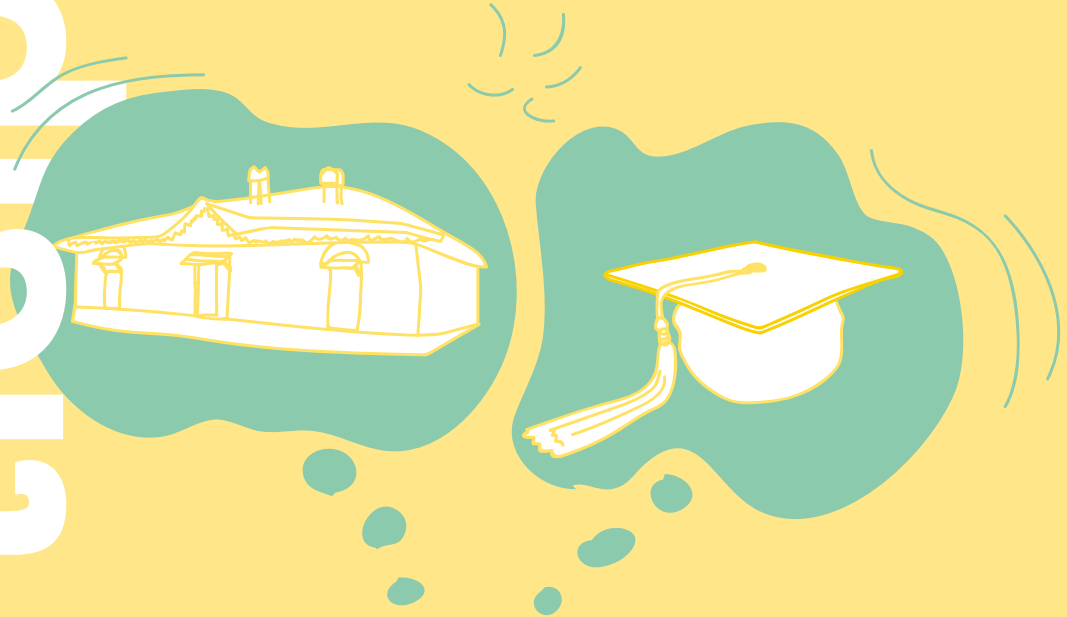




Bridging Participation

Bridging Participation:

**Children's Advisory Committee
Members' Journey from Childhood to
Young Adulthood in Dialogue Works**



September 2024

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Kindernothilfe is a German children’s rights organisation that supports vulnerable and marginalized children and youth to develop their full potential. We partner with local non-governmental organisations in 33 countries and empower children to lead independent, self-fulfilled lives.

Terre des Hommes International Federation is a network of ten national organisations committed to realizing children’s rights and to promote equitable development without racial, religious, political, cultural or gender-based discrimination.

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Introduction

Introduction

Dialogue Works is a collaborative campaign led by Kindernothilfe and Terre des Hommes, aimed at fostering sustainable and meaningful participation of working children in sub-national, national and international policy discussions. The project supports over 30 Children's Advisory Committees (CACs) across 15 countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East, to realise working children's right to be heard.

Since their establishment, CACs have actively engaged in participation spaces to share their lived realities and experiences as working children and to develop skills in evidence-based and collaborative advocacy. At the community level, CACs have developed and led their own advocacy initiatives on priority issues affecting them, and they have contributed to practice and policy dialogues from local to global levels. For many CAC members, their journey began as far back as 2016 within the framework of the "It's Time to Talk! Children's Views on Children's Work" research and campaign project. Over time, numerous CAC members who initially joined the project as children have transitioned into young adulthood.

The interest in developing this booklet emerged following partners' ad hoc adaptations for young people's participation throughout the project implementation. It documents participation approaches to age transition, outlining roles, responsibilities, and the support provided to CAC members upon reaching the age of 18. Drawing from the participation experiences of nine implementing partners across India¹, Kenya², Nepal³, Peru⁴, Rwanda⁵, The Philippines⁶, and Zambia⁷, it sheds light on the pivotal transition of CAC members into young adulthood and the supportive frameworks guiding their journey. It also includes reflection and learning on effective ways to engage and actively involve younger members to enhance the sustainability of children's action and advocacy initiatives. It is our hope that the experiences and insights presented in this booklet will provide guidance and inspiration for organizations supporting meaningful participation of children as they grow into young adulthood. ●

¹ Vigyan Foundation

² Welfare of Children and Youth (WCY) Kenya

³ Children and Women in Social Service and Human Rights (CWISH)

