



Save the Children

Uganda

Guatemala

Bosnia-
Herzegovina

Nepal



SUMMARY

Global Report

Adult's War and Young Generation's Peace

Children's participation in armed conflict,
post conflict and peace building

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GLOBAL REPORT

Children's participation in armed conflict,
post conflict and peace building

SUMMARY



Save the Children

2008

The vision

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

The mission

Save the Children fights for children's rights.

We deliver immediate and lasting improvements to children's lives worldwide.

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This report is a summary of the Global Report of Save the Children Norway's global thematic evaluation on children's participation in armed conflict, post conflict and peace building. Children, young people and adults from Bosnia-Herzegovina, Guatemala, Nepal and Uganda participated in this thematic evaluation from September 2006-October 2008.

This summary follows the format of the Global Report and presents information on children's, young people's and adults experiences of armed conflict, post conflict and peace building in the following 8 sections:

- I. Introduction to the global thematic evaluation (p. 2)
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I. Introduction to the Global Thematic Evaluation on children's participation

Save the Children Norway is an international non-government organization working towards the realization of children's rights. Save the Children Norway understands and approaches children's participation as a need and a right, a working principle, a crosscutting issue, a process, an objective, a political tool and a pedagogical approach ¹.

Save the Children Norway has introduced thematic evaluations as an organizational learning method to evaluate how it is working as an organization and, with what results, in different thematic areas across different country programmes. In the case of a thematic evaluation on children's participation this relates to: the need to ensure that children's participation is part of all areas of Save the Children Norway's work; the need to improve quality in children's participation; to identify strengths and weaknesses, challenges and opportunities; and, to document what has been achieved. The decision to focus on the specific area of children's participation in armed conflict, post conflict and peace building was based upon children and young people's clear messages for peace and education, and their need for more support for their own participation and peace initiatives articulated during a global evaluation undertaken in 2005 on children affected by armed conflict, displacement or disaster ².

Save the Children Norway country programmes in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Guatemala, Nepal and Uganda, all of which are affected by conflict or post conflict and which support children's groups, participation or peace initiatives, chose to participate in the thematic evaluation on children's participation.

Purpose, aims and objectives of the thematic evaluation:

The overall purpose of the thematic evaluation was to contribute to strengthening children and young people's capacities regarding peace building initiatives and to promote the inclusion of children's voices in peace processes.

Through this thematic evaluation, Save the Children Norway aims were to:

- ensure the rights of children affected by armed conflict, post conflict and disaster
- strengthen both implementation and monitoring of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)
- ensure that children's rights are prioritised in peace building and reconstruction processes
- support the strengthening of child led groups and organisations

1 Save the Children Norway (2005a) Framework to Increase Quality in Work in Child Participation. Mozambique, October 2005.

2 Save the Children Norway (2005b) Global Evaluation: Children Affected by Armed Conflict, Displacement or Disaster (CACD) by Maggie Brown.

The main objectives of the thematic evaluation were to:

- Document and analyze the process and the lessons learnt. The lessons learned are being used to help strengthen current projects and improve future country projects, policy and strategies on children's participation and children's rights so that children can meaningfully participate in such processes.
- Reflect and learn through the process by encouraging dialogue with all the people involved and especially encouraging the involvement of children and young people. Again lessons learned have been used to strengthen and improve country projects, programs and policies.
- Make children's own documentation of their experiences and contributions a part of their nation's history.
- Through the documentation, to make children and young people's experiences an integrated part of future national agendas and to ensure that their voices are included in peace processes, agreements and reconstruction.

Where? Introducing each Country Context

Save the Children Norway has been operating in each of the participating countries for many years – in Bosnia-Herzegovina since 1999; in Guatemala since 1976; in Nepal since 1984; and in Uganda since 1990. The socio-political, economic and cultural context in each country is diverse. In each context the conflict has a different history and influence upon society, communities, families and children.

Key socio-political characteristics of each participating country during the thematic evaluation:

- **Bosnia-Herzegovina** is characterized by a post conflict scenario. It is also a country in transition as it endeavours to meet the criteria for joining the European Union. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, the war, which lasted from April 1992 - September 1995, is closely connected with the break-up of the former Yugoslavia. It was caused by a complex combination of political, social and safety crises in the country as a part of the general transformations which accompanied the end of the Cold War. While the ending of the armed conflict highlighted the need for peace stabilization, the peace building process was burdened and often slowed down by a lack of political will to approach the issue in a serious and systematic way. In addition, while claims were made by politicians to support the role of civil society in the peace building process the reality has been that this aspect has been neglected and generally lacking in support.
- **Guatemala** has also been characterized by a post conflict scenario during the thematic evaluation. However, the levels of violence which are also associated with gang culture have been described by children and adults to have a similar impact as living through armed conflict. In Guatemala, the internal armed conflict began in the early 1960s. The Mayan people were discriminated against and attacked. Disappearances and torture were prevalent. The internal armed conflict continued for more than thirty years. The Peace Talks started in Oslo in 1990, and the Peace Accords were signed by the government and the URNG (Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca,) the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity in 1996. However, a decade later poor implementation of the Peace Accords and a lack of attention to some of the issues which caused the conflict - wealth, education, food security, public security, integral development of different communities – has contributed to the prevalence of continuing violence, including gang violence.
- **Nepal** has been characterized both by conflict, post conflict and general insecurity during the thematic evaluation process. A Maoist insurgency led to the start of civil war in February 1996, with counter-insurgency operations being undertaken by the State government. After a decade of internal conflict which claimed the lives of 13,000 people, including at least 450 children, the conflict was supposedly ended in November 2006 when a comprehensive peace agreement was secured. However, insecurity continued to affect different parts of the country, particularly the eastern region which were affected by Terai agitations promoting the interests of particular minority groups within the constitutional election process. In April 2008 the constitutional election process finally took place, which resulted in the establishment of a Maoist-led Government in August 2008.

- In **Northern Uganda** a formal peace talk process was underway in Juba in Southern Sudan throughout much of the duration of the thematic evaluation. These peace talks contributed to hopes of peace and security, resulting in some resettlement of children and adults from camps of internally displaced people. However, levels of insecurity also continued as the peace talks broke down in early 2008. A peace agreement was not reached between the Government of Uganda and the Lords Resistance Army (LRA) prior to October 2008. The conflict in Northern Uganda can be largely traced back to the history, politics and economy of pre- and post independent Uganda. This includes religious and ethnic divisions as well as socio- economic disparities and the marginalisation of the pre-independence times. The LRA has hoped to address injustices caused by regional imbalances in political power and resource distribution. Two decades of conflict in Northern Uganda have resulted in: gross violations of human rights and children's rights – including abductions, forcing children to kill, sexual abuse and cutting off body parts of victims; massive population displacement into camps; breakdown of infrastructure; dependence on food and other humanitarian supplies; deteriorating education and health situation; and decreasing life expectancy.

II. How the Research and Evaluation was conducted

In each of the four participating countries **national research teams** were established who worked collaboratively with children and young people (aged 6 - 18 years) from existing child clubs/ associations or peace initiatives. The national research teams were supported by a **global research team** - two global researchers³ and two senior advisers from Save the Children Norway head officer, in particular the senior adviser on child participation. This global team was involved in co-facilitating capacity building and reflection workshops directly with children's representatives and the adults who are supporting their clubs and initiatives. Throughout the research and evaluation process girls and boys were actively encouraged to participate in every stage of the process as: **advisers, peer researchers, active respondents, development workers/ peace agents, and as documenters.**

A Time Frame of the Thematic Evaluation:

Phase I: Preparing for the Country Study, September 2006 -January 2007, focused on preparations for country study work including: the recruitment of local researchers and setting up of country research teams; an international start up workshop (6-10 November 2006, Kampala, Uganda), bringing together research teams (adults and children) from each country to enhance knowledge, skills and values for a meaningful evaluation process, including an introduction to Formative Dialogue Research (FDR); an initial round of consultations with children and young people in their communities to ensure their views and suggestions influence the research design; further planning of country studies.

Phase II: Commencing the Study: Exploring Children's Diverse Experiences, Views and Visions and Strengthening Capacity, February-July 2007, included: the establishment of a 'child adult reference/advisory groups' in each country; active engagement with children's groups using a range of participatory methods (a 'kit of tools'⁴) and ethical guidelines⁵ to explore children's diverse experiences, views and visions; strengthening the capacity of children and adults in each country to enhance participatory, reflective, inclusive research with and by girls and boys - including a 5 day capacity building workshop.

Phase III: Continuing the Study: Ensuring a Focus on Quality, August-December 2007.

³ The two global researchers worked collaboratively to help facilitate mutual learning and quality work of each team. Each global researcher focused on two countries each – Clare Feinstein supported work in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Guatemala; and Claire O'Kane supported work in Nepal and Uganda.

