the instructions you give for the essay are the same for each group of children, are unambiguous and easy to understand;
- Make sure children understand the task you have set—write it on the blackboard for everyone to see;
- Make sure that each essay is marked with characteristics or variables that are important to the research, such as: name of school; class name or number; grade (where applicable); age and sex of child;

- Negotiate issues of confidentiality and authorship with children, who will be accustomed to writing their names on all their school work. If they wish to keep a copy (or the original) of their essays make sure that this is done. Tell them how the essays will be used;
- Make sure there are sufficient supplies of pencils or pens and paper. Some schools do not have plentiful supplies of paper—take your own, which should be of the size and quality with which the children are familiar.

During writing sessions:

- If teachers are present, or leading the sessions, make sure that they know the exact instructions to give and do not add any instructions or ideas of their own. If they do, make a note of this as a factor affecting data collected in that session;
- Do not allow teachers to interfere with or comment on children's writing processes (and do not do this yourself);
- Make sure there is enough time for children to finish their essays and also have another activity (such as drawing on a related subject) for children who finish the task rapidly;
- Make a note of any distractions or other limitations during the writing process;
- Make sure that children know that their writing is valued and that there are no 'marks' being given for 'good' and 'bad' writing or spelling;
- Allow children to write in the language with which they are most comfortable as a written medium.

Analysis of children's writing can be time-consuming, but can also yield quantitative results.

**EXAMPLE****Data from school children in Jamaica in response to essay title  
'What I do when I am not in school'***Categories of work engaged in by Jamaican school children in sample (grades 4-11)*

Category	Number of cases	Percentage of total cases
Not known	121	—
Definitely not working	1,383	68.30
Unspecified work	20	0.99
Part-time or weekend	33	1.63
Holiday work	10	0.49
Apprentice	49	2.42
Shop work	18	0.89
Manufacture	7	0.35
Farming	173	8.54
Parent assistance	27	1.33
Parent substitute	9	0.44
Child care	36	1.78
Domestic	200	9.88
Vending alone	18	0.89
Vending assistant	33	1.63
Hustling	2	0.99
Fishing	7	0.35
<b>Total known</b>	<b>2,025</b>	<b>100</b>

Source Judith Ennew & Pansy Young, 1982, *Child labour in Jamaica*,  
London, Quatermaine Press, p. 67

**8.2.4 Visual methods\***

As with role play, participants will already have experience of using visual methods themselves during the learning process, particularly as part of their exploration of childhood. Visual methods can be more or less participatory. They can use the children's own visual representations and their comments on various kinds of images or they can be a record of children's lives, made by researchers, which can be regarded as a framed, or selective, observation.

- Children's own visual representations may be drawings, paintings, sculptures and models, puppets for use in role play, photographs or videos. These are a visual form of individual or group testimony.

The data may consist of representations that are:

- Made spontaneously by children;
- Gathered to supplement information obtained through other methods;
- Gathered systematically to research specific themes or topics;
- Part of a therapeutic process;
- Psychological or diagnostic tests;
- Gathered systematically to explore the ways children perceive and understand their worlds.

\* Many parts of the sections on children's own visual representations are adapted from Anderssen et al, *The what, why and how book of using drawings in research with children: a field manual for discussion and use among those who research with children using drawings and other visual methods*, Trondheim, NOSEB, 1996

- Visual stimuli, ranging from images made by other children or adults, through photographs and films, can be used to stimulate discussion in focus group discussions or interviews, and may be particularly useful as a means of finding out about the language used or ideas concerning particular themes.

Children's own visual images often represent children's understandings and realities in such a way that they require interpretation or explanation. It is common in psychological research, which emphasises diagnostic tests, for this to be done by the researcher—often without consulting respondents on what their intentions were. A more appropriate use of visual representations is as a prompt or stimulus for respondents' own interpretations and explanations.



### EXAMPLE

*Drawings can show aspects of a child's life that a researcher might not have thought about*



*This nine-year old Peruvian boy, drawing the street where he lived, showed the route he had to take across a busy road to collect water from the only tap available to his family.*

*Without either an explanation or knowing the context, this line could be meaningless, or misinterpreted*

*Source Judith Ennew, field data 1982, Lima, Peru*

Many researchers, especially in therapeutic work and psychological testing, interpret visual representations without:



- Consulting children, and asking for their explanations and interpretations;
- Finding out about the ways of seeing and representation used in the children's own culture.

Visual research that fails to follow these basic procedures cannot be called participatory, will be unlikely to be scientifically valid and may be unethical.

## DATA

### **Explanation is necessary**

*This picture, drawn by a 12 year old street boy in Addis Ababa, is difficult to interpret without the boys' own explanation. An adult might not see the significance of the most important feature—the hat.*

*The boy explained that he had drawn himself eating rotten fruit. He had drawn himself wearing a hat because he was ashamed to be seen by other people.*



*Drawing collected by Konjit Kiftew*

### 8.2.4.1 Advantages of using visual methods

- Most children enjoy drawing, painting, modelling, or looking at pictures and other visual images;
- 'A picture paints a thousand words':  
Children may find it easier to communicate if they do not have to use words;  
Visual images are not linear, they can be taken in as a whole and the eye can also move easily from one part to another;
- More than one image can be compared simultaneously;
- Images are easily shared, creating a common basis for discussion;
- Photographs and films can capture events and activities that may be overlooked by other forms of observation or recording.

### 8.2.4.2 When not to use visual methods

- If they are likely to evoke painful memories or thoughts that children will not be able to cope with;
- If children are not familiar with visual images in two dimensions;
- If using a pen or pencil or other equipment makes children feel embarrassed or uncomfortable;
- If it is not culturally appropriate;
- If researchers are not familiar with children's cultural 'ways of seeing';
- If there is no opportunity for children to explain or interpret the images they have produced;
- If the method or equipment attracts undue public attention;
- If making a visual record could present a security risk for children and researchers.



### LEARNING POINT

#### Cultural ways of seeing

When these stylised drawings were shown to villagers in Nepal they did not see the fish, house, person running, sun, or man and woman that the artist intended.

For example:

Instead of a fish, 8% of people saw a khukri (the knife shown below the fish);

Instead of a house, 3% of people saw a table;

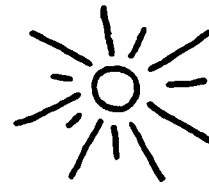
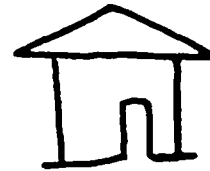
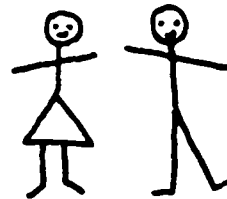
Instead of a person running, 30% said they did not know what the picture was about, and many others saw negative images such as scarecrow, snake or ghost.

In the case of the picture of the man and woman, in answer to the question 'What is this?', 65% answered 'people', 22% did not know and 3% saw devils, ghosts or skeletons. Of those who saw people, the answer to 'What kind of people?' was.

Male (left) & Female (right) 24%

Female (left) & Male (right) 6%

Thin (left) & Fat (right) 8%



### 8.2.4.3 Collecting children's visual representations

Although focusing on drawings, the following discussion applies to all visual representations made by children, whether drawings, paintings, sculpture, models, photographs or films.



#### LEARNING POINT

##### *Rules for using children's drawings in research*

- *The process is as important as the product;*
- *Give clear instructions,*
- *Be unobtrusive;*
- *Do not comment;*
- *Do not interrupt;*
- *Allow time for discussion*

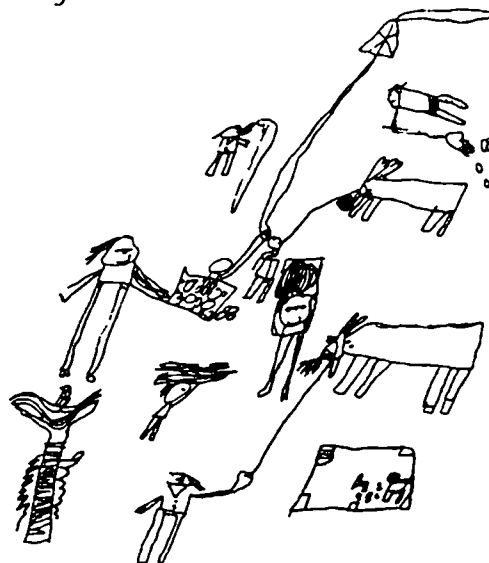
Collecting drawings from a group of children in a single drawing session is one way of generating a considerable amount of research data fairly easily. If drawings are systematically collected they can also be used in quantitative analysis. There are a number of pitfalls, but these can be avoided.



#### EXAMPLE

##### *Systematic collection of drawings (1) Child labour in Jamaica*

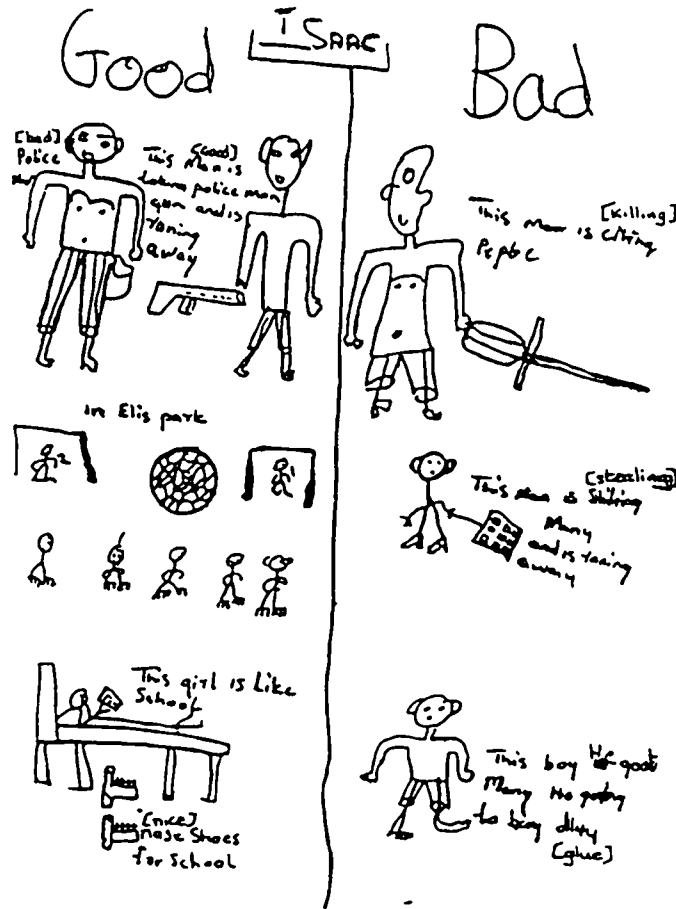
*As part of a study of child work in Jamaica, school children who could not write essays were asked to draw what they did outside school. In a sample of nearly two hundred drawings, the activities they drew could be counted and tabulated. In this picture the boy has shown himself collecting water, sweeping the yard, flying a kite, collecting breadfruit, collecting firewood, carrying a load to market, looking after a donkey and cleaning the house*



*From a series collected by Judith Ennew in Jamaica, 1980*

**X** EXAMPLE

Systematic collection of drawings (2) Moral values of street children



In the context of long-term action research, Jill Swart held thematic drawing sessions in which street children were asked to divide large sheets of paper longitudinally in half and draw as many pictures as they could of people doing good things down one side and bad things on the other side. The drawings were categorised and tabulated. Alongside discussions with the children they showed that they held very mainstream moral values.

From Jill Swart, 1988, *An anthropological study of street children in Hillbrow, Johannesburg, with special reference to their moral values*, MA dissertation in Anthropology, University of South Africa

Children's drawings are not simple representations of the world. They are cultural as well as individual products and research should be preceded by some initial reading so that researchers know

- Local ways of seeing and drawing,
- Local customs respecting drawings and conventions of representation,
- What children in the culture draw at different ages

**LEARNING POINT****Children's drawings for research are not art**

*Do not praise "good" drawings and criticise "bad" ones*

*Do not select only "good" drawings for analysis*

*Do not display drawings or otherwise use them publically without the children's permission and understanding of how they will be used—ask if they want their names to be given if pictures are used*

**Children own their drawings**

*Ask if you can use pictures or take them away*

*Explain the purpose of your research and how drawings will be used*

*Return drawings to children (after reproduction) if that is what they request—Keep your promises!*

**8.2.4.4 Still photography and filming**

Children can and do use both still and video cameras as research tools. However, in some countries these are expensive options. Although children can often very rapidly learn to use complex photographic equipment, disposable still cameras may be the most practical option. These are not available in some countries. However, if researchers plan to use photography as a frequent option in research with children they may be able to purchase disposable cameras in bulk and arrange for development at discounted prices.

**DATA****The cost of cameras, according to working children in Bangalore, India**

*I wanted to see what photographic images the leaders of Bimha Sangha [children who are organisers of the working children's movement] might make about what it stood for and meant to them. With Nandana interpreting, I showed Lakshmi, Gopal and Hari one of the disposable cameras I had brought with me. At first they were very interested in how it worked, and spent some time handling it and asking questions. Then they had a longer discussion among themselves, and Lakshmi seemed to ask a sharp question.*

*'They want to know how much it cost,' explained Nandana.*

*Knowing that environmental issues are important in Bimha Sangha, I said that the camera was disposable and would be recycled after the film had been developed. Nandana translated this, and also turned the price into rupees. The children asked more questions about recycling and had another discussion. Then they pronounced their verdict.*

*'They say it's still too expensive,' Nandana told me.*

*Source: Judith Ennew, field notes on visit to The Concerned for Working Children, May 1995.*

**DATA****Photographs taken by tribal children in Orissa**

*Sanjit Patnayak has been a community level worker in a tribal area of Orissa for some years. During classroom-based learning in New Delhi he was extremely sceptical about the ability of the children he works with to use cameras, but he was persuaded to include taking photographs in the methods he used for field-based learn-*

ing and took some disposable cameras as well as his own auto-focus camera with a supply of film

By the time he was visited by the facilitator in the field Sanjit was a convert. But when the facilitator saw the photographs taken by the children she at first refused to believe the children had taken them. The pictures were a record of their daily lives. Perfectly framed and focused, each one told a story. They appeared to have been taken by experts. And, in the sense that the children were the experts on their own lives, they were.

Later, the facilitator saw the children taking photographs. First a group discussed what they wanted to record, then one child actually took the photograph, with advice from others, so that the photographs were a purposeful group statement as well as being technically good. She was also able to see the pleasure children took in seeing (and individually owning) developed photographs of themselves, as well as the way Sanjit was able to use these images as the basis for focus group discussions about the children's work within the community.

*From Field-based learning during the India/Nepal Learning Experience*

#### 8.2.4.5 Visual stimuli

Visual representations made by children are useful in research not only because of what they say in themselves but also through what is said about them. As already pointed out, drawings and other representations should not be used in research without also taking note of children's explanations of their own drawings. They can also be used to start a longer discussion on the subject or theme depicted and thus become not only records in themselves but also a stimulus for collection of further data.

Single or multiple visual stimuli can be used in various ways in research with children, including:

- In the early stages of research, to break the ice with children who could be shy of talking to a stranger,
- To stimulate interviews, group discussion or role play,
- To find out about children's visual perception and two-dimensional understandings, particularly before collecting visual representations;
- To encourage children to talk about issues that might be difficult or embarrassing,
- To find out about general ideas, rules about or attitudes towards specific topics,
- In ranking exercises (see below under 'Collective methods');
- To discover what words or phrases are used by children in particular contexts or about certain subjects;
- To report back to research respondents about the findings and results of research, in order to encourage feedback, evaluation and ideas about further research or action.



## EXAMPLE

### **What is the meaning of punishment?**

One of a series of pictures used by Tsegaye Chernet for field-based learning in Ethiopia

During focus group discussions with schoolchildren on physical punishment, Tsegaye found that children were unclear about the definition of the topic. He explored the meaning of the corresponding Amharic word *Q'tat* with the children, and then asked an artist friend to draw the various kinds of punishment they described. The set of pictures was then used as the basis of further work using diary recall methods.



Many different kinds of visual objects can be used as stimuli:

- Drawings, paintings and cartoons;
- Photographs,
- Collages, made by children from newspapers and magazines;
- Posters;
- Films and videos,
- Three dimensional objects, including natural materials as well as weaving, pottery, sculpture and other artefacts.

If researchers prepare visual stimuli for research with children they should be careful to note the comments about cultural ways of seeing made above, and to pilot the materials and ways of using them.

### 8.2.5 Interviews

Interviewing is one of the most fundamental methods of social research. A development of the 'natural' process of conversation, it relies primarily, but not solely, on verbal communication. It is important to record not only words but also such aspects as body language and tone of voice.



## QUOTE

*Conversation is a basic mode of human interaction. Human beings talk with each other—they interact, pose questions, and answer questions. Through conversations we get to know other people, get to learn about their experiences, feelings, and hopes and the world they live in.*

*There are multiple forms of conversations—in everyday life, in literature, and in the professions. Everyday conversations may range from chat and small talk, through*

*exchanges of news, disputes, or formal negotiations, to deep personal interchanges . . . Professional conversations include journalistic interviews, legal interrogations, academic oral examinations, religious confessions, therapeutic dialogues, and . . . qualitative research interviews. Each of these conversational genres uses different rules and techniques*

*The research interview is based on the conversation of daily life and is a professional conversation*

Source: Kvale, S., 1996, *InterViews: an introduction to qualitative research interviewing* Sage Publications USA, p. 5

Research interviews are conversations with a structure and purpose that are controlled to a varying degree by the researcher. Just like everyday conversations, research interviews can take a variety of forms, including:

- Life story interviews;
- Testimony;
- 'Key informant' interviews on specific topics.

A frequently misused term in research is 'in-depth interview', often applied to any structured conversation that uses open-ended questions. There is no exact definition of an in-depth interview, but the term should almost certainly not be used unless it describes a series of long, relatively unstructured conversations between a researcher and a respondent who know each other well, interact verbally on a day-to-day basis and are relaxed and comfortable in each other's company.

It is important to remember that all cultures have appropriate ways of greeting, beginning and ending conversations, and ways of speaking. Direct questions and answers, speaking out as an individual, or even having an individual life history may be alien or even offensive. Respondents may engage in interviews with researchers who use inappropriate forms of address, ask what are regarded as 'stupid' questions or try to discuss themes that are not usually the topic of polite conversation. The researcher might thus acquire data—but not realise that it is worthless.



#### QUOTE

*The recent contact with white investigators . . . has led to the emergence of a number of new literary categories. I am thinking particularly of autobiographies and the descriptions of the various aspects of culture, especially of religion and ritual. These never existed before . . .*

*. . . within less than two generations American Indians have developed the technique for composing well-rounded autobiographies. . .*

Paul Radin, 1955, *The literature of primitive peoples*, *Diogenes* 12, Winter

Never ask questions unless you are sure you know.

