

# **RIGHTS THROUGH EVALUATION**

**PUTTING CHILD RIGHTS INTO PRACTICE  
IN SOUTH AFRICA AND NEPAL**

## **Executive Summary**

**Development FOCUS International**

and

In Nepal

**Himalayan Community Development Forum (HICODEF)**

with

**ActionAid Nepal**

In South Africa

**The Early Learning Resource Unit (ELRU)**

**National Working for Water Programme, Department of Water  
Affairs and Forestry**

**iMEDIATE Development Communications**

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Mr. Cosmas Desmond - Editor - Children First magazine

Ms. Thola Mpungose - Administrative Assistant, iMediate Development Communications.

## **ACRONYMS**

AAN – ActionAid Nepal  
BESG – The Built Environment Support Group  
CBOs – Community-Based Organisations  
CBP – The Children’s Budget Programme  
CGE - The Commission for Gender Equality  
CHIP – Child Health Policy Institute  
CINDI – Children in Distress Initiative  
CRC – (United Nations) Convention on the Rights of the Child  
CSP – Country Programme Strategy Paper  
DFID – Department for International Development (UK Government)  
DICAG – The Disabled Children’s Action Group  
DM&E – Design Monitoring and Evaluation  
DQA – Development Quality Assurance  
DWAf – Department for Water Affairs and Forestry  
ECD – Early Childhood Development  
ELRU – The Early Learning Resource Unit  
EPP – The Division of Evaluation, Policy and Planning (UNICEF)  
Gos – Government Organisations  
GTZ – Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (German Technical Cooperation)  
HARP – Hill Agricultural Research Programme  
HICODEF - Himalayan Community Development Forum  
Idasa – The Institute for Democracy in South Africa  
IDS – Institute of Development Studies  
IIED – Institute for Environment and Development  
ILO – International Labour Organisation  
INGO – International Non-Government Organisation  
IoE – Institute of Education (University of London)  
LFA – Logical Framework Approach  
M&E – Monitoring and Evaluation  
MTR – Mid-Term Review  
NEWAH – Nepal Water for Health Office  
NDA – National Development Agency (South African Government)  
NGOs – Non-Governmental Organisations  
NLC – National Land Committee  
NPA – National Plan of Action (South African Government)  
NPO – Non-Profit Organisation  
ODA – Overseas Development Administration (Former name of DFID – see above)  
PM&E – Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation  
PRA – Participatory Rural Appraisal  
RDC – Regional Development Committee  
SANGOCO - South African NGO Coalition  
SC US – Save the Children US  
SCF UK – Save the Children Fund UK  
SIDA – Swedish International Development Agency  
UNCRC – UN Convention on the Rights of the Child  
UNDP – United Nations Development Programme  
UNESCO – United Nations Education and Scientific and Cultural Organisation  
UNICEF – United Nations Children’s Fund  
WFP – Working for Water Programme

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **Introduction, Who? Why? What? When? Where? How?**

This project has been managed through Development FOCUS International, an organisation working on children's rights, participation and development issues based in Brighton, England. Work was carried out in Nepal with The Himalayan Community Development Forum (HICODEF) with ActionAid Nepal, and in South Africa with the Early Learning Resource Unit (ELRU), The National Working for Water Programme (WFWP) which is part of the Department for Water Affairs and Forestry (DWAF), and iMEDIATE Development Communications.

Although many current development projects are informed by a rights-based approach to children, in practice this is hard to realise. Rather than target children solely, this project has evaluated interventions set up on a broader basis to address poverty within a region, working with health, education, natural resources and other sectors. Our purpose has been to inform the monitoring and evaluation functions within the partner organisations as well as other organisations including DFID.

This project's rights-based approach considers children's rights within the context of human rights, and reviews strategies for putting those rights into practice. Monitoring and evaluation can be seen as an integral component of a rights-based approach when they feed back into applications as part of the learning process, thereby enhancing implementation and improving people's lives.

One primary aim of this project is to mainstream issues of age, reviewing strategies to better target development policy and practice to meet the different needs of children and adults. Building on previous work by Development FOCUS International, this project seeks to establish, through detailed case studies, whether and how the monitoring and evaluation of development initiatives in different sectors can be carried out in a more child-sensitive manner. In this way we can start to see how broader developmental interventions – including water, forestry, agricultural, infrastructure, health and education programmes - affect the lives of girls and boys. This learning needs to feed back into further planning and implementation programmes to ensure that children's lives are improved and not harmed by otherwise well-intentioned development initiatives.