⁴ Save the Children Norway (2008d) A Kit of Tools for participatory research and evaluation with children, young people and adults. A compilation of tools used during a Thematic Evaluation and Documentation on Children's Participation in Armed Conflict, Post Conflict and Peace Building, 2006-2008 www.reddbarna.no/chp

⁵ Save the Children Norway (2008f) Thematic Evaluation on Children's Participation in Armed Conflict, Post Conflict and Peace Building: Ethical Guidelines. available at http://www.reddbarna.no/default.asp?V_ITEM_ID=19028

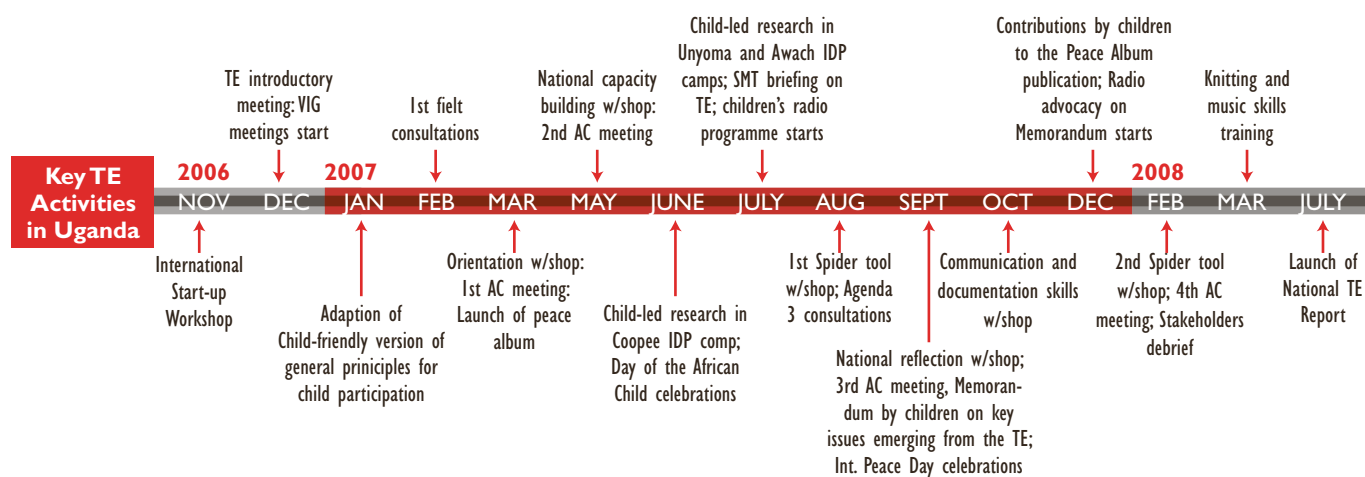
This part focused on supporting quality in country study processes including a focus on inclusive processes, good documentation, analysis with and by children and adults, disaggregation of findings according to gender, age, and other background differences and, support for children's identification of their key advocacy messages. It included: a 5-day workshop in each country with children (and support adults) to reflect on key findings and ensuring that these informed strategic developments, and child led documentation and advocacy initiatives.

Phase IV: Report Development: Ensuring Quality Reporting, January-June 2008, focused on ensuring quality reporting of the country studies to share key findings, recommendations, examples of good practice and new knowledge which could feed into the final global report; and inform quality improvements in programmes;

Phase V: August-October 2008, the global report was written. This period was also used to support the development of child friendly reports and materials, including children's own documentation and advocacy initiatives.

In each country **national and/or district level advisory groups** with children's and adult's representatives were formed to ensure quality implementation of the research and evaluation process in each phase. In addition, a **Virtual Interest Group** (reference group) was established to connect the global and national/local teams and to ensure a space for monthly sharing of information and reflections on experiences and to provide collective guidance. A **global reference group**, including the Save the Children Norway senior advisers, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs children's ambassador, Head of Machel Strategic Review, representatives from Oslo-based research institutes, PRIO and NIBR and members from PRESS-Save the Children Norway Youth Organisation, was also formed. This group met 2-3 times a year to provide guidance to support quality developments and strategic impact during the thematic evaluation process.

Time Line for the Global Thematic Evaluation and Documentation of Children's Participation in Armed Conflict, Post Conflict and Peace Building in Uganda



Who was involved?

In **Guatemala** 112 children and adolescents (under 18 years) and 12 youth (over 18 years) were actively involved as core group members. These children are from both rural and urban backgrounds. The majority are school going children aged 10-18 years. However, a few children under the age of 10 years were involved as core members. 337 additional children and young people were consulted.

In **Bosnia-Herzegovina** 140 children aged 6-18 years were actively involved. The children are from rural and urban backgrounds and the majority are school going children. 14% of the children actively involved are from ethnic minority backgrounds. 3 boys with disabilities were also actively involved. An additional 400 children and young people were consulted.

In **Uganda** over 400 children and young people aged 9-18 years from school based peace clubs and out of school child associations were actively involved (through a rotational representation system). These children (girls and boys) are from urban and rural backgrounds, including camps for internally

displaced people (IDP). The children actively involved included: formerly abducted child soldiers, child mothers, orphans and children with disabilities. An additional 175 children in IDP camps, rural and urban settings were consulted.

In **Nepal** 33 children and young people were most actively involved as members of the local research team in three geographic areas. These girls and boys were mostly aged 14 years and above and included children from different castes and ethnic groups and from rural and urban backgrounds. These core members were effective in undertaking outreach activities to involve and consult 1225 children aged 8-18 years from 78 Child Clubs during the thematic evaluation process. Most of the children consulted were from ethnic minority groups and a significant number were from Dalit communities. Most were school going, from a rural setting, aged 13 years and above. In addition, 21 girls and boys who had been associated with armed fighting forces or groups were actively consulted to seek their views, experiences and reflections.

The Methodology used

The thematic evaluation can be considered to be **process led** with an emphasis on opportunities for the safe and active involvement of children. **Formative dialogue research** (FDR) was used as an overall methodological framework and a key tool during the thematic evaluation and was complimented by the **use of a wide range of child friendly and participatory tools**, as well as **strong adherence to ethical guidelines**.

<p>KEY ELEMENTS OF FDR:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ‘re-search’ to find out new information or understanding; • dialogue – where people meet on equal terms to explore and better understand different perspectives; we can better understand why things are as they are, and we can work together to find solutions to challenges faced; • Formative means giving a form or a new shape to things. This means that people doing the research and evaluation can influence and advice changes in work or activities <u>during</u> the study as ideas come up. In this way, problems can be solved or improvements made. This is new! In most research, changes are made <u>after</u> an evaluation or research has been completed.
<p>KEY FOCUS AREAS OF THE ETHICAL GUIDELINES:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensuring that Practice Standards on Children’s Participation are fully incorporated in the process • developing some general principles for good child participation practice • exploring possible risks faced and ways of dealing with them • ensuring that Child Protection issues are dealt with appropriately and sensitively • ensuring that the diversity of children’s experiences is captured • ensuring that issues which reflect or reinforce child-adult power relations are dealt with • exploring discrimination and ensuring non-discrimination is practiced • ensuring effective communication and co-ordination
<p>KEY PARTICIPATORY TOOLS:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exploring & documenting experiences and opinions: Tree analysis, Body map, Risk Map, Stories of Most Significant Change, Peace Albums – poetry, drawings, Peace building Balloon; Focus group discussion, Value Line Discussion, Songs, Drama • Evaluating / assessing projects and processes: H-assessment; Time line; Spider tool; Save the Children Norway KQEs; Circle Analysis (included/ excluded) • Planning: Visioning Tree; Circle Analysis (activities at different levels); Spider tool; Partnership mapping; Creating the ideal agent of peace • Creative use of media for children and young people – radio, newspapers, murals, knitting and sewing, art, and video clips

'The tools are very useful for work with children: they stimulate and motivate children to actively participate in the work; they enable collection of quantitative and qualitative data; they involve children of different ages; and, they enable the active participation of all children regardless of their individual differences'.

(Children and young people in Bosnia-Herzegovina, June 2007)

What have we learnt from the use of Formative Dialogue Research?

- Formative Dialogue Research is a difficult concept to explain to children, young people and adults. In some of the country programs it took many months for the FDR approach to be understood and applied. Different strategies were developed to better explain what it means and how to apply it. An outcome of this process has been the production of a child friendly leaflet about FDR⁶.
- When understood and applied FDR provides a useful methodological framework, as it encourages deeper dialogue, exploration of different perspectives, analysis, problem solving and action planning to improve quality work. It expands spaces of participation, as it facilitates information sharing, more equal dialogue and action planning among children and adults. It helps overcome conventional barriers, enabling better communication between and among adults and boys, girls and adolescents. For example, in Guatemala, the team suggested that FDR facilitated work with different ethnic groups and with different age groups of children in more equal and respectful ways.
- FDR encourages better more systematic information gathering. In many occasions the answer to one question turns into another question, which allows for a continuous collective learning.
- FDR requires a lot of commitment and action from all those involved to make it work. It is a time-consuming process. The FDR process requires that regular and repeated dialogue, trust and confidence is built between the researcher or implementer and the stakeholders. However, as a result of this time investment, people open up more and are willing to share more information and become more involved.
- An issue handled effectively through the FDR process can lead to a “chain reaction” – causing an unexpected demand for other previously unresolved (sometimes unrelated) issues to be revisited. For example, use of FDR has contributed to requests from children, young people, and adults for minimum quality standards in children’s participation to be met in other projects that they have been involved in.
- Use of FDR (like other research methods) necessitates feedback to stakeholders who have raised issues or been involved in dialogue. FDR can raise a lot of expectations. If the intended end result is not fulfilled it can have negative outcomes. Once issues are taken on using FDR they need to be pursued to the very end to avoid unwarranted tensions.

⁶ See Save the Children Norway (2008c) *Formative Dialogue Research Made Easy*; available at http://www.reddbarna.no/default.asp?V_ITEM_ID=19028

Establishing Rotational Representation: An Example from Uganda about how FDR was used to strengthen child led initiatives:

Children and young people in school-based peace clubs and out of school associations in Northern Uganda expressed their dissatisfaction concerning representation by the same children – who were often the most confident children selected by the teachers – each time workshops or external meetings were organised. Using the FDR approach, dialogue was initiated by children and feedback was shared with the national researcher. The national researcher facilitated dialogue and action planning among various stakeholders at different levels – with the children in clubs and associations, the adult facilitators – patrons/ matrons, Save the Children focal persons in Uganda and the global researcher. As a result children and adults agreed to establish a system of rotational representation. With the sole exception of young representatives for the Advisory Committee who were elected as permanent representatives for a one year period to ensure continuity and uninterrupted follow up to pertinent issues in the thematic evaluation, a rotational system of representation was set up and implemented to ensure fairer and more inclusive systems of representation.

What have we learnt from children's involvement in the thematic evaluation process?