- The correct ways of beginning, carrying out and ending a conversation between the person you are intending to interview and yourself (taking into consideration such factors as gender, relative age



and other aspects of status) in the social or cultural group concerned,

- Cultural ways of framing questions and answers;
- If the topic is one that can be discussed in conversation—if it can be discussed within that culture, or is of interest;
- The words and phrases normally used to discuss the topic, and what they mean.



### QUOTE

*Questions are speech acts which place two people in direct, immediate interaction. In doing so, they carry messages about relationships—about relative status, assertions of status and challenges to status*

*Esther Goody, 1978, Questions and politeness, Cambridge University Press, p. 39*

This entails that interviews should not normally be the first method used in research, or take place with children you do not already know fairly well and who are interested to talk to you about the topic in which you are interested. The best interviews are those that children initiate themselves, or in which children interview other children.

In conventional research, interviews are nearly always focused on the researcher's interests and research objectives. If this method is used at the outset of a research process it is unlikely to be participatory. Nevertheless, if children themselves chose the research topic, or themes within the topic, and become involved in collecting the interview material, it is possible for interviews to be participatory.

- **Life story interviews:**  
Can provide a wealth of information on the life and personal circumstances of an individual child, group of children or family. It may be most practical to conduct an interview in several sessions to ensure that it does not intrude into the child's routine. Issues raised in one session can be discussed again in a later one.



### LEARNING POINT

#### **Children's life stories**

*First make sure that children know what the interview will be about and how it will take place*

*A life story interview should begin with basic biographical details*

*Other topics might include*

- *Parents (including step-parents, foster and adoptive parents)—whether they are alive, where they are from and where they live, relationship with the child,*
- *Family background—extended family and the members' role/influence in the child's life,*
- *Brothers and sisters (including half- and step-siblings)—their roles and relationships,*
- *The community—neighbours, companions, friends and other significant people in the child's life, their roles and influence;*

- *Every day life—the household environment, domestic routines and household economy,*
- *Special occasions—births, baptisms and naming ceremonies, weddings, funerals, festivals, initiations;*
- *Social and cultural life—religion, world view, friendships, and aspirations,*
- *Education—grades, repeated years, relations with classmates and teachers, content of education, informal education and homework,*
- *Working life—tasks and occupations, hours of work, work environment, work history, relations with employer(s) and work companions, domestic responsibilities and paid employment,*
- *Decision-making,*
- *Leisure and recreation.*

*From H Slim and P Thompson 1993, *Listening for a Change*, London, Panos, pp 64-65*

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- **Testimony**  
This is a more focused form of interview in which a specific aspect of a child's life is explored, such as experience of work, education or family life. These focused interviews take less time than life stories but, since they go into greater detail, require greater prior confidence and trust between subject and researcher and a greater knowledge by the researcher of the issue in question. Because they are specific and can be quite short, it is possible to conduct single-issue interviews with quite a large number of children.
- 'Key informant' interviews

The term 'Key informant' has two meanings.

- i In the early stages of research, most researchers spend some time with people who seem to be knowledgeable about the topic or group to be studied. These can be either adults or children, and may be 'key' in the sense that they are opinion leaders or acknowledged authorities on the subject. Or they may be 'key' in that they can open the door to access to a group. In either case, key informants may mislead researchers, and can be more interesting for the stereotyped ideas they present than for the actual knowledge they have. Many will be accustomed to talking to researchers and have well-practised tales to tell. In the case of child research, conventional approaches have tended to use adults, such as teachers or parents, as key informants. Ultimately the best information comes from children, rather than from 'brokers' who stand between researchers and respondents.
- ii As research progresses, certain respondents become involved in the process and may form a close friendship with a researcher, who will often spend time talking to them both formally and informally. These people are key informants in the sense that their opinion

and reflections will be sought regularly during the course of field-work and they may sometimes spontaneously offer to be interviewed or give testimony on a specific subject, or even make tape recordings or written records that add to the researcher's data.



### LEARNING POINT

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#### **How participatory is an interview?**

##### *Researcher-led*

- The topic is predetermined,
- Structured to a set format,
- Type of question (closed, open or a mixture of the two);
- Researcher does the interviewing

***Researcher-led interviews can make children feel uncomfortable and result in poor data.***

##### *Respondent-led*

- Freedom to determine the topic;
- Control over the flow of conversation,
- Use of a few open questions, or no questions at all,
- Children conduct interviews.

***Respondent-led interviews can be conducted as an unstructured conversation or monologue without questions from the researcher.***

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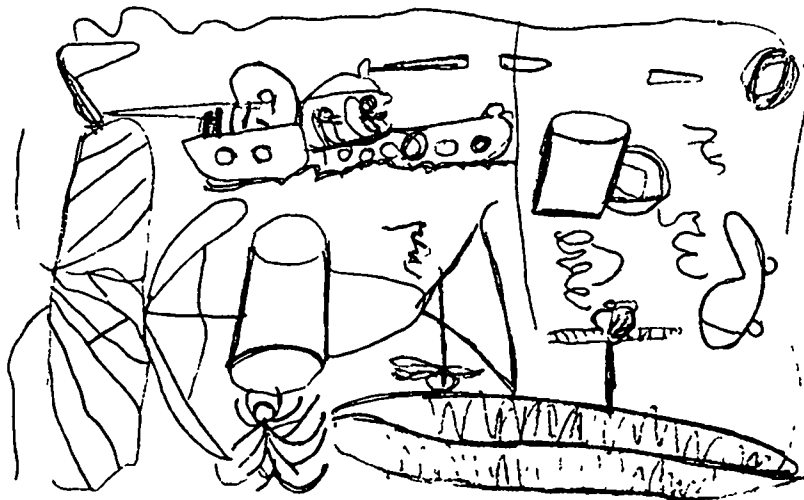
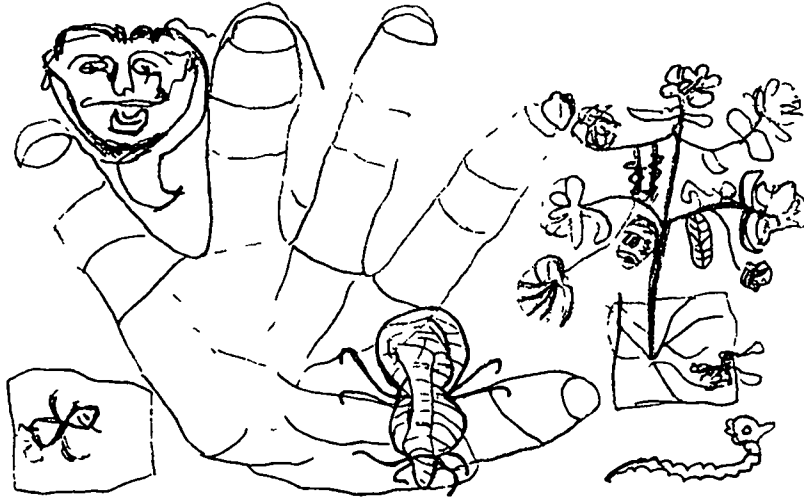
Respondent-led interviews tend to generate more qualitative information which, although adding a richness and texture to research findings, cannot always be easily quantified. Respondent-led interviews are particularly effective for learning about children's words, concepts, ideas and world view and are thus particularly useful during the early stages of research. When researchers have understood language, meanings and ideas used by children, both researcher and children may decide to use more structured interviews with focused questions.

It is important to help children feel relaxed during interviews. Sometimes it is a good idea to begin an interview with an activity, such as drawing, singing songs or playing a game. The place in which an interview takes place should be familiar, comfortable and free from distractions or interruptions. Interviewer and interviewee should sit at the same level and there should be no table, desk or other symbol of authority between them. The method used to record the interview should be agreed and, if a tape recorder is used and they are not familiar with this, children should be shown how it works. Ideally the record made of an interview should be played or read back to the child—although many children will say they find this boring or that they trust the researcher, they should be given the option.

## X EXAMPLE

Interview: using his own drawings as visual stimulus, with Bunnith, a Cambodian boy who had been a refugee

Two Drawings by Bunnith, 14 years of age



When I asked Bunnith what made him happy he said "nothing makes me happy here Back in the camp I liked swinging on the swings and horse and I had many friends"

And when I asked was there anything that he did not like or that made him afraid he said "There is nothing I dislike but I am sometimes afraid that they will kidnap us" (The younger children sitting close by interrupted at this point—they said that they were afraid of strangers and ghosts and giants like in videos)

Another child added that what they fear is "That the kidnappers can give you a toy to play with which will lead you away And I have also heard that there may be a chemical in the hands of the kidnapper which could make us follow them"

Bunnith then went on to say that the time he had been most frightened was when he had seen the demon --he saw it the night they fled from their home to come to this place It came out of the top of a tree and was very frightening (He pointed to his picture to show what it had been like The other children who had gathered around

agreed that it would be very frightening to see such a demon )

He went on to describe the rest of the pictures that he had drawn "Here is a tank with people inside it and a gun shooting bullets that are exploding This is what was happening on the hill above my house This is the sea and a pipe The water is being pumped so it can be stored up here I have never seen the sea This is a car, which I didn't finish and here is a flower And what is this? ...I started to draw the HIV virus here, but it was a long time ago that I saw it and I couldn't remember exactly what it looked like "

Where did you see the virus? "I saw it on the side of an education car "

"This is a fish in a fish basket This is an old man with a moustache and a beard—he's a mean man—this is his big hand—I wanted to draw him all, he was going to be a big man This is a flower tree—there is a bird and a net to catch it This is a snake and a snake hole . people here are very frightened of snakes "

Source Sarah Gibbs field notes, Cambodia 1995

When conducted in a supportive and respectful way, interviews can be a very powerful medium of liberation for children, more especially because in most societies children are given very little opportunity to speak for themselves



## QUOTE

Children are generally 'spoken for' and often misinterpreted

Speaking up is a sign of confidence, being listened to increases that confidence.

Slim and Thompson 1993, p 73 and p 8

Children and youth often find it easier to interview each other than to be interviewed by an outsider. This can be especially true when dealing with sensitive subjects or issues that children normally like to keep secret from adults Interviews by children can provide very high quality data.



## EXAMPLE

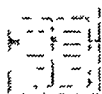
### Children interviewing

Tobias Hecht conducted what he called 'radio workshops' with street children in Recife, Brazil, handing them a tape recorder and microphone and asking them to interview each other, using their own questions He found that:

- The children tended to view the tape recorder not with suspicion, but as a means of making themselves heard,
- They often used role play, pretending to be on the radio, as the basis of their interview technique,
- Child interviewers were not afraid to challenge a companion if they thought he was telling lies,
- They asked questions that adult researchers might not think of,
- They asked the questions in words and ways that their companions understood;

- The questions they asked each other were often as interesting for the research as the answers they gave.

*Tobias Hecht, 1995, At home in the street, street children of Recife, Brazil, unpublished manuscript, USA, p 15 and 20*



## DATA

### **One Brazilian street boy interviews another**

*Question: Hey, Carlos, where do you live?*

*Answer: In Ibura.*

*Question: What part of Ibura?*

*Answer: In UR-4.*

*Question: You and who else live there?*

*Answer: Me, my mother, my father. .*

*Question: Are they separated?*

*Answer: Yes.*

*Next, the interviewer asked where the boy slept, rather than where he lived. This was a more appropriate question than an adult might ask. The boy being interviewed did not want to admit that he lived in the street. He felt more comfortable saying that he slept there, even though he had not set foot in his 'home' for some years.*

*Tobias Hecht, 1995, p 15*

### **8.3 Collective methods**

Many of the methods already described can be carried out with groups, rather than individuals. A drawing may be made by a group of children working together, and it can be very effective to interview a group of children together, because they may have more confidence in being a number of children talking to a single adult than being interviewed alone. Moreover, children in a group usually interact together, correcting each other's statements and adding additional information. Role play, too, is almost always a group activity. But all the methods described in this manual thus far tend to collect information about individual ideas, viewpoints and life events. This means that researchers have to be careful about the samples they choose because the views or experiences of one or two unusual or idiosyncratic individuals may bias their results.

Collective methods, on the other hand, use techniques to gather views and information that is agreed on by a group of respondents. Thus these methods find out about, or even develop, consensus about specific themes or topics. Collective methods can be particularly useful at the beginning of the research process to discover what people think about and the language they use to discuss various issues, or to test out ideas and analyses during or at the end of field-work.

Individual and collective methods each have their disadvantages:

- Individual methods may lead to bias unless the sample is carefully chosen;
- Collective methods can lead to information that lacks depth because fear of conflict, or mockery or of appearing to be 'different' may lead to some members of the group of respondents keeping quiet about their real feelings or opinions.

In an ideal research situation, both types of method should be used and the results compared in order to cross-check the information gathered.

### 8.3.1 Focus Group Discussion\*

A focus group discussion is a purposeful, facilitated discussion between a group of respondents with similar characteristics, within a fixed timeframe, focusing on a limited number of topics that may be chosen by either researchers or respondents. The number of respondents should not be too small nor too large. The discussion should take place between the respondents, facilitated by a researcher, whose role is to ensure that the topics are adequately covered and that all members of the group have an equal chance to talk. The facilitator is supported by a recorder, using a notebook, a flip chart, audio- or videotape, or a mixture of methods.

#### QUOTE

*A focus group discussion (FGD) is a group discussion of 6-12 persons, guided by a facilitator, during which members talk freely and spontaneously about a chosen topic*

*Konjit Kiftew, Ethiopia Learning Process*

The discussion may be completely unstructured or may be prompted by a small number of open questions posed by the facilitator in ways that do not interrupt the flow of the discussion.

Focus group discussion can be especially helpful for exploring controversial topics, or identifying:

- Community knowledge or ideas;
- Language and words used;

As well as agreed ideas about:

- Feelings;
- Attitudes;
- Behaviours.

Focus group discussions can be organised with several groups consecutively, or with the same group meeting regularly over a relatively long period of time.

#### LEARNING POINT

*A focus group discussion is not a group interview*

#### 8.3.1.1 Organising focus group discussions

- Participants should have similar characteristics, determined by the research question, culture and other relevant elements.
- Researchers should negotiate participants' informed consent to:
  - Place;
  - Topic;

\* based on presentations by Fathana Faruqi in Bangladesh and Konjit Kiftew in Ethiopia

Research;

Person who is acting as moderator/facilitator;

Person who is acting as recorder;

Recording method;

Review of the record of the discussion.

- Many manuals on focus group discussion suggest that a written list of topics should be given to participants, but this is obviously not advisable with illiterates, or with children whose reading ability may be limited.
- Ensure that the participants understand the topics.
- Ensure that the seating is comfortable and does not create distance or an unequal relationship between moderator/facilitator and participants. A circle of chairs is often stipulated in manuals, but participants may be happier on cushions, or on the ground. Eye contact between all members of the group should be the main aim of the seating arrangement.
- A quiet, well lit space, with no interruptions is the ideal, but many focus group discussions take place successfully in un-ideal conditions indoors or outdoors.



### EXAMPLE

**A focus group discussion can take more than one form**

#### **Ethiopia**

*Konjit Kiftew carried out successful focus group discussions with street children in Addis Ababa, in a small dark hut within the compound of a street children project. The children were excited and seldom sat still for long. To make a point they often spontaneously broke into role play, which sometimes ended with a song. Sometimes, when really excited about something in the discussion, they left their seats on the rolled up blankets they used at night and clustered around Konjit.*

#### **India**

*Rekha Rajkumar worked in a remote community in rural Rajasthan, where children usually spent their time away from the village herding goats. For these children the opportunity to speak to each other in a focus group discussion was a novelty—as was the idea that an adult was interested in their views. They gathered in an open space, sitting on the sandy ground, for the discussion, surrounded by the goats. From time to time a child would notice that one of his or her charges was straying and break away from the discussion to herd it back again, before returning to resume the activity.*

The role of the moderator/facilitator is to:

- Build rapport;
- Introduce the session;



- Encourage discussion;
- Encourage involvement;
- Monitor the rhythm of the discussion;
- Minimise domination of the discussion by powerful, articulate or emotionally involved individuals;
- Summarise discussion for review at the end;
- Listen for additional comments after the session;
- Not to act as an expert or teacher, correcting facts and providing opinions.

Facilitators should bear in mind that focus group discussion is a method that originated in the United States, where free discussion between individuals is the norm and it is regarded as impolite to dominate a conversation. In other cultures, the normal model of discussion may take another form—for instance it may be usual for everyone to take their turn to give a lengthy opinion, followed by others (often repeating what has just been said). According to focus group discussion 'rules' this is both dominance and lack of 'real' discussion, but it may be a necessary phase before ideas can be exchanged. It is vital to find out how people normally discuss important issues before asking them to take part in a focus group discussion and to adjust your expectations and way of running the session to be appropriate to the cultural context.

#### **EXAMPLE**

##### ***Culturally appropriate focus group discussion***

*During research about the behaviour, treatment and punishment of children in Ethiopian schools, a focus group discussion was held with teachers. The researcher, Belay Zeleke, himself a former teacher, was very familiar with the appropriate forms of address and communication among adults within the school setting. The discussion lasted over two hours. In the first hour, Belay appeared quite calm and remote, intervening hardly at all. Each teacher in turn gave a lengthy, formal speech without prompting or interruption. Dealing with broad cultural norms and values, the content of these monologues was in the main extremely general, far removed from the quite specific questions posed by Belay. Only when all of the teachers had spoken did the real discussion begin, becoming very lively, with interruptions and interjections. In this stage of the discussion specific issues of children's behaviour and punishment were addressed and Belay 'managed' the process more actively.*

The record may be kept by another researcher, or by a member of the group of respondents. The recorder's role in a focus group discussion is to:

- Record date, time, place and names of participants;
- Make a detailed record of content and actions, recording exact words where possible,
- Make a general description of group dynamics:
  - Level of participation;
  - Level of interest;
  - Dominant and passive participants;

- Record opinions—especially key statements;
- Record emotions—reluctance, strong feelings and so on;
- Make a note of the words and phrases used by participants to discuss the topic.

The record may be kept by using one of the following methods, or a mixture:

- Written notes;
- Flip chart;
- Tape recorder;
- Video recorder.



### LEARNING POINT

#### **Key rules for Focus Group Discussions**

- *There are no right and wrong answers;*
- *You are not a teacher;*
- *The purpose of the focus group discussion is to find out what the children think and do—not to tell them what to think and do.*

#### **8.3.1.2 Focus group discussions with children**

Focus group discussions provide one way of breaking down the unequal power relationships between adults and children in the research process. In a focus group discussion, child respondents outnumber the adult researchers.

In addition to taking part in focus group discussions facilitated by adults, children can also run their own. However, there are some special issues to be considered when running a focus group discussion with children:

- Who has chosen the topic or research problem?—children will not be good discussants for a topic in which they are not interested,
- Should the group be boys and girls together or separate? This depends on the children's age and cultural factors;
- Warm up activities and stimuli for focus group discussions work very well with children:

It helps to have some suitable warm-up activities (such as games and songs) to use before you begin a session (and to cool down at the end)—these should be planned beforehand and relate to the topic if possible. Children can also be good at initiating warm ups; Stimuli for discussion can be role plays on the chosen topic, drawing activities; a story; a video; music or a review of a previous discussion.

