How the Child's Right to Participation Can be Promoted in German Development Cooperation

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German Institute
for Human Rights

Imprint

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Acknowledgements

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Study

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Preface

The right of the child to participation is at the core of recognizing children as rights holders, and a central idea of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Still today, 25 years after the adoption of the Convention, the full implications of that right seem difficult to grasp. There is movement in the right direction; yet one of the main messages from children around the world is that they do not feel that they are listened to and taken seriously by adults.

States need to put in place structures and procedures for involving children in all kinds of decisions affecting them, including policy decisions at local and national level, not as a tokenistic gesture, but rather ensuring their real influence. However, the right of children to participate goes beyond their right to be heard in matters affecting them. It also means the right of all children to be active agents in the lives of communities at every level, whether it be in the family, in schools or in the broader community. To achieve this, a change in attitude towards children is needed.

Development cooperation can contribute to this shift. If children take part in discussions about development programmes, and their ideas are listened to and developed, the programmes are more likely to address the issues at hand. Such programmes should also encourage children's participation in the community more widely, all the more so in countries where children form a large part of the population. It is about their present lives and the shaping of their future. This study is a valuable reminder of the need to take children's participation seriously.

Kirsten Sandberg
Chairperson
UN Committee on the Rights of the Child

Children have a right to participation. In the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) participation is both a freestanding children's right and a general principle of the Convention, signifying its key importance: Participation enables children to exercise their other human rights that are guaranteed in the CRC.

The year 2014 marked the 25th anniversary of the CRC and children's rights have been the focus of worldwide attention. However, children's participation rights are probably the least explored provisions of the Convention. This holds true for implementation by States parties on their own territory as well as through their policies affecting other countries, the so-called extraterritorial obligation of States parties.

This study aims to fill this gap, analysing how the child's right to participation can be promoted in German development cooperation. The findings and recommendations are directed at decision-makers in German development policy as well as development professionals in Germany and abroad.

The interdisciplinary study is the result of a project on children's rights in development policy at the German Institute for Human Rights between 2012 and 2014. It was commissioned by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development. The study is based on legal analysis of children's participation rights and a social science analysis of focus group discussions with children in Guatemala, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan and Serbia as well as interviews with development professionals, including in Germany. Based on this material, this study provides practical advice on how children's rights can be supported by German development cooperation and promoted as part of its implementation. We hope it will inspire and encourage decision-makers in German development policy and development professionals to better incorporate children's participation rights in their work.

Michael Windfuhr
Deputy Director
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Introduction

Participation is a method employed in good development cooperation, a key principle in the human rights-based approach, and also a specific right that children have under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). Germany ratified the CRC in 1992, and thus needs to implement this right both nationally and internationally in its development cooperation.

And yet, a 2011 study by the German Institute for Human Rights found that while children's rights, including the right to participation, are among the objectives of German development cooperation in several policies, the implementation of children's rights remains a major challenge. The study observed that development measures usually do not initiate processes for the increased participation of children and youth. It recommended that the implementing agencies should pay more attention to children's participation in German development cooperation, inter alia by identifying practices of children's participation as well as by facilitating an exchange on methods for child participation.[1]

The present study shows that participation rights can be strengthened through German development cooperation measures and how this can be done. It is based on the expectations of children and has identified a number of good practices for children's participation in development cooperation. However, the study argues that much more needs to done to implement the right of children to participate, both as part of development measures and resulting from them. A key precondition for more participation of children in development is to address the existing power imbalance between adult professionals in development cooperation and children. The perception and role of adults vis-a-vis children need to change significantly, and children need to be empowered to participate. German development cooperation must support more child-friendly and responsive structures[2] that provide participation opportunities – both in Germany and internationally.

The study is based on an interdisciplinary research design: Besides a legal examination of children's participation rights as guaranteed in the CRC, it analyses material gathered in focus group discussions with children and youth in four countries as well as in interviews with development professionals in Germany and in partner countries. This approach is based upon the assumption that interdisciplinary approaches are necessary for applied human rights research, in order to understand the content of legal provisions and the perspectives of persons concerned – in this case mainly children and young people – but also development professionals. The study is complemented by an in-depth analysis of legal and social science literature as well as relevant policy documents.

Chapter 1 sets out the context of the study, presenting the legal framework of children's participation rights in the CRC and the policy framework of German development cooperation regarding children's right to participate. It also provides an overview on the research design and methods applied. Chapter 2 discusses why German development cooperation should strengthen the right of the child to participate. It first introduces children's views on the meaning and values of participation and then develops a systematization of the different dimensions of children's right to participation. Following the same structure, chapter 3 discusses how German development cooperation can

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[1]   Simon 2011, pp. 94, 114.
[2]   In this study, structure is defined as the framework that promotes or hinders children in effectively making use of their right to participation in a society or country. This includes laws and procedures; formal (governmental and non-governmental) institutions; informal institutions in societies; as well as 'physical' spaces that guarantee and provide opportunities for children's self-initiative and participation.

strengthen children's participation rights. Children's views on how to participate meaningfully are followed by exemplary good practices; and lastly chapter 3.2 sets out a model for meaningful participation that should be applied in development cooperation.

Finally, chapter 4 identifies key issues that need to be addressed in German development cooperation in order to encourage more meaningful participation of children. Children's views are presented; showing that the key obstacle towards more participation is the power imbalance between adults and children. Chapter 4.2 shows how barriers to effective participation can be overcome by changing adults' self-understanding as well as making adult-led institutions more open and supportive for children's participation. Based on these findings, the study closes with a list of recommendations for German development policy and cooperation.

1
Putting children's participation in context

This chapter sets out the context of the children's right to participation, illustrating both the legal and the policy framework and explaining the research design and methods applied in this study. According to this, children's participation requires a comprehensive approach, understanding and implementing different participatory provisions of the CRC. This chapter also shows that there is already an enabling policy environment in German development cooperation, which still needs to be put into practice, along with further guidance for development practitioners, in order to provide for the full realization of children's rights.

1.1 The Legal Framework: Children's right to participate in the CRC

This chapter lays out the legal framework for the children's right to participate as it is set out in the CRC and in the work of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, the UN treaty body monitoring the implementation of the CRC (the Committee).[3] It analyses the elements of article 12 CRC, which are essential for its implementation in practice, and argues that

the child's right to participation goes beyond this key provision. Illustrating the Committee's comprehensive approach to participation, this chapter makes the case for the interdependence of different participatory rights in the CRC, which need to be considered when development cooperation aims at promoting meaningful child participation.

1.1.1 The core provision: Article 12 CRC

The core provision of the CRC on participation rights of children is article 12. It stipulates the child's right to be heard and to have his or her views taken into account. While participation as a term is not mentioned in article 12, the Committee summarizes in its General Comment[4] no. 12 on the right of the child to be heard that the term 'participation' is commonly used "to describe ongoing processes, which include information-sharing and dialogue between children and adults based on mutual respect, and in which children can learn how their views and those of adults are taken into account and shape the outcome of such processes."[5]

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3   The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child is the expert body of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols. The latter govern issues that go beyond the scope of the CRC. The Committee currently comprises 18 experts from different countries, who are elected by the States parties for a term of four years. In their function as experts they are independent and carry out their work for the Committee free of charge. The Committee monitors the States parties' progress in implementing the CRC through a reporting mechanism.

4   The key source of explanation and interpretation of the UN human rights conventions are the General Comments of the UN treaty bodies. They use the General Comments to explain human rights norms, and they may comment on issues which are of particular importance for the human rights convention in question. Since the articles in the UN human rights conventions are usually very brief, the General Comments serve to more closely define States parties' human rights obligations. In ratifying the UN human rights conventions, States parties accept that the UN treaty bodies play a central role in interpreting the conventions. General Comments are thus an authoritative source of interpretation of the obligatory regulations as laid out in the individual UN human rights conventions, even if the General Comments are not strictly binding in a legal sense. Since 2001, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child has issued 18 General Comments, which can be found at http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/CRC/Pages/CRCIndex.aspx (last accessed Dec. 3, 2014).

5   UN, Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment no. 12 on the right of the child to be heard, UN doc. CRC/C/GC/12 of July 20, 2009, para. 3. For a summary of the Committee's General Comment no. 12 (2009) on the right of the child to be heard, compiled for development practitioners, see German Institute for Human Rights 2014c.

Box 1: Article 12 CRC The child's right to be heard

1 States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.

2 For this purpose, the child shall in particular be provided the opportunity to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting the child, either directly, or through a representative or an appropriate body, in a manner consistent with the procedural rules of national law.

Article 12 paragraph 1 provides that States parties shall assure the child's right to be heard. The term "shall assure" is a strong legal term. It does not leave any leeway for States parties' discretion but imposes a strict obligation on States parties to undertake appropriate measures to fully implement this right for all children.[6] It is both a right of the individual child and of children as a group and it applies to all children, no matter their age.[7]

The right to be heard applies "in all matters affecting the child". This must be understood broadly, covering all kinds of matters that affect children's lives, directly or indirectly.[8] The drafters of the Convention deliberately rejected a limited list of such matters.[9] Therefore, the term "all matters affecting the child" also comprises issues that affect children as part of a general strategy, such as programmes against labour exploitation.

However, the drafters of the CRC specified one particular matter in article 12, "judicial and administrative proceedings." Judicial proceedings may concern e.g. children in conflict with the law. Examples for administrative proceedings are decisions about children's education, health interventions, or living conditions. The Committee emphasizes that all such judicial and administrative proceedings must be accessible and child-appropriate.[10]

In General Comment no. 12, the Committee suggests five steps for the effective implementation of the child's right to be heard, that is for participation. These steps should be considered "whenever a matter affects a child or when the child is invited to give her or his views in a formal proceeding as well as in other settings."[11]

Box 2: Five steps for the implementation of the child's right to be heard

Five steps for the implementation of the child's right to be heard

1 Preparation: Inform the child about his or her right to be heard and the impact his or her views may have on the outcome, as well as the options and conditions of the exercise of this right.

2 The hearing: Ensure an enabling and encouraging context. The hearing should be confidential and have the format of a conversation rather than a one-sided examination.

3 Assessment of the capacity of the child: Give due weight to the child's views, if a case-by-case analysis indicates that the child has the capacity to form autonomous views.

4 Feedback: Inform the child of the outcome of the process and explain how his or her views were considered, allowing for a reaction of the child, including a complaint.

5 Complaints, remedies, redress: Secure the right to be heard against violations by complaint procedures and remedies; this should include an ombudsman or a person of a comparable role in all institutions that deal with children.

Source: General Comment no. 12, paras. 41-47.

The only condition for the child to be heard is that he or she is "capable of forming his or her own views." The Committee clarifies in General Comment no. 12 that this wording does not constitute a limitation on the child's right, but an obligation on the State to

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6   General Comment no. 12, para. 19.
7   General Comment no. 12, paras. 9, 21.
8   General Comment no. 12, paras. 26 – 27. Some scholars in social science criticize the wording "in all matters affecting the child." In their view, it is often construed in a restricted way, excluding political and economic matters. Liebel/Saadi 2012, pp. 168 – 169. However, this was not the intention of the drafters of the CRC, nor is it the Committee's contemporary interpretation of the term. See Detrick et al. 1992, pp. 224 – 229.
9   For an overview on the drafting process see Parkes 2013, pp. 27 – 31. For original draft texts, the so-called travaux préparatoires, see Detrick et al. 1992, pp. 224 – 229.
10   General Comment no. 12, para. 34.
11   General Comment no. 12, para. 40.

assess the capacity of the child to form his or her own opinion.[12]

If a child is not yet able to express views in "adult language," the implementation of article 12 requires the use of non-verbal forms of communication, for example play, body language, or drawing.[13] What matters is the manner by which adults ask the child to express his or her views.[14] States are obliged to ensure the implementation of the right to be heard also for children who have difficulties in making their views heard. This is particularly important for children with disabilities as well as for children of ethnic minorities, indigenous or migrant children.[15]

The views of the child shall be "given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child." However, this does not require that the child's views be conclusive or determine the decision, rather, they should be one factor in the decision.[16] The child and his or her views have to be taken seriously.[17] Thus, respecting and giving due weight to the views of the child requires at a minimum "giving reasons as to whether the relevant decision-makers agreed or disagreed with the child's views."[18]

In General Comment no. 12, the Committee identifies key quality requirements for effective and meaningful child participation. Most of all, child participation is voluntary; a child who chooses not to express his or her view also exercises the right to participation. The issues at hand must be of relevance to his or her life and there should be space to enable children to highlight and address issues which they identify as important. Participation must be inclusive, avoid patterns of discrimination and encourage opportunities for marginalized children. Children must also be protected from negative consequences of their participation. For this purpose, the Committee recommends

the development of "a clear child-protection strategy which recognizes the particular risks faced by some groups of children, and the multiple barriers they face in obtaining help."[19]

Box 3: Quality requirements recommended by the Committee for effective and meaningful participation

Processes where children are heard, must be

- transparent and informative, so that the child understands them
- voluntary, as there is no obligation to speak
- respectful of the child's views
- relevant to the child's needs and experiences
- child-friendly, that is, environments and working methods should be adapted to children, being accessible and encouraging
- inclusive, so that all children can exercise their right without discrimination
- supported by training of the adults involved on how to safeguard the rights of the child
- safe and sensitive to the risk that can be associated with expressing one's views
- accountable, that is, the child should have a clear understanding of his or her role in the process; feedback should be provided and evaluation undertaken.

Sources: General Comment no. 12, para. 134; Working methods for the participation of children in the reporting process of the Committee, para. 7.

The Committee has identified the child's right to participation as outlined in article 12 as one of the four general principles for the implementation of the CRC.[20] The other three general principles are the right to non-discrimination (article 2 CRC), the primary

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12 General Comment no. 12, para. 20. White sees an ambiguity here: participation is being upheld by the CRC while at the same time adults determine if the child is at all capable of forming his or her views. White 2007, p. 532. In contrast, Lansdown emphasizes the obligation of adults, who in their capacity as parents, professionals and politicians have to "ensure that children are enabled and encouraged to contribute their views on all relevant matters and to provide age-appropriate information with which to form their views". Lansdown 2005a, p. 2.

13 General Comment no. 12, para. 21. See also Parkes 2013, pp. 32 – 33, with further references.

14 Lücker-Babel 1995, p. 398.

15 General Comment no. 12, para. 21. See also Concluding Observations Rwanda, CRC/C/RWA/CO/3 – 4 of June 14, 2013, para. 24 and Uzbekistan, CRC/C/UZB/CO/3 – 4 of June 14, 2013, para. 27.

16 Ang et al. 2006, p. 18.

17 Lansdown 2001, p. 2.

18 Parkes 2013, p. 267.

19 General Comment no. 12, para. 134.

20 UN, Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment no. 5 on general measures of implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (arts. 4, 42 and 44, para. 6), UN doc. CRC/GC/2003/5 of November 27, 2003, para. 12; General Comment no. 12, para. 2.

consideration of the best interests of the child (article 3 CRC), and the right to life and development to the maximum extent possible (article 6 CRC). A general principle requires consideration in the implementation and interpretation of all other rights of the CRC.[21] Specifically, the Committee explains in its General Comment no. 5 that article 12 highlights "the role of the child as an active participant in the promotion, protection and monitoring of his or her rights."[22]

1.1.2 Other participatory rights in the CRC

Participation rights of children go beyond article 12 CRC: articles 13, 14, 15 and 17 CRC provide the necessary framework for the effective participation of children. Together they illustrate the comprehensive approach of the CRC to child participation.

Article 13 CRC stipulates the child's right to freedom of expression, which includes the right to "seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds."[23] A decision can only be free if it is also informed.[24] That is why freedom of information, as enshrined in article 13, is an important prerequisite for the effective participation of children.[25]

Closely linked to article 13 is article 17. It covers the child's right to access to information and material from a diversity of national and international sources, and particularly focuses on the role of the mass media and the States parties' obligations in this regard. So far, no other human rights treaty contains a provision with similar guarantees.[26] Article 17 sets out opportunities for the media to protect and promote children's rights, including by disseminating information

and material of cultural and social benefit to the child (referring to the aims of education in article 29 CRC), and by respecting the linguistic needs of children belonging to a minority group.[27] In its General Comment no. 12, the Committee relates article 12 to article 17, emphasising the important role of the media both in "promoting awareness of the right of children to express their views, and (…) [in] providing opportunities for the public expression of such views."[28]

The former UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, Frank La Rue, dedicated his 2014 annual report to the UN General Assembly to the right of the child to freedom of expression. He emphasizes the importance of respecting, protecting and promoting the right of children to freedom of expression. The exercise of this right contributes significantly to the shift in laws, policies and attitudes which is necessary if children are to be recognized as full subjects of rights. La Rue criticizes how some countries adopt measures restricting children's rights to freedom of expression and access to information with the alleged aim of protecting children from harmful information. These measures are often disproportionate.[29] To promote children's rights to freedom of expression and access to information, his report features good practices, such as encouraging children to organise and participate in politics, encouraging child-led advocacy, and ensuring children's access to information from a range of sources.[30]

Another participatory right is article 14 CRC, dealing with the child's right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. Particularly the freedom of thought is interdependent with the right to form and

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21   General Comment no. 12, para. 2.
22   General Comment no. 5, para. 12. In its working methods for the participation of children in the reporting process, the Committee reiterates the obligation of States parties "to ensure that children are encouraged and enabled to participate in the preparation of the State reports to the Committee." UN, Committee on the Rights of the Child, Working methods for the participation of children in the reporting process of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, UN doc CRC/C/66/2 of October 16, 2014, para. 1.
23   Article 13 applies to all cases in which the child wants to express a view and/or wishes to seek, receive and impart information on any topic. Whenever the matter at stake does not affect the child and thus the scope of article 12 is not opened, article 13 is an important and similar participatory child's right, which deserves consideration.
24   OHCHR 1997, p. 427.
25   See UN, Committee on the Rights of the Child, Day of General Discussion on the right to be heard of September 29, 2006, para. 12.
26   See Schmahl 2013, article 17 para. 6.
27   Article 17, paras. (a), (b) and (c) CRC.
28   General Comment no. 12, para. 83.
29   See e.g. UN, General Assembly, Report of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, UN doc. A/69/335 of August 21, 2014, paras. 48, 50, 53, 81.
30   UN, General Assembly, Report of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, UN doc. A/69/335 of August 21, 2014, paras. 54 – 64.

express views. "Matters affecting the child" in article 12 also include matters of religion and choice of religion.[31] Similarly to the wording of other provisions of the CRC (especially article 5), the exercise of the child's right in article 14 is confined by his or her evolving capacities, maturity and by parental direction and guidance. According to the concept of "evolving capacities" the child constantly acquires competencies and is thus entitled to increasing responsibilities for the exercise of his or her own rights.[32] Therefore, parental direction and guidance must be provided in accordance with the child's evolving capacities: The more the child knows, has experienced and understands, the more the parent or legal guardian has to transform direction and guidance into reminders and advice and later to an exchange on an equal footing. Overall, child participation is a tool to stimulate the full development of the personality and the evolving capacities of the child.

Article 15 stipulates the child's rights to freedom of association and to freedom of peaceful assembly. Read in conjunction with article 12, this means that children have the right to join with others for a collective representation of interests, participating in political processes and decision-making, and thus amplify their voice. In his 2014 annual report to the UN Human Rights Council, the UN Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, Maina Kiai, criticises that many countries restrict children's rights to peaceful assembly and association on grounds of age. He identifies children and youth as one of the groups most at risk in the enjoyment of their rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association.[33]

Further articles with a link to participation are articles 23 and 31. They are the only two articles explicitly mentioning the term participation.[34] Article 23 provides that a child with a mental or physical disability should enjoy a full and decent life, under conditions which facilitate the child's active participation in the community. Article 31 covers the child's right to rest, leisure and engage in play and recreational activities as well as the right to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.[35]

1.1.3 Core obligations of States parties under article 12 CRC

Article 12 CRC imposes several obligations on States parties. In legal and social science, three core obligations have been identified:[36]

- the incorporation of the CRC participation articles into domestic law and procedures,[37]

- the implementation of that legislation by the adoption of appropriate and structural institutional mechanisms;

- the information and training about children's rights for persons working or interacting with children, such as parents, teachers and other care-givers, as well as information and training

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31   There is a tension between the child's right to religious freedom and the liberty of parents "to ensure the religious and moral education of their children in conformity with their own [the parents'] convictions", as stipulated in article 18 paragraph 4 UN International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and article 13 paragraph 3 UN International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. The CRC illustrates a paradigm shift in comparison to the provisions in the Covenants of 1966, since it adds the parental right and duty "to provide direction to the child in the exercise of his or her right in a manner consistent with the evolving capacities of the child". See e.g. Brems 2006; Langlaude 2008; Schmahl 2013, article 14 paras. 7 – 9, 11 – 12; Scolnicov 2007.

32   For more information on evolving capacities and participation see Lansdown 2004 and Lansdown 2005. Alderson distinguishes two ways to look at the concept of evolving capacities: A repressive angle ("children do not fully evolve until they are adults") and an emancipatory one ("children gradually become more competent and independent"); Alderson 2008, p. 86. The Committee interprets the concept of evolving capacities in General Comment no. 12 in an emancipatory way, see General Comment no. 12, paras. 84, 85.

33   UN, General Assembly, Report of the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, UN doc. A/HRC/26/29 of April 14, 2014, paras. 10, 23 – 24, 27, 30, 49.

34   Besides, 'participation' is mentioned in article 40 paragraph 2 (b) (iv), but refers to the child's guarantee in criminal proceedings "to obtain the participation and examination of witnesses on his or her behalf under conditions of equality."

35   For further information on the interpretation and implementation of article 31 CRC, particularly regarding social participation, see chapter 2.2.1.

36   See Ang et al. 2006, pp. 20 – 25, 234, with numerous references to Concluding Observations. Marta Santos Pais distinguishes three similar core obligations of States parties in the UN Manual on Human Rights Reporting: Legislative review, information campaigns and training for children and those who work with children in order to enhance children's capacities to participate in decision-making processes, and the establishment of mechanisms for child participation. See OHCHR 1997, pp. 428 – 429.