The following objectives were developed for the project:

- To understand how development interventions impact on children
- To equip staff in governmental and non-governmental institutional settings with the capacity and tools to make development decisions to address poverty which will be more child-focused and meet the different needs of children and adults.
- To develop and share approaches and tools.
- To identify where and how child-sensitive monitoring and evaluation fits into the project cycle and into a rights based approach
- To inform monitoring and evaluation functions within organisations

The project has been carried out over a period of eighteen months from January 2000 until June/July 2001.

## *Rights Through Evaluation: Executive Summary*

The pilot countries – Nepal and South Africa – were initially chosen because Development FOCUS International has experience and a good network of contacts in those countries. However, these countries were well suited as pilot studies for other reasons.

In South Africa, human rights and children's rights are embedded in the National Constitution. The National Programme of Action for children is situated in the Office of the President and there are initiatives throughout government that concentrate on human rights. There is also a high level of public awareness throughout South African society about children's rights and human rights, although this is not always reflected in the everyday lives of people recovering from the injustices of apartheid. Due to this history, there is an emphasis in non-governmental organisations on advocacy work which few have had the opportunity to review and evaluate. There are also NGOs, particularly welfare and faith based organisations and those in Early Childhood Development (ECD) that focus on service delivery.

In Nepal there is a history of development funding being channelled through NGOs to develop participatory methodologies and rights-based approaches. International organisations have also wanted to account for funding and evaluate the effects of their programmes. Government in Nepal, however, has been relatively neglected in terms of resources and capacity strengthening and has a lower profile on human rights. Although Nepal was one of the first countries to ratify the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, this has not been integrated consistently into national policy levels.

Detailed case studies were included to show how we can build capacity, how we can measure impact in different sectors, and what methods and approaches can be used.

The partner for the detailed case study in Nepal is the Himalayan Community Development Forum (HICODEF) working on integrated development in the hilly regions of Nawalparasi. They are partners of ActionAid Nepal who also provided valuable linking with HICODEF and logistical support for the project.

The case study in Nepal illustrates why the impact of development projects on children's lives is relevant and how this may be monitored and evaluated within HICODEF programmes in the future. HICODEF and Development FOCUS International staff used participatory approaches with different stakeholders in the community to evaluate their programmes, including men, women, girls and boys of different caste/ethnicity, teachers and local government representatives. HICODEF's programmes include education, health, water and sanitation, road building, women's and children's groups, savings and credit, and environmental programmes.



***Mother and child in Nawalparasi, Nepal***



The South African case study looks at the kind of capacity that may need to be developed within a government department working on water and forestry issues. The National Working for Water Programme (WFWP), part of The Department of Water Affairs and Forestry (DWAf), identified the need to develop participatory M&E systems to complement its current, externally driven quantitative M&E methods. Development FOCUS International held training sessions with Working for Water staff from six regions: KwaZulu Natal, Eastern Cape, Northern Cape, Western Cape, Northern Province, Mpumalanga, with a member of staff from the WFWP national office co-ordinating. The Early Learning Resource Unit (ELRU), which is working on the childcare programme with WFWP, runs its own training programmes on early childhood development throughout South Africa.

The main objective of the case study was to assist WFWP and ELRU in developing a participatory M&E system that would address children's rights in the on-going childcare program of WFWP. The kind of capacity building needed was also reviewed as part of the learning for the project. Participants shared their experiences of using participatory methods, explaining how this experience has led them to be more sensitive to the needs of people with whom they work.

**Participants at WFWP/ ELRU training workshop**



A consultancy organisation based in Durban, iMEDIATE Development Communications, was employed to carry out a process of mapping initiatives relating to children’s rights and the monitoring and evaluation functions of different organisations throughout South Africa. Mapping was done to draw out lessons about M&E from existing initiatives in organisations working in a range of sectors and settings. Aspects examined included: understanding M&E as part of a rights-based approach; documenting strategies that have, and have not been successful in looking at quality and impact in M&E; and understanding how M&E systems can be more sensitive to issues of age and gender. The mapping process also helps to show where in the project cycle and organisational systems child sensitive procedures could be incorporated, rather than treating them as a ‘new’ sector of work or as “add-ons”.

Case studies were also carried out by iMEDIATE on issues of Land Reform and Tourism to establish why it is important to address child rights in these development sectors.

An important component of the project was to share approaches between the pilot areas, as well as networking and sharing between different organisations. This was done throughout the life of the project by the co-ordinators supporting the pilot in the different areas and by the partners meeting for focused discussions during the project.

