

Article

Children in the drivers' seat

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Children Studying their Transport and Mobility Problems in India

'Participation' is highly fashionable, and it is highly talked about especially among social scientists and development activists. It is a progressive word extensively used by social and anthropological researchers. One hears of participatory planning, participatory evaluative processes, participatory programme implementation, participatory research, and on and on. Community participation, civil society participation, people's participation are all powerful terminologies used to express different levels of participation of the stakeholders in processes that affect them. The strength, impact and sustainability of participatory processes are highly determined by the nature and level of participation of the parties involved. Participation is a process. It is neither an event nor a project.

Information is power. Information is one of the fundamental requisites for meaningful and effective participation. Information management involves a whole range of accessing, analysing and using information.

CWC¹ has been working with children, especially the most marginalised, for over 25 years in India. Our objective has been to empower children to enable their participation in governance processes so that they take decisions on matters that affect them. Enabling children's participation has been a challenging journey for us through unexplored terrain. There have been no blue prints before us. Each step has been new and learning.

In the process of enabling children's participation, facilitating children to do their own research and use the information they collected to bring about change in their life situation is an arena we have explored in depth. There have been numerous instances of members of Bhima

Sangha², Makkala Panchayat³ and Namma Sabha⁴ conducting their own researches, documenting processes and using the information collected for purposes of local, national and international advocacy.⁵

INTRODUCTION TO THE PROJECT

"We missed our playtime, free time and even marriage celebrations! But, we are very proud that we were able to do something for our village. We have identified our problems, we know the solutions and also how to get them solved....."

In November 2004, University of Durham-UK approached CWC to participate in a study on children's mobility and access to education, health and other facilities to be jointly done by the University and CWC. This study was to be conducted in rural areas of three countries: Ghana, South Africa and India. The research idea was of interest to CWC as the children of Kundapur Taluk had just completed a very complex exercise of developing Five-Year Plans⁶ with their local governments; issues related to access and mobility, especially, transport had been flagged as a priority.

1 CWC is a secular, democratic, national, private development agency working in partnership with working children, their communities, and local governments to implement viable, comprehensive, sustainable, and appropriate solutions. (www.workingchild.org)

2 A union of, by, and for the working children in Karnataka facilitated by the Concerned for Working Children (CWC), with a membership of over 13,000, striving towards the realisation of child rights.

3 Children's Village Council, or parallel government of children, set up in Karnataka state. It was started by Bhima Sangha and CWC's facilitation. It is a forum for all children to participate in decision-making and governance at the Panchayat level.

4 An association founded by ex-Bhima Sangha members, which is comprised of youths between the ages of 18-36 years, who are artisans, craft persons, or are engaged in various other occupations.

5 Lolichen P. J., Children and their Research: A Process Document, The Concerned for Working Children, Bangalore, 2002

6 See box for details

A Unique Revolution: Children Prepare the National Five-Year Plans

In 2004, a unique revolution took place in Karnataka state; for the first time in history, children not only participated, but also led the way for adults to participate, in the 10th National Five-Year planning process, in all 56 Gram Panchayats of Kundapur Taluk, Udupi district, India in partnership with the state government. The children's plans were accepted by the District government, which becomes part of the official 10th five-year plan. Children are pursuing with the local and higher levels of government to make sure their issues are prioritised and addressed in the Panchayat plans. Their advocacy towards this is very strategic and sustained.

*This entire process was monumental because it not only rejuvenated people's eagerness to become involved in democratic processes; it was made possible through children's initiatives. For the first time, children had turned the traditional 'top-down' power structure on its axis. They demonstrated that they were fully capable of actively participating in decision-making processes and involving in civil society processes.*⁷

CWC's first challenge was to negotiate and convince the partners, including Durham University that the study, including designing the methodology and developing tools, ought to be conducted by children themselves who are affected by the problem and not by interested adults or university students. CWC offered to provide the expertise to facilitate the University and the other partners in the study to enable the child participants to design and develop the methodology and tools to conduct the research.