37   See General Comment no. 12, para. 48.

of children themselves.[38] Particular regard needs to be paid to vulnerable groups of children, for example children with disabilities, children belonging to minorities, and girls.

To fulfil States parties' obligations under article 12 CRC, the Committee recommends, amongst others, the establishment of independent human rights institutions for children's rights, such as children's ombudspersons or National Human Rights Institutions, to monitor the implementation of the rights enshrined in the CRC and make recommendations for improvement.[39] The Committee also recommends public campaigns to change widespread negative attitudes regarding the capacities of children to form and express autonomous views and shape their own lives.[40]

1.2 The Policy framework: Children's right to participate as an objective in German development cooperation

This section will set out how children's participation rights are integrated into German development cooperation policies and guidance. As will be seen below, there is an enabling policy environment in German development cooperation to promote the child's right to participation.

With the 2011 BMZ Strategy Paper 'Human rights in German development policy,' (short: 'BMZ Human Rights Strategy' or 'Strategy') the BMZ made the human rights-based approach binding for German bilateral development cooperation. The Strategy recognizes that the human rights-based approach flows from treaty ratification, and covers the implementation of human rights domestically and in international policies, affecting other countries.

The Strategy postulates the interdependence of two key human rights principles, participation and empowerment:

"Every person should be empowered to articulate their interests freely and effectively in the political sphere and have the chance to participate in the relevant political and economic processes; this applies especially to those groups which lack capacities of their own to demand or assert their human rights."[41]

The Strategy refers to participation in two ways: As a human rights principle, which States have to comply with when fulfilling their obligations; and as a human right of individuals. The Strategy points out that children and youth often lack opportunities to participate in society and its decision-making processes and stresses the obligation to systematically involve young people in decision-making processes that affect their life.[42]

The BMZ operationalized its Strategy with its 2013 'Guidelines for the consideration of human rights standards and principles, including gender, in the design of program proposals of German bilateral technical and financial cooperation' (short: 'Guidelines'). Just like the Strategy, the Guidelines are binding for the BMZ and implementing agencies alike when assessing programmes. They help to analyse human rights risks across all sectors of development cooperation and to maximise human rights gains.

One of the human rights risks often encountered in development is the impairment of participation rights, particularly of people in vulnerable situations such as people with disabilities or indigenous peoples.[43] Therefore, the Guidelines require planning and decision-making processes in development measures

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38   In the outcome document of the Day of General Discussion on the right to be heard in 2006, the Committee also emphasized the States parties' obligation "to ensure that human rights education in general, and on the CRC in particular, is included in the curricula in order to equip children with the fundamental knowledge tools in order to enhance the exercise of their rights." UN, Committee on the Rights of the Child, Day of General Discussion on the right to be heard of September 29, 2006, para. 23.

39   For a summary of the Committee's General Comment no. 2 (2002) on the role of independent national human rights institutions in the promotion and protection of the rights of the child, compiled for development practitioners, see German Institute for Human Rights 2014a. See also Bölscher 2013.

40   General Comment no. 12, para. 49. The Committee identifies traditional and cultural attitudes to children as a major obstacle in many Concluding Observations, see e.g. Chile, CRC/C/15/Add.173 of April 3, 2002, para. 29; Burkina Faso, CRC/C/15/Add.193 of October 9, 2002, para. 26; Morocco, CRC/C/15/Add.211 of July 10, 2003, para. 30; India, CRC/C/15/Add.228 of February 26, 2004, para. 36; Algeria, CRC/C/15/Add.269 of October 12, 2005, para. 33; Hungary CRC/C/HUN/CO/2 of March 17, 2006, para. 24; United Republic of Tanzania CRC/C/TZA/CO/2 of June 21, 2006 para. 29. Regarding the problem of traditional views of the child see Steward 2009, pp. 7 – 9 and UNICEF 2007, p. 80.

41   BMZ 2011, p. 6.

42   BMZ 2011, pp. 18 – 19.

43   BMZ 2013, pp. 3 – 4.

to be as inclusive and representative as possible and to involve all groups that are affected by the respective measure. To maximise gains for human rights in partner countries, the Guidelines advocate for the promotion of inclusive participation of those groups, and their self-representation organizations, such as children and youth, women, persons with disabilities and indigenous peoples.[44] Referring, for example, to cooperation on "democracy, civil society and public administration," the Guidelines recommend the promotion of representation of disadvantaged groups in parliaments, community councils and in the administration at the local level, explicitly mentioning youth councils. In another example for the improvement of human rights through development cooperation, the Guidelines advocate for the promotion of student councils on a national and decentralized level, to increase the accountability of the education system.

The BMZ concretises the human rights-based approach set out in its Strategy in a Position Paper 'Young people in German development policy – a contribution to the implementation of the rights of children and youth' (short: 'Position Paper'). Its aim is "to help identify, appraise, plan, implement and evaluate development projects that are of relevance for young people."[45] The Position Paper is based on the experience that even a human rights-based approach does not automatically ensure that children's rights are sufficiently taken into account.[46] In addition, the Position Paper indirectly acknowledges that despite their number, children and youth are often invisible in development cooperation. One of the reasons for their invisibility is a frequent assumption in development that benefits from measures targeting the well-being of families and households, for example increasing households' access to food or cash-generating employment, will automatically trickle down to children. As a number of studies have shown, this is not necessarily the case. Household relations are often based on seniority and patriarchy, meaning, for example, that older men eat first, and girls eat last and often little.[47]

With regard to promoting children's participation rights, the Position Paper suggests two approaches: supporting governmental and non-governmental structures by way of development measures to facilitate the participation of young people through these structures, as well as the participation of young people in measures implemented by German development agencies.[48]

Inspired by the CRC and its interpretations, the Position Paper defines the children's right to participation as:

"The right to be heard and taken seriously as an independent legal person; the right to participate in all measures that concern children; the right to social and political participation and to have a say in matters that affect them."[49]

It recommends a number of measures for the implementation of the right to participation likewise based on recommendations of the CRC Committee:

"Age-appropriate presentation of relevant information; active participation of children and youth in measures that affect them; participation and representation in schools; establishment of bodies and other entities for joint decision-making, and political participation for children and youth at local government level."[50]

The Position Paper is a meaningful policy concerning children's rights. However, as a stand-alone policy – without further guidance for development practitioners, specifying for example good practices on the successful implementation of children's participation rights – the implementation of the child's right to participation will lag far behind the policy commitments.

1.3 Research design and methods

The study uses an interdisciplinary research design. It analyses children's participation rights as set out in the CRC as well as its interpretations by the Committee on the Rights of the Child in its General Comments and Concluding Observations, and focus group discussions with children and youth as well as interviews with

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44   BMZ 2013, p. 5, annex pp. ii, xiv, xix, xxii.
45   BMZ 2011a, p. 3.
46   See Simon 2011, pp. 95 – 96, box 13.
47   See e.g. Hamid/Nazli 1999, pp. 8 – 9.
48   BMZ 2011a, pp. 6 – 7.
49   BMZ 2011a, p. 9.
50   BMZ 2011a, p. 9.

adults. An in-depth analysis of legal and social science literature on the interpretation and implementation of children's participation rights complements the analysis of primary sources.

1.3.1 Interviews with adults

Fifty-four qualitative interviews with adults in Germany, Guatemala, Kyrgyzstan and Serbia were conducted for this study; interviewees comprise development professionals, including from the BMZ, the implementing organisations Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH (GIZ) and Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (KfW), as well as from UNICEF, non-governmental organisations and professionals from institutions of children and youth support in the researched countries.[51] The interviews lasted between thirty to sixty minutes, and were based on an interview guide (see Annex 4). Interviews were conducted in German, English, Spanish, or with an English/Russian or English/Serbian interpreter. They were analysed for content with MAX QDA, a software for qualitative data analysis. All names of the interview partners were kept anonymous in the text.

1.3.2 Focus group discussions with children

1.3.2.1 Research approach

The last two decades have seen an increased interest in and knowledge about conducting research with children, as opposed to the previous approach of conducting research on or about children.[52] This required new methodologies, in particular moving away from large-scale quantitative methodologies – the latter underpinning adults' assumptions and interests.[53] Therefore, this study used qualitative methodologies to gain more in-depth knowledge about children's perceptions.

Focus group discussions with children were conducted in Guatemala,[54] Kyrgyzstan,[55] Serbia,[56] and Kenya.[57] All countries are partner countries of German development cooperation, and the research was implemented with the support of the implementing agencies and, where possible, with local academics. The participating children are the target group of the respective development measures in the education and health sectors as well as those measures for youth support.[58] The research method was designed for children between the ages of thirteen and eighteen.[59]

1.3.2.2 Research objective and questions

The research aims to give advice to development policy and development cooperation professionals on how to strengthen the participation rights of children and youth in societies of partner countries.

The primary research question was how children in partner countries of German development cooperation assessed their opportunities for participation in their community and school. Secondary research questions included:

- What do children and young people regard as the objective of participation and what does it mean to them?

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51 An overview of interviewees can be found in Annex 1.
52 See Greig et al. 2013, p. 203 – 4.
53 See Barker/Weller 2003, p. 35.
54 In Guatemala, the research was carried out by the German Institute for Human Rights and the University Landivar in Guatemala City. Six focus group discussions were conducted with young people from 13 – 18 years old and took place in Guatemala City, Tactic and Momostenango.
55 In Kyrgyzstan, the research was carried out by the German Institute for Human Rights. Four focus group discussions were conducted with young people between 13 – 18 years old and took place in Naryn and Karakol, two municipalities where GIZ implements a project on behalf of the BMZ.
56 In Serbia the research was conducted by Annika Kluth, MA in Childhood Studies and Children's Rights, Free University of Berlin. She held a scholarship from the German Institute for Human Rights for the completion of her MA-Thesis. She conducted the research with Ivana Savić, LL.M., PhD candidate at the Faculty of Law, Union University in Belgrade. They conducted three focus group discussions in Belgrade, Kragejevac and Kovačica with children and young people between 13 – 25 years.
57 The data used from Kenya in this study was gathered by Johanna Mahr-Slotawa, PhD candidate at the University of Bielefeld, who used a different research approach and kindly provided some of her data to the German Institute for Human Rights.
58 In Guatemala the interviewed children were not attending schools which are supported by German development cooperation, but as pupils, they constitute the target group of the education programme.
59 Within the context of this research children are not regarded as a homogenous age group (cf. Taylor 2000, p. 22). The conceptual context of the study, however, follows the definition of children as people under the age of 18 as laid down in the CRC. As German development cooperation on child participation focuses rather on youth than on children, it was decided to conduct one focus group discussion in Serbia with young people between the age of 15 – 21 years.

- Which opportunities for participation do children see?

- What strategies do children envisage to have their voice heard and to make an impact on decision-making processes?

- What kind of support do they wish for?

1.3.2.3 Research Methods, Sampling and Analysis

The results of the qualitative research are a snapshot of the present situation; they shed light on children's experiences of and opinions on actual or envisioned forms of participation in their local community and school.[60] The results are not representative of children in the respective communities and should thus not be generalised.

Data collection took place during focus group discussions. Focus group discussions are appropriate for exploring perspectives and generating ideas[61] and focus on the interaction among the participants and the joint construction of meaning.[62] The method is based on the assumption that "social realities appear as a result of constantly developing processes of social construction."[63] Thus, the focus group discussion provides a methodology to explore children's views on their actual and desired participation in their community.[64]

The sampling was conducted with the support of either a local research institution or the German development cooperation measure in the respective country.[65] In Serbia and Kyrgyzstan, the participants in focus group discussions were active in youth centres or youth offices supported by development measures on youth promotion. In Guatemala the participants were school children, as they were interviewed in the context of an education programme.

The focus group discussions were designed for five to eight children and lasted approximately four hours. Where possible, the participants were arranged in groups with a gender balance and of similar age.[66]

Focus groups were sequenced in four phases. First the participants identified and chose an issue in their community that they do not like because it does not seem right or fair. In the next step, they developed a basic project plan on how to address the issue. Project plans were then discussed in the third phase and a debate about further aspects of participation was stimulated. In the fourth phase children were asked to develop their vision on how ideal participation in solving the issue would look like.[67]

The research interest during each focus group phase was not limited to the specific issue of the project plan and not directed at its feasibility. The focus of interest was rather on how the children interacted and imagined themselves interacting, and how they liked to cooperate with the people in their community. By identifying and addressing a problem in the community, children could indicate what issues they regarded as important, what role they were currently playing and what role they desired to solve the respective issue. This allowed the researchers to draw conclusions about the children's participation in the

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60   Qualitative research aims at providing a better understanding by revealing patterns of lived perspective of the research participants (see Flick et al. 2004, p. 3).
61   See Greig et al. 2013, p. 117 and 239.
62   See Bryman 2012, p. 502.
63   Flick et al. 2004, p. 6. The methodology of the focus group discussion is used to mirror the forms and contents of the construction of social reality in a communicative dialogue (Flick et al. 2004, p. 6 – 7). In contrast to an individual interview, the focus group setting allows participants to not only state their view but also to discuss each other's reasons for holding that view (see Bryman 2012, p. 503). In that sense, the activities during the focus group discussion produce two kinds of data for analysis, one as a result of the specific activity and the other as a result of the dialogues around the activities which is considered "the richer source of interpretation and meaning" (O'Kane 2008, p. 143).The focus group is thus a means to identify group norms and to provide insight into social processes (see O'Kane 2008, p. 140).
64   The unstructured nature of the setting provides the participants the opportunity and space to express their views and also to take some control over the interview process (see Bryman 2012, pp. 501 – 503.) This can prove a challenge for the facilitator but it is a meaningful way to lessen the power disparity between the adult facilitator and the child participants (see Heinzel 2012, p. 28). Furthermore, it has been observed that children generally feel comfortable in a group setting (see Darbyshire et al. 2005, p. 420).
65   For more information regarding the sampling see Field Manual in the Annex 3.
66   See Greig et al. 2013, p. 217.
67   See the detailed explanation of the phases of the focus group discussion in the Field Manual in the annex.

community without having to use the term 'partici-pation' itself and agree on a meaning in the required language and for the specific context in each country.

The research data for analysis consisted of the written materials from the focus group discussions, such as the visualisation of the project plan and the vision of participation as well as of the transcriptions of the recordings taken during the focus group discussions. Transcriptions were analysed by qualitative content analysis.[68] The research data was analysed by creating a system of codes to identify structural features.[69] In a first step, the transcriptions of the focus group discussion were structured by codes derived from the theoretical considerations and research questions. In a second step, additional codes were selected by taking up key patterns from the focus group discussions that had not been considered ex ante.[70]

1.3.2.4 Ethical Considerations

Participants and their parents or caregivers[71] were informed about the context, content and process of the research prior to the decision whether or not to take part in the research.[72]

In order to ensure privacy and confidentiality of the participating children, the researchers made sure that access to the raw data was limited to researchers and transcribers. The data and quotations used in the presentation of the findings are anonymized.

The international and multilingual context of the research project contributed to a high complexity of the facilitator's tasks. In general, both the international and the local facilitators had to be ready to recognise the participating children as competent partners, listen to their views and respect their rights in every aspect of the research. In addition, the researcher had to acknowledge and consciously deal with the existing unequal power relation between children and adults and its impact on the content, methodology and ethics of the research. The field manual which was prepared prior to the research and translated into the local languages provided guidance on how to minimise the power imbalance in practical terms.

The participants of this research were not compensated financially, but were provided with food and drinks during the focus group discussion.[73]

1.3.2.5 Limitations

While the research methods have been chosen for their participative quality, the framework of the research project did not allow including children in the design, analysis or presentation of results in a meaningful way. A child-friendly version of the research results was produced and shared with participating children. The research results also do not allow a country-based analysis of how German development cooperation should proceed in the respective context. This would necessitate a very different research set-up.

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68   See Mayring 2010 and Mayring 2010 b, pp. 468 – 475.

69   See Diekmann 2011, pp. 608 – 609.

70   By combining deductive and inductive codes an analysis predetermined by adults' categories was avoided. This allowed the researchers to follow the young people's focuses (see Mayring 2010, pp. 64 – 66.)

71   In Guatemala two focus group discussions were carried out in a boarding school; the informed consent was signed by the school director, as he was formally the caregiver.

72   For that purpose a letter of information (see Annex 3) was prepared and translated beforehand. Both the children and the parents/caregivers had to agree to take part and decide on whether or not they would allow pictures to be taken (see Annex 3). Even if parents and children signed the letter of consent, they were allowed to withdraw their consent at any time. On the two ethical imperatives of respecting the child's autonomy and parental responsibility, see Graham et al. 2013, p. 57.

73   The issue of compensation of participants of the research is discussed in the literature. Some researchers regard payments for taking part in research as a strategy to break down the power imbalance between child participants and adult researchers (see O'Kane 2008, p. 143).

2
Why German development cooperation should strengthen participation rights of children

This chapter fleshes out the different perspectives of participation as seen by children and young people interviewed in Guatemala, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan and Serbia. The respective German development cooperation measures are briefly introduced. It is argued that German development cooperation shall strengthen the participation of children to realize their participation rights, as well as to generate a more positive impact on children's lives. This can be achieved by integrating the children's expectations of their participation into the design and implementation of development measures.

2.1 Why do children want to participate?

The children interviewed identified a wide range of visions, objectives and definitions of participation.

2.1.1 Children want to be treated equally

Children of all ages strongly expressed their demand to be treated equally and to be considered in the same way as adults. "We want the voice of young people to be considered in the same way as [the] voice of the adults", states a boy from Kyrgyzstan in a discussion on ideas for future participation (boy, Kyrgyzstan, 15-17)[74]. They demand that adults perceive them as "normal, reasonable thinking people" rather than "as small kids, who have no reasonable way of thinking" (boy, Kyrgyzstan, 15-17).

In Serbia, young people from a Child Rights Centre drew a picture to illustrate their vision of participation. They described the role of children vis-a-vis adults as follows:

Box 4: Project information Kyrgyzstan: 'Prospects for Youth'

Objective: Young people between 14 and 28 years have access to needs-oriented, attractive and sustainable activities generated by youth work. They can take part in the country's political and social life. The responsible actors at all levels work together in the interests of young people.

Target Group: young people between 14 and 28 years

Duration: 2012-2015

Approach:

- Improvement of structures in the youth sector and enhancement of technical expertise in the Ministry of Youth and local government administrations.
- Advisory services to the development of different training courses for experts in the youth work sector, such as in-service training courses to enable employees of non-governmental organisations to qualify as youth leaders.
- Support of the study programme on 'Youth Work' at the Kyrgyz State University of Construction, Transportation and Architecture.

Source: GIZ website: http://www.giz.de/en/worldwide/23383.html

74   The numbers in brackets following the children's quotes represent the age group of their focus group.

"No there is no difference. Here you see a child and on purpose we made it almost as tall as older people. Because we want to show that there is really not that big a difference between adults and children, because children are of course not as experienced as adults. But one day they will become adults and should not be discriminated against because one day you want them to be like you [...]" (child, Serbia, 15-18).

Children are also strongly aware of the issue of equality among children and young people of different ages and nationalities. While explaining their understanding of participation in an exercise ('developing and designing a project plan'), one girl from Kyrgyzstan demanded that "youth should have an equal position in the society, in order to avoid age discrimination" (girl, Kyrgyzstan, 13-15).

2.1.2 Children want to be taken seriously

Children define participation as being "accepted seriously [...] by other participants of the community" (boy, Kyrgyzstan, 15-17). Participation means that their voices "will be heard, understood and considered to the highest extent of seriousness" (boy, Kyrgyzstan, 15-17). Asked about how participation should be different in their community, a child from Guatemala stated: "Well, first that they take us into consideration!" (child, Guatemala, 13-17).

A young person from Serbia explains: "I would feel that my opinion matters [if] he or she is interested in what I am doing and what I want" (child, Serbia, 15-17). Even young people over eighteen feel that they are only taken seriously if they are asked about their opinion and are consulted (child, Serbia, 21-25).

In Kenya, boys and girls expressed that it is significant for them to be able to give their views, to be heard or to be taken seriously. The girls talked about the need to be able to give their opinions, and said "teachers should stop telling them they are children, that they cannot give opinions" (child, Kenya, 10-14).

2.1.3 Children want to be heard and to take decisions

The core demands to be treated equally and to be taken seriously by adults is directly linked to the children's request to be asked for their opinions and views.

In Guatemala, children defined participation as "to be asked" by adults about their opinions and to have the opportunity to answer: "look at this, this is what we need", "this is how we see it" (girl, Guatemala, 13-17). Definitions for good participation like "actively participating in the workshops and freely expressing our thoughts" (boy, Kyrgyzstan, 15-17) and "we should be listened to and should be heard and we need to act" (girl, Kyrgyzstan, 13-15) are definitions of a good form of participation given by children from Naryn, Kyrgyzstan.

But for the children interviewed, participation is more than being heard and expressing their views. Children in Kyrgyzstan demanded "to make some sort of decision" (girl, Kyrgyzstan, 15-17), and "to have [the] opportunity to influence the decisions made by adults" (boy, Kyrgyzstan, 15-17). In Guatemala, children in

Box 5: Project information Kenya: Health sector programme

Objective: At national and county levels, state and non-state actors implement strategies for the increased use of high quality health services.

Duration: 2005-2016

Approach:

- Technical advice to Kenya's Ministries of Health and Education to develop the School Health Policy for implementing a Comprehensive School Health Programme;

- Supporting implementation of the School Health Programme in 160 primary schools in Kenya's Vihiga and Kisumu Counties

- Implementation of the comprehensive school health curriculum in 160 schools contributes to the health programme initiatives on sexual and reproductive health and gender-based violence.

Source: GIZ website: http://www.gizkenyahealth.com/blog/

boarding schools demand to make their own decisions on how to spend their leisure time (child, Guatemala, 12-15).[75] In Kenya, children expressed the need to be heard by their teachers and a desire for more involvement in decision-making. All children taking part in the focus group discussions said that they would like to take part in changing the present situation of being involved in the health clubs supported by German development cooperation and would like to take part in decision-making, e.g. what to do in the health club. On the other hand they agreed that the teacher should still make the final decision as they are under his or her care and as long as decisions are accepted by all children (child, Kenya, 10-14).