- Children's comfort and safety:

Adults often interrupt a focus group discussion with children, talking to the facilitator as if the children did not matter—make it clear to the adult concerned that this is unacceptable;

Children can be easily distracted, and children who are not involved in the focus group discussion can be particularly disruptive because they are curious about what is going on—try to minimise this;

Chairs or other seating should be comfortable for children, not too big for smaller children and not smaller than the chair used by the facilitator and recorder—sit on the floor with the children if that is how they are most comfortable—never sit them behind desks or sit behind a desk or table yourself.

- Avoid 'question and answer' sessions;
- Don't use a special patronising voice for children or act and speak in an authoritarian manner;
- Make sure the children understand (and have agreed to) the method of recording used and the review at the end of the session;
- Take special care over informed consent; many focus group discussions with children take place in schools with teachers telling children to take part;
- Be sensitive to the children's level of literacy and use of language—but don't talk down to them.

#### **M E T H O D**

##### ***The telephone method for focus group discussion with children***

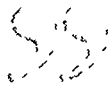
*Children are not always accustomed to discussion, and may find it difficult to abide by rules for listening to each other without too many interruptions. The telephone method can be helpful for organising a focus group discussion and is fun for both children and researcher.*

*The 'telephone' is a long piece of string, with a paper funnel, matchbox or yoghurt pot tied at each end, to represent the telephone sets. The facilitator explains its use, as well as the way telephone calls take place, with each person on the telephone line having their turn to speak and listen. Interruptions from other children can take place through 'trunk calls' in which the person speaking is asked if he or she will 'take a call from. ' at which the listener may have to hand over the telephone set.*

*This method was developed successfully for use with street children in Guntur, India, by P B Baskar Rao*

### **8.3.2 Collective visual methods**

In recent years an approach known as Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) has been used successfully in poor, rural communities to gather, and even stimulate, community ideas. The majority of methods used are visual, although few begin with drawings made with pencil and paper.

**QUOTE**

*PRA is a family of approaches and methods to enable local people to present, share and analyse their knowledge of life and conditions, to plan, act, and monitor and evaluate.*

*Robert Chambers, 1995, PRA Training Session, INTRAC Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation course*

PRA evolved out of several disciplines and research approaches. It is based on the assertions that:

- Regardless of educational background, poor people are creative, capable of doing investigation, analysis and planning;
- Outsiders can act as catalysts and facilitators in these processes;
- Empowering the weak and marginalised is an essential part of social and economic development and change

Most of the methods used in PRA are visual, relying heavily on symbols that are as far as possible recognizable and accessible to illiterate or semi-literate populations. To make it possible for poor people to participate, extensive use is made of natural materials, such as sticks and stones, that are readily available locally and free. Drawing and modelling is done on a large scale on the ground, so that all participants in the process can see the final product. A permanent record can then be made on a large sheet of paper, ideally using agreed symbols in place of the written word.

PRA shares many of the principles outlined in this manual:

- Participation of respondents should be proactive rather than passive;
- Respect for respondents' own words, concepts and meanings;
- Equality of researcher and respondents;
- Methods should be flexible, exploratory and inventive,
- Both researchers and respondents should enjoy the research;

In PRA, as in all good research, the researcher acts as a facilitator rather than as an investigator; establishing rapport, convening, watching, listening, learning, supporting, asking and, as far as possible, handing control over to the respondents.

PRA is based on a philosophy of human development that involves transferring power and control to the poor so that they can participate fully in all political and social processes.

**QUOTE**

*Exponents of PRA argue that this approach. 'enables and empowers communities to do their own analysis, take command of their lives and resources and improve their well-being as they define it.'*

*C James, 1995, Empowering Communities in the Development Process Participatory Rural Appraisal as an Approach, MEd Dissertation, University of Bristol, p 24*

Thus, PRA claims that.

- Research should be an essential part of social action;
- Research should be for the direct benefit of respondents, or research participants, rather than for the researcher;
- Research results derive from a consensus among participants; collective methods reflect the conditions/perspectives of whole communities
- Powerless groups (which includes children) can be empowered by developing knowledge about themselves;

PRA methods and exercises can be used with whole communities and repeated with sub-groups (children:adults, boys:girls, and so on) within these communities, to reveal similarities and differences in their perspectives and experiences. Because PRA is carried out with whole communities, it does not isolate children from their social environment.

It is also claimed that PRA research builds consensus. There is considerable emphasis on sharing experiences and knowledge. Respondents undertake the discussion and analysis of results while the researchers watch, facilitate and listen.

PRA research is conducted by teams of researchers. If different social groups are to be reached by the research, a team needs to have a variety of members, mixed in appropriate ways according to gender, age and other social characteristics.

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### **E X A M P L E**

#### ***Flexibility in PRA***

*A team of ActionAid researchers in rural Nepal found that villagers did not want to draw maps on the ground with sticks, as is often suggested in PRA manuals as more appropriate than paper and pencil, which would be unfamiliar to people who have not been to school. The villagers believed that to do so would be to disturb the integrity of the soil and lead to poor crops. In this case, the villagers preferred to use paper to draw their maps.*

*Another suggestion made in PRA is using familiar materials, such as beans or other pulses, in exercises that entail counting. Ranking exercises often use boxes drawn on the ground, into each of which respondents put a different number of beans to indicate their preferences. But for villagers who experience food shortages, using beans in this way is likely to be tactless or offensive. In some cases, they have been observed retrieving pulses from the dirt and taking them away to wash and eat later*

*Sources: Verbal communications from Victoria Johnson and Farana Faruqi*

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### **8.3.2.1 A typology of PRA methods\***

#### **8.3.2.1.1 Spatial**

The spatial dimension is represented by mapping and modelling exercises, which can be used in the early stages of research with groups of children and/or adults as an aid to observation, a means of gaining the confidence of respondents and a way of acquiring basic information on their familiarity with and use of the environment, resource distribution, settlement patterns and concepts and understandings of health and nutrition.

Maps can be drawn on the ground with sticks, chalk or other materials. They are an effec-

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\* This typology is based on a presentation by Robert Chambers at an INTRAC workshop

tive way of obtaining simple quantifiable information about a given community or social group and often generate a good deal of discussion among respondents which can be very informative. Maps of the past can be drawn alongside maps of the present, illustrating changes in land-use, settlement and other factors. Three-dimensional models can be especially useful for finding out about environmental changes.

The various mapping exercises include:

- **Transects:** Following the dictionary definition of a transect as a crosswise-cut, a transect map involves walking with respondents along a line, a road or other predetermined route and identifying with them various features such as natural resources, vegetation, settlement patterns, farming practices and so on. The findings are recorded on a map of the route.

**DATA**

**Children's Transect of Kyakatebe village, Uganda**

A group of four children, three boys and a girl, participated in a transect walk, noting for the facilitators the human, social, economic and physical features of the area, who owned what and who contributed what to the village.

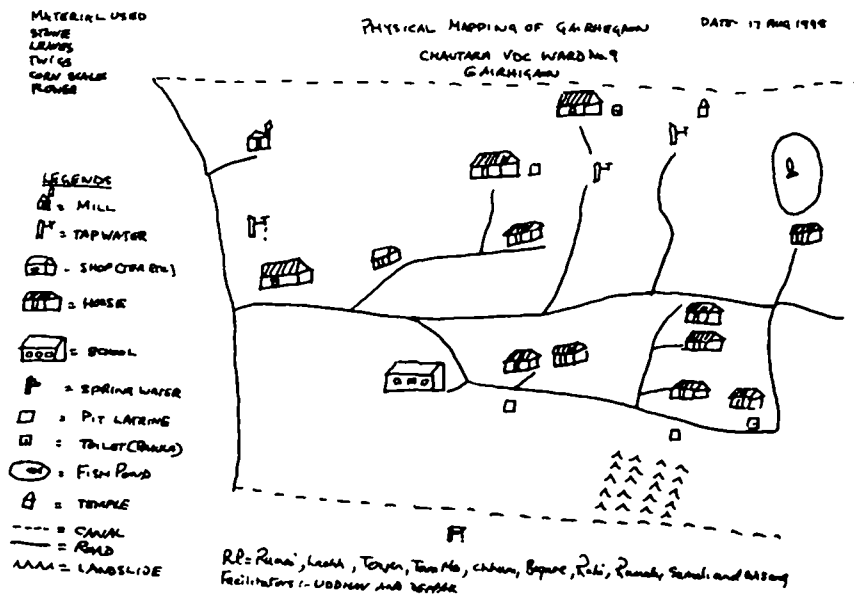
PHYSICAL FEATURES						Electric poles	Born hole	Cemetery				
VEGETATION	Bush			Bush, cactus scanty grass	Eucalyptus trees	Plantain		Muluba trees				Swamp
SETTLEMENT		Spurn				Semi- permanent	Permanent settlement					
RECREATION ACTIVITIES	Play ground							Removing bark from trees				
ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES		Coffee growing	Plantain farming	Trapping Grazing	Eucalyptus tree growing	Plantain farming	Bark cloth making		Brick- making	Wood cutting		
RESOURCES												Wall
RESOURCE OWNERSHIP												
SIZE OF OWNERSHIP					100m <sup>2</sup>							

Source | Guijt, A Fuglesang and T Kisadha 1994, *It is the young trees that make a thick forest, Uganda* and London, IIED and Redd Barna, p 18

- Physical maps and models of the local area, which show resource and settlement distribution (including seasonal differences and changes over time). Maps can indicate land tenure and use, water sources, trees, roads and other communication systems, as well as services

## DATA

### Children's map of water sources and sanitation in a Nepali village



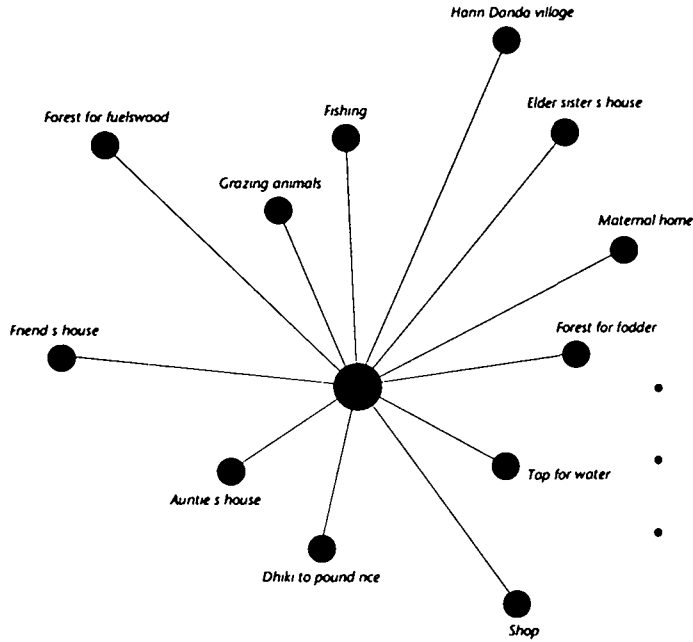
This map of their home village was made by primary-aged children who did not attend school. They used natural objects to build the map on the ground and then transferred the image to a large sheet of brown paper with the help of Udhav Poudyal, who was researching their knowledge, attitudes and practices with respect to hygiene, for his field-based learning. Overnight, Udhav copied the map onto a smaller sheet of paper and then returned the original map to the children, who were delighted to have it back and carefully folded it up for safekeeping.

- Social maps and models, which involve documenting settlement patterns and giving the location and membership of households (numbers of inhabitants and distribution of population by kinship relationships, sex and generation.)
- Health maps are social maps indicating households in a given community overlaid with information about patterns of illness and death indicated by showing people (children) with nutrition or health problems, people (children) with disabilities and people (children) who have died, with causes of death.
- Mobility maps can be used to indicate how often children travel to and from destinations beyond their home or community at different distances, including the reasons for their journey and means of travel.

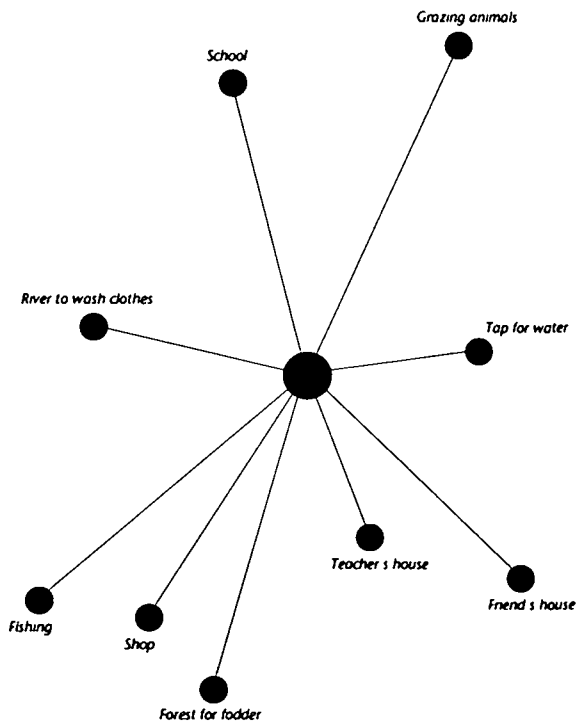
**DATA**

*Mobility map of Maya Rani Waiba and her younger brother Singh Bahadour Waiba, Sindhuli District, Nepal*

*Maya Rani Waiba (a Tamang girl, aged 14)*



*Singh Bahadur Waiba (a Tamang boy, aged 12)*



- The children were asked to draw the places that they often went to.
- They drew a circle to represent their house
- Then they drew circles around the house to represent the places that they went to, showing the relative distance and direction from the house
- These maps are copies of the children's drawings
- Notice that Maya Rani has not drawn school on her map. She said, "Boys and girls can earn money and become teachers if they are educated. I would like to go to adult literacy classes but my parents don't let me go as I have to work."

Source: V Johnson, J Hill and E Ivan-Smith 1995, *Listening to smaller voices children in an environment of change*, London, Action Aid, p 51



- Body maps, for which an outline of the body is drawn by the children (perhaps drawing around the shape of one of them lying on the ground). Children are then asked to talk about, and then place on the drawing, their own names and ideas about the health topic being researched, for example:

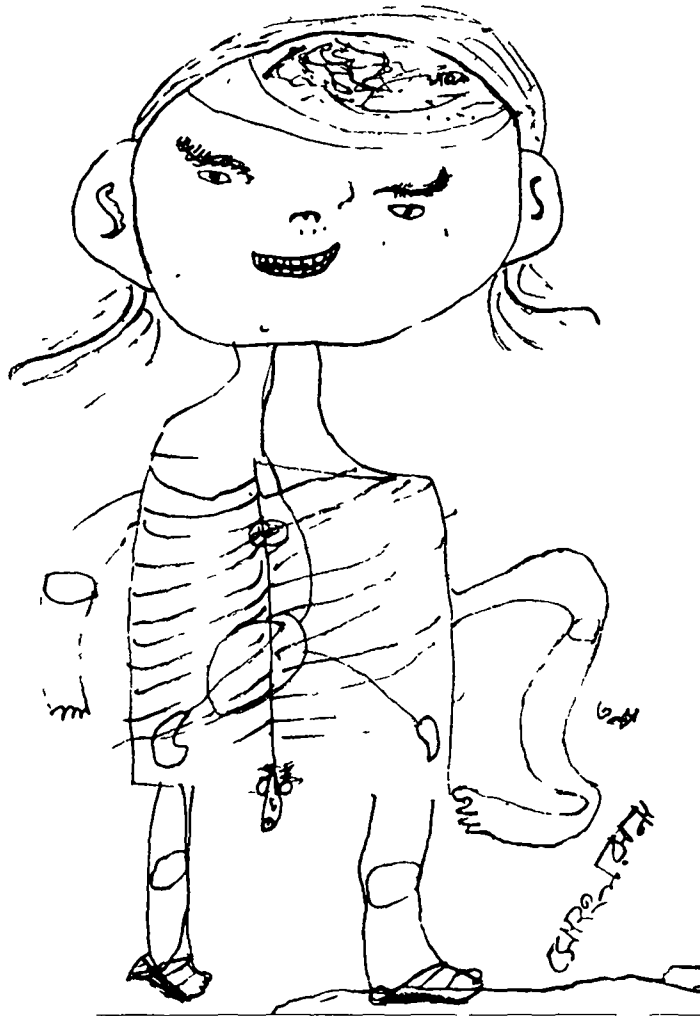
The names and functions of different parts of the body as they understand it,

'Things they cannot see' such as what happens inside the body during digestion;

The causes and progress of different diseases.

#### DATA

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*Asif Munir was interested in learning about the understandings street children in Dhaka have of anatomical functioning and health. Through an informal conversation with 4 boys he learned about their lives and circumstances generally. He then asked if they would draw a figure, indicating the internal organs and describing their function, if possible. The boys concentrated hard throughout the session, which lasted for thirty minutes.*

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**DATA**

When the boys had completed their flower diagram, Ruby asked them to do a matrix showing how they rated the various work activities they used to be involved in. The quantitative nature of the ranking exercise was alien to the boys and they showed much less interest in doing a matrix than they had in drawing the flower. However, a great deal of qualitative information, on wages, hours of work, the children's perceptions of work hazard and so on, emerged in the discussions surrounding the activity.