**Child Rights and Monitoring and Evaluation**

Children are involved with and affected by all the complexities of human social life. Yet, adults can and do easily assume that children are concerned only with education and health, and often ignore children’s other concerns, e.g., about conflict, the environment, and their future. Development programmes have often relegated children to sectors rather than thinking of children across different dimensions of development. Children’s contributions to social life have often been ignored and they are rarely seen as having a productive role in society. They are more often seen as passive recipients of development assistance.

Traditional approaches to development work have focused mainly on able-bodied male adults, excluding large sections of society. In order to address children's rights, and ensure lasting benefits for them, information is needed that will present a comprehensive picture of the reality of children's lives. This type of basic data is frequently lacking, as is the recognition and acknowledgement of children's roles in local social processes and economies. Even where gender is taken seriously, it is not necessarily the case that age/generation is taken into consideration.

Frustration about the lack of data and the invisibility of children in the planning process of development programmes stimulated the initiation of child-focused approaches to development work. Child-focused development is not a fashion, but rather a more effective way of working to improve the impact of development practice.

In concept and practice, children's participation is fraught with problems of definition. Many children's organisations use the Convention as a framework within which to work. As the Convention is not a practical or programme-driven document, organisations have had to define their own methods and approaches for interpreting it. Children's participation is an emotive subject, which is why it is the most fiercely debated aspect of children's rights and therefore the most difficult to implement.

Working with teams on this project we identified the more important components involved in putting a rights-based approach into practice:

- Awareness
- Obligation, responsibility and partnership
- Participation and Inclusion
- Ethics
- Capacity

Applying guiding principles to our work with children will help to ensure an ethical approach to our programmes. Ethical principles include fulfilling adult responsibilities to children. Adults have a moral obligation to protect children at risk even if this means losing access to them and the ability to do research or project work. We should be guided by good development practice that ensures the inclusion of children throughout the programme cycle.

Rigorous monitoring and evaluation is an essential part of the process of realising children's rights. Without the means of assessing the impacts of programmes and projects, the progress that is made towards realising children's rights cannot be measured. In addition, the participation of children and young people in planning and decision-making necessitates their involvement in the assessment and reflection process. Therefore, child-sensitive monitoring and impact assessment within a child-rights based framework requires a participatory approach to monitoring and evaluation.

### **Children scoring their indicators**



Monitoring and evaluation are part of good development practice. However, this good development practice has often bypassed children and young people. Except for physical health inputs such as immunisation or school enrolment, children have rarely been the units of measurement, even in projects that directly affect them. At best, this has meant that children's specific needs have been overlooked or, at worst, negatively affected. Monitoring and measuring the impact on children has to be a fundamental part of any child-focused development programme. This will show how and if the programme is making a difference to children's lives. By exploring the work of different agencies, we hope to have a better understanding of the elements that are needed to improve work in the field of participatory monitoring and evaluation with children and young people.

This project provides some examples that highlight the need for rigorous child-focused PM&E as an integral part of a child-rights based approach to development. The findings from this project have provided many examples of why it is important to address children's rights. Two key points have emerged in this respect:

- Development interventions can sometimes be harmful to children if information about children does not inform programme design and implementation.
- Talking to children and involving children can reveal new information about a community and provide a better insight into the community and poverty dynamics, thus leading to more effective and accountable development programmes.

Although many current development projects are informed by a rights-based approach, in practice this is hard to realise. The application of children's rights in practice requires that all programmes intended to alleviate poverty are assessed for their impact on children's lives. If the specific needs of children are not understood and addressed, their lives can be adversely affected. For example, even with sufficient food in a household, children may still go hungry. Or, money targeted at households through credit and savings schemes may not necessarily reach the children in that household.



## **Examples from South Africa**

These three examples should make clear why organisations dealing with different issues, such as water, land reform and tourism are beginning to include an understanding of children's needs throughout their programme planning, design, monitoring and review.

### **Water**

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The largest NGO in the water sector notes the 'crippling' lack of M&E in the sector as a whole. It says important impacts upon children of water supply and sanitation programmes have been noted anecdotally – such as reduced teenage pregnancy since children go to the bush less, and reduced female absenteeism due to toilet facilities that afford privacy and hygienic conditions to menstruating girls. Such unforeseen impacts could have far-reaching policy implications if properly assessed.

### **Land Reform**

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The resettlement of a community through land reform has far-reaching implications for children beyond formal education provision. A Farm Workers' Project of the National Land Committee (NLC – a South African NGO) found that children were the most severely affected by evictions and forced/slave labour.

Safety is an issue of concern. A significant number of the children and youth especially the girls, expressed the view that safety of children was a serious concern. When communities are resettled, old networks and community bonds are weakened and in some cases broken. As a result, the children felt they were more vulnerable – they did not have their friends and adults who knew them around to look out for them.