- Need significant TIME for a meaningful process – supporting children's involvement in all stages of the evaluation and working at times when children are most available (school holidays, weekends)
- Continuity and dedicated time of key adult researchers / facilitators who can build quality relationships with groups of girls and boys, to empower and support them as active researchers, evaluators, documenters and advocates throughout the process, increases the quality of the process
- Children respond positively to opportunities where they are treated with respect, trust and through which they can express themselves freely.
- Commitment to and application of ethical guidelines are essential in all stages of an evaluation process, including identification of and access to sources of psycho-social support
- Need pro-active strategies to reach and involve younger children, children with disabilities, out of school working children, and children from other marginalized groups
- Need increased efforts to engage with children's parents and caregivers as key allies and to seek and respond to their views and concerns and encourage their involvement in and support for children's participation
- Use of formative dialogue research helps to address differences in perspectives and to improve participatory projects with and by children and adults
- Child friendly and participatory tools can be very effectively used by children to gather and analyze key information from children and adults
- Girls and boys of different ages and backgrounds demonstrate significant skills and confidence as active researchers, evaluators, agents of peace, documenters, and advocates
- Creation of advisory boards (with representation from children, NGO adults, Save the Children staff, government officials, others) helps create common ownership and follow up action by concerned adults and children on issues raised by children
- Creative child led documentation, media and advocacy initiatives can be supported through children's involvement in an evaluation process
- Children and staff have been empowered through their involvement in the thematic evaluation process

III. Strengthening Children's Participation

An organisational framework introducing 10 Key Quality Elements (KQEs) has been developed by Save the Children Norway to increase quality in its work – and that of its partners - on children's participation⁷. During the thematic evaluation, these KQEs were used as a tool to assess the quality of existing programmes and projects by and with Save the Children staff, NGO partners, and children and young people and, to guide improvements in quality work.

- KQE 1: Process is given the same priority as products
- KQE 2: Children are involved from the very start of the project
- KQE 3: Implementation of child participation work is based on inclusiveness, equity, respect, honesty, transparency and non-discrimination and promotes principles of sharing leadership and decision making
- KQE 4: Children who participate benefit in terms of individual development
- KQE 5: Child participation is based upon and promotes children's rights
- KQE 6: Participation is relevant to children in terms of content and methodologies. It is informed, voluntary and enjoyable
- KQE 7: Protection is a priority during the process of child participation
- KQE 8: Adults ensure that children's views and proposals are taken into consideration
- KQE 9: The values, beliefs and positive cultural/traditional practices of children and families are recognised and respected
- KQE 10: Staff members have the knowledge, skills and attitudes that are necessary to promote and support child participation

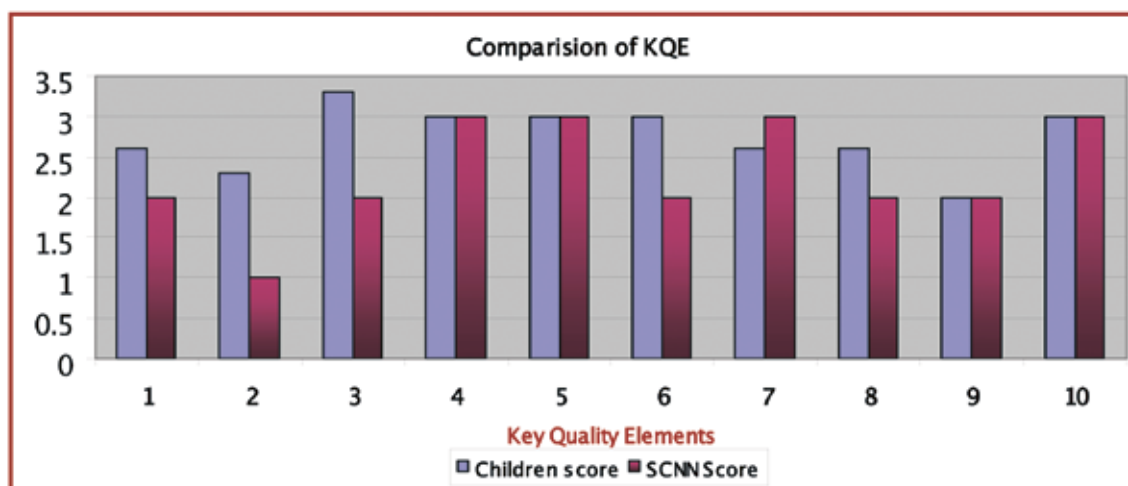
For example, in Nepal, the Key Quality Elements were assessed with Child Club members participating in the evaluation as well as separately with Save the Children Norway in Nepal staff members⁸. The same rating was used for both children and staff. The findings are compared in the diagram overleaf. In general, children gave high ratings compared to Save the Children staff and their partners for their understanding and practice of children's participation. The lowest scores were however recorded in the areas relating to their involvement in each stage of the process and respect for values and belief (KQEs 2 and 9). Save the Children Norway staff also gave lower scores on: the importance of process (KQE 1), issues of inclusion and non-discrimination (KQE 3), the relevance of methods and content (KQE 6) and, whether adults take children's views sufficiently into consideration (KQE 8). In Uganda, programme staff from Save the Children Norway working in different sectors (protection, education, HIV/AIDs) undertook a rapid assessment and analysis of Save the Children in Uganda's performance relating to the key quality elements in children's participation. There was no top rating on any of the elements with room for improvement being cited as a reason. The weakest KQEs were felt to be 1, 2 and 8 which is, in general, comparable to the results from Nepal. One key finding related to an assessment that good policies, strategies and guidelines exist and are in place. The challenge lies in implementing quality work in practice and ensuring quality processes with partners.

⁷ Save the Children Norway (2005a) Framework to Increase Quality in Work in Child Participation. Mozambique, October 2005.

⁸ 22 Save the Children Nepal staff program staff assessed the present status of Child Participation work within Save the Children Norway Nepal on 2nd April 2008

Children's and Save the Children's Norway assessment of Key Quality Elements:

Note the KQE numbers (1-10) relate to the numbered KQEs listed above



Strengthening Children's Participation

The evaluation provided a key opportunity to improve the quality, mainstreaming and accountability of children's participation across Save the Children Norway's country programs and within partner organisations.

Specific contributions from the thematic evaluation to strengthen children's participation have included *increased*:

- Capacity of Save the Children and partner staff and children and young people to practically take forwards safe, meaningful and inclusive children's participation work, including children's involvement in research, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation activities;
- Interest, awareness and skills among children and young people for promoting children's rights and peace, including a focus on non-discrimination;
- Attention to ethical issues and application of ethical guidelines, including child protection checklists and provision of psycho-social support;
- Focus on issues of inclusion, non-discrimination and fair representation;
- Use of a range of creative participatory tools with girls and boys in other parts of the program and, in other projects and initiatives;
- Use of participatory tools, such as 'Stories of Most Significant Change', 'Spider Tool' and Key Quality Elements within ongoing monitoring and evaluation work by Save the Children Norway and its partners;
- Efforts to develop and disseminate child friendly information;
- Efforts to support child led documentation, action planning and advocacy and, strategic use of children's memorandums, risk maps, peace albums, radio programmes with and by girls and boys to amplify children's voices and recommendations;
- Networking among children's groups and initiatives to enable children and young people to learn from each other and undertake joint advocacy;
- Support for children's involvement in peace building processes and initiatives;
- Recognition of the importance of supporting partnerships between adults and children so that children are involved in decision-making matters which affect them within families, schools, communities, district level governance and national level governance and, so that adults support this.

What I achieved (Nepali girl, age 17 year)

Before my involvement in peace building activities, I think I was impolite, and believed on using bodily force rather than mind to solve any problem. I talked little with unfamiliar people as I did not have confidence that other friends and community adults would appreciate me. I was frightened to move outside my home because of the traditions. I could not join any cultural and other sorts of program. However, since my involvement in Child Club

peace building activities, and through my involvement in this evaluation I have developed positive thinking. My fear and hesitation have been over. I can participate freely in any discussion and put my ideas and issues. Further, I have enhanced my capacity to make understand what I learnt.

Ideas and proposals to strengthen children’s participation as emphasised by children, young people and adult supporters – the need to:

- Document good practices and achievements in order to better share and apply lessons learnt on children’s participation in ongoing work.
- Update reporting formats for NGO partners so that they directly report on children’s participation.
- Support the establishment and strengthening of Child Clubs, Associations or Groups in more communities and schools.
- Support girls and boys to develop more inclusive, democratic Child Clubs/ groups/ peace initiatives so that girls and boys from different caste, ethnic, religious, economic backgrounds – including working children, younger children, children with disabilities, children with HIV, and/or children associated with armed forces - have more opportunities to be actively involved, to express themselves and to represent their peers.
- Increase training for children on: child rights, facilitation, communication, life skills, conflict resolution, peace building, psycho-social well-being, constitutional and election processes.
- Prepare and train children, community resource persons, NGO partners staff and Save the Children staff on various child friendly and participatory methods and monitoring tools to enhance children’s participation
- Support networking among children’s groups and children’s media initiatives. *For example supporting a network among children who produce radio shows in Guatemala; strengthening networks among peace clubs and associations in Uganda, and establishing district level Children’s Forums that bring together Child Club members in Nepal.*
- Explore and support increased opportunities for adult institutions to create partnerships with children’s groups. *For example to involve Child Club members in community based protection work, in school governance, local governance and district level governance meetings concerning children, peace, reconciliation or reconstruction.*
- Increase opportunities for children to be meaningfully and safely involved in national policies and processes affecting them, including formal peace talks, constitutional elections and other relevant political processes. However, the issue of the limits to children’s participation also needs to be taken into careful consideration – when is it safe and when is it meaningful for children to engage in policy making and other decision making processes. This is discussed further in sections 6 and 8 of this report.
- Strengthen child focused networks and consortiums to better promote and support inclusive meaningful children’s participation and opportunities for inclusive sustainable child clubs/ groups. *For example, the Ugandan Child Rights National Network, the Consortium of Child Clubs in Nepal.*
- Identify programme and advocacy opportunities which increase children’s participation in peace building, including the ‘Children/ Schools as Zones of Peace’ initiative
- Increase vocational skill training for young people and skills to mobilise income and resources for child and youth led initiatives

See also box on p. 19 for additional ideas on how to strengthen children’s participation in peace building.