⁴ Centro de Estudios Sociales e Publicaciones (CESIP); Instituto de Formación para Educadores de Jóvenes, Adolescentes y Niños Trabajadores de América Latina y el Caribe (IFEJANT)

⁵ Children's Voice Today (CVT)

⁶ Christian Advocates for Justice and Development in Negros (CAJDEN); Kaugmaon

⁷ Jesus Cares Ministries (JCM)

From childhood to young adulthood

The CACs have focused their participation experiences on meaningful spaces that allow working children to share their views and experiences while engaging in learning, accountability, and decision-making processes. Understanding the realities of children's daily lives, from their own point of view, is helpful in exploring solutions to address their concerns. Recognizing and valuing the range of childhood experiences is only possible when policymakers and practitioners communicate information in ways that are easy for children to understand, engage in dialogue with children from various backgrounds, and actively listen to and act upon children's views and suggestions at every level, from local to global.

In line with the principles enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, specifically article 12 on children's right to be heard, as well as article 15 on "the rights of the child to freedom of association and to freedom of peaceful assembly," - children's civil and political rights should be respected. Children's inherent capacities to express their views and feelings, and to contribute meaningfully to the social and political spheres of their communities and wider society should be valued and nurtured. Their interactions, whether social, cultural, or political, are an indication of their potential to influence and be influenced by the collective aspirations of their communities⁸.

"Young people know now how to articulate issues, and to present agenda to duty bearers and key stakeholders. They are now able to get the buy-in of the leaders and the community because they have built credibility by participating in such a process since an early age."
WCY, Kenya

"One of the main successes is the growth we have seen in young people as to who they are and how they feel about themselves and the world around them. Many of them have been motivated to pursue human rights related careers."

JCM, Zambia

Formal avenues for participation often require individuals with the expertise, resources, and strategic thinking abilities that are cultivated over time⁹. The more time children engage in participation spaces –like the CACs–, the more knowledge, skills, and opportunities they have to shape their own growth and development, and to influence decisions that affect them.

The pursuit of personally meaningful goals allows children and youth to engage in "self-directed development"¹⁰ and acquire or practice personal and interpersonal skills within a supportive setting¹¹. However, their goal pursuit depends on opportunities afforded by their environment¹² and family expectations¹³. Young people's ability to strive for and attain their ambitions is, therefore, deeply intertwined with the support and resources that their immediate and extended environments can provide, reinforcing the idea that a supportive ecosystem is crucial for the holistic development and empowerment of children as they grow into young adulthood. ●

⁸ See: Kigali Declaration: Our World, Our Voice.

⁹ O'Kane, C. Barros, O. Meslaoui, N. (2018).

¹⁰ Daly, A. (2016).

¹¹ Taylor M, Percy-Smith B (2008).

¹² Dworkin J. B., Larson R., Hansen D. (2003).

¹³ Larson R. (2020).

¹⁴ Massey E. K., Gebhardt W. A., Garnefski N. (2018).

¹⁵ Massey E. K., Gebhardt W. A., Garnefski N. (2008).

Young People's Participation in CACs

Most of the CACs engage working children between the ages of 12 and 17, but several have turned 18 since the beginning of Dialogue Works. For some of them, this transition occurred after five or more years of active participation in the Committees. Among the nine partner organizations consulted, on average, up to 30% of CAC members have reached 18 since the start of the project. Their participation after reaching adulthood varies from country to country, depending on personal goals, work responsibilities, and available opportunities to remain involved.

The age transition of CAC members marks the conclusion of a participation phase that has transformed their lives. According to partner organizations, this transition has been accompanied by positive changes, including increased knowledge of their rights, improved self-esteem, enhanced critical thinking abilities, developed public speaking skills, proficiency in evidence-based advocacy, and a strengthened determination to pursue higher education.

As some members reach the age of 18, changes may also be experienced by the rest of the CAC. While most members view the age transition of older participants as a natural step in their participation journey and express excitement about what lies ahead, according to partner organizations, the main change encountered by the group is the integration of new members. What could be presented as a challenge, in most cases presents an opportunity for the members to mentor newcomers and further develop ownership of their group and activities.

"The CAC was more proactive in looking who to engage to replace the ones who left. The young people advise but do not decide. Thus, CAC members are able to develop more ownership of the group and exercise more leadership, especially the ones that joined at a younger age."

CVT, Rwanda

"The main change has been in terms of their self-esteem. Most of them came in shy, but the process helped them finding their voice, and thus increased their active participation. Young people have now more interest in learning and doing evidence-based advocacy by doing research on issues that affect children's lives. We have also noticed an increased determination to pursue higher education and increase their life quality."