### **Tourism**

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A workshop was held to capture the views of children, community leaders, NGOs and civil servants interested in a tourism project at KwaShushu (meaning 'hot place' in Zulu and the site of natural hot springs) in KwaZulu, Natal. The workshop allowed children and their parents to critically consider the potential impacts the project would have on children in the community.

None of the participants expressed any opposition to the project but felt there was a need to transform the economic and social relationship between the campers/tourists and the community as a whole. The children perceived that the Campers' Association owned the site. The parents understood that the site belonged to the community but were not able to convince the children that the Nkosi (a traditional leader) will change the relationship between himself and the Campers' Association. The relationship between the community and the campers has always been one of a master-servant relationship. Local people, including children, were employed solely as domestic servants, security guards and porters.

Children had the following suggestions:

- A youth organisation should be formed in the area.
- More attention should be given to the recreational and safety needs of children.
- A training centre should be built in the community to train students in travel and tourism.

**Children carrying tourists' luggage in KwaZulu Natal, South Africa**



**Examples from Nepal**

In the HICODEF programmes the evaluation showed that both boys and girls liked the drinking water and forestry programmes best as they allowed more time to go to school and play. In the past many of the children, especially the girls, had to trek several hours a day to collect water and fodder for their animals. As a result of these programmes combined with the road and market initiatives children are now attending school more often.

The feeder road that has been built into the area has also been popular with children, as parents do not have to spend so long walking to the end of the road for provisions. Before the road was built, children had to carry goods to and from the road that was almost a day's walk from some of the villages.

The newly constructed gravelled road and market also cut down on the workload of children in the community. Previously, children accompanied their parents to market carrying local produce and returned weighted down with household goods. Now tractors bear the burdens of portering.

In some of HICODEF's income generation programmes however there were some unforeseen consequences for children. In their goat-rearing project for example, children ended up leaving school in order to herd their goats. This needs to be remembered in future planning of income generation programmes. The costs and benefits for children's lives need to be taken into account at the earliest stages.

Another project that omitted to consider children in the planning and design stage was the provision of a school tap for children's drinking water. The resultant tap was too high for the children to reach.

The following examples demonstrate how positive and negative impacts of projects on children can be revealed in programme evaluation:

**Water Tap Stand HICODEF project**

<b>Positive Aspects</b>	<b>Negative Aspects</b>
Time saving monsoons so children had to fetch water which takes time	Tap stand water does not work during the from another village
Clean drinking water	No regular maintenance of taps
Easier to cook and clean but the poor become indebted paying maintenance fund	Rich people can pay for maintenance, into the compulsory

**School Project**

<b>Positive Aspects</b>	<b>Negative Aspects</b>
Getting the opportunity to play	No study environment at home
Literacy	Corporal punishment by teachers
Getting better clothes to wear	Pulled out of school in herding time

After acknowledging children’s perspectives, HICODEF has reconsidered its methodology. They now work with men, women and children so that their programmes can be better designed and implemented. They will also be using different, more impact- orientated and child sensitive indicators for their programmes.

For example for school, instead of only considering enrolment, programmes indicators will also consider attendance of pupils and of teachers, and the learning environment at school and home. For income generation programmes, children’s time in work, school and at play will be monitored.

Rather than just target children, this project has analysed interventions that more broadly address poverty within a region. This includes health, education, natural resources, and other general development interventions.

In this project, participation in monitoring and evaluation of different stakeholders is seen across a spectrum. Levels of participation will vary even within the same organisation for different projects with different approaches to, and understandings of participatory M&E. Clarity needs to be sought. Sometimes participation is thought of as being PRA and PRA is quoted as “the only way”. But a participatory approach can include different tools, such as questionnaires and focus group discussions, if they are designed, field-tested and carried out involving different stakeholders from planning to verification of results, and if an ethical code of informed consent and confidentiality is observed. The visual tools of PRA can be employed in a mechanistic way in the programme cycle or as part of a process of empowerment and social change<sup>1</sup>. The team has also observed the compilation of baseline surveys using PRA that have gone no further in informing the rest of the project planning process or the monitoring and evaluation systems. M&E has to be seen within the context of a rights-based approach. Participatory tools used for monitoring and evaluation thus have to be seen within the broader context of the organisational commitment to learning and listening, and feeding into action to improve the lives of poor people in communities.

<sup>1</sup> [Pratt, 2001, “Practitioners Critical Reflections on PRA and Participation in Nepal” IDE Working Paper No. 122].