IV. Armed and Post Conflict and how it has affected the lives of children, young people and adults

Root Causes of Conflict

In each of the countries, children and young people involved in the thematic evaluation were clearly able to identify the root causes of the conflict in their specific socio-political context:

- In **Nepal** children and young people highlighted social issues, political issues and factors relating to people's attitudes and behaviour. Social Issues which lead to conflict, include: poverty, unemployment, wide gap between the rich and poor, inequality and discrimination based on caste, ethnicity, gender and/or disability, lack of education, illiteracy, alcohol and drug use, abuse and violations of rights, discrimination against people with disabilities, inequity, lack of jobs, girl trafficking, alcohol and drug use; Attitudinal and behavioural factors include lack of trust and respect, jealousy and greed and abusive behaviour; Political issues include lack of good governance, corruption, power struggles, autocratic rule of the King and political conflict between the Maoists and the government.
- In **Guatemala**, children and young people identified social injustice, including discrimination, extreme poverty and exploitation of the Mayan people and other ethnic minority groups; political factors such as the repressive State system and a lack of democracy; the economic situation, the fact that a small economic elite, with the support of military forces, the government and religious leaders, concentrated national power and wealth in its own hands; religious factors, including the repression and prosecution of the Mayan faith and, the appearance of mainly protestant sects which created confusion and division; the social ethnic situation, including the fact that child mortality, due to hunger, disease and lack of vital services, disproportionately affected the Mayan population. This was considered as the worst violation of human rights by the children and young people. In addition, communities were plundered and natural resources, such as water, wood and fertile land, were expropriated.
- In **Bosnia-Herzegovina**, root causes include: social exclusion caused by the unstable economic situation of poor families and discrimination based on religion or ethnicity and increasing violence within society; lack of political will to ensure respect and equality among different groups; psycho-social factors including feelings of revenge and a lack of willingness to build; and a lack of value for children's participation.
- In **Uganda** girls and boys expressed how poverty, poor leadership, disunity, struggle for power, jealousy and misunderstandings, discrimination (based on ethnic, tribal or religious differences), ignorance, illiteracy, greed and corruption and foreign interference were causes of the conflict.

Impact of Conflict

Children and young people also recognize the significant negative impact armed conflict has had on them as individuals, their families, communities and countries:

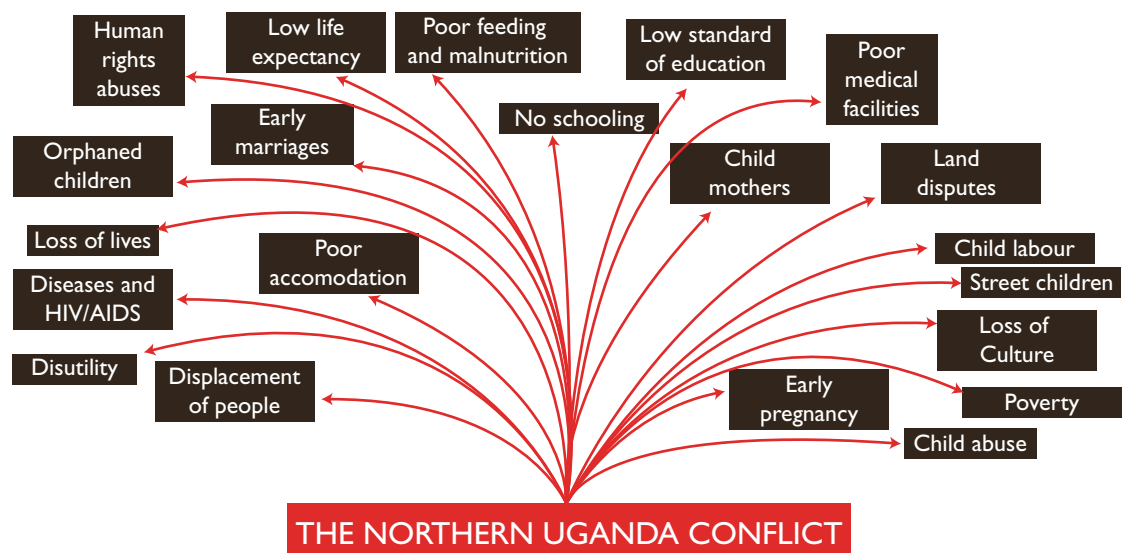
- In **Uganda** the conflict has involved the abduction of children and gross violations of child rights including forcing children to carry heavy loads, to kill, boys and girls to fight and girls to become 'wives' of commanders. Displacement to and life in over-crowded Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps has led to a decline in cultural practices and loss of cultural values which has a negative impact on child rearing; there is increased immorality within the camps, increased sexual abuse of girls, increased risks of HIV and early pregnancy. When returning to their villages, issues of land dispute are common. Other significant effects of the conflict include: displacement with a majority of people being uprooted from their homes into IDP camps and emerging land disputes which was identified by children and young people through their research as becoming increasingly sensitive and violent. For example, after more than two decades of conflict displaced people are



beginning to return home only to find their land claimed by others. Children and young people see all the issues relating to land disputes 'as a potential for future conflict'. Loss of culture which has been cited by the children and young people as an outcome of the two decades of conflict. This is particularly evident in the case of the Acholi traditions.

How I was abducted, Northern Uganda

It was June 1998 when the rebels attacked our home in Acek in Odek sub-country. It was at midnight; and we were all deep asleep. We were awoken by the loud noise in the compound. The rebel commander flashed his torchlight into our eyes; and we could not see anymore. She had two men with her, who pulled me out of my bed. I pleaded with them to leave me. One of them held me tight; and gave me a strong blow at the back of my head. He threw me outside where I found other children tied together with sisal ropes around their waists. It was then that I realized that we have been abducted. We were given heavy loads of merchandise, which they had looted from the nearby trading centre, to carry. They warned us that if we fell down, we would be killed. Two girls who tried to escape were chopped into pieces by other children. Early the next morning, it rained. It got darker with lightning and thunder. I slid and hid in an abandoned house. I spent the night there. The following day, as I was trying to find my way back home, I ran into a camp of government soldiers. I told them my sad story. One of them listened to me attentively as he wrote down what I said. He escorted me back home. Since then, I have been getting bad dreams.



- In **Bosnia-Herzegovina** the post conflict situation features increased economic insecurity in families which has a negative impact on children, families and society. There are high rates of violence and abuse of children, both physical and sexual, by peers and adults within families, schools and broader society which has a negative impact on children's psycho-social well-being and their positive sense of identity. There is increased segregation of families from different religions, increased exclusion of ethnic minorities and discrimination in schools. Children insult each other for different reasons (ethnic or religious background, social status, disability). The environment is unsafe for children, especially in areas where demolished/ruined/ abandoned/unlit buildings remain as these are areas where drug addicts and alcoholics tend to gather. Among secondary school children there is increased anti-social behaviour by young people including drug use and crime. Children face risks of child trafficking. Minefields still exist in areas outside the towns. There are not sufficient places for safe, enjoyable activities by children, such as sports centres or parks. The long-term economic, political and moral crises must be addressed, especially poverty.
- In **Guatemala** children and adolescents explained that they did not experience the war directly. However, they understand and feel the effects of the internal armed conflict in the systematic violence, repression and oppression which are still pervasive today in the country. They also feel the pain, resentment and sadness of their parents and relatives. They feel that the fear and silence that prevailed during the conflict is still tangible in people, families and communities. A key concern is that the history of the armed internal conflict and its impact are not included in the school curricula. In addi-

tion, children and their families have fears about conflict, violence, gang culture, criminal activities and the negative impact of speaking out. They want social injustice, disintegration of families and increased violence in society to be seriously addressed.

- In **Nepal** the impact of conflict is widespread. However, some groups or communities appear to have been more severely impacted than others – depending on the strength of Maoist mobilisation in different regions. The Maoists actively recruited young people to their cause through organising cultural programmes and extra curricula activities in schools. Active child club members have been targeted by Maoists but it is also important to note that child club members also claim that they are more able to assert themselves, to negotiate and to avoid being ‘lured’. There have however been some cases of child abduction. In some districts child marriage has increased. Young girls also dress as married women as a ‘protection mechanism’ as unmarried girls are more likely to be abducted. The Maoists have initiated some forced social reforms in areas under their control which reduce gender and caste discrimination and dowry practices as well as the use of alcohol and gambling. However, many feel that these social reforms will not be sustainable after the peace agreement as they have been introduced as a result of fear, rather than by choice. Fighting between opposition parties has resulted in frequent strikes which negatively affect the delivery of basic services (education, health), livelihoods and transport. Changes in children’s play have been observed as younger children’s play imitates fighting between the security forces and the rebels.

A **body mapping exercise** was effectively used by girls and boys in all the four countries to explore children’s diverse experiences in conflict and post conflict settings. The body map below from **Nepal** illustrates some of the different impacts – negative and positive - of conflict on boys and girls of different age groups and from different backgrounds, including children associated with the armed forces.

BODY PART	NEGATIVE IMPACT	POSITIVE IMPACT
HEAD	It is common for boys age 11 to 18 to be porters for the Maoists. Bad dreams or sleeplessness, as well as other psychological expression of fear are experienced by girls and boys of different age groups.	People, including girls and boys of different ages are more aware of their rights; they have increased knowledge and interest on political issues; Children and adults are more aware of caste untouchability. During the Maoist insurgency there was decreased caste discrimination.
EYES	Girls and boys saw violent incidences – people being hit by a bullet, seeing injured body parts. Psychological experiences like crying or wanting to cry were also felt by all children, especially the girls aged 10 and 15 years. Some children were affected by temporary blindness as a result of the bomb blasts.	
EARS	Temporary deafness and hearing high pitch sound are common experience felt. Some children reported how they avoided listening to the news related to conflict, as it made them feel sad about the situation.	
NOSE	Pungent smell of explosive material, bad smell of decaying body and difficulty in respiration are some of the common experiences of the children.	

MOUTH	Open big mouth by being frightened and loss of appetite were felt by children of different ages.	Some girls and boys above 12 years became more vocal for own rights and interests – as they had increased awareness and knowledge on the social and political issues affecting them.
HEART	Lower self confidence for children of 10 to 18 years, feeling of fear and hurt. In addition some children expressed how they conflict situation and insecurity made them more curious, and could lead to an increase in revengeful attitude.	
HANDS	Changes in children's play – more play fighting and violent games especially among boys under 12 years. In each of the districts some girls and boys, aged 12 – 18 years had been directly associated with the fighting forces – as messengers, porters or fighters.	During the Maoist insurgency was decreasing gambling among adults and among older children – as the Maoists actively discouraged gambling.
LEGS	Some children experienced injuries to their legs. Some children, especially girls 14 years and older, left school or changed school for the fear of being abducted by the Maoists.	During the Maoist insurgency there was a decrease in young males (15-18 years) roaming around at night using drink and drugs.
BODY	Some girls were encouraged to dress as married women by their parents, even though they were unmarried, as the married women were less likely to be abducted by the Maoists.	