JCM, Zambia

There is no standard duration of engagement for young people after turning 18. However, in all cases, their involvement is influenced by factors such as time availability, work responsibilities, and relocation for educational pursuits. In some contexts, young people remained connected to CAC activities for a period of two to four years. In settings where established youth programs exist, young people's engagement tends to be more consistent over time.

"Their participation depends on individual interest and the importance that is given to them in activities. It also depends on their availability based on their hours of work."

Vigyan Foundation, India

"Young people tend to remain engaged for extended periods when they perceive an educational role that prepares them to become adult collaborators in the cause of working children. Additionally, they are encouraged to participate in a youth group with a distinct advocacy agenda centered on youth law rather than the adolescent child code."

IFEJANT, Peru

The transition of CAC members from adolescence to young adulthood marks a pivotal moment in their journey, highlighting the transformative impact of participation¹⁶. As young people navigate the complexities of adulthood, they carry with them invaluable skills and experiences gained through their involvement in the CACs. In anticipation of this transition, it is crucial to prioritize enhancing the flexibility and adaptability of both the group and its individual members. This proactive approach ensures that the group can effectively navigate changes, such as the aging out of some members and the integration of new ones, while maintaining cohesion and momentum in its activities. By fostering a culture of flexibility and adaptability, the group becomes better equipped to embrace new challenges and opportunities, ultimately strengthening its resilience and capacity for growth. ●

Tips for supporting age transition

- **Encourage Open Dialogue:** Foster open dialogue among CAC members about age transition. Create a safe space for discussions about their expectations, concerns, and aspirations as they approach adulthood and continue their engagement with the group.
- **Celebrate Accomplishments:** Use creative methods such as a timeline of milestones or an appreciation tree to celebrate the accomplishments and changes experienced by members transitioning into young adulthood. This highlights their contributions to the group and fosters a sense of pride and appreciation.
- **Collaborative Integration:** Collaborate with the CAC members to brainstorm a variety of ways to inform, reach, welcome and integrate new members in a meaningful way. Ensure that the welcoming process is inclusive and fosters a sense of belonging for both current and new members, promoting continuity and cohesion within the group.

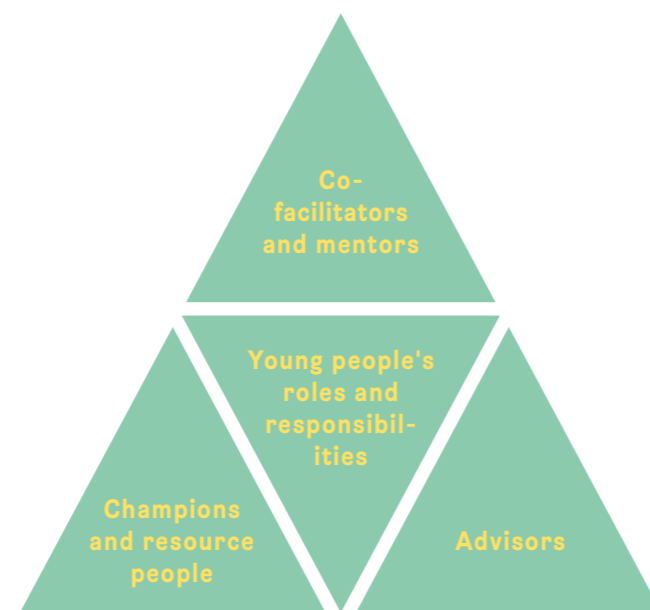
¹⁶ See: A Handbook of Children and Young People's Participation Conversations for Transformational Change. Edited by: Barry Percy-Smith, Nigel Patrick Thomas, Claire O'Kane, Afua Twum-Danso Imoh

Young people's roles and responsibilities

As children approach the age of majority, their experiences within the group vary widely. While some may feel uncertain about their future within the group, grappling with questions about their continued involvement, others view this transition as a natural progression in their participation journey. These diverse perspectives show the need for every individual to feel valued and empowered to make informed decisions about their continued participation. By providing this support, the group fosters a sense of belonging and encourages each member to shape their own journey within and outside the Committee, ensuring that their voices are heard and respected.

The majority of consulted partners have successfully adjusted to the roles and responsibilities proposed by young people as they reach the age of 18. Three partners have established youth programs, providing a structured pathway for CAC members transitioning into young adulthood. Among these partners, two operate project-funded youth programs, and efforts are underway by at least one partner to document and propose an age transition plan for CAC members entering young adulthood.