Though hesitant at first, the University of Durham and other partners agreed. The study had the following principal objectives:

- To enable children to access, obtain, and manage information appropriately, in order to empower them to become their own protagonists;
- To enable children to identify and recognise problems, access and analyse data, and use the resulting information to take control of the issues they face and, further, to develop solutions to overcome them;
- To demonstrate that children are capable of effectively participating in all democratic
- processes, provided that they are equipped with appropriate information and skills and that their participation in such processes can bring about structural changes in the community;

⁷ A Unique Revolution: Children lead the way to decentralisation and civil society participation, The Concerned for Working Children, Bangalore, 2004

Context of the study

The Child Research Protagonists

The child researchers were boys and girls in the age group of 9 to 18, from socially and economically marginalised groups. About 85 percent of them were school going children and the remaining were working children. It was a big challenge for the children to find time to conduct such an extensive research exercise amidst all their domestic responsibilities and work/scholastic pressures. They managed this by conducting the study either on holidays or in the early morning or late evenings outside school and working hours. On a few occasions the school authorities sanctioned leave to the school children to conduct the study. The kids who participated in the study, despite all the shuffling around and time constraints, enjoyed the process and were proud of their achievements.

The Child Respondents

The child respondents for the study were from all cross sections of the community. The study aimed to understand the transport, mobility and access issues of children from diverse backgrounds and situations. The respondent's were in the age group of 6 to 18 years; they were an equal number of boys and girls; they included working and school going as well as children who are differently abled. Over 300 children participated as respondents in the study.

Location

CWC decided to conduct the study in 'new' Panchayats, areas that CWC had not worked so far and where children had no prior experience of forming organisations, conducting research or participating in areas of governance. This was a measured decision as we wished to demonstrate that any groups of children with the right inputs could not only conduct research, but also use that information to remedy their situations. This choice was also important for the adult facilitators to be able to draw skills, methodology and tools to apply in South Africa and Ghana.

The study was conducted in three Gram Panchayats of southern Karnataka; Gujjadi, Aajri and Hombadi Mandadi Panchayats, each diverse in characteristics.

Each Panchayat had households between 950 and 1200 and a population between 5500 and 6500. The three Panchayats were backward, underdeveloped, poor and lacking transport and mobility facilities in the region, especially from the point of view of children.

Time Frame

The study was conducted over a period of 7 months,

from October 2004 to April 2005. This period was intensely hectic for the 149 children who conducted the research.

During one of the intermissions awaiting their mid-day snacks, the children engaged in the Observation Mapping, started having fun. Most of them climbed on the trees through the creepers and branches. They were hanging from, and swinging on, the trees. This scene of child research protagonists looking down from the top of the trees reminded one child of an aerial survey being done. This captivating scene was captured by one of the Child Researchers in his notebook in the form of an illustration.

THE PROCESS

The project started with the inception workshop designed and facilitated by CWC. The participants were both adults and children. The adults that attended the workshop were researchers from the UK, Ghana and South Africa, and some of CWC's field facilitators. There were 29 children in all from the three selected Panchayats.

The project got off to a great start with a participatory, child-centred workshop organised by the Concerned for Working Children (CWC) in Karnataka, India....In the space of the five day workshop, the children used their knowledge of their transport problems to develop a research framework, and pilot test three tools for conducting research into these problems. These three tools, a transect walk, focus group discussions, and mapping access and mobility indicators for different children, were field tested in one Panchayat by the children. CWC aims to continue working with the children to develop two additional research tools: a house-to-house survey and a PRA map.

For the adults the children's perspectives were revealing. Children engaged in a range of transport activities: they had to go to school, they fetched water and firewood, they transported the harvest and collected rations from the shop, they take milk to the market, and they accompany older people to the health centre. Their transport responsibility result in late attendance in school and tires them out, making it difficult for them to concentrate. It also takes up a lot of their time. They face very different hazards to adults: they cross busy roads; they climb over rocks or big roots of trees, jump over gullies, ford streams or walk on slippery bridges.

Working with CWC who have over twenty-five years of experience working in partnership with children, made the project team realise that if the project is to do more than pay lip-service to children's participation, it needs to widen its scope. Children must be empowered to use the information generated by the research to advocate on their own behalf, to be in control, and to be a part of

decision-making processes and interventions. This is their right to participation, as enshrined in the Convention of the Rights of the Child. IFRTD, the University of Durham and CWC will assist the members of the project team in Ghana and South Africa to lay the foundations for the structures that can make this possible. This requires commitment to continuous involvement of children in all aspects of the research project, and to developing children's organisations.

