So You Want to Involve Children in Research?

A toolkit supporting children's meaningful and ethical participation in research relating to violence against children

Save the Children

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

Save the Children works for:
- a world which respects and values each child
- a world which listens to children and learns
- a world where all children have hope and opportunity

ISBN 91-7321-088-9
Code no 2958

Project coordinator: Eva Åhlén

Authors: Sophie Laws (Primary research), Gillian Mann (Secondary research)

Research: Annica Kempe

Members in the Save the Children Task Group for the UN Study on Violence against Children and members in the Save the Children Child Participation Working Group, have contributed to the production, in particular Clare Feinstein, Karin Fyrk, Helena Gezelius, Turid Heiberg, Elizabeth Jareg, Ravi Karkara, Cecilia Modig, Mali Nilsson, Anita Sheth and Sarah Stevenson.

Production management: Anna-Carin Carlsson

Graphic design: Petra Handin/Kapsyl Reklam

Photography, cover: Karan Bahadur Mahajan

Printed by: PartnerPrint 2004

Save the Children Sweden
107 88 Stockholm
Sweden
Phone: +46 8 698 90 20
Fax: +46 8 698 90 25
www.rb.se/bookshop
info@rb.se

Contents

Preface

Violence in the family; schools; care and residential institutions; detention centres and prisons; sports; on the streets; at work and other settings is part of the lives of many girls and boys in all countries and regions of the world. Gravely concerned at the extent and scope of this violence, the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the expert body which monitors implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, devoted two days of general discussion in 2000 and 2001 to the theme of violence against children, and recommended that the Secretary-General of the United Nations conduct an in-depth international study on the issue. On 12 February 2003, the Secretary-General appointed me as the independent expert to direct the study.

My objective is to provide an in-depth global picture of violence against children, proposing concrete recommendations for the improvement of legislation, policy and programmes which seek to respond to and prevent such violence. My focus will be on prevention strategies, and the identification of best practices, in particular strategies that have been designed by children. I believe that although the perspectives of children are frequently overlooked when considering issues that concern them, girls and boys are best placed to provide information on their own situation. It is for that reason that I am committed to involve children at all stages of the study and explore ways in which their participation can be most meaningful and significant. Realizing this commitment will be a challenge, as all too often children's participation, particularly in discussing difficult topics such as violence against them, is little more than token, or mere window-dressing. There are various reasons for this, not least that the right of children to be heard and express their views, particularly on the sensitive issue of violence, may not be universally accepted. Engaging the participation of younger children may be difficult, and call for differing approaches dependent on the age and maturity of the child. Safeguards must also be built into any child participation strategy. The best interests of the child must be the overarching consideration, and attention must be given to the safety and protection of the child, as well as ethical considerations, including confidentiality, the child's willingness to participate, and her situation vis a vis her parents and community. Legal obligations, such as the requirement to report abuse, must also be taken into account.

I welcome the efforts of the International Save the Children Alliance to produce a toolkit to encourage meaningful and ethical participation by children in work around violence against children, and particularly in the global study. I particularly acknowledge the Alliance's contribution in preparing this research kit which draws on case studies from around the world to put forward ideas on how children can be involved in primary and secondary research. Amongst the strengths of this research kit is its practical approach and commitment to including children at all stages of the Secretary-General's study.

When asked, girls and boys identify violence against them as a priority issue. Their accounts of their experience of violence are critical to the study's accuracy. I

congratulate the International Save the Children Alliance in formulating tools to ensure children's participation in the study, and thereby acknowledging children's powerful capacity to be actors for change.

Paulo Ser gio Pinheiro
Independent Expert for the UN Study on Violence against children

Introduction

This research kit is one part of a series of toolkits produced by the International Save the Children Alliance. This part of the toolkit aims to encourage meaningful and ethical participation by children in research related to violence against children. It promotes research that sees children as active agents in their own lives, not passive victims or research 'subjects'. There are many ways in which children can be more actively involved in research, both as respondents and as co-researchers. This kit aims to give guidance on ways of approaching this work, on ethical issues to be considered, and on techniques that can be used. Case studies from around the world draw on a rich field of participatory research with children that has developed in recent years.

When asked what issues are important to them, children frequently identify violence as a priority. The UN Study on violence against children concept paper (7 July 2003) draws attention to the need to emphasise children's own definitions of violence, and to highlight strategies developed by children themselves to confront violence. Participatory approaches thus have much to contribute to the Study, which, for example, includes the identification of prevention strategies and interventions designed by children themselves.

Following this Introduction, which looks at why children's participation is important to the UN Study and the benefits it will bring, this toolkit contains two main subject areas:

Involving children in secondary research considers investigations that examine what can be learnt from existing research, without undertaking new research with people. In the UN Study, as in much social research, secondary research will be done first, to gather what is already known about violence against children, and only then will new primary research be commissioned. There has been much less secondary research undertaken with active involvement from children than there has been primary research. Part One suggests many positive ideas for how this can be done. It includes a discussion of issues to consider in making decisions about children's involvement, and a look at ways of involving children at the different stages of the process.

Involving children in primary research concerns research which collects information directly from people, in this case primarily children and young people. Its first chapter looks at ethical issues in children's participation in research. The second is entitled 'How to do it' and starts with sections on how children can be involved in the different stages of primary research. The final section of this chapter discusses methods for participatory research with children on issues of violence, including setting up the project, participatory approaches, research techniques and how to choose methods.

Violence against children is obviously a challenging area to research. Much violence towards children takes place in 'private' settings such as the family, or in institutions which resent outside scrutiny such as schools and institutions for children without family support. Clearly a high level of attention to ethical issues will be necessary, to avoid causing further harm to children. Another challenge

is that violence against children may be taken for granted, not questioned, by children as well as by adults. Some kinds of violence, such as sexual abuse, carry a particularly heavy load of stigma for those reporting it. Feelings of shame can inhibit sharing of experience. All these issues need to be carefully negotiated in planning research – and children can help adult researchers in working out positive approaches to overcoming these difficulties.

This research kit is part of 'Supporting children's meaningful and ethical participation in work around violence against children: A toolkit produced by Save the Children for the UN study', which includes a second toolkit giving guidance on consultation: "So you want to consult with children? A toolkit of good practice". It draws heavily on Save the Children's experiences of children's participation in the UN General Assembly Special Session on Children and aims at encouraging and facilitating children's involvement in regional and other consultations that will be part of the UN Study. Further parts may be added later on, in particular one to consider the lessons learnt from children's participation in the UN study.

Why is Children's Participation in the UN Study important?

Given the growing recognition that violence is an all-too common experience in the daily lives of many boys and girls around the world, in 2001 the UN General Assembly requested the Secretary General to conduct an in-depth study on this issue. The goals of the UN study are:

- To provide an in-depth global picture of violence against children
- To review and better understand the nature, extent and causes of violence against children and its consequences for children, adults and societies
- To identify best practices and interventions that work in combating violence against children
- To propose clear recommendations to improve legislation, policy and programmes in order to prevent and respond to violence against children

The process of the Study aims to raise international visibility of violence against children and ensure increased attention to the issue. The Study also aims to highlight the views and experiences of children themselves, encouraging their active involvement.

The participation of children in describing and exploring their own experiences of violence is crucial to the quality and validity of the UN study. Girls and boys are in the best position to provide information on their own situation. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child makes it clear that all boys and girls have a right to have their views taken into account in matters that concern them.

It is important to recognise that boys and girls can be actors for change, while also being aware that as for all of us, their views are formed by past experience. Children's involvement is at the very heart of the proposed Study and the trustworthiness, accuracy and inclusiveness of its findings.

There is much to be gained from children's participation in the Study. Boys and girls, their friends, families and communities can all gain from their participation. So, too, can the research community in terms of learning new skills, new perspectives and new ways of working, which can enhance the quality of the work that researchers do.

Increasing children's active participation in research requires thorough consideration, flexibility and openness. It has implications for planning, timing, budgeting, methods, analysis, writing, ownership, dissemination, and follow-up. Perhaps most importantly, it has implications for how we as adults view children and children's roles, how we work with children, how we support them to contribute to the research and how we help them to develop into the people they want to be. In this way, children's participation in research is about a lot more than their responding to questionnaires, for example, or even interviewing their peers. It is about intergenerational relationships, promoting healthy child development and creating an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect.

The child rights perspective

The right of the child to participate in matters affecting him or her is made explicit in Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. This article states that "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". This article asserts that all children who are able to voice their opinions must be provided with opportunities to participate in decisions that affect them. This right applies to decisions that are made within both the private sphere of the family and the public domain of the community. It refers to decisions that affect the individual child and to those that impact children as a group.

Article 12, together with the child's right to freedom of expression (Article 13), freedom of thought, conscience and religion (Article 14), and freedom of association (Article 15), powerfully asserts the status of children as individuals with fundamental rights, opinions, and feelings of their own. Additionally, the right to information (Article 17) requires duty bearers to provide child-friendly information to support children in claiming their rights.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child also of course sets out the child's right to protection from violence. Article 19 states that:

> '1. States Parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child.
>
> 2. Such protective measures should, as appropriate, include effective procedures for the establishment of social programmes to provide necessary support for the child and for those who have the care of the child, as well as for other forms of prevention and for identification, reporting, referral,

investigation, treatment and follow-up of instances of child maltreatment described heretofore, and, as appropriate, for judicial involvement.'

Children's participation can mean different things in different contexts. Careful attention needs to be given to the importance of gender, age, socio-economic status etc of the child. These axes of difference have a powerful influence on how children are perceived and treated and how they see themselves and their role and abilities.

Girls and boys can usefully be involved in many aspects of development work including research, situational analysis, strategy development, programme development, implementation, monitoring, evaluation, governance, and in policy work. This document is designed to address issues related specifically to children's participation in research – guidelines already exist for other related areas of work, and some will be found in the reference list at the end. For consultation with children see another part of this Toolkit: 'So you want to consult with children?'

The issue of choice is fundamental to the involvement of children in research (and other aspects of programming, decision-making or community life). A "more is better approach" to children's participation is not necessarily always the best or the most appropriate way of involving children. It is of central importance to respect the boundaries of each child. This practice is very important at all times but especially so when it comes to the investigation of violence, when individual children, or particular groups of boys and girls, may choose not to become involved. Such decisions should always be respected.

Benefits of Children's Participation in Research

This section describes the reasons for encouraging greater participation by children in research: the benefits to children themselves, to the research, and to society in general.

Benefits to children

Research that makes the most of children's abilities, and treats them with respect, can provide children with opportunities that bring significant improvements in their own wellbeing. These include greater opportunities to acquire knowledge, to develop new skills, to build new friendships and wider support networks, to be heard and to have their concerns taken seriously.

Assertion of their right to participate

- Perhaps the principal argument for children being more actively involved in research concerning them is that it is their right. Boys and girls have the right to decide if they wish to get involved, to what degree and how. They will be able to identify the most important concerns related to violence against children.

- Active participation by children will also help to challenge the silence surrounding much violence against children, and the stigma that can attach to those who have experienced it.

Participation can help to protect children

- Children are most vulnerable to abuse in situations where they have little opportunity to voice their views. A participative approach helps overcome fear and builds skills to resist exploitation.
- Through developing their critical thinking abilities, children are helped to discern and discriminate what information is important.
- Participation in research teaches children how to access information – and this can be of crucial importance to their very survival. Increased self-confidence is also protective.

Children's participation can help to heal the past

- In relation to traumatic events, the process of involvement, if undertaken in a supportive and understanding environment, can help children to explore past experiences and regain confidence for the future. At its best, participation can be an important tool out of victimisation, passivity and silence.

Gillian Mann, research anthropologist with long experience of working with separated children, describes one study where children reported benefiting from taking part in the work itself.

Children as informants in Malawi
Gillian Mann

People often say that it is difficult to talk with children about things that might make them sad and lonely. As adults, we worry that by discussing unhappy experiences, we will somehow intensify the child's pain. But this undesirable situation is not inevitable. A recent experience with research with children affected by HIV/AIDS in Malawi demonstrated how supporting children to talk about difficult topics can also be empowering for them.

In 2002, a study was commissioned by members of the International Save the Children Alliance to address the need to learn from the experiences of boys and girls who have been most severely affected by HIV/AIDS by using research methods which enable children to share and articulate their experience. It was felt that in order to understand better the care and protection needs of children in such circumstances, such a child-focused approach was needed. It was also hoped that in-depth information from children affected and infected by HIV/AIDS could provide some insight into how boys and

girls understand the many facets of the disease so that future interventions could be more effectively targeted.

Primary data for the study were collected in 3 communities in different parts of Malawi. In each community, adults and youth participated in the study, but the bulk of the research time was spent with children between the ages of 8 and 12 years, who participated in day-long workshops in which a number of participatory methods were used, including games, story telling, drawing, singing, drama and ranking. Boys and girls were encouraged to construct and share with researchers a picture of their lives and the issues of greatest concern and importance to them. The methods employed elicited rich and varied data on the experiences and perceptions of orphaned and other vulnerable children about the joys and challenges of their daily lives; the problems they face and the strategies they use to overcome them; their views on the most appropriate care arrangements for children who live without their parents; their networks of support; their perceptions of community activities and suggestions for changes and new approaches to supporting children and HIV/AIDS affected families.

The boys and girls who participated in the workshop days were very enthusiastic about the different research methods that were used. One activity in particular, an exercise in which children identified different care options available to them and then worked as a group to rank the options, was especially popular. It seemed that nearly everyone had an opinion on the subject, and they were all keen to share their views. Energetic and lively discussions were held as children explained to one another why it was better to be looked after by certain people rather than others (for example, most preferred to live with a relative rather than a non-relative). Boys and girls listened openly to one another as their reasons were stated and challenged each other to explain their preferences. They told of their experiences, they paid close attention to what to one another was saying and how they were saying it; discussions continued long past the planned amount of time as they worked towards consensus on their choices and rankings.

At the end of the workshop day, when we asked the children which activity they had liked the most, many spoke of this specific activity. They said that they learned a lot, that they did not know that others shared their feelings, that others had experiences just like theirs. The comments of one 10 year old boy were particularly encouraging: "no one has ever asked us what we thought before…it feels good". When we, the research group, were leaving the schoolroom where we had spent the day, many children asked us when we were going to come back because "[we] have lots more to say".

Benefits to research

Those most directly concerned are always the best placed to describe their reality. This holds for all age groups including children.

- Participation of children in research can often produce better quality data, as it helps focus the research, and clarify the analysis and the interpretation of data. New insights are provided by children.
- Obtaining data from children themselves increases the possibility of presenting a picture that is freer of adult interpretations.
- In much of the world, the circumstances of children's lives have changed so much in the last generation because of conflict, HIV/AIDS, and other factors, that it may be difficult for adults, including researchers, to know the reality of the lives of boys and girls. Adult researchers may have less insight into the daily lives of children than they think they have.
- Children constitute a significant proportion of the global population and in some communities, they are the majority. Consequently, the natural way to obtain information is to work with children as informants and/ or researchers. For instance, in studying street life, organised armed violence, or separated children as a result of HIV/AIDS and war, such an approach may be the only feasible one.

The research described below shows that children's and adults' views may not coincide.

Make no assumptions: some reflections on research with working children
Joachim Theis

A study in Vietnam focused on children involved in money-earning activities in Ho Chi Minh City (formerly Saigon) (Theis and Huyen 1997). The purpose of the research was to gain a better understanding of the extent of child labor in order to inform Save the Children's programme. The research team was particularly interested in children's own perspectives on their work conditions. Children's views sometimes contradicted those of adults. The research found that children prefer work that pays well, is interesting and has flexible work hours. They want to work in groups of friends rather than under constant adult supervision. Children were not much concerned about the potential risks and hazards associated with their work.

To give an example: some of the children working at the city's garbage dump were as young as six and worked all night from six until three the next morning. While hundreds of garbage trucks dumped the rubbish that had been produced during the day by the six million people living in Ho Chi Minh City, the children picked through the steaming and stinking garbage piles to collect recyclables. This work was dirty and dangerous, yet the children were among the happiest encountered during the research

in Ho Chi Minh City. Their earnings were far above what other children could hope to make in "safer" jobs, the children were among each other, rather than under adult supervision, and they could decide when and how much to work.

Selling lottery tickets in the streets of the city was another job popular with children, since it offered flexible hours with the chance for higher than average earnings. However, lottery sellers risked traffic accidents, assault and harassment.

Parents of child workers, on the other hand, want their children to do work which is safe and relatively free from risks and where children are under adult supervision. Entrepreneurs tend to employ children to do work which is light, low paying and monotonous. They prefer children who work regularly and do not attend school. Adults tend to see work as a way to keep children out of trouble, as an opportunity for children to learn something useful, to earn money and support their families. These examples of the differences between the views of children and adults highlight some of the difficulties of defining hazardous and exploitative child labor, and shows the value of directly investigating the child's perspective.

Benefits to society

Choosing to involve children in research is a political act – it challenges ideas about who has expertise and who does not. It teaches children to question power relationships. In many ways children's participation makes children more active citizens as it:

- Involves learning the skills of co-operation: how to negotiate with your peers, give and take, collective problem-solving and respecting other people's points of view
- Challenges the status quo in terms of what children can realistically contribute and accomplish – challenges existing notions of children's capacities and vulnerabilities
- Contributes to a positive intergenerational communication, which increases the chance that children are listened to and their opinions taken into account.