One of the key messages to emerge from this project is about the importance of including monitoring and evaluation as part of a participatory and inclusive project process. Simply being able to conduct evaluations in a participatory way does not necessarily give an insight into the impact of programmes on children and other traditionally excluded sections of the community. The parameters of monitoring and evaluation and the objectives need to be negotiated, and explained with and by children. The capacity to do this is still quite limited as it means more than simply adding participatory research techniques to the evaluation process.

### **More messages on process from the detailed case studies**

#### **In Nepal**

The team worked in three main villages in the Nawalparasi area in the Mahabarat Mountains, investigating approaches and constraints to children's rights. The programmes were reviewed in a child-sensitive way so that future programmes could be modified to take fuller account of children's rights. A greater appreciation of children's rights was established with HICODEF staff in discussions about what child rights means to them in practice and how this accords with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Many participatory evaluation methods were tested in the field by the team. These include evaluation matrices, ranking, building on mapping, time-trends and flow diagrams, as well as the examination of participation levels by different stakeholders at different stages of a project cycle. Some of these approaches were specifically designed or modified during our fieldwork and build on participatory monitoring and evaluations used by Development FOCUS International.

Some of the findings that came out of the work with children surprised staff. As we have seen, the favourite programmes for girls and boys in terms of impact on their lives were the tap and forestry programmes. The road programme also saved labour in carrying goods from the roadside to the villages. As a result more children were able to go to school. Some of the programmes, however, meant that children came out of school, for example livestock programmes where children were expected to herd the animals.



### **Boy prioritising issues through pairwise ranking**



The impact assessment showed that discrimination between girls and boys and between children of different ethnic caste was decreasing amongst the children. However this was slow to change amongst the adults and some of the men were confrontational about the changing roles of children. Different programmes were evaluated by children giving positive and negative perspectives in order to start to develop child focused indicators. Girls and boys also suggested action that they and other stakeholders could take to improve their lives and achieve their aspirations.

Changes for HICODEF programmes and monitoring were also highlighted when children showed how they 'participated' in the hard labour of water tap construction, but did not have a say in any of the planning or decision –making issues. These amongst other findings are feeding into the HICODEF planning and development of their programmes and monitoring systems.

Implications for HICODEF and the way forward on issues of child rights and monitoring and evaluation are discussed. The value of a more critical analysis and learning process of reflection has been appreciated in HICODEF as they were previously largely looking at quantitative measures of input and output. They now have the capacity and commitment to further develop a rolling and inclusive PM&E process as an integral part of their rights based approach. They also feel that the tools and approaches explored in the project can be used, both for intergenerational participation, analysis and action, and for inclusion of different marginalised people or groups of interest.

### **In South Africa**

The outcomes from this case study are presented below. Outcomes are grouped according to the four main objectives of the case study.

- a) To raise awareness of staff in the Social Development Unit, National WFP, of children's rights and participation

WFP relationship with crèches has improved since the Social Development staff acquired a clearer understanding of the rights and needs of children, especially in the field of early

childhood development. There is a growing understanding of the need for an enabling environment in which children and young people can take part in planning and development initiatives.

- b) To strengthen the capacity of staff to facilitate participation of community groups – adults and children – in monitoring and evaluating the childcare programme

There was great improvement in the general facilitation skills of the Social Development staff which is also evident in the broader scope of their work in the programme. Once able to understand the concept of participatory monitoring and evaluation Social Development staff improved their planning. Staff are now able to constructively engage project managers at local level to become “managers” of this programme.

Social Development staff are able to facilitate understanding on the rights and needs of children at regional management level, therefore improving management’s commitment to the programme. Training focused on building new skills on an existing knowledge base.

***Mothers’ group discussing and drawing their ‘ideal’ creche***



- c) To enhance capacity of ELRU trainers to deliver child-focused PM&E training modules, and to design M&E system for NFWFP childcare programme

ELRU has strengthened the use of participatory techniques in its training courses and in its family work. It has also increased the time spent on these in research training modules that it offers for the projects in the early childhood development and children’s sectors.

The power of direct field experience compared with simulations in training was reinforced by our experiences at the workshops and ELRU is building much more fieldwork into its research training courses.

- d) To assess implications of child-focused PM&E on management systems within WFWP

It is possible to implement child sensitive monitoring and evaluation systems in a large-scale government job creation initiative such as the WFWP.

They improved their overall management of the social development initiatives including facilitating the formation of community steering committees and HIV/AIDS interventions.

Through this work there has been a steady improvement in the Self-Assessment Monitoring and Evaluation Tools currently applied as a set of general standards by which project performance is monitored. Through using these tools it will now be possible for project managers to develop additional project specific indicators to monitor the programme's impact on children at macro and micro level.