A significant component of the Inception Workshop were the special sessions that were held with adults throughout the five days to provide in-depth understanding into the concepts and principles of children's rights, participation and protagonism as well as acquiring skills of facilitation. The children were facilitated to understand the significance of information management by children, for their active and effective participation. Subsequently they designed the methodology and developed appropriate tools to conduct the study. The methodology and the tools were field tested and fine-tuned. Subsequently the children went back to their villages with specific action plan for conducting the research.

The children's first step in conducting the study was to identify more researchers from their villages to conduct the study. They formulated specific criteria for selecting other researchers, which reflected principles of non-discrimination, respect, sustainability and equality.

This was followed by continuous fieldwork by children, with intermittent training workshops conducted by CWC.

To the North of the bus stop, there is a footpath that leads to Tenkarkodi area. On the West side of the footpath there is a cashew plantation. On the East side there is a playground. There is a dry well in the plantation, approximately 10 feet away from the playground. It is used for waste disposal, and is filled with glass and syringes. Children are worried about people falling in, as it is 15-20 feet deep. One drunkard and a child have already fallen in and died.

On completion of the study, representative Child Research Protagonists got together at a workshop to consolidate the findings, document the process of the study and to develop advocacy strategies to find appropriate solutions to the problems they raised.

Simultaneously, CWC was requested by the Ghana partner to train and facilitate the research by children in Ghana. A CWC team trained a group of 13 children and 4 adults to conduct the study. During this process, children were facilitated to design the process and methodology, develop appropriate tools and materials as well as field test their study.

On completion of the study in the three countries, CWC along with the project initiators conducted a training workshop with representative child researchers from India, Ghana and South Africa and adult partners, to consolidate the findings by children and to develop their advocacy strategies in Cape Coast, Ghana. The programme concluded with a consultative meeting where the Minister of Transport, Ghana, met with the child research representatives and assured them to integrate their findings and demands into the country's transport policy.

The methodology

The methodology and the tools for conducting the study were developed and designed by the children themselves through numerous workshops, facilitated by CWC. They used multiple methods to conduct the study, to make sure their findings were foolproof.

Participatory Rapid Appraisal (PRA)

The objective of the PRA was to help children to identify and map the resources as well as list the problems and issues related to them in each Panchayat. Moreover, it would help them to understand the socio-cultural, political and economic condition of their Panchayat. It started with collection of secondary information. This is followed by a walkathon and mapping. Prior to starting the walkathon, child researchers developed an indicator list of all the resources that should be mapped and designed appropriate symbols to demarcate the resources on the outline of Panchayat map. Subsequent to the walkathon, the team conducted a focus group discussion with key informants in the area about the various resources and the issues identified; the discussion was documented in detail. On completion, the map was recreated in a large open space and the information was presented and discussed with the community, with their inputs of solutions.

There is a small bridge from Aajri to Jangsale, which is in bad condition. Around 50-60 children and 200-300 adults use this route for many purposes. At present, as they cannot use this bridge, they have to walk for 6-7 kilometres. People are finding it very difficult, especially children who go to school. Thus, this bridge should be repaired so that all can move freely across it and save time and avoid all the trouble of walking.

Observation Mapping

Mapping means demarcating any kind of information through pictures or symbols. Children developed observation maps along the road, which they found most diffi-

cult for children to use, as identified during the PRA. Their list of indicators for mapping included, potholes, trees, drainages, bridges, culverts, school, crèche, houses, agricultural fields, wells, ration shop, mud road, black topped road, etc. They documented in detail any problem with any of the indicator demarcated on their map.

In Hebbarbail-Manki area in Gujjadi Panchayat there is a stream that runs across the footpath leading to Nayakwadi village. During the rainy season, it is impossible to cross this stream and children are forced to walk around it on either side. However, there are many cashew trees along these paths, which make it difficult to walk along. Children worry about getting their clothes and belongings caught and torn on the branches of the trees. Anganwadi- aged children are not able to take this route at all.

Interview

This method was used by children in transport study to collect information from children living along the route identified as difficult or risky during the PRA. Prior to doing the interviews, the child researchers were facilitated to develop an interview schedule.

Manjula, a 13- year old working child from Nayakwadi, is able to walk to the shop, as it is close by. However, in order to get to the market or the ration store, she needs to take the bus. It is a problem for her to go to these places because it takes long time and she has a lot of work to do at home. It is also a problem for her to carry heavy loads, since there are many ups and downs, and small stones along the route that she frequents. There are forests on either side of the route that Manjula takes to get to the hospital, temple, and to fetch water. She also has to pass a cemetery, which frightens her. There is a water facility close to her house, but it does not supply water regularly.