Part one: Involving Children in Secondary Research

Children's participation in research has increased significantly in recent years. Adult investigators interested in children's perspectives and experiences have sought boys' and girls' involvement in their explorations of issues as varied as children's working lives, discipline and corporal punishment, experience in foster and institutional care, and on school governance issues. Much of this research has been aimed at improving service delivery to children and families, and consequently has focused to a large extent on children's participation as researchers and respondents in needs assessments and programme and project evaluations. The aim has been to learn from children themselves about their views and experiences so that efforts to address their needs will be appropriately targeted.

The nature of these types of enquiries has meant that children's participation in research has to date taken place almost exclusively in the collection of primary data. Most often, boys and girls participate as respondents in adult-designed studies. It is becoming increasingly common, however, for children to work with older youth or with adults to design research questions, to decide who will be the most appropriate respondents, to conduct interviews and use other data collection methods, and to analyse the results of their investigations. Children's participation in research is thus expanding and there is a growing appreciation within the research community of the important role that boys and girls can play as both researchers and respondents.

Despite this realisation that children can and do make significant contributions to research, it is rare for children to be involved in the collection, examination and analysis of secondary data. This work is ordinarily carried out by adult researchers in advance of involving boys and girls in a specific research project. Time spent doing this background work provides investigators with an opportunity to reflect more on the topic of interest, to explore its various aspects and to learn what others have or have not discovered in similar or related studies. This process of reflection is critical to the conceptualisation of any research project. It shapes the overall objectives of a study and the direction that the primary research will take. It is for this reason that this important stage of research should not be the sole domain of adults. When appropriate, boys and girls can also be involved in the collection, examination and analysis of secondary data. The ways in which children can participate in this aspect of research is the subject of this document.

Secondary Research: What is it and Why is it Important?

Secondary research involves the collection, examination and analysis of existing documentary sources on a broad topic of investigation. Some major types of documentary data include books, journals, cd-roms, websites and other information on the internet, newspapers, magazines, reports, memos, and NGO,

multi-lateral and government publications and statistics. Television shows, radio programmes, documentary films, maps, drawings and music can also be useful sources of information and insights. A thorough investigation of these secondary sources can provide essential background information on the research topic and can serve as a source of data in its own right. Secondary research should precede the commencement of primary research, the stage at which new, as yet unrecorded information is collected and analysed.

Secondary research serves many important functions. First, it helps to establish what work has already been done in the area of the proposed research topic. In so doing, it enables investigators to avoid replicating research that has already been conducted. Second, it provides researchers with the opportunity to identify and reflect on the key issues, critical questions and significant gaps, strengths and weaknesses in the existing state of knowledge. In this way, analysis of documentary data serves an important base upon which to design new research. Third, the information contained in secondary sources can itself be a useful accompaniment to the data collected through primary research methods such as interviews and focus group discussions.

Can Children be Involved in Secondary Research?

Experience has shown that boys and girls can participate in all stages of the research process, from its earliest inception to the final dissemination of the findings. In particular, if adequately supported, children are capable of being involved in the collection, examination and analysis of secondary data. The extent to which boys and girls are involved in this process, in what ways, and at which stages depends on a number of factors, including, but not limited to:

- The goals of the research
- The appropriateness of children's involvement in the issue under investigation
- The level of interest and consent of children to be involved in the project
- The consent of parents and guardians to children's involvement
- The timeline of the research
- The ability to build on existing relationships with children
- The openness of adult researchers to involving children
- The level of support available
- The skills and experience of researchers
- The skills and experience of children
- The context in which the research takes place, including the nature of adult-child relationships

Benefits of Children's Participation in Secondary Research

Much work has been done on the benefits of involving children in research. However, as mentioned earlier, the bulk of this work refers to children's involvement participation in primary data collection and occasionally in its analysis. But children's involvement in secondary research can also have numerous advantages. Some of these benefits are outlined below:

For the research:

- Children may have ideas about where to locate relevant documentary sources otherwise unknown to adult researchers;
- Children may provide interpretations of materials that differ markedly from those of adult researchers;
- Children may be well-placed to judge the quality of the research findings and the appropriateness of the methods used if the topic resonates with their own or their families' and friends' life experiences;
- Children may be able to provide insights into how findings might differ if the research had been conducted in their own community;
- Children's enthusiasm may act as a motivator to the research group as a whole.

For organisational/institutional learning:

- Children's contributions may surprise and impress organisations, thereby leading them to question established ways of conducting research, especially secondary research;
- Children may approach old problems in new, and sometimes more effective and appropriate ways;
- Collaboration with children ensures the ongoing learning and development of organisations and increases the appropriateness of its research and the effectiveness of its programmes.

For children's relationships with adults and the larger community:

- As adult researchers and respondents learn to work together with children, they may become more aware of children's strengths and competencies, and their skills become apparent in clear and tangible ways. These experiences help to create a more favourable environment for dialogue and understanding on a wide range of issues, both within and outside the context of the research;
- When children's participation in research takes place in an environment of mutual respect, it can lead to a change in attitudes about the roles and capabilities of children and the amount and level of responsibility that they are able to manage.

- As children share their views, ideas and experience with others, dialogue with others is enhanced. People begin to appreciate that children view the world around them in different and insightful ways, and that their perspective can bring creativity, new ideas and understanding not only to the issues under investigation, but to the important issues in their community.

For children themselves:

- Participation in secondary research provides children with valuable opportunities to develop skills in a number of different domains, including problem-solving, negotiation, critical thinking, communication, co-operation and analytical skills;
- Being recognised as important contributors to research can enhance children's sense of personal competence and self-efficacy;
- Children's positive experiences of involvement can provide them with the confidence needed to take on challenges previously considered too difficult or within the exclusive realm of adults' worlds.

Decisions about Children's Involvement in Secondary Research

Recognising that there are numerous benefits to involving boys and girls in secondary research is a necessary precursor to making a number of pragmatic yet important decisions about the capacity of the research team and its affiliated institution(s) to support children's participation.

Before approaching boys and girls and their guardians to explore the possibility of children's participation in a research project, it is very important that adult researchers consider carefully the decision to involve children. Researchers need to ask themselves why they want to involve children in their study. Different individuals and organisations will have different reasons why they want boys and girls to participate. Acquisition of good quality data, children's skills development, and the realisation of participation rights enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child may be just a few of the reasons identified by adult researchers and their organisations. The point is not that there is a fixed list of general reasons for why children should be involved but that researchers themselves take responsibility for thinking through their own specific purposes in advance of exploring with children the possibility of their participation.

The decision to involve children in research has significant implications. This is as true for the participation of boys and girls in the collection and analysis of primary data as it is for their involvement in secondary research. The following implications should be kept in mind when deciding how and in what ways children could participate in secondary research.

Time

It takes a lot of time to conduct good quality research. This truism holds regardless of whether or not children are involved. However, when boys and girls participate in research, the process can be even more time-consuming. How much time is taken depends on the level of involvement of children, whether or not they need to be recruited, the amount of training and support they need, the scale of the research project and the extra administrative and planning time that accompanies their participation.

Some examples of the types of time-intensive activities associated with involving children include the possibility that adult researchers may need to prepare child-friendly materials or be ready to explain issues that might otherwise be self-evident or accessible to grown-ups in a similar situation. Similarly, meetings with children may need to be structured differently than those traditionally held with adults: games and other group activities may take up a larger proportion of meeting time than the usual five-minute warm-up exercises used with adults. Meetings with children may need to take place outside of ordinary office hours because their involvement in school, work and other daily activities may limit their time to evenings or weekends. Furthermore, things like homework, paid work and household responsibilities often make it difficult for boys and girls to undertake tasks outside of planned meetings.

The specific nature of children's daily lives and responsibilities will depend on the context in which the research is taking place. It is a good idea for adult researchers to explore with boys and girls and their guardians and others what some of these particular considerations might be and to contextualise the implications of these realities alongside the specific objectives, timeline and requirements of the research.

Human resources

Researchers always need support to do the best job possible, regardless of whether they are adults or children. However, boys and girls may require particular types of support which have implications for staff time (as outlined above) and also for staff skills. Involving children in research is not just a question of giving them tasks to go off and do. It is a developmental process which involves working with children in groups and as individuals to help them to work together, to acquire new skills and to develop personally. Adult researchers need to have the appropriate skills and training to assist in this process. It is not enough to have good research skills. It is also necessary to be a patient trainer, listener, learner and friend. These skills are important and should not be underestimated.

Money and organisational resources

Involving children in research can be expensive because of its implications for time and human resources. It can also be costly because committing to supporting children's participation means being open to their suggestions and the likelihood that their vision for how the research should be conducted and disseminated will differ from that of adults.

Some examples of the types of costs that may be associated with children's participation in research include additional staff time and training needs, compensation or incentives for participating children, research equipment such as cameras and video and the associated training needs, transport costs, and the design and publication of child-friendly materials. Some expenses can be anticipated but some cannot be planned in advance of involving children. It is therefore a good idea to set aside a lump sum at the beginning of the research to be allocated as appropriate to the needs identified by the adult and child researchers. Boys and girls can work with adult researchers to plan how this money will be spent. Most children appreciate that there is rarely a bottomless pot of money to spend and are able to prioritise their needs and desires accordingly.

Approaching Children about their Involvement

Once the necessary reflective work has been done and it has been established that there is sufficient time and human and financial resources to encourage children to become involved in the research project, the next step is to approach children to discuss ideas with them and to see whether or not they will be interested in participating. It is important at this stage to think about approximately how many boys and girls you would like to involve in the secondary research, and the age, minimum level of experience and specific skills that you would like participants to have. These considerations are important for a number of reasons, most importantly perhaps, to ensure that the research project is able to achieve its basic objectives, to ensure that you do not commit yourself to working with more children than you have the capacity to support, and to allow interested children to have a relatively clear idea about what the work might involve. These considerations are important to keep in mind when approaching children about their potential involvement in primary research as well. However, they are especially necessary when inviting children to become involved in secondary research, as the process and methods involved in the review and analysis of documentary data is more predictable than are those associated with primary research.

When approaching children about their potential involvement, it is critical that you explain clearly what the research is about, why it is being conducted and what is hoped to learn by doing the study. It may be necessary to explain what research is, the various stages involved, and to delineate the specific points at which you are requesting their participation, ie: for the secondary research. Talk with them about why you want them to be involved and listen carefully to their comments. Be open to their ideas and suggestions and explore with them various ways that they can participate. Be sure to allow a good amount of time for questions from the children and be prepared to ask them some of your own questions should they be shy and quiet. Be creative about the methods you use to explain the research and to solicit their ideas: a question-and-answer session may not be the most effective way to communicate with children on these issues. Try using different methods such as active games in which they position themselves in the meeting space according to their level of interest in participating; small group discussions about their hopes and concerns about becoming involved; role play

about what they kind of participating would be "fun" and what kind of participation would be "boring" or "insulting" or "scary"; secret comment boxes in which they can place anonymous questions; invite other young researchers you know or with whom you have worked to come to the meeting and share their experiences with the children. There are countless ways to share ideas and explore options with children about their involvement. No method is the "right" method – the context in which you are working, the children with whom you are meeting and the topic of the research will all influence how these interactions take place.

NB: It is important to keep in mind that many children may not want to be involved at this stage of the research. They may think that secondary research is boring and might prefer instead to be involved in other aspects of the investigation such as deciding primary research methods and using these to collect data. The important thing is not that children do what you want them to do but that they are able to make an informed decision about what is and is not of interest to them. Once you have this information, it is much easier to work with them to explore options and make a plan for their involvement.

NB: parental or guardian consent will also need to be obtained for children's participation and sufficient time should be allocated to meeting with them to explore the topic of the research, potential ways in which children may be involved, ways in which children will not be involved, and any concerns or suggestions that they may have.

How can Children be Involved? Some Ideas and Suggestions

If the outcome of discussions with children about their participation results in their expression of interest in becoming involved, then it will be important to sit down with participating boys and girls to explain the study in greater detail and to outline the various components involved in secondary research. These discussions should be open and flexible opportunities for questions and questioning and the sharing of ideas and experience. Again, it is more enjoyable when these interactions are fun, where some sort of rapport has been established between the group, and where participants feel free to be creative.

Experience has shown that it is highly unlikely that boys and girls will participate in the same way in all contexts. Just as no research project is the same, so too are there differences in the ideas, interests, abilities, experience and availability of child researchers. Despite these differences in the kind, quality and level of participation of children, the steps involved in secondary research are quite predictable (as outlined above). It is therefore possible to think through some of the potential and specific ways in which children can become involved.

In any research project in which more than one investigator is involved, specific tasks need to be allocated and allotted timelines. This procedure is especially important when the research team is composed of people of different ages, levels of experience, knowledge of the topic, contacts, skills and levels of confidence. Successful and fun team work is much easier to achieve when tasks are clearly spelled out and everyone is aware of one another's expectations.

Please keep in mind that the following suggestions for ways to support children's participation are just ideas – there are no hard and fast rules for how and in what ways to involve boys and girls in secondary research. Once a rapport has been established between researchers and participating children, additional ideas will be generated that will likely be more appropriate to the context in which the research is taking place. Similarly, it is important to be flexible throughout the process so that the work can be done most effectively and with the greatest level of enjoyment for all.

Very simply, once a broad research topic has been identified, the following steps are involved in secondary research. Included in each step are some suggestions for how children might choose to become involved.

Step 1: Identification and collection of potential documentary sources of information

Ideas for how to involve children in Step 1:

- Brainstorm with children all the different sources of documentary data that could be used in your specific research project.
- Ask children if they know about any specific studies or projects that have taken place in their neighbourhood, school, religious community, etc. Work with them to follow up on these studies and reports by contacting or helping them to contact appropriate individuals and organisations who may know more about the studies and/or have copies to share.
- Ask children to identify different groups of people in their community, such as parents, friends, school principal, public health nurse, librarian, etc who might know more about what work has already been done on the research topic. Make a plan with them for how to contact these people.
- Share with children some of your own ideas about other potential sources and explain to them how you know about them.
- Bring in copies of books, reports, documentary films, etc that you already have on the topic. Share these with the children and discuss what it is about these sources in particular that makes them useful and helpful.
- Support the children to compile a list of all of the documentary materials that need to be collected.

Step 2: Arranging for and collecting the documents and other materials for examination and analysis

Ideas for how to involve children in Step 2:

- Ask children if they have any suggestions for how to collect the required documentation. Discuss some of the possible ways for arranging to collect the materials, such as writing letters, telephoning, face-to-face visits, emailing, etc.

- Work with the children to explore whether or not they want to be involved in the collection of the documents and other materials. If so, which tasks they would like to carry out: the web search? the visit to the resource room of a local organisation? the request for information from the relevant government department? Once the tasks have been determined, establish who will be responsible for which tasks and by what date. Keep in mind that children may not want to be involved in the collection of secondary data and those who are interested may need support in terms not only of transport, adult accompaniment, role playing telephone conversations in advance of making calls, etc.

Step 3: Examination and analysis of each of the documentary materials

Children are most often excluded from this important step in the research process.

Ideas for how to involve children in Step 3:

- Work with children to identify a series of questions to keep in mind when examining and analysing documentary sources (ie: When was the research conducted? Why was it conducted? What were the major research questions? What were the major themes and findings? What are the assumptions behind the research? Which sources has the research relied upon? How have these assumptions and sources influenced the design of the research? Are the research findings examined critically? How applicable are the findings beyond the context in which the research took place? Are the facts reliable? What alternative explanations can be considered? What further research questions does it raise?
- Brainstorm with children an initial list of categories or themes for qualitative data analysis.
- Adult researchers can work alongside children to analyse those materials of greatest interest to them. For example, it may be enjoyable for children (and informative for everyone) to watch a documentary film and afterwards comment on it and compare it to their own experience.
- Children can participate in workshops designed to strengthen their skills and build confidence in data analysis. Depending on their age and abilities, training sessions can also focus specifically on the coding and categorising of qualitative data and/or the interpretation and analysis of quantitative data. Some excellent training exercises are described in Worrall (2000); see the "Helpful References" section at the end for details.
- If it is not appropriate or possible or of interest to children to be involved in the examination and analysis of each of the available documents, older youth or adult researchers may choose to summarise individual articles or studies and present these to the children for discussion. To what extent do the themes and findings raised in the secondary sources resonate with their own experiences and those of their friends and families? This process can enable researchers

to enrich their understanding of the data and to ask new questions of as-yet unexamined sources. It can also facilitate children's sense of involvement and ownership in the research by keeping them informed and giving them the opportunity to reflect on what others have learned and experienced.