কাজ WORK	WASTE PICKER কাষাৰ (সেৱা) উৱা	DELIVERING LUNCH বাৰি প্ৰতিভা কৰা	WORKING IN A SHOP দোকানত কৰা	CLEANING TOILETS বাৰাৰ পৰিষ্কাৰ কৰা	VENDING (VEGETABLES) ব্ৰা কৰা
সোৱা INCOME	২/৬ ২ OR ৩	৪/৫ ৪ OR ৫	২ ২	২ ২	৬ ৫
অসচ্ছন্দ DISLIKE	২/৬ ২ OR ৩	২/৬ ২ OR ৩	৬ ৩	৬ ৫	৬/৪ ৩ OR ৪
জান	৬/৪				
পৰিবাৰৰ লক্ষ্য BENEFIT লক্ষ্য FAMILY	৬/৪ ৩ OR ৪	৬/৫ ৩ OR ৪	৪/৫ ৪ OR ৫	২ ২	৬ ৫
কাঠান HARDWORK	৪/৫ ৪ OR ৫	৬ ৩	৬ ৫	৬/৪ ৩ OR ৪	৬ ৫
ঝুৰিপূৰ্ণ HAZARDOUS	৬ ৫	৪/৫ ৪ OR ৫	৬ ৫	৬ ৫	৬ ৫

1- LEAST  
5- MOST

MATRIX RANKING

- Wealth or well-being grouping and ranking is used to learn people's criteria for wealth and vulnerability and their perception of the distribution of well-being or wealth among families, households or individuals in a given community or group

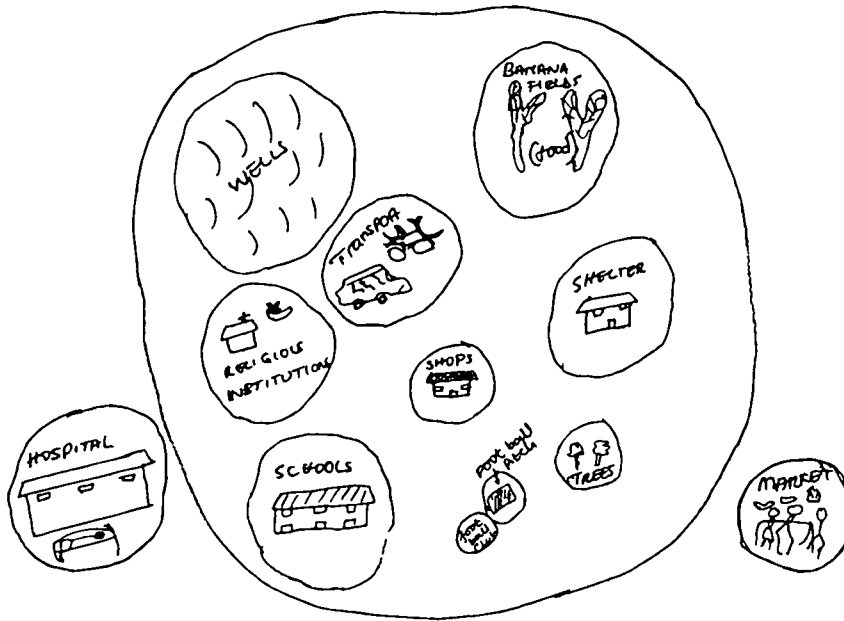
8 3 2 1 3 Relational

In these methods diagrams are used in order to learn about the way people see relationships between things

- Venn (chapatti) diagrams can be used to identify and establish the relationship between children and key groups or institutions, such as a church, school or health centre, within and outside the community in order of relative importance. The community is represented as a large circle and key groups and institutions as smaller circles—the size of these latter showing the relative importance of the institution to the children. Institutions within the community are drawn inside the main circle and those not, outside.

**DATA**

**Venn diagram showing what children from Kyakatebe village in Uganda consider important in their community.**



Children were asked to show the groups and institutions in their community and the roles they play as perceived by the children. They were also asked to indicate the order of importance of these institutions.

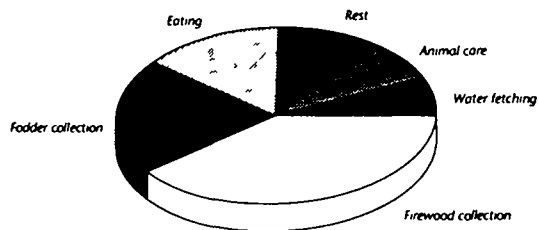
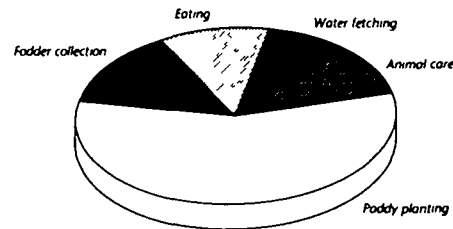
Source: Gujt, Fuglesang and Kisadha 1994, p. 29

- Linkage/flow charts, reveal connections between things, activities and events. They can reveal children's understanding of the chain of causes and effects in a given situation, or in relation to a given problem, as in the case of school drop out, for example.
- Pie charts are also used to express relative values. Pie charts show information in a circle, each portion or segment of which varies in size according to the proportion of the total it represents.

**DATA**

Table and pie charts showing activities of a ten-year old girl from Bastipur, Sindhuli District, Nepal, in peak and slack seasons

	Activity	Hours spent
<b>In peak season</b>		
5 30	Get up	
5 30 - 6 15	Animal care	3/4
6 15 - 7 00	Water fetching	3/4
7 00 - 7 30	Breakfast	1/2
7 30 - 9 30	Fodder collection	2
9 30 - 10 00	Food	1/2
10 00 - 6 00	Paddy planting	8
6 00 - 6 30	Animal care	1/2
6 30 - 7 00	Water fetching	1/2
7 00 - 7 30	Food	1/2
7 30	Sleep	
<b>In slack season</b>		
6 00	Get up	
6 00 - 6 30	Water fetching	1/2
6 30 - 7 00	Animal care	1/2
7 00 - 7 30	Breakfast	1/2
7 30 - 10 30	Fodder collection	3
10 30 - 11 30	Food	1
11 30 - 12 30	Rest	1
12 30 - 6 00	Fire wood collection	5 1/2
6 00 - 6 30	Water fetching	1/2
6 30 - 7 00	Animal care	1/2
7 00 - 7 30	Food	1/2
7 30 - 8 00	Rest	1/2
8 00	Sleep	



Source Johnson, Hill and Ivan Smith 1995, p 55

**8 3 2 1.4 Temporal**

Methods such as time lines, trend and change analyses (in which people order events, histories, changes in land use, population, education and so on) and seasonal calendars (which show changes in rainfall, crops, food, health, labour and other factors by month or season) provide temporal information.

- Trend lines are graphs in which a curved line is used to illustrate historic trends.
- Time lines record time and events of significance to the respondent group in chronological order along a line. This can be a useful way of putting an individual's or a community's history into perspective by identifying the framework of events that shaped their past. Time lines can provide a good basis for focus group discussion.

**DATA****Time line made by 5-11 year old children in Sri Lanka**

Date	Event
1995 10 26	Herathhalmillewa village was attacked by LTTE (Tamil Tigers) A security spot was established The villagers from Morkewa came to the camp During the night they stayed in the jungle security spots Some of the villagers left for another village Villagers came back
1996 02 24	Nikawewa village was attacked by LTTE
1996 02 25	Came back to camp The [water] tank went dry Morakewa was attacked by LTTE School was started in a new place We went to Kebethigollewa school We received books for us and for the library from the Peradeniya University Water was brought by the Social Services Department's Bowser (treasurer)
1996 03	From Kandy we received sugar, rice, soap, coconuts, clothes and jak fruits
1996 03	Received clothes

Source Coomaraswamy, P, 1996, *Coping Mechanisms of a Village in the Border Areas of Anuradhapura District Affected by the Conflict*, unpublished report, Save the Children Fund (UK) Sri Lanka

- Seasonal calendars have proved a very effective way of showing the distribution of children's work by occupation or task throughout the year.

**8 3 2 1.5 Personal**

In PRA personal information is often obtained by verbal rather than visual methods, sometimes on a one-to-one basis. The methods used include oral histories, group discussions and brainstorming

**EXERCISE****Practice with PRA methods**

Participants are divided into three groups and given a series of PRA tasks to be undertaken in the grounds of the learning process venue, a car park, or somewhere else that is in the open air. Each group is asked to use whatever materials—leaves, sticks, soil and so on—are available in the vicinity to convey their findings visually. When the tasks have been completed, they are asked to reproduce the information they have given on the ground onto large sheets of paper. These are hung on the wall and used as a basis for a SWOT analysis conducted later.

**Group I:** People are asked to imagine they are members of a rural community. They should decide on their individual roles and statuses in the village and then make a resource map and a social map, of the village, followed by a historical transect. The maps should be made on the ground, using whatever materials they can find, and then transferred to paper.

**Group II:** Is asked to assume the role of children living on the streets of a city in their own country. They must decide whether they are boys or girls and also establish their

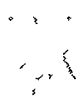
ages. First they should do a Venn diagram on the ground showing the area where they live and the institutions and resources they have access to. This is followed by a matrix showing the ways they earn or acquire money and the criteria they use to decide what they like or dislike about these activities. Using pebbles, sticks or other materials, the group should fill the matrix in, indicating which activities they prefer according to the criteria they have set. The final task for this group is to draw a flow chart indicating what caused them to be living on the street. All the information displayed on the ground should then be transferred to paper.

**Group III:** Should imagine that they are school pupils, boys and girls aged 10 to 14 years, in a small town in their own country. They are asked to draw a time line on the ground showing the most important events in their lives and that of their community. They should then make a seasonal calendar indicating how they use their time through the course of the year, including leisure and work activities as well as schooling. Finally, they should do a flow chart indicating causes of low attendance or drop-out at their school. The information should then be transferred to paper.

When all three groups have finished their exercises, participants should gather together and look at the work of each one in turn. Each group should explain what information it is conveying, how it conducted the exercise and whether there were any difficulties with the process. Facilitators might want to encourage discussion of the dynamics of the groups and any problems that were encountered, for example in reaching consensus.

**8.3.2.2 Constraints of PRA**

Participatory rural appraisal has enjoyed considerable success in recent years and has liberated many researchers and respondents from some of the problems and constraints of conventional research approaches and methods. It is being used increasingly in research with children, with some very good results (see Part II of this manual for materials on PRA with children). However, collective participatory research has some potential problems and constraints of its own, especially when conducted with children, and researchers need to be aware of and address these.



**EXAMPLE**

**SWOT analysis of PRA mapping**

<p><b>Strengths</b>  <i>Broad picture of physical/social factors                  See the child's environment Not isolated unit                  observation/analysis Avoids bias and                  misunderstanding Easy to assess the local                  situation, immediate results Comprehensive                  Descriptive Cheap</i></p>	<p><b>Weaknesses</b>  <i>Less valid than a photograph Needs space                  Choice of location critical Difficult in varied                  urban communities or in conflict situations                  Mobility maps are imprecise and depend on                  recall and would be confusing if many people                  were doing them at the same time</i></p>
<p><b>Opportunities</b>  <i>Empowers research participants Aids their                  learning Creates interest to do more                  Information transfered through generations                  Generates rich discussion and further                  information</i></p>	<p><b>Threats</b>  <i>Invites interference from outsiders</i></p>

Source Flip chart record from Ethiopia learning process

**EXAMPLE****SWOT analysis of PRA ranking**

<p><b>Strengths</b>  <i>Defines priorities, values, attitudes and concepts</i>  <i>Consensus is good</i> Abstract thought can be reflected in material ways It is fun for children</p>	<p><b>Weaknesses</b>  <i>The individual not well represented by this method</i> Consensus on criteria is difficult to achieve It is difficult to rank criteria (although easier with fewer criteria)  <i>Unnaturally limits children's priorities and concerns</i> Raises expectations</p>
<p><b>Opportunities</b>  <i>Having generated criteria it is possible to move to more individual methods</i>  <i>It is recreational</i> Good for needs assessment, programme monitoring and impact evaluation  <i>Opportunity to identify further research topics</i></p>	<p><b>Threats</b>  None</p>

Source Flip chart record from Ethiopia learning process

**LEARNING POINT****Constraints of PRA**

- Visual representations can be threatening, meaningless or misunderstood,
- Group consensus could imply majority rule;
- Group consensus could emphasise existing power structures and imbalances, which might eventually increase social conflict,
- Collective research methods may not be feasible in areas of dissent and conflict;
- Collective research methods may not always be possible in urban areas,
- Common knowledge may not be either different from or superior to individual knowledge,
- Collective methods may not be suitable for gathering qualitative information, especially on sensitive personal issues or major social structural problems;
- Outsiders researchers may not be able to reduce the, often subtle, 'sabotage' activities of dominant figures,
- Informed consent may not really be possible in groups;
- Empowerment raises expectations, which cannot always be met,
- Ranking is an abstract (western?) way of thinking and doing, which is often meaningless in other cultures or to children in general;
- Even visual representations can disempower illiterate children,
- PRA is not necessarily rapid—negotiation takes time and children may not be free to participate

Source Jo Boyden, presentation on PRA, INTRAC Participatory Monitoring & Evaluation course, 1996



## 8.4 Recording data

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The selection of methods for recording information needs to be done with as much care and planning as choosing the methods of research. Each method has advantages and disadvantages. In some situations it may be advisable to use more than one recording method in order to be able to cross check the records for accuracy, or to capture different kinds of information.

Information can be documented through:

- Written notes and diaries,
- Sketches, drawings and maps;
- Schedules, tables and forms;
- Tape recordings;
- Still photography or video.

In addition to the researcher's records, respondents can provide their own records, in the form of:

- Graphs, charts, matrices, maps and time lines;
- Still photographs or videotapes;
- Diaries;
- Group or individual drawings;
- Schedules, tables or forms;
- Essays;
- Tape recordings.

### 8.4.1 Research diary

The most vital record of all is a research diary, which should be kept throughout the research process—from the first ideas about a research topic to the final analysis, but particularly during fieldwork. It provides information about the progress of research and is the main point of reference and cross-checking for all other records. A research diary records:

- Thoughts, ideas and things to do in the future;
- What happened (activities, incidents, events, conversations);
- Impressions;
- Reflections about the possible significance of what happened;
- How the researcher feels about the circumstances and progress of fieldwork or the research in general;
- Problems (and their solutions);
- Issues and questions.

### 8.4.2 Attention to detail

Good research notes pay attention to small details and take careful note of exact words used wherever possible. Body language, facial expression and tone of voice are important, as are clothes, general appearance, the surroundings and the weather. Details that do not seem to be significant at the time can be important later in the research. As pointed out in the earlier section on observation, the best rule is that 'Nothing is trivial'. Experienced fieldworkers often take voluminous notes, adding small sketches and maps.

Impressions and feelings, mood and atmosphere are relevant 'facts' in research, because

they often tell us about what is not being said or done. Sometimes what we are not told is far more significant than what we are told. And sometimes the way something is said tells more than the actual words used.

Field notes should aim at 'thick' description, which allows a reader to enter the situation in all its dimensions, rather than superficial, or 'thin' description, which simply summarises a few relevant facts.



## DATA

### **Researcher's observations in a conflict zone (Anurhadapura, Sri Lanka)**

*'Gunshot heard in the distance. I thought it was a firecracker, I was told it was not. People were visibly shaken.'*

*'While talking to a villager, there was a sudden thunderclap. The face of the villager, who normally presented a calm exterior, changed dramatically. On enquiring what the sound was, he replied—"I thought it was a bomb."*

Source: Coomaraswamy 1996, p. 25



## EXERCISE

### **'Thick' description and 'thin' description**

The objective of this exercise is to demonstrate the difference between a summary and a more adequate field record of the same conversation with a respondent. Working individually, participants should read both records, list the most important differences and then make a list of the items of information contained in each description. These lists should be compared in pairs and/or in plenary.

#### **Field note 1**

The respondent said that in his village and some of the surrounding villages children started to contribute through their work to the household economy from an early age. Girls started earlier than boys. Children did not earn as much as adults when they were very young but, as they got older, their wages started to go up. They did not start with the heaviest work.

#### **Field note 2**

The respondent was 15 years old and a fisherman. In his village (named Santil, 15 kilometres N E of the district capital, Santander) which is a village of roughly half fishermen and half farmers, the sons of farmers start to help by caring for small animals—goats, chickens and guinea pigs—from the age of five. The fishermen's sons do not go out fishing at this age, but help untangle nets, sort fish and prepare bait. They are not paid if they work for their families.

He said that boys start to go out in boats at the age of 10 and, if they work for unrelated boat owners, they are paid half the rate of a grown man—eight pesos for a day from dawn to dusk. The farmer's sons start to work in rice cultivation, repairing terraces, at age 10-12, and they get about two thirds of an adult labourer's wage—that is, 15 pesos for a long day.

Girls help their mothers from age five in both fishing and farming households. They help clean the house and peel vegetables. They find green fodder for small animals, and they look after younger children. When they are between eight and 10 they start to carry water from the wells, and take up cooking. Girls do not work for

wages or for unrelated families, but they plant padi weed, and harvest rice from the age of eight

Source Peter Loizos, Sri Lanka, Save the Children UK Workshop

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## LEARNING POINT

### **Recording interviews, focus group discussion and role play**

- Negotiate the recording method, make sure children know and agree to the way a record will be made, and how it will be used,
  - Record verbatim as far as possible  
Do not summarise,  
The words children use are important
  - Make sure your recording methods do not interrupt communication  
Look at people,  
Make eye contact in interviews,  
Do not look all the time at what you are writing,  
Do not stop talk or action in order to record
  - Children should validate and agree to the record  
Written records (including flip charts) should be read by children, or read to them,  
Visible records (sketches, photographs and videos) should be shown to children, at the time or later
  - Every data gathering session should end with a summary of what has happened and/or been said
- 

### 8.4.3 Writing and tape recordings

Although it is important to obtain informed consent from respondents for making records as for other processes in research, recording by the researcher should usually be as unobtrusive as possible, and certainly not disruptive. With records of unstructured observation it is often better to wait until afterwards to write the notes. If the researcher knows that some time will elapse before a written record can be made it helps to scribble a few key words on a scrap of paper as an aid to memory. Some field researchers keep a small notebook in a pocket for this, although in desperation any scrap of paper or a shirt cuff can be pressed into service. It helps to do some memory training by watching a television programme (news broadcasts and soap operas are particularly useful) and then writing a record some time afterwards. This is particularly helpful if the programme is video-recorded and the written record can be checked against the video version later.

In interviews, respondents may be made self-conscious by the use of cameras or tape recorders, although taking notes can interrupt the flow of conversation if not properly managed. Try to avoid losing eye contact, or stopping the conversation to write. Once again, the television is useful for practising writing notes while concentrating on what is going on and not looking down at what you are writing.

Using a tape recorder may seem to be the most reliable option, but it is not wise to rely entirely on this method. Tape recordings do not record body language and it is often difficult to distinguish between different voices. Thus a tape record is better viewed as supplementary to a written record. In addition, tape recorders may fail to work properly and both tapes and batteries can run out at the most 'interesting' moments. The cost of tapes may be too high for

participants in developing countries. Transcribing tapes is both difficult and time consuming and is not always necessary. It is often best to play back a tape several times and listen as if it is a radio programme, just listening the first time and then taking notes. The most interesting passages can then be transcribed.

#### 8.4.4 Visual records\*

In addition to drawings and maps, some researchers use visual records made with still photographs, film or video to complement their written records. Still photographs can be organised as narrative, photographic essays of events or activities. Visual narrative can provide a permanent record of fast-moving or detailed research events, such as role play or focus group discussion, as well as being a form of observation in its own right. Researchers can help develop film-making skills in respondents, through video workshops, so that they can initiate and produce their own visual records through this medium. Researcher-led, visual documentation can provide tangible evidence of conditions and events, such as working or living conditions, which can be used in advocacy, or record ceremonies in their entirety. Photographs and films made by respondents or researchers can also be used as visual stimuli.