Depending on the configuration of such participation, young people take over one or more of the following roles and responsibilities:



Co-facilitators and mentors

Co-facilitation is one of the primary roles assumed by CAC members after they turn 18, for those that are interested to continue playing an active role. This role extends beyond session moderation to encompass coordination tasks before, during, and after CAC meetings. These tasks may involve registration, documentation, and follow-up with children and/or their parents and caregivers regarding their participation.

"Once, two members close to turning 18 introduced themselves to the group without saying their age because they were afraid of how it was going to be taken by the group. Once we explained that there were going to be opportunities for them to continue engaged, they felt comfortable because they know they are equipped to support the group and become multipliers of the learning acquired."
CESIP, Peru

"At first age transition was very natural. We did not intervene to change their participation. Children naturally started creating the roles of co-facilitators, and animators. Then, they themselves asked to formalize such roles to continue engaged in activities but now as co-facilitators. Five of the CAC members actively continue enrolled as co-facilitators."
CAJDEN, The Philippines

In Kenya, WCY engages young people as co-facilitators taking over responsibilities such as the welcome and introduction, registration, moderation, and energizers. Each session is led by two facilitators, one of whom is the CAC coordinator. This engagement as co-facilitators has not only provided young people with a valuable experience but has also opened up opportunities for some of them to pursue internships and scholarships, leveraging their involvement in broader participation platforms.

"The organization promotes the protagonism of working children so that they can exercise their own ability to direct and decide about the present and future of their organization as their own space. They are not called facilitators but delegates of the organization, representing the group at the local, regional, national, and global levels."
IFEJANT, Peru

The support extended to younger CAC members, both within and outside sessions, has created **mentoring opportunities** that enable new members to gain deeper insights into the Committee's objectives, achievements, challenges, and overall activities. Having young people serve as mentors has not only provided practical guidance but also offered moral support to the group. By sharing their own experiences and perspectives, mentors help younger members relate to their participation journey, fostering a sense of belonging and understanding within the group.

In the Latin American child-led movements, the support provided by young people focuses on nurturing children to evolve as delegates. In this sense, child delegates not only assist in implementing sessions or mentoring new members but also to remain at the forefront of decision-making processes regarding the group's objectives and activities.

"Young people feel that as they become older, they have a natural responsibility to look after the younger ones."
CESIP, Peru

While most young people's roles and responsibilities have been developed on an ad hoc basis in collaboration with them, recent efforts to systematize these experiences are making a significant difference in formalizing their contributions as mentors and co-facilitators. Through the establishment of an **age transition plan** involving intergenerational collaboration, learning, and accountability, both children and youth are empowered to stay motivated and explore their potential to take on new roles. This structured approach has not only provided clarity and continuity for members but also ensured recognition of their contributions and integration into the broader objectives of the CACs.

In Zambia, JCM has been working on a **youth mentorship plan** for former CAC members aged 19-22. This plan focuses on a co-facilitation role where young people collaborate with the organization to discuss the CAC meetings' flow and agree on co-facilitation roles. They receive training on relevant tools and topics proposed for each CAC meeting before implementing the sessions with children. Key tools for their training include Dialogue Works' Toolkits and Modules, the Nine Basic Requirements for Ethical and Effective Participation of Children, and the Article 15 Toolkit. After each session, they meet with the coordination team to discuss feedback and lessons learned, ensuring continuous improvement in their mentorship efforts.

Advisors

"The young people understood that they are adults already. The decision making is on the children. They help provide relevant information that could help the children decide."

Kaugmaon, The Philippines

Some young people have transitioned into the role of advisors within CACs. This role is typically shaped by their desire to remain involved in the CAC's activities while not necessarily attending every meeting or session. **As advisors, they serve as a valuable sounding board for the Committee**, drawing from their experiences as former CAC members, but encourage decision-making by CAC members who are under 18 years. They offer insights on key advocacy opportunities, share lessons learned, and provide advice on engaging key stakeholders in the process.

While the advisory role of young people within CACs has not been formalized in most contexts, there are instances where they are informally consulted by CACs on various topics, including safeguarding standards, policy analysis, and strategic decisions.

"This role helps in continuity and experience sharing and also a sense of commitment and ownership among young people."

Vigyan Foundation, India

NGO partners have noted that having young people serve as advisors has not only provided valuable insights and guidance but has also fostered a sense of ownership among CAC members regarding the coordination and operation of the group.

"Young people advise but do not decide. They share about their own experience, what is working and what is not working, as well as challenges they faced in previous activities. Their advice helps to understand how to approach others, and get community members and parents/caregivers onboard."