Through the implementation of this case study it was clear that management is keen to support staff training and development initiatives where there is an immediate application of the lessons learned and where the trained staff are able to implement lessons learned in an inclusive manner.

In terms of the WFWP Child Care programme the development of participatory monitoring and evaluation indicators will continue in the context of the WFWP Childcare Programme. This will be done with a strong emphasis on a transfer of acquired skills and experiences to the stakeholders of the process.

The WFWP Social Development staff will continue to develop broader programme indicators that will inform the management systems on the development of child sensitive participatory monitoring and evaluation systems. The social development staff will continue to work closely with the internal Monitoring Unit to improve the monitoring tools to be more inclusive and participatory in nature.

Improving public participation instruments such as Local Project Steering Committees and Provincial Liaison Committees, with an eye to developing their own indicator sets in addition to monitoring at a local level the broad indicator set of the WFWP.

### **Organisational Mapping**

Ostensibly, Nepal and South Africa have very different cultural and political histories. Nepal is a small land locked Asian kingdom that has never been officially colonised. South Africa is a large ethnically diverse presidential society that has only achieved democracy since 1994; Nepal also has only engaged democracy since 1990. Thus, in terms of children's rights, some of the fundamental similarities are more potent than the differences. From our experience in working in both countries and the lessons gained from institutional mapping, we can see that the differences are not as disparate as might be expected. However, in relation to children's rights they are significant.

The different elements that emerged from the South African mapping show that the importance of and the reasons for activating children's rights seem to be well understood and supported by the majority of policy makers and NGOs.

- **Strengths**
  - ✓ There is strong political commitment to children's rights which enjoys a high profile backed by central government.
  - ✓ There is broad acceptance of the importance of children's rights throughout the NGO and Government sectors, and an increasing awareness of children's needs in the general population.
- **Areas for capacity building**
  - ✓ There are only a few examples of practical experience and implementation of child sensitive monitoring and evaluation within the NGO sector.
  - ✓ In the context of monitoring and evaluation there is a lack of capacity to develop practical processes for delivering children's rights.

In Nepal, the practical aspects of participatory work with children are quite well established. There are a number of international and local NGOs that have experience of developing participatory approaches in their work and many are now adopting these to use with children.

- **Strengths**
  - ✓ Experience and capacity in INGOs and NGOs in participatory tools, such as PRA, is well established.
- **Areas for capacity building**
  - ✓ Awareness of children's rights is still restricted to INGOs, NGOs and UN agencies. There is very little general understanding by the population at large of children's rights.
  - ✓ Unlike South Africa, children's rights are not mainstreamed at the government level

#### **Similarities**

- In both countries the criteria for monitoring are dictated by external organisations. This hinders experimentation with impact assessment and child sensitive monitoring.
- Ethical issues in participatory approaches still need to be addressed. In South Africa, the long history of children's direct involvement in the struggle and the enthusiasm for children's participation in development, following the demise of apartheid, has meant that it is sometimes not recognised that participation is not always in the best interest of the child. In Nepal, because the emphasis has been on participatory tools, the preparation of communities has often been overlooked. Issues such as informed consent, accountability, and verification with communities and children need to be monitored.

### **Reference group meeting in Nepal**



The project then looks at some of the Best Practice that arose from the mapping of different organisations in South Africa and Nepal. This information has been split into different levels of operation from Local to National so that it is more accessible to people in different types of institutional settings. This section highlights some of the practical learning that has been gained by a range of organisations, both governmental and non-governmental, operating at all levels from local to national, including international donors.

Working partnerships between different types of organisations, such as government bodies and NGOs, and links made between departments within organisations have emerged as examples of the way forward a more holistic approach to children's rights.

The findings from this project show that even the largest of donors, such as Unicef or the World Bank, have gaps in their capacity that can be met by smaller or more specialised organisations that work directly with communities. This cross-fertilisation of ideas and experience that can be gained from different partnerships has emerged as an important element in developing a more comprehensive approach to children's rights and child-centred monitoring and evaluation. The challenge is now how to do this. Some key points about the best approaches to new partnerships have been identified in the project.

### **The Way Forward**

Issues of capacity and commitment characterise the main messages that have emerged from this project. To know about children's rights and participatory approaches is not enough. Most of the organisations involved in this project have a good understanding of children's rights and M&E. Linking this understanding to strategies for implementation is where the gap lies. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child is not a programming tool - organisations have to devise their own ways to 'operationalise' children's rights. They also have to discover what kind of monitoring and evaluation works in practice and in the context of their organisation, its systems, and its commitment to learning.