Step 4: Overall analysis of documentary sources (identifying common themes, supporting and contradictory evidence, questions for further investigation, etc)

Ideas for how to involve children in Step 4:

- A workshop can be held with children in which the various themes and findings of the secondary materials can be presented and explored by children, individually and in small groups. Exercises can then be designed to elicit children's views on the quality of the data and its analysis and the adults' interpretation of the data.
- Adult researchers can provide children with a short, written analysis of all of the materials examined and children can work individually or in small groups to discuss and comment on it or on aspects of it. They can then present their insights back to the larger group for discussion.
- Adult researchers can provide children with their analysis of the quantitative material contained in the secondary data. Children can comment on the adults' work, suggest additional comparisons to be made within the data, discuss the ways in which different variables may influence each other and explore possible alternative explanations than those provided by adult researchers.
- Children can work with adults' analyses to identify gaps in existing knowledge and to suggest questions for further investigation. This type of involvement ensures that boys and girls have a say in the direction of the primary research, regardless of whether they were involved in the analysis of the secondary data.

Step 5: Deciding how the results of the analysis should be written up, by whom and then doing it

Ideas for how to involve children in Step 5:

- Children can be supported to write up their own analysis of the documentary data. This report can be done regardless of the extent to which they were involved in each of the stages of the data analysis. For example, after a workshop session in which children comment on and discuss adults' analyses, they may choose to write a short document of their own to express those aspects of the secondary research they felt were most revealing, interesting and important. They can include in this report their ideas about questions for future research and suggestions for which data collection methods might be most appropriate. This report can accompany that written by adult researchers.

- Children can write the report or write some sections of it.
- Children can give adults ideas about what to include in the report, how it should be presented and designed.
- Children can read and comment on all or on some aspects of adult researchers' report. These comments can then be incorporated into the report, either by the adults or by the children themselves.
- Children can write short pieces to be included after each section of the report. These ideas could also be presented to adult researchers to write on behalf of the children.
- Discuss and clarify with children who the authors of the report will be and how people's work will be acknowledged.

This 5 step process feeds directly into the design and development of the primary research, in which the results of the review and analysis of documentary sources are used as the basis upon which to design primary research questions and a strategy for acquiring more information on the topic under investigation. Children can be involved in this next stage of the research, and it is often of interest to those who took part in secondary research to continue their involvement. Likewise, other boys and girls may express an interest in getting involved at this new stage of the research.

Some General Tips and Pointers

- There is no "right" or "perfect" way to involve children in secondary research. Do what is possible in the context of the research and within your existing resources and the timeframe of your study. Doing something is always better than doing nothing.
- Be honest about what work realistically needs to be done by adult researchers, and what tasks can be shared with or led by children.
- Try as often as needed to consider the risks and costs to children of their participation. ie: time, inconvenience, embarrassment, sense of failure or coercion, fear of admitting anxiety, pressure to perform unachievable tasks. Act always in their best interests.
- Try to build in benefits for children who choose to become involved in research. ie: satisfaction, increased confidence, skill development, time to talk to an attentive listener, greater awareness of and access to caring adults and organisations.
- Think through how you will recruit children to become involved in the project and how different methods of selection have different implications for participatory work. Consider issues of representation.
- Explore with children what you and they think are appropriate roles for adults and children in this work. Share your goals and expectations with each other so that everyone can understand the needs, interests and pressures of each

member of the team, young and old. Draw up a group contract or ground rules to set the stage for your work together.

- Recognise that boys and girls may not want to be involved in all steps of secondary research. Choosing not to participate is also a form of participation.
- Practice talking about the research without using any jargon or academic language so that your interactions with children (and adults!) will be less intimidating.
- Consider whether children should be paid or given another type of incentive to participate in the research.
- Recognise that there may be some turnover in the group of children with whom you are working and have a plan in place in the event that children withdraw. Try to create opportunities for ongoing involvement and for one-off participation.
- Try to accommodate children of varying skills and abilities. Consider and plan for how those with physical, language and learning difficulties can be involved.
- Ask children for examples of "good" and "bad" involvement (ie: being asked to present ideas versus being given a pile of papers to photocopy). Create ongoing opportunities for sharing views and experiences about how the process is working, what things are working well, what things should be changed or strengthened.
- Be reflective. Critically examine your assumptions and prejudices about children's capacities and vulnerabilities and the quality of their ideas and insights.
- Consistency, constancy and continuity are important in adults' and children's relationships with one another. Commit to holding up your end of the bargain, to showing up regularly and on time to meetings throughout the process.

Recommended Reading on Secondary Research

Denscombe, M. 1998. *The Good Research Guide for Small-scale Social Research Projects.* Buckingham, UK: Open University Press.

Kirby, P. 1999. *Involving Young Researchers: How to Enable Young People to Design and Conduct Research.* London, UK: Joseph Rowntree Foundation and Save the Children.

Worrall, S. 2000. *Young People as Researchers: A Learning Resource Pack.* London, UK: Joseph Rowntree Foundation and Save the Children.

Part two: Involving Children in Primary Research

This part looks at how to involve children in primary research. Primary research collects information directly from people, in this case primarily children and young people. The first chapter discusses the ethical issues raised by participatory research with children on issues of violence, and the second 'how to do it' – approaches, methods and ideas for greater involvement.

Chapter 1: Ethical Issues in Children's Participation in Research

Research into violence against children obviously raises particular concerns in relation to research ethics. This section aims to identify some key issues to consider in planning research projects. Many potential problems are apparent, and there are not always perfect solutions to them available. However we should remember that it would also be unethical to continue to avoid doing research into violence against children. Children have frequently raised the issue of violence against them in studies of their needs, and they have a right to be heard.

Ethical issues arise not only in the traditional areas of concern like consent and confidentiality, but also throughout the research process. Research needs to be well-designed, based on appropriate consultation, and properly conducted and followed through. Staff need to have appropriate skills and knowledge. Methods need to be suitable to their purpose, and sensitive and flexible enough to include all those whose voices need to be heard. Children often choose to participate because they want to see change take place, so the promotion of research findings is also key. Wasting people's time is harmful too.

The rise of more strongly participatory research satisfies children's rights to have their opinions listened to, but the interests of respondents still need to be protected. If girls and boys are the researchers, they need to be helped to think through all the issues discussed in this section. For example how can they avoid putting pressure on other children to take part in research; or how, practically, to protect the identities of respondents? And of course the participating young researchers themselves may also be exposed to risks which need special consideration. Ethical issues in peer research are usefully discussed in Kirby 1999.

In relation to all the ethical issues discussed below, a key factor is the inherent imbalance of power between an adult researcher and a child. Thought must be given as how to mitigate this, for example by informing the child of her or his rights, and by always demonstrating respect for children's views.

Various ethical codes exist, and in some countries there are Research Ethics Committees which will need to be referred to, but there is no substitute for a full discussion within and beyond the research team of the specific ethical problems raised by a particular project. Possible risks also need to be discussed, ideally with

representatives of the group/s of children you hope to study, and certainly with people who work with them on a daily basis.

There is in this type of research a constant dilemma in seeking the correct balance between participation and protection.

The contributors of the following example are Annica Kempe and Fatoom Nooraldiin, research team leaders of an ongoing study in Yemen concerning mortality and identity patterns of the girl child seen across generations. They describe challenges that may arise when conducting research in a cultural setting where the participation of girl children in society is restricted and the older generation has a strong influence on children's expression.

Researching child abuse in Sana´a – dilemmas of gender and generation in child participatory research
Annica Kempe and Fatoom Nooraldiin

The idea of interviewing orphan girls about their living conditions in their new adoptive families grew out of research work concerning the health of mothers and daughters in urban and rural Yemen. The conditions of childhood, especially for orphan girls, seemed relevant to relate to the excessively high mortality rates in the capital of Yemen.

It was with great expectancy that we, a team of three, approached the house of a 9-year old girl Nawal, who, after losing her mother in childbirth had been adopted into a relative´s family. Great care had been taken to introduce ourselves to Nawal's new family beforehand through a mutual friend who also accompanied us to the interview. To make the interview in another place than in the home was not an option, since it is not customary for girl children to leave the house other than for special purposes. Neither was it ever an option to interview Nawal alone, as young girls live under the strict surveillance of their family members.

We were led into a big room covered by carpets where the 5-year old brother of Nawal, her aunt and other older family members had gathered to listen in on the interview. Because of the lack of privacy, we had decided to ask very general questions.

The life conditions of Nawal – work, school attendance etc – gradually revealed a very vulnerable situation. It became more and more evident to everybody in the room, possibly for the first time, that Nawal was in fact a very unhappy child. Nawal was outspoken and her relatives started to interfere to give their points of view on matters, modifying and even trying to contradict the information given by Nawal. Nawal's brother got involved, telling us about his feelings in the new home and about missing his mother. It turned out that both children, in different ways, wanted to follow the mother. Because of the tense situation we decided to end the interview and went playing with the children, trying to ease the situation as best as we could before leaving.

The experience stayed with us for a long time and made us very attentive to the following:

- The life conditions of the child will determine whether interviews are a good method of investigation or not
- Household power dynamics related to gender and generation are crucial
- It may be easy to assume that orphan children living in families might have a better life than those living elsewhere, but this may not be the case. As a researcher it is better to assume nothing
- It is possible that children will reveal information for the first time, even in the presence of the rest of the family
- In that case, the situation needs to be attended to in further meetings with the family and such an option should be thought of in advance
- In situations where children have kept a lot inside, it is of crucial importance to arrange for follow-up visits to the family and/ or to provide other kind of support in order to secure the wellbeing of the child
- Children are not only the best but the only source of information regarding their own situation – nobody living in the same house with Nawal and her brother would have been able to present a true picture.

The ethical issues discussed in this section are as follows:

1. Avoiding harm to participants
   Support
2. Child protection
   Recruiting staff
3. Informed consent
   Giving information and gaining informed consent from children
   Consent forms
4. Confidentiality
   Confidentiality and child protection
5. An inclusive approach
6. Fair return for participation
7. Welfare of research staff
8. Wider accountability

At the end there is a checklist summarising key points.

1. Avoiding harm to participants

The duty to protect the physical, social and psychological well-being of those you study and work with is central to the researcher's role. It is essential to assess the risks to individuals and groups which might be entailed in participating in

your research, and to weigh these up against the benefits you hope to achieve. In the case of studies of violence against children, you obviously have to consider whether participation might increase a child's exposure to violence. It will also be necessary to assess the context you are working in, in terms of what options exist for help and support to children at risk of violence.

Individual children may be best placed to assess any risks to themselves, which is why informed consent is so important, but you still need to consider the wider implications. As a researcher you are likely to have greater knowledge of the possible consequences of children's participation in research. A participatory approach does not mean handing over responsibility for avoiding harm to participants.

Covert research, where participants do not know that they are being observed or having their words recorded, is unacceptable. One of many reasons for this is that you as the researcher cannot know what risks you may expose research 'subjects' to, if you do not consult them about their participation.

In choosing methods for your research, you should consider how to minimise distress caused to children. While privacy may be valuable, it can make children feel safer to be interviewed along with a friend, or to work in groups.

Avoid further victimisation. For example do not single out children who have been violated/abused in any obvious way. Also, ensure that children who are victims of violence and abuse are not repeatedly interviewed (researchers, police, medical staff, psychologist, social workers, journalists).

Support

As well as aiming to avoid harm to respondents, it is also important to make arrangements to help research participants to deal with any distress that may be caused by talking about their experiences. While children may want to tell about their experiences of violence, recalling the details may well cause them pain. Researchers need to be ready to respond appropriately during interviews, focus groups or other interactions. Think about how you will react if told of shocking experiences. It may be useful to ask children at the end of an interview or focus group how they have felt to talk about these issues. Make sure you allow time to either play with the child or talk about something pleasant at the end of an interview, so that children are not left focused on violent experiences with no time to adjust to the here and now.

Researchers also need to arrange for individual children to have access to further skilled support afterwards, and this should be negotiated with local organisations. In the absence of child-focused services it is advisable to request help from organisations offering similar support to women affected by violence, or people affected by HIV/AIDS for example, explaining the theme of the research to them fully.

There will be times when researchers will want to act positively to assist children they have contact with. There are clear limits to what a researcher can achieve, and it is important not to give children the impression that you can make huge changes to their situation. The researcher should not have any expectations

about helping to heal the child. However they can perhaps affirm and validate the child's experiences. 'Everybody has the right to report crimes against human rights to the United Nations' (Brendler Lindqvist, interview).

2. Child protection

Given the obviously sensitive nature of research into violence against children, we are including here an extract from the International Save the Children Alliance's child protection policy which spells out a simple code of conduct, which could usefully be discussed within the research team.

Child protection: code of conduct

Staff and others must never:

- hit or otherwise physically assault or physically abuse children
- develop physical/sexual relationships with children
- develop relationships with children which could in any way be deemed exploitative or abusive
- act in ways that may be abusive or may place a child at risk of abuse
- use language, make suggestions or offer advice which is inappropriate, offensive or abusive
- behave physically in a manner which is inappropriate or sexually provocative
- have a child/children with whom they are working to stay overnight at their home unsupervised
- sleep in the same room or bed as a child with whom they are working
- do things for children of a personal nature that they can do for themselves
- condone, or participate in, behaviour of children which is illegal, unsafe or abusive
- act in ways intended to shame, humiliate, belittle or degrade children, or otherwise perpetrate any form of emotional abuse
- discriminate against, show differential treatment, or favour particular children to the exclusion of others.

This is not an exhaustive or exclusive list. The principle is that staff should avoid actions or behaviour which may be construed as poor practice or potentially abusive.

It is important for all staff and others in contact with children to:

- be aware of situations which may present risks and manage these

- plan and organise the work and the workplace so as to minimise risks
- as far as possible, be visible in working with children
- ensure that a culture of openness exists to enable any issues or concerns to be raised and discussed
- ensure that a sense of accountability exists between staff so that poor practice or potentially abusive behaviour does not go unchallenged
- talk to children about their contact with staff or others and encourage them to raise any concerns
- empower children – discuss with them their rights, what is acceptable and unacceptable, and what they can do if there is a problem.

In general it is inappropriate to:

- spend excessive time alone with children away from others
- take children to your home, especially where they will be alone with you.

Full policy document:
www.savethechildren.net/alliance/publications/main.html

It is worth thinking about child protection in planning research methods. You might want to avoid creating situations where one adult and one child are in a closed room – check whether there are strong reasons to work like this. Working with pairs of children is one approach; in some research it is good to have a parent or a teacher present with children; and researchers can usefully work in pairs themselves (though larger groups should be avoided).

A UK research project with younger children on smacking, conducted in schools, asked for a member of staff to sit in on all their sessions. They felt this had several benefits – first of all to help the children to feel secure and comfortable, as the researchers were strangers to them. If strong feelings had been brought up in individual children, the staff member would be available after the session if the child wanted to talk more. Finally the presence of the staff reassured parents. (Willow and Hyder, 1998) Obviously there will be other situations where it is not in the interests of children to have staff members present during interviews – for example in a country where corporal punishment is common in schools, or in studying any form of abuse within institutions.

Recruiting staff

In recruiting research staff, remember that researchers should be treated the same as any other staff in relation to child protection. It is possible, and has been known, for adults to use research work to gain children's trust and then to abuse them. If researchers will have significant unsupervised one-to-one access to children, the selected candidate's police record should be checked. In addition,

and where this is not possible, it is important to undertake an identity check, for example by asking to see their birth certificate or passport. One simple measure is to ask to see original copies of relevant qualifications. References should be followed up, and referees should be asked for information about the candidate's suitability to work with children.

3. Informed consent

In addition to seeking consent from individual children, it will be important to seek the support of the broader community, and institutions which care for children, such as community organisations, schools, and traditional leaders.

It will be necessary to seek the consent of parents and carers to work with individual children. This should usually require the parents or carers to positively consent, eg by returning a form, but in some circumstances, having explained the research in ways local people can understand, it is sufficient to give parents a choice to opt out. That is, to say that unless you object, your child will be offered the chance to take part in this process. A judgement must be made based on the sensitivity of the research, and the potential risks involved. However parents' or carers' consent does not, of course, compel children to participate – their own consent still needs to be sought. Children may wish to have their parents present when they are interviewed – but wherever possible this should be the child's choice, not the parent's.

More strongly participatory research requires more careful groundwork in terms of winning community support. It will be important to explain both how the research process will be conducted, and what use the research will be put to when it is completed. You will need to positively 'sell' your research to adults and children in the community. There will of course be resistance to addressing the issue of violence against children. Alliances will need to be made with local organisations that wish to open up these issues for discussion. This will be a two-way process, and advice should be sought as to local ways of doing things, history and priorities. However the need for children to be given a voice must not be forgotten in responding to the views of adults.

Giving information and gaining informed consent from children

If they are to give a valid consent to their involvement in your research, children need to fully understand what it is about, and what their own involvement would entail. However, in addition to good information, children need a genuine choice about their participation. Children are so often simply told what to do that you need to counterbalance this in your approach. It must be made clear that nothing bad will happen if they refuse.

It is helpful to think of gaining consent as an ongoing process throughout the research. For example, a child should be able to stop an interview at any point, as they wish. This can usefully be rehearsed with children, making it clear that they do not need to explain why they want to stop – this is their right. The implications of participation may only become clear to a child during the process of the

research, and they should be able to end their involvement whenever they wish. It has been suggested that 'assent' may be a better term to use.