V. Children's Vision and Understanding of Peace and Peace Building



Peace is important to children. They have expressed a desire to end the conflict, insecurity, violence and discrimination that have negatively affected their lives and the lives of their families and community members. Children seek a peaceful life where they can live without fear and where basic services can be provided to all citizens without discrimination. They dream of an environment where all girls, boys, men and women's rights are respected.

Vision of Peace, collective ideas from children in Nepal: Children have a vision of their communities where all girls and boys experience their rights. The sun is shining and there is a green and peaceful environment. There is no more discrimination against girls, children with disabilities, low castes, different ethnic or class groups, or children affected by HIV/AIDs. Caste baste un-touchability is ended. Everyone is treated fairly and equally. Child friendly schools, health, water, and play facilities exist and are accessible to all – all girls and boys attend school. Schools are recognised as Zones of Peace. Poverty is ended. Violence against children and women, including threats, abuse and rape is ended. Alcoholism is ended. All will be safe and secure. Children are not exploited. Juvenile courts are established. Vocational education is provided to young people, and family members have access to good job opportunities. There is no corruption. Children are encouraged to participate and their voices are respected and heard in families, schools, communities and nations. Children are involved in peace building, especially through their Child Clubs and schools which are Zones of Peace. Their voices and ideas are also heard in policies affecting them, including opportunities for direct representation in the Constitutional Assembly.

- In **Guatemala** children and young people's shared a vision where: there is no more violence; no more poverty; no more discrimination; no more gangs, delinquency or drug use; children have access to education, health, recreation and a local church; girls and boys have the right to participate; people live in harmony with love, tranquillity and comprehension in their families, schools and communities. Children also emphasised the importance of respecting the environment, animals, plants and natural resources, so there will be true, long-lasting peace.
- In **Bosnia-Herzegovina** children have a vision where there is increased respect for children's rights; better implementation of international and national laws; increased democracy, freedom of movement and strengthening of civil society. Children and young people have also highlighted the importance of creating safe and protective environments, with increased opportunities for girls and boys from different ethnic and religious backgrounds to socialise and play together.
- In **Uganda** children have emphasized the importance of leaving the congested IDP camps and returning to their villages where they can cultivate their own land and generate their own livelihoods. Violence, discrimination, corruption and poverty will be ended, so that children and families can access quality services (education, health, water) in their own locality. Adults and children will be able to restore their traditional culture, which was adversely affected during life in the camps. Incidences of abuse, early marriage, early motherhood, and HIV/Aids infection will be reduced. Boys and girls have also highlighted the importance of faithfulness, prayer, forgiveness and reconciliation.

Children's Understanding of Peace Building

'Peace is not just a word; it is not just about feeling well with others, peace involves many things. Communication is one of the fundamental bases. Before making any decision, it is important to communicate to avoid conflicts.'
(children, Guatemala)

Children and young people, including younger children, have demonstrated an holistic understanding of the complexity of peace building, taking into consideration social (attitude, behaviour and value), cultural and religious factors, as well as structural, economic and political factors. Children and young people understand that peace building comprises of many different elements that have to be worked on. These include the need for: peace talks, peace agreements, reconciliation among different groups (religious, ethnic, caste, tribe), political stability, democracy, good governance, addressing corruption, unity, equity, sharing of resources, job security, development, transparency, freedom of movement and speech, respect for human/ women/ children's rights, equality for all and non-discrimination, access to education and health services, respect for children's participation and views, honesty, cooperation, friendship with all regardless of background. In Uganda the importance of prayer, forgiveness and reconciliation among tribes has also been highlighted.

As emphasised in the Nepal country report: *'Such a subtle and complex understanding of peace building is quite a revelation as most of the people participating in the process were between 13 and 18 years of age. Clearly, the understanding of peace among children and young people reveals the complexity and exposure inherent to the armed conflict, which not only had influenced their thinking process, but also appeared to have forced them to assume new responsibilities in family, child clubs, schools and community level and higher..*

Children have emphasized how peace building starts at an individual level among family and friends, and moves outwards. Children and young people from Guatemala emphasised the importance of families as *'an important nucleus; it is the heart of a community, of a society. Thus, it is basic; it is a fundamental axis for re-building peace... The meaning of family must be valued, as well as the role it plays within the society for future generations'*.

Children and young people have suggested that a wide range of people should be involved in peace building including: Government officials, rebel groups, different political parties, religious and community leaders, intellectuals, women and men, girls and boys, representatives from all class/ caste/ ethnic/ religious groups including people with disabilities, rich and poor, NGO representatives, police, teachers, parents and children. All children without discrimination should be involved - including orphans, children with disabilities, children (formerly) associated with armed forces, girls and boys, rich and poor, school going and working children, including children in clubs/associations.

Various forms of discrimination and exclusion based on religion, ethnicity, caste or low income have been instrumental in each of the conflict scenarios in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Guatemala, Nepal and Uganda. Children and young people have therefore emphasized how inclusive participation, non-discrimination, respect for human rights and children's rights, equality and fair distribution of resources are essential to establishing and sustaining peace.

The importance of broader political and social development initiatives have also been emphasized by the young participants. Structural changes which address poverty, discrimination, unfair distribution of resources and violation of human rights are needed. Political processes, through which peace may be agreed, justice secured and structural changes promoted, have been described according to the specific socio-political context.

Children's advocacy for increased space in political processes to further peace building and realisation of child rights:

Children and young people are advocating for increased space in political processes affecting them, including formal peace talk, reconciliation and reconstruction processes so that they may more meaningfully contribute to efforts to identify, address and monitor the structural factors which inhibit peace and the fulfilment of children's rights.

For example:

- in Nepal children have highlighted the importance of the peace agreement and the constitutional assembly process as a means to establish more inclusive forms of governance, to address poverty and discrimination and, to ensure fair distribution of resources;
- in Uganda children have advocated for space to be included in the formal peace talks taking place in Juba (South Sudan) and have contributed to consultations on agenda 3 of the peace talks on accountability and reconciliation. In particular, they have emphasized the importance of forgiveness and reconciliation and making use of traditional forms of justice;
- in Bosnia-Herzegovina delegates of children have met with the Prime Minister to advocate for their recommendations on the provision of quality education, and the importance of addressing existing discrimination within the school system – based on religious difference;
- in Guatemala children have reflected on the presidential elections and efforts to ensure greater attention to monitoring of the peace accords and implementation of children's rights, as well as advocating for the historical memory of the internal armed conflict to be maintained. Children and young people have also explained their interest in addressing gang culture and youth delinquency. Recognising some of the root causes which contribute to delinquency they are advocating for improved education and employment opportunities for marginalised children and youth and, increased support to families to reduce family violence and, to prevent children from running away to the streets or joining gangs.

Children and young people have emphasised the importance of involving them in peace building. As they know their own situation best they can best explain how conflict has impacted upon their lives. They have important and unique contributions to make to peace building and they have the right to be informed and involved in decisions that affect their lives. Children and young people have also articulated how participation in peace building fosters attitudes, knowledge and behaviours which contribute to peace, forgiveness, respect for others, and inclusion, helping them overcome or transform negative emotions, anger or frustration that could otherwise lead them to engage in revengeful acts, anti-social behaviour, gang violence or other forms political violence.

In Nepal the concept and practice of Children as Zones of Peace (CZOP), and Schools as Zones of Peace (SZOP) have supported advocacy, awareness-raising and action at a range of levels to support children's participation in peace building. *Consideration should be given to adapting and applying the concept of Children / Schools as Zones of Peace in other contexts affected by conflict and/or insecurity.*

Children and Schools as Zones of Peace (CZOP) / (SZOP), Nepal:

During the conflict period collaborative efforts between children, child clubs, local NGO partners, INGOs, UN and government officials have promoted understanding and action on the concept of Children and Schools as Zones of Peace which should not be interrupted or used by warring parties. Collaborative work on the Children or Schools as Zones of Peace concept has led to various initiatives including: the formation of a national Coalition for CZOP; a public commitment by five major political parties to respect children as zones of peace; the issuance of child protection guidelines for security forces by the Prime Minister's Office; and, the announcement by the Government that schools are also zones of peace. During the conflict period, the Maoist rebels targeted some schools and Child Clubs to organise Maoist propaganda programmes and to lure students and teachers to their cause. However, awareness-raising on CZOP has resulted in increased confidence among children, parents, teachers, and head teachers to negotiate with the warring parties to prevent interruption of children's education and to better protect children from being associated with fighting forces. For example, at the community level children and child clubs have successfully negotiated with both warring parties not to involve children, not to use or involve schools in the conflict and not to interfere in the work of Children's Clubs.

'Peace can be built through peaceful means, children are very good peace builders.'

(children, Northern Uganda)

VI. Children's Roles as Agents of Peace

'We think that children are the basis of a process for searching for peace and building it. What we wanted to achieve was to inform children and help them understand that there is a much better world, and that they can make it happen with specific actions.' (Children,ACJ, Guatemala)

It is crucial to recognise and engage with children and young people as social and political actors, as potential agents of peace. Promoting and supporting children's participation, including children's participation in peace processes, peace agreements and broader peace building initiatives can support the better fulfilment of children's rights.

Children's roles as agents of peace

In their respective child clubs, groups and associations girls and boys are participating actively to ensure their own protection and to contribute to peace building through:

- Organising children's meetings, how to live, to relate to each other and to respect each other, and to better protect themselves;
- Preparing poems, songs, dance, drama, debates and (wall) magazines to sensitise peers, family, school and community members on child rights and peace;
- Using local and district level radio programmes to raise awareness, spread messages and encourage dialogue on peace and child rights;
- Promoting conflict transformation, dialogue and supporting peer advice, peer support, peer education and peer counselling;
- Encouraging all girls and boys to go to school and to study (including children who were formerly associated with armed forces, and children with disabilities);
- Raising their voice to tackle discrimination, abuse, violence and corruption within school and community settings;
- Promoting children's participation in school governance, local governance and policy and practice developments to address issues which affect them

Children are also taking specific action according to the particular socio-cultural, political context of their country and immediate environment:

In **Nepal** girls and boys aged 8-18 years from different ethnic, caste and socio-economic backgrounds have been actively involved in peace building initiatives, particularly through their Child Clubs. Save the Children in collaboration with local NGO partners has been actively supporting the development of Child Clubs as a key strategy for realising children's participation. Many of the Child Clubs are community based. Some Clubs are school based. Networks among Child Clubs exist in many districts. There are also some opportunities for Child Club members to meet, to exchange experiences and to undertake joint advocacy at a national level. Roles played by children and young people in peace building, especially through their Child Clubs, include:

- Promoting understanding and respect for 'Children as Zones of Peace' and 'Schools as Zones of Peace' – including negotiations with Maoist and Government army officials not to interrupt children's lives or education.
- Advocating for peace through: the organisation of peace campaigns, rallies and workshops at local, district and national levels.
- Raising their voice against violations of children's rights including early marriage, discrimination, abuse and violence. In many villages child club representatives are participating in village child protection committees, and school management committees.
- Engaging in the constitutional election processes at district, and national levels. In a national level consultation Child Club representatives developed a 12 point Declaration by children's representatives from across the country which has been presented to concerned political parties and agencies⁹.