Flash Card Exercise

The purpose of this method was to understand the different resources that children access, the mode of transport they use to access those resources and the distances/time taken to reach those resources. This was done by developing appropriate flash cards with illustrations or pictures that represent the respondent, called 'ME' cards, kind of resources that the respondent accesses, called the 'RESOURCE' cards, the various modes of transportation ('MODES' cards) that are used by children in accessing the resources, for example car, bicycle, walking, bus, etc., the kind of obstacles and challenges that children face in accessing those resources, called the 'OBSTACLE' card and 'SEASONS' cards representing various seasons of the year. The respondent child picks each of these that is applicable to her/him and dis-

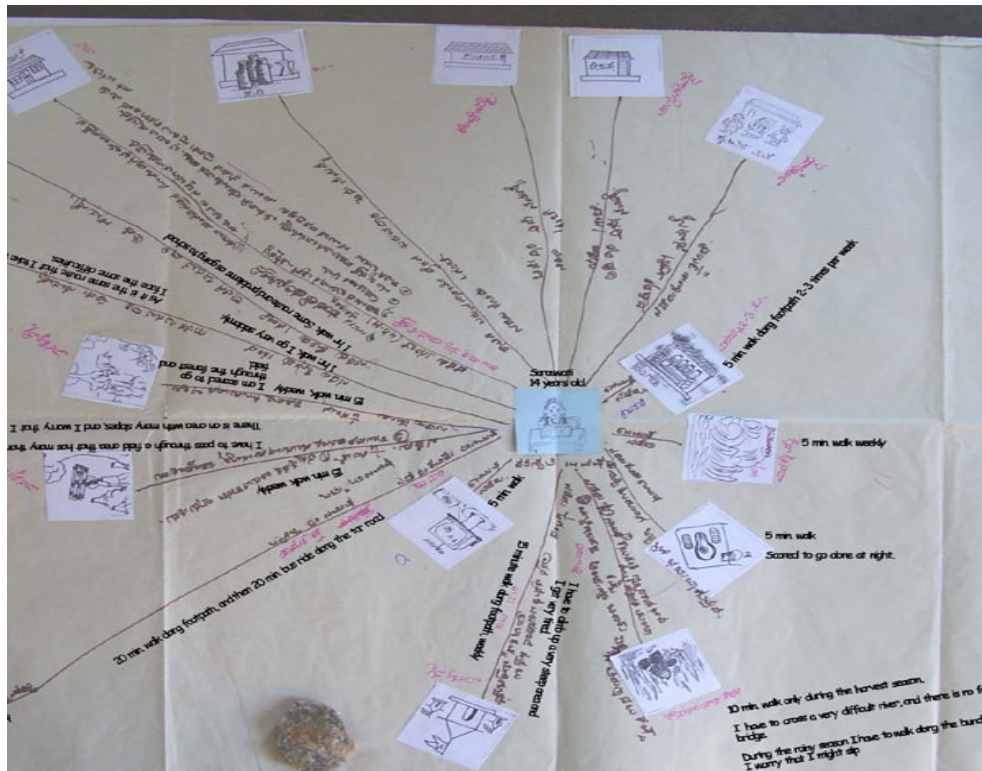


Figure 1. A sample flash card profile.

discusses them with the researcher, having appropriately placed on a large sheet of paper (as given below). The issues were documented in detail by the respondent. This provided the researcher with a detailed mobility profile of the respondent. (Figure1).

Raghavendra is a 14- year old school-going boy from Bengere village in Gujjadi Panchayat. In order to get to school, everyday he has to walk 35 minutes along a mud road and tarred road that are full of pot holes. During the rainy season, when they become full of water, vehicles splash the muddy water all over him, soiling his clothes. There is also a very steep inclined along this route, which is difficult for him to climb when he is carrying a heavy load, and durring the rainy season he worries that he may slip. Furthermore, Raghavendra has to pass by a graveyard, which frightens him. He must also take this route when he goes to his friend's house, the ration shop, the hospital, the town, the hotel, the milk dairy and the provision store. Raghavendra has suggested that the potholes be filled and the road should be levelled and paved.