Information obviously needs to be given in such a way that the children can understand it. It will be useful to prepare a child-friendly information sheet about the research, but where few people read well, this process may be more helpful to the researchers in clarifying their message than to potential respondents. It is important to rehearse a verbal explanation of what research is, in general, as well as the aims of your particular piece of research, in terms understandable by children. Practical matters like how long an interview will take, where it will take place etc need to be covered. Children need to understand that participating in the research will neither benefit nor harm them individually – for example it will not affect any help they are already receiving from an organisation that has invited them to take part in the research.

It is helpful for an information sheet, and its verbal equivalent, to include statements explaining participants' rights, for example:

Rights of all children involved in the research

We respect your rights:

- To take time to decide whether to help us;
- To refuse to take part without this affecting your care/education/ whatever;
- To refuse to answer some questions;
- To withdraw from this project at any time;
- We will keep notes and tapes from the groups in a safe lockable place;
- When we talk about the research or write reports, we always change people's names so that they remain anonymous.

(after an original by Priscilla Alderson)

Information sheets should also give contact information for the research team and a clear account of what organisation/s they belong to.

It will be important to encourage children to ask questions about the research, and to have some dialogue about its subject and design. A frequently asked question is what will come of the research – will it be listened to? Researchers need to consider how to respond to such questions – giving an honest and realistic but reasonably optimistic response.

Informed consent from children with communication difficulties
Maddy Lewis and Perpetua Kirby

A joint project between Hammersmith and Fulham Social Services (London) and Save the Children looked at ways of consulting children and young people with disabilities about services for them (Lewis and Kirby 2000). The children in the study were aged between 4 and 14 and had a range of disabilities and communication needs. The researchers had a number of concerns about how to get valid consent from their respondents, and how to assure confidentiality. Working closely with practitioners from a day centre that the children used was very helpful in encouraging parents and children to agree to take part, but did it make it difficult for them to decline? It was difficult to maintain the anonymity of respondents with this high level of staff involvement, and on one occasion confidentiality was broken (a staff member told a parent something that a child had said).

In terms of gaining consent, in some cases it was satisfactory, as shown in the following account:
'I said – shall I tell you a bit about why I'm here? She signalled "yes". I got out the leaflet. I read it through to her, showed her the picture, explained that what she says will go in a book but not her name. I said you don't have to say anything you don't want to, I said you can stop when you want. I asked if it was ok to talk to her about [the Centre]. She signalled "yes".'

In other cases it was less clear that the child understood what was being said, and they were not included in the research.

Ongoing consent was also felt to be important. One researcher established a means for a child to indicate that they wished to stop:
'I got out the "Stop" sign, gave it to (child) and explained that if he wanted to stop for a short while, to stop to eat or drink, or just to rest, or stop for today, or stop altogether, he could let me know by holding up the stop sign. I said, "how will you let me know if you want to stop?" and he put up the sign and smiled.'

Consent forms

In some settings, for example in health care research, it is usual to ask respondents to sign a consent form to participation in research. Typically these forms state that the person signing it has been given and read an information sheet and that they agree to take part in the research. In the case of research with children, processes for gaining consent from parents as well as children themselves need to be considered.

This formalises the process considerably, and may not actually improve the real situation in relation to informed consent. Especially, respondents may feel that having signed the form obliges them to answer all the questions, for example. A key reason for consent forms in medical research is to protect those behind the

research from any legal action from participants against them, which is much less relevant in social research. Clearly where literacy is limited, signing a form could be token exercise. On the other hand the use of a form indicates that consent is being taken seriously.

Consent forms	
Advantages	**Drawbacks**
Creates a formal point when someone agrees to participate	Meaningless where literacy is low
Can ensure potential participants are in fact given information sheets	Can create a sense of obligation in the respondent
Prevents a casual approach to consent	Formalises participation in a way that could put off some respondents
Could protect staff by ensuring consent is handled carefully	Could appear to be a legal document, though probably not actually being one

4. Confidentiality

It is essential that the identities of respondents be protected. Children with experience of violence are likely to be especially concerned about issues of confidentiality. From the outset of the study, the research team should have a plan in place for how to achieve this in practice. You need to take care never to write respondents' names on the same sheet as the data they give you, and to keep data in a secure place. It should be possible to show potential respondents any form you use, to practically demonstrate how their identity will be protected. It is also of course important to observe confidentiality in casual conversation with others around the research setting. Practitioners in the helping professions do not always realise how important confidentiality is to research.

If you want to tape record your interviews to ensure that you can accurately represent people's words, think about what will happen to the tapes. Some researchers undertake to destroy tapes after a certain time. Consider exactly how you will request permission to tape record, and how you will explain exactly who will hear the tapes. Respondents are often nervous of tape-recording, and in some settings it is not advisable, eg a conflict zone where you cannot be confident of the security of the tapes. It is always helpful to discuss issues of confidentiality with all those participating in the research – they will give you helpful pointers to issues of concern to them.

Then at publication, you do not use participants' names in your report. Respondents may like to choose their own pseudonym for the purposes of the research. With qualitative data, it will be necessary to consider whether a person's story might identify them. Stories can sometimes be altered so as to disguise identifying details, in keeping with the integrity of the findings, but at times they may have to be omitted. Where possible it is best to show your report to

respondents, and certainly to participating peer researchers, and ask them to read it with attention to this type of issue – can anyone be identified by others within their community?

Where boys and girls are active participants in research and development work, it is not uncommon for them to want to put their real names alongside accounts of their experiences. Some children see themselves as championing particular issues, and feel that they know the consequences of 'going public'. Is it patronising to refuse to allow them to do this? The difficulty is in assessing the risks they may be taking. The child is likely to focus on certain audiences that they are aware of, but once published, material can get into the mass media, and researchers cannot guarantee that it will not be distorted at that stage. Children (and indeed adult respondents) might not have the experience to know how intrusive the media can be. Where child co-researchers are authors of a report, and they also provided data for the research, of course they should have their names on the report. But it may still be advisable to disguise their specific experiences. The risk of harm to the child is the primary concern.

Confidentiality and child protection

Confidentiality is an important value, but it does not over-ride the duty to protect the welfare of respondents. Respondents may take the opportunity of the research interview to tell about abuse they are suffering or have suffered. Others may talk about suicide, or about doing violence to others. Where the researcher has concerns that the respondent themselves, or another person such as a younger relative, is at risk of serious harm, they must first of all discuss the situation with the respondent. They should aim to encourage the child to tell some other trusted adult what they have told the researcher, so that action can be planned. Try to enable the child to maintain as much control over their situation as possible. However if the child does not wish to tell anyone else, the researcher may still need to take action. They must tell the child so, before finishing the interview. The first step is to talk to their research supervisor, who can assist in deciding what is best to do.

Research teams should discuss what they would do in this kind of situation, and agree appropriate plans, so that researchers are supported in any action they take. Researchers need to have ready information about possible sources of help, and it may be appropriate routinely to leave a package of relevant information with respondents.

Because they know that they would breach confidentiality in this situation, some research organisations warn children of this at the start of each interview, and then again during the interview if the researcher thinks that the child is heading towards a disclosure.

Unfortunately in most places it is impossible to guarantee that those systems that are supposed to protect children who have experienced abuse will work effectively to improve a child's situation. However a researcher can neither ignore what they are told, nor themselves 'rescue' the child. This is why it is so important to talk carefully with the child before taking any action.

5. An inclusive approach

Violence against children affects all kinds of children, and those facing discrimination for whatever reason are likely to experience extra difficulties in coping with it. Researchers will need to make a particular effort to include diverse perspectives. Thought must be given to how to hear the voices of girls and boys – working in separate groups may be appropriate, as gender is highly relevant to experiences of violence. It will usually be best if women researchers work with girls and women, men with boys and men, though in some cultures boys may find it easier to be open with adult women.

Communities may themselves routinely exclude for example minority ethnic groups, children with disabilities, lesbian and gay young people, and others who are disapproved of for whatever reason. All these groups of children are often subject to bullying and are of course equally likely to experience violence in the home, school, or other institutional settings as other children. Particular efforts will be needed to involve relatively excluded children, and specific outreach may be needed to build confidence to participate.

It is not necessary to be an 'expert' to include the voices of children with disabilities, but some extra efforts may be needed. More time may be required to establish good communication. It may be worth budgeting for some extra costs, for example for advocates/support workers to assist children with learning or communication difficulties to participate. Please see section on research techniques (page 64) for ideas about a range of child-friendly techniques which can help to include as many children as possible.

It may be helpful for the research team to consider how to respond if prejudiced comments are heard in the course of data collection. Traditional researcher neutrality can be problematic in group settings when others may hear silence as agreement.

6. Fair return for participation

There should be no exploitation of respondents or of co-workers. In participatory research, children may contribute large amounts of work to a project, spending time which might otherwise be spent on domestic or paid work which contributes towards their own or their family's survival. Decisions need to be made on a pragmatic basis, however some ethical issues arise, as any financial dealings change relationships. So, issues of recompense need to be carefully considered from the outset.

There are two sets of dilemmas here, as respondents' engagement with research is quite different from that of peer researchers, but some of the dilemmas overlap, so we will deal with them together.

Offering recompense/incentives to respondents or young researchers	
Pros	**Cons**
Incentives to respondents	
Can increase participation levels considerably, especially in poor communities	Cost
This can prevent waste of researchers' time seeking a sample, and hence resources	Could create a sense of obligation and compromise freely given consent
Recognises the value of respondents' time and contribution	Could bias the sample by encouraging those who want the recompense to participate, and possibly tell you what they think you want to hear
Not offering recompense can prevent hard-pressed people from participating, so could bias sample	Can create expectations of recompense for participation in future
Recompense to young researchers	
Peer researchers may feel more valued	Could put inappropriate pressures on young researchers to act as employees
Increases motivation	Some peer researchers may participate for the money rather than because of interest in the research
Can encourage young researchers to complete research tasks	Changes relationships between staff and children
Can mitigate suffering which might be caused by peer researchers being unable to spend time on making money in other ways	Potential for disputes over fairness
Professionals and their organisations may take peer researchers more seriously	Payment can become a form of control, with peer researchers having less control over how they participate

[draws on Laws et al 2003; Kirby 1999; Boyden and Ennew 1997]

You can, of course, offer recompense in kind rather than cash. It may also be an option to give support to a local children's organisation of some sort, as an alternative to giving recompense directly to individuals. However this may not win you any benefits in relation to motivating individual children, and obviously does not replace income foregone.

It is clear that there is much to consider in making these decisions. How money is handled can have a strong effect on research processes, for good or ill. Appropriate recompense must be discussed within the local context. Participating boys and girls can be consulted about what might be suitable. What is crucial is to have some discussion of these issues at an early stage, and not to let forgetting to budget for these expenses determine your decisions.

7. Welfare of research staff

You also have a responsibility to protect the well-being of research staff and of course children acting as researchers themselves. Again, think through possible risks and ways of tackling them. Research staff should be told that their own safety is at all times to be placed above the completion of research tasks. Avoid the situation where a lone researcher calls at an unknown address. Ensure that someone knows exactly where fieldwork staff will be during their working day. Working in pairs adds security, and brings other benefits in terms of learning and support. Consider carrying out fieldwork in more public settings. Carry documentation establishing your identity as a researcher.

Consider also the emotional well-being of research staff. Everyone within the research team, including for instance interpreters, must be treated with respect, and their exposure to distressing information must be considered. Regular professional supervision gives an opportunity to discuss upsetting experiences, as well as furthering professional development. Staff may also wish for access to confidential counselling support.

8. Wider accountability

It is important to consider your accountability to others in the local and perhaps national communities you work with. They need to be properly consulted as you develop the research. In planning your research process, think about how you can contribute to building useful skills amongst participating children and adults, including respondents. It is essential at the end of the process to bring back the results of the research to communities which participated in it, presenting them in a form that the community can use.

Avoid raising unrealistic expectations. Don't make promises that you can't keep, as hard as this may be. Not promising anything is better than not fulfilling the promise. Honesty concerning the limits of the research is imperative and this cannot be over-emphasised. If participation in the research is not going to have a tangible effect on the lives of the children or the community, this should be conveyed from the beginning by the researcher. However it is important to explain the potential benefits of the research to other children in the same situation, and this might encourage some children to participate in the research.

Checklist – some key ethical considerations in research involving children

- Assess the risks of harm to participants through your research, and plan to minimise these
- Ensure that all participants give informed consent to their involvement
- Seek the informed consent of children, ensuring that children know that they can withdraw their consent at any point
- Be prepared to deal with any distress children may express during the research process

- Make arrangements for further ongoing support to individual children who need it
- Consider child protection issues in daily practice and in the recruitment of research staff
- Seek consent from parents and carers
- Seek the support of community organisations, people who are important in the lives of children locally
- Ensure that information about the research is given in such a way that it is understandable and attractive to children, and includes information about their rights as respondents, and about how the data they provide will be handled
- Make practical arrangements to protect the confidentiality of respondents
- Discuss how you would handle situations where risk of serious harm to respondents is disclosed
- Make sure that your methods maximise the chances of girls and boys to participate fully
- Consider how to include the voices of children who face discrimination
- Consider whether there is a need to offer recompense to those helping you with your research, and what form this should best take
- Assess possible risks to the safety of research staff and take steps to prevent these
- Ensure that you properly consult with communities in planning your research, and contribute where possible to capacity building
- Give feedback to respondents' communities on the findings of the research, in an appropriate form.

Recommended reading on ethics

Alderson, P., 1995, *Listening to Children: children, ethics and social research,* Barnardos: Barkingside, UK. New edition in preparation.

Boyden, J., Ennew, J. Eds. (1997). *Children in Focus: A manual for participatory research with children.* Save the Children Sweden.

McIntyre, P. (2002) *Putting Children in the Right: child rights and the media. Guidelines for journalists and media professionals.* International Federation of Journalists: Brussels. www.ifj.org

Morrow, V., Richards, M. (1996). *The Ethics of Social Research with Children: An Overview.* Children and Society, Vol. 10. 90–105.

Chapter 2: How to Do it

Chapter 2 opens with ideas for how children can be involved at each step in the research process. It moves on to identify some issues to consider in making decisions about children's involvement in research. The third section looks at methods for participatory research with children. This section starts with discussion of some key issues to think about in approaching research with children – how to establish good communication.

We then look at some of the specific issues involved in researching violence against children. The next part looks at how to set up a participatory project, and the problems of negotiating access to respondents. Some specific approaches to research with children are discussed: Participatory Learning and Action; peer research; Friere-style action research methods and Child to Child. Finally we will look at a range of techniques that have been found useful to help us to hear what girls and boys want to say, and at how to choose methods. In considering choice of methods, it is worth looking also at Chapter 1 on ethical issues, as it is impossible in research with children to separate questions of methods from questions of ethics.

How can children be involved? Some ideas and suggestions

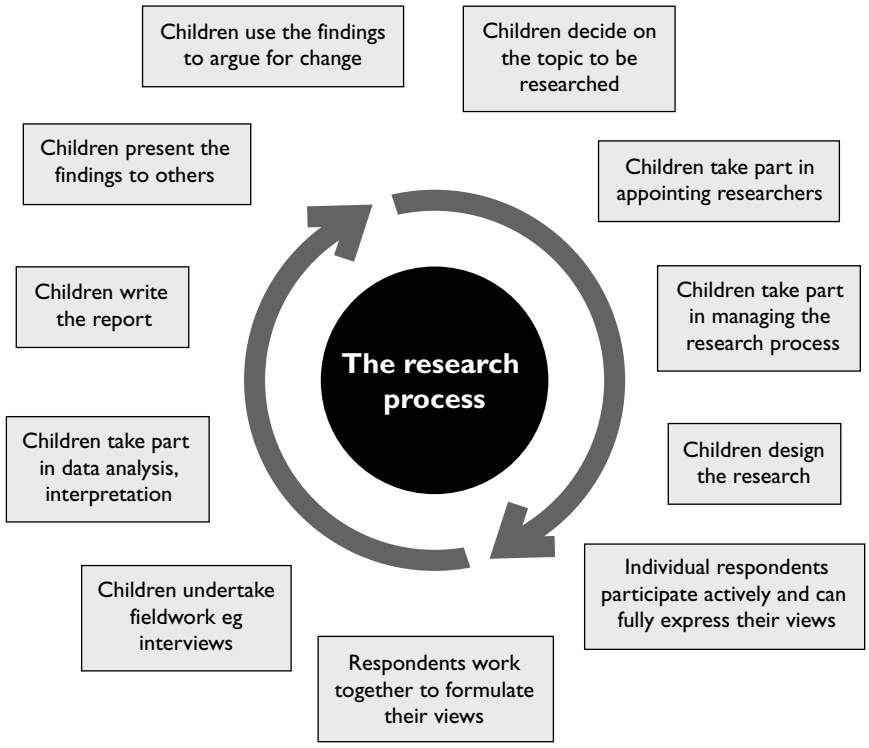
This section aims to suggest ways in which children can be involved in the various stages of research. Participation must be tailored to the specific research project, its focus, objectives, intended methods and especially its context. For example where there is an agency already doing good participatory work with a group or groups of children, and willing to co-operate on your project, a much higher level of participation can be achieved in a shorter time.