#### QUOTE

*The camera, however automatic, is a tool that is highly sensitive to the attitudes of its operator. Like the tape recorder it documents mechanically but does not by its mechanisms necessarily limit the sensitivity of the human observer, it is a tool of both extreme selectivity and no selectivity at all.*

*The camera's machinery allows us to see without fatigue, the last exposure is just as detailed as the first. The memory of film replaces the notebook and ensures complete quotation under the most trying circumstance. The reliably repetitive operation of the camera allows for comparable observations of an event as many times as the needs of research demand. This mechanical support of field observation extends the possibilities of critical analysis, for the camera record contributes a control factor to visual observation. Not only is it a check on eye memory, but further, it allows for an absolute check of position and identification in changing and crowded cultural events.*

*Photography is an abstracting process of observation but very different from the field workers's inscribed notebook where information is preserved in literate code. Photography also gathers selective information, but the information is specific, with qualifying and contextual relationships that are usually missing from codified written notes.*

*Source: Collier, J., & Collier, M., 1986, Visual anthropology: photography as a research tool, Albuquerque, University of New Mexico Press, pp. 9-10.*

Still photography and video film provide powerful visual testimony, many think they are undeniable 'evidence'. But the camera can and does lie. For this reason, special care must be taken to obtain the permission of people being filmed or photographed, and to use cameras with great sensitivity.

\* The sections on photography and film are based on presentations by Peter Loizos in the Bangladesh learning experience.

**QUOTE**

*The degree to which photography is perceived as a threat and therefore unwelcome can be affected by the behaviour of the photographer. This is an issue particularly when working in public situations where it may not be possible to introduce yourself to all people who may come before your lens. Hurried and secretive shooting is certain to arouse suspicion regarding motives. In most situations it is best to move slowly and take time making shots, giving people time to know you are there and object if they wish. If through your behaviour, you convey a sense of respect and confidence in your role people are more likely to assume that your motives are good. Equally important, unhurried recording allows people to adjust and to make contact with you.*

*What is public, what is personal, and what is threatening become acutely important when we consider the feedback of pictures of community interaction. Errors of taste as to what photographs you show to whom can cause more explosions than any other failure of protocol.*

*Source: Collier, J., & Collier, M., 1986, *Visual Anthropology: photography as a research tool*, Albuquerque, University of New Mexico Press, p. 135*

If participants are planning to use still or video cameras, they are likely to need both information about and practice in the technical aspects involved. They should begin with practice in still photography, for which disposable cameras can be used, and then proceed to video cameras, if these are available.

It is important to remember that people who are filmed or photographed should give their informed consent. It is also not only ethical but also courteous wherever possible to offer a copy of photographs or a chance to view a video.

**EXERCISE****Practice with still cameras: a photographic essay**

*In this exercise, participants shoot a photo-essay on a theme of their own choosing, outside the venue used for the learning process. It can be carried out as an individual or group activity.*

*The essay might be a narrative, which tells a story with a beginning, a middle and an end. Or it might be a more symbolic exploration of a single theme or issue. This might illustrate the photographer's perception of, or feeling about, an issue. It could illustrate an argument, or show 'what goes on'. It might show a set of contrasting images or emphasize similarities.*

*The essay should use only one roll of film, or one disposable camera. The essay might be exactly timed (90 minutes is suggested) or shot over an unspecified period.*

*After the photographs have been taken (sometimes after each shot), participants should make a note of the location(s), theme(s), subject(s) and any other relevant information. The exposed rolls of film should be given to the facilitators for developing, which should be done as swiftly as possible. Once the photographs have been developed, the photographers should mount them for display and explain in plenary what they intended to convey. Plenary discussion can focus on the different approaches taken as well as the advantages and disadvantages of the method. Photographers should also write an account of their experience, including*

- Four key things they have learned,
  - Four constraints they encountered,
  - Four opportunities offered by this method
- 

### LEARNING POINT

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#### **Basic steps to take before using a video recorder**

- *Cassette in?* (Do you have spare cassettes?)
- *Battery charged?* (Do you have spare, charged batteries?)
- *Power on?*
- *Lens uncovered and clean?* (A dirty lens means 50% loss of light and focus)
- *Is the camera in 'stand-by' mode?*

*If the answer is 'Yes', you can see subjects, electronically, in the viewfinder*

**To shoot: press the red button**

*You should see either a red light or 'Rec' inside the frame*

**To stop: press the red button again**

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Mistakes commonly made when working with a video camera can be avoided

- Keeping the image steady
  - When possible, use a tripod or brace your body against something solid,
  - Breathe normally,
  - It helps to use a wide angle lens,
  - Using a telephoto lens exaggerates shakiness, and should be avoided
- Having good continuity and getting good coverage
  - Establish context in a wide, slow opening shot, then slowly move in closer, either by altering the lens to a close-up shot ('zooming') or by walking closer, changing your angle to the subject by 45 degrees (half a 'right-angle'),
  - Take long, steady, deliberate shots,
  - Do not 'zoom' often (avoid making frequent changes between long shots and close-ups),
  - Use slow, deliberate 'pans' and 'tilts' (upwards, downwards and side-ways movements of the camera) rather than quick jerky movements.

If you do not feel happy about shooting video yourself find a local professional with whom you can collaborate. A person who makes wedding videos may have the skills you need, but make sure you have seen examples of their work before committing yourself

**EXERCISE****Shooting a video**

Participants should work in pairs, sharing a camera, for 90 minutes. Each partner should handle the camera for 30 minutes continuously and shoot about 10 minutes of material (a fully-charged battery lasts only 25 minutes)

The task is to illustrate the theme 'Children at work and play'. Complex theoretical ideas are not necessary.

The video footage shot by each pair should be screened to the entire group, followed by discussion.

**8.4.5 Organising records**

Collecting data is only half the work. The next step—analysis—is usually more time-consuming and generally not so enjoyable. Every fieldworker's nightmare is to be faced with a huge pile of disorganised paper of different shapes and sizes, with varied types of data that somehow have to be turned into a research report. But this is unnecessary. The process of analysis can be made smoother and quicker by keeping to some simple organisational rules, right from the start of the research process.

- Number notepads (and individual pages), rolls of film, tape recordings and drawings,
- Date each research event (diary entry, interview, drawing session, focus group discussion, role play and so forth),
- Add details clearly and systematically: where the event takes place, child's name, age, sex, village, school grade, or whatever is appropriate. Details can be added at the head or foot of a written record, in the margin of a notebook, the label on a film or tape or on the reverse of a drawing,
- Store materials and records systematically, using a clear filing system, and in a safe place, where they cannot be lost or damaged.

Films and tapes should be transported and kept in dry, cool conditions,

Paper should be protected from damp, light and heat, as well as from damage by animals or destruction by suspicious outsiders,

Wherever possible, keep a copy of records in a separate place. Research diaries, for example, can be made in duplicate notebooks with the top copy sent to a research supervisor on a weekly basis. If it is practically and economically viable, copies of children's writing and drawings can also be sent elsewhere for safekeeping.

- Index all research material, according to clear categories, drawn up during fieldwork. These categories might relate to
  - Themes (such as 'family life' or 'child work'),
  - Research questions (such as 'What children understand by the word 'punishment'?),
  - Research respondents (a particular child by name, or a school class, or 'newspaper vendors'),

Places (for example, villages by name, a school or school class, a particular bus station where street children hang out)

Finally, a general index can be made that cross-references information from different sets of records

### LEARNING POINT

#### ***A (hypothetical) example of a general index of research records***

Category	Research Diary	Role play	Drawings	Focus Group Discussion
Village 1	Vol 1 pp 5 15	Nos 6 7 & 8	202 263	4 & 5
Village 2	Vol 2 pp 35 8	Nos 1 2 & 4	1 76, 102 154	6 & 7
School	Vol 1 pp 7 8, 15, 27, 85 Vol 2 pp 36 38	No 2, pp 2 & 12 No 7, p 5 No 8 pp 3 & 6	54 76, 102 154 202 231	Nos 1, 2 & 3
Family	Vol 1 pp 27, 33, 108 Vol 2, pp 15, 44 5 78, 1	No 2, pp 6 8 No 3, pp 4 & 8 No 8, p 15	263 331	No 1 p 15 No 5 pp 3, 12, & 20
Child work	Vol 1 p 7, p 25 6, p 74 6 Vol 2 pp 12 14 78 9	No 1 & 6 No 3 pp 11 & 12	232 262 76 101	No 1 p 16 20 No 2 p 3 14 No 3 p 6

If records are systematically numbered, ordered, stored and indexed the process of analysing data and writing a report is easier and there is less likelihood of important information being forgotten or overlooked. Sometimes it may seem as if the business of numbering and indexing takes up too much time that ought to be spent on 'real' data collection or analysis. However, as in scientific research in laboratories, recording and organising data are essential parts of the research process. They not only aid analysis, but also help to make results valid and replicable. Systematic treatment also makes it possible to use qualitative data in quantitative ways.

### SUMMARY

This section has introduced and described individual and collective methods of collecting data with children, including observation, recall, role play, visual representations, writing and focus group discussion.

The first and fundamental method in all social research is observation, which should continue throughout the research process, even though it is the least participatory method.

All methods have advantages and disadvantages, or are more or less suitable with different aged children or different cultural settings.

No one method is superior to another, a mixture of methods should be used in order to cross-check data and ensure validity of research results.

Factors influencing data collection, such as outside interferences and distractions, should be recorded so that their effects can be taken into account during analysis.

Children can be active participants in all methods of data collection, both as respondents and researchers. Their authorship of data they have produced must be respected.

It is important to make systematic records of data and to organise storage, not only for safekeeping but also for ease of retrieval.



## 9 FIELD-BASED LEARNING

*This section covers work in the field-based learning phase. It is designed to help facilitators supervise participants when they are planning fieldwork, writing a protocol and carrying out field research using some of the methods introduced during classroom-based learning. Both facilitators and participants should refer back to materials in the previous two sections for information about research in general as well as details of specific methods. Reference should also be made to Section 2 on participation, particularly to the passages on ethical considerations.*

*The self-evaluation checklist at the end of this section should be completed by all participants.*

Participants should spend up to two weeks carrying out field research on a topic of their choice, with a group of children they have selected. This phase of the learning programme can be challenging and stimulating for participants and facilitators alike, but requires careful planning and coordination. Field work should be a rewarding learning experience for participants and not cause too much disruption in the lives of the respondent children. For this to be the case facilitators need to help participants organise:

- Research diary and recording methods (see Section 8);
- Choice of research topic;
- Selection of respondent group;
- Selection of research site;
- Identification of research sequence and methods
- Development of research protocol and instruments;
- Timing and supervision of field work;
- Peer review of field work;
- Communication procedures for 'emergencies';
- Self-evaluation procedures after completing fieldwork.

### 9.1 The choice of research topic

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Participants should be given the opportunity to select their own research topics. Some may have an idea of what they would like to research even before the learning programme begins. Others, however, may need quite a bit of guidance. With the selection of topics, there are several issues that facilitators should bear in mind:

- There is not much time for field work so research subjects must be simple and straightforward. Participants are often over-ambitious and need to be encouraged to think of more modest projects or focusing their interests on something that can be accomplished in the time available. It may be helpful for them to think of the field-based learning as a pilot for future, more comprehensive research;

- It is not wise to research sensitive issues during field work both for ethical and practical reasons—a hurried investigation on a very difficult subject could distress the children involved and yield very poor information; some topics could threaten the safety of researcher and/or respondents and should be avoided.



### EXAMPLE

#### **Some research topics chosen by participants in the Bangladesh learning process**

*Sharffudin: The impact of credit and savings schemes on children in a village in Bangladesh.*

*Priya: Coping mechanisms of children, their families and communities in a village bordering the conflict area, Anuradhapura District, Sri Lanka.*

*Mandy: Exploration of the factors why children do not attend school in a rural Tamil village in Trincamolee District, Sri Lanka*

*Ruby: Children's impressions of the impact on their lives of an experimental programme in participation and empowerment, Dhaka, Bangladesh.*

*Khurshheed: The perceptions and attitudes of children working on the streets of Dhaka towards law enforcement agencies, Bangladesh.*

*Hakim: Child work and child labour in an unstable physical environment—a study in a char (riverine island) of Bangladesh.*

*Javed: The relationship between children's work and school attendance in a village in Bangladesh.*

*Faiz: The economic aspirations and attitudes and values of child domestic workers in Islamabad, Pakistan, towards education .*

*Soraiya: The impact of a child-to-child programme in Dhaka, Bangladesh, on children's understandings of health, nutrition and hygiene.*

## 9.2 Selection of respondent group

Many participants will already be working with a particular group of children before taking part in the learning programme, while others may have very little contact with children. The choice of which group to do fieldwork with will be influenced largely by the research topic and by participants' prior experience of and relationships with children. It is not advisable to encourage participants to carry out research with children with whom they have absolutely no prior contact because negotiating access and creating confidence and trust can take a long time. Several participants in Ethiopia, Bangladesh and India gained access to children via friends or colleagues who were in close contact with them.



### EXAMPLE

#### **Choosing a respondent group**

*In the Ethiopia learning experience, one of the participants came from a university department that had no contact or links with children. She wanted to study street children's impressions of a programme to assist them. She negotiated with one of the other participants to allow her to do research in the programme in which she worked. The arrangement worked out well, since she did not have to go through*

*lengthy introduction procedures herself and was able to report back to programme staff and children about the results of her research on children's impressions and views of the programme.*

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### 9.3 Selecting a research site

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The majority of participants will probably choose to conduct their fieldwork in places where the children congregate and feel most at ease. However, there may be two reasons why a special site needs to be selected for fieldwork, or for particular methods:

- The need for privacy,
- Avoiding interruptions from other children or adults;
- Avoiding distractions that could break children's concentration;
- Issues of personal security.

#### **EXAMPLE**

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##### **Selecting research sites**

###### **Addis Ababa**

*Street girls in Addis Ababa had nowhere to be alone or to go when they wanted to escape harassment from passersby and from street boys. Participant Ethiopia Haile obtained permission to use a local school for her field research with these girls.*

###### **Dhaka**

*Asif Munir began observing children on the streets in Dhaka but was threatened by several passers by. His fieldwork was carried out during the rainy season which was difficult because the children mostly used the streets in the evenings, when flooding was often severe. Eventually Asif decided it would be safer and more practical to do his research with street children who used a nearby refuge.*

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### 9.4 Identifying research methods and sequence

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All good social research requires the use of more than one method. Use of three or more methods facilitates 'triangulation', or cross checking information on the same issue or topic obtained through different methods, perhaps from different sources.

Methods should be used in a logical sequence. This begins with a search of information that already exists, often called 'secondary data'. This may be published (such as books and articles on the research theme, group or area, or official statistics) or unpublished (such as the records of a project or programme).

Primary research in the field, which generates new data, should begin with observation, which helps to develop research questions. The choice of the next methods in the sequence will depend on:

- The research topic;
- The research questions;
- The characteristics of the respondents;
- The characteristics of the researcher;
- The context of the research.

Questionnaires and interviews should not be used until the last stages of research, once researchers have developed their knowledge and understanding of the respondents' own words, concepts, ideas and understandings, through using more qualitative methods.

All methods used should be culturally appropriate and suited to the maturity, development and experiences of the children.

Regardless of the method used, the degree to which the investigation is researcher-led or respondent-led has important implications for the type of information generated. Researcher-led approaches tend to use more structured instruments in which the research topics and possible range of answers are predetermined and/or the findings are largely interpreted by the researcher. Respondent-led approaches are less structured and give far greater scope to the children to choose the topics and use the words, concepts and understandings with which they are familiar. The degree to which a group of children is able to participate in research should grow during a research process.

The methods chosen need to suit the research topic. Some research methods may be more effective than others for eliciting certain types of information, so it is very important to match the method with the information sought. Some methods may be more effective than others at creating a relationship of intimacy and trust between the researcher and the respondent. Some methods may not be feasible because they are slow and cannot be completed in the time available. And some may simply be more enjoyable.

Given the brief time available for analysis and writing up after field-based learning, it is important that participants do not generate too much data.



### LEARNING POINT

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#### **Criteria for choosing methods**

*What is the potential of using a particular method with the group of children who will be respondents:*

- *As a medium of communication?*
  - *For the quality and amount of data it might generate?*
  - *The way it would make the researcher and respondents feel?*
  - *The time it would take to provide information.*
-



## LEARNING POINT

### The research process: when to use what methods

Questions	Stage	Methods
What is the objective?	Programme problem	Observation, discussion, background information
Who do we need to know?	▼	Discussion, observation
What is the background in culture and social life?	Researcher's problem	Secondary research, observation, informal interviews, focus group discussion, visual methods, rapid appraisal, role play
What is the objective now?	▼	
What words and ideas do people use?	Children's (people's) hypotheses	Focus group discussion, role play, visual methods
What social and cultural factors affect the situation?	▼	Focus group discussion, recall, structured observation, in-depth interviews, visual methods, 'written data', role play
	Set of questions to test the hypotheses	All of the above, plus surveys
	▼	
Are these results valid? (triangulation and cross-checking)	Research results	Use other methods, plus focus group discussion, interviews and role plays
	▼	
	Analysis	
	▼	
Is this analysis valid?	Test validity of analysis	Focus group discussion, interviews
	▼	
Who owns the results?	Presentation and dissemination	Role play, drawings, newsletters, academic publications, project planning

### 9.5 Developing a research protocol

Having identified the research population, site and topic, and the most appropriate methods and their sequence, participants will need to begin planning their fieldwork in greater detail. This involves developing initial research questions, then drawing up a research protocol, which is a detailed plan for carrying out a research project. Participants will need several individual meetings with facilitators, in order to help them prepare their own research plans according to the following protocol format:

Title of research:

SECTION	QUESTIONS
<i>Background</i>	
<i>The context</i>	<i>What is known about this area, topic or group?</i> <i>What secondary material will be investigated?</i>
<i>The target group</i>	<i>What will be researched?</i> <i>Who will be researched?</i> <i>Where will the research be carried out?</i>
<i>Objectives Aims for doing this research</i>	<i>Why will you be carrying out this research?</i>
<i>Research question or problem</i>	<i>What specific issue or problem will the research investigate?</i>
<i>Methods to be used</i>	<i>How will the research be carried out?</i> <i>What methods will you use?</i> <i>Why have you chosen these methods?</i> <i>In what order will you use these methods?</i> <i>Which group or groups will you research (including control groups where necessary)?</i> <i>How big is the research group(s)?</i>
<i>Limitations and advantages</i>	<i>What factors might affect the research process and results (negative and positive)?</i>
<i>Timetable and logistics</i>	<i>What is the detailed timetable for your research?</i> <i>What resources will you need?</i>
<i>Ethical issues</i>	<i>What ethical issues are involved in the context or in the research process?</i> <i>How will confidentiality be observed?</i> <i>How will informed consent be negotiated?</i> <i>How participatory are the research process and the methods to be used?</i>
<i>Dissemination</i>	<i>To whom will the results be communicated?</i> <i>How will the results be communicated?</i>

### 9.6 Designing research instruments

Finally participants can design draft research instruments. Facilitators need to emphasize to participants that research instruments will need to be refined and developed during field work as new themes and questions and fresh insights emerge.

Participants should be encouraged to think before they go into the field about the research instruments they will need to develop for each of the methods they plan to use. But it is advisable to develop only lightly structured instruments for the early phases of the research. In conventional research, elaborate instruments with long lists of complicated questions are often mistakenly developed before starting initial observations in the field. Many of the questions will be meaningless to respondents.