Traffic Count:

The Traffic Count Exercise was designed to develop a clear idea of the kinds of loads that children carry, the modes of transport they use to carry these loads, frequency of their carrying these loads, weight of the

loads, the distances the loads are carried, and the difficulties children face along the way while carrying loads. Before the researchers launched out to conduct the traffic count, they developed a questionnaire for collecting information. The child researchers positioned themselves in teams of 2 or 3 uniformed as traffic inspectors with banners publicising their study, at the main junctions in their Panchayat, where children frequent, such as school, ration shop, milk dairy, factories, etc. They weighed the load and filled in the questionnaire. This provided them a detailed profile of the loads that children carry. The goods that children carry vary from milk, groceries, cattle feed, firewood, agricultural products for sale, kerosene, etc. and these are mostly carried while going to or from school. The most frequent mode of transport was head load. The difficulties that children faced on account of carrying load included back pain, neck pain, headache, getting late to school, etc. It was found that children carry load weighing up to 25 kilos.

Children from Shalegudde and Kodladi area have to walk for half an hour into the forest to fetch firewood. The footpath in the forest is very bushy and they have to make their path by cutting the thorny bushes. They have to fetch firewood at least once or twice per week. The smaller kids between 8-12 years carry the firewood weighing 3-7 kilograms and children between the ages

of 13-17 years have to carry an average of 8-15 kilograms of firewood. They complained of neck, hand and leg pain due to carrying the load of firewood.

Focus Group Discussion

The children used focus group discussion (FGD) especially to fill in the gaps and make clarifications. Prior to conducting the FGDs, child researchers developed a checklist of all the issues they wanted to discuss with their friends in the village. In each Panchayat they held 3-4 group discussions, with school going children and working children separately.

The High School is located quite far away, nearly 7 km, for the children in Hemmakki village in Aajri Panchayat. Some High School students have to take the bus after walking for about 45 minutes. During the rainy season, children face many difficulties walking along this route. For instance, vehicles splash muddy water on to them, soiling their clothes.

Benefits and challenges

The ultimate objective of this research process was to empower children by facilitating them to acquire new skills and information and to enable them to use this information to change their lives for the better.

However, by participating in this project the children have gained much more than this on both a personal and professional level. The process has equipped the children with skills and expertise in information management, including applying methods, developing appropriate tools, talking to other children and adults with confidence, meeting up and discussing with key stakeholders in their community, ability to negotiate and argue their point, substantiating their argument with appropriate data, making presentations, advocating their cause at various levels, including internationally and finding appropriate solutions to their problems.

The children from each of these Panchayats have formed their own organisations and are working on various issues that affect them as a collective. The children who participated in the research have an identity and they are highly recognised in the village. The children also faced immense challenges carrying out the research. They found juggling between their regular schooling / work, domestic chores and work on the research very difficult. They also faced certain ridicule and embarrassment from some quarters of the community, who found children's work very whimsical and silly; some were even offensive saying, they are keenly involved in the project because this provides opportunity for the girls and boys to meet up! In some cases the child researchers were turned away by the parents or adults when they went to collect information from the children. The parents were unwilling to let some of the researchers participate in the

research. Not many, gave into the restrictions of the parents, because they saw and experienced the benefit of being part of the process. The children have also lost their playtime, attendance in marriages, holidays, opportunity to visit their friends and relatives, etc. However, in the final analysis children said that they have more gains than losses.

The researchers were able to discuss their research with international visitors, train children and adults from international agencies on doing similar research, apply principles and methods of research to other situation in their community, etc. The representative researchers who met together in Cape Coast, Ghana, were able to present their findings to many who were interested in the process. Furthermore, they have become highly aware of their right to know and the need to participate and are exploring various forms for making their voices heard. I did not expect such a marvalous experience and it was totally different from what I thought before coming here. The kids sitting here have been marvellous. They have taught me things that I have never known before. I have been doing research in transport for the last 24 years and I have learned more in these 5 days than those 24 years, from you children. I have also realised that I had ignored a very significant group of people in all my research, that is children. Something interesting is going on here that we have not seen before – children planning their own life. I will leave a promise with you that I will do my best to uphold what you are doing here in Ghana as well, which some day you could come and see.”

SUSTAINING THE PROCESS

The research by children has enabled them to gain control over the process as well as to have ownership over the information they collected. The child researchers from each of the Panchayats have established their own children's organisation with a view to sustain the process. They have recognised the strength of collective and the need to work together to get their issues solved. The children have not left their findings to mere information. They are working with various stakeholders in the community to address the problems identified, such as getting footbridges, starting crèches, filling potholes, blacktopping roads, etc. They are also negotiating with the key stakeholders such as the Gram Panchayats, the school authorities, etc. to institutionalise children's participation in their Panchayat. They are in the process of setting up the Makkala Panchayats (Children's Village Councils) in each of the Panchayats. They want to ensure that children's participation in decision-making and governance is permanent and official.