Actively participating in decision-making or taking own decisions are of high importance for children in Serbia: "Everything would be different for us if we would make decisions, actually" (child, Serbia, 15-17).

Making decisions means to the children in Kyrgyzstan "to be a piece of the big society" and the "beginning of new things" (boy, Kyrgyzstan, 13-15). On the other hand, they also consider their participation in deci-sion-making as beneficial to the society: "if somebody is not heard then this person could be dissatisfied later and that is why it is important in the community to consider everybody's opinion" (boy, Kyrgyzstan, 13-15).

2.1.4 Participation is their right

By demanding to be heard by adults and to make decisions, some children refer to the right to participation. "To have a right to choose" is one such definition of participation given by a girl from a youth centre in Naryn, Kyrgyzstan (girl, Kyrgyzstan, 13-15).

At the same time, they see their right to participation not respected by adults. In Serbia, a group of young people drew a cartoon story illustrating that adults denied treating children according to their rights, when children claim their rights. Adults would answer that children first need to grow up and then talk about their rights. Children explained: "I might be a child but I have rights and I want to participate on an equal footing with adults in decision-making" (child, Serbia, 15-17).

Box 6: Project information Serbia, 'Strengthening the structures for youth empowerment and participation'

Objective: Development of a structural framework for youth empowerment enabling Serbia's youth to participate socially and politically in Serbian society.

Target group: Young people between 15 and 30 years.

Duration: 2005 to 2014

Approach:

- Support the Serbian government in establishing formal structures at different levels that permit youth participation.
- Advise the Ministry of Youth and Sport and the Ministry of Education on the development and de-centralised implementation of a Serbian youth policy and support the establishment of a Federation of Youth Office.
- Support the establishment of school parliaments[76] and Local Youth Offices that conduct Local Youth Action Planning.
- Provision of skills for young people on issues such as critical thinking, conflict resolution, mediation, leadership, teamwork, negotiation, the CRC and participation in order to enable them to participate actively in Serbian society.
- Training of professionals who are relevant for facilitating participation processes. Inter alia, training of teachers on the rights that can be derived from the CRC and what they mean for work with young people in schools.

Source: GIZ website: https://www.giz.de/en/worldwide/21213.html

75   In Guatemala, two out of six focus group discussions were held in boarding schools.
76   Prior to the current project, the predecessor project 'Conflict transformation and youth empowerment in Serbia' focused on the establishment and improvement of school parliaments as one way of youth participation. School parliaments have now become obligatory in Serbia and are running independently.

2.1.5 Children are experts

Some children reason that they should participate because they see themselves as experts. A child from Serbia argues that although they may not be aware of consequences and lack experience, children have "fresh ideas" and that "what we want is really what we want and we think that we can do it" (child, Serbia, 15-18). A boy from Kyrgyzstan demands that "even being young, we could also make some decisions to resolve some of the issues" (boy, Kyrgyzstan, 15-17). Young adults, aged fifteen to twenty-one years in Serbia share this notion. They claim that they "know better what their needs are than adults do" since:

> "We still have different experiences and different opinions and maybe we could also support adults in making decisions especially with our experiences and our knowledge and I think the young people should be included because they [adults] are not following the time we are living in" (young person, Serbia, 21-25).

2.1.6 Children want to change society

Children and young people have a clear understanding of what they would like to contribute by their participation. Young people in Guatemala and Kyrgyzstan want to be part of change (child, Guatemala, 13-15). One girl from Kyrgyzstan states that for her, participation is "to change yourself, to change people around you and the world around" (girl, Kyrgyzstan, 13-15).

In the focus group discussions, children reflected in particular on their contributions to society as one objective of their participation. One boy explains:

> "Participation for me means to implement my thoughts and ideas into reality; and by doing that I would like to help my State to become better." (boy, Kyrgyzstan, 13-15)

This vision of a better society was especially pronounced by young people affiliated to the youth offices and child rights centres, partners of German development cooperation in Serbia. In a visioning exercise, young people formulated the idea of an ideal world where "you can be who you are [...], it doesn't matter what race you are, it doesn't matter whether you are tall or short, you are talkative or not" and where "others appreciate your differences" (child, Serbia, 15-

18). These visions of a better society can be realized when children are acknowledged and have the opportunity to participate equally: "When we put together the interests of young people and adults we get unity, a better future and common interests" (child, Serbia, 15-17).

As a major objective of participation, most children and young people stated that they want to contribute to the development of their immediate environment, usually their town. "First, I help my town," stated a boy from Kyrgyzstan when asked about what participation means to him (boy, Kyrgyzstan, 13-15). The various problems children have identified in their community, as well as their strategies to participate in problem solving, will be further elaborated in chapter II.

2.1.7 Children want to help each other

Interestingly, in contrast to young people in Kyrgyzstan and Serbia, children in Guatemala strongly emphasized the fact that "participation means to help each other in different situations" (child, Guatemala 15-17). It may be interpreted that for children from indigenous communities in Guatemala, participating in and through their peer groups is of greater relevance than making use of individual participation opportunities. One child explains this as follows:

> "[...] If there is a group who cannot do the job, we go to ask them if we can collaborate with them and help them, depending on whether they tell us 'yes you can'." (Guatemala, 12-15)

Communicating and having positive relations with everybody (child, Guatemala 12-15) are seen as meaningful forms of participation by the children in Guatemala. Similarly, in Kenya, children and especially girls, understood "active participation in the health club," "respect for each other" and "to be friends with other children" as key elements of desired participation (girl, Kenya, 10-14).

This understanding is supported by children in Kyrgyzstan, Guatemala and Kenya. Some children explained that a good form of participation is "having good behaviour" (girl, Kenya, 10-14), that with participation they "can gain new experience, get pleasure, and at the same time remain a good person" (girl, Kyrgyzstan, 13-15) or that participation means "to try to become a better person" (child, Guatemala, 15-17).

Box 7: Project information Guatemala, 'Programme to Promote Better Education (PACE)'

Objective: Education in Guatemala, particularly in rural areas, conforms to the requirements of a multi-ethnic society undergoing a process of modernisation.

Duration: 2005 to 2013.

Target group: Primary school children.

Approach:

- Educational management: Strengthening the institutional and professional capacities of the departmental education directorates in connection with efforts to decentralise the education sector.

- Intercultural bilingual education: Promoting intercultural bilingual education at preschool and primary levels within the context of the national in-service training plan for teachers, with the active involvement of parents and local communities.

- Rural secondary school education: Identifying formal and informal educational opportunities in rural areas that are better suited to meeting the requirements of local labour markets and the needs of the population.

- Education for food and nutrition security: Imparting and strengthening pupils' life skills with the active involvement of their parents.

Source: GIZ website: http://www.giz.de/en/worldwide/13711.html

2.1.8 Children want to empower themselves

Children in Serbia and Kyrgyzstan discussed participation as a means to improve their skills and to empower themselves. Through participation, children feel that they are "gaining life experience", can promote themselves and show their leadership qualities (girl, Kyrgyzstan, 13-15). They see that participation enables them to learn, especially on how to actively take advantage of opportunities:

> "First of all we got to know how to resolve the problem, to whom we could turn, steps we need to take. Participation means a lot to us." (girl, Kyrgyzstan, 13-15)

Another girl from Kyrgyzstan explains that "through participation there is a big influence on my character and on my future too" (girl, Kyrgyzstan, 13-15). She further states that she would spread the things she had learned by her participation to others. This shows that participation of children and young people is providing them with those skills and experiences that enable them to participate more actively and meaningfully in the future. As a child from Serbia puts it: "And [participation] would also support my empowerment" (child, Serbia, 15-17).

2.2 Towards a systematization of the children's right to participation

Social science literature has defined two main dimensions of participation: Political participation, meaning the right of the child to participate in decision-making, and social participation, meaning "possibilities for children to engage with the world around them."[77] The two dimensions are interdependent and mutually reinforcing. Furthermore, the reasoning for participation can either be rights-based or instrumental. The systematization aims to support identification of good practices of children's participation in German development cooperation.

2.2.1 Political participation

The demands of the children sketched out above are obvious: Children demand from adults that they take their views and opinions into account. They want to participate in decision-making processes in a meaningful way and decide on matters affecting them.

The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child does not explicitly differentiate the two dimensions nor does it provide definitions. Instead, the Committee interprets the child's right to participation, referring

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77   Ansell 2005, p. 9.

Figure 1: Dimensions and reasoning of the child's right to participation

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                                                                    ┌─────────────────────┐
                                                                    │     Rights-based     │
                                          ┌─────────────────────┐   └─────────────────────┘
                                          │ Participation in    │
                                          │ decisions:          │   ┌─────────────────────┐
                                          │ Political           │   │     Instrumental     │
                                          │ participation       │   └─────────────────────┘
  ┌─────────────────────┐                 └─────────────────────┘
  │ The child's right   │                                          ┌─────────────────────┐
  │ to participation    │                                          │     Rights-based     │
  └─────────────────────┘                 ┌─────────────────────┐  └─────────────────────┘
                                          │ Participation in    │
                                          │ society:            │   ┌─────────────────────┐
                                          │ Social              │   │     Instrumental     │
                                          │ participation       │   └─────────────────────┘
                                          └─────────────────────┘
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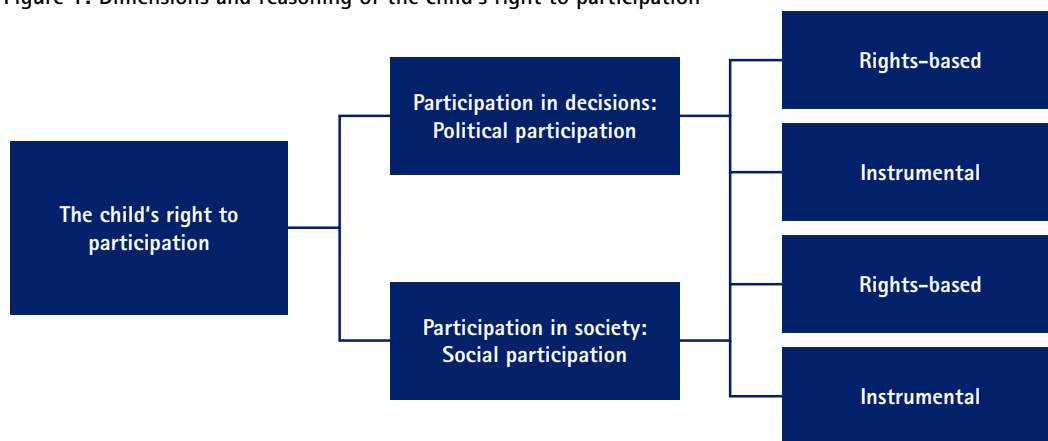
Source: authors

to the respective articles of the CRC, and that way implicitly refers to both political and social participation. In most cases, when mentioning the child's right to participation, the Committee does so in the context of the right and general principle enshrined in article 12. Mostly, the Committee refers to the dimension of the child's right to participate in decision-making processes, that is, in political participation. In its General Comments and Concluding Observations, the Committee sets out that children's participation in decision-making needs to be considered in three different kinds of situations.

- Children as individuals: The Committee demands that children are heard in decisions affecting them as individuals. These include a decision on a particular health intervention, judicial or administrative proceedings involving a child, such as proceedings of juvenile justice, asylum requests or a discipline issue in school.[78] Children should not be seen as an object about which decisions are made, but should actively be involved in the assessment of his or her needs and the development of solutions.[79]

- Children as a group: The Committee requires States to include children in the decision-making process regarding the development of strategies, programmes and policies related to children in general.[80] For example, in General Comment no. 9 on the rights of children with disabilities, the Committee criticizes that States develop policies and decisions related to children with disabilities, but leave children out of the process.[81] In General Comment no. 13, the Committee emphasizes the importance of children's participation in the development of strategies to prevent violence against children in general and in school.[82]

- Children affected indirectly: The Committee demands children's participation when developing laws and policies at the national or local level, which may affect children indirectly. In its General Comment no. 16 on the impact of the business sector on children's rights, the Committee demands that States should hear children's views regularly in line with General Comment no. 12, when developing such business-related laws and policies.[83]

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78   UN, Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment no. 3 on HIV/AIDS and the rights of the child, UN doc. CRC/GC/2003/3 of March 17, 2003, para. 20; see also General Comment no. 12, paras. 50–67.

79   General Comment no. 5, para. 12.

80   See e.g. Concluding Observations: Rwanda, CRC/C/RWA/CO/3–4 of June 14, 2013, para. 24; Uzbekistan, CRC/C/UZB/CO/3–4 of June 14, 2013, para. 27; Niue, CRC/C/NIU/CO/1 of June 24, 2013, para. 29; Israel, CRC/C/ISR/CO/2–4 of July 4, 2013, paras. 27, 28.

81   UN, Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment no. 9 on the rights of children with disabilities, UN doc. CRC/C/GC/9/Corr.1 of November 13, 2007, para. 32.

82   UN, Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment no. 13 on the right of the child to freedom from all forms of violence, para. 63.

83   UN, Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment no. 16 on State obligations regarding the impact of business on children's rights, UN doc. CRC/C/GC/16 of February 7, 2013, para. 21; see also UN, Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment no. 14 on the right of the child to have his or her best interests taken as a primary consideration (art. 3, para. 1), UN doc. CRC/C/GC/14 of May 29, 2013, para. 19.

2.2.2 Social participation

The focus group discussions with children showed that young people do not only understand participation as being heard and taken seriously in decision-making processes, but also as an active role for and in their community and social life. Defining themselves as experts who can influence and help to change society indicates that they connect participation with being socially included.

The discourse on social participation is strongly influenced by the literature on social exclusion and inclusion of children and young people[84] and links the social and the political dimensions of participation. In order to be able to participate in decisions in political, economic, social and cultural issues, young people must have the opportunity to take part in what occurs in these spheres, i.e. participate socially. Being able to decide on their own concerns and having the possibility to fully participate in all spheres of social life are the cornerstones of citizenship.[85]

The Committee mentions and demands the implementation of social participation only indirectly, not mentioning the term. For example, in many General Comments and Concluding Observations, the Committee refers to the right to be heard as an empowerment right, highlighting the role of the child as an active participant in the promotion, protection and monitoring of his or her rights, thus linking empowerment to social participation.[86] The Committee identifies traditional and cultural attitudes to children as the major obstacle to the acceptance of the child as a holder of rights and to the implementation of article 12 worldwide.[87] The traditional view of the child as a "dependent, invisible and passive" member of the family persists in some States,[88] and perceptions of childhood in different societies wield a large influence on the implementation of the child's right to participation.[89] In addition, the Committee frequently calls on States parties to ensure the inclusion of children in vulnerable situations, for example children with disabilities, from ethnic minorities or without parental care, and that way demands the implementation of social participation of all children in all spheres of social life.[90]

Without mentioning the term explicitly, social participation is an overarching theme of the CRC.[91] Article 31, the right of the child to rest, leisure, play, recreational activities, cultural life and the arts, is one of the key articles in this regard. However, the legal foundation of the child's right to social participation is embedded in many articles, such as for example the child's right to education (art. 28 and 29), the right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health (art. 24), the child's right to be heard (art. 12), and all articles and rights therein that protect children belonging to a vulnerable group, including refugees, children from ethnic minorities, and children with disabilities.

The Committee explains in General Comment no. 17 (on article 31 CRC) that play and recreation facilitate the child's capacity to negotiate, regain emotional balance, resolve conflicts and to make decisions. Through play and recreation, children learn actively to explore and to experience the world around them, and to develop new ideas and roles, thereby learning to understand and to build their social position within the world.[92] The following Box 8 illustrates key requirements of the child's right to participate fully in cultural and artistic life (article 31 paragraph 2 CRC) and thus illustrates one aspect of social participation.

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84   See Davis/Hill 2006, p. 1 et seqq.

85   See Davis/Hill 2006, pp.10 – 13.

86   See General Comment no. 3, para. 12; General Comment no. 5, para. 12; UN, Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment no. 7 on implementing child rights in early childhood, UN doc. CRC/C/GC/7/Rev.1 of September 20, 2006, para. 14; General Comment no. 13, para. 63; UN, Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment no. 15 on the right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health (art. 24), UN doc. CRC/C/GC/15 of April 17, 2013, para. 19.

87   UN, Committee on the Rights of the Child, Day of General Discussion on the right to be heard, September 29, 2006, para. 9; Concluding Observations: e.g. Chile, CRC/C/15/Add.173 of April 3, 2002, para. 29; Burkina Faso, CRC/C/15/Add.193 of October 9, 2002, para. 26; Morocco, CRC/C/15/Add.211 of July 10, 2003, para. 30; India, CRC/C/15/Add.228 of February 26, 2004, para. 36; Algeria, CRC/C/15/Add.269 of October 12, 2005, para. 33; Hungary CRC/C/HUN/CO/2 of March 17, 2006, para. 24; United Republic of Tanzania CRC/C/TZA/CO/2 of, June 21, 2006 para. 29.

88   See UNICEF 2007, p. 80.

89   Steward 2009, pp. 7 – 8.

90   General Comment no. 12, para. 134 (f); For Concluding Observations: see e.g. Rwanda, CRC/C/RWA/CO/3 – 4 of June 14, 2013, para. 24; Uzbekistan, CRC/C/UZB/CO/3 – 4 of June 14, 2013, para. 27.

91   Kirsten Sandberg, Chairperson of the Committee, emphasized that social participation is embedded in many articles of the CRC during an interview in Geneva on September 25, 2014.

92   UN, Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment no. 17 on the right of the child to rest, leisure, play, recreational activities, cultural life and the arts (art. 31), UN doc. CRC/C/GC/17 of April 17, 2013, para. 9.

Box 8: Key requirements of the right to participate fully in cultural and artistic life

- **Access** necessitates that children are provided the opportunities to experience cultural and artistic life and to learn about a wide range of different forms of expression;

- **Participation** requires that concrete opportunities are guaranteed for children, individually or as a group, to express themselves freely, to communicate, act and engage in creative activities, with a view to the full development of their personalities;

- **Contribution to cultural life** encompasses the right of children to contribute to the spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional expressions of culture and the arts, thereby furthering the development and transformation of the society to which he or she belongs.

Source: General Comment no. 17, para. 15.

2.2.3 Rights–based and instrumental reasons for participation

In development cooperation, participation is often used as an instrument to obtain more ownership and sustainability of measures. Only with the introduction of the human rights-based approach has participation come to be seen as rights-based and as a goal in itself, due to it being a key human rights principle.[93] The distinction between the instrumental and rights-based, normative value of participation is also debated in the literature on children's participation[94] and is the subject of the following section. By expressing their vision, objectives and definitions of participation, children and young people aspire to both dimensions of participation.

The rights-based dimension stresses that the child is an autonomous agent of his or her own life, and is entitled to the right to participation, "regardless of whether it is of use for someone or not."[95] Children's demands to be treated equally, to be taken seriously and be empowered as set out in chapter 2.1 refer to this rights-based dimension of participation – as does children's reference to their right to participation. Through participation, they gain skills and learn how to influence the outcome of decisions or policies and are thus empowered to make use of their fundamental right in article 12 CRC. The development professionals interviewed stressed that participation empowers children, strengthens their capacities and promotes them as self-governing subjects with agency.

The Committee on the Rights of the Child emphasizes the rights-based dimension of participation. Referring to article 12 CRC as an empowerment right, the Committee highlights the role of the child as an active participant in the promotion, protection and monitoring of his or her rights.[96] For example, in General Comment no. 3 on HIV/AIDS and the rights of the child, the Committee reiterates that the child as a rights-holder has a right to participate in awareness-raising activities about the impact of HIV/AIDS. To strengthen the active role of the child, the Committee encourages the active promotion of the participation of children as peer educators within and outside schools and calls on States, international agencies and NGOs to provide children with a supportive and enabling environment. The latter should allow them to carry out their own initiatives and to participate fully at community and national levels in HIV/AIDS policy and programme conceptualization, design, implementation, monitoring and review.[97]

The instrumental dimension of participation is two-fold: On the one hand, participation is labelled instrumental, whenever children's participation predominantly aims at improving the results of an intervention or making decisions more effective and efficient.[98] That is the case, for example when it is solely used as a method to enhance the performance and to ensure the accountability of projects, particularly if the participating children have no real opportunities to influence outcomes.[99] It is also an instrumental argument whenever children are requested to

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93 See above chapter 1.2. For critical considerations on rights-based approaches to participation in theory and practice, also in the context of development cooperation, see VeneKlasen et al. 2004, particularly pp. 13 et seqq.

94 See Liebel/Saadi 2012, pp. 164 – 166. Other scholars distinguish between the constitutive and the instrumental dimension of participation, see Ang et al. 2006, pp. 232 – 233; Hanson/Vandaele 2013, p. 257.

95 Liebel/Saadi 2012, p. 165.

96 See General Comment no. 3, para. 12; General Comment no. 5, para. 12; General Comment no. 7, para. 14; General Comment no. 13, para. 63; General Comment no. 15, para. 19.

97 General Comment no. 3, para. 12.

98 See Liebel/Saadi 2012, p. 164; see VeneKlasen 2004, pp. 5 – 7, 13 et seqq.

99 See VeneKlasen 2004, p. 5.

participate "to enhance identification with processes and measures and to diminish resistance."[100] On the other hand, participation is instrumental when it is directed at democratic citizenship or nation-building, or when it is seen as contributing to "a 'better world,'"[101] in general by, for example, enhancing the living conditions of the target group.

While there is thus a useful distinction between instrumental and rights-based approaches, there are also many overlaps where the distinction collapses. This holds true, for example, when the rights-based reasoning for children's participation promotes the realization of human rights principles, such as transparency and accountability, empowerment or the implementation of other human rights, including children's rights.

When children in the focus group discussions claimed that through participation, children want to help each other, improve decisions and contribute to a better society, they were referring to the instrumental dimension of participation. Likewise, many development professionals interviewed for the study refer to the contribution of the child's right to participation to the development of democracy in the respective countries, including transparency and accountability through participation. An interviewee working in Guatemala stressed the contribution of children's participation to effect change in partner countries characterized by authoritarianism, racism and discrimination. Without the participation of children and young people, he stated, strengthening democracy would not be feasible. In addition, development professionals mentioned that the participation of children contributes to the better realization of other child rights such as the best interests of the child and his or her right to protection.[102]

In development cooperation aiming for improved health and education, for example, interviewees stressed that more participation of children can better meet demands and thus have a direct impact on children's lives. If children and young people participate in the implementation of policies, they will also know best how to reach their peers, thus amplifying the policies' impact. One interviewee stated that the participation of children can also be an instrument to reduce violent conflict, especially with regard to indigenous groups.