This is a challenge even for those organisations that have children's rights as their focus. But learning together and working in new partnerships, organisations that have a broad range of development initiatives can move to a more inclusive approach and mainstream issues of age into their work. Monitoring and evaluation can be more of a learning process that informs programmes about how they are affecting the lives of men, women, girls and boys, and how implementation can be improved.

What follows are the essential points that have emerged from our partners and the organisations mapped and included in reference group meetings about child rights and monitoring and evaluation.

- **Monitoring and evaluation as part of a rights based approach**

Monitoring and evaluation needs to be an integral part of the development process. Information and learning needs to feedback through a reflective process into improved implementation and action.

In order to do this, there needs to be clear institutional commitment. An organisation needs to make a fundamental shift away from evaluating only how money is spent, about inputs and outputs, towards a learning organisation that uses positive and negative to improve the lives of people in the community.

Having a continuous reflective process not only improves interventions, but can be a rewarding process of individual development and empowerment. Staff and community members who have been involved in a more participatory and iterative review process have found it very satisfying and rewarding. People in communities, including children, who participate in monitoring progress for better services and quality of life have also become enthusiastic, providing they have been a part of the whole process.

The scales between people's rights to participation and inclusion, and their rights to fulfillment of basic needs have to be balanced. While considering longer-term development requirements, we must also deal with the immediate hand to mouth conditions facing poor people and their communities. There is little point in processes of empowerment when people are too hungry or ill to think.

- **Mainstreaming gender and generation into M&E**

There are a growing number of examples of monitoring and evaluation that are sensitive to gender and to marginalised groups within communities. An inclusive process to development requires a gender and generation approach that is sensitive to issues of age. Without child sensitive monitoring, the lives of girls and boys could be inadvertently made worse. For example, programmes addressing income generation can end up causing children to be withdrawn from school, or sent to school with no teachers, or being physically punished and abused.

Child sensitive monitoring can also show us how programmes, where children are not thought of as the main beneficiaries, are effecting children's lives in a positive way. Water and forestry programmes in the hills of Nepal are the favourites of children, especially girls, as they save their time in fetching water and carrying fodder and fuel. This allows more time to go to school and to play. Just as development practitioners and policy makers have realised that gender analysis is an integral part of any development process, so too must they recognise the intergenerational approach. Children should not be seen as add-ons or separate sectors, but as active participants and important stakeholders in the development process.

- **Balance the simple & sample, the quantitative & qualitative**

There needs to be a balance struck between broad monitoring and evaluation systems that concentrate on inputs, outputs, and simple measures of outcome, and smaller samples analysed in more detail that feed back directly into implementation.

A balance can also be struck between the quantitative and the qualitative.

Often donors need quantitative data to trace how money has been spent and to provide accountability to the tax paying public. Government departments and non-government organisations in developing countries also have to account to their public and supporters. However, we all need to appreciate the qualitative aspects of fundamental problems like poverty and discrimination which are revealed through focusing on gender, generation, ethnicity and disability.

- **Child sensitive monitoring and evaluation in a rolling system**

In a well-constructed M&E system, a baseline can be set up with the participation of children. This can be generated from a children's perspective, looking at issues which are important to them such as their work, play, and their relationships with families, friends, and with communities. This would involve children in a realistic planning process designed to realise their rights and aspirations.

Simple monitoring systems can be set up that are carried out by staff and people from the community. Indicators can be developed that are qualitative as well as quantitative provided that monitoring methods are well thought-out, and the capacity of staff to work with adults and children in the community is confirmed and strengthened. These simple systems need not be so time-consuming that they hamper the rest of the programming.

Evaluation or review and reflection should be done throughout the process, not merely at the end of a programme. Each stage should be inclusive, so that the different perspectives of stakeholders, including girls and boys, can be understood.

- **Understanding Impact**

Children's evaluation of programmes and information about their changing lives can lead us to an impact assessment. Evidence collected with girls and boys, men and women in a participatory way can be analysed by fieldworkers and people from the community to draw conclusions on impact. If the information is qualitative and there is no baseline to work from then at least the direction of change - positive or negative - can be assessed. This then needs to be verified with different stakeholders in the community.

***Mother presenting her views to young people***



Impact does not necessarily have to be looked at in a large assessment study, especially if there are well-planned and inclusive processes of creating baselines and child-focused indicators. If there are simple processes to look at progress and review the effects of programmes from children's perspectives then impact can be assessed in a rolling monitoring and evaluation system.