There is no one right way to involve children, just as there is no ideal technique to use in research with children. You may want to involve children in every stage of your research, or to consult them about specific areas. Ideally, consult children themselves about what they think would be an appropriate way for them to be involved. It will be important to develop good, open communication with children, and you must expect to take time and care to achieve this. The section on decisions about children's participation (page 18) in Part One, Involving Children in Secondary Research, identifies some key issues to consider.

Whilst there is great value in a participatory approach, there will be research topics and contexts where a more conventional approach is the most suitable. Violence against children includes some very controversial topics, and it may not be possible (ie acceptable to powerful adults) to investigate them using methods which are also seen as controversial. Within traditional qualitative research carried out by adults, there is scope to increase the active engagement of children as respondents, and to ensure that they feel more in control of the process. It is very valuable for children to be properly 'heard' as research respondents, whether or not they have other roles in the research process.

The diagram in Table 1 proposes the image of a wheel of participation, looking at participation in the various parts of the research process. It also suggests the idea of travel and of learning from one's experience.

Table 1: A wheel of children's participation in research[1]



There are a number of distinct roles children could take in research. Different groups of girls and boys could be involved at different stages of the process.

As advisors

- Members of advisory groups
- Being consulted on specific issues

As respondents

- Fill in quantitative questionnaire
- Be interviewed
- Take part in focus group discussion
- Take part in active group work including play, drawing, singing, ranking and scoring exercises
- Validate findings by hearing summary and confirming key points
- Assist in developing recommendations

1 Adapted from S. Laws with C. Harper and R. Marcus (2003) Research for Development: a practical guide, Sage/Save the Children: London.

As co-researchers

- Plan the research alongside adults
- Act as peer researchers, carrying out fieldwork
- Act as a research assistant

As development workers

- Lead projects on issues of importance to them
- Develop plans for advocacy/ action arising from research work

The rest of this section suggests ways to increase children's involvement by looking at possible approaches at the different stages of the research process.

The following case study gives one example of a researcher taking an opportunity to involve a child, with great results for the research.

Children as research assistants in Tanzania
Gillian Mann

Without Isabelle, my research among refugee children and families in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, would have been more difficult to undertake and less fine-tuned and appropriate to the context in which it took place. Isabelle is a 14 year old Congolese girl who worked with me as a part-time research assistant for approximately 4 months in 2002. Like many of the children who participated in this study, she was interested in the research both in its process and in its findings.

Isabelle started working with me a few months after I began exploring the daily lives of refugee children in urban Tanzania. We met one another through a friend of Isabelle's mother. As an intelligent out-of-school girl who was normally confined to the house for fear of her inadvertent disclosure of her family's illegal status, Isabelle was a shy and discouraged young woman who was at loose ends in the cramped compound where she and her mother and sister live. After spending several days with her at her home, I learned of her keen interest in the issues that I was exploring and of her skills in working with young children. I asked her whether she would like to work with me in the mornings, the time when I typically visited children and families in disparate parts of the city. (Isabelle's mother was very keen on this arrangement, as she felt that her daughter needed stimulation and social contact and that she would be less vulnerable to discovery if she was accompanied by me).

Isabelle's participation in the research breathed new life into many of the activities that I had been doing with children up to that point. On the first day that we worked together, I had anticipated that her shyness would cause some initially awkward moments. However, within a few moments, she was actively involved in the entire enterprise. When one of our drama activities was not working very well, she spontaneously suggested to the

children some slight adaptations to our previous instructions. The result was increased interest and enjoyment on the part of participating children and better quality data for the study. On other occasions, she used traditional Congolese songs to ask children what they missed and did not miss about "home"; she had them make up stories about the imagined lives of Tanzanian children they passed on the street; she adapted well-known games to help us learn more from the children in different and new ways. Each time we worked together, I learned new skills, new ways of doing things, and new things from the participating children.

Isabelle's participation did not only help to improve the quality of the research methods and their findings. Among many other benefits, her involvement helped me to establish stronger relationships with participating children and families: because she was young and a refugee herself, she was not seen as a threat to the safety and security of the participating families. The boys and girls were attracted to her laid-back and soft-spoken demeanour, and to her endless ideas for fun and games. As the weeks and months passed, she became more confident; she began to speak of her hopes to re-enrol in school, to become a teacher, to get married and have children. During this time, her mother told me that Isabelle laughed and smiled more at home than she had done since their arrival in Dar es Salaam 3 years earlier.

Step 1: Early planning and development of research

- Children could be consulted about how they might like to participate in the planned research process, and what would help more children to be involved. Start with an open mind about styles of involvement.
- Think broadly about how to identify children who could be involved with your research work. Build alliances with relevant development organisations, schools and colleges, etc. Make use of informal contacts, where some trust already exists. Persist.
- Children could be consulted about appropriate research topics. For example a group of children with an interest in the area you plan to work in could brainstorm ideas for research projects; 'what do we need to know?'. Descriptions could be given of existing research findings, to assist in focusing on gaps in knowledge.
- Children can advise on the overall direction of the project. There are different ways of doing this. Children could be represented on the adult advisory/reference group, or a children's reference group could be formed.
- Children could contribute to the process of clarifying the aims and objectives of the research, and specific research questions, once a general area of focus is agreed.
- Training could be provided, both for adult researchers in appropriately involving children, and for children in research methods. Training together may be

effective too. Workshops for children with a training content can also provide an opportunity to learn from the children.

- In recruiting researchers, children could be involved in various ways. With training in recruitment processes, they can participate as members of a recruitment panel – at least two children should be involved. Another option is to ask a small group of boys and girls to meet candidates separately from the 'adult' interview and ask them to assess them on one or two criteria only – their ability to work well with children, communication skills etc. The children's favourite candidate may not be appointed, as other factors will also be taken into account.

Step 2: Detailed research design

- With research training, children can assist in choosing appropriate methods to use in investigating a particular topic. They may be particularly able to comment on ways of making children feel confident to speak within the research process.
- In opening up a subject for investigation, a group of children could be asked to take part in a focus group discussion with the aim of identifying the areas that are of particular concern to children around this topic. It is easy for adults to make wrong assumptions about what is most important.
- Children can contribute to the writing of questions for use in research instruments – questionnaires; topic guides for focus groups. This is a detailed process, and researchers can give guidance on how to write unbiased questions.
- In planning emotional and practical support for respondents and perhaps peer researchers, it can be helpful to consult children with an interest in the subject on what might be the best approach.
- Children are often very sensitive to ethical issues like confidentiality and consent, and discussion with them may help to clarify the best ways to handle these.
- Children could help with the design of research materials such as an invitation to participate, to make them attractive to other boys and girls.
- Information sheets and verbal explanations of the research can usefully be tested on more than one group of children before they go into use.
- Children could help in piloting research techniques and materials.
- In selecting a sample, children can contribute views on what might be appropriate ways to approach children/families/organisations. They may be able to advise on good methods of seeking out the 'hard-to-reach'.
- Children can usefully be consulted in deciding about the use of incentives for respondents, or recompense for young researchers.

Step 3a: Fieldwork – ways of increasing the active participation of children as respondents

- Ensure that children know their rights and are able to make a genuine choice as to whether or not to participate
- Provide clear information about the research and how it will be used
- Demonstrate respect for children's views in the way you approach them
- Take time to build up trust with children before asking questions
- Active games, story-telling, songs, and creative approaches can make children more comfortable and open up communication
- Where children are used to drawing, a 'Draw and write' approach can enable younger children to express themselves more fully
- Children could be offered choices as to how they are interviewed – alone or with a friend; by an adult or a child; a man or a woman; etc. They could also be asked about what time and place would be best for them.
- Children may find focus group discussions a comfortable way to air sensitive issues. Probably best to work with boys and girls separately.
- Include questions about what might make things better for children facing the problems you are investigating. Children are not just victims.
- At the end of an interview, a child or group of children can be asked to check a verbal summary of what they have said, to validate the data.
- Children with communication difficulties may need the support of a skilled helper to participate in the research.

Step 3b: Fieldwork – other ways of involving children in gathering information

- With training, children can act as peer researchers, carrying out a whole range of fieldwork tasks. Respondents may be more comfortable confiding in others close to their own age and experience. Children can: distribute questionnaires; fill in simple questionnaires with respondents; undertake interviews; facilitate group discussions; carry out structured observation; play games, sing songs etc with other children. Different degrees of adult support will be needed. Qualitative interviewing and group work are particularly complex skills to learn.
- Children can promote the research and encourage others to take part as respondents or peer researchers.
- Children can act as key informants and/or as research assistants, taking part in interviews as an advisor, helping to engage with other children in a positive way.
- Children can interview professionals and other adults, as well as other children.

Step 4: Analysis and writing

- Where children have carried out fieldwork, they can begin the analysis process by reflecting together on what they feel they are learning from respondents, as they go along.
- An adult helper can bring together key issues they see arising from the data, put these in an accessible form to a group of children, and ask their responses.
- Children can be consulted further at the stage of developing recommendations – these do not always readily arise from the data, and a further level of discussion can be useful.
- Children can write sections of the report.
- Children can read and comment on draft reports, perhaps each taking responsibility to read a short section and discuss it with others.

Step 5: Promotion of research findings

- Children can give talks presenting part or all of the research findings. This can be very influential.
- Children can actively use the research findings to argue for change, if they are made available to them in an accessible form.
- It may be a good idea to produce materials suitable for an adult professional audience and also for children. Children can helpfully advise on, and contribute much towards, attractive ways of presenting the material to children.
- Children can assist in producing materials other than reports, for example plays, videos or posters, which dramatise the issues explored in the research and bring them to a wider audience.

Methods for participatory research with children

In this section we will look at the process of actually carrying out participatory research with children. For more details we recommend that you look at other manuals which give fuller guidance on research techniques.

Recommended reading

Boyden, J., Ennew, J. Eds. (1997). *Children in Focus: A manual for participatory research with children.* Save the Children Sweden.

A training manual on child-centred research for programme staff in NGOs and academic institutions. There are discussion chapters on participation, childhood, 'conventional' research methods, child-focused research methods and PRA. The manual includes numerous examples of participatory research undertaken around the world including many visual techniques. Strong on ethical issues.

Kirby, P. (1999). *Involving Young Researchers: How to Enable Young People to Design and Conduct Research.* London: Joseph Rowntree Foundation and Save the Children UK.

A clearly set out step-by-step guide for practitioners who want to carry out, or commission, research involving young researchers (aged between about 14 and 25). Research carried out by young people is seen as a way of empowering them. The book draws many examples from peer research projects carried out by Save the Children UK. The text works through the whole research process discussing practical decisions that need to be made, and includes chapters on ethics and ways that participation can take place.

Worrall, S. 2000. *Young People as Researchers: a Learning Resource Pack.* London, UK: Joseph Rowntree Foundation and Save the Children.

This is a companion volume to Involving Young Researchers (above) and provides adaptable training exercises and handouts for workers training young people to undertake social research. Topics covered include choosing and designing research methods, ethical issues, taking part in analysis and report writing, learner needs, support and evaluation.

Laws, S. with C. Harper and R. Marcus, (2003) *Research for Development: a practical guide,* Sage/Save the Children: London.

Designed as a quick reference manual and learning tool for development practitioners undertaking research. Includes chapters on participatory research, ethics and good communication with respondents, including children. Strong on research planning and management, including steps to writing a brief. Detailed guidance on a range of research approaches and techniques.

Many different techniques can help researchers in their work with children – people have developed approaches to research with children out of traditional research and development methods, educational methods and therapeutic techniques, amongst other sources. But the main thing you need is not a specific technique, but a child-friendly approach. You may most of all need the flexibility to let go of your favourite technique, if it is going down badly with the children on that particular day, and invent something else. There is no perfect technique; all have strengths and drawbacks.

There is a lot to be said for planning to use more than one method in your research. It creates an element of triangulation (seeing things from different points of view) by deepening the data you collect. It also creates a check on any bias that may be produced by the specific techniques you choose. Another way of validating your findings is to create opportunities to check back with children you have worked with that they agree with your summary of what they said.

What is required when considering doing research with children?

In approaching research with children, it can be helpful to think about girls and boys as you might any other relatively powerless group of people. Your efforts need to be directed to building their confidence in themselves, as well as their confidence in you. It is likely to be best for interviewers/researchers to be people who are accustomed to talking with children. Make practical arrangements to ensure that the space you meet in is comfortable and pleasant, with a feeling of safety for the children. Avoid interruptions and do not hurry. Be aware that children, especially those with much experience of institutions, may be practised at telling adults what they think they want to hear.

Respect for children

Doing research with children is not only about using participatory methodology. Nor is it only about the recognition that extra time or resources might be needed. Above all, it is about respect for girls and boys as citizens in their own right and a fundamental belief in the principles of equal opportunity for all human beings to express themselves and to be a part of the life of their community. It is important to value children's own person-hood.

One helpful way to prepare for the possibility of conducting research with children is to examine one's own experience and values and to explore how these may or may not influence the way we see and relate to children. Reflect on your own childhood and consider the circumstances in which trust was established with adults. What were the important ingredients in those personal interchanges? As a child, what made you want to share your point of view, and what made you hesitant to do so? What made you trust someone and who helped you to build your confidence?

Non verbal communication and enjoyment of children

Children, as much or more than most adults, are very attentive to non-verbal means of communication. Such things as body language may reveal a great deal, such as the researcher's level of comfort in working with children, and whether he or she really enjoys it or not. These cues may be unintentional or even unknown to the researcher but they are nonetheless significant and can have an impact on the way that children perceive their role and their relationship with the research process. Humour, besides constituting a levelling influence in human relationships in general, is a factor that plays an important role in the lives of most children. It is important to share a sense of humour with children and to incorporate it into the research process. Do you enjoy yourself in the company of children?

Flexibility of mind – a key to good research with children

One of the requirements when conducting research with children is to learn to remain open and to make as few assumptions as possible. The experience of adult researchers studying issues relevant to children shows that sometimes the researcher's expectations of the key issues for research may not match with children's priorities. Often, the researcher's idea has been derived from a grown-up perspective, even though it may be a local grown-up perspective. Different

priorities can create tension between the researcher, his or her wish to comply with children's reality and the perceived (or real) need to conform to the local values and preferred ways of seeing things.

Presence with children

Children, more than many adults, tend to live in the present and be less preoccupied with the past or the future. In order to share in the reality of children's daily lives, it is important to appreciate the need to listen to boys and girls as they speak of their experiences in the here and now. Expressions of interest and taking the time to be with children are important to building trust, a central ingredient in all aspects of the research process.

Discussing issues of violence

There are some special issues to consider in researching violence against children. Many of these have already been discussed above in the section on ethics, as they relate primarily to the well-being of participants. Whether violence has taken place within public settings like schools or other institutions, or at home within the family, researchers must of course maintain a primary concern for children's ongoing welfare. This is, after all, going to be one of the preoccupations of the participating children! Approaches and methods need to take account of this.

It is likely that research will need to be carried out either with general populations or with those who have experienced violence in the past but are now safe and in touch with services. Where children have recently disclosed abuse against them, it would usually be damaging to them to add a research interview to the procession of professionals who have asked them questions.

Of course children who are currently experiencing violence will be found in all general populations, and thought must be given to this. There is stigma attached to revealing one's experiences of violence, and methods should aim to counteract this. For example it may be useful to give some information about how common violence against children is throughout the world. Children are also likely to feel torn about what they can say because they will feel loyalty towards their families, even where they have suffered great abuse. In many cultures keeping family business private is a key value and a great inhibition to children and women in combating violence. Thought should be given in planning methods of research as to how to help overcome this problem.

In terms of dealing with 'victimised' girls and boys with respect, it is valuable to ask their views on what should be done to make things better, what they would like to see change – to go beyond describing their own experiences. Children are agents in their own right, and should be dealt with as such. We need to remember, too, that children can be perpetrators as well as victims of violence.

In listening to children about painful experiences, we can learn from therapists, counsellors, social workers and others about helpful ways of working. An interviewer should control their facial expression so that shock and anger felt in response to accounts of abuse do not show, while conveying empathy for the child. Remaining calm enables the child to continue. Pay special attention to the

closing of an interview or group session, to bring children back to everyday life with some positive activity or talk, and avoid leaving them still focused on their past suffering. It is a good idea, towards the end of an interview, to ask how it has felt to talk about these issues.

Setting up the project

Accounts of participatory research projects very often emphasise the importance of allowing enough time at the start of a piece of work to build good relationships with all those involved. Children, like adults, are often suspicious and cynical about the motives of strangers, and trust and optimism cannot be taken for granted.

And before you even get to meet the children, it will be necessary to 'negotiate access', as researchers put it. This means talking to all relevant authorities: it might be schools, local people, parents, perhaps national government, explaining your research and asking for help in contacting a sample of children. Informal local community leaders and traditional leaders may also need to be consulted. Given the sensitivities surrounding research into violence against children, it is to be expected that this process will be more time-consuming and delicate than usual. It will be important to 'sell' the benefits of the research in a very positive way. Rachel Kabir describes in the case study below how her research team set up a study of child abuse in Bangladesh.

It is likely that researchers for this Study will need to make alliances with organisations providing services to children, and will hope to benefit from the trust built up by their practitioners. Practitioners may introduce researchers to children they are already working with, or may themselves be asked to take part in the fieldwork. With back up from an organisation that provides services to children, it is more likely that research can be done on these difficult issues in an ethical way. It may be helpful to make an explicit written agreement as to what will be expected of each party in any such co-operative arrangement.