The interviewees also see the participation of children as instrumental for a better achievement of project results or for a stronger social impact of development measures, again making an instrumental argument. They argue that the participation of children and young people makes development more efficient. The professionals have experienced that results can only be achieved and made sustainable if they are oriented towards children and young people – as a target group or "clients" – and if they are owned by young people. One professional stated that only by talking to the target group directly can one find out if measures will be accepted, and interventions can thus be designed much better and more effectively.

To conclude: The views of the children as well as the contemporary interpretation of the child's right to participate set out that German development cooperation has a broad understanding of child participation, including both political participation and social participation. Development cooperation can strengthen the opportunities for participation in decision-making processes by the promotion of social participation of children, especially of marginalized children. In addition, both rights-based and instrumental reasons for participation have to be taken into account in designing policies, strategies, instruments, and implementing development measures. Though participation is first and foremost a children's right, it is also a means of realisation of other (child) rights. At the same time, participation can have the positive effect that decision-makers take measures that actually address the reality of the right-holders, the children.

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100   Liebel/Saadi 2012, p. 164.
101   Ang et al. 2006, p. 233.
102   For information on the link between child protection and participation see e.g. Parkes, who emphasizes that participation enables children to protect themselves, empowering them to challenge abusive situations. Parkes 2013, pp. 13 – 14, 31, with further references of social science literature. See also Lansdown 2001, p. 2 and General Comment no. 12, paras. 120, 134.

3
How German development cooperation should strengthen children's participation rights

The following chapter addresses how German development cooperation can strengthen children's participation rights. It first presents the key ideas from the focus group discussions in which young people claimed distinct spaces that allow self-initiated action and structures for their participation. In the second section, the chapter uses a model for the different degrees of child participation and shows corresponding good practices from German development cooperation. This gives a clearer picture about which forms of participation are currently being realized in or through German development cooperation and where there is room for improvement.

3.1 How do children want to participate?

In the focus group discussions, children and young people expressed their understanding on how their demand for increased participation can be achieved. They identified the need for self-initiated activities and mobilization of society for their causes, and see the need for spaces that enable them to be active. All children also stressed their demand for structures that are open and responsive to their participation in debates and the decision-making process, especially in school and the community.

3.1.1 Children want to initiate activities themselves

Children in all countries expressed that they want to propose ideas and initiatives themselves; the degree to which they are able to do so depended on their social context and prior experience with participation.

In Guatemala, children who participated in the group discussions were approached through the school system. They demanded to have the opportunity to pro-

pose activities in schools but said that adults – teachers and school directors – are making the decisions. For example, children at a boarding school thought the approval of the director to watch a movie they had proposed was a good experience of participation (child, Guatemala, 12-15). In another focus group discussion, where the children discussed their proposed "project plan" to reduce violence at school, one child stated that they may take the initiative, but "have to discuss it with the adults" and that "it depends on them to help them" (child, Guatemala, 15-17). Another child disagreed – children are more than able to take the initiative:

> Child: "It is assumed that the adult should take the initiative, but in this case I think the initiative could be taken either by children or by adults. In this case, no matter who it is, the idea is to change." (Guatemala, 15-17)

Children active in a youth centre in Kyrgyzstan see opportunities to initiate own activities and discuss them with adults as a good way to participate:

> Boy: "We initiated this idea, we raise this idea, but then we need to have the advice of adults and discuss with them together." (Kyrgyzstan, 13-15)

For some children, taking initiatives and showing responsibility within their own age group is a good form of participation. One child from Guatemala explained:

> Child: "For example, if someone says 'Let's do something bad', there is somebody who takes the initiative to say 'No, we better go and play football or something else, to change things to positive'." (Guatemala, 15-17)

Young Serbians who are active in a school parliament organized charity actions for other young people

living in poverty. They raised funds for a girl with leukaemia and supported a young boy who was the victim of peer violence and suffered physical trauma. Besides the collection of money, they explained that they also had fun and educated others through this activity (child, Serbia 15-17).

By discussing what they can do themselves, children from Kyrgyzstan concluded that they could organize cleaning days in their town under the slogan "We are for the clean town" (child, Kyrgyzstan, 15-17). They also referred to activities they had already initiated, like flash mobs. One girl explained it as follows:

> Girl: "We had this flash mob at the central square and we had this Winter Festival 'I love Kyrgyzstan.' We danced and sang songs and we showed in this way we love Karakol" (Kyrgyzstan, 13-15).

Within their self-initiated projects, children from Kyrgyzstan reflected on decision-making among them. Some want to decide by majority (boy, Kyrgyzstan, 15-17 years), others by consensus:

> Girl: "How are the decisions made? I think this will be our general opinion that the decisions are made jointly and all of us make them, because we have the right and we have team spirit." (Kyrgyzstan, 13-15)

3.1.2 Mobilization and peer-to-peer support

At the beginning of the focus group discussions, children identified the main problems they face and their problem-solving strategies (see above chapter 1.3). They see the problem that especially young people in rural areas are inactive, since they might be afraid of potential change.

> Young person: "Everyone is interested and everyone would like to change something, but when it comes to concrete actions they are not getting involved." (Serbia, 21-25)

Therefore, many children named mobilization of other young people as a key to bringing forward their initiatives.

In Kyrgyzstan, children therefore define the creation of a "new movement" of active young people as their strategy to resolve different types of problems in their town (boy, Kyrgyzstan, 15-17):

> Girl: "Of course when we will implement this project we will face different difficulties, such as unwillingness of young people to participate and also to have interested parties, such as youth and youth organizations and volunteers and we would make a real request for the support of Youth Centre, Youth Bank[103], schools and youth organizations. And why we need it [activeness]? Because the youth form a local movement in our town and the future of the country depends on the youth. And our purpose is to get the youth activated so they will be connected to social life." (Kyrgyzstan, 15-17)

To mobilize their peers, they also focused on institutions for youth support, like youth offices or clubs. These offer leisure time activities, language courses and job counselling which may encourage young people to come to those local contact points. After that, they can express their opinions on matters affecting them and participate in decision-making at a municipal level.

Children from a Child Rights Centre in Serbia want to organize like-minded youths to get more support for their cause until they "become a huge group". A child defines the mobilization of peers as a precondition for achieving the objectives of their initiatives:

> Child: "And if we want to make some changes, we as a crowd have to fight together. We have power, but mobilization needs to be done first." (Serbia, 15-18)

School pupils in Guatemala want to create a social group to facilitate the dialogue between adults and themselves as the "new generation" (child, Guatemala, 12-17). Through collaboration with their peers they want to increase their opportunities for participation (boy, Guatemala, 15) and to achieve their objectives (child, Guatemala, 12-17).

To activate other youth, children propose peer-to-peer activities. Young people in a focus group discussion in Serbia highlight the need for age-appropriate and relevant information for young people. They see the active youth as those who can provide this

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103   The Youth Bank is a youth-led grant-making organization.

information to their peers: "those who are involved in the [youth] office can share with those who are not involved in it" (child, Serbia, 15-17). Young people in Guatemala have a similar view:

> Child: "Between adults and youngsters, it is difficult to understand each other. Young people and other young people can better understand each other. From there, they can go to the parents, and they can talk to other adults."
> (Guatemala, 15-17)

In Kyrgyzstan, children propose peer-to-peer training on "passiveness and activeness of youth" as a way to mobilize other youth to participate in their activities:

> Girl: "We could conduct peer-to-peer training. Our peer group would accept us seriously as we could explain in an easier way, whereas the adults could not explain in an easy-to-understand way. It depends on their age, but then the most interesting thing is that we should be interested." (Kyrgyzstan, 15-17)

They want to transfer their skills and knowledge to children and youth active in school parliaments, who will in turn train others (girl, Kyrgyzstan, 15-17). A different group of children in Kyrgyzstan want to announce a meeting in the youth centre to discuss their problem and seek support in schools and via social networks (boy, Kyrgyzstan, 13-15). Likewise, young people from Serbia use Facebook, local networks and radio and TV stations to inform others about the offers in the child rights centre (child, Serbia, 15-18).

Boys in Kenya want to participate in the health club by helping injured people and therefore want to learn about first aid. Teaching others on health issues was of high significance to all girls.

Young Serbians over eighteen explain that they need to learn about rights to participation and especially what it means in practice, how to implement it and how participative structures can be developed. This would empower more young people to participate (young person, Serbia, 21-25).

3.1.3 Reaching out to adults and institutions

In addition to peer-to-peer mobilization and support, children agree on the need to reach out to the adults in their community:

> Child: "First we have to change ourselves and afterwards we have to reach others and this group has to again reach other persons. So this is the result of the community. And with the community we reach all the other people [...]."
> (Guatemala, 15-17)

In Kyrgyzstan, two groups of children developed detailed plans on how they want to reach out to individual adults or institutions that could support them in implementing their plans, which included a recreational centre in their town:

> Girl: "[...] once we have a project proposal then we can appeal to town administration for help and we need to involve all the citizens of the town, students from all educational institutions, more adults and parents."
> (Kyrgyzstan, 13-15)

The same respondent added that parents "should have also the right to express their voice, and make their contribution as well" and that they have to approach influential and well-off people, since the town budget lacked the resources to build the recreational centre.

The group also identified the school administration as supporters for this project and organizations such as USAID, UNESCO and GIZ as possible sponsors. The children also thought to reach out to others by awareness raising, advocacy, organization of camps and by a survey among the population on how people evaluate the conditions for children in terms of entertainment and leisure (boy and girl, Kyrgyzstan, 13-15). Another group in Kyrgyzstan identified the Youth Bank, a youth-led grant-making organization, as a potential supporter for their project. They proposed to describe the project in detail and hand it in for the pre-screening process at the bank. If this is successful, they want to "start to involve more people" and tell their friends and the friends of their friends "mouth by mouth" (girl, Kyrgyzstan, 13-15).

The ideas described above show that children are both creative and realistic at the same time in developing strategies to solve problems they have identified. They know which people and institutions they have to involve in order to reach their objectives. More than that, they see themselves as responsible for the initiation of the desired changes:

> Child: "But it all starts from us. It has to start from someone and if it hasn't started from someone else by now, we should be [the ones] [...] it should be expected that we should start something and call other people and get support from adults [and] from parents."
> (Serbia, 15-18)

3.1.4 Spaces and structures for children's self-organized participation in school

In Serbia, young people who come to a youth office state that they appreciate that the school facilitates a way to express their needs and demands, for example in school parliaments. Participants in the focus group discussion agree: "That is the way that young people could participate: through school! For us, school is the same thing as jobs are for adults" (child, Serbia, 15-17).

Kyrgyz children agreed. A group of them had identified "youth, unemployment, low level of education and [...] a low level of patriotism" as the main problems of their town. A project called 'New Generation' could resolve this problem, with school parliaments as a decisive mechanism:

> Boy: "[...] we have fifteen schools and every school has a school parliament consisting of six to ten people and we are going to attract school parliaments and we want to gather them into one big conference. Why [the] school parliament? Because they are representatives of these schools and they could later interact with their schoolmates.

Children in another focus group in Kyrgyzstan plan to raise money from the students to construct a new sports field for their school, if all students agree. Again, the school parliament is the structure for voting and decision-making among the students:

> Boy: "[The] speaker and vice speaker, they could agree and arrange it. Firstly they need to coordinate it with teachers and administration of the school. Firstly the speaker and vice speakers, they need to collect representatives of the classes [grades] and once they have counted the number of the students, for example like 100 or 200 soms [Kyrgyz currency] is their contribution. And surely they have to discuss it with students, because some of them would be 'for' and some of them would be 'against'."
> (Kyrgyzstan, 13-15)

Children that cannot contribute with money should have the opportunity to make at least "some kind of contribution" (girl, Kyrgyzstan, 13-15).

When reflecting about their present participation opportunities at school, some children are satisfied with their participation in decisions related to solving problems at the school, but criticize that they have no access to participate at the teacher council (girl, Kyrgyzstan, 15-17).

Students from Guatemala say that they do not have opportunities for self-organized activities or decision-making in school, all decisions are taken by the director and the teachers. The only occasions where they can participate are meetings in which the teachers talk with their parents about the student's individual performance (girl, Guatemala, 15). Also, their class presidents are "not doing anything" and did not even contribute to a plan to increase the discipline among children in school (child, Guatemala, 12-15).

School children from another focus group in Guatemala – although naming similar limited participation opportunities - rely on activation of their peers in school:

> Child: "The first step that we would take is with the people, with the director from here. We would talk to them and they would say 'yes', and from there we would go to the auditorium, from there we would go to another one, there would be two groups and from these two groups there would be four, and then we would cover places until we reach out to homes and houses. So it is a long process, but we hope that it is possible." (Guatemala, 15-17)

3.1.5 Spaces and structures for children's self-organized participation in the community

Structures of youth support in the respective municipalities, like youth clubs, centres or offices, provide important spaces for youth participation.

"There is a youth office and everyone has a right to go" (child, Serbia, 15-17). The youth office provides information young people may need to solve their problems. Young Serbians identified the youth office a place where they can self-organize, do actions to mobilize young people to come up with their own projects: "everyone who wants to take action can either call the youth office or [school] parliaments" (child, Serbia, 15-17). They especially mention their projects on drug prevention and on discrimination based on gender, sexual orientation, nationality or religion. Through their activities in these structures, they can influence their communities:

> Child: "As we said earlier, we have the youth office and [school] parliament. We have opportunities to decide on issues or the things on which the future of our city depends." (Serbia, 15-17)

In a focus group discussion with young Serbians over eighteen years, they criticized that youth offices focused on educational projects or leisure time (for example a football field) rather than on participation for youth at the municipal level. Especially in rural areas "not a lot of young people are involved in the youth office" (young person, Serbia, 21-25). These young people therefore propose to develop a local action plan for youth and to create a youth forum, consisting of young people from different organizations. The forum would identify problems which young people want to solve and discuss them publicly.

Kyrgyz children thought of the youth centres in the municipalities as a key space for their participation. The youth centre is the only facility where they can all gather, decide on and realize their projects:

> Girl: "Yes, we make decisions here, because this centre exists due to young people."

> Boy: "For example, on the organisation of a new project."

> Girl: "We could propose projects and vote on them, we could comment and add ideas to

them. For example, last week we had a training session on IT literacy for children from the orphanage and it was explained at that training session how to work with social networks on the Internet." (Kyrgyzstan, 15-17)

In addition to the youth centre, children name child-led youth unions as the kind of structure in which they can make plans and conduct surveys in the community, e.g. whether people see the need for recreational or leisure centres (Kyrgyzstan, 13-15). But some children also say that they would like to go to more 'unofficial places' in the countryside or the mountains as they can "discuss freely" there (Kyrgyzstan, 15-17). This shows that children also wish for more informal spaces for debate and participation, besides the formalised spaces provided by youth centres.

Guatemalan children wanted to engage with the mayor of their municipality (Guatemala, 13-17), but they did not mention any support structures and did not know of any organisations of or for children within their community: "there is only an association for men and women" (Guatemala, 15). One group of fifteen-year-old children described their role in the community as "just to listen" (Guatemala, 15).

Despite the existing participation opportunities in Serbia and Kyrgyzstan, young people in both countries still point out that their decision-making opportunities in their towns are limited. They are not taken seriously and they do not make decisions related to money (Kyrgyzstan, 15-17). There is a lack of communication with local authorities and a lack of transparency in decision-making:

> Child: "Young people can influence decision-making by the local authorities. We have a Ministry of Youth and there is also a Youth Council, and we can propose our ideas and comments, but people here are not aware of it. And that means we have bad communication. We have a secret group in the mayor's administration, consisting of the mayor himself and other employees etc. and this group secretly makes the decisions concerning the budget."

> Child: "They make the decision, because they have the power." (Kyrgyzstan, 15-17)

One of the biggest challenges to solve the problems Kyrgyz children have identified is the lack of dedicated funds for young people (girl, Kyrgyzstan, 13-15).

Another group identified strategies to collect money for their activities by organizing competitions where adults buy the prizes or to find "small sponsors" to conduct different projects (boy, Kyrgyzstan, 15-17). Young Serbians report that they need more moral and financial support from the city council. They are aware that funds are allocated to youth work, but that so far these funds have not reached them:

> Child: "And there is now a youth budget, but we don't receive this money. And no one actually monitors how the money is spent. And there is also funding but we don't know where that money goes. Everyone talks about the advancement of youth participation but for three or four years all that I know is that a gym has opened." (Serbia, 15-17)

3.1.6 Partnership and consultation with adults

Besides the demand for own spaces for participation, children from Serbia and Kyrgyzstan also demand to engage closely with adults in decision-making processes (child, Serbia, 15-17). In explaining their idea of how to realize their project plan to provide support for young and talented people, they include parents and other adults:

> Child: "In order to reach our goal we can use three approaches, but the best way would be to have a mixed approach. Financial support from the city council, a working group that would consist of young people and also adult or parental support in negotiating, lobbying and advocacy." (Serbia, 15-17)

In Kyrgyzstan, children who want to work towards a cleaner municipality declared that decisions will have to be made to increase the number of garbage containers and cleaning days. A girl states that these decisions should be made by the children and the adults together at the municipal government level (girl, Kyrgyzstan, 15-17). A younger boy from another group in the same town explains how decisions in their planned projects will be made:

> Boy: "How are the decisions made and who decides? In order to resolve some problems we would try to gather many children, school students and we would surely make some announcements and invite adults, representatives

of the companies. For example, the main person is our speaker, who would propose one solution, one decision and all people in that room would vote, who supports and who does not, or who is for and who is against. And then all of us would come to a common decision and then we could take some action, because some decisions might be negative and maybe some people dislike them." (Kyrgyzstan, 13-15)

A boy from another town in Kyrgyzstan demands more interaction with adults and involvement in research carried out by adults:

> Boy: "Adults should interact with young people, because usually young people are doers. And they should conduct some research [...] in our country in order to know what we want, to conduct some monitoring and to see whether they are working in the right direction or not. They should attract us, they should get us involved." (Kyrgyzstan, 15-17)

A Kyrgyz group of children came to the conclusion that the support they get is missing the "voluntary" and "interesting" aspects. They say that they rather "want to see themselves actively participating," for example in workshops that are more interesting, with a good trainer, and organized in a way that everybody can participate (girl, Kyrgyzstan, 15-17). Children of another group expect the municipality to conduct more training and educational events, for example on improvement of the town planning or education at school (boy, Kyrgyzstan, 13-15). The young people have also developed the idea of having apprenticeships for young people in State institutions, for example in the mayor's office. Hereby, an exchange of experiences could happen and children would learn on how to officially appeal to the office and how to develop strategic plans (boy, Kyrgyzstan, 15-17).

Children in Kyrgyzstan also identify their family and their school as the places where interaction between children and adults should happen. Children in one group say that they know of organised meetings in schools where children and adults came together, but say that they have never participated (Kyrgyzstan, 15-17). Children of another group have experience of discussions with parents in their school (Kyrgyzstan, 13-15), and refer to classroom sessions organized by the school's parent council on topics like "alcohol and tobacco smoking", where "kids and parents can discuss the issue in the classroom and can resolve the

issue". Some children name a teacher with whom they can discuss their problems:

> Girl and Boy: "[...] we sit in a big classroom and [...], our teacher she helps us a lot more than others. She gives us direction, she is an experienced person, she is a psychologist, and we can trust her."

> Interviewer: "What kinds of direction?"

> Girl: "For example she is a teacher, who has worked for a long time in school and she is like an X-ray: she could say what this student would like in his or her work. For example, this teacher would say that this student would like decorating or maybe economics, or maybe to collect money, or mass media, or maybe sports and culture etc., etc. So students could discuss with their parents at home, at school and in the big general assembly room in the schools as well as in the teachers' offices." (Kyrgyzstan, 13-15)

For Guatemalan children, the discussion with parents, teachers and representatives of the government is the main strategy for reaching their goals. A group of school children identified the problem of child labour and perceives the need to "tell the parents that it is [their] obligation to look after their children and not of the children to look after their parents" (child, Guatemala, 13-17).

3.1.7 Access to decision-makers

All children identify the access to adults who take the decisions within their community and the municipality as a key success factor for reaching their objectives. At the same time, none of the groups where satisfied with the level of access they currently have.

In Guatemala, community members who may oppose the children's projects are identified as one of the main obstacles. Kyrgyz children said that they would appeal to the mayor's office to set up more garbage containers in their town and send them their project proposal. In case of no response they want to appeal directly to the president (Kyrgyzstan, 13-15). Children state that they previously had only gained access to the mayor's office if their school representatives took them along. They did not mind being escorted by adults since for them "it is a bit scary to go directly" and "the local

administration would say 'you should rather go and study at the school'" (Kyrgyzstan, 15-17).

Young people in a child rights centre in Serbia share the same experience in having very limited access to decision-makers. They explain:

> Child 1: "There are people at the top of society. They accomplished something in their lives [and think:] 'Why waste time on smaller people?' – people like me. I said that bluntly, but I think there is a grain of truth to it." (Serbia, 15-18)

> Child 2: "They [children] don't have power. Basically the politicians see us as a crowd and they need to control the crowd [...]." (Serbia, 15-18)

Some young people in Serbia expressed their fear in non-effective structures for participation. They fear that even though these structures exist on paper, in reality children and young people have no influence on the results (young person, Serbia, 21-25).

Children in Guatemala are also frustrated by politics and the local administration, as they believe that planned projects were promised to be implemented but nothing happened: "The mayor, for example, promised to build a wall here, but did not do anything in the end" (child, Guatemala, 15-17). In Kyrgyzstan, children are similarly frustrated that although they were given a space to develop their own ideas and plans and even handed them over to the municipality, there had been no action:

> Child: "For example, we participate in the project which relates to establishing the garbage containers in every school and all over the town. That project proposal has been approved and it is now being implemented. But we have heard that nothing has been changed, we don't see any changes." (Kyrgyzstan, 15-17)

In other focus group discussions children also reported that on several occasions their ideas have been heard and even approved by decision-makers, but that no action was taken or support provided (girl and boy, Kyrgyzstan, 13-15 and 15-17). This shows that if children do not experience any result of their participation or feedback, they feel frustrated and do not make use of the spaces and opportunities for participation in their school, community or town.