CVT, Rwanda

Champions and resource people

Some young people, faced with limited time availability due to work or education commitments, as well as those who have relocated to pursue better opportunities, have transitioned into roles as champions of children's participation and resource people for the CACs.

As champions, young people play a crucial role in amplifying the voices of children within their communities and advocating for their inclusion in decision-making processes.

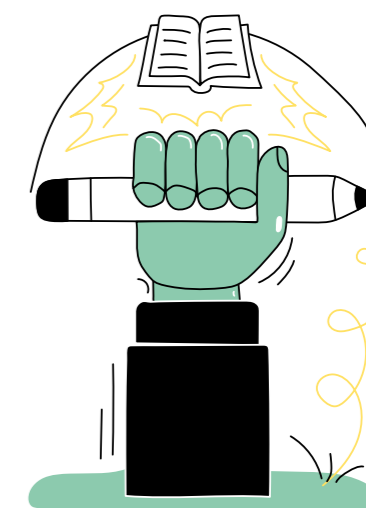
Acting as resource persons, they frequently bridge CACs with relevant platforms and stakeholders, offering occasional training related to their professional expertise, and facilitating the expansion of CACs. Furthermore, they actively support the group's efforts to promote meaningful participation of children, thus ensuring that the impact of the CACs extends beyond their immediate sphere of influence.

"One child who participated in It's Time to Talk four years ago, later came to train the children on reproductive rights based on the studies he pursued at boarding school. Another former member is now an artist, and he comes every week asking about how to support the CAC to train for free."

CVT, Rwanda

"They also became partners of the organization in providing opportunities for more participation of children, furthermore, they also became the bridge between parents and members of the CACs."

Kaugmaon, The Philippines



While the presence of champions and resource young adults may be less frequent compared to other roles, consulted partners highlighted that young people consistently find ways to contribute back to the group. Even as they pursue personal and professional growth elsewhere, they remain dedicated to representing the values and learnings gained from their CAC experience. ●

Tips for supporting young people's roles and responsibilities

- **Formalize Roles:** Collaborate with young people to formalize their roles within the CAC by defining the scope of their responsibilities. Recognize that they may choose to take on one or more roles, or none at all, after turning 18. Ensure clarity about the limits of their roles, to ensure that CAC members under 18 years remain the main decision-makers for planning and implementing action and advocacy initiatives.
- **Capacity Building:** Provide capacity-building opportunities for young people in areas of their interest that will strengthen their roles within the CAC. This could include training sessions, workshops, or access to relevant resources.
- **Documentation:** Document approaches, methodologies, and lessons learned from young people's engagement with CACs. This documentation serves as a valuable resource for future initiatives and ensures continuity in youth participation efforts.
- **Interaction:** Ensure ongoing interaction opportunities between young people and CAC members, even if young people transition into a separate youth program within the organization. This fosters continuity and collaboration across different age groups.
- **Peer-to-Peer Learning:** Leverage the impact of peer-to-peer learning by promoting mentoring opportunities for both children and youth within the CAC. Encourage older members to mentor younger ones, fostering a supportive environment for skill development and knowledge sharing.

Successes and challenges of young people's engagement with CACs

According to the NGO partners, the continued participation of young people after turning 18 has been instrumental in demonstrating the **long-term impact** of CACs. The knowledge and skills acquired through their participation in the CACs often translate into empowering opportunities for them to enhance their personal growth and pursue their goals.

Furthermore, the continued engagement of young people has served as living **evidence of credibility within their communities** and opened significant **opportunities for collaboration with local authorities**. Recognizing the complexities of the contexts in which most CAC members are situated, witnessing young adults **become positive role models** has represented a **significant source of motivation for younger children** to envision a better future for themselves and their families.

However, maintaining young people's engagement has also presented challenges. The primary being **time constraints**, which often hinder young people's consistency in fulfilling their roles. In some cases, this results in the need to adjust CAC meeting schedules to accommodate their availability. Another significant challenge is the **lack of funding to support young people's participation**. While they currently volunteer their time, there is a pressing need to cover their transportation, refreshment costs, and mobile data costs to ensure their continued involvement. At minimum young people should not be "out of pocket" as a result of their facilitation, mentoring or advisory role.

Successes	Challenges
Engagement and collaboration with local authorities	Time constraints because of personal and educational commitments.
Motivation and interest to continue engage in CACs on a voluntarily basis.	Lack of funding to manage their participation including transportation, refreshments, or stipend.
Maximization of their contribution to the group and community.	Mobility to pursue higher education.
Increased self-esteem and self-confidence.	Potential safeguarding risks
Increased credibility and positioning of children's participation within their communities.	Giving up decision-making
Realization of their right to association	Avoid influencing children's views.