Study on child abuse in Bangladesh
By Rachel Kabir, Research Team Leader

The Government of Bangladesh, Save the Children Alliance and UNICEF are supporting a child-centred study on child abuse, the first research initiative in the country to focus exclusively on this issue. (Kabir 2002) The main objectives of the study are to find out about the perspectives of children and significant adults (in children's lives) on child abuse (physical, emotional and sexual abuse and neglect) and inform the design of future policies and interventions aimed at reducing the incidence of abuse.

Sample, process and methods

The research is carried out by 8 field researchers (4 male and 4 female) in one urban and one rural site under the supervision of a team leader. Boys and girls aged 6–9 and 10–14 years (both in school and out of school)

from poor and non-poor families are taking part in the study. The research process is monitored by the three partners involved in the study and an adult advisory group. A child advisory group[2] has also been formed to give ongoing feedback on the study in order to ensure maximum effectiveness and minimise any potential harm to child participants.

The field researchers have received extensive training on issues such as child rights, child development and abuse and child-centred research techniques. After selecting the research sites, participants have been selected through a household survey or existing survey data. Access has been established and informed consent obtained through (a) meetings with community leaders (b) individual discussions with mothers and fathers of the selected children and (c) meetings with these children. A detailed research methodology and instruments have been developed. These are being piloted at present.

Data will be collected through group discussions followed by individual interviews with two children from each group who have a particular and important perspective on abuse. In view of the sensitivity of the research topic, female researchers will work with girls and male researchers with boys (an approach already adopted in the discussions with mothers and fathers).

Lessons learned so far…

- Importance of good communication with leaders and other members of local community
- Benefits of male and female researchers working with boys/fathers and girls/mothers respectively
- Positive effects of establishing office at/near research site
- Need for sensitivity on part of field researchers in all aspects of work
- Change in field researchers' perception of and interaction with children and positive effects.

Challenges so far…

- Presenting subject matter of research in way that allows community leaders/parents/children to give informed consent but does not threaten their participation
- Extensive time required to create positive environment for research in area where not previously worked
- Working with younger children – time input and mental demands of group work
- Balancing needs of research with ethical obligation to provide psychosocial care/protection to child participants.

2 11 boys/girls (elected by larger body of children) from urban/rural areas, mixed social backgrounds, 1 with disability, 1 indigenous

The following case study shows how 'negotiating access' may relate to informal 'authorities' as well as to the official ones.

Favela nights: interviewing children working for Rio de Janeiro's drug factions
Luke Dowdney

Children's increasing involvement in armed faction disputes for the control of favela[3] communities in order to sell marijuana and cocaine to both Rio's wealthy and poor, has resulted in firearms being the principal cause of death for under eighteen year olds in Rio de Janeiro. The most recent data regarding firearms-related mortality rates in Rio de Janeiro demonstrates that between November 1999 and December 2001 a total of 612 under eighteen year olds were killed by small arms fire[4]. The majority of these deaths are related to child and adolescent participation in drug faction territorial disputes and armed confrontations with the police.

Yet, statistics such as these only tell half the story. I was able to spend around 14 months from 2001–2002 co-ordinating a research programme that aimed to understand why children have increasingly become involved in these ever more violent disputes. As a team of four researchers, our principal aim was to interview armed child faction workers during their working hours and in the communities in which they work. After numerous months of negotiation with intermediaries, we were at last in a position to do so, and the lessons we learned during this experience were numerous, crucial to deepening our understanding of the situation and fundamental to seeking solutions to the problem.

When approaching these interviews, it was fundamental to have trusted intermediaries that were able to safely give us access to children and adolescents working in the drug factions. Of course, informants' safety was paramount and by speaking via third parties with high ranking faction members, we were able to ensure that no children were approached without their superiors knowing and agreeing to the interviews beforehand. By focusing on 'child protection' and solutions to the problem of children's involvement in armed territorial disputes, we were seen by all sides as 'neutrals' seeking to understand the problem in order to prevent future generations from becoming involved, and develop methods for rehabilitating those already working in drug faction employment. Despite some rumours to the contrary, we learned that children enter drug factions 'voluntarily'[5] and are not forced by older faction members to join the ranks. This was an important step to understanding the recruitment process and subsequently proposing

3 shanty town

4 Brazilian Ministry of Health, DATASUS - RJ

5 Understanding that a child may choose to enter drug faction employment due to necessity or a lack of alternatives, I use the word 'voluntarily' with caution here, as it may be argued that children do not enter such extreme or dangerous employment if they have real life alternatives.

policy and programmes that would counteract what drug trafficking offers young people that have little access to the socio-economic necessities we all require.

Interviews with heavily armed teenagers in the middle of the night were at times a tense experience for all involved, not least for some of the interviewees that were a little sceptical as to why we were so interested in their lives. Yet, with time, interviewees tended to relax and began to open up freely regarding their working functions, family backgrounds and reasons for deciding to become involved in such a dangerous occupation. This was helped by the fact that they knew their identities and the names of the communities in which they worked would remain confidential. Interviews were taped for later reference and analysis and in some cases we were allowed to take photographs of armed children and adolescents (with their faces covered). These images have subsequently been an important and shocking record of the rarely photographed reality of children working in Rio's drug factions. The photos have also greatly aided in raising awareness of the problem. They have helped, too, in the advocacy effort that aims to bring social and economic investment to affected communities in Rio de Janeiro, so that children and young people in the favelas will be guaranteed their rights as stipulated by the Convention on the Rights of the Child (to which Brazil is party), and will consequently be in better position to choose a more positive life path.

In planning your research, it is important to think about working with adults as well as children, since children cannot make changes on their own. How will you engage adults with the issues in such a way as to maximise the chances of making improvements for children? How will you help to encourage adults to listen more carefully to children's views?

Corporal punishment in schools in Bangladesh – learning from children
Rachel Kabir

Corporal punishment of children is very common in schools, at home, in work places and in institutions in Bangladesh. In Bangladesh corporal punishment is an area of contested views. Being used to the western view that corporal punishment is meted out to children when they are naughty, misbehaving and disobeying, talking with children in Bangladesh has completely changed my view on this and made me realise that these issues need to be considered culturally and holistically.

Children in schools are beaten and caned not because they are misbehaving – they hardly do, as the system is very strict on discipline and most children remain quiet and passive because they are afraid of their teacher. Children are punished for not knowing the correct answer to a question, for mistakes in assignments, for being late and for not having

finished homework. Furthermore, certain children are punished more than others, because of their socio-economic background or other differences that socially exclude children (children with disability/children from ethnic minorities/children of sex-workers). They are ridiculed and made into scapegoats. The psychological consequences for individual children can be serious. However most children keep silent about this kind of teacher behaviour or drop out from school.

During the last 12 months we have seen 4 deaths in Bangladesh due to physical punishment in schools, and these incidents, covered by the media, may be a tip of the iceberg.

Eight-year-old boys and girls tell us that one of the main problems is the fact that teachers do not know how to explain new concepts in different ways to help all children to understand and learn. If a child does not understand a concept after the teacher has explained it, the child will be blamed and punished.

Children also tell us that most teachers are not interested in or aware of their living conditions and the difficulties they face. Many children have additional tasks and responsibilities when they go home after school, with little time (and support) for homework. Children also highlight the need for mutual respect – children respecting adults as well as adults respecting children – and that respect has to be earned!

To open up the discussions on coercive discipline, physical and mental punishment, one of Save the Children's partner organisations has started school-based debate programmes on corporal punishment (and other issues that children identified as important in their lives). Students (12–16 years old) and teachers, sometimes also involving parents and other community members, reflect on reasons for corporal punishment and developing more teacher and learner friendly school environments. Teachers and other adults are asked to remember their own childhood and how they experienced corporal punishment. Students and teachers collaboratively identify ways and means to create less abusive teaching-learning environments and develop a number of corporal-punishment-free schools as role-models for other schools, while also advocating for policy changes at the ministry of education.

Sampling/recruitment

In recruiting children to participatory research work, it is usually necessary to think very differently from the traditional researcher with their ideas of collecting a carefully controlled sample from a list. The children may decide who participates more than you do – you need volunteers with enthusiasm more than you need children with specific demographic characteristics. Finding children to work with may take place through informal contacts developed while generally exploring the issues you are working with. You may be able to build an alliance with an organisation offering services to children and families.

In gathering children to work with, it is important to think about including

those who are often excluded, for example those living in institutions, the homeless, those with disabilities (see 'An inclusive approach', page 38). You will also want to think about equality issues in terms of whom you end up working with – making sure that girls and boys are appropriately involved, for example. This may not mean equal numbers, but thought must be given to who is included and who is excluded, and special efforts may have to be made to include groups who do not so readily come forward.

If you plan a peer research project where the children will be invited to do significant work on your project, you may want to create quite a formal selection process, with written descriptions of tasks required and so on. This is likely to become necessary if you intend to pay young researchers. Another approach is to allow all volunteers to start work with you, but to say that there will come a point when you will need to decide whether all are ready to undertake research with other children.

Training and supervision

It is likely that your own staff, those you work with, for example in agencies you hope to get help from in recruitment, and children themselves, will require training in participatory research with children. Adults' attitudes are often reported to be a major barrier to children's greater participation. There may also be a need for training relating to the issues under investigation, to research methods, and perhaps to equality issues.

It is important that training reflects the kind of approach you hope to see within the research – modelling participatory methods, taking participants' views seriously, and being fun. Worrall (2000) gives detailed guidance on training for participatory research with children. Some specific approaches offer training in their methods, for example the Child to Child organisation. You can also combine training processes with starting the work with the children, using 'live' examples.

In addition to initial training, it is important to recognise that people learn on the job, and research supervision should be provided. Researchers, including young researchers, should have regular private meetings with their managers where they are able to air any concerns about the research. This is especially needed because of the difficult issues that are sure to arise in research on violence against children. If managers are not experienced researchers, consider arranging research supervision from someone with greater experience of research with children.

Piloting research tools

Remember to test out materials you want to use in the research. The time you have with children is precious, and you should prepare for it as well as possible. Reading over an interview schedule reveals some areas for improvement, but trying it out with someone, even if they are your sister or your friend, reveals many more. Pictures or stories that make a lot of sense to you may not be understood in the same way by other people. Where children are acting as co-researchers, it is natural to try out group techniques you think may work well with them before

they are used with respondents – but remember they already know much more professional jargon than respondents will.

Participatory approaches

In this section we will consider four 'packages of methods' – approaches to participatory research with children. These are not techniques, like interviews or drawing, as discussed in the next section: they are broad approaches, coming out of different traditions of work with disempowered people. We will look at Participatory Learning and Action (PLA); peer research; action research that builds on the work of Paulo Friere; and the Child to Child approach.

Participatory Learning and Action (PLA)

Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) is a broad term for a group of similar approaches including Participatory Action Research, (PAR), Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) and Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA). PLA uses a wide range of visual methods such as mapping, model building, role-playing, ranking and scoring exercises. Such methods are used to empower people to express and analyse the realities of their lives. In particular, it aims to encourage the involvement of people who cannot read or write. PLA is generally open and unstructured, and is an overall attitude and approach: critical self-awareness, changing behaviours and attitudes, a culture of sharing and a commitment to equality.

Researchers working with children have drawn on the PLA tradition in a number of ways, since its techniques are designed for use with those with limited formal education. PLA tends to emphasise work with groups, and has been criticised as sometimes working with communities as if the power inequalities within them were unimportant. Obviously in looking at violence against children, methods need to take account of potentially conflicting perspectives from different people.

The case study in Part One under 'Benefits to Children', Children as Informants in Malawi, page 11, describes a PLA style of study.

Peer research

In peer research children, usually girls and boys who themselves have some experience of the issue under investigation, are engaged as researchers to work alongside adults. Children may decide upon the questions to be investigated, choose approaches and techniques, and carry out fieldwork themselves. They can also be involved in analysis and writing. Obviously training and support need to be provided to enable children to carry out research properly.

Using a peer research approach ensures that you focus on issues that children think are important, not the priorities of adults. On some issues, children will more readily confide in other children. And where stigma is attached to a particular set of experiences, it can be helpful for respondents to talk with children whom they see as 'like them'.

Much very effective peer research has been carried out in the last few years. However being sympathetic to others, and doing sensitive qualitative research,

does not come 'naturally' to all children, as you would expect with adults. Training is necessary, as well as supportive supervision and coaching, in response to how young researchers perform research tasks.

The need for empathetic research skills
Perpetua Kirby

1. In one project, the worker was concerned that a young researcher's attitude to interviewing was inappropriate as the young researcher saw it as a means of control and an opportunity to interrogate others. In this instance, the young person dropped out of the project before fieldwork began.
2. In another project, the worker was concerned about the deep-rooted sexist views of one young researcher, which were expressed in his blatant language and comments. There was no time to run equality training, and therefore the worker talked to the young researcher alone, and explained her concerns. The young man was paired with a young female researcher, and the worker accompanied them to all their interviews.
3. In a research project in Tajikistan, workers were particularly struck that the young researchers – aged 12 to 16 – did not automatically empathise with the children they interviewed. They needed clarification and discussion about their role as interviewers and role play exercises to adopt a more caring and sensitive approach to the interviews, otherwise it was thought that they might do more harm than good. After the pilot stage, the young researchers were told the work was now to begin in earnest and that it was going to be hard: this was to provide them with 'ample excuse to leave' if they wanted. (Parry-Williams, 1998)
4. In one project, some of the young researchers made it clear to respondents – particularly those they knew – what they thought of their responses to questions. One young researcher exclaimed 'you can't say that!' when they disagreed with a respondent's answer. The workers felt that the young respondents were not as overwhelmed by the young researchers talking this way as they would have been by adults, however.

From Kirby, 'Involving Young Researchers', 1999

The key point is that in researching sensitive subjects, the standard of training of peer researchers needs to be good enough to guarantee an ethical standard of interaction with respondents and potential respondents. This will be time-consuming, but the results can be of the greatest value.

Researching child abuse in Ottawa
Gillian Mann

In the late 1990s, children in a low-income neighbourhood in Ottawa, Canada were asked to share their ideas about what things in their community they liked and disliked. This question was the starting point for several discussions with children in which they identified and prioritised those issues of greatest concern to them in their neighbourhood. Among a long list of issues such as pollution, racism, bullying and drug abuse, boys and girls highlighted the problem of child abuse and decided that they wanted to do something about it.

The first step in helping children to tackle the problem was to learn more about it. An adult support worker and a 17-year old boy worked with a team of approximately 15 children between the ages of 7–11 years to find out what the members of the group already knew about the problem, and to identify gaps in knowledge. From these sessions, it became clear that participating boys and girls already knew a great deal about child abuse: for example, they were able to give reasons why people abuse children, who are the most likely perpetrators, how it feels to be abused and how it might feel to be the abuser. But it also became clear to team members that there were some things that they did not know enough about, for instance who should a child go to if he or she is abused? How can friends help each other in scary situations? What are some strategies for stopping child abuse before it happens?

The project facilitators worked with the children to identify and make a plan for how to learn the answers to their questions. Libraries, websites, community organisations, the Department of Social Services, teachers, nurses and parents were all suggested as possible sources of information. But despite all these potential avenues for research, in the end, the team decided that they wanted to learn directly from those who experience child abuse – children themselves. They therefore decided to interview girls and boys at the local school and in the neighbourhood.

Before designing the interview questions, the young researchers spoke informally with their parents, grandparents, friends and siblings about the problem of child abuse and what questions they had. Individuals then came back together about a week later to work as a group to write the interview questions. One of the children mentioned that it might be difficult to get their peers to talk to them about this very sensitive issue and this comment led to a brainstorming session about how to help people feel comfortable when they are being interviewed. The team of children decided that they would play some games with their respondents before and during their interviews, so that there would be lots of opportunities to laugh and play as well as to talk about serious things. They also decided that they wanted to work as small teams to interview children and that they would do group rather than individual interviews. That way everyone would feel more comfortable and less singled out.

Once the questions were established and the methods determined, the facilitators worked with the children to practice how they would run the interview sessions, ask the questions, respond to and record the answers, etc. The young researchers then spent three afternoons over a period of two weeks collecting data from their peers. The group came together twice in the course of this process, to talk about problems faced, new ideas and interesting things that they had learned. When the interviews were completed, the group worked together to explore and talk about the findings. Together, they prioritised the three main messages about child abuse that they wanted to share with others. They then worked to develop a short play about the day in the life of three different fictional children in their neighbourhood. In this play, they incorporated the findings of their research.

Once the children were confident that they were ready to perform their play, they arranged the date and time of the performance with staff of the local youth centre, who had agreed to house the event. Parents, teachers, youth workers and many children came to watch the play. Following the performance, the young project worker described the process of the research that had been undertaken and then led a discussion with the audience about the play and its main messages. The children received a standing ovation from the audience.

One of the recognised drawbacks of peer research is that it may seem to respondents, and may actually be, less confidential than research by adult professionals. In research on violence, this may be especially important. One approach might be to offer children a choice as to who interviews them – adult or child, male or female.