3.1.8 Participation as a right

The difficulties young people experience in accessing decision-makers convince some children that participation needs to be based in law. A boy from Kyrgyzstan explains:

> Boy: "In order to make decisions at the municipal/national level we need some legal force or legal power. If we just talk, they will just be empty words." (Kyrgyzstan, 15-17)

Some children and young people also see the right to vote as a way to access decision-makers (young person, Serbia, 21-25; Kyrgyzstan, 13-15). In Kyrgyzstan, children say that their opinion on whether a certain candidate should become president should matter as well. When they discussed the appropriate age they came to the result that children younger than fourteen should not be able to vote. One girl explains:

> Girl: "Anyway these two years are also very important and you can understand a lot and when you become fourteen years old you listen to what the President says, who is President and who promises what and you become clever. And when you are twelve there are some words you do not know and you do not understand what the President or politicians are talking about. For example, twelve-year-old kids they just put a tick and when you are fourteen you are more developed and you have a better developed brain." (Kyrgyzstan, 13-15)

3.2 Meaningful participation of children: A model

Children have a clear understanding of how they want to participate. By referring to adults as key determinants for realizing their participation opportunities – as addressees of their mobilization and campaigning activities, dialogue partners and supporters within their family, school or community, or decision makers they want to gain access to – they show that the adult-child relationship is a key determinant of whether children perceive their participation as appropriate or meaningful. Children also clearly differentiate how they want to participate and interact with adults in different settings, spaces and situations – and when they consider participation as meaningful.

Theorists and practitioners have devised different models on children's participation. The literature aims to provide orientation for practitioners working with children, to assess which level of participation is appropriate in a given situation or space and whether that participation is meaningful according to the right to participation as defined in the CRC (see above, Box 3). Most of the models differentiate between different levels (also: degrees or forms) of participation, and whether they contribute to reducing or transforming the power of adults vis-à-vis children.[104]

The most prominent model of participation – the so called ladder of participation – was developed by Roger Hart in 1992.[105] Besides the basic differentiation between participation and non-participation, the model describes different levels of participation. Building inter alia on his work, Gerison Lansdown developed a typology for the different forms of genuine participation.[106] The following Table uses Lansdown's model, combined with the description of non-participatory degrees of children's participation, described by Hart as tokenistic, manipulative or decorative[107]. The Table gives development practitioners a quick overview over the possible degrees of children's participation and measures to support it.

3.2.1 Child-led participation

With their demand to initiate their own activities and solve identified problems, young people in the four countries stress that they strive for child-led participation as characterized in the following Table. They focus on the activation of their peers and mobilization of adults. They define their own problem-solving strategies and processes and demand the necessary support from adults, showing a high degree of the children's own agency.

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104 An overview of the different models of participation can be found in Tisdall et al. 2014, pp. 8 – 13 and in Parkes 2013, pp. 15 – 25; see also Liebel 2013, p. 104.

105 Roger Hart developed the "ladder of participation" in a paper prepared for UNICEF, and based it on Sherry Arnsteins earlier work, originally intended to measure citizen participation (Arnstein 1968, pp. 216 – 224). Hart's work has been adopted and modified by other authors, e.g. Schröder 1995, pp. 16 – 17. Critics of Hart point out that his model is normative and hierarchical because it assumes that the higher the level of child participation the better, disregarding the respective contexts. Liebel claims that the model might promote a paternalistic understanding since its highest level of participation of children can only be achieved with the support of adults (see Liebel 2013, p. 104).

106 Lansdown 2001 and Lansdown 2010, pp. 11 – 23.

107 Hart 1992, pp. 8 – 14.

The Committee on the Rights of the Child calls upon States to support children's organizations and child-led initiatives, among others in order to address issues such as violence.[108] For example, in General Comment No. 12, the Committee recommends that these organizations should be involved "in the elaboration, establishment and evaluation of anti-violence programmes and measures, so that children can play a key role in their own protection."[109] In addition, in its working methods of 2014 for the participation of children in the reporting process, the Committee puts particular emphasis on the role of child-led organizations and children's representatives in the reporting process. In these guidelines, the Committee makes suggestions how children's representatives can meaningfully participate in the reporting process and gives advice on how adults can support them.[110]

Likewise, the development professionals and their local partners who were interviewed for the study give examples for child-led participation supported by German development cooperation:

- In Kyrgyzstan, youth centres in municipalities have been established to provide children and young people a platform for their own initiatives. These youth centres are supported by a German development cooperation programme in partnership with the Kyrgyz Ministry of Labour, Migration and Youth. Children are empowered and trained to lobby for funds from the local budgets. This was successful in one municipality where local authorities allocated additional funds to support young people and employed a person as contact point for the youth to collect their ideas and demands on how to spend the funds. Youth centres also support young people, including young adults, by providing training for young entrepreneurs on how to start up social business, and on how to open and run their own businesses.

- In Guatemala, an education programme supported by German development cooperation plans to expand its focus from the formal school system towards civil society initiatives that work with youth and to support a youth congress. In

a municipality in Guatemala - with a majority of indigenous citizens, young people have self-organized in groups without adult leadership to promote initiatives, cultural activities, sports and education.

- In Serbia, German development cooperation worked with the NGO Child Rights Centre Serbia, which advocates for the implementation of children's rights in Serbia. Additionally, the NGO established a youth group and trained the group members on children's rights, leadership, teamwork, critical thinking, negotiation, and participation. Later on, graduates of this training programme started to run the youth group independently from the NGO. The group can thus be considered as one example of child-led participation, where young people up to the age of eighteen discuss issues related to children's rights in Serbia, conduct their own research, and run peer education projects on children's rights. This group also wrote a parallel report, when Serbia was reviewed by the Committee on the Rights of the Child in 2008.

3.2.2 Collaborative participation

Besides participation through self-initiated organizations and activities, children also demand participation in decision-making processes dominated by adults. Though initiated and mainly controlled by adults, this type of participation is characterized by the opportunity for young people to expand the degree of self-directed action and influence on decision-makers such as mayors, municipal administrations, school directors and teachers.

The Committee on the Rights of the Child refers to school parliaments or youth councils as particularly apt for joint decision-making with adults and for the political participation of children and youth. With regard to the continuous participation of children in decision-making processes in school, the Committee explicitly refers to "class councils, student councils and student representation on school boards and committees, where they can freely express their views on the

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108   General Comment no. 12, para. 128.
109   General Comment no. 12, para. 121, referring to the Secretary-General's Study on Violence against Children: Pinheiro 2006.
110   The working methods draw on the Committee's experience with children's participation in the reporting process, including reviewing children's submissions, meeting with children and the Day of General Discussion in 2006 on the right to be heard. UN, Committee on the Rights of the Child, Working methods for the participation of children in the reporting process of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, UN doc CRC/C/66/2 of October 16, 2014.

Table: Forms of participation: children's views and practices in German development cooperation

Types	Characteristics	Argumentation and examples	How children in Kyrgyzstan, Serbia, Guatemala & Kenya want to participate	Practices in German development cooperation
Child-led participation	Children are afforded or claim the space and opportunity to initiate activities and advocate for themselves: • the issues of concern being identified by children themselves • adults serving as facilitators rather than leaders. They are resource providers, technical assistants and child protection workers to enable children to pursue their own objectives • children are controlling the process	Children can initiate action as individuals: • choosing a school • seeking medical advice • pressing for the realization of their rights through the courts • utilizing complaints mechanisms Children can initiate action as a constituency: • by establishing and managing their own organizations for the purposes of policy analysis, advocacy, awareness-raising • through peer representation and education • through the use of and access to the media	• self-initiation of activities • activation and mobilization of peers • reaching out to others • having the right to vote • assembling in their own organization/NGO	• youth centres or offices as spaces for (self-) initiated activities • support of self-organized youth initiatives of local NGOs
Collaborative participation	Greater degree of partnership between adults and children, with the opportunity for active engagement at any stage of a decision, initiative, project or service: • adult-initiated • involving partnership with children • empowering children to influence or challenge both the process and outcomes • allowing for increasing levels of self-directed action by children over a period of time	Involvement of children in: • designing and undertaking research • policy development • peer education and counselling • participation in conferences • representation on boards or committees	• participation in municipalities through youth centres/offices • participation in school through school councils and school parliaments • having access to decision-makers	• support of participative structures on municipal level, e.g. youth planning, public hearings and youth councils • involvement of young people in peer education and counselling, especially in the health sector • awareness raising among adults on children's participation in local communities • support of participation of children in school governance through school parliaments and school councils • cooperation with Civil Society actors that support youth participation
Consultative participation	Adults seek children's views in order to build knowledge and understanding of their lives and experience: • adult-initiated • adult-led and managed • lacking any possibility for children to control outcomes	Appropriate means of enabling children to express views, e.g.: • when undertaking research • in planning processes • in developing legislation, policy or services • in decisions affecting individual children within the family, in healthcare or in education • as witnesses in judicial or administrative proceedings	• participation in school and in the classroom • participation in the municipality	• participative research and studies with children prior to project planning and development • consultation with children or representatives of children in development of programmes • consultation in monitoring and evaluation • consultation of measures, e.g. in disaster risk reduction and resilience planning • feedback by young people on service provision, e.g. in the health sector • promotion of participation of children in youth conferences and congresses
Non-participation	Children are involved by adults without having the opportunity to decide on this and without being fully informed: • decorative • manipulative • tokenistic	• uninformed children at conferences • children carrying political messages • one-off events		

Sources: compiled by the authors according to Lansdown 2001, Lansdown 2010 and Hart 1992.

development and implementation of school policies and codes of behaviour."[111] Overall, the Committee recommends that States support the establishment of independent student organizations.[112] It reminds States parties in many Concluding Observations "to strengthen initiatives for children to express themselves, such as the youth parliament project, to have their views taken into account in the formulation of policies and legislation affecting them."[113] In its Concluding Observations on Slovenia, the Committee emphasized that it is the State party which assumes "primary responsibility for the effective operation of the children's parliament and [that the State should] provide it with adequate human, financial and technical support."[114]

Beyond school, structures at the local and national level provide important spaces for children's participatory initiatives. The Committee clarifies that many opportunities for children's participation takes place at the community level, welcoming the growing number of local youth parliaments, municipal children's councils and ad hoc consultations where children can voice their views in decision-making processes.[115] At the same time, the Committee observes that these structures for formal representation in local government are only one of many approaches to the implementation of children's right to participate. The downside of representative structures is that they may allow only a small group of children, typically not the marginalized ones, to engage in their local communities.[116] The Committee does not provide practical advice on how to prevent exclusion of children in representative structures, but suggests a variety of approaches, "including children's hearings, children's parliaments, children-led organizations, children's unions or other representative bodies, discussions at school, social networking websites, etc."[117]

Based on the interviews with development professionals, a number of examples for collaborative participation were identified:

- In Burkina Faso, a project focusing on the promotion of women's and girls' rights. Boys and girls were involved in designing activities to fight Female Genital Mutilation and acted as peer counsellors to discuss their rights and the legal provisions, empowering them to say 'no' to the practice.

- In Kyrgyzstan, the youth administration supported the introduction of regional youth councils, consisting of young people who are active in youth centres on the local level. This shall provide young people with opportunities to address their views to the regional youth administration. The GIZ implemented a programme on youth support work with local NGOs, who support the capacities of young people under 28 to empower their younger peers. Young people are supported to contribute to the development of local youth strategies and to participate in the planning of support for young people in their towns. Young people are also prepared to participate in local public hearings.

- In Serbia, German development cooperation advised the Ministry of Education to introduce school parliaments. Students elect their representatives to the school parliament, and the latter communicate to adults what is relevant to them and take part in decision-making at school level. A well-run school parliament in one municipality provided a platform for students to start their own charity initiative, where young people did fundraising for other young people in need. In some municipalities it is now common practice to include young representatives of the school parliaments in decision-making processes at municipal level.

- In Guatemala, school councils have been established to contribute to decisions related to the

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111 General Comment no. 12, para. 110.
112 General Comment no. 12, para. 112. See also Concluding Observations on Guyana of 2013, where the Committee recommended that the State "undertake programmes and awareness-raising activities to promote the meaningful and empowered participation of all children, within the family, community, and schools, including within student council bodies – with particular attention to children in vulnerable situations." Concluding Observations Guyana, CRC/C/GUY/CO/2 – 4 of June 18, 2013, para. 29.
113 Concluding Observations Niue, CRC/C/NIU/CO/1 of June 24, 2013, para. 29. See also: Concluding Observations Guinea, CRC/C/GIN/CO/2 of June 13, 2013, paras. 42, 43; Rwanda, CRC/C/RWA/CO/3 – 4 of June 14, 2013, para. 24; Uzbekistan, CRC/C/UZB/CO/3 – 4 of June 14, 2013, paras. 26, 27; Israel, CRC/C/ISR/CO/2 – 4 of July 4, 2013, paras. 27, 28.
114 Concluding Observations Slovenia, CRC/C/SVN/CO/3 – 4 of July 8, 2013, para. 33.
115 General Comment no. 12, para. 127.
116 General Comment no. 12, para. 127.
117 General Comment no. 14, para. 91

organization and the conditions at school. While there are some positive examples of children's participation in these councils, the general assessment of the councils' performance as well as of the participation opportunities are rather negative. Respondents from Guatemala argued that the low performance can be explained by the fact that these councils have been introduced top-down.

- In some Kyrgyz schools, school parliaments and the respective pupil posts - such as 'president' or 'member' of a school parliament – have been established in the education system. Within these school parliament and pupils' offices, children and youth learn how to discuss and to vote. The danger is that school parliaments are merely seen as a "game", as one respondent from Kyrgyzstan described them, and not as a mechanism for children to participate in real decisions at school level.

3.2.3 Consultative participation

In the focus group discussions, many children demanded to be consulted by adults, indicating that consultative participation is relevant and meaningful to the children interviewed for the study.

With regard to adult decision-making, the Committee on the Rights of the Child calls on States parties to establish systems and/or procedures to allow children to fully exercise the right to be heard and to "change social attitudes that perceive children as passive subjects of adult decision-making".[118] States parties should encourage families, guardians and child-minders to listen to children and give due weight to their views in matters concerning them.[119] To this end, the Committee recommends that States parties promote programmes that educate parents on relationships

of mutual respect, listening and taking into account the child's views as his or her capacities evolve, and dealing with conflict.[120] As for schools, the Committee recommends that children take an active role, for example in class or student councils, or through representation on school boards and committees, and independent student organizations.[121] Decisions on the choice of school, educational tracks or on disciplining deeply affect the child's best interests and must give due weight to his or her views.[122]

Public consultations on the community level should include children's views, for example for community development plans.[123] In General Comment no. 12, the Committee mentions well-established participation opportunities for children and youth on the district, regional, federal state and national levels, where youth parliaments, councils and conferences provide forums for children and youth to present their views and make them known to relevant audiences.[124]

Referring to the child's rights to be heard, the Committee repeatedly emphasizes the obligation of States parties to consult with children. This is also relevant with regard to the preparation, planning and implementation of laws, policies and programmes relating to children.[125] In some General Comments, the Committee recommends the meaningful participation of children in coordination and monitoring measures.[126]

Often, only children themselves are in a position to indicate whether their rights are being fully recognized and realized. Thus, the Committee suggests children's participation in the State party's reporting process.[127] Particularly, the Committee recommends involving children as researchers, explaining that

"interviewing children and using children as researchers (with appropriate safeguards) is likely to be an important way of finding out, for example, to what extent their civil rights,

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118   Concluding Observations Uzbekistan, CRC/C/UZB/CO/3 – 4 of June 14, 2013, para. 27.
119   See e.g. Concluding Observations: Guyana, CRC/C/GUY/CO/2 – 4 of June 18, 2013, para. 29; Rwanda, CRC/C/RWA/CO/3 – 4 of June 14, 2013, para. 24; Guinea, CRC/C/GIN/CO/2 of June 13, 2013, paras. 42, 43; Guinea-Bissau, CRC/C/GNB/CO/2 – 4 of June 14, 2013, para. 31, and General Comment no. 12, para. 92.
120   General Comment no. 12, para. 93.
121   General Comment no. 12, para. 110.
122   General Comment no. 12, para. 113.
123   General Comment no. 12, para. 127.
124   General Comment no. 12, para. 129.
125   See Concluding Observation Rwanda, CRC/C/RWA/CO/3 – 4 of June 14, 2013, para. 24.
126   See for example General Comment no. 15, paras. 108 – 118; General Comment no. 16, para. 77.
127   For the working methods for the participation of children in the reporting process of the Committee on the Rights of the Child see UN, Committee on the Rights of the Child, Working methods for the participation of children in the reporting process of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, UN doc CRC/C/66/2 of October 16, 2014.

including the crucial right set out in article 12, to have their views heard and given due consideration, are respected within the family, in schools and so on."[128]

It is crucial that such research involves children from the most marginalized communities.[129] In General Comment no. 10 on children's rights in juvenile justice, the Committee underlines the importance of involving children both in the evaluation of and in the research on juvenile justice, with particular emphasis on those children who have been in contact with the juvenile justice system.[130]

Another participatory structure the Committee suggests to facilitate dialogue among children and adults are consultation hours for politicians and government officials, as well as visits of these adults in schools or even kindergartens.[131]

Interviewed development professionals point to a couple of examples for consultative participation:

- In Serbia, German development cooperation supported the establishment of Local Youth Offices as part of the municipal government. These offices plan and implement youth policy in the municipality. German development cooperation advised the Serbian Ministry of Youth and Sports in the development of a method which facilitated consultation of young people through Local Youth Offices. This method was called Local Youth Action Planning and the local municipality used it to consult young people on their needs and interests by for example youth meetings, public and focus group discussions and surveys (see Box 9 below).

- In a development measure on conflict prevention in Guatemala implemented by KfW, consultation roundtables were conducted with local administration, NGOs and youth groups prior to the formulation of the project and its measures. This was helpful to identify the needs of young people as the main target group of the

programme as well as to ensure that measures are socially and culturally embedded.

- In the German support for Kyrgyzstan implemented by GIZ (see Box 4), the monitoring of the project's progress and impacts is done jointly with local partner institutions, including a number of young adults. To expand its consultation with young people, the project has recently undertaken a qualitative study with fifty-six in-depth interviews and eight focus group discussions with young people to better understand their living conditions and environment. A gender analysis of the programme included interviews with forty-eight children and youth in the project's pilot municipalities to identify gender-specific problems and demands. Those studies give responsible decision-makers and project managers a clearer picture on the needs of children and youth as they perceive them. The results of the studies will be considered in the design of the new project phase. At the same time, this type of participative research with children sensitizes both adults and children themselves on the importance of the children's right to participation.[132]

- In the health sector, German development cooperation utilizes consultation with young people for several purposes. First of all, feedback from young people as users of health services is sought, especially in the area of family planning and education on sexual and reproductive health and rights. Programmes apply participative instruments like road shows and theatres through social marketing agencies in developing countries. In many health programmes, young people are reached at decentralized health centres that provide access to health services, information and a safe space. Information is provided to children and young people on the functioning of the health system and on which health services are accessible to them free of charge. This also contributes to more transparency and accountability in the health sector. Children and youth

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128 General Comment no. 5, para. 50. See also General Comment no. 17, para. 58 (b).
129 General Comment no. 17, para. 58 (b).
130 UN, Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment no. 10 on children's rights in juvenile justice, UN doc. CRC/C/GC/10 of April 25, 2007, para. 99. For a summary of the Committee's General Comment no. 10 (2007) on children's rights in juvenile justice, compiled for development practitioners, see German Institute for Human Rights 2014b.
131 General Comment no. 12, para. 127.
132 For more information on participatory research with children see German Institute for Human Rights 2014d.

also participate in the formulation and design of information brochures to better reach the target group. Besides this, health programmes often address gender questions, such as the importance of girls' participation in the formulation of measures that are directed at avoiding the early marriage of young children. Through their participation, girls may be empowered and better protected from the decisions of adults.

- Respondents from German NGOs implementing development projects for children state that the participation of children in the formulation of project proposals is challenging due to time pressure and the demanding donors' guidelines and procedures, and thus is not done. But once a project has been approved, children are often systematically consulted, through child rights situation analyses, mappings, planning of project measures as well as project evaluation, all of which usually take place as part of focus group discussions. In one organization, external evaluators have to demonstrate knowledge and experience with children's rights and participative research with children.

Box 9: Serbia: Local Youth Action Planning

Local Youth Action Planning is a method developed by the Serbian Ministry of Youth and Sports with the support of GIZ and serves as a mechanism for the implementation of the Serbian National Youth Strategy in municipalities. Local Youth Action Planning has designed the following tools to facilitate the process:

- Guide to Methodology - specifies all steps that need to be undertaken by local governments and a local youth offices.

- A matrix for the process - sets out the structure for the Local Youth Action Planning, its goals, possible activities and expected results, responsibilities, time frames and indicators.

- A set of training sessions for all members of the Local Youth Action Planning working group. The training sessions help to understand the process, values and principles of the youth policy. Members are trained on appropriate methodologies and matrices used in the process. Active youth participation is taught as one central precondition for successful Local Youth Action Planning.

Through the process, the National Youth Strategy is adapted to the needs of young people in the different municipalities. Therefore one central aspect of Local Youth Action Planning is the consultation of young people. This takes place through:

- Informative and educational youth meetings or public discussions at schools, clubs, student organizations, volunteer clubs, and local NGOs to inform participants about the whole process and how young people can participate.

- Focus group discussions in which young people define their needs and problems, and possible solutions to guide their work in the process.

- Other research methods, such as anonymous surveys, creative workshops, and short research with young people in order to include the maximum number of children and youth possible.

Sources: Borojevic und Klasnja 2012, pp. 20-21; Borojevic 2009, pp. 15-16.