It is also worth bearing in mind that children may be too busy to give much time to research or find it hard to concentrate over long periods and so that it is unreasonable to prepare

instruments that are too long or detailed. For instance, when informal interviews or conversations with open questions are used, it may take up to two hours to cover just five key questions. More time needs to be allowed with collective methods.

Facilitators can help participants think in general terms about the kinds and numbers of questions, if any, they will use at different stages of the research and with which methods. If the research sequence is designed and applied well, the researcher should progress from a state in which they are open to almost any kind of information or question to one in which very specific information needs are identified.

### 9.7 Timing and supervision of fieldwork

The timing and supervision of fieldwork can have a critical impact on outcome. Participants may well have no choice about when they do their field research—the slot allowed for this phase of the learning programme will most likely have been determined during the early stages of planning. Some participants may be constrained by ongoing work commitments to do their research on a part time basis. Facilitators and participants need to anticipate as far as possible any problems that might arise connected with the timing of field work. For example, does it coincide with:

- A religious festival?
- A period of peak activity in the children's work?
- School or public holidays?
- A foreseeable public event or crisis, such as an election?

#### EXAMPLE

##### **Research timing considerations**

###### **School holidays**

*Several participants in Ethiopia chose research topics that in one way or another were connected with schooling, making school pupils the obvious respondent population. The period for field research was set well in advance of the learning programme. After fieldwork had already begun it was discovered that in the second week all schools were to be closed to allow teachers time to mark examination papers. This necessitated rapid revision of fieldwork schedules and other adjustments in the research process.*

###### **Security restrictions**

*Participants from Sri Lanka were doing research with children and families living in conflict zones. Security restrictions in the north and east of the island made it impossible to stay overnight at the research sites and required that the researchers left their field sites at 3.30 pm each day. This restricted the total amount of time available for fieldwork and also meant that the researchers were not always able to be with children and their families at the times of the day or in the evenings when they tended to be free. In one case, children attending school in a nearby town were not accessible at all.*

Facilitators will need to arrange between them to make at least two supervision visits to each of the participants during the fieldwork period. If possible, each participant should receive at least

one visit while actually conducting their research with children. The other visit can take place somewhere away from the research site to allow for problems and concerns about field work to be discussed fully and in complete privacy.

Participants receive a wider range of comments if they are visited by more than one facilitator during their field-based learning. However, it is important that they are not confused by conflicting advice, and that problems picked up by one facilitator are also addressed in subsequent visits. Facilitators should take notes about their field visits to each participant and arrange to discuss and exchange notes at regular meetings, in order to ensure continuity between visits. It helps to keep a file on each participant, containing copies of protocols, notes and all other relevant information, which can be handed on to the next facilitator to make a visit.

Field visits can help participants and facilitators in a number of ways. They give facilitators the opportunity to:

- Support participants;
- Observe their relationship with respondents;
- Check if methods are being used correctly;
- Check on the quantity and quality of data collected;
- Check on recording methods and organisation of records;
- Suggest where changes or additions might be made;
- Discuss solutions to problems.

Participants can use the visits to:

- Report progress;
- Ask for advice on problems;
- Discuss solutions;
- Get feedback on methods and data;
- Try out new ideas.

Facilitators should be very aware of their own role, dress and conduct during supervision visits, since their presence can have an adverse effect on the research process. Unless children are obviously being put at physical or psychological risk during the use of a research method, facilitators should not intervene in any way in the application of a research instrument. Their presence should be negotiated with the children and their role is to observe as unobtrusively as possible. Ideally they should not sit where they have eye contact with children, and they should certainly not be placed in a prominent position on a higher chair.

### **9.8 Peer review**

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Fieldwork can be both interesting and exciting, but even for experienced fieldworkers it can also be daunting and even sometimes painful, as it is often associated with personal growth. In all the learning experiences in which this manual was piloted, those participants who were most resistant to participatory approaches often became the greatest enthusiasts once they had tried innovative ways of carrying out research with children in the field.

Although they may find the experience rewarding, fieldwork can be tiring and participants may encounter unanticipated problems. It can be helpful to share these with facilitators, but often the best way to learn from fieldwork is to discuss the highs and lows with other partici-



pants who are going through similar experiences. Sharing problems can lead to more acceptable solutions and more effective learning than listening to the suggestions of a facilitator.

Even before fieldwork begins, participants can benefit from sharing and discussing their draft protocols. Progress during fieldwork can also be reported to peers so that they can offer comments and suggestions on what to do next. Peer support before, during and after fieldwork can be facilitated by

- Workshop sessions in which participants, divided into small groups with similar research topics, discuss each others' protocols and make a presentation about common issues and problems to a plenary session,
- Encouraging these groups to keep in touch with each other informally, by telephone, letter or through regular meetings during the fieldwork period;
- Arranging for a peer review meeting, either for all participants or for smaller groups, part way through the fieldwork period.

### **EXAMPLE**

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#### **Peer review**

##### **India/Nepal**

*After the classroom-based learning period participants returned to their programmes for a month and revised their protocols. Before fieldwork began three peer group meetings were held, with different facilitators, in Madras, New Delhi and Kathmandu. Participants presented their protocols and discussed each one in turn. Facilitation was scarcely needed. Participants were far more successful at firmly but gently pointing out errors and omissions and making even quite radical suggestions than facilitators might have been. And their comments were less threatening, as well as providing a learning experience for all concerned.*

##### **Bangladesh**

*Participants in the Bangladesh learning programme met for peer review during the fieldwork period. They took the opportunity to discuss problems and constraints faced, whether personal, institutional, methodological, financial, or to do with the external environment of research. They identified issues they felt needed further exploration in the final phase of the learning programme, requirements for additional support and developed and adapted their research plans in response to comments and suggestions from colleagues.*

*Several major concerns emerged. One was the civil unrest in Bangladesh, which was making field research very difficult and in some cases impossible. Another was the ethical issue of raising children's expectations that the research would result in some kind of project response that would not necessarily be possible. Another key issue was to do with the nature and meaning of children's participation in research. This was felt to be so important that a decision was taken to include more detailed discussion of the subject during the final phase of the learning programme.*

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### 9.9 Communication procedures for 'emergencies'

Unanticipated problems may arise during fieldwork, both with respect to research and in participants' personal lives. Sometimes confidence may fail or fieldwork plans need to be changed because of external factors. Facilitators need to make clear to participants that they can be contacted at any (reasonable) time during fieldwork. This means providing home and office telephone numbers or other means of direct communication.

#### **X** EXAMPLE

##### **Pressing 'the panic button'**

*In the Ethiopia learning experience, facilitators referred to the communication procedures for 'emergencies' informally as 'the panic button'.*

*One participant sought the facilitators' advice on a problem that was causing him considerable anxiety. He was doing research on children's and parents' understandings of the work children do, using focus group discussion and other methods. To his dismay, and quite unexpectedly, several children from different focus groups and on separate occasions broke down and cried. The participant was worried that he was to blame and also that he might not have handled the situation well.*

*The facilitators discussed the situation with him at some length, establishing what had happened and how the participant and the other children in the focus groups had reacted. In fact it was clear that the participant had instinctively acted in an appropriate way, showing sympathy and respect for the children and ending the discussions on a positive note. It also emerged that the children had received the spontaneous support of others in the focus groups, who consoled and encouraged them. The participant was concerned that he should possibly stop doing field work, but the facilitators recommended that he should continue on the grounds that there was no evidence that he was harming the children.*

### 9.10 After fieldwork

The first meeting of participants after fieldwork usually seems like a happy reunion after a far longer time than the two weeks fieldwork has actually lasted. Participants are generally pleased to share their experiences and show examples of the data they have collected. Time should be spent reviewing the successes and failures of each method used by participants. Group work, organised around the type of method used, is a particularly useful way of sharing and learning from each others' experiences and should be regarded as part of peer review, with facilitators summing up the lessons learned about each method and about field research in general as well as making general points about participatory research, ethical issues and research with children.

On an individual basis, self-evaluation checklist should be filled in and then discussed first in pairs or groups, and then in plenary.

#### 9.10.1 Self-evaluation checklist

##### (a) Preparation:

Did you familiarise yourself with local customs and practices before going into the field?

Did you know what children of the chosen age group may be able to achieve in this local area?

Did you have a plan that included

A clear, written protocol including aims, objectives, methods and expected outcomes?

Time management?

A precise list of materials to be used?

Describe any problems that arose as the result of any negative answers to these questions.

(b) Self-awareness:

Did you discuss with colleagues your own potential emotional needs with respect to this research?

Did you have a plan for coping and follow-up if children became distressed?

Describe any problems that arose as the result of any negative answer to these questions.

Did you ask your colleague for feedback on what you did well and which skills or methods you need to improve?

Did you notice that you still need to work on some skills and attitudes? If so, what needs to be improved—and how will you improve?

(c) Privacy and respect for children:

Who chose the topic?

Who chose the place to work and seating or working arrangements?

Was the purpose of the research explained—could children explain to someone else what the research is about?

Did you ask children's permission to take drawings or other work away and use them?

Have you promised to show pictures or writing to other adults such as teachers? Did you ask children's permission to do this?

If you collected drawings, were children who had drawn individual pictures given sufficient privacy for both drawing and explanation?

Was the time for discussion adequate?

Was the discussion a question and answer interview or did it take the form of a dialogue?

Did children really understand that they could refuse to take part in this research? Did any refuse or show reluctance? Did you attempt to persuade them?

Did you allow or encourage the children to take control of the process? If not, why not?

Did you act in an authoritarian or patronising manner towards the children?

Did you find yourself teaching, rather than being a researcher and learning?

(d) What would you do differently next time?

### **S U M M A R Y**

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The essence of good fieldwork is prior planning, although this must be combined with flexibility in the field.

*A written protocol helps to clarify:*

- Objectives;
- Research questions;
- The group to be researched;
- The location;
- The methods to be used;
- The instruments.

Methods should be combined to ensure cross-checking through triangulation.

The sequence of field methods should begin with observation.

In participatory research, the research question, sequence of methods and methods used should be determined as far as possible by participants.

Supervision from facilitators should be supportive and non-interventionist.

Peer support should be arranged, not only for the field-based learning but also to encourage future collaboration among participants.

Fieldwork undertaken in this phase is part of a learning process, thus participants should take the opportunity to learn how to use methods rather than attempting to carry out a complete research project.

On return from fieldwork, participants should not only share experiences but also evaluate their own field performance.

## 10 WHAT TO DO WITH DATA

*This section provides advice on analysing data and using the results in written accounts. The aim is to build participants' confidence through a series of simple exercises that will both break down some of the mystery of analysis and report writing and help them to avoid some of the common mistakes made in writing reports.*

*This is the only section in this manual in which exercises are not placed in boxes. The central part of this section is called 'Exercises in analysis' and consists entirely in exercises, which facilitators can adapt to suit participants and local contexts. Facilitators may like to use these exercises during the classroom-based learning phase, immediately after fieldwork as a preliminary to writing up, or during writing up, when participants come up against particular problems. The exercises have been used in a pilot learning process at all three stages, sometimes repeated in more than one stage.*

At the end of the fieldwork period, participants should spend some time in a residential setting together with facilitators, analysing and writing up the material they have gathered. The timetable should provide opportunities for individual writing and tutorial periods with facilitators, but also plenty of time for group work, sharing experiences both from the field and the analysis and writing.

There should be adequate facilities for writing. Participants will need to have desks or tables in their rooms, and access either to word processors or typists.

The background material and exercises in this section should be used flexibly by facilitators. Some exercises could be carried out before fieldwork, during classroom-based learning, and repeated afterwards to reinforce learning and confidence. The advice about writing, particularly about the order in which research accounts should be written, needs to be given to the participants when they first arrive back from fieldwork, but will also need to be repeated once they begin writing.

### QUOTE

*August 24th, 1980, the University of Exeter, unpacking my battered blue and white metal trunk I had carried five thousand miles home by landrover across the Sahara and up into Europe, I realized I had a mixture of qualitative and quantitative data, some collected by design, quite a lot by chance. As I placed the data in small piles over my study floor I felt more anxious than I had in all my five thousand mile journey home. Did I have enough data? Had I interviewed the right people? Were the questionnaires reliable? Could I possibly write something like 70,000 words from all this material in one academic year? Would my savings last me the course?*

*I carefully checked what I had: one pile of one hundred questionnaires administered to four groups of teacher trainees (I had been promised the use of the University's SPSS programme); a huge pile of secondary source data including newspaper cuttings; journal articles, notes taken from government reports, statistics on just about everything concerned with education, and my research diary which had remarkably survived a flash flood high in the Air mountains south of Tamanrasset.*

*...I had one academic year to complete the research. As I surveyed the small mountains of data spread out over my floor it seemed I had only just begun.*

*David Stephens, 1990, Leaving Kano: Analysis, outcomes and consequences, in Vulliamy, G. Lewin, K., and Stephens, D., (eds.), Doing Educational Research in Developing Countries, Basingstoke UK and Bristol USA, The Falmer Press, p. 215*

## 10.1 Data

Data are nothing in themselves. Data are good to think with. They are ways of entering reality, each as good or as bad as the method used and the researcher who used it. Each method, individual or collective, qualitative or quantitative, written or visual, has its own bias. Each research situation has its own bias. The first and most important rule of analysis is to think about each method, each research situation—and about yourself as a researcher, and work out what factors affected the data that you collected, and what the effects might be. Then the trick is to fit the pieces of data together so that the biases cancel each other out as far as possible. This is what the terms analysis and triangulation mean in practice.



### LEARNING POINT

#### Raw data

- *What do the data mean?*
- *Compare and contrast (similarities and differences)*
- *What is significant?*
- *What does not fit?*
- *Why?*
- *What happened?*

*What do your data say about what people think and believe?*

Some data analysis is purely mechanical. During fieldwork participants should have organised and indexed most of the materials they have gathered. Their first task is to complete this process, which will probably take more time than they expected. This can be frustrating, because they will want to get on with the business of writing and they may feel that organising is taking too much time. But hours spent on ordering data are never wasted. If it is done properly, organisation provides both the ideas and the building blocks that should make writing up a relatively smooth process. It also ensures that important details of information are not lost in what probably appears at first to be a huge pile of unmanageable papers.



### QUOTE

*Genius is one per cent inspiration and ninety-nine per cent perspiration.*

*Thomas A. Edison, US inventor, 1903*

Organisation also provides an opportunity to review the data, in order to note:

- Comparisons—where the same information appears in more than one place, within a method, or between methods;
- Contrasts—where the data are contradictory;
- Gaps—where there is insufficient data, or where a topic on which they expected children to provide information has not been mentioned.

These three aspects are the basis of accurate analysis.

- Check the comparisons.

Do they confirm the original research hypothesis?

Are they the result of researcher bias—do they reflect the way the methods were used?

Do they reflect stereotypes held by the respondents?

Are they surprising? Do they contradict the original research hypothesis?

Does this mean that the research has uncovered new information and ideas?

- Check the contrasts. Are they the result of:

Working with different groups?

Using different methods?

External factors affecting data collection at particular times?

- Check the gaps.

Did you forget to collect some important information? If so, is it possible to return to the field, or use secondary data, to fill the gaps?

Is there a social silence about this topic? If so, why?

It is helpful to continue to keep a research diary while organising data, noting ideas and new questions at the time they occur. If an individual piece of data strikes you as particularly interesting, or especially typical, mark it in some way so that you can find it again easily to use as an illustration when you are writing. It is all too easy to forget moments of inspiration when ploughing through different data sets.

## 10.2 Secondary data

Data that already exist as the result of previous research or work on the topic of research are called 'secondary data' to distinguish them from the 'primary' or new data collected during fieldwork. They may be:

- Published books or articles, by organisations, researchers or other authors;
- Unpublished reports, by academic researchers or project staff;
- Statistics from local or national government sources, police, hospitals, social workers and so forth; or figures from projects and pro-

grammes (published and unpublished);

- Maps;
- Legal documents;
- Newspaper and magazine articles;
- Photographs, films, videos and radio programmes.

These data are important for establishing the context of research, for knowing as much as possible about:

- The population, politics, social structures and economy of the area in which the research will take place, and how these compare with regional and national characteristics;
- The issue or problem being researched, what is known and thought about it, locally, nationally and internationally.

Secondary data should be researched with as much care as primary data, and most of the relevant information should have been gathered before planning primary data collection, because it will be the basis of research questions.

Creativity and some detective work will be necessary in order to collect secondary data. Inexperienced researchers often complain that no secondary data exist on the topic they have chosen, usually because they are using a narrow perspective. Even if there is no direct information they will still need to contextualise the issue.



### LEARNING POINT

#### **Secondary data on child sexual abuse in San Isidro**

*There are no published reports about this topic. But there may be:*

- *An unpublished report by a concerned social worker on a shelf in the municipal offices,*
- *Police, court and hospital records;*
- *Articles in the files of the local newspaper,*
- *Some anecdotal accounts in the reports of a local NGO project.*

*There will also be:*

- *Books and articles on child sexual abuse in other places (perhaps other countries) that will give information on:*  
*Child sexual abuse in general;*  
*The concepts and theories used by other researchers*
- *Books and articles on sexual attitudes and behaviours nationally, and perhaps in the San Isidro region.*

*You will also need:*

- *General information about the child population in San Isidro, including:*  
*Numbers of children in different age groups;*  
*Family size and type,*  
*Housing, incomes and economic activities;*



*How these factors compare to regional and national figures*

- *Information about the law relating to child sexual abuse, as well as legal and administrative mechanisms for dealing with it.*

## **EXERCISE**

### **Secondary data**

*Working individually, participants should draw up a list of the secondary data they need to research their chosen topic, and where these data might be found*

*Facilitators should then place participants in groups researching similar issues, to share ideas*

*The ideas of each group should be presented to plenary, so that other participants can make further suggestions.*

### **10.2.1 Reading secondary data**

Secondary data, especially when it is published or comes from official sources, tends to be taken at face value and not questioned. However, research using secondary data needs to be subjected to the same critical reading as the data collected by participants themselves and included in the same process of organisation, indexing, comparing and contrasting.

It is important to examine the information to see if it is verifiable, and to see what might be hidden or implied in the way data are presented. The analysis exercises below should be borne in mind. In addition, the following questions should be asked:

- What is the source of this information? Who has written it? What organisation, agency or academic institution is involved?
- Is there a known bias? If the source is a newspaper or journalist, is the article written to shock? If an organisation is the source, is it possible that what is written is intended to represent a particular point of view or political or economic interest?
- Are the writer's sources accurately given? Dates, times, places, people's names?
- Are methods of research clearly given? Sample size, ages of children, ways of collecting data?
- If numbers are given, are these properly sourced, defined and dated?
- Is the analysis appropriate? Are conclusions based on the data? Are they justified?
- Are there any underlying assumptions in the way the data are collected, recorded and analysed, for instance:
  - About society?
  - About families?
  - About children?
  - About gender?
  - About ethnicity?
  - About the poor?