Action research – combining pedagogy with research

Based on the participatory research approaches for social change developed by Paulo Freire, the case study below describes a method of combining pedagogy with research in order to elucidate young people's experience of violence in urban communities in Brazil.

Developed in Brazil, the Human Rights Observatories Network aims to gather qualitative information on human rights in communities affected by problems of violence and poverty from the perspective of the young people living there. For this purpose, groups are formed and trained under the guidance of human rights activists and researchers, carrying out the actual research, communicating the results to other residents and the general public. The concern underlying this methodology is to combine information-gathering activities with the training process and to allow a high level of local involvement and co-ordinated working between the various participants in the network. Marcelo Daher is director of the Human Rights Observatories Network in the Institute of Sao Paulo, Brazil.

Human Rights Observatories Network – A pedagogical approach to action research with young people
Marcelo Daher

The project aims to empower young people and to involve them in community associations by their engagement in a qualitative assessment of the human rights situation in the community. This assessment is intended to highlight day-to-day violations of these rights, evaluate the local impact of public policies and identify possible local measures to solve the problems from the perspective of those teenagers.

The network is formed through partnership networks between research centres, community associations and other civil society organisations so that there is an exchange of information and experience among the various participating organisations and communities. In the final stage, all parties are involved in drawing up a report (the Citizens Report) and a newsletter ("LUPA" – that means magnifying-glass in Portuguese) recording and publicising their findings.

LUPA is put together by the young people themselves. While the Report is more formal and descriptive, LUPA is much more informal and aimed at the youth audience in the communities involved in the work. One of its main functions is to disseminate the results of the work done to other local players.

The observers' groups are formed after a selection process in each neighbourhood that will be studied. Each group observes their own community, but they exchange all the information with other groups creating a network that can involve even different cities or countries. They work daily inside one community association or one public institution that accepts to host them, and receive a scholarship. During this process, they also communicate and exchange experiences with other young people's groups and associations that are active in the community. The research and the pedagogic process are simultaneous and are combined in each activity since its beginning.

The methodology for creating observatories has been codified in the "Support Manuals" which detail the functions of each member of the team, as well as the different stages of the work and the main activities involved. Thanks to this codified methodology, the experience has been replicated in different locations and it has been possible to exchange information gathered by the various groups through the Observatories Network in real time, despite the physical distances involved.

To address human rights in everyday life, there are six recommended areas for specific observation, of which one is violence. After a broad discussion between all the groups, each group explores one area in more detail. In general terms, the aspects to be observed in each thematic area are:

- Cases of rights violations experienced by local residents
- Positive examples or good practices in promoting human rights
- Local impact of public policies to promote the right in question

The observation phase includes the description of personal experiences, interviews, visits to different institutions; photography, video etc. The first group of activities, making a general description of the community and its situation is carried out at the same time and in the same way for all groups. After choosing a specific area of interest, each group develops its own research strategies. Once the observation phase is finished, the information gathered is used to produce the Citizens' Report and LUPA.

In our first two years we worked with only four communities in Sao Paulo city. The consolidation of our methodology has made it possible to replicate the experience of Observatories in São Paulo in another 27 communities throughout Brazil, widening the range of participants in the network. During this year the experience is being replicated also in Caracas, Venezuela.

Child to Child

Child to Child is an approach to health promotion and community development that is led by children (Save the Children UK 2003; Gibbs 2002). CtC projects involve children in activities that interest, challenge and empower them. CtC projects aim to achieve positive change on three levels:

- Communal impact on families, children local professionals and others, including increased knowledge and positive changes in health attitudes and behaviours.
- Personal impact on children involved in the project including increased knowledge and skills, improved self confidence, and development and strengthening of friendships and other relationships.
- Professional impact on facilitators, including increased respect for children's ideas and abilities and increased use of child-centred learning and teaching materials.

Although the majority of child to child processes have worked with younger groups (aged 9–13 mostly), it has been also been successfully used with older children.

It follows a six step approach:

1. Identifying a local issue and understanding it well
2. Finding out more about the issue
3. Discussing what's been found out and planning action
4. Taking action
5. Evaluation: discussing results
6. Discussing how we can be more effective next time and sustain action

The process usually takes place over a period of 10–12 weeks in two hour sessions, depending on the motivation of the group and issues they decide to

discuss. It can take place during school time or in afterschool club/ youth work setting.

Some research techniques

This section discusses some research techniques which have been used successfully with children. In recent years researchers have been very creative in developing methods which encourage children to speak about a wide variety of issues. A group of researchers working on the needs of the children of Kabul summarise well the basic findings of this body of work:

- 'It helps children talk about their ideas if they have activities to do and participate in. For example, they can give their ideas through drawings, acting, story telling or making models. If children are enjoying themselves and having fun during the activities, this is an indication that they feel at ease with the methods being used.
- It helps children to talk about their ideas if facilitators start with easy questions and activities, to help them relax, and then move to more sensitive and personal topics.
- It helps children talk about their ideas if facilitators have kind manners and good listening skills.
- It helps children talk if they do not feel they have to give a correct or specific answer; rather that all their ideas and opinions are respected.' (de Berry et al 2003)

One-to-one interviews – and more

One of the most basic research techniques is an interview between one researcher (or perhaps two) and one child. The researcher could be an adult professional or another child. A 'depth' interview can sound more like a conversation, and researchers with children would expect to take their lead from the child as far as possible in terms of the order issues are discussed in, the time taken, and so forth. In a semi-structured interview, there are some 'set' questions and some space for less structured talk. In either case, the researcher can take notes or can tape-record the discussion (with permission from the child of course), or can rely on memory and write notes immediately afterwards. Consider carefully the practicalities of the recording method you choose.

Interviewing is a complex skill, and one learnt to a great extent from experience. Inexperienced interviewers should be accompanied by someone with more experience so that they can be given comments about how to do better next time, and perhaps some help on the spot. It is essential to be very well-prepared, and to rehearse tricky parts of the interview in a role play, especially when working with such sensitive subjects as violence.

There are, of course, many advantages to methods where one researcher interviews one child. But because of the inherent power imbalance in this situation, children may feel more confident if they are interviewed along with a friend. Lar-

ger groups can also work well. You will not get the depth of individual experience, but groups may be better able to develop ideas for change together. Children can gain confidence from the 'strength in numbers' involved.

Focus groups have been used successfully with children on sensitive subjects. Again, facilitating focus groups can be challenging, and needs good preparation. A focus group uses a topic guide with broad areas for discussion, not a questionnaire, and the aim is to encourage discussion amongst the group, with as little attention on the facilitator as possible. It is very helpful to have a second researcher acting as an observer, who can also, for example, give assistance if a group member becomes upset during the discussion.

Group discussion methods are most appropriate in cultures where there is a culture of open discussion. Groups obviously cannot enable every individual to express their view fully, and information from them relates to the group, not to its individual participants. A strong individual can 'lead' a group – and we should not put too much reliance on data from just one or two groups for this reason. Interviews and focus groups can often be combined with the other techniques discussed below.

People who work with children as counsellors, social workers or community workers may be asked to undertake research interviews. People who are trained in interviewing for therapy rather than research need to think carefully about the different approach needed for research interviews with individuals or groups. The aim is not to draw out children's emotional responses, nor to make any intervention, but to enable the child or children to say what they want to say about the issue, without being intrusive, but of course with warmth and empathy from the researcher. Equally community workers need to remember not to explain their rights to children during the interview! There is plenty of time for this on other days – the key is to listen to the children, not to tell them anything.

Play

Children's capacity to combine work and play has been found to add to the quality of research. Based on her extensive work with peer research in many settings, Priscilla Alderson (2001) shows how children can help each other to become more confident in sharing their views and ideas through merely enjoying being together. Play can also give children who would usually remain silent in a project a chance to participate and express their views.

> *'A striking aspect of children's research is the combining of work and play. They use "ice-breaking" sessions to help one another to feel confident and relaxed, more willing to listen and risk sharing ideas, with less fear of being dismissed. To enjoy being together as well as working together helps to sustain the enthusiasm of children who are usually volunteers. Play methods can enhance children's research imagination. Talking about "let's pretend" can involve young children in planning improvements in playgrounds and nurseries. (Miller, 1997)…*
>
> *Topics and ideas are selected and noted in words or pictures on large sheets and everyone has coloured sticky dots to put beside the most liked items. It is*

one of several transparent, fun ways to assess opinions. Very young or unschooled children can contribute detailed data through their songs and dreams, by making models, drawings or maps about their daily mobility and routines.'

Using stimulus material

Many researchers have found it helpful to have some kind of stimulus material which enables the child to focus on something other than the researcher. Many things could be used:

- short scenarios/ 'stories' on a relevant theme
- objects
- photos
- drawings, cartoons
- a newspaper report
- a puppet, as in the example below

Children could for example work on a problem you set them and you can probe for the reasons they take a particular view. However you need of course to make sure that you get the information you need, and don't let your materials run away with you.

Read more on using pictures to show different types of physical punishment in "Children in Focus", p 121 (Boyden and Ennew, 1997).

Children talk about smacking
Carolyne Willow and Tina Hyder

In 1997 the British government issued a consultation document on corporal punishment of children in the home. Given that young children are far more likely to be smacked than older children, Save the Children UK and the National Children's Bureau believed that it was essential to get the views of those most affected by smacking – young children themselves. Sixteen group discussions were held with between three and six children. Five, six and seven-year-olds were listened to separately. (Willow and Hyder 1998)

Smacking may be a difficult subject for children to discuss, and the issue needs to be approached with caution and sensitivity. Our starting point was that children have a basic human right to be heard on matters that affect them; and that it is up to adults to engage with children in an appealing and effective manner. With a playful and child-focused approach we felt that children might be more interested and also feel safer about offering their opinions and thoughts.

A storybook was devised, in consultation with an artist, featuring a cartoon character named Splodge. Splodge is an alien visiting from another planet, and is curious about life on earth. The children we talked to, aged between five and seven years (there was one four year-old), were extremely

interested in Splodge. When first introduced, they spent some time discussing whether Splodge was male or female; pondering how he/she had travelled to earth and also remarking on her/his strange appearance.

These early conversations meant that children quickly established a rapport with the character. Another important point was that although all concerned were aware of the reality of the situation (adults were asking questions through a story), children readily suspended their disbelief and answered the questions that Splodge posed, and addressed their answers to Splodge and not to the adults. There were some poignant moments of children standing up in front of the storybook to demonstrate what a smack is – one boy hit himself hard on the leg, telling Splodge, "it's like that, only harder".

A series of ten questions were put to children by Splodge, for instance: Who knows what a smack is? What does it feel like to be smacked? Why do you think children get smacked?

There are a number of factors that contributed to the success of Splodge as a means for children to convey their views about smacking. One factor was the phrasing of the questions. Splodge did not ask what happens to you – but instead asked what happens to children in general. For instance, *'Splodge asks: Why do you think children get smacked?'* This allowed children taking part to generalise or to draw on personal experience as appropriate. This was clearly helpful, especially if children had a difficult experience to recount.

The story itself was produced as a large book. This helped establish the consultation session as an event, something out of the ordinary, so capturing children's attention. In subsequent consultations with children on other issues such as children's experiences of poverty, the Splodge character has been made into a large hand puppet. The puppet was introduced to the children at the end of each session. In one group, when children were told "We have a surprise for you now. Guess who we have here?" some eagerly looked at their classroom door and asked whether Splodge was coming in to see them. They were very content with the puppet, but their excitement and hope of seeing Splodge in 'real life' shows how much they believed in the character.

This method of using cartoon characters or puppets has many advantages as an approach to finding out what children think. Children appear to enjoy the experience whatever the subject, and offer their insights and thoughts willingly. From our point of view, as adults who were not known to the children being questioned, the character of Splodge was a very welcome intermediary, and children appeared to quickly relax with us and focus on the interaction with the character.

Despite the success of this approach, we did encounter doubts from some colleagues about whether children were relating their own experience or simply talking about smacking they had witnessed, either directly or through television for example. It is true that we could not be absolutely sure that children were referring to their own experience all of the time,

principally because we did not encourage them to talk in the first person (though many did). Some children told us that they had *never* been smacked. Overall, the passion and detail of children's conversations made us conclude that most were talking from direct experience.

Visual techniques

Techniques using a visual approach have been developed in several research traditions. Within PLA (discussed above) the intention is to enable people with low literacy to focus on issues of importance to them. As we have seen, mapping, modelling (build a model of your village using local materials), ranking and scoring type activities may be usefully adapted to children's situations. PLA practitioners emphasise the use of materials available on the spot, so that for example a ranking exercise might be drawn out on the sand with stones or beans used for 'voting'.

'Draw and write' has been widely used with younger children on health education issues. Children are asked to draw something, and then to write about their drawing. This might be done several times, developing a theme. Obviously only appropriate where this sort of activity is familiar to the children.[6]

Photos can be used in a number of ways – for example children can be given disposable cameras and asked to take pictures on a theme. Or a group might work together to plan what photos should be taken.

Creative methods

Children might work together to produce a piece of theatre or a video film. They can decide what issues should be explored and improvise how these might be dramatised.

Theatre for Development is a powerful methodology used in development work to explore issues with a group of people who then interact with audiences around their ideas about them.

Artwork can be used to explore feelings. For example a study of bullying asked children to decorate boxes to represent people who bully and those who are bullied, thinking about what goes inside and what outside. Groups of children were given materials and spent several hours working on their boxes, and then explained their significance to the rest of the group. (Sanner 2003)

6 It is very important to make a note of what children say about their drawings. See example in "Children in Focus", p. 126 (Boyden and Ennew 1997).

Children as research advisors in Dar es Salaam
Gillian Mann

Looking back, the day I first met Jean, Deo and Desmond was the day that my research turned from being "my project" to "our project". Until this point, for several weeks I had been working almost entirely on my own, hanging out and getting to know a number of refugees who had come to Dar es Salaam to seek medical care, asylum from the refugee camps, or to try to find a better life in the big and bustling city. I was slowly trying to find my way – meeting individuals, couples and families, bumbling my way in a not-yet adequate Kiswahili, trying to explain the purpose and nature of my research project. Remarkably, people put up with me and my questions, while asking me many of their own. And, after varying lengths of time, those who shared my interest in the situation of refugee children in Dar es Salaam, invited me to meet their children.

It was in this manner that I met Jean and Deo, two young brothers from Burundi who have lived in Dar es Salaam off and on for several years, between time spent in the refugee camps of Congo (DRC) and Tanzania. Their mother, Adèle, is a strong and intelligent woman who had been widowed several years before we met. When I arrived at the family's small, one-room accommodation in a high density area of the city, Adèle came out to the road to meet me and to accompany me back to her home. Once there, I met three of the family's children, including Jean, Deo and their 11 year old younger sister, Elisabeth. Also present was Desmond, a young Rwandese friend of the boys. After introductions had been made and we had spent some time talking as a group, Adèle got up to leave – she said she felt it was important for her children to have space to talk to me on their own.

After Adèle's and Elisabeth's departure, Jean, Deo, Desmond and I began talking about the research that I was trying to do. I told them why I wanted to do the research and explained the broad questions that I was trying to explore. We talked in depth about the needs and circumstances of refugee children in Dar es Salaam and how these are similar and different from those of boys and girls living in the refugee camps. I asked the boys what questions they thought were important to explore, and why.

Some of these questions were similar to those I was interested in pursuing; some were different. But what struck me most powerfully was the fact that they had so many questions that they thought were important: How is life different for refugee children compared to Tanzanian children? Do refugee children miss their home country? Do their parents allow them to speak of "home"? What strategies do children use to hide their refugee identity? How long did it take children to get rid of the French words in their vocabulary? Did they have to change their name? The questions were endless, and the boys' interest seemingly piqued as well.

It was in this initial, exciting and inspiring meeting that my "research advisors" began their work. In time, they were joined by two Congolese girls aged 13 and 14. Over the course of the following 10 months, we

worked together to frame specific research questions for particular groups of children, to develop creative methods for data collection with children between the ages of 7–11 years, to plan and run group discussions with refugee adolescents, and to design and implement workshops for young boys and girls, in which they participated in a series of activities including song writing, dance, drama and drawings.

In addition to conducting their own research, independent of me, the "adult" researcher, my advisors helped me to contact children and families who might want to be involved and to contextualise the data that I was collecting. They taught me to be a better researcher. More importantly, they taught me to listen well, to be adventuresome, to always try to see the good things in what were often very bad situations, and to laugh and have fun while working on tough issues in a tough environment.

Children's writings

Where children are literate, it is possible to take advantage of their skills. Children can be asked to write an essay on a particular subject – this gives them a great deal of control, so long as it is made clear to them that there is no 'right answer'. This method makes it possible to collect a great deal of information quickly. Diaries could also be used to enable children to express themselves over a period of time. With more limited literacy skills, children could be asked to write lists, or complete a simple, well-designed questionnaire.