Ethics of children doing their own research

CWC has numerous experiences where children have amply proved time and again that they are capable of

conducting their own research and using the information they generate, and that in many situations they are better researchers than adults themselves. Children have a right to know their situation and respond to them appropriately. They are able to understand and present their problems much better than anybody else. They are capable of arriving at solutions most suited to them. Children doing their own research and using the information to better their situation is their right.

However, there are some ethical issues, when it comes to children doing their own research that should be ensured:

Ethical issues for child research protagonists

Rights:

Ownership of the process and outcome

- Children are very capable of setting the agenda, designing processes and implementing the research. Children should have absolute control over the research process.
- The children who collect/generate information have complete ownership over that information. They can decide what to do with it. Their level of empowerment will determine how they will put it to use. The adult facilitators or any one else should take the permission of children to use any information generated by children.
- The information collected should be shared with the entire children's organisation, other children and the community at large.
- The drawing of conclusions from the study should be done in consultation with the entire children's organisation and the community affected, so that also their views are appropriately considered.
- In this way solutions arrived at, will have a larger community mandate and accountability.
- It is preferable that children conduct research in their own socio-cultural and economic milieu. This will help them to collect reliable data. They will be more readily accepted and their comfort levels in such milieu will be high.

Right to protection

- Children researchers and other participating children must be protected from any harmful risks during the research; in case where such risky situations exist, the effect on children ought to be minimised.
- Children must have access to supportive structures in case of any emotional or psychological disturbance during or after the research process.

Right to information

- The children who decide to be researchers should be well informed about the process and all it involves. The decision whether or not to participate in the research should be taken by the children themselves.
- Children should be enabled to access appropriate information and equip themselves with adequate skills to undertake the research.
- The information made accessible should be correct, complete, age-appropriate and need-based. Such information ought to be available to them in a child-friendly, understandable and interesting manner.

Responsibilities:

Protection and confidentiality

- The researchers have the responsibility to maintain confidentiality of the information provided as well as about the background of the respondent.
- As respondents, children and other respondents have the right to refuse to respond to certain questions or not give information regarding some issues if they wish to do so.

Consent

- The young researcher should take informed consent of the children and others who participate in the research as respondents. Children should clearly and completely understand all the implications of participating in the research.
- Children should intimate their parents/guardian of their participation in conducting the research and provide them with complete information about the process. However, in rare cases, children may have to keep such information concealed from their parents/guardians to ensure the objectivity of the process (E.g. in some cases of domestic violence, abuse, etc.).

Honesty and transparency

- The child researchers should raise the expectation of the community, unless they are absolutely sure of fulfilling them.
- The community should be informed about the research in its entirety and their support and cooperation should be sought.
- The information should be shared with the respondents and the rest of the community and conclusions and action plan should be drawn in consultation with them.

Objectivity

- The methodology and the tools that children use to do their research should stand scientific scrutiny. The logic and principles of scientific research must be adapted by the children in the methodology and the process of the research to ensure the quality of the research.
- They must verify the information they collect through multiple sources.
- Information collected must be triangulated to ensure veracity of the information.

Use

- Children engage themselves in conducting research because they have a problem that they need to solve. They will explore various ways to solve their problems using the information collected. However, adults should not manipulate to keep the information 'dead', rather support them to identify and explore ways of using them to solve their problems.

Accountability

- The child researchers who conduct the research are accountable to those children who provide them with information. Prior to the research, they should clearly explain the purpose of the research to all information providers. The findings of the study have to be presented to all the information providers and the conclusions and action plans must be drawn together with them.
- The children who participate, as researchers should be members of children's organisations or collectives so that they can jointly sustain the process of solving their problems as well as pursuing the process set in motion. If they do not have their own organisation, they should be facilitated to form one. If not, individual children, however committed and empowered, find it very difficult to sustain the process single-handed.
- The members of children's organisation who participate in conducting the research should be representatives of their organisation. They should be selected on the basis of criteria set by the children themselves. This ensures that the researchers are accountable to their organisation and to the research process.
- The children participating in the research should be facilitated to draw up a set of ground rules, which they strictly abide to.