In **Northern Uganda** Save the Children in collaboration with local NGO partners has been supporting children to form school based Peace Club, and/or children's associations for out of school children. Both the Peace Clubs and Children's Associations have been actively involved in peace building efforts such as:

- Organising awareness raising and sensitisation programmes on child rights, peace and child protection within communities and schools, as well as at district level.
- Initiating community activities to build co-operation and solidarity amongst children and adults, to raise awareness of HIV/AIDS and to support re-integration of formerly abducted children back into their communities. These activities include sensitisation about the rights of children, including formerly abducted boys and girls, as well as peer counselling and/or mediation.
- Contributing to peace albums, preparing and disseminating messages on peace through radio programmes, music, dance and drama.
- Promoting unity at community level through cultural dance and drumming.
- Undertaking home visits to strengthen relationships between children and their parents.
- Praying for peace and reconciliation.
- Engaging in consultations on agenda 3 of the peace talks on accountability and reconciliation and influencing the preparations of the Peace Agreement.

In **Guatemala** Save the Children Norway has been working in collaboration with local NGO partners and radio stations to support children's expression, participation and organisation. Children's radio groups, groups of mental health promoters and youth groups are supported. These groups bring together girls and boys from different ethnic, socio-economic, geographic backgrounds and support them to be actively involved in various peace building initiatives including:

- Working to maintain the historical memory of the internal armed conflict with children, parents and other adults within schools and communities. Children encourage their parents to share their stories and experiences with their children so that children can learn from them and feel freer to express themselves, rather than reproducing the silence that has prevailed.
- Participating in dialogue with the Ministry of Education to revise the education curricula to better reflect and include study of the history of the armed conflict, the importance of peace building and the benefits of multi-culturalism.
- Working as 'mental health promoters' to promote better mental health among peers, especially those affected by the civil war such as orphans.
- Undertaking public advocacy through radio programs, the painting of wall murals and the development of articles for a magazine to promote their messages about conflict and peace and the need for justice.
- Establishing community based children and/or youth organisations to promote values such as solidarity and support among its members. Through organisation and participation, children and adolescents become aware of the fight for their values and human rights and they are more able to organise transformative action which addresses the violence in society, and seeks to create a more peaceful existence in which girls and boys rights are better respected.
- Organising a peace campaign to promote use of non-violent toys
- Encouraging the participation of indigenous girls and young women in organisations that open up spaces for girl's and women's expression
- Sharing their ideas with representatives of the Human Rights Ombudsman's Office to increase attention to children's rights and the need to implement the Peace Accords.

Peace Campaign to promote use of non-violent toys, Alta Verapaz, Guatemala:

In the Alta Verapaz area of Guatemala children have organised an effective peace campaign to promote use of non-violent toys among children. The campaign provided an important opportunity for children to exchange violent toys (such as toy guns, knives) for non-violent toys. Over 100 toy guns were collected and exchanged for non-violent toys. The campaign was organised by children with the support from the Foundation of Indigenous Women. Support from parents, local business people, the media (announcements about the campaign on cable TV and the radio) and the wider community was also mobilised to ensure a successful campaign. The children who started this initiative do not want any more children to grow up in violence. They want to prevent children from becoming members of gang groups, and/or from living in the street. For these reasons, the campaign was organised.

In **Bosnia-Herzegovina** Save the Children, in collaboration with local NGO and school partners, has been supporting different children's participation initiatives both within schools and within broader community settings to empower children to express themselves and to work together to realise their rights. Girls and boys aged 6-18 years have been actively involved in action and advocacy initiatives to create a safer and friendlier environment for children in the post-conflict scenario in which they live through Children's Parliaments, Monitor's Groups and Reference Groups. Their roles have included:

- Forming a Children's Parliament in early 2006 with support from the NGO partner 'Amica-prijateljice' in Srebrenica, with the aim of increasing awareness of children's rights in the local community to avoid manipulation and discrimination of children.
- Organizing round table discussions on issues relating to children's rights and peace building. For example, young people in Srebrenica were concerned about the effect of the 1995 massacre. Young people from the region, together with internally displaced and returnee children, initiated and organized a round table conference to discuss issues of importance for children living in the town and invited community leaders, local stakeholders and religious leaders to talk together with them.
- Implementation of a project 'Children and NGOs monitor the situation related to children's rights in Bosnia-Herzegovina' which is supported by NGO partners «Zdravo da ste»¹⁰ from Banja Luka and «Naša djeca»¹¹ from Sarajevo to actively work on empowering the children for a more active role in the process of monitoring of the situation related to the rights of children. Children from elementary schools from different parts of Bosnia-Herzegovina have been involved and 18 children's groups for monitoring child rights are established and functioning.
- Children's *Reference Groups* involving children from different ethnic groups and religious backgrounds were established in each project area to support sharing of knowledge gained through the thematic evaluation process and to strengthen peace building action initiatives.
- Undertaking public advocacy through highlighting the importance of creating safe and protective environments for children. They have designed 'risk maps' of areas in their localities in which they feel unsafe and why and have developed action plans to make these places safe and protective for children which they have then presented to the local authorities, including the mayor, for action.
- Organizing a children's delegation to meet with the Prime Minister to advocate for the provision of quality education where no child is discriminated against.
- Children have advocated for their involvement in developing the school curricula

Children's main activities towards peace building have largely focused on raising awareness of peace, promoting the social values needed for peace, strengthening social relationships and, in some contexts, demonstrating peaceful ways of resolving conflicts with families, schools and communities. To some extent children are also rebuilding social structures and contributing to creating safer environments and a stronger civil society. They are doing this by organising children's clubs and networks, groups and organisations and, by influencing school, community, local and national governance planning through dialogue between children and adults. These collaborative efforts can make significantly contribute to monitoring and better implementation of children's rights. As highlighted earlier, children and young people are also advocating for increased space in political processes affecting them, including formal peace talk, reconciliation and reconstruction processes.

Opportunities for Children's Participation in Peace Processes

Children and young people are advocating for increased space in political processes affecting them, including formal peace talks and reconciliation and reconstruction processes. Questions about when and how it is most meaningful and ethical for children to participate in peace processes and agreements, or other relevant political processes, require careful consideration in each socio-political context. The **Uganda scenario** is interesting to consider in this respect.

¹⁰ How are you

¹¹ Our children

When is it safe and meaningful for children to participate in peace talks? Exploring the Uganda scenario as an example

Throughout the thematic evaluation process children's representatives in Northern Uganda continuously highlighted the importance of sending their own representatives to participate in the formal peace talks in Juba. Their reasons for sending their own representatives to Juba include: they are not content with what is being discussed by others; they feel that children's views are often left out, yet, they are vital; children have brilliant ideas that can push forward the peace talks; participation in the peace talks will bring unity between the children in captivity and themselves and may encourage the rebels to release children. The District Speaker vowed to support these advocacy efforts by children and to also explore opportunities for children's representation in the District Council to ensure follow up to children's issues.

Possibilities for children's direct representation in the formal peace talks in Juba was debated during successive Advisory Committee meetings, through radio advocacy, as well as through the lobbying of district and national leaders by children and young people. While children's views were seriously considered there was reluctance by adults (from the government, UN and INGOs) to support children's direct representation in the peace talks at Juba. The main reasons relate to what is considered safe and meaningful for children and, what is meaningful for the process. Consideration of factors included: the manner in which peace talks primarily involve key representatives from the government and the rebel group; they are taking place in a neighbouring country; the peace talks may continue over a series of months; they may break down without a final agreement. These all contributed to the decision of adults that it was not necessarily appropriate or meaningful for children's direct representation. The fact that children's representation would involve the child representatives being away from home for long periods of time with an ensuing negative impact on their education and, potentially without any opportunities of having a positive influence on the impact of the proceedings also contributed to this decision.

However, more meaningful alternative opportunities for children's participation in the peace process were taken forward. For example, since mid/late 2007 children were encouraged and supported by local NGOs, INGOs, UN and the government to participate in consultations concerning peace talk agenda issues, such as agenda 3 on reconciliation and accountability. Initial consultations on Agenda 3 – reconciliation and accountability of the formal peace talks - were held on 22nd August, 2007 with 19 children and young people (11 boys/young men and 9 girls/young women) from Gulu who were involved in the Thematic Evaluation. In September 2007 more than 200 children and young people from four districts of Northern Uganda and Teso region were consulted on agenda 3. The consultations were collaboratively organized by NGOs - Concerned Parents Association, Trans-cultural Psychosocial Organization, Save the Children in Uganda - and UNICEF. The outcomes of the consultations were presented to Government representatives who were involved in the peace talks. The Government officials also met directly with children's representatives to gain further insight into children's perspectives. In the emerging agreement on agenda 3 between the Government of the Republic of Uganda and the Lords Resistance Army there is a clear section which includes the need to 'recognise and consider the experiences, views and concerns of children', 'to protect the dignity, privacy and security of children in any accountability and reconciliation proceedings', 'to ensure that children are not subjected to criminal justice proceedings, but may participate in reconciliation processes', and to 'encourage and facilitate the participation of children in the processes for implementing this agreement'.

In this way children's views and suggestions from their consultations on agenda 3 have been heard and considered seriously. These consultations took place within children's local communities and districts. Some children also had the opportunity to represent their peers in a national level meeting with government officials. Preparations for, during and following the consultation process paid attention to practice standards and ethical guidelines in order to fully promote and support meaningful opportunities for children and young people.