"It is sometimes challenging learning to stay behind and no longer at the center of the processes. It is important so that they know how to mourn that phase of their lives and transform their role. It means giving up protagonism and becoming a supporter of the process. It is about discovering their new social status as youth and engaging in youth spaces and organizations."
IFEJANT, Peru

NGO partners also highlighted challenges related to **potential safeguarding risks**, particularly in contexts where young people's participation is not formalized. As these youth transition into young adulthood, some **struggle to step back and allow children to make decisions about their committee or freely express their views.** ●

Tips for overcoming challenges of young people's engagement with CACs

- **Task Planning:** Collaborate with young people to develop a Gantt chart (a timeline of activities), identifying tasks related to their roles and availability to support them. Planning ahead allows for task delegation and sets clear expectations for their engagement.
- **Incentive Package:** Develop an incentive package that includes both monetary and non-monetary compensation for their engagement. Ensure systematic inclusion of young people's participation-related costs in funding proposals (e.g. transport and refreshment costs, mobile phone data etc). Non-monetary incentives may include access to certified capacity-building programs, internships, letters of recommendation, etc.
- **Safeguarding Standards:** Ensure the application of safeguarding standards by having young people sign a code of conduct and providing training on the safeguarding policy and mechanisms. This promotes a safe and respectful environment for all participants.
- **Training and Information:** Facilitate young people with relevant training and information about youth platforms and participation opportunities outside CACs. Empower them to continue advocating and sharing their experiences beyond the committee.

Young people's participation and the sustainability of children's groups

Young people are instrumental in ensuring the sustainability of children's groups by contributing their leadership, networks, and outreach. Ultimately, the lasting legacy of the CACs lies in their ability to empower children, equip them with skills, and nurture a commitment to exercise their right to be heard that extends beyond their years of active involvement.

"Young people are pillars of sustainability because they are already connected to other networks; they are leaders; they are mobilizing others; they help the group increase their outreach and success."
CAJDEN, The Philippines

For children's groups to become sustainable in time, key conditions should be promoted including anchoring of children's participation into established government-led platforms; differentiated roles and opportunities for children, adolescents, and youth; inclusive membership; and training and support by organizations.

Anchoring participation into established government-led platforms

Consulted organizations recognize the importance of ensuring the sustainability of children and young people's participation. Sustainability, in this context, goes beyond maintaining specific children's groups or associations. Instead, it involves **connecting participation experiences, which may occur through involvement in various projects, with existing and ideally permanent platforms for children and young people supported by the State – by national and local governments, and by schools.** To fulfil children's right to be heard (Article 12), Governments have responsibilities to plan, budget and implement platforms for children's participation and representation in key decision-making processes at

a range of levels, for children to influence policies and practices that concern them. By doing so, participation can continue beyond the organization's capacity to finance individual groups or associations.

In Nepal, CWISH has been actively fostering opportunities for children and young people to engage in established government-led platforms. Recently, they provided support to participants of the Youth Leaders program in promoting a climate action campaign, facilitating a smoother transition from the CAC while also connecting them with relevant youth platforms. Additionally, CWISH has been creating avenues for youth involvement in the Youth Commission convened by the municipality and in establishing CACs within school settings as a way to make them more sustainable.

Active participation of children and young people in government-led platforms has also facilitated **spaces for them to access public-funded scholarships and livelihood programs.** This engagement equips them with the knowledge and resources needed to pursue their educational and professional aspirations.

In some contexts, anchoring children's participation in government-led platforms requires **legal registration of children's groups and associations.** In such cases, young people could play a crucial role in navigating the bureaucratic processes involved in the registration and ensuring accountability within the organization.

Establishing differentiated roles and opportunities for children, adolescents, and youth

For sustainable CACs, it is important to **keep participation relevant for all age groups.** This involves supporting meaningful participation according to the evolving capacities of children, adolescents, and youth. While most CACs involve adolescents, some members transition from participation platforms intended for younger children.

"In order to keep the process sustainable, it is crucial to maintain separated spaces as well to keep the platform relevant. But it takes time, human resources, and funding."
CAJDEN, The Philippines

When participation opportunities are defined for all ages, CAC members develop a **sense of growth and motivation to remain engaged.** However, establishing differentiated roles often needs different spaces, expertise, and financial resources to provide adequate support.

In Peru, CESIP is currently developing a training program for children to become rights advocates, which is being integrated into other projects, including the Rights Clubs for ages 5-8 and 9-12. Children are already aware of the existence of the Rights Clubs and the CAC. The first meeting recently took place, and the concept is for CAC members to conduct a session for the Rights Clubs once a month. Additionally, they will have the chance to participate in art workshops. The fact that younger children view the older ones as role models, plays a crucial role in keeping them all motivated.