4
What needs to change towards more meaningful participation of children?

The above examples from German development cooperation show that participation of children, if realized, is mainly focused on consultative and sometimes on collaborative forms of participation. As stated above, all three forms of genuine participation – consultative, collaborative and child-led - may be appropriate in different situations. It is therefore important that professionals in development cooperation and institutions of the partner countries identify these forms, together with children. By asking children, they can better recognize which forms of participation meet the demands and needs of young people in a given context and culture. To this end, German development cooperation needs to put more effort into realizing partnership with children in decision-making and support systems in partner countries where young people can put self-initiated projects into practice. To achieve this, the adult-child power relationship needs to be changed; this is the topic of the following chapter.

4.1 What do children demand in order to participate more meaningfully?

For children, the power relations between adults and children are the most prominent factor hindering them to exercise their participation rights in the desired forms presented in chapters 2 and 3 above. In all of the researched countries, children perceive their power vis-à-vis adult as very limited, since adults perceive that children have to grow up before they have something meaningful to say (chapter 4.1.1). At the same time, children demand the support of adults, but want to be on an equal footing with them (chapter 4.1.2) and lastly, children clarify that adult behaviour is critical in determining children's access to institutions (chapter 4.1.3)

4.1.1 Change in adults' perception of children

In Kyrgyzstan and Serbia, young people explained that adults often do not listen to them and that they are considered "too small, too young" (girl, Kyrgyzstan, 13-15) and that children "can't think for ourselves because we are kids" (child, Serbia, 15-18). Another boy from a Kyrgyz youth group adds that "adults do not perceive children seriously" (boy, Kyrgyzstan, 13-15).

Children also perceive that adults "may mistrust" them and that especially teachers often misunderstand them when they put forward their ideas (girl, Kyrgyzstan, 13-15; child, Serbia, 15-18; child, Serbia, 15-17). Their ideas are taken as "dreams of kids" which makes them feel "insulted." At the same time, support for children is often "rejected" by adults (girl, Kyrgyzstan, 13-15). Children from a focus group in Serbia use an example: the body language and the actions of teachers, though not violent per se, is not the way teachers should behave towards them (child, Serbia, 15-18). One boy from Kyrgyzstan explains that the disrespect for children's views comes from the fact that "there is a concept that young people do not have enough experience" but also that "in the past the youth did not participate in resolving issues" (boy, Kyrgyzstan, 15-17).

Most children have experienced that adults justify their behaviour with the fact that the children are below eighteen. One boy from Serbia who started going to a feminist organization recalled a conversation with his parents on his opinion that a male can be a feminist. His parents objected and ended the discussion by stating: "Well, you are seventeen years old; you don't know really what you are talking

about" (child, Serbia, 15-18). Thus, children get the impression that they first have to grow up before they can talk about their rights (child, Serbia, 15-17).

Kyrgyz children give examples of similar experiences. Because they are under eighteen, their teachers do not support them in their ideas and projects, and sometimes even decide to cancel events students had prepared for a long time (girl, Kyrgyzstan, 15-17). Therefore, a girl demands:

> "We want them not to consider our age, to treat us as if we were twelve years old. They should not treat us as if we do not know anything [...]. Parents listen to their children more when they are sixteen rather than when they are twelve. We want them not to consider our age. Younger children may sometimes understand more than adults." (Kyrgyzstan, 13-15)

Interestingly, a few children from Serbia responded that they are taken seriously by adults when they behave "maturely" like adults. One child explains that if children appear responsible in the adult's eyes, adults do listen. Another child responds that if children are prepared in cases of problems or issues, parents do take them seriously (child, Serbia, 15-18). Some children also have the perception that their own parents would support them if they think that it is good for them (child, Serbia, 15-17).

4.1.2 Adults as supporters for children's participation

When children in Guatemala, Serbia and Kyrgyzstan presented their project plan during the focus groups, they also identified persons who could support them to realize the plan. Most of those persons were adults, for example their family and especially their parents. They are seen as persons they can talk to, who listen to them and whom they can trust.

> Young Person: "And I have to add those who take us into account are actually family and friends and that's the basis where we can actually start to bring about change in our communities." (Serbia, 21-25)

Besides the family, people such as school psychologists, teachers and school directors, may provide support to children. Children in Guatemala City argue that teachers are the ones who would support them,

because they are the ones who are responsible for their education (child, Guatemala, 13-18).

When arguing why they want support from adults, children and young people from Serbia, Kyrgyzstan and Guatemala say that ideally they see adults as their advisers (child, Guatemala, 12-15). Adults help them to choose a direction, to make decisions and provide financial support.

As young people perceive adults as having experience, they also expect advice from them on how to approach the local municipality. Children in Serbia pointed out that their participation in school parliaments was not powerful enough and therefore should be supported by "a person, who can really do something, like adults" (child, Serbia, 15-18). Adults are also seen as persons who can provide them with information that they usually do not receive through school (child, Serbia, 15-17). In a focus group discussion in Kyrgyzstan, children described the role of adults as mentors:

> Boy: "And if we go in the wrong direction then the adults should give us their advice and correct our actions. The role of the adults is also to mentor younger people, to take care of them, so that they would have the same level equal to the adults." (Kyrgyzstan, 15-17)

Children also see adults as persons who can advocate and lobby for their causes (child, Serbia, 15-17). Children from Kyrgyzstan demand that adults should use their connections to help them make announcements on TV and radio and to advise them on how to implement their project plan "so that everybody likes the project" (boy, Kyrgyzstan, 13-15).

Especially in Serbia, young people mentioned the importance of having someone who "monitors" the teachers and "protects the rights of students and protects our interests" (child, Serbia, 15-18).

For children in Guatemala and Kyrgyzstan it is important that they can trust an adult and have confidence in him or her. Adult supporters should be experienced, able to give advice, and be fair. Adults should have information, connections to other adults with influence as well as money (girl, Kyrgyzstan, 13-15; child, Serbia, 15-18).

Although children stressed the importance of peer support and education, some children are reluctant to approach a person who is as young as eighteen years.

They consider that the person has too little experience. Others think that age does not matter, but that the person should be experienced, professional and "should know how to do it." (boy, Kyrgyzstan, 13-15) A girl from Kyrgyzstan summarizes her expectations:

> "First of all the adults, whom we appeal to, they should be experienced, clever, and easy to understand, because we should not turn to just anyone. We need a person who really works in this area and this person could really help us, because the role of the adult has a big influence because they make decisions. They help us to make decisions." (Kyrgyzstan, 13-15)

The participants of the group discussions had clear expectations from adults. When asked about the role of adults, one boy in Kyrgyzstan replied that "it is to consider us [young people] seriously and to maintain a good attitude towards young people, and we, the youth in turn shall respect the adults" (boy, Kyrgyzstan, 15-17).

One essential requirement for meaningful participation of children and young people is that adults listen to them and act accordingly. One girl in Guatemala expressed it as follows:

> "That they listen to us, because most of the time they do not listen to us, maybe they say that they hear us/listen to us, but they do nothing of what we have asked for." (girl, Guatemala, 15)

They also expect that in case the children and young people are on the wrong track with something, adults should not just say "no", but explain why they say no and what was wrong regarding the proposal the children have made (girl, Guatemala, 15).

Children in several groups in all countries also expect that adults should be the ones who take the responsibilities assigned to them in their duty or their profession. When talking about different initiatives at the local level, which children planned to implement in their project plan, children in one focus group in Kyrgyzstan said:

> Boy: "The role of adults is to be responsible for the activities. These persons have been elected, and those who have been elected should work according to the goals and purposes that they have been elected for, as in their positions. This person shall achieve his goal."(Kyrgyzstan, 13-15)

4.1.3 Child-friendliness and access to institutions: The role of adults

Young people generally request more structures for youth (see above chapter 2 and 3), as a basic condition for participation. They claim that only a "very few organizations are actually willing and committed to supporting youth participation" (child, Serbia, 15-17), they can be "counted on one hand" (child, Serbia, 15-17 years). In a discussion among young people in Serbia the participants agreed that the people in organizations do not have the time nor the interest to listen to them and have the feeling that "it is easier for them" not to support them (child, Serbia, 15-17).

Kyrgyz youth also think that they do not get enough support from governmental organizations:

> Boy: "You know that there is a Ministry of Youth in Kyrgyzstan and it does not work as efficiently as desired. It has to be like a bridge between the youth and the State. But this does not take place, because an adult works in that Ministry and we need this Ministry to interact closely with the youth. We want this Ministry to perceive us in serious way. We know that a lot of funds are allocated to it." (Kyrgyzstan, 15-17)

Children in one focus group identified corruption as an issue: "the money for the youth sector is not necessarily getting where it was supposed to be" (child, Serbia, 15-17). In another group, children define politicians as a big problem for their country since "they do it just for money and for themselves, they don't think about us, just the small people" (child, Serbia, 15-18).

In Serbia, adults invited children to the Youth Offices and this is what increased the opportunity to participate. In a discussion on why young people engage in the Youth Offices at municipal level in Serbia, a young person stated:

> "Because I was invited. I would have never gotten there by myself and it's important to invite people to the office. (...) That's how I met my friend and established my own organisation." (young person, Serbia, 21-25)

Others agreed, saying that "some young people do not go to this office alone" (young person, Serbia, 21-25 years) and therefore, as another group demanded, more information on participation opportunities should be provided (child, Serbia, 15-17 years).

4.2 "How to?": Addressing the power imbalance between children and adults

The different models and forms of participation described in chapter 3.2 helped to flesh out what meaningful participation is and how it addresses the power relations between adults and children. Young people who participated in the research in Guatemala, Kyrgyzstan and Serbia have voiced their reasons and ideas for participation as well as their expectations from adults and the institutions they manage. Based on the analysis above, the following chapter will give practical recommendations on how adults in development cooperation can change their perceptions and role vis-à-vis children (chapter 4.2.1), how they can educate themselves and empower children (chapter 4.2.2), and how they can support child-friendly and responsive institutions in partner countries (chapter 4.2.3).

4.2.1 Roles and obligations of adults

Experiences in participatory research with children show that the power imbalance between adults and young people dominates the research setting and has to be addressed by it, if children's participation in research is to be meaningful. When adults conduct research on young people or consult with children, existing imbalances can lead to research situations in which researchers do not act necessarily in the children's interest and "adult pre-eminence is unquestioned."[133] This is also true for situations in which adults create safe spaces for participation in which children can express their views and are included in decision-making.

The realization of meaningful participation of children thus puts great demands on adults. They have to start to review and adjust their own role and their relationship with children. Due to the power held by adults vis-à-vis children, it is adults who are responsible for creating an enabling environment for children's participation.[134] In other words: Adults cannot put the responsibility for participation on children and youth, and even if children are powerful enough to advocate for their rights and have appropriate participation opportunities, "they can only sustain this role where there are adults to facilitate the process."[135] But what does this responsibility of adults, including those who work in development cooperation, mean in practice?

Adults should learn to define their role as facilitators who do not manipulate children or lead them in a certain direction.[136] Only in this fashion can adults learn that participation is not something which they offer to children but that they are responsible for creating the enabling environment for children's participation, which entails transferring some of their power to children. The important role of adults as facilitators was also confirmed to be a key enabling factor for realizing the child's right to participate by the young people in Serbia, Guatemala and Kyrgyzstan.

Adults have to consider that "children need to be fully informed before they can express their views".[137] This information needs to be comprehensible, and provided according to the children's age. Children need to be informed about all possible alternatives and need to understand the potential impacts of their decisions for themselves and others.[138] Another requirement that can be derived from the CRC is that children "must be provided with alternative modes of expression."[139]

Adults need to reflect that there is a high duty of care involved in working with children and youth and "it is necessary to balance the right to participation with the right to protection".[140] This can be achieved by assessing the capacities of children, the available support, the risks involved and their nature, as well as the risks perceived by children themselves.[141] Adults have the obligation to make sure that children have opportunities for participation and methods which are appropriate to their age, maturity and their evolving capacities.[142] Adults who want to seek the views

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133   Liebel 2012, p. 221.
134   See Save the Children 2004, p. 55 et seqq. and Lansdown 2005, p. 4.
135   Lansdown 2010, p. 16.
136   See Boyden/Ennew 1997, p. 12; see Protacio-de Castro et al. 2007, p. 118. Cornwall/Jewkes 1995, p. 1668 aptly define the role of researchers in participatory research as a "learner, facilitator and catalyst."
137   Parkes 2013, p. 15, referring to articles 12 and 13 CRC.
138   See Lansdown 1997, p. 34.
139   Parkes 2013, p. 15, referring to article 13 CRC. See also General Comment no. 12, para. 21.
140   Lansdown 2010, p. 18.
141   See Lansdown 2010, p. 19.
142   See Lansdown 2005, pp. 57 – 62.

of children need to provide safe spaces for children's participation and make sure that there are no reprisals against them. In general, they need to ensure that other relevant adults share the objectives, processes and results with all participants of the research or consultation process,[143] and consider the equal value of children's and adults' perspectives.

Adults working with children should make use of available handbooks which propose a variety of child-friendly methods working with children.[144] One of these methods is the so-called mosaic approach, which combines visual and verbal tools to build up a living picture of children's perspectives. The mosaic approach is particularly useful for problem assessments in the community or school, as well as in evaluation missions of development cooperation.[145] Since different children may perceive methods differently, i.e. as more or less inclusive or participative, it is important to combine methods. In addition, adults should consider that it is more relevant how a method is applied in a given environment, e.g. how participative it is designed, than which method is used. For example, a focus group discussion which is not prepared in an appropriate way can be less child rights-oriented than a survey that has been jointly prepared with children. Furthermore, adults should turn to available handbooks to implement basic rules to reduce their power when working with children, for example choosing low chairs and work in open spaces where adults do not hide behind a desk, one of the typical symbols of adults' power in institutions.[146]

4.2.2 Sensitization and training of adults

Professionals and decision-makers in German development cooperation and in the researched countries who were interviewed for the study did not specifically refer to power imbalances between adults and children as a constraint for realizing the children's right to meaningful participation. At the same time, the majority of interviewees seem to be aware that

there is a lack of sensitization, awareness and knowledge on the right to participation. Being asked what has to be changed to better incorporate the right to participation in German development cooperation, a large group of respondents mentioned awareness raising and training of professionals on participation rights as a key priority.

Young people demand adult mentors and facilitators who have the necessary skills to support them; to take over the role of supporters, therefore training for adults is necessary. In practice this means:

- Training should provide adults "with skills in listening, working jointly with children and engaging children effectively in accordance with their evolving capacities."[147] Education on children's rights should help adults in understanding the concept of participation, and prepare them to share power with children. Training on the practice of children's participation should support adults in listening to children and in talking to them as equals,[148] to develop child-friendly methods, not to discriminate against certain groups of children and to adhere to ethical standards. This is particularly relevant for staff who work with children on a day-to-day basis.

- Adults should be committed to children's rights and respect children as individuals exercising their rights autonomously. Training of adults should therefore always include the content of the CRC and the specific social and cultural contexts of childhood.[149]

- Introductory training for international development professionals is as important as the training of national development professionals and partner institutions. This may require the use of blended learning formats. The professionals interviewed clearly stated that they need such courses to develop a proper understanding of participation. Training for development profes-

143 See Boyden/Ennew 1997, pp. 54 – 56.
144 See for example Alderson/Morrow 2011; Clark/Moss 2011; Ennew 2010; Graham et al. 2013; Greig et al. 2013; O'Kane 2013; Shaw et al. 2011.
145 For a detailed list of methods see German Institute for Human Rights 2014d.
146 See Boyden/Ennew 1997, p. 54.
147 General Comment no. 12, paras. 49, 134.
148 See Protacio-de Castro et al. 2007, p. 118.
149 Okyere and Twum-Danso Imoh conducted a study on child participation in the Niger Delta. They emphasize that the socio-cultural context of the child is embedded in conceptions of childhood and needs to be taken into account when implementing children's participation rights. Okyere/Twum-Danso Imoh 2014, p. 208 et seqq.

sionals should therefore take the development context into account, flesh out the rights-based and the instrumental value (see above, chapter 2.2.3) of children's participation for development, provide overviews on the "how-to" and on perspectives for scaling-up the respective interventions. This type of training is as relevant to staff working with children directly as it is for programme managers.

- Good practices of children's participation should be provided so that development professionals can learn from the experiences of others. Case studies from both developing and OECD countries should be made available, not only from state-funded development cooperation but also from the non-governmental sector. The professionals interviewed not only recommended considering the western views on participation but also to provide practices in which children's participation is realized in cultural contexts with concepts of childhood and participation that may differ from the western concepts.

- 'Communities of learning' will facilitate exchange, dialogue and support networks between professionals who work on children and children's rights.

- Meaningful participation not only requires trained professionals in development cooperation but also support for training of adults and children in the respective partner countries. This can be implemented by targeted support to institutions dealing with children such as schools or local councils, and training-of-trainers for institutions such as National Human Rights Institutions and civil society organizations.

4.2.3 Institutions and structures that enable children to participate meaningfully

Besides the strong focus on the role of adults as facilitators and supporters with heightened skills and perceptions, children have also stressed the importance of appropriate institutions and structures that provide participation opportunities. Child-friendly structures and institutions are also discussed in the literature as

a key precondition for genuine participation of children.[150] Harry Shier has developed his so-called "Pathways of participation". This model defines the specific demands on institutions and on adults working in those institutions according to the level of participation (see figure 2).
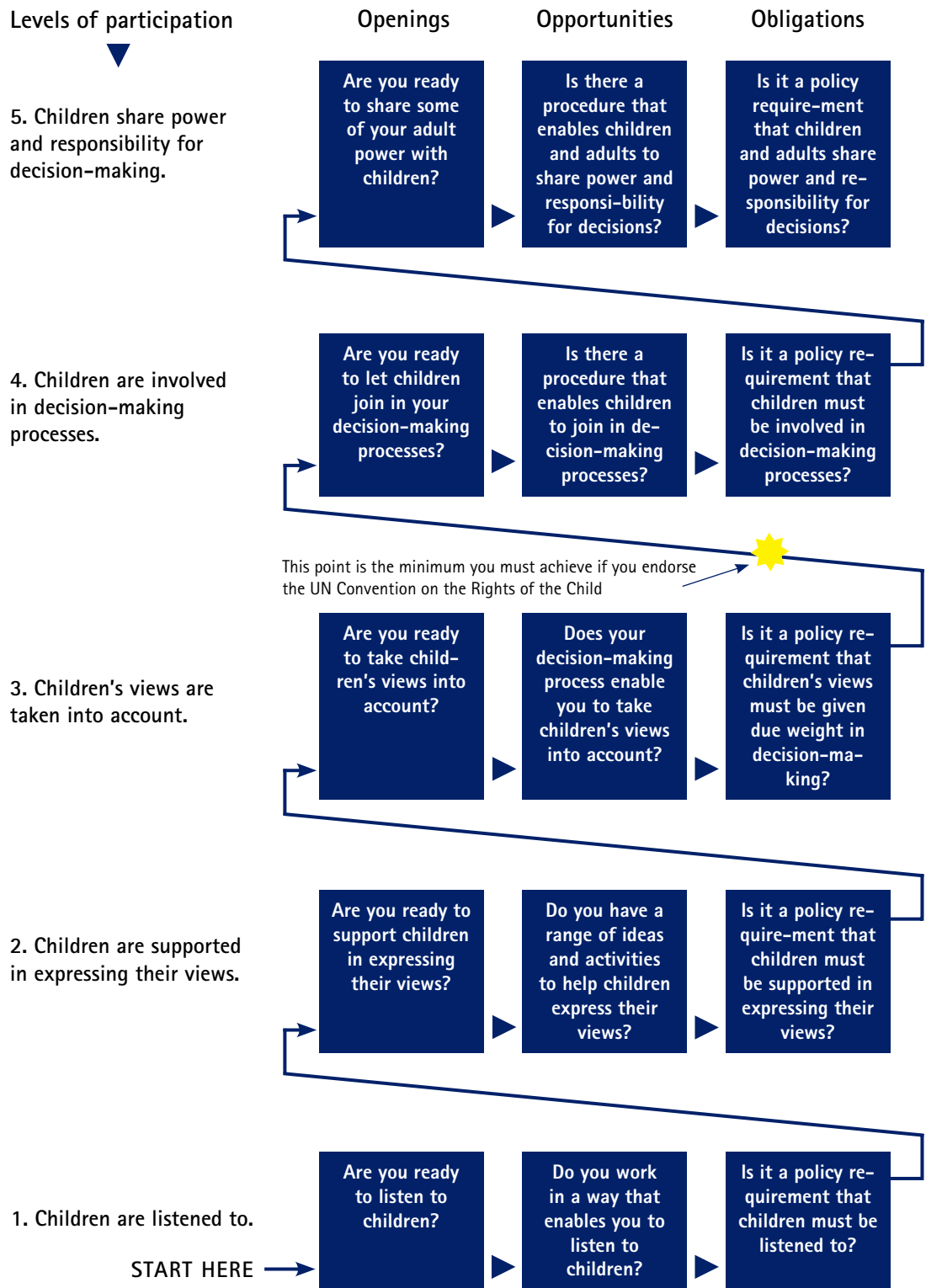
As Shier divides his levels of participation into different layers of possible action - "openings," "opportunities" and "obligations," the model appears to be well suited to institutional settings as the ones dominant in German development cooperation. The model clarifies that while making a certain step obligatory for the institution or organization is an important part of creating an enabling environment for children's participation, there are many steps that can be taken even in the absence of "obligations." His levels of participation also string together what was pointed out above (see chapter 4.1.3): Institutions are inhabited by individual adults who need to review and adjust their roles ("openings") in order to generate ideas and procedures for children's participation ("opportunities").

Interestingly, interviewed development professionals in partner countries reflect on the organizational and institutional constraints they face when attempting to introduce more children's participation. To integrate children's rights in general and the right to participation in particular, they point out the following needs:

- A higher degree of political will among partner countries and in German development policy to promote the participation of children. This ideally would manifest itself in an increase in the number of projects and programmes that aim to improve the rights and living conditions of children.

- Sufficient time and space for staff to seek the views of children and to value participatory approaches with children as well as with civil society organisations. Currently the institutional culture in German development cooperation largely works against participatory approaches: there is a high pressure on time, on quantifiable results, and on disbursing funds quickly.