Sadly, the Juba peace talks were suspended at the time of compiling this report. However, if the Government and the LRA return back to the negotiating table to sign the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, it would be very important to involve children and young people in the implementation process of the Agreement.

Such opportunities are also mandated and encouraged in the agreement relating to agenda 3.

At a district level, the District Speaker in Gulu, Uganda has also supported the idea of children's representation in district level meetings which affect children, as well as supporting the idea of establishing children's parliaments at the district level and at a lower level. Each of these mechanisms could allow meaningful opportunities for children's involvement in reconciliation, peace building and reconstruction processes, especially if practice standards in children's participation are applied.

Girls and boys in Uganda, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Guatemala and Nepal have all proven that they have significant ideas, suggestions and practical contributions to make to post-conflict reconstruction processes which would further consideration of and respect for the fulfilment of children's rights. In addition, the **importance of involving children and young people in monitoring implementation of peace accords and peace agreements**, especially in relation to the fulfilment of children's rights, has been identified as an important mechanism in each country to increase the accountability of governments to children and communities both in terms of peace and respect for human rights. The **concept of children/schools as Zones of Peace** could be usefully adapted and applied in other country contexts which are affected by conflict to further the realisation of children's rights and support children's participation in conflict settings. At every level, new kinds of partnerships need to be created between children and adults so that girls and boys have opportunities to have dialogue with adults, to share their views and suggestions and for these views and suggestions to be taken seriously. In addition to providing representational space in local and national governance structures as well as in school governance, there should also be more regular meetings between adults and children in their local context. For example, government officials, community and religious leaders should also be encouraged to regularly attend children's own club/ association or network meetings so that there is increased dialogue and joint planning between children and adults in their local communities in order to encourage mutual learning and collaboration.

Children's Achievements

Children's achievements vary in each project and in each context depending on a range of factors, particularly the level of support mobilised from adults. However, some general achievements made by children who are actively involved in peace building across diverse contexts which have been repeatedly highlighted through the global thematic evaluation process are presented in the box below.

Key achievements made by girls and boys through their participation and role as peace builders:

- **Individual children have benefited developmentally and personally** from their role as peace builders. For example, girls and boys have fostered values of respect, tolerance, forgiveness and empathy which bring them hope, healing and better acceptance in communities; they have increased self-esteem and increased skills in communication, negotiation, conflict-resolution and peace building.
- **Children have demonstrated their capacity as agents of peace**, mobilizing peers and adults to play more active roles in peace building, supporting and counselling their peers and resolving conflicts within families, schools and communities;
- **Children have increased awareness of child rights and peace** among children, parents, teachers, community members and officials;
- In some settings, such as in Nepal, children's clubs have worked together with adults to make sure that **children and schools are increasingly respected and valued as 'Zones of Peace'** so that children's lives and education are less negatively affected by conflict and armed groups.
- **Teachers have increased respect for children's capacity, creativity and potential.** Teachers are more willing to learn from children, and to collaborate with children to bring about positive social changes within schools and communities.
- There is **decreased use of corporal punishment and humiliating treatment** by teachers to pupils in schools in both Uganda and Bosnia-Herzegovina and, decreased violence in families in Nepal.
- There is **decreased bullying and discrimination among peers within schools and commu-**

- nities** and greater efforts to support inclusion and non-discriminatory behaviour by all.
- In Nepal there are **decreased levels of recruitment of children into the armed forces** in areas where there are active Child Clubs.
 - **Community members and government officials who have been interacting with the children as peace builders have increased respect for children's contributions and role.** As a result there are an increasing number of adults advocating for and supporting children's participation in peace building at district and national levels.
 - **Children's associations/ organisations are increasingly being recognised as key institutions in civil society** which can be actively involved and included in relevant practice and policy developments affecting children and the better implementation of children's rights.
 - In some settings **concrete actions have been taken by communities, school authorities, local authorities, or NGOs to address protection issues** affecting girls and boys in their local communities or schools.
 - In some settings, particularly in Uganda, **children's views have influenced peace processes and the development of peace agreements.** This has the potential to increase attention to and secure the better fulfilment of children's rights

'We have learnt that reconciliation is the best means of conflict resolution because it has had some impact on the people we talked to; it makes us to be tolerant with war affected victims like the abductees and to know that they also need love, care and above all peace; we have learnt how to interact with various classes of people without discrimination; we have learnt that prayer is one of the means to creating peace; we have also explored our talents through poems, debates, songs, drama'

(girls, Sacred Heart Peace Club, Uganda)

What Hinders Children's Participation in Peace Building?

'Intolerance, violence, mistrust, adult attitudes, lack of support from the authorities, the lack of a culture of peace' are all factors which inhibit children's participation in peace building according to children and young people in Guatemala¹².

Factors that hinder children's participation in peace building:

- Adult attitudes and traditional practices - children should not express their views; a lack of trust in children's capacities; lack of value for girls and boys contributions;
- Discriminatory attitudes – gender, disability, ethnicity, religion, socio-economic status etc;
- Misunderstanding of children's rights and a lack of awareness about children's participation;
- Lack of attention to ethical practice so that children are put at risk and/or not provided with support needed. Where necessary, this may also include psycho-social support;
- Children's fear of speaking up, of being blamed or punished for what they say;
- Violations of children's rights;
- Authoritarian teaching practices, over-burdened school curricula, non-involvement of children in developing the school curricula;
- When children's initiatives are poorly coordinated or non-inclusive children may lose their sense and motivation as a group;
- Lack of policies, laws and practices to involve children in decision-making processes;
- Insecurity, conflict and violence – including gang violence;
- Poverty;
- Poor governance and corruption;
- Discrimination and lack of opportunities for marginalised groups;
- Poor implementation and monitoring of Peace Accords or Peace Agreements;
- Weak justice systems and impunity contributing to increasing crime, violence and insecurity;
- A lack of understanding of the history of conflict which should be actively included in the education curricula.

¹² Save the Children Norway in Guatemala (2007). National Reflection Workshop, November 2007

Adult Views and Experiences in Engaging with Children Involved in Peace-Building

'Opinions of adults about children's experiences and roles in peace building are contradictory.'

(Bosnia-Herzegovina Country Report)

This statement reflects a broader finding from each country. In diverse socio-cultural political contexts many adults – parents, teachers, community and religious elders, government officials, NGO workers - continue to under-estimate children's potential and do not see a value in encouraging girls and boys to express their views or participate in decision-making processes which affect their lives. Particularly, when it comes to formal peace processes or peace accords, many adults think that children are not able to influence formal agreements for peace due to their age, lack of experience and maturity. However, correspondingly an increasing numbers of adults - parents, teachers, community and religious elders, government officials, NGO workers - are recognising children's capacities, realising the benefits of listening to the distinct perspectives of girls and boys and the importance of including children in peace building initiatives and peace processes which affect them.

'Other adults acknowledge that they must learn a lot from children's experience and recognise their capacity, energy and willpower.'

(Guatemala Country Report)

In many cases, adults direct interactions with groups of children who are actively participating in some kind of initiative or social project has forced adults to question their assumptions and perceptions of children. In the process adult attitudes and behaviour with girls and boys may have been transformed. Awareness and knowledge of children's rights is also seen as a critical factor which increases adults' sensitivity to and support for children's participation.

'Initially many adult had admitted their ignorance and lack of confidence on children in the potential, ability and skills in peace process. But when they observed and participated in child led activities, their views and perception were changed.'

(Nepal Country Report)

In Uganda there are increasingly positive and supportive relationships between the adult facilitators (patrons and matrons) of the peace clubs and associations. Many of these facilitators are also teachers. They therefore had to re-learn new roles in terms of participatory work with children: *"Our children now enjoy their freedom of expression; and their views are honoured by adults. Before I became a patron, I used to have conflicting issues with children's rights. I have now realised how important children's participation is. There is a good relationship between children, young people, patrons, matrons and researchers."*¹³ The patrons and matrons have also shared encouraging feedback regarding children's role and positive impact in terms of creating non-violent schools and communities. One matron shared, *"Our peace club members have been involved in mediating conflicts. This has resulted in reduced conflicts in the school. Also, the drop out rate for girls in the school has gone down because of peer counselling."*¹⁴

Adult views on the benefits of children's participation in peace building, Nepal:

Adults seem to be impressed with:

- the range of activities that children and child clubs have organised in the community and at the school level: *"Various informative activities like street drama, school enrolment campaign, vital registration campaign, children as zone of peace conducted by children gives a feeling that in true sense they are real agent of peace and future policy makers"* – expressed by a local social worker of Bandipur Tanahun district.
- the behaviour and discipline of the children after they started involving in child club activities, becoming more respectful of elders, rather than less – one of their earlier fears about children's participation: *"Now they speak politely, use better words and shows cooperative attitude"* – a community women in Bardiya district.