In shaping roles and opportunities for different age groups, the NGO partners emphasized the importance of **applying the Nine Basic Requirements for Ethical and Effective Participation** as a planning tool, and as a monitoring tool. Additionally, NGO partners stressed the need of **aligning activities with their intended objectives; establishing a safe environment** that prioritizes values such as respect and mutual understanding; and **promoting team spirit** that values and integrates diverse views and perspectives.

Promoting inclusive membership

Supporting CACs for over three years has provided implementing partners with insights into the age transition of youth and the process of integrating new members into the group. Through this experience, they have come to recognize the significance of inclusivity, particularly in **involving children closer to the age of 12 or younger.** They have observed that **extended involvement that arises when CAC members join the group from a younger age strengthens group identity and enhances the sustainability of advocacy initiatives,** leading to potentially more impactful outcomes. Children and young people play a significant role in this process by serving as role models in their communities and embodying the values of the group.

"It provides a starting point for children to perceive the CAC as a safe space by witnessing others who have completed the program and can share their experiences. Having a diverse and inclusive group is securing continuity, adaptability, and sustainability."
WCY, Kenya

As CACs were established within the framework of a project focusing on working children's the right to be heard, their membership has prioritized children who have worked or who currently work. With a **clear focus on the intended childhood experience,** partners have been intentional about ensuring the **selection process of new CAC members is gender-sensitive, socially inclusive, and respectful of religious and cultural diversity.**

From the experience of CAJDEN, in the Philippines, younger children (7-11) are often eager and excited to be part of groups, driven in part by the engaging and interactive learning-by-playing approach used in their sessions. These activities not only provide opportunities for learning but also serve as a means for children to disconnect from their daily realities. Younger children consistently attend sessions, often making organization easier compared to involving parents or youth. Recognizing the importance of maintaining inclusivity within the CACs, the process for involving new members begins by prioritizing engagement of working children. CAJDEN collaborates closely with the local government and uses a profiling tool from the Department of Labor to identify eligible children in the community.

Ensuring training and support from NGOs

In all contexts, NGOs are regarded as natural allies of children and young people's participation. Their programmatic and advocacy efforts to advance children's causes and children's right to be heard are highly valued by children, their families, and the broader community. Specifically, the NGO support encompasses coordination, logistic arrangements, convening, facilitation, safeguarding and monitoring of children's participation in CACs.

Many implementing partners are well-established organizations that have supported generations of children in exercising their participation over the years. NGOs have earned a significant place in many vulnerable communities, becoming trusted allies of parents and caregivers in promoting children's rights and empowerment. This longstanding presence and trust are foundational to the success and sustainability of children's participation initiatives facilitated by these organizations.

Kaugmaon in the Philippines has been training peer facilitators/educators. This practice stems from the understanding that young people and children often confide in their peers about their problems and personal matters. It has been 25 years since Kaugmaon began training Peer Educators/Facilitators in various projects, including Adolescent and Reproductive Health and Rights with UN Agencies, Environmental Care, and Children's Rights Promotion. This approach has proven to be effective. Many of these peer educators have embraced the values and lessons they gained from their experiences; in fact, some of them currently serve on the Board of Trustees of Kaugmaon. Most pursued social work or education courses because they wanted to continue the work they started as peer educators. Some have even joined Kaugmaon staff and hold directorship positions.

In terms of sustainability, maintaining inclusive membership also involves keeping participation spaces flexible. For organizations without established youth platforms, inclusivity doesn't necessarily entail creating new platforms specifically for youth. Instead, it means defining potential roles –such as those described earlier– while allowing for flexible participation based on their interests and personal or work commitments. Ultimately, whether young people remain connected to the group on an occasional or regular basis, they will carry with them the outcomes of their participation experience. This flexibility ensures that participation remains accessible and meaningful for all members, contributing to the long-term sustainability of the group.

"Making age transition a natural progression within the group, understanding that the group is flexible and will always be a safe and open space for everyone to join. Not only do children belong to the space, but the space also belongs to those who have been part of it, because wherever children go, the footprint of their participation experience goes with them."
CESIP, Peru

The support provided by NGOs to the CAC members transitioning into young adulthood is equally vital as the support given to current CAC members. Taking a holistic approach to child development and investing in supporting age transitions is essentially investing in nurturing community leaders who lead by example. However, it's crucial to strike a balance between empowerment and exploitation. While young people are encouraged to learn and share to the best of their capacity, availability, and interest, they should not be expected to replace the roles and responsibilities of staff. By providing tailored support during this transition period, NGOs can help young people navigate their roles effectively, ensuring their continued growth and development as role models within their CAC and broader community.