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150   See for example Protacio-de Castro et al. 2007, p. 119.

Figure 2: 'Pathways of participation' by Harry Shier

Levels of participation	Openings	Opportunities	Obligations
5. Children share power and responsibility for decision-making.	Are you ready to share some of your adult power with children?	Is there a procedure that enables children and adults to share power and responsi–bility for decisions?	Is it a policy require–ment that children and adults share power and re–sponsibility for decisions?
4. Children are involved in decision-making processes.	Are you ready to let children join in your decision-making processes?	Is there a procedure that enables children to join in de–cision-making processes?	Is it a policy re–quirement that children must be involved in decision-making processes?

This point is the minimum you must achieve if you endorse the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

3. Children's views are taken into account.	Are you ready to take child–ren's views into account?	Does your decision-making process enable you to take children's views into account?	Is it a policy re–quirement that children's views must be given due weight in decision-ma–king?
2. Children are supported in expressing their views.	Are you ready to support children in expressing their views?	Do you have a range of ideas and activities to help children express their views?	Is it a policy re–quire–ment that children must be supported in expressing their views?
1. Children are listened to. START HERE →	Are you ready to listen to children?	Do you work in a way that enables you to listen to children?	Is it a policy re–quirement that children must be listened to?

Source: Shier 2001, p. 111.

- Tools to integrate child's rights perspectives in the procedures of policy and programme development as well as in the assessments and evaluation of programmes. Development professionals viewed policy markers, as have been established e.g. for the relevance of programs for good governance or gender equality, as a mixed blessing. Some argue that policy markers facilitate the integration of such issues in programming, others that yet another policy marker will only be another "tick-box" and rather discourage programme managers from engaging with children's rights substantially. On programme level, indicators that capture progress with the implementation of child rights and particularly their right to participation were cited as an important tool for programme managers since they can help in designing programmes that aim at the realization of participation rights in partner countries and/or realize effective and meaningful participation of children in the implementation of programme activities.

- A clarification of responsibilities. Programme proposals and evaluations are usually reviewed by BMZ regional departments, and the unit responsible for children's rights has neither a supervisory function nor the capacity to make sure that children's rights are properly integrated into programme proposals or evaluations. Given these institutional constraints, decentralising responsibilities – by for example having a dedicated person in country portfolios or programmes to advise project managers on children's rights – may be an option to make sure that more programmes in partner countries support children's rights. Another option is establishing a steering group for relevant development programmes, consisting of representatives from partner institutions as well as young people.

5
Recommendations

Strengthen children's right to participation in German development policy and development cooperation measures

- The Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) should agree with more partner countries to commission development measures that aim directly at realizing children's rights and thus improving the living conditions of children. The Ministry should pay particular attention to partner countries with a large proportion of young people.

- The BMZ should compile, evaluate, and scale up existing measures supporting children's rights, directly or indirectly. The existing portfolio should be analysed with respect to its relevance for children's rights, and results should be used to intensify the engagement for children's rights. The review should also result in the development of exemplary indicators to capture progress on children's rights.

- In the long term, the BMZ should use appropriate instruments to mainstream children's rights, drawing on successes in mainstreaming other human rights issues. One of those instruments is embedding children's rights as one of the objectives for German development cooperation with clear-cut financial targets.

- Participation of children and youth can be integrated in all sectors of cooperation between Germany and its partner countries. However, to date the most promising entry points are education, health and good governance. The BMZ should define realistic and measurable targets to support the participation of children in these sectors; and use opportunities in other sectors as they arise.

Find ways to systematically listen to children and empower them to participate

- Professionals in the BMZ and implementing agencies should enable children's participation not only internationally but also at home, by applying the same standards and using similar measures to share power with children and youths. Inside Germany, meaningful participation of children and youth should become a standard procedure in policy development, public events and research on development issues. Particular care should be taken to involve children and youth organized in or represented by youth-led organizations as well as potentially marginalized children, for example from migrant communities.

- Implementing agencies should start to research and consider the views of children with respect to development measures. Research has to identify children's views on their rights within the context of their society and culture as well as the obstacles, particularly for marginalized children, to exercise their rights and to suggest mitigation measures within the ambit of development cooperation. Research cooperation, for example with universities focusing on children's rights or with child-led organisations, should be encouraged and results widely shared.

- Implementing agencies should explore joint planning of measures with children and youth. Appropriate instruments may be including young people in appraisal missions, in steering committees, or as part of evaluation teams. Measures which have been planned without children and youth should likewise integrate participatory approaches, for example by monitoring selected measures and activities through children's committees. Part of joint planning or monitoring should be the development of

indicators of progress and results which are meaningful for children.

- Implementing agencies should empower children and youth to make effective use of participation structures supported by development cooperation, be they directed towards youth and children or towards all generations. This is best done by support for human rights education designed for young people, according to their age groups, and delivered by experienced facilitators or peer-to-peer approaches. Existing manuals, like Compasito, can guide human rights education; curricula developments, be they in formal or non-formal education, are good entry points. Cooperation with other agencies, for example UNICEF, should be actively sought.

Devise measures that support sustainable structures and spaces for children's participation

- Development measures should support institutions in partner countries in establishing sustainable structures for the systematic participation of children and youth, for example legislation on children's rights, national or local youth strategies, independent children's ombudspersons or a National Human Rights Institution with a broad human rights mandate. The planning and/or support of such structures should always be done jointly with young people.

- Development measures should endeavour to create the political and legal space where young people can initiate child-led activities, for example by establishing funds to support micro-projects developed by young people at the municipal level.

- In schools many children make their first but lasting experience with participation or non-participation. Development measures in education should use the potential of participation at schools (for example by way of student councils, parent-teacher-pupil school councils, pupils' score cards, joint school inspections,

peer-to-peer education) but also link it to participation of young people in policy-making or programming at municipalities or the national level. Development measures should therefore be attentive to cross-sector cooperation.

Qualify professionals working with and for children

- Development measures should support sustainable capacities on children's rights for professionals working with and for children in partner countries, providing individual training, practical advice and financial/technical support for the creation of participative structures. Good entry points are training courses on human and children's rights for professional groups such as teachers, lawyers and judges. Civil society organizations and government bodies that monitor the progress of the CRC can be advised on how to work with state and parallel reports on children's rights; and especially on how to initiate and sustain dialogue and participative processes with children and youth in the respective fields.

- The BMZ and implementing agencies should support suitable capacity development measures for expatriate and local development professionals. These measures should aim for a change of adults' attitudes towards children. Besides knowledge on children's rights, capacity development should include culturally and socially adequate methods to empower children, good practice on how to support professionals in partner countries to perceive children's participation as valuable; as well as a reflection on professionals' own role as 'adult experts' and how to share power with young people in their role as experts. A practitioners' network on children's participation consisting of development professionals from the BMZ, implementing agencies and NGOs may be helpful to facilitate capacity development. BMZ incentives, for example a BMZ-led competition among German development programmes for best practices to empower children or to support children's rights may also be helpful.

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Abbreviations

BMZ	Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development
BMZ Human Rights Strategy	BMZ (2011): Human rights in German development policy. Strategy. BMZ Strategy Paper 4
CRC	UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
Committee	UN Committee on the Rights of the Child
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
Guidelines	BMZ (2013): Guidelines for the consideration of human rights standards and principles, including gender, in the design of programme proposals of German bilateral technical and financial cooperation
KfW	Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau
PACE	Programme to Promote Better Education
Position Paper	BMZ (2011): Young people in German development policy – A contribution to the implementation of the rights of children and youth. BMZ Strategy Paper 12/2011
Strategy	BMZ (2011): Human rights in German development policy. Strategy. BMZ Strategy Paper 4

List of boxes and figures

Annex

Annex 1: List of interviewees

Germany

No	Organization	Date
1	BMZ, department 201 Focus: education	04.11.2013
2	BMZ, department 204 Focus: Children's rights	04.11.2013
3	BMZ, department 202 Focus: Health and population	04.11.2013
4	BMZ, department 204 Focus: Human rights	04.11.2013
5	BMZ, department 204 Indigenous people	04.11.2013
6	BMZ, department 204 Focus: Women, girls, gender	05.11.2013
7	BMZ, department 204 Focus: Girls in violent situations	05.11.2013
8	BMZ, department 305 Focus: Southern Africa/ Zimbabwe	05.11.2013
9	GIZ, Sectoral Planning Youth development and sports	12.02.2014
10	GIZ, Sector Project Implementation of children and youth rights	14.02.2014
11	Save the Children Germany	22.07.2014
12	Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (KfW), Competence Centre Development, Governance, Peace	29.07.2014
13	Kindernothilfe	25.07.2014
14	UNICEF Germany	08.08.2014

Guatemala

No.	Organization	Date
15	Teachers' union, primary school, Guatemala City	12.11.2013
16	Project 'Education for life and work (EDUVIDA)', GIZ	14.11.2013
17	Ombudsman office for children´s rights	14.11.2013
18	Ombudsman office for children´s rights	14.11.2013
19	UNICEF	14.11.2013
20	COPREDE (Comision Presidencial de Derechos Humanos)	15.11.2013
21	Ministry for bilingual education	15.11.2013
22	Ombudsman office for children´s rights	15.11.2013
23	Municipal department for education, Huehuetenango	18.11.2013
24	Municipal department for education, Huehuetenango	18.11.2013
25	Municipal department for education, Quiché	18.11.2013
26	Ministry for the quality of education	21.11.2013
27	Project "Education for life and work (EDUVIDA)", GIZ	21.11.2013
28	Board for Maya education	21.11.2013

Serbia

No.	Organization	Date
29	Project 'Strengthening the structures for youth empowerment and participation', GIZ	19.02.2014
30	Project 'Strengthening the structures for youth empowerment and participation', GIZ	19.02.2014
31	Child Rights Centre Belgrade	28.02.2014
32	Youth Office Kragujevac	04.03.2014
33	Ministry of Youth and Sports	06.03.2014
34	Ministry of Youth and Sports	06.03.2014
35	Child Rights Centre Belgrade Policy and legislation programme	07.03.2014
36	Youth Office Kovačica	10.03.2014

Kyrgyzstan

No.	Organization	Date
37	Project 'Prospects for youth', GIZ	07.04.2014
38	Ministry of Labour, Migration and Youth	07.04.2014
39	Ministry of Labour, Migration and Youth	07.04.2014
40	Ministry of Labour, Migration and Youth	07.04.2014
41	Ministry of Labour, Migration and Youth	07.04.2014
42	Youth Centre Naryn, 'NCER'	09.04.2014
43	German Embassy Bishkek	11.04.2014
44	GIZ Country Office, Portfolio Management	11.04.2014
45	Project 'Reform of educational systems in Central Asia', GIZ	11.04.2014
46	Ministry of Labor, Migration and Youth, Oblast Naryn	12.04.2014
47	Youth House, Oblast Naryn	12.04.2014
48	Mayor's Office, Karakol	14.04.2014
49	Youth Centre, NGO Liderstvo, Karakol	14.04.2014
50	Member of parliament, City of Naryn	16.04.2014
51	NGO 'Dostojanie Respubliki', Bishkek	16.04.2014
52	University KGUSTA, Bishkek	16.04.2014

Geneva

No.	Organization	Date
53	UN Committee on the Rights of the Child	25.09.2014
54	Child Rights Connect	25.09.2014

Annex 2: Overview of focus group discussions with children and young people

Guatemala

No.	Focus Group Discussion	Number & Gender	Age	Date
1	Ciudad Guatemala, Guatemala	8 participants (5 female, 3 male)	12–15	20.11.2013
2	Ciudad Guatemala, Guatemala	8 participants (5 female, 3 male)	15–18	20.11.2013
3	Tactic, Alta Verapaz, Guatemala	9 participants (3 female, 6 male)	12–17	28.06.2014
4	Momostenango, Guatemala	5 participants (5 female)	15–17	28.06.2014
5	Momostenango, Guatemala	4 participants (2 female, 2 male)	15	28.06.2014
6	Momostenango, Guatemala	5 participants (4 female, 1 male)	13–17	28.06.2014

Kyrgyzstan

No.	Focus Group Discussion	Number & Gender	Age	Date
1	Naryn, Kyrgyzstan	6 participants (3 female, 3 male)	15–17	09.04.2014
2	Naryn, Kyrgyzstan	6 participants (3 female, 3 male)	13–15	10.04.2014
3	Karakol, Kyrgyzstan	6 participants (3 female, 3 male)	15–17	14.04.2014
4	Karakol, Kyrgyzstan	6 participants (3 female, 3 male)	13–15	15.04.2014

Serbia

No.	Focus Group Discussion	Number & Gender	Age	Date
1	Belgrade, Serbia	5 participants (3 female, 2 male)	15–18	01.03.2014
2	Kovačica, Serbia	5 participants (3 female, 2 male)	21–25	04.03.2014
3	Kragujevac, Serbia	9 participants (7 female, 2 male)	15–17	10.03.2014

Kenya

No.	Focus Group Discussion	Number & Gender	Age	Date
1	Kiriri, Kenya	12 participants (12 male)	11–14	22.10.2013
2	Kiriri, Kenya	12 participants (12 female)	11–14	05.11.2013
3	Kiriri, Kenya	12 participants (12 female)	11–14	05.11.2013
4	Kiriri, Kenya	12 participants (12 female)	11–14	06.11.2013

Annex 3: Field Manual for research with children

I. Introduction to the research

Research project

The research study with children[151] will be conducted as part of the project on 'Children's Rights in Development' by the German Institute for Human Rights.

Within the project, a study is being undertaken which prepares answers to the question of how German development cooperation can strengthen the participation rights of children in partner countries. The study has several components, among them a desk study and an empirical part consisting of expert interviews and research with children.

This document is the field manual which will prepare and instruct the researchers involved in conducting the research in the various locations.

The empirical research study with children focuses on the views of the target group of the overall study, i.e. on children. It seeks to explore and document their perspective on participation opportunities in their respective community.

The findings of the research study with the children will be included in the main research project. The subsequent publication will be available for a wider audience and will form the basis for briefings and hands-on publications directed specifically at professionals in development cooperation.

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151   In the context of this study the term "child" refers to persons below the age of 18, which is in accordance with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the conceptual basis of the study.

Research design and setting

The study is designed to be qualitative and explorative and it will be implemented on a small scale. The research approach suits the research goal because it is able to capture the experiences and perspectives of the participating children. The study represents a snapshot of the present situation without representational or generalisation goals.

The research is participatory to a certain degree. The research methods have been chosen for their participative quality. Unfortunately, however, the framework of the research project does not allow the inclusion of children in the design, analysis or presentation phases in a meaningful way.

The research will be carried out in three different countries on different continents. A youth programme in Kyrgyzstan and Serbia and an education programme in Guatemala have been identified. The research will be implemented with the support of GIZ development measures and, where possible, local research partners. The participating children are the target group of the respective GIZ programmes. The research method is designed for children between the ages of thirteen and eighteen.

Research questions

The research project is intended to give advice to development policy and development cooperation professionals on how to strengthen the participation of children (and youth) in the societies of partner countries. In order to be able to do so, it is necessary to know more about existing forms of participation and about what form of participation children would like to see and what they feel comfortable with.

For the purposes of the study and in communication with the participating children, participation will be defined as "having an impact on decision-making processes within the community so as to strengthen respect for the dignity of the child". This definition incorporates central aspects of participation as defined by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN CRC) which requires in Article 12 that the child is not only heard but that the views of the child shall be given due weight, i.e. actually impact the decisions taken. It also implies that children have to have access to the necessary information to be able to form an opinion on a given issue, that they enjoy the right to freedom of expression, to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, to freedom of association and to freedom of peaceful assembly. Like the UN CRC this definition leaves the question open as to what kind of role children play in taking the decision.

The research study will generate knowledge about what strategies children themselves employ in order to be heard and to impact on decision-making processes within their community and what kind of support and forms of participation they would wish for.

Community in this context means any part of public life in the local or, where applicable, regional context. The focus on the community was chosen a) in order to be able to ask the participating children about their experiences in their more immediate environment where interpersonal relationships play a decisive role and b) in order to focus on a level where German development cooperation is implementing measures.

The research will help to identify some of the people, places and settings that children consider relevant when engaging in decision-making processes in their community. It will also give an idea of what skills and knowledge children use in order to influence decision-making processes and what challenges they perceive.

The results will help future development cooperation programmes to base child participation policy on *existing* needs, ideas and practices, depending on the target group.

Primary research question

How do children in partner countried of German development cooperation assess opportunities for partici-pation in their community?

Secondary research questions

a. Which opportunities for participation do they see?

b. What strategies can they envisage to employ in order to have their voice heard and to make an impact on decision-making processes?

c. In what areas of social life in their community would they like to participate?

d. What kind of support do they wish for?

e. How does the 'ideal' participation look like for them?

f. What do they regard as the objective of participation and what does it mean to them?

g. When is participation good and successful for them?

h. What are crucial aspects for successful participation for them?

II. Preparing the research

Role of the researchers

The recognition of the rights of the child not only impacts the content of research, but also its approaches and methodologies. For the role of the researcher this has two fundamental implications. The researcher has to be ready to recognise the participating children as competent partners, to listen to the presentation of their own views and to respect their rights and dignity in every aspect of the research. This field manual will give advice on some of the key tasks and decisions which need to be made. But there will be situations where the researcher will have to make his or her own decisions. The best interest of the child should be a (if not the) primary con-sideration in that.

The researcher also has to acknowledge and consciously deal with the existing unequal power relation between children and adults and its impact on the content, methodology and ethics of the research. Wherever possible, the significance and manifestation of the difference in power should be minimised. In practical terms this means, for example, to make sure that the children too (not only their parents) give their informed consent to take part in the study, that the number of adults during the discussion is kept as low as possible and that the questions are asked in a manner which makes it clear to the child that he or she is regarded as the expert in reporting on his or her own views.

Advice for the researcher:

- Reflect on your own perception of children, their role in society and the power relation between children and adults

- Reflect on how the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child impacts on the way you will facilitate the research process

- Allocate time to get to know the children, their backgrounds and preferences and to familiarise them with the research setting

- Carefully decide on how, where and when to be introduced to the children since this is likely to define your relationship with the participants

Documentation of the research process

For the quality of the research it is essential that the research process is documented. The way that the data is collected will have to be reconstructed and understood by people who were not present during data collection. This is even more important for research like this where there is little prior knowledge about the research setting and participants, where there are many people involved in the research and where the analyst of the data might not have been present during data collection.

What should be documented:

- Expertise and role of the researcher and other people involved

- The researcher's relationship with the participants (prior to the research)

- Problems that occurred

- Decisions that had to be made

- Local or national ethical standards for conducting research with children and, if applicable, the result of securing approval for conducting the research

- Deviations from the field manual when conducting the research

- The sampling process

- The process of asking parents and children for their informed consent

- Background information about the needs, likes and sensitivity of the children

- The plan of what to do in case a participant is distressed

- The precautions and measures taken to protect the privacy of the participants and to treat the information they give with confidentiality

- The time, location and context in which the data collection took place

- The cooperation with the local researchers, institutes and organisations

- The process of how the parents and children will gain access to the results of the research

- Any other issues, occurrences or comments relevant to the research process

Approval of local and national institutions

The conditions and criteria for being allowed to do research with children vary between places and research disciplines. It is the task of the researcher to enquire whether approval from a local or national institution has to be sought and if so, to ensure that the research is approved before inviting the children and their parents to give their informed consent.

Tasks for the researcher

- Enquire about local or national ethical standards for sociological research with children under the age of eighteen. For example there might be an ethics committee at the organisations involved in conducting or hosting the research
- Organise the approval if necessary before inviting the participants to give their informed consent

Sampling

In the context of this study, children are understood and defined as people below the age of eighteen. This corresponds with the CRC which provides the conceptual background to the study. The research method is designed for children between the age of thirteen and eighteen.

For each country, the researchers, in cooperation with local institutions, are requested to invite participants for two to four different focus groups of five to eight participants each. A small group of participants is preferred, as this will allow the facilitator to discuss the issues in more depth and with more time for each individual. The group will also find it easier to work together on a common project plan in a smaller group.

Criteria for sampling

- Participants should be thirteen to seventeen years of age
- Each focus group is comprised of five to six participants
- There should be an equal representation of boys and girls
- If possible, participants should be allocated to groups of similar age. This may be beneficial for the dynamics within the group and may allow a comparison of different views by children according to their age.

Informed consent

The participants and their parents or guardians will have to be informed about the context, content and process of the research prior to the decision whether or not to take part in the research. The letter of information (see Annex) is intended to support this process. For the child to participate, both the parents/guardian and the child in question have to agree to take part. As an expression of their agreement, they are asked to sign the letters of consent (see Annex).

Tasks for the researcher

- Together with the local institutions, decide on an appropriate way to inform the parents/guardian and their children about the research so they can make an informed choice. It is advised that the parents or guardians are informed during a meeting with someone who can answer their questions about the research. The meeting might also prove useful to better get to know the participants, their preferences and characteristics as well as the general group dynamic among them. This knowledge will help to prepare and create the appropriate environment for the discussions, tasks and breaks during the focus group.

- It is important to keep in mind that the way and context in which the parents/guardians and children are invited to take part has a significant impact. Therefore an appropriate procedure has to be implemented for each research location that allows the participants to feel free to say both yes and no.

- If parents decide to allow their child to take part they must then sign the appropriate letter of consent for parents. They will sign two identical forms and keep one copy while the other is handed back to the researcher and forwarded to the German Institute for Human Rights.

Only if the parents agree for their child to take part are the children asked whether or not they would be willing to take part in the research. They too are to sign a letter of consent. The idea behind this is to show that their consent is of equal importance as their parents', even though their parents'/guardians' consent is a prerequisite for their participation. They too will sign two identical forms and keep one copy while the other is handed back to the researcher and forwarded to the German Institute for Human Rights.

It is important to make clear that even if parents and children have signed the letter of consent, they are allowed to withdraw their consent at any time. The researcher is advised to design an opt-out process depending on the local circumstances. The researcher has to be alert to signs that children would like to opt out which they might not necessarily communicate verbally.