¹³ Patron, Laliya Primary School, follow-up visit, 16th April, 2008

¹⁴ Bungatira Primary School, follow-up visit, 16th April, 2008

- the attitude of children and level of understanding on peace and conflict. As described by a local government official in Tanahun district, the Village Development Chairperson: *“the children and young people have impressive and attractive style of speech, presentation skill, body language and their ability of analysing of subject matters gives a feeling that as if they are no less than any leaders of the political parties. Their leadership skill and ability to mobilise, I think is a lesson for us too”*

Strengthening Child Led Organisations and Peace Initiatives

Key strategies to strengthen child led organisations and peace initiatives which have been emphasised by children and young people include the following:

- **increased sensitisation of adults** - parents, teachers, head teachers, school administrators, community and religious elders, government officials about the children’s clubs/ groups, their vision, and their role in peace building and promotion of children’s rights so that adults provide increased support to children’s participation, peace and organisation initiatives;
- **increased support for girls and boys to establish and strengthen their own clubs, associations** or organisations. Participation in peace clubs or associations has instilled values of peace and has encouraged children to be involved in peace building activities;
- **increasing active membership** of children in peace initiatives and clubs with regular meetings and more action oriented initiatives by girls and boys. This involves motivating new members to join, negotiating with parents and teachers to ensure that children and young people have more time to dedicate to peace and child rights initiatives¹⁵ and being more action oriented in planning and implementation of ideas;
- **increased efforts to tackle discrimination and to include and actively involve girls and boys from different ages and backgrounds** including out of school working children, children who were associated with armed groups, children with disabilities, children from different ethnic or religious backgrounds;
- **increased efforts to develop fair systems for rotational representation** in training, exposure or advocacy opportunities – giving more girls and boys the chance to represent their peers;
- **increased development and implementation of club/ association work plans and policies**
- **increased support to assess and address risks** that may be faced during peace building or organisation initiatives; and use codes of conduct to ensure adults don’t abuse children or place them at risk during club or peace initiatives;
- **increased access to child friendly information** and resource materials on child rights and peace building, including information on national policy and practice issues affecting them, including peace agreement, peace talk, constitutional or election processes;
- increased awareness and **skill development on child rights, peace building, conflict resolution, peer mediation, psycho-social well-being, guidance and peer counselling, life skills, facilitation and leadership skills;**
- **increased training for more effective documentation, record keeping, project development, monitoring and evaluation;**
- increased **training on media skills and advocacy skills** to develop children’s wallpapers, newspapers, radio programs; and **increased access to media** – radio, print and electronic - radio stations, journalists so that children’s messages can be included in local and national level radio shows and newspaper;
- continued and increased **use of theatre, music, dance, drumming, debates, quizzes, poem, song and drawing** competitions to mobilise and sensitise children and communities;
- **increased awareness-raising and campaigns to promote children and schools as Zones of Peace;**
- increased joint activities between children and adults to **develop a village or community as a**

¹⁵ In some contexts like Uganda negotiations are needed with the School Authorities to recognise and support school based peace clubs as official parts of the co-curricula activities.

model of peace;

- increased **support for peer guidance and counselling** and, whenever needed, increased access to psycho-social support;
- increase children's **access to youth centres and sports facilities;**
- **consider the particular needs of child mothers and working children and young people** who have additional constraints on their time and resources to ensure support¹⁶ that enables them to actively participate in peace building initiatives;
- increase young people's **access to relevant vocational skills training and livelihood opportunities;**
- Increased **practical support from NGOs and INGOs** including provision of key materials for creative peace building initiatives including: hand microphone, musical instruments, parachute game for cooperative games during rallies and cultural programmes, bags for carrying materials and a digital camera for documenting our work;
- **increased access to small funds/ allowances** for transport and refreshment when organising local programs;
- **increased mobilisation of funds and resources**, for example through submitting proposals to NGOs, through organising cultural programs to raise funds, other income generation activities or through membership fees;
- **increased networking and exchange visits** with other children's groups and club and the formation of district level children's group forums;
- **increased efforts to dialogue and build partnerships between adults**, children and young people at every level - community, district, national level;
- **increased co-ordination** with adults and institutions including: school governance boards, village child protection committees, other civil society groups, district governance bodies, national forums concerning children – so that adults and children can work in partnership to promote peace, and to identify, monitor and respond to violations of children's rights;
- **establishing sustainable forums** for children to have regular **dialogue with district and/or national officials on practice and policy matters** which affect them – for example, through establishing district level children's forum and including space for children's representatives in district level governance structures, and national policy developments;
- **supporting children's participation in peace processes and other relevant political process** (such as constitutional election, reconstruction processes etc);
- support safe and meaningful opportunities for children to **interact with different political parties** to ensure that their party manifesto promotes and respects children's rights;
- **increased efforts by government, rebel groups, UN, INGOs, NGOs, civil society groups and other actors to respect, protect and fulfil children's rights through peace agreements** and peace accords. Children and young people, and other members of civil society can be actively involved in monitoring the implementation of such accords or agreements.
- **Providing feedback to children** who have shared their views. By doing this, children and young people feel that their views are being heard and that they are taken seriously and accorded the same respect as adults.

¹⁶ for example, efforts to ensure the safe care of the child mothers own children during participatory or peace building initiatives requires attention.

VII. Children's Key Messages

During the thematic evaluation children and young people in each country developed their own Children's Memorandums¹⁷ as an advocacy tool to bring their key messages, issues and concerns to the attention of decision makers in their communities and at national level. A summary of the key advocacy messages raised in the Children's Memorandum from each country is shared below:

In **Nepal** children and young people have highlighted:

1. The importance of Child Clubs developing and implementing rules, regulations and action plans
2. Ensuring inclusive and active participation
3. Building the capacity of all Child Club members
4. Ending all forms of social discrimination
5. Promoting peace building

In **Bosnia-Herzegovina** the following issues have been highlighted:

1. Lack of knowledge about child rights
2. Child participation in curriculum
3. Peace building
4. Promotion of child initiatives and skills
5. Peer violence

In **Uganda** children and young people found the following issues most important:

1. Ignoring children's views
2. Child rights negligence
3. Corruption
4. The International Criminal Court – and the arrest warrants as a barrier to securing the peace agreement
5. Land disputes

In **Guatemala** the following messages were prioritized by children and young people:

1. Children's opinions are not taken into account and they are considered incapable
2. To learn the causes of the internal armed conflict
3. To include the real history of war in the school curriculum
4. Lack of security and increased violence due to maras (gangs) needs to be addressed
5. To promote respect for cultural differences

Overall, children and young people in each country have emphasised the need for greater support and priority to be given to children's rights, the importance of listening to children and taking into account what they say and the promotion of peace building. Children and young people in each country have also highlighted and emphasised particular advocacy issues that are unique to their socio-political, cultural context. These are described further in each of the country reports as well as in the Global Report.

¹⁷ Full versions of the Children's Memorandums from each of the four Thematic Evaluation countries can be found at http://www.reddbarna.no/default.asp?V_ITEM_ID=11749

VIII. Valuing Children's Involvement and Contributions – Moving Forwards

Creative child led documentation and its use in media and advocacy initiatives were effectively supported through children's active involvement in the thematic evaluation. Examples of this include: the development of video clips in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Uganda; the development and publication of Children's Peace Albums and a Child Friendly Report in Northern Uganda; the publication of poetry and stories in newspapers in Nepal; children's involvement in community and district based radio programmes in Guatemala, Nepal and Uganda; the presentation of children's risk maps to the Mayor in Konjic, Bosnia-Herzegovina; and, the development of a children's newsletter which was presented by children's representatives to the Prime Minister of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Some collective signposts for all participating countries in the Thematic Evaluation to take forward work on children's participation:

Adult support for children's participation has been identified as critical so that key adults in children's lives better understand the purpose and benefits of children's participation and how best to support and assist it, especially in the area of peace building.

The critical role that child led initiatives and organisations play in sustaining quality and meaningful children's participation and in actions to support and build peace.

The need to maintain and expand **the level of skills acquired** to meet the training and capacity building needs of both children and adults in order to continue strengthening quality children's participation in programming, advocacy and wider decision making forums and agendas.

The **challenge for adult decision makers to support and respond to the concerns raised by children and young people** during the course of the thematic evaluation, and especially through their Children's Memorandums in each country.

The importance of supporting strategic and meaningful opportunities for children's participation in peace processes by analysing, advocating for and supporting safe and meaningful opportunities for girls and boys contributions. This includes the importance of providing feedback to children regarding any potential or possible limits to their participation and clearly explaining the reasons for this. Children's participation in peace processes, including peace agreements, offers opportunities for increased attention to and fulfilment of children's rights. However, application of practice standards and ethical guidelines are essential.

During the thematic evaluation girls and boys have actively participated in different ways and, through the process, they have been able to gain confidence, feel included and better able to defend and realise their rights. Girls and boys have shown how they are affected by armed conflict and by the continuing violence in their daily lives. However, they have also shown, through their initiatives and organisations, the very real contributions they are making – and want to continue to make – to the development of more peaceful, inclusive, fair and safe families, schools, communities, districts, and countries. This young generation are embracing the task of building a society of sustainable peace out of a war that was imposed on them. This implies a responsibility of adults – government officials, UN, INGO, NGO and civil society actors - to listen to children and young people and to involve them in peace processes that affect them. As adults we need to better recognise and value children's involvement and contributions and move forwards together with them to promote and act upon their concerns, to overcome the consequences of armed conflict, to

build on the opportunities for children's participation and to work on the development of a stable and sustainable peace for all.

The Global Report concludes with **four key recommendations** to strengthen and support children's meaningful participation, children's role as agents of peace and, the increased fulfilment of children's rights in peace processes¹⁸.

Recommendation One:

The Security Council, governments, UN, INGOs, NGOs and civil society actors should undertake increased efforts to ensure children's rights and children's voices are included in peace processes, peace agreements, and other political processes affecting children.

Recommendation Two:

Key adult institutions and actors, including governments, UN, INGOs, NGOs, CBOs and parents, should undertake more systematic efforts to promote and support meaningful, sustainable children's participation processes, including support to child led peace initiatives, and child led organisations.

Recommendation Three:

The Ministry of Education should support increased opportunities for children's involvement in school management and decision-making concerning the school curricula, to enhance education systems which promote non-violence, non-discrimination, inclusion and children's participation.

Recommendation Four:

Save the Children Norway and its partners should undertake increased efforts to mainstream inclusive, safe, sustainable and accountable children's participation in all its programming, including efforts which involve children in programme research, assessments, planning, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

¹⁸ For each of these key recommendations, actions that can be undertaken by influential actors are outlined in more detail in the longer version of the global report which is available at http://www.reddbarna.no/default.asp?V_ITEM_ID=19028

Children's Participation in Armed Conflict, Post Conflict and Peace Building, 2006–2008

Save the Children Norway's Thematic Evaluation on children's participation has taken place in four countries: Bosnia-Herzegovina, Guatemala, Nepal and Uganda. It is based on the active involvement of girls and boys who are members of children's organisations, clubs, associations and groups.

The overall purpose has been to contribute to strengthening children and young people's capacities regarding peace building initiatives and to promote the inclusion of children's voices in peace processes.

Children and young people have been actively involved as advisers, peer researchers, active respondents, development workers, peace agents, documenters and advocates. In partnership with adult researchers, they have been using a range of participatory tools to explore their experiences of armed conflict, their understanding of peace building, the factors which limit or support children's active participation in peace building, and received support for peace building initiatives. Adults' views on these issues have also been explored.

'Formative dialogue research' has been used as an overall research methodology to encourage dialogue on differences in perspectives between adults and children, and/or among children. It is also being used to support ongoing efforts to strengthen children's participation initiatives based on the knowledge gained during the research process.