### LEARNING POINT

#### What is a statistic?

*'There are 1 million sexually abused children in Asia. The number is increasing.'*

*Even if this is printed in a book, with a reputable author, it is just a statement with no proof.*

*A reliable statistic would be written:*

*According to research carried out by [name of researcher and source of information], in [year in which research was carried out], using [methods of research, size of sample], in [places in which research took place], it has been estimated using [method of calculation] that there were 1 million sexually abused children in [South and South East] Asia in that year. This is an increase of [number]% on the estimation made in the same way in [earlier date], which might be considered to be a fairly rapid rise in incidence.*

*Note: It is important that this should be the date of research and not the date of publication of research, because there may be a delay of some years between data collection and publication of results.*

Even if secondary data are clearly not factual, or are obviously written to make a political or moral point, they still count as data, because they show the context of ideas and beliefs surrounding the research topic.

Nothing is useless and nothing is trivial, but there are different levels of data.

### 10.3 Analysis

The principles of analysis are those of simple logic, with which everyone manages to find their way about the world and solve everyday problems.



### LEARNING POINT

#### Getting the word 'analysis' in perspective

- *We all do it every day,*
- *We do it fairly well;*
- *The principles are the same for both everyday and scientific issues.*

*From Peter Loizos, Save the Children Fund (UK), workshop, Sri Lanka, 1995*



### LEARNING POINT

#### Principles of analysis

- *Identify the problem;*
- *Break it down into smaller elements;*
- *Seek additional information if necessary;*
- *Try out some causal connections between the elements;*
- *List priorities:*

*What has to be done first?*

*What can be done next?*

- *Make a provisional diagnosis;*
- *Try it out with other interested people,*
- *Form a conclusion or action plan*

*From Peter Loizos, Save the Children Fund (UK), workshop, Sri Lanka, 1996*

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## EXERCISE

### **Everyday analysis**

*In plenary, ask participants to call out the logical order of working out a simple problem. For example:*

*Facilitator Why is Ravi (one of the participants) not here today?*

*Answers Perhaps he missed the bus*

*Facilitator Does he always come by bus?*

*Answers Yes. He hasn't got a car. It's too far to walk.*

*Facilitator Why would he have missed the bus?*

*Answers: He might have slept late He had to take one of the children to school.*

*Facilitator Which of those is most likely?*

*Answers. He has four children One of them is a baby, so he wouldn't sleep late.*

*His wife has an exam today, so he probably did have to take the children to school And, make breakfast, and look after the baby, and take her to his mother's before coming*

*Facilitator With all those things to do, no wonder he missed the bus.*

*When Ravi arrives, he can be asked if the group's analysis of the situation was correct If there is another, previously unknown, reason for his late arrival, the facilitator should point out that all analysis (every-day or scientific) is provisional*

*This exercise should be repeated using one or two other examples until the facilitator is satisfied that participants are aware of the logical order they use for problem solving*

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## **10.4 Exercises with analysis**

The aim of these exercises is to build participants' confidence in their own ability to analyse data and write up their research. Their success depends to a large extent on developing peer group review skills. Thus, in most cases they should be carried out in the first instance as individuals, with participants perhaps doing the exercise over night, then sharing their ideas in pairs, with the pairs subsequently joined into groups, which finally share their ideas in plenary sessions. Facilitators should find local examples, from published or unpublished reports, that can be used in the exercises, and be prepared to repeat particular exercises with new materials at intervals, in order to reinforce learning.

### **10.4.1 Some words we use: the game of eight squares**

This game was created in response to the question of a participant in one of the pilot learning experiences. His mother tongue was not English and he was hazy about the difference between the words concept and analysis. The facilitators realised that this was a common problem, affecting a number of words that are used in a loose way in everyday speech, but have precise use in social science.

The game can be played twice during the learning experience. Once, using the examples given here, during the classroom-based phase. Then again, during writing up, using examples from participant's data or writing.

To play the game, facilitators need to prepare three to four game boards (stiff card, about the same size as a flip chart sheet), and mark each one up clearly thus:

<i>Concept</i>	<i>Fact</i>
<i>Idea</i>	<i>Assumption</i>
<i>Myth</i>	<i>Analysis</i>
<i>Hypothesis</i>	<i>Description</i>

They should also prepare two sets of cards, 'Definitions' and 'Examples', for each group, placing each set in a marked envelope. A master sheet should be prepared for each facilitator, making sure that participants do not see this.

Master sheet for the game of eight squares:

<i>Word on game board</i>	<i>Definition</i>	<i>Example</i>
<i>Concept</i>	<i>An idea that is part of a structured theory</i>	<i>Child exploitation is based on situations of power between children and adults</i>
<i>Fact</i>	<i>A justified, true belief (based on information that has been properly collected and analysed)</i>	<i>Medical tests and records show that children treated with oral rehydration therapy (ORT) tend to recover better from diarrhoea than children who are not given ORT</i>
<i>Idea</i>	<i>A theory that has not yet been proved</i>	<i>Children can take an active, meaningful part in democratic processes</i>
<i>Assumption</i>	<i>A belief that is taken for granted and mistakenly used as the basis of a statement or research question</i>	<i>Street children need extra food to combat drug use because they use drugs to reduce hunger</i>
<i>Myth</i>	<i>A traditional or conventional belief, not based on fact</i>	<i>Children are used in the carpet industry as workers because their nimble fingers can do the work faster than adults</i>
<i>Analysis</i>	<i>The logical process of examining data to see what they mean</i>	<i>In a study of 450 15 year old Indian boys, 25% were found to work full time. Of those who worked, 85% were found to have suffered an illness episode in the past 14 days, compared to 32% of those who did not work. This suggests that full-time work in childhood may be harmful to health.</i>
<i>Hypothesis</i>	<i>An idea, based on previous observation or analysis, that will be proved or disproved through a research process</i>	<i>School children using learning materials in their mother tongue make better progress in reading than school children using learning materials that are not in their mother tongue</i>
<i>Description</i>	<i>A verbal account of places, events, people or situations</i>	<i>There were three children working on the market stall, all apparently pre-pubertal. One was male and two were female. They were busy at all times with their work and did not appear to be tired.</i>

Each group should first open the envelope marked 'Definitions' and fit the cards onto the correct square on the board. The facilitator asks each group in turn to provide one of the definitions, checking with other groups, until all groups have correctly matched definitions to words. Then the process should be repeated with the cards in the 'Examples' envelope.

Although it may seem to be too simple for some participants, it is surprising how often the answers are incorrect in practice. The game provides a means of learning in a group that is not threatening and does not cause individuals to lose face. Because it is fun, it is easy to remember what is learned.

There is usually some discussion about the examples given for 'myth' and 'assumption', because participants themselves often believe these two stereotyped statements to be facts.

During the writing up period, this game should be repeated, using examples drawn from participants' own work.

#### 10.4.2 How do we know what we know?

These exercises are intended to sharpen participants' understanding of how information achieves the status of fact—a justified true belief. Facilitators should write a series of factual, preferably everyday, statements on a flip chart and then ask participants to brainstorm about how they know these statements are true.

**EXAMPLE**  
**How do we know what we know?**

Statement	Participants' comments
<i>The sky is blue</i>	<i>From whose point of view?</i> <i>What do we mean by sky?</i> <i>The sun is in the sky—beyond the clouds</i> <i>What is blue?</i> <i>What day and time of day is it blue?</i> <i>Based on observation</i> <i>Social consensus + scientific consensus</i>
<i>It will rain this afternoon</i>	<i>Probably is true</i> <i>Based on past experience</i> <i>It's the rainy season (experience)</i> <i>It has rained for the past three afternoons (experience)</i> <i>There are clouds in the sky (observation)</i> <i>Weather report (science—but can you believe it?)</i> <i>Donkeys have their ears pricked up (observation, tradition)</i> <i>Humidity (sensation, scientific measurement)</i>
<i>Children need parents</i>	<i>It's obviously the case</i> <i>But nothing is obvious</i> <i>It's natural for human beings</i> <i>Who says so?</i> <i>Which children (age and gender)?</i> <i>Which parents?</i> <i>Biological?</i> <i>Foster?</i> <i>Abusive?</i> <i>Caring?</i> <i>Nothing is obvious This statement needs</i> <i>Theories of biology, experience (but not</i> <i>individual, social consensus), psychology,</i> <i>Evidence from studies of abuse,</i> <i>Definition of terms</i>
<i>All children in England go to school</i>	<i>All children in England go to school</i> <i>except (include school age, define child),</i> <i>change 'all' to most</i> <i>What is 'most'?</i> <i>Bare majority?</i> <i>Great majority?</i>  <i>Give date and authority for the statement</i>

Source Flip charts from Ethiopian workshop on analysis and writing up

**10.4.3 What do numbers mean?**

Tables in secondary data are often taken uncritically and not checked. Yet even published numerical material quite often has obvious errors such as:

- Columns that do not add up;
- Percentages given without sample size and raw numbers being provided;

- Percentages given for numbers less than 100;
- Incorrect, or insufficient information given in the title of the table or column headings;
- Tables that are not linked to text and conclusions.

These mistakes are also commonly made by inexperienced writers. If participants learn to be critical of numerical information in secondary data, they will be less likely to make the same mistakes themselves. This is also a useful skill for peer group review.

#### 10.4.3.1 Exercises

##### 10.4.3.1.1 What is wrong with this table?

<i>Children</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
<i>Girls</i>	43.7
<i>Boys</i>	53.3

- No title;
- No age given for children;
- No sample size;
- Percentages do not add up to 100.

##### 10.4.3.1.2 What is wrong with this table?

Table 1: Sample sizes in research villages

<i>Village</i>	<i>Number of interviews</i>	<i>%</i>
<i>A</i>	52	33
<i>B</i>	27	50
<i>C</i>	88	10

- Insufficient information in title, which should give details of when the research was carried out and what/who was sampled;
- Insufficient information in column headings: who was interviewed? Percentage of what?

##### 10.4.3.1.3 Reading numbers?

- Look carefully at the table and text below, then try to answer the following questions:  
 What is wrong with the title and layout of the table?  
 How easy is it to read the table?  
 What are the most interesting results shown in this table?
- Try to re-write or redesign the table so that the most interesting results are clear:  
 For a reader from an NGO.  
 For a group of school children aged 8 to 10 years.



## EXERCISE

### Number statements

Facilitators should write the following statements on the flip chart and ask participants to say what is wrong with them

UNICEF says that urbanisation in Africa is increasing rapidly.

It is estimated that there are 100 million street children in the world, and the numbers are increasing daily.

More women and children are migrating from rural areas into towns

NGOs are concerned about growing numbers of delinquents

In the sample of 37 children, 15% were girls

The vast majority of children in slums live under the poverty line.

Most children in Europe go to school.

Table 2: Distance from home to school for Grade One pupils (percentage of pupils travelling the indicated distance).

Awraja	2 kms	2.5 kms	5-10 kms	10 kms and above
Gimira	40.8	40.9	12.4	5.9
Jimma	37.3	40.1	21.4	2.3
Keffa	31.4	43.0	20.0	5.7
Kullo Kanta	43.7	32.1	18.0	6.4
Limmu	50.7	31.5	13.7	4.0
Maji	50.0	33.4	16.0	0.7
Keffa Region	39.2	38.4	18.5	4.8

The highly scattered settlement pattern of the rural population and the difficult terrain in most parts of the country pose major obstacles to the expansion of and equitable distribution of primary education. It is estimated that there are some 27,000 villages in the countryside which should be served with primary schools within walking distance of children's homes. The conditions facing the expansion of primary education in rural Ethiopia are prohibitive. About 20% of grade 1 pupils travel more than 5 km (one way) to attend school. Extrapolating from the data, it can be deduced that a daily 10 km journey to and from school has to be undertaken by young children. The effect of such distances on enrollment and drop out rates is obvious. (Example taken from Situation Analysis of Women & Children in Ethiopia, UNICEF, Addis Ababa)

#### 10.4.4 How do you know what you don't know?

This exercise aims to develop critical awareness of the validity of published material. Facilitators should choose an informative, published article (no more than three or four pages) by a national authority on some aspect of child welfare. Investigative journalism is often a good source for this exercise. Participants should read the article overnight and try to answer questions such as:

- Has the author adequately described any research methods used?
- What else would you need to know, in order to be able to decide if the information provided is accurate?



- Always supposing the information is accurate, what conclusions could you draw?
- To what extent is the information useful:
  - For researchers?
  - For planning policy and programme interventions?
- What research questions might be suggested by the information provided?

#### 10.4.5 What does this mean to me?

Many inexperienced researchers are unsure about how to use literature from other countries. This exercise should help them to incorporate materials from elsewhere in their literature review.

Facilitators should obtain the UNICEF Situation analysis for women and children for the participants' country and from another country on the same continent and photocopy for each participant the pages on children in especially difficult circumstances from each volume (usually a small portion of the whole).

Participants should read both photocopies and do the following:

- Using the photocopies only, write a brief account of children in especially difficult circumstances in the foreign country, giving a description of the main points, together with any criticisms or doubts you have about the information (150 words);
- List the similarities and differences (compare and contrast) between the situation of children in especially difficult circumstances in these two countries;
- Taking one of the differences, write a hypothesis for research to be carried out in their own country.

### 10.5 Writing

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A written report of research should follow the basic order of the protocol. It should give an account of what the researcher set out to do, how it was done, what happened and any conclusions reached.

It really is as simple as that, providing the proper prior steps have been taken:

- Organise data;
- Index data;
- Make a general index;
- For each method used, write notes:
  - Description of what was done and what happened;
  - Discussion of the results;
  - Analysis of the results.



## LEARNING POINT

### **The difference between description, discussion and analysis**

- **Description:**  
*Narrative account of what happened, using clear, precise language, avoiding emotive words and value judgements:*  
 What;  
 When,  
 Where,  
 Who;  
 How many.
- **Discussion:**  
*Narrative that links observations and facts into an argument, considering factors that may have influenced what happened and what was found out.*  
*Interprets description.*
- **Analysis:**  
*Narrative explanation of what has been described and discussed:*  
*Making links;*  
*Prioritising reasons;*  
*Suggesting causes,*  
*Raising issues,*  
*Coming to a provisional conclusion on the basis of facts presented*

- 
- Compare and contrast the results from each method.

Once these steps have been taken report writing can begin, according to the following format, using the written material already prepared both in the protocol and in the data analysis:

1. Background
2. Research problem
3. Methods (describe each in turn, according to the research schedule). For each method say:
  - Why it was used.
  - What specific question it was designed to ask.
  - Exactly how it was used.
  - Comments on difficulties experienced, especially those that might have affected results.
  - Data obtained
4. For each table or figure used in the report:
  - Describe what it is and how and from whom it was obtained;
  - Discuss why it is as it is:

What other results might have been obtained/expected?

The effects of the research situation;

Cultural and social factors (refer to what has been said in the background section)

5. Triangulate: compare and contrast the results obtained from each method, explaining any differences.
  6. Analysis:
    - What do the data show?
  7. Conclusions based on the analysis of data:
    - Do not present new data in the conclusion;
    - Make a distinction between conclusions you can be sure about and those you think are not too clear.
  8. Recommendations:
    - Make a clear distinction between conclusions and recommendations.
    - Make only practical recommendations that could be carried out by organisations that will read the report.
- Bibliography\* of all sources cited in the report;
  - Glossary of technical terms, or special words used, if necessary;
  - Appendices, perhaps some examples of data that are too long or complex to be included in the main body of the report.

### 10.5.1 Summaries

There are two kinds of summary that may be required by readers of your research report.

- Organisations, projects and programmes usually request a summary, giving the main points from an administrative or planning point of view. For a brief research report this summary should be no longer than one page, use non-technical language and give:
  - Objectives, methods and results of the research;
  - A clear statement of the circumstances of the research (who, what, where, why, when)
  - Main conclusions;
  - Recommendations.

It is not correct to call this summary an 'executive summary' unless it refers to a report that will be presented to an individual or group that has commissioned the report and may take decisions based on the research findings and recommendations.

- Academic publications, seminars and conferences often require an abstract, usually of 80 to 150 words, for which the readership will be mostly other researchers. Thus an abstract should be tailored to giving them the information they will wish to know:

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\* Facilitators may like to guide participants through the different ways of making citations in texts, pointing out that the Harvard (or author/date) system is the most widely used in the social sciences

Problem statement, topic or research question;  
Theories and methods used;  
Details of group of respondents;  
Conclusions reached.

### 10.5.2 Style

All writers have their own style, but research requires calm, clear reporting. Long, technical words are not necessary. Emotive words and phrases, statements that cannot be backed up by facts, and broad generalisations should be avoided at all costs.

Participants should spend some time with exercises to understand the principles of writing credible research reports.



## EXERCISE

### Style

Facilitators should write the following statements on a flip chart, for participants to criticise. In this box they have been written with the problem words and phrases underlined. On the flip chart the underlining should not be shown.

For the short statements, participants can brainstorm, with their comments recorded on the flip chart. For the longer paragraph, they should work individually, then in pairs, before reporting to plenary.

- (i) Ribero says that half the children in Peru work.
- (ii) Many Ethiopian children suffer from malnutrition.
- (iii) UNICEF says that urbanisation in Africa is increasing. More women and children are migrating from rural areas to towns, and this 'contributes to the lack of housing infrastructure' (Smithson). NGOs are also concerned about growing numbers of CEDC and delinquents. The resulting misery can only be eradicated by drastic government action and should be supported by international aid agencies.

## SUMMARY

Writing a research report requires:

- Prior organisation of data;
- Logical analysis;
- Clear, unemotional language.

## 11 FUTURE ACTIVITIES IN APPLIED RESEARCH WITH CHILDREN

*This section considers the future research plans of participants after the formal learning process is complete. It offers suggestions for facilitators about the kind of research participants might carry out in their programmes, picking up the thread from the individual exercises in Section 5 and providing examples of children-centred, participatory research within programme settings.*

*If there is time at the end of the learning process, or in order to maintain and reinforce the learning of a group of participants at a later date, facilitators can design group and individual exercises based on this section.*

The kind of learning process set in train by this manual should never be considered complete because it is only the beginning of the development of participatory research with children, through which participants will increase their understanding of, and skills in using, the methods introduced. However, when the formal part of the process is over, and participants return to their programmes, it will help if they can be supported in applying what they have learned to the research needs of their organisations. It should be possible for them to meet regularly to discuss their experiences, or to carry out joint research or to use this manual to plan and carry out further learning processes in order to share their skills with a wider group of colleagues.

Whatever the case, it is worth considering briefly the type of research task involved. When using this final section of this manual facilitators and participants may find it useful to refer again to the individual exercise on their programmes carried out at the end of Section 5.

### QUOTE

*True generosity consists precisely in fighting to destroy the causes which nourish false charity. False charity constrains the fearful and subdued, the 'rejects of life' to extend their trembling hands. Real generosity lies in striving to that those hands—whether of individuals or entire peoples—need to be extended less and less in supplication, so that more and more they become human hands which work and, by working, transform the world.*

*Paulo Freire, 1972, *The pedagogy of the oppressed*, London, Penguin, pp 20-21*

In the context of participants' work in social development and child welfare, research will have three main applications linked to stages in programme growth:

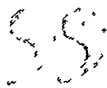
- Planning and formulating policies and programmes (policy research);
- Assessing process, impact and performance of programmes and projects (monitoring and evaluation);
- Communicating messages (advocacy research).