It is advised to develop a process of how to inform the participants about the research results parallel to the process of asking for informed consent. This might involve asking the parents and children for their contact details or arranging for a place where the parents can go to pick up a copy of the results.

Knowing the children

Once the participants have been identified and have given their agreement to take part, the researcher is strongly advised to familiarise themselves with the needs, wishes and backgrounds of the children. Only through having a better knowledge of the participating group will the researcher be able to support their well-being and avoid causing (unintentional) harm during the research process.

Tasks for the researcher

- Arrange to spend time with the participants, the target group in general or to talk to people who are in close contact with the participants or target group.

- Find out about what the children like, what kind of activities they enjoy, which topics are sensitive, how the group dynamics work.

- It might be of particular importance to find out about the children's previous experiences of human rights violations.

- Find out whether the children who will be together in a focus group know each other or not and what the relationships among them are.

If participants are distressed

The well-being and respect of the child's dignity are paramount and have to be given priority when, for example, they clash with the requirements of the research process. The German Institute for Human Rights will have the legal and ethical responsibility to ensure that there will be no harm done to the participating children.

Tasks for the researcher

- Prepare a contingency plan of what to do if any of the children become upset during the research process.

- Provide for an appropriate contact person with the needed language skills and relationship to the participants. Make his or her contact details known to the participants and their families (ideally by including it in the letter of information) so they know whom they can turn to if something comes up. This might be during the research process, or even after the research is finished and the researcher has left.

Compensation

The participants will be reimbursed for any travel costs that are related to their taking part in the research. They will also be provided with food and drink during the focus group discussion.

Time and location

The location and time of the research has an impact on the attitude, behaviour and well-being of the participants. It is the task of the researcher in cooperation with the local institutions to organise and decide on an appropriate place where the research with the children can take place.

Criteria for choosing the time and location:

- Relation of the children to the place and a possible impact on their well-being, behaviour and attitude towards the research.

- Accessibility for the children.

- Appropriate size for the number of people present during the data collection.

- Appropriate time of the day and day of the week for the children.

Privacy and confidentiality

The participating children are entitled to have their privacy respected and to have the information they give treated confidentially.

Tasks for the researcher

- The researcher has to ensure that only the Institute's staff will have access to the raw data and be allowed to store it.

- The researcher has to ensure the agreement of the local researchers who will support and/or facilitate the research and who will be present during the focus group, that they will not use the data in any other way than making it available to the Institute's staff.

- The focus group setting makes it especially difficult to maintain confidentiality among the participants. In some instances a debriefing with the group on sensitive issues that were brought up during the research is advised.

III. Conducting the research

The data collection involves focus groups. The methods are chosen for their openness and ability to incorporate the ideas of the participants, for their cultural adaptability, and for their appropriateness for a wide age range.

Focus group discussions

The focus groups are regarded as an appropriate method for generating ideas and are the central data collection method for this research. The focus groups are designed for five to six participants, ideally of a similar age, and last for approximately four hours. There will be two to four focus groups per country.

TIME	PHASE	ACTIVITY
30 Min	Introduction	Presentation of the researchers, the research process and the participants
30 Min	Exercise 1	Identifying and choosing a problem
50 Min	Exercise 2	Developing and designing a project plan
20 Min	Break	Drinks and snacks
80 Min	Discussion	Discussion about the project plan, the ideas behind it and general issues of participation of children in the community. Optional: Drawing a vision of a perfect community with desired forms of participation in desired areas of life.
30 Min	Evaluation and Wrapping up	Time for questions from the participants Evaluation of the activities

It is advised that the participants and the researcher all sit together in a circle so there is no dominant position

Introduction

The introduction of the people present and the research includes

- the presentation of the researchers.
- the presentation of the outline of the focus group activities.
- an introduction of the participants.
- making sure that all the children who are present are the ones whose parents gave their consent and who themselves agreed to take part.
- informing the participants about the privacy, confidentiality, recording, photos etc. as agreed in the letter of consent.
- ensuring that everyone knows they can decide to withdraw at any time.
- making sure everyone is feeling well.
- agreeing on how to go about breaks, drinks and snacks.
- icebreaker to get to know each other

Exercise 1: Identifying and choosing a problem

- The participants are asked to think about which situation in their community makes them angry because it doesn't seem right or fair to them.

- Each participant writes down one or two answers on separate pieces of paper or cards.

- Each participant is asked to present his or her card(s).

- The cards can be collected by sticking them on a poster and grouping them in broader topics in order to eventually select one topic.

- The participants decide on a common issue/problem that they regard as in need of attention and change in their community. This will be used for the following activity.

- Alternative: The following diagram can be used for collecting and grading the issues. Here participants are asked to put the cards in the diagram where they feel they best fit. The group is invited to comment and discuss where the cards should best be placed.
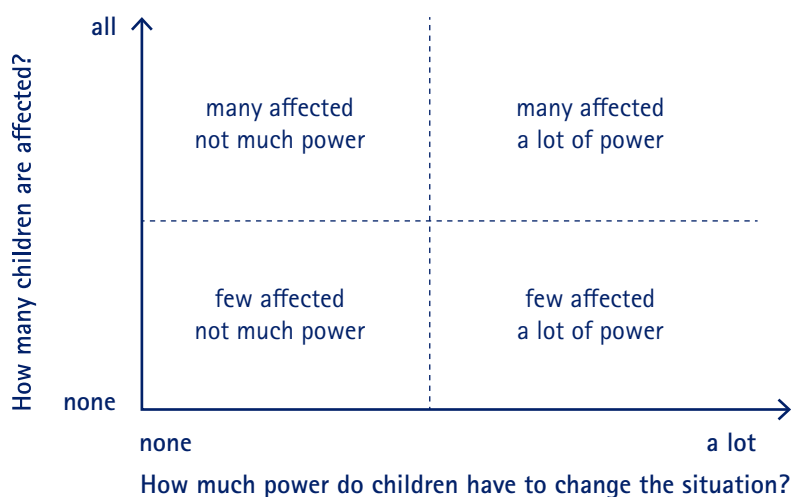
- In case the diagram proves to be too difficult, the two questions can be asked one after the other and the cards are arranged along a single axis for each question.

- Or the diagram can be divided into four sections which are labelled according to the figure above (see grey broken lines and text).

- Make it clear that the idea of the meeting is to work together on ONE issue only. In case the group is too diverse and cannot select one issue only, it shall be strived for a compromise and two smaller groups will be formed.

Exercise 2: Developing and designing a project plan

The research interest during the focus group phase is not directed towards the specific content or to whether or not the project plan seems feasible. What is of interest is rather how the children interact, can imagine interacting and like to interact with the people in their community.

It is important to make clear to the participants that there are no right or wrong answers in this task and that we are interested in their ideas.

The task of the facilitator is to support the participants in designing the structure of the project plan without interfering in or judging the content. Ideally the participants work on their own and only ask for support when needed, however this depends on the dynamic and capacity of the group. Some groups might need more guidance. One way to provide guidance can be to announce or visualise the category or questions for inspiration.

Initiate a brainstorming session, let the participants note down their answers on cards and in a next step, arrange them on the project plan in a way that makes sense to them. Connections between different cards can be visualised by connecting lines that are labelled with a key word.

- Present the visualised start and finish and the arrow marking the space in between. This can be along a wall or on the floor.

- First the problem (start) and the objective (finish) have to be identified and agreed upon. This can be done by brainstorming with the whole group or by splitting up the group, letting them brainstorm separately and then combining their ideas.

Category	Content	Question
Problem/issue	A defined problem they consider important and in need of being addressed	What do you think is not good or right in your community? What would you like to change?
Objective	A defined solution which they would like to achieve as a goal	How would you like it to be?

Now that the problem (start) and the objective (finish) have been identified, it is time to start thinking about what lies between the two. How do we get from start to finish? Answers are noted down on cards and pinned between the start and finish.

Category	Content	Question
Stakeholders and their function	Names of people, organisations and institutions that the participants consider need to be involved in order to work on the specific problem, for example who need to or can make decisions	What needs to be done? Who can make the change happen?
Steps	Steps that need to be taken on the way to the objective, for example decisions and changes	What could you do?
Support	Names of people, organisations and institutions that the participants consider could support/enable them to manage their tasks within the project	Who would support you?
Challenges	Possible problems and difficulties that the participants can anticipate will make it difficult to reach the objective or to take steps on the way	What might be difficult?
Strategy	Further details about how the participants would go about achieving the objective, i.e. arguments to convince the stakeholders	How can you convince others that the change is needed?

- Ask the participants to present their final projexct plan and explain its content.

Proposal of how to structure the project plan:
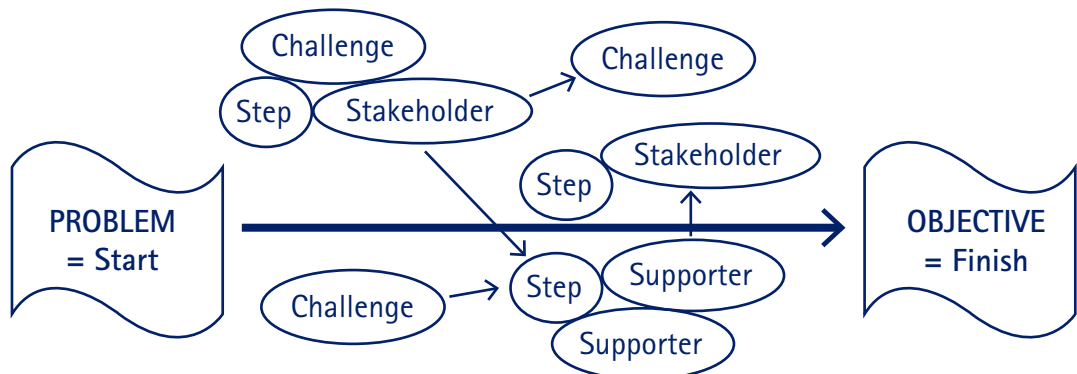
Please note: the categories in the Table and the chart above are for the orientation of the researcher and facilitator only. The participants are not expected to use, understand or work within these categories. Only the questions in the right hand column are directed at the participants.

Break

The break can be taken at a different time if needed or wished. It is equally possible to take several smaller breaks.

Discussion

The most critical task of the facilitator is conducting the discussion of the project plan and the participants' ideas behind the plan. The information generated during the discussion will be vital for the analysis. For the participants, the discussion is the opportunity to present their project plan to the researcher.

The questions below are intended as a guideline. It is recommended to first concentrate on questions in the first Table which centre around the project plan and only later to touch upon the more general issues of the second Table. The idea is to have a talk with the participants which may involve changing the order of the questions. And it will certainly involve asking follow up questions that pick up an issue raised in the answer and inviting the participants to further elaborate on it.

- These questions can be asked one after the other without lengthy discussions in between. They are intended to be more like an oral survey than a discussion about controversial issues. More time should be and needs to be reserved for the second round of questions.

- In case a free discussion about these questions is not possible due to language issues, another option would be to visualize the questions. This can be done on cards, hanging them on the wall. In order to engage the participants in a discussion about their project plan, they can be asked to read all questions and choose one that they are most interested in to discuss about. For physical activation, the participants can be required to walk around and stand next to the question they would like to talk about. After they give their comments on their selected question, the others are invited to add comments. If some questions remain unanswered, the facilitator can still ask the whole group.

Questions about participation within the project plan situation	Research interest
What will adults likely say about the ideas presented in the project plan?	Perceived relationship between children and adults in the community
How are decisions made? Who decides? Who can influence decisions?	Perceived people/institutions of power
Is there a person or organisation that could support you?	Perceived opportunity for complaint
Who listens to you and cares about your opinion?	Identification of people who children feel comfortable with
Where can adults and children discuss these issues together in your community?	Identification of places for interaction
What are the challenges, especially for children?	Perceived obstacles for participation
Are you involved in some of the decisions in your community? Have you been asked to be involved?	Perceived chance and opportunity for participation
Would you like to be more involved? What does it mean to you to be involved in making decisions?	Perceived objective of participation

- Make it clear to the participants that there is a cut between the first and the second round of questions. Now the participants are invited to dream, to imagine the community they would best like to live in.

- During this discussion the facilitator will have to respond to the answers of the participants. It will be necessary to pose follow up questions to further clarify and explain what has been said so far. The questions do not have to be asked in the order they are written down in the field manual.

- Depending on the preferences of the groups, the following questions can also be answered in a "visioning exercise". This means that the participants will be supplied with paper and pens and asked to draw the perfect community for them, with perfect adults, perfect children and perfect form of participation in their desired areas of life. Afterwards they will be required to present their vision. The following questions can be used for the discussion about their developed vision.

Questions about the desired form of participation	Research interest
What does participation mean to you? What do you consider YOUR role in participation? What do you consider the adult's role? Could you imagine playing a different role? What would that look like?	Self-perception of role in community and possible objective of a changed role, information about perceived dimensions of participation
How do you explain participation? What does a good form of participation look like for you?	Definition of participation
In which areas of social life would you like to participate?	Desired areas in life for participation
What kind of support for children's participation in the community is missing?	Desired form of support
What are your ideas about what could be done to increase the power of children/youth so their wishes and needs are more strongly reflected in decisions?	Desired form of participation
What kind of contact person would you like to go and see when when you see a problem in your community? What kind of person would you best like to talk to and where?	Advice on how to design a complaint mechanism
What advice would you like to give adults who want to include children/youth in changing their community?	Advice to adults who want to change the present situation

- Where appropriate, the facilitator can draw on the project design to make the question more precise and better related to a concrete situation.
- The research interest is to learn about the children's perspective on the issues mentioned in the right hand column.
- It is important to avoid asking leading questions.
- It is an important task of the facilitator to create productive interaction among the participants during the discussion.

Evaluation and wrapping up

- The participants have the opportunity to ask any questions they might have.
- The researcher invites the participants to give feedback on the focus group activity.
- The researcher makes sure to collect all research data: surveys, project plan, pictures, notes and recordings.
- The researcher thanks the participants for their time and for sharing their ideas.

Notes and Recording

- If possible, assign a local researcher the task of taking notes of the main points of the discussions during the focus groups, including the evaluation.
- Use a digital recording device to record the entire focus group.
- Take pictures as agreed in the letter of informed consent. Make sure that participants do not wear a name tag when taking pictures. Please avoid including signs and landmarks in the pictures that will easily allow the identification of the exact place or organisation where the picture was taken.

Materials

- Large sheets or roll of paper
- Cards or sheets of paper
- Pens
- Drinks and snacks
- Digital recording device
- Paper and pen for the note taker
- Camera

Recommendations

There is the possibility that the focus group will have to be adjusted to the needs and interest of the participants or the situational context. Changes are allowed if they are for a good reason and are noted down in the research documentation.

There can be no promises made as to whether the ideas and results of the project plan will be implemented by GIZ or another organisation.

Confirmation of participation and survey

At the end of the focus group discussion the participants are asked to sign a confirmation of participation and to fill out a small survey. The confirmation of participation primarily serves documentation and budgetary purposes but also asks for the participants' contact details so they can be provided with the research findings.

Each participant will fill out an individual form as a way to increase privacy and confidentiality. The survey, which is not mandatory, will have to be separated from the confirmation of participation by the researcher prior to analysis and before being passed on to those people dealing with budgetary tasks.

IV. Follow-up

Dissemination of findings

Depending on what has been agreed with the parents and children prior to the research, the researcher might be asked to support the process of relaying the analysed results of the research. To this end, the contact details provided by the participants on the confirmation of participation form are to be consulted.

V. Useful templates

- Information Letter to Parents/Guardians and Children
- Letter of Consent (participant)
- Letter of Consent (parent/guardian)

INFORMATION LETTER TO PARENTS/GUARDIANS AND CHILDREN

Project   How can German development cooperation strengthen participation rights of children (and youth) in developing countries?

Researcher   (name of the researcher), German Institute for Human Rights

Co-Researcher   .... (local supporting researcher)

Dear Parents/Guardians and Children,

We would like to invite children to participate in a research study we are undertaking that documents young people's views on their participation in their community.

Why is the research being done?

By undertaking this study, we hope to include children's voices in the conversation about their participation in society. The research question is: How can German development cooperation strengthen participation rights of children in partner countries?

The study is intended to benefit children in different parts of the world by addressing issues and generating ideas about how children would like to be included in decision-making processes in their community. The results will support people working in German development cooperation in designing and implementing more appropriate and effective programmes and projects which aim at strengthening the participation rights of children and youth.

In order to be able to give advice to development policy and development cooperation professionals on how to strengthen the participation of children (and youth) in the societies of partner countries, it is necessary to know more about existing forms of participation and about what form of participation children would like to see and feel comfortable with.

Who is carrying out the research?

The German Institute for Human Rights is Germany's independent National Human Rights Institution (NHRI). It contributes to the protection and promotion of human rights. "Children's rights in development" is a practice-oriented research project of the German Institute for Human Rights. The project was commissioned by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and is running from January 2013 to December 2014.

The research will be conducted in different countries in cooperation with GIZ projects. The focus group discussions will be conducted together with local research institutions.

What is it like taking part in the research?

The participating children will be given the task of asking their friends which issues they regard as important to children, and of collecting the answers. Subsequently they will be invited to take part in a discussion with the researcher and a small group of other children. During the discussion the participants will have the chance to communicate their ideas about the inclusion of children's perspectives in the decision-making processes in their community.

The participants will have the opportunity to engage in a verbal discussion as well as to present their ideas in writing and drawing. The discussion will last for about four hours, including a break. It is not anticipated that the discussion will cause any distress or discomfort. The research will be conducted with children between 13 to 18 years of age in different countries.

Do I have to take part?

Children's participation in the research will be completely voluntary and they do not have to participate in any part or at any time, if they do not wish to. In case the parents agree, the child too will be invited to give his or her informed consent or dissent (more info on how/where/when). If both the parent and child agree to take part, they can still decide to drop out at any time without any consequences.

Who will know about the child's participation and what the child has talked about?

We will make every effort to keep the identity of the participating children confidential. The child's name will not be included in any subsequent presentation or publications. We will take pictures of the children, their drawings and writings. The discussions will be recorded. All information will be safely stored at the German Institute for Human Rights in Berlin, Germany and at the local research institution. At all times, the right to privacy, confidentiality and respect for the participants will be observed.

What if I have further questions?

Any questions regarding this project should be directed at the researchers (contact details) and/or .... (contact details).

Who will know about the research results?

The results will be published in 2014 in English and German, available online and presented to different audiences who are interested in children's participation. The results of the research will also be made available to participating families.

How do I agree or not agree to my child taking part?

If you agree to participate in this research project, please sign both copies of the consent form. One of them is for you to keep, the other is to be returned to .... (contact details).

Thank you for taking the time to read our letter.

Kind regards,

(signature)

LETTER OF CONSENT (PARTICIPANT)

Project   How can German development cooperation strengthen participation rights of children (and youth) in developing countries?

Researcher   (name of the researcher), German Institute for Human Rights

Co-Researcher   ……………………………………… (local supporting researcher)

I, ……………………………………… (participant's name), have read and understood the information provided in the Letter to Parents and Children. Any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction.

I agree/do not agree (please delete where appropriate) to take part in the study realising that I can withdraw my consent at any time without any consequences.

I agree/do not agree (please delete where appropriate) that the research data collected for the research may be published in a form that may identify me through use of a photograph of me. My name will not be mentioned in any report or presentation.

SIGNATURE OF THE PARTICIPANT   ……………………………………………………….

DATE   ……………………………………………………….

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCHER   ……………………………………………………….

DATE   ……………………………………………………….

Note: One copy of this form is for the participant to keep.

LETTER OF CONSENT (PARENT/GUARDIAN)

Project   How can German development cooperation strengthen participation rights of children (and youth) in developing countries?

Researcher   (name of the researcher), German Institute for Human Rights

Co-Researcher   (local supporting researcher)

I, ... (the parent/guardian's name), have read and understood the information provided in the Letter to Parents and Children. Any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction.

I agree/do not agree (please delete where appropriate) for my child .... (name of the child) to take part in the study, realising that I can withdraw my consent at any time without any consequences.

I agree/do not agree (please delete where appropriate) that the research data collected for the research may be published in a form that may identify my child through use of their photograph. My child's name will not be mentioned in any report or presentation.

NAME OF PARENT/ GUARDIAN   ....

SIGNATURE   ....

DATE   ....

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCHER   ....

DATE   ....

Note: One copy of this form is for the parent/guardian to keep.

Annex 4: Interview guide

Relevance of children's rights

- How do you work towards the implementation of children's rights? What role do children and young people play as a target group or actors in your sector? Could you provide examples?

- How would you assess the status of implementing children's rights in the sector or country you are working in?

- Can you name successes and challenges in supporting children's rights in your sector or your country? Are there any risks to consider?

Relevance of participation rights of children and young people in German development cooperation/in the specific sector

- What is your understanding of participation? How would you define 'real/good' participation?

- How would you personally argue that stronger participation of children and young people in society is important?

- Is there an added value of stronger participation rights?

- Have you observed any changes in the understanding of children's rights over the last years? If yes, how did it change?

Good examples of support for the participation rights of children and young people

- Do you know of any successful (or unsuccessful) cases in which German development cooperation strengthened (or tried to strengthen) the participation rights of children and young people? Which are the key success factors?

- (If not:) Do you know of any good examples of successful participation of children and young people in other development programmes or organisations?

- Do you know any examples where children and young people participated in the planning of a development cooperation measure, its implementation and monitoring & evaluation? Which were the factors for success?

- Which institutional procedures, channels of participation or instruments to strengthen participation have proven successful? Which should be expanded or created?

- Which changes are necessary to strengthen the participation rights of children and young people in your country or your sector you are working in?

- Which contribution to strengthen participation of children and young people is already being provided by development cooperation?

- What kind of advice and support is necessary? Which capacities need to be built?

- Have you experienced challenges of participation for specific age groups?

- Do you have experiences in participation of children with disabilities? Do you see any specific challenges? What are suitable methods and instruments?

Possibilities for further strengthening participation rights of children and youth (in development cooperation)

- What would need to change in your opinion so that German development cooperation puts a stronger focus on the promotion of the participation of children and young people? Where do you see the greatest challenges?

- What would help you to consider the participation rights of children and youth more seriously in your daily work?

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