Tips for the sustainability of children's groups

- **Anchoring participation:** Incorporate the anchoring of children and young people's participation in government-led platforms from the initial stages of project planning. This establishes a foundation for long-term engagement and institutional support.
- **Differentiated roles and opportunities:** Ensure that participation opportunities are relevant for all age groups, allowing for a sense of growth in their participation journey. Offer platforms for influence at all levels while making sure that children under 18 remain at the center of decision-making.
- **Inclusive membership:** Regularly review and update selection criteria in collaboration with children to ensure inclusivity. By maintaining flexibility in participation spaces, children are able to enjoy the process and understand the lasting impact of their participation beyond the CAC.
- **Training and support by NGOs:** Invest in training and support for children and young people to enhance the quality of their participation, promote sustainability of processes, and foster ownership and empowerment. Ensure that their contributions complement rather than replace the work of staff, maintaining a balance between empowerment and support.

"Young people are the ones who could support the organization and groups to grow. They can motivate the younger ones to continue engage and transform their communities. They become an inspiration for younger children."
CVT, Rwanda

The participation approaches included in this booklet reflect shared practices and knowledge among organisations that invest in supporting sustainable children's participation from childhood to young adulthood. Their experiences demonstrate the importance of prioritizing participation platforms that foster a supportive environment where young voices can continue to be heard and their contributions valued, ultimately leading to a more impactful and enduring model for children's participation and advocacy. ●

Useful Resources

Eurochild (2021) We are here: A child participation toolbox, especially part E “Me, as facilitator” p.99 -111

The Article 15 Resource Kit, especially module 7 How we keep our group going strong over time.

Council of Europe (2017) New and innovative forms of youth participation in decision-making processes, especially p. 57-61

Save the Children (2016) A Youth Participation Best Practice Toolkit: Part II

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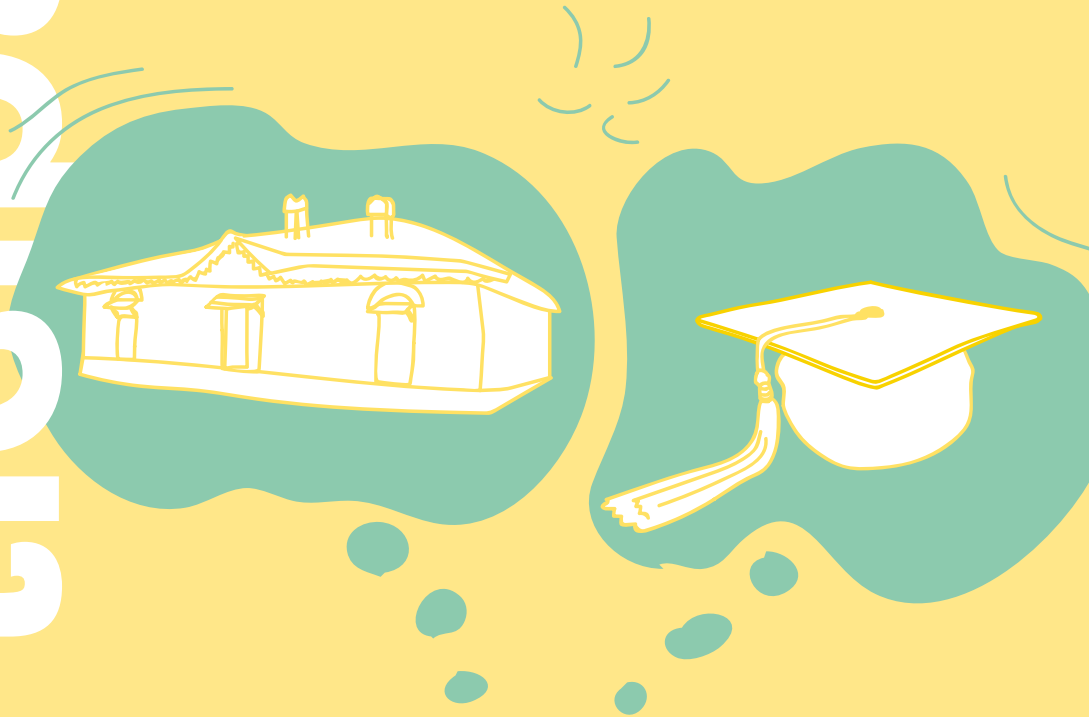
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