A children-centred, participatory approach applies not only to research but also to programmes and projects of all kinds. It is a total philosophy, which implies that children, their families and communities should be gradually empowered in the course of work designed for their welfare,

rather than remaining dependent on the ideas of other, more powerful people, for definitions of and solutions to their problems. Research is a powerful tool in this process because it:

- Gives an opportunity for powerless groups (including children) to voice their own concerns and perspectives;
- Provides ways that they can find out more about their own problems (and the underlying causes);
- Enables them to collect evidence to use for advocacy on their own behalf;
- Allows them to develop programmes to solve their own problems;
- Makes it possible for them to monitor and evaluate the impact of these programmes

The image of victimised and helpless children often stands for powerless people as a whole. Empowering children within their families and communities is thus an important element in breaking with false charity, which keeps people dependent on gifts of goods and services from more powerful groups.



#### QUOTE

*Without the image of the unhappy child, our contemporary concept of childhood would be incomplete. ...Children living in poverty, children suffering from neglect or disadvantage, children who are the victims of wars or natural disasters—they figure in imagery as the most vulnerable, the most pathetic, the most deserving of our sympathy and aid.. Paradoxically, while we are moved by the image of a sorrowful child, we also welcome it, for it can arouse pleasurable emotions of tenderness, which in themselves confirm adult power*

*As with children, so with all those other groups who bear the characteristics of childhood—women, Black people and the whole of the Third World are among those who stand in a childish relation to the exercise of power. The non-white nations are regularly presented as if in themselves they lack potency, and it is among the children of the developing countries ...that we find the most frequent pictures of childhood suffering*

*Patricia Holland, 1992, What is a child?, London, Virago, p 148*

## 11.1 Policy Research

Policy research is conducted at different stages in the development of a programme, and for different reasons.

### 11.1.1 Baseline research

Baseline assessment should take place even before a programme is planned. Its purposes are:

- To understand the nature and extent of a problem, so that needs can be properly assessed, goals and objectives can be set and policies and action strategies planned in order to meet these needs.

- To learn about any existing legislation, policies and interventions that may affect the situation.
- To provide a prior reference point against which changes in the children's circumstances or condition can be measured so that the impact of the programme, or of external factors, can be evaluated.

Thus the critical questions in baseline assessment are:

What kind of issue or problem is giving us (the researchers, the children and/or other interested parties) cause for concern?

How serious or widespread is this problem?

What are the exact dimensions?

What are the existing policies and programmes that affect these children?

Answering these questions requires the following steps:

- Assess the numbers of children affected and the kinds of event(s) or experiences affecting them. They may be separated from their families and living in an institution or on the streets, for example, or involved in hazardous work. This assessment may require some work defining local ideas about children and childhood (see Section 3).
- Define the social characteristics of the children. This is related to work on the divisions and differences of power between groups of children (see Section 3). Research needs to establish not only the broad population of children affected but also how this group can be broken down ('disaggregated') by gender, age, class and ethnic and religious status, as well as by other relevant factors, such as caste, or place of birth or residence.
- Find out about the consequences of the problem for children, particularly through obtaining the views of the children themselves.
- Identify the external factors that affect this group of children and this problem, which may be legal, social, economic, political, cultural or personal.



### **EXAMPLE**

#### ***Listening to smaller voices***

*After the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio, an ActionAid team of researchers in Nepal examined the issues of population and environment in the context of understanding children's household roles, including the work they do:*

*'Our starting hypothesis was that children's roles and the nature of child labour and work have to be central to our analysis of poverty. They can only be understood by listening to what girls and boys are saying and by appreciating the differing attitudes of men and women to their children. We also have to set all this within the*

*context of a varied and changing physical and socio-economic environment. Children's roles and their workload vary with issues of difference, such as their gender, their age, and the wealth and caste/ethnic group status of the households in which they live*

*The research led us on to realise that children have to be treated as active participants in the whole development process. If the specific needs of girls and boys are not fully understood and addressed, then action to alleviate poverty could affect their quality of life adversely. Instead, only those members of society with louder voices and more prominent positions within society are likely to benefit, thereby increasing the poverty gap.'*

*Victoria Johnson, Joanna Hill and Edda Ivan-Smith, 1994,  
Listening to smaller voices, London, ActionAid*

It may be necessary to research the national or local legal framework, public policy and political conditions in a country, since these can all have a dramatic impact on children's situation. The outlawing of vagrancy in many countries, for example, makes street children highly susceptible to arrest and detention. Information on existing services and interventions benefitting, or of relevance, to children is also important and helps to facilitate collaboration and avoid duplication or conflict between agencies.

Children's family or kinship ties are also key factors, especially for younger age groups. Families determine the social status, wealth and style of upbringing for children, as well as being the source of the most powerful emotional bonds. Families can provide emotional support, confidence and trust for children, yet the ability of family members to sustain children in all these ways depends very much on personal and social circumstances and can be seriously undermined by disunity, separation, ill health, abuse and other problems. Relationships outside the family, with neighbours, friends and the wider community can be equally important.

Finally, culture plays an important part in children's welfare because it influences the ways in which people perceive and interpret a given situation or a given problem, having a profound effect on the way they behave.

Access to basic services and physical infrastructure can also be a vital mediating factor. Shelter, safe places for play and recreation and for storing food and personal possessions securely can be critical to children's survival and welfare, as can access to education, health, transport, water and sanitation.



### EXAMPLE

*'On being invited to start a programme in the Cambodian province of Kratie... Save the Children (UK) decided to undertake a full child-focused needs assessment to discover the reality of children's lives in such a remote part of Cambodia and identify more accurately the needs of children in order to find ways of benefitting them in their specific context. Such an assessment begins with the children's capacities, rather than their deficiencies, and focuses on their lives, needs, aspirations, problems and the causes of their problems; and identifies possible solutions*

*Many traditional participatory techniques can be used such as mapping and ranking, kinship diagramming, group discussions, categorising and prioritising, although these have been adapted to each age group by the Cambodian researchers. In addition the children participate in games and role plays which are videotaped and then discussed with the children and adults known to them in their community. Children are involved not simply so that their needs and situation can be assessed*



*but as partners in the research As key-informants children can provide information to balance that of adult informants in the villages. It is useful to know the attendance rates at school but information provided by teachers is often unreliable Researchers cannot go in every day to count the pupils who attend school but pupils can do this. Asking one of the children to record which children are the frequent water carriers has proved a more reliable method of finding out how regularly children carry out household tasks than questioning the parents.'*

*From a Save the Children Project Report, quoted in, Save the Children (UK), 1995, Towards a children's agenda: New challenges for social development, London, Save the Children.*

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### QUOTE

*Participation not only allows a child the right to have a voice, it is equally valuable in enabling children to discover the rights of others to have their own, very different voices*

*Roger Hart, 1992, Children's participation. from tokenism to citizenship, Florence, UNICEF, p 42*

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Children-centred, participatory research entails that children's views and perceptions of all these factors must be taken into account, along with those of other community members. Community members, and community leaders, may not take children's opinions into account, and may not be sensitive to children's rights, needs and perspectives. It is often taken for granted by programmes that all welfare programmes, or all health projects or all actions in favour of women will be of benefit to children. Yet this is not always the case. Many programmes for general welfare, health and women's rights have unintended negative effects on children's lives, or do not reach the most needy children.

- One of the purposes of children-centred, participatory research is to find out the exact effects of policies and programmes on children.
- The very fact that children are being taken seriously in research, as well as results that show ways in which their welfare is improved or damaged by social development activities, is likely to be part of the sensitisation of communities to the special needs of the children in their midst
- Many researchers who work with children have found that the community interests the children express include not only their own but those of other disadvantaged groups, particularly the elderly.

**QUOTE**

*There must be transparency about the aims and processes of children's participation in community development issues, with parents, children and other community members. It is important that there is an awareness among staff and fieldworkers that children are capable of analysing their situation and making viable suggestions for change.*

*Victoria Johnson, 1996, Sharing a dialogue on children's participation, PLA Notes 25, p 30*

## **11.2 Monitoring and evaluation**

Baseline assessment alone is not sufficient for good policy and programme planning and development. Effective interventions must be accompanied by a continuous process of evaluation and reflection. Research is used to learn about the performance of implementing organizations. This involves:

- Finding out whether the strategies and activities of an organization are coherent and consistent with its goals and objectives;
- Learning whether the goals and objectives fit the priorities and needs of the children, families and communities in the programme;
- Finding out how effective the organization is at improving the circumstances and life chances of the children with whom it works.

One way of checking on the functioning of an organization policy or programme is through monitoring.

### **11.2.1 Monitoring**

Programme monitoring generally focuses on the internal functioning of an organization, programme or project, the availability and utilization of resources, relating these to the goals and targets. Monitoring can be a fairly mechanical exercise that does not normally address more challenging questions about the quality or impact of an intervention. It is conducted on a regular, continuous basis throughout the life-cycle of an organization, project, programme or policy, gathering and processing standardized, quantifiable data.

The questions addressed might be:

How is our work progressing?

Are we meeting our goals and objectives?

Are we using our resources efficiently?

Monitoring can also be a way of keeping track of the changes over time in the group of children with which you work, their families and communities. In this case, baseline data is required as a fixed reference point for comparison.

In both types of monitoring, the most useful tools to use are indicators. These are measures of changes over time in situations or groups of people and depend on using the best quality data available so that accurate comparisons can be made. The best indicators are those that are selected by people themselves, perhaps using PRA techniques, and children can be very perceptive in suggesting what kinds of measurements would indicate changes in aspects of their lives.

Measurements used for indicators should be easy to collect and use. They need to be:

- Factual: mean the same to everyone;
- Valid: measure what they claim to measure;
- Verifiable: capable of being checked;
- Sensitive: reflect changes;
- Reliable: not be subject to changes themselves;
- Comparable: capable of being used accurately in more than one situation;
- Accurate: use the best possible data.

## LEARNING POINT

### Developing a social indicator

	Example
Decide what social activity or aspect of social life you wish to measure	Child labour
Define the dimensions	Work done for payment, outside the family by children aged less than 14 years of age
Decide what data can be used to measure it	Percentage of children aged 5 to 14 years not enrolled in primary school Annual rate of children not completing primary school Number of children aged 10 to 14 years in the labour force as a percentage of the age group
Decide on the time periods at which measurements should be taken and any breakdown into subgroups (disaggregation)	Annual measurements (end of school year), Disaggregated into boys and girls

### 11.2.2 Evaluation

Periodically, and especially at the completion of a project or programme cycle, an evaluation should be conducted. This is a more comprehensive and complete exercise than monitoring and tends also to be more analytical. Evaluation may cover use of resources as well as an informed judgement about the wider role and effects of a project, programme or policy. Evaluations may be conducted internally by members (and project participants) of an organization or programme, possibly in collaboration with donors, or externally, by independent evaluators appointed by the funders.

## EXAMPLE

### Methods used in programme evaluation with children

In an evaluation of a number of street children in Brazil, a number of methods were used to find out the opinions of children and the impact programmes had had on their lives. The methods included participant observation, structured observation, drawings and paintings, life histories, conversations and drama. Researchers were careful to triangulate not only the results from different methods but also the data obtained by each of the three researchers using the same method

*'Many different means were utilised to collect information, some of them de-*

*vised on the spur of the moment For example, when an evaluator was conversing with a group of children, one of them started to communicate through mime The evaluator took advantage of this opportunity to ask the child to dramatise the status of the children 'before', 'during', and 'after' their participation in the programme—three acts revealing changes (and perhaps programme impact) according to the child's own perception. At the same time, another child spontaneously provided an oral interpretation of the meaning of the mime*

*On another occasion, when an evaluator also took puppets to a downtown plaza, the children used them to communicate about their own situations They were encouraged to assume various roles such as mother, boy, girl, policemen, programme staff, etc. This approach led to rich expression of the children's problems and of programme impacts on them. It also facilitated comparison between those plaza children who were in programmes and those who were not.'*

*Thereza Penna Firme, Vatsala Iyengar Stone and Juan Antonio Tijjiboy, 1991, The generation and observation of evaluation indicators of the psychosocial development of participants in programmes for street children in Brazil, in Myers, W, (ed), Protecting working children, London and New Jersey, Zed Books Ltd & UNICEF, p 145*

Evaluation entails questions like:

What is the impact of our work?

How do children perceive the effects of our programme?

And covers topics such as:

To what extent is this programme built on the priority concerns of children, as identified by them and their families or communities?

How many children benefit from this programme and what are the criteria for inclusion in the programme?

How does the programme affect the children it works with?

What are the programme activities and are they appropriate and effective?

Is the programme sensitive to differences in survival and welfare that are the result of distinctions in age, gender, ethnic or religious status?

What is the impact of the programme on public policy?

Is the programme sustainable? Is it replicable?

Is the programme based on sound information about children?

What are children's views of the programme?

What is the evidence concerning the way children are treated by programme personnel?

Is the programme having any unforeseen consequences for children, their families or communities? Are these consequences positive or adverse?

## EXAMPLE

### **Participatory evaluation in Dakar, Senegal**

*With the help of adult facilitators, child street workers in the Senegalese capital, Dakar, identified three main problem areas with respect to their lives in general and the ENDA project designed to help them*

- *The negative image given to society in general by the unacceptable behaviour of some child workers;*
- *The official policy of trying to force them to leave the streets,*
- *Child workers have very little time to spare because they have a very weak source of income,*
- *They have a tendency not to cooperate with the programme because they don't have the time; they do not have a clear idea about what they have to gain by cooperating with ENDA*

*Fabio Dallape, 1994, Un exemple d'évaluation participative a Bamako, Dakar, St Louis et Ziguinchor, in Jeuda 91, Dakar, ENDA, p 20*

### **11.3 Advocacy Research**

All programmes and policies are strongly influenced by the environment in which they operate. Social action is rarely straightforward; sometimes it confronts suspicion and doubt, sometimes ignorance and prejudice and occasionally outright hostility. Acceptance, support and collaboration in favour of new ideas and initiatives requires prior awareness-raising and advocacy. To support these activities, research is used to

- Learn about the local attitudes, beliefs and practices affecting a particular issue or problem;
- Generate messages and concepts out of these beliefs for application in awareness-raising campaigns and other activities to communicate new ideas to the public or change the attitudes and behaviour of influential people;
- Test the communication materials used in advocacy and social mobilization, to monitor their utility and validity and evaluate their impact on attitudes and behaviour.

Social change often has opponents, some simply clinging to familiar ideas and ways of doing things and others having a strong vested interest in maintaining the way things are. Pimps, bar tenders, taxi drivers, law enforcement bodies and brothel owners, for example, may be dependent on the income earned by children in prostitution and thus oppose attempts at abolition. Part of the function of advocacy research is to find out who is likely to oppose change and who is likely to support it. People who are concerned about children's welfare, or dependent on their activities, need to be convinced of the utility and value of a programme. Their energy and enthusiasm need to be harnessed not to oppose change but to support and facilitate it.

Good communication is at the heart of effective advocacy and campaigning using modern communication technologies and media, as well as face to face communication. But access to technology is not the only path to success: to be relevant, appropriate and convincing, the messages used in communication materials need to be based on the concepts, knowledge and priorities of the target audience. This means research about the people you wish to influence.



## LEARNING POINT

### Some hints for a successful advocacy programme

- *Get your facts straight* Start with good, accurate qualitative and quantitative data, based on sound, verifiable research. Make up a campaign pack of information
- *Build a coalition of allies.* Target influential people—film, sport and pop stars, party chiefs, friendly civil servants, NGOs and other interested groups. Make sure they have the facts straight by giving them copies of the campaign pack
- *Form a campaign committee that meets regularly, with members who are committed to really work.* Make sure they all have the facts straight
- *Plan a media campaign with a target and a deadline.* Think at least one year ahead and plan peak events

*Distribute your campaign pack to the media, with a one-page press release, giving your campaign headquarters address, and contact telephone numbers*

*Find an easily-recognisable emblem (or 'logo') that will symbolise your campaign, and a slogan that will sum it up in a few easily-remembered and unambiguous words. Make sure that these do not contradict the facts or give a negative picture of children*

*Make sure there is regular, accurate coverage in the printed media, with progress reports on targets. Write letters to the newspapers, especially in response to related news items (ask your influential allies to sign these letters).*

*Study 'form' and formats—give newspaper and magazine editors stories in styles and lengths they will want to use, with good, clear photographs that show something happening (not just posed shots).*

*Get TV and radio spots, using your influential allies.*

*Run competitions, prizes, school and other public events*

- *Continue to research the topic and keep information flowing to the media*
- *Keep the pressure up, and keep your facts (and campaign pack) up to date*

*Based on a presentation about Advocacy by Peter Loizos, Bangladesh Learning Programme*

Campaign work always brings with it the temptation to exaggerate facts or to use particularly shocking or emotive examples. However, the ethical rules for research apply even more strongly to advocacy. Remember that:

- Portraying children as helpless victims increases the chance that they or other children will be abused or exploited;
- Using children's stories or photographs without their informed consent is not ethical and may put the children themselves at risk;
- Media stories that make it possible to identify groups of children at risk may increase their vulnerability to victimisation or stigmatisation.
- Children should never be used in public campaigns for decoration or without fully understanding the aims of a campaign and the consequences for them of taking part.

**EXAMPLE****When participation is decoration**

Two Indian child labour activists describe their feelings about a campaign march at the end of a workshop on 'Advocacy and Social Mobilisation Towards Elimination of Child Labour' in Tamil Nadu

*'More than a thousand children from neighbouring villages joined the participants of the workshop in demanding their rights. In order to bring the issue to public attention, a silent march was taken out from the venue of the workshop to a traffic junction in the city*

*The children carried a number of placards and posters as well as a huge banner prepared during the workshop on which were painted various slogans: 'We want the elimination of child labour,' 'children are assets, not liabilities,' 'Right to childhood' and so on. Children and activists were also wearing T-shirts with similar messages across it, unfortunately, the children had no idea what was written on the T-shirt as it was in English. The purpose for which they had joined the activists that day also seemed unknown to them. This was extremely painful for us because we had always believed in child advocacy and their right to information.*

*At various times during the workshop we had spoken of the child's need for a common platform and children's rights to be heard and involved in decision-making; what happened during the Public Action Day seemed to make a mockery of our discussions about children's participation*

*Caroline Wesley and Sreelatha, 1993, Food for thought, in Molak, 3 (4), Bangalore, The Concerned for Working Children*

Plans for advocacy and social mobilisation about children's issues, in which children participate, should not only be mindful of ethical concerns but also think about where on the ladder of participation children will stand.

**SUMMARY**

*Children-centred participatory research can be used within programmes to:*

- Plan future work;
- Monitor and evaluate current work;
- Back up advocacy and social mobilisation campaigns.

*It is important to remember that, whenever children are involved in research or programmes,*

- Ethical standards are maintained;
- The nature of their participation is considered.