Email interviews, web-based questionnaires

In wealthy countries some children find internet discussion groups a comfortable way to communicate. There is potential to use the internet for research in a variety of ways. It will be necessary to have particular regard for ethical issues in research into violence against children through these media. Without face to face contact it can be difficult to assess a child's response to questions, for example. Avoiding intrusiveness and maintaining anonymity can be issues, as they can with traditional methods. Researchers should ensure they seek out current best practice to protect children's interests. (eg Murray and Sixsmith 1998; Fox et al 2003)

Choosing methods – some issues to consider

Research with younger children

In working with younger children it is best to use some kind of indirect approach. There will obviously be a higher degree of concern as to the children's ability to understand what is meant by research. But as we have seen above ('Children talk about smacking') researchers are successfully collecting information from young children, whose competence is often underestimated.

One approach with very small children is of course to talk with those who care for them, asking them what they feel their baby or toddler communicates. But they can be directly involved, as in following case study, from the UK's Children and Young People's Unit.

Case study: Engaging younger children

Save the Children and the Children's Society undertook some consultation work with children aged 2 to 4 for the Greater London Authority.

Two local authorities were asked to nominate nurseries to take part in the consultation. The children were to give their views and perceptions of London and to do this they were taken on a 'sensory walk'. The children were encouraged to talk about what they saw, smelt, touched, tasted and heard as they walked along. Some of the children took photographs and drew pictures which showed how things look from their perspective. Their comments about the traffic, litter, noise and amenities were recorded and demonstrated that even very young children can give a useful insight into how much they already understand about the services provided by central and local government ('It will be safe to cross at the traffic lights') and what they think needs improving ('I saw a lot of rubbish on the floor'). The children's views are being fed into the Greater London Authority strategy. (Children and Young People's Unit 2001)

Research with older children

Remember that older children may be insulted and put off if you approach them with techniques they consider 'babyish'. With any group of children, spend some time observing what they are doing in their daily lives, seeing for example what images they have around them, before developing ways of working with them.

Balancing fun with data collection

Having fun is an essential part of research with children, but we do also need to ensure that what they say is recorded in a rigorous way. Creative approaches can be excellent for opening up issues, but if there is an audience beyond the immediate group or community, you need to think how you are going to capture what is being said. If children make powerfully expressive sculptures, make sure they are photographed before they fall apart. Write down what they say about their creations. Their meaning to the child cannot and will not be immediately apparent to other people.

With verbal methods, ensure that recording goes beyond the odd word on a flipchart – find ways to maintain something of the depth of the material the children are producing.

Structured techniques

A word in defence of traditional research methods. Where literacy is at a high level, a self-completion questionnaire gives good privacy and confidentiality, and a measure of control to the children. Face-to-face qualitative interviews with a skilled researcher enable the collection of very detailed information, with the child potentially able to have considerable control of the interaction.

Multiple methods and evaluation

Since all techniques have strengths and weaknesses, it is often best to plan to use a number of techniques together. In this way you can get some of the benefits of detailed work with individuals, for example, and the energy and ideas generated by working with groups. Respondents who are more comfortable with visual or with verbal methods can both get a chance to participate. It is also helpful to gather information from more than one group of people, for example you might interview teachers in a school as well as students.

Build in participatory evaluation to your research, so that you get immediate feedback on what works best, and in the longer term can contribute to the broader learning on how best to undertake participatory research with children on issues of violence.

Some general tips and pointers

- There is no "right" or "perfect" way to involve children in research. Do what is possible in the context of the research and within your existing resources and the timeframe of your study. Doing something is always better than doing nothing.
- Be honest about what work realistically needs to be done by adult researchers, and what tasks can be shared with or led by children.
- Try as often as needed to consider the risks and costs to children of their participation. ie: time, inconvenience, embarrassment, sense of failure or coercion, fear of admitting anxiety, pressure to perform unachievable tasks. Act always in their best interests.
- Try to build in benefits for children who choose to become involved in research. ie: satisfaction, increased confidence, skill development, time to talk to an attentive listener, greater awareness of and access to caring adults and organisations.
- Think through how you will recruit children to become involved in the project and how different methods of selection have different implications for participatory work. Consider issues of representation.
- Explore with children what you and they think are appropriate roles for adults and children in this work. Share your goals and expectations with each other so that everyone can understand the needs, interests and pressures of each member of the team, young and old. Draw up a group contract or ground rules to set the stage for your work together.

- Recognise that boys and girls may not want to be involved in all steps of research. Choosing not to participate is also a form of participation.
- Practice talking about the research without using any jargon or academic language so that your interactions with children (and adults!) will be less intimidating.
- Consider whether children should be paid or given another type of incentive to participate in the research.
- Recognise that there may be some turnover in the group of children with whom you are working and have a plan in place in the event that children withdraw. Try to create opportunities for ongoing involvement and for one-off participation.
- Try to accommodate children of varying ages, skills and abilities. Consider and plan for how those with physical, language and learning difficulties, and of different ages, can be involved.
- Ask children for examples of "good" and "bad" involvement (ie: being asked to present ideas versus being given a pile of papers to photocopy). Create ongoing opportunities for sharing views and experiences about how the process is working, what things are working well, what things should be changed or strengthened.
- Be reflective. Critically examine your assumptions and prejudices about children's capacities and vulnerabilities and the quality of their ideas and insights.
- Talk to the children about their expectations for follow-up and be clear on what you can and cannot do. Give feedback on the results of the research they have taken part in.
- Consistency, constancy and continuity are important in adults' and children's relationships with one another. Commit to holding up your end of the bargain, to showing up regularly and on time to meetings throughout the process.

Contributors

Priscilla Alderson, Professor of Childhood Studies, Social Science Research Unit, Institute of Education, University of London

Sevil Bremer, psychologist, psychotherapist, Centre for Children and Young People in Crisis, Save the Children Sweden

Monica Brendler Lindqvist, psychotherapist, Centre for Children and Young People in Crisis, Save the Children Sweden

Marcelo Daher, director Human Rights Observatories Network, Institute of Sao Paulo, Brazil

Luke Dowdney, director Children of Organised Armed Violence (COAV)

Inger Ekbom, social worker, psychotherapist, Specialist Centre for Children who have Experienced Violence in the Family, Stockholm

Margareta Erixon, psychologist, psychotherapist, Centre for Children and Young People in Crisis, Save the Children Sweden

Guhn Godani, psychologist, psychotherapist, Centre for Children and Young People in Crisis, Save the Children Sweden

Tina Hyder, development worker and programme officer, Save the Children UK

Rachel Kabir, research team leader, Save the Children Sweden/Denmark – Bangladesh

Ravi Karkara, regional programme manager, Save the Children Sweden/Denmark (South and Central Asia)

Lena Karlsson, thematic programme manager, Save the Children Sweden/Denmark – Bangladesh

Annica Kempe has a background in anthropology and public health. She is a research affiliate with the Karolinska Institute Department of Public Health and works with Save the Children Sweden

Perpetua Kirby, research consultant, UK

Dr Sophie Laws is an independent research consultant. Co-author of Research for Development: a practical guide, Sage/Save the Children UK, 2003. Website: www.sophielaws.co.uk.

Gillian Mann has a background in education and anthropology. She works in the field of policy and programmes for children, as both a researcher and a practitioner

Fatoom Nooraldiin, registered nurse-midwife (RNM), Department of Maternal and Child Health/ Family Planning, Ministry of Public Health, Sana´a, Yemen

Bridget Pettitt, research consultant, UK

Lotta Polfeldt, social worker, Centre for Children and Young People in Crisis, Save the Children Sweden

Olof Risberg, psychologist, psychotherapist, Centre for Children and Young People in Crisis, Save the Children Sweden

Marit Sanner, project leader and advisor in the field of children´s participation. Transformation Factory, Save the Children Norway

Börje Svensson, psychotherapist, Centre for Children and Young People in Crisis, Save the Children Sweden

Joachim Theis, researcher, senior advisor Child Rights Programming, Save the Children Sweden, Bangkok

Carolyne Willow, national coordinator, Children's Rights Centre, London

Per-Erik Åström, journalist, Centre for Children and Young People in Crisis, Save the Children Sweden

Contributors have provided case studies and advice – they do not share any responsibility for the final text.

References

Abdullai, M., Dorbor, E. and Tolfree, D. (2002). Case Study of the Care and Protection of Separated Children in the Sinje Refugee Camp, Liberia. Save the Children Alliance.

Alderson, P. (1995) Listening to Children: children, ethics and social research, Barnardos: Barkingside, UK. New edition in preparation.

Alderson, P. (2001). Research by Children. International Journal of Social Research Methodology. Vol. 4 (2): 139–153.

Bartholdson, Ö. (2001). Corporal Punishment of Children – a cross cultural study. Save the Children Sweden.

Beresford, B. (1997) Personal Accounts: Involving disabled children in research, SPRU, UK.

Boyden, J. and Ennew, J. Eds. (1997). Children in Focus: A manual for participatory research with children. Save the Children Sweden.

Breaking Through the Clouds. A Participatory Action Research (PAR) Project with Migrant Children and Youth Along the Borders of China, Myanmar and Thailand. Save the Children UK, May 2001.

Children and young people's participation. Child Rights Information Network (CRIN). Newsletter, No 16, October 2002.

Children and Young People's Unit (2001), Learning to Listen: Core Principles for the Involvement of Children and Young People, Dept for Education and Skills, UK Government. www.dfee.gov.uk/cypu.

Christensen, P. and James, A. (eds). (2000) Conducting Research with Children, Falmer Press: London, UK.

Cussiánovich, A. and Márquez, A. M. (2002). Toward a protagonist participation of boys, girls and teenagers. Discussion paper prepared for Save the Children Sweden. Save the Children Sweden Regional Office for South America.

De Berry, J., Fazili, A., Farhad, S., Naziry, F., Hashemi, S. and Hakimi, M. (2003) The Children of Kabul: discussions with Afghan families, Save the Children US/ UNICEF, Kabul, Afghanistan.

Denscombe, M. (1998). The Good Research Guide for Small-scale Social Research Projects. Buckingham, UK: Open University Press.

Diaw, B. (1996). 'Participatory Research is the First Step Towards Political Action. The case of young female domestic servants in Dakar, Senegal'. Childhood SAGE Publications Vol. 3, 271–277. London, Thousand Oaks and New Delhi.

Doná, G. (2001). The Rwandan Experience of Fostering Separated Children. Save the Children.

Dowdney, L. (2002). Child Combatants in Organized Armed Violence: a study of children and adolescents involved in territorial drug faction disputes in Rio de Janeiro. Viva Rio, Brazil.

Ekbom, I., Arnell, A. (2000). Then He Kicked Mummy. Interviewing children who have witnessed violence in the family. Save the Children Sweden.

Fox, J., Murray, C. and Warm, A. (2003) 'Conducting research using web-based questionnaires: practical, methodological and ethical considerations', International Journal of Social Research Methodology, Vol 6, No 2, pp167–180.

Fuglesang, A. and Chandler, D. (1997). Children's Participation: a case for a strategy of empowerment in early childhood. Save the Children Norway.

Gibbs, S., Mann, G. and Mathers, N. (2002). Child to Child: a Practical Guide: empowering children as active citizens. Contact ctclondon@yahoo.com; www.child-to-child.org

Hart, R. (1997). Children's Participation. London: Earthscan Publications.

Johnson, V., Hill, J., Ivan-Smith, E. (1995). Listening to Smaller Voices: Children in an Environment of Change. Chard: Action Aid.

Johnson, V., Ivan-Smith, E., Gordon, G., Pridmore, P. and Scott, P. Eds. (1998). Stepping Forward. Children and young people's participation in the development process. Intermediate Technology Publications, London.

Kabir, R. with support of Islam, S. (May 2002) Report of Findings from Consultations with Children on Sexual Abuse and Exploitation. Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh. Dhaka, Bangladesh: Herald Publications Ltd., May 2002. Supported by Save the Children and UNICEF Bangladesh.

Karkara, R. (2000). Facilitating children's organisation for children citizenship and governance. Save the Children, South and Central Asia.

Kefyalew, F. (1996). The Reality of Child Participation in Research. Experience from a capacity-building programme. Childhood Vol 3, 203–313, SAGE Publications. London, Thousand Oaks and New Delhi.

King, N. M. P. and Churchill, L. R. (2000). Ethical Principles Guiding Research on Child and Adolescent Subjects. Journal of Interpersonal Violence, Vol. 15 (7): 710–724.

Kirby, P. (1999). Involving Young Researchers: How to Enable Young People to Design and Conduct Research. London: Joseph Rowntree Foundation and Save the Children UK.

Kirby, P. with Bryson S. (2002). Measuring the Magic? Evaluating and researching young people's participation in public decision making. Carnegie Young People Initiative: London. Carnegieypinitiative@rmplc.co.uk.

Laws S. with Harper. C. and Marcus, R. (2003) Research for Development: a practical guide, Sage/Save the Children UK.

Lewis, A. and Lindsay, G. Eds. (2002). Researching Children's Perspectives. Open University Press. Buckingham, UK and Philadelphia, USA.

Lewis, M. and Kirby, P. (2000) Consulting children and young people with disabilities in Hammersmith and Fulham, Save the Children: London, quoted in Sophie Laws with Caroline Harper and Rachel Marcus, 2003, Research for Development: a practical guide, Sage/Save the Children.

Mahon, A., Glendinning, C., Clarke, K. and Craig, G. (1996). Researching Children: Methods and Ethics. Children and Society, Vol. 10, 145–154.

Mann, G. (2002). Family Matters: The Care and Protection of Children Affected by HIV/AIDS in Malawi. Save the Children.

Mann, G. and Tolfree, D. (2002). Children's Participation in Research: Reflections from the Care and Protection of Separated Children in Emergencies Project. Discussion paper. Save the Children.

Mauthner, M. (1997). Methodological Aspects of Collecting Data from Children: Lessons from Three Research Projects. Children and Society, Vol. 11, 16–28.

McCauley, U. (2002). Now Things Are Zig-Zag. Perceptions of the Impact of Armed Conflict on Young People in Liberia. Save the Children Sweden.

McIntyre, P. (2002) Putting Children in the Right: child rights and the media. Guidelines for journalists and media professionals. International Federation of Journalists: Brussels. www.ifj.org

Miller, J. (1997). Never Too Young. London National Early Years Network, Save the Children UK.

Morrow, V. and Richards, M. (1996). The Ethics of Social Research with Children: An Overview. Children and Society, Vol. 10. 90–105.

Mullender, A., Hague, G., Imam, U., Kelly, L., Malos, E. and Regan, L. (2002) Children's Perspectives on Domestic Violence, Sage: London.

Murray, CD. and Sixsmith, J. (1998) 'Email: a qualitative research medium for interviewing?' International Journal of Social Research Methodology, Vol 1 No 2, pp103–121.

Parry-Williams, J. (1998) Evaluation, Primarily by Children Evaluators, on the Save the Children (UK) Female-Headed Project, Tajikistan. Tajikistan, Save the Children UK.

Pinnock, K. (2002). Research Practice Guidelines for the UK. Save the Children UK.

Regional Working Group for South Asia on Child Labour (2003). Learning to work together – a handbook for managers on facilitating children's participation in actions to address child labour.

Richman, N. (1993). Communicating with Children. Development Manual 2. Save the Children UK.

Safeguarding Children: Information and resources for the protection of children. Save the Children UK, 2003.

Sanner, M., (2003), 'No 1 Out': young people about bullying and exclusion, unpublished.

Save the Children UK (2003). Participatory consultation with separated children in Europe: Guidance Pack for Managers, produced for the NGO network of the Separated Children in Europe Programme.

Silberg, J. L. (1998) The Dissociative Child. The Sidran Press.

Svensson, B. (2003). 11 september – om barn och katastrofen i TV-rutan (11 September – about children and disaster on the TV screen). Save the Children Sweden.

Theis, J. and Huyen, H. T. (1997). From Housework to Goldmining – Child Labour in Rural Vietnam. Save the Children UK, Hanoi.

Theis, J. (2003). Eliminate the Worst Forms of Child Labor including Trafficking. Handbook for action-oriented research. Regional Working Group on Child Labor, Bangkok.

Thomas, N. and O'Kane, C. (1998). The Ethics of Participatory Research with Children. Children and Society, Vol. 12 (5): 336–48.

Thomas, N. and O'Kane, C. (2000). Discovering What Children Think: Connections Between Research and Practice. British Journal of Social Work. Vol. 30, 819–835.

Tresedar, P. (1997). Empowering Children and Young People: A Training Manual for Promoting Involvement in Decision-Making. London: Save the Children and Children's Rights Office.

Van Beers, H. (2002). Children's Participation. Experiences in capacity building and training. Save the Children Sweden.

Ward, L. (1997) Seen and heard: involving disabled children and young people in research and development projects, Joseph Rowntree Foundation: York, UK.

West, A. (1995). You're On Your Own: young people's research on leaving care. Save the Children UK.

Wilkinson, J. (2000) Children and Participation – Research, Monitoring and Evaluation with Children and Young People. Save the Children UK.

Willow, C. and Hyder, T. (1998). It hurts you inside. Children talking about smacking. National Children's Bureau and Save the Children UK.

Woodhead, M. (1998). Children's Perspectives on Their Working Lives. A Participatory Study in Bangladesh, Ethiopia, The Philippines, Guatemala, El Salvador and Nicaragua. Save the Children Sweden.

Worrall, S. (2000) Young People as Researchers: a Learning Resource Pack. London, UK: Joseph Rowntree Foundation and Save the Children.