Positive and negative effects on children's lives need to be recorded. Too often the positive and not the negative reflections are recorded. Critical analysis feeds into more effective action.

- **Action and responsibility for rights and children's evaluation**

The impacts of programmes on children's lives need to be informed by an evaluation of those programmes by children themselves. Children of different gender, age, ethnicity/caste and (dis)ability will have different perspectives to share about their lives and how these programmes affect them.

There are ethical issues about raising rights without considering action to address them. Organisations, when they consider children's rights, often concentrate on children's clubs or educating children about their rights. This may be an important part of the picture, but putting rights into practice requires a more holistic and inclusive view of the development process.

There are also ethical issues about the participation of children relating to informed consent of children and their parents or guardians, maintaining confidentiality, and allowing girls and boys to opt out.

- **Universality, context, participation and obligation**

Children's rights are universal as accepted by governments in the CRC and in other human rights treaties. In order to put those rights into practice the realities of girls' and boys' lives



need to be understood so that practical steps can be taken for their protection, provision of services and participation. Adults and children need to be included in the process of identification and prioritisation of action that will serve to address children's rights. To put children's rights into practice, the power relationships between adults and children have to be addressed and also those amongst children.

***Mother and child in the fields***



This requires an environment of trust, and an ethical code that includes maintaining confidentiality and being prepared to deal with the difficult issues that may arise when confronting the abuse of rights. Everyone, especially children, needs to feel safe to talk about issues of power and changing roles.

Policy makers have responsibilities and governments have obligations to address children's rights. Different organisations at various levels of operation from local to international should be treated as stakeholders in the process of turning rights into reality. New ways of working together will have to be found to link those who have influence over government policy and provision of services with those who have the capacity and relationship to work with men, women, girls and boys on the ground.

- **Support and funding for inclusive processes**

Having a more inclusive and participatory approach to development has been identified as a key element of a rights-based approach. This approach requires the inclusion of different marginalised groups and groups of interest, including children and adults, to identify action and review the progress and quality of development services and interventions. This takes time and money.

Discussions about rights, inclusion and participation has to move beyond rhetoric and be put into practice. This requires capacity strengthening at all levels of operation and capacity building requires donor comprehension and support. Just putting participation and inclusion, gender and generation into a logframe does not operationalise the concept.

*Rights Through Evaluation: Executive Summary*

The following table shows what it took to actually start working on child rights and evaluation in practice with different organisations and partners that worked on this project:

WHAT YOU NEED	BUILDING CAPACITY	WHAT YOU GET OUT OF IT
<b><i>NB: Dialogue / sharing / linking stakeholders is required throughout the process</i></b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Commitment in policy and by individuals in organisation</li> <li>✓ Mechanisms and resources to follow-up</li> <li>✓ Partnerships</li> <li>✓ Needs assessment to tailor capacity building</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Joint strategic planning between different organisations &amp; partners</li> <li>✓ Rights-based approaches</li> <li>✓ Child rights theory &amp; practice</li> <li>✓ Ethical issues</li> <li>✓ Institutional analysis</li> <li>✓ M&amp;e and PM&amp;E</li> <li>✓ Participatory approaches</li> <li>✓ Analysis and dissemination</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Informed and improved programme plans that are more inclusive and therefore sensitive to children</li> <li>✓ Review of M&amp;E systems</li> <li>✓ Child-focused processes including children's evaluation of programmes</li> <li>✓ Processes and tools that can be used with sensitivity to different marginalized groups</li> <li>✓ Involvement of different stakeholders on how to turn rights into reality</li> <li>✓ Individual and team confidence and skills</li> </ul>

• **Mainstreaming and continued capacity support**

Capacity strengthening can be carried out in the context of other training on rights based approaches and poverty already running within organisations. Intergenerational issues need to be mainstreamed across organisations. Checklists may be used as with environmental checklists or screening, or issues of age and children's rights added to objectives in logframes, but this is not enough. People need to understand why an intergenerational approach is part of an inclusive process of addressing human rights. They also need to be given the ethical approaches and tools in order to work in a participatory way and put the rights expressed in the international policy arena into practice. Continued mentorship and team support in applying skills and tools with communities and within their organisation were shown in our case studies to be vital.

To successfully implement a rights-based approach, organisational commitment, a more inclusive and participatory approach to development needs, and effective follow-up mechanisms are important. The integration of approaches into the organisational systems and policies and the commitment of management are also necessary elements. of the process. However, these must be regarded as part of the overall capacity strengthening and awareness-building programme of support. Without follow-up and commitment to action on the ground child rights will stay in the realms of theory and international rhetoric.