Ethical issues for adult facilitators

- Adults should never impose research themes or research methodologies on children. Children themselves should recognise and identify the need for the research to meet a specified purpose prior to their study. If not, research by children should not be attempted at all. It certainly should not be imposed on children.
- However, adults do have a specific and strategic role to play as facilitators of the process. It is very important for us adults to recognise when to make observations and offer guidance and when not to. Our experience clearly shows that the primary role of adults is to enable children with information and skills.
- Enabling children's participation does not mean letting go, of the entire process and leaving children to fend for themselves. This is a grey area where children determine their frameworks and spaces. In a healthy adult-child partnership, there is possibility for negotiation between them and through discussions they arrive at agreements of what works best for the partnership, in terms of each other's roles and responsibilities. The more space children claim and occupy, their responsibilities increases proportionately. The parameters of this partnership are dynamic and vary from situation to situation. They may also vary within the same situation, based on the experiences and maturity levels of the individuals/organisations involved.
- Hence the facilitators must keep in mind not to rush the research; consciously create enough space for children and move in sync with the children's pace.
- The issue that children conduct research on should be chosen by them as a result of their needs assessment. Among the issues they identify, they shall short list and prioritise for their further in depth study.
- The resulting information is the property of the children and shall not be used by others without their informed permission.
- The details of the research and the possible outcomes should be shared with the respondents and their community
- One of the most important roles adults can play here is to facilitate children to effectively interface with appropriate decision makers and decision-making structures.
- Adult facilitators should ensure that children who decide to be researchers are well informed about the process and all that it involves. The decision whether or not to participate in the research should be taken by the children themselves. Further, children themselves should decide on the criteria for choosing the child researchers and adults should not interfere with it.

- Demystifying the research process and transferring the methods and tools to children in an objective open-ended way that empowers children to adapt, develop and design tools and methods of their own to suit their situations is important. However, adult facilitators should ensure, through dialogue with the children, that the rigor of the research should not be compromised at any stage.
 - The methods and tools used in the research should be child friendly and easily understandable to children and their community members. The tools used could be illustrated and be pictorial so that unfamiliarity with the written words is not a hindrance for comprehension.
 - The adult facilitators should not raise the expectation of the children regarding the outcomes of the research or of the community; unless they are absolutely sure of fulfilling them and this should be explained to the child researchers as well.
 - The adult facilitators should always consider and compensate where necessary or required the risks and costs children may face due to their involvement in the research such as shortage of time, pressures at home and school, loss of wages, reduced hours to play, loss of holidays, etc.
 - The adult facilitators must ensure that children have supportive structures in case of any emotional or psychological disturbance.
 - The adult facilitators must ensure that children are not exposed to any harmful risks during the research; in case where such risky situations, efforts should be made to minimise its effect on the children.
 - Active involvement of one or more adult organisations that are committed to promote and facilitate children's participation can enhance the impact of research by children.
- The issue that children conduct research on should be chosen by them as a result of their needs assessment. Among the issues they identify, they shall short list and prioritise for their further in depth study.
 - The resulting information is the property of the children and shall not be used by others without their informed permission
 - The details of the research and the possible outcomes should be shared with the respondents and their community
 - If adults feel the need to conduct research on an issue related to children, they should do that themselves and take responsibility for the study and to translate that into action. They should still share the findings with the children and ensure that the decisions are taken in partnership with the children.

"I did not expect such a marvellous experience and it was totally different from what I thought before coming here. The kids sitting here have been marvellous. They have taught me things that I have never known before. I have been doing research in transport for the last 24 years and I have learned more in these 5 days than those 24 years, from you children. I have also realised that I had ignored a very significant group of people in all my research that is children. The staffs here have been excellent. I am carrying back to Ghana very memorable ideas. Something interesting is going on here that we have not seen before – children planning their own life. I will leave a promise with you that I will do my best to uphold what you are doing here in Ghana as well, which some day you could come and see."

If Adults are Initiating the Process

- Children identified to do the research should be representatives of a child led/governed organisation
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Conclusion

Children's participation in research and social planning is not an end in itself, but rather its a process that continuously needs to be re-evaluated, altered and evolved according to their needs. The research and advocacy by children has successfully enabled active participation of children in democratic processes. They are leading the way to making the governments accountable. Children have started a revolution for change and the adult world is yet to catch up with them and respond adequately.

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