

# **12 Lesson Learned** from Children's Participation in the UN General Assembly Special Session on Children

The International Save the Children Alliance is the world's leading independent child rights organisation with members in 29 countries and operational programmes in more than 100.

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REGISTERED CHARITY NO. 10768220

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The printing of this report has been made possible with the support of the Ministry of Development Cooperation, Government of the Netherlands

## Vision

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

## Mission

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

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# Preface by Senator Pearson

The Canadian Government was proud to be a strong supporter of children's participation in the process leading up to the UN General Assembly Special Session on Children. From the first moments the Government of Canada was committed to arguing for the meaningful participation of children - both within government delegations as well as more broadly. Canada was one of the few governments to include children and young people in its own delegation to the very first Preparatory Committee meeting in May 2001 and children were involved in this way right through to the Special Session itself two years later. Subsequently, children and young people have played an important part in the development of Canada's own National Plan of Action for Children.

I therefore congratulate Save the Children for its efforts in this report to honestly record the lessons that that we all learnt during the Special Session process. Save the Children, working with its many partners around the world, played an important role in encouraging and supporting children's participation in the many national, regional and international activities that made up the Special Session process. As a result, by the end of the process, many thousands of children and young people around the world had the opportunity to discuss the priority issues affecting their lives and how they should be tackled.

This report is an important way of ensuring that we all learn from the successes - and inevitable failures - that we experience as we seek to turn the principle of children's participation into a living reality. The Special Session clearly demonstrated that children's

participation in international processes can be made meaningful, safe and a vastly rewarding experience for both children and adults. But this requires real effort and commitment from all those involved. This report explains what happened during the Special Session process and what lessons we can all learn for similar initiatives in the future.

I am very happy to commend this report to you. I am sure it will make an important contribution to improving the scale and quality of children's participation in public debate and policy-making in the years to come.



**Senator Landon Pearson**  
Personal Representative of the Prime Minister  
of Canada to the UN General Assembly  
Special Session on Children

# Note to the Reader

This report has been put together by Save the Children's Child Participation Working Group, with contributions from Save the Children staff around the world. It also draws significantly on the results from an earlier evaluation of the Special Session process by a consultant, Michael Etherton.<sup>1</sup> Save the Children hopes that, by making this report available, other similar initiatives in the future will not have to spend time 'reinventing the wheel' and can build upon the Special Session experience to achieve even better results in supporting meaningful, quality children's participation.

The report is primarily addressed not towards child participation 'experts' - who will find much that is familiar here - but towards those who have been charged with involving children in a meeting, conference or longer-term process and are looking for advice on how to do it.<sup>2</sup>

## **A Word of Warning**

An assessment always has to be made about the value of children and young people participating in high-level meetings. The benefits for the individual children attending, and for the issues for which they are advocating, need to be set against several potentially negative outcomes. These may include the fact that in an adult-determined process, where the agenda is set and the decisions are made by adults, children may find themselves with a voice in the meeting but no real place at the table. In many cases, children's expectations of such meetings are often far from the messy reality of

political negotiations and international diplomacy. Other factors to be considered include the costs involved and the potential exposure of children to risk. However, the children involved in the Special Session process were clear that they did not want to be denied the opportunity to be present at meetings where they and their peers were the subject of discussion. The objective of those organisations supporting children's involvement then becomes one of trying to ensure that their participation is meaningful and that the process is of high quality.

# Background on the 2002 UN General Assembly Special Session on Children

This section provides information for those unfamiliar with the 'Special Session on Children' process.

The UN General Assembly Special Session on Children was held in New York on 8-10th May 2002.<sup>3</sup> It brought together over 7000 people including Heads of State, government leaders, NGOs, multilateral agencies and children and young people themselves. The Special Session was held to measure the progress made in achieving the goals agreed at the 1990 World Summit for Children and to agree a new agenda for the coming decade. The main outcome of the Special Session was a global plan of action, 'A World Fit for Children'.

Over 600 children and young people attended the Special Session and were fully involved in the three days of work - including addressing the General Assembly, chairing panel discussions, holding workshops and lobbying government delegates. Many adult delegates voiced the deep impression that had been made on them by the responsible, serious and committed participation of children in the proceedings. Many of the children brought with them experiences of abuse, violence, exploitation and discrimination but were able to use these experiences in a constructive way to convey to adults the reality of their lives and the urgency of a practical response.

Immediately before the Special Session a three day Children's Forum event had been organised in New York. This gave children and young people from across the world an opportunity to explore the issues to be debated at the Special Session and to prepare a statement that was then presented by two child delegates to the Special Session itself. The children and young people taking part in the Children's Forum and the Special Session attended both events as members of either official government or NGO delegations

that were formally accredited to the Special Session..

Preparations for the Special Session had begun in the late 1990s and a series of formal preparatory meetings were organised in the years 2000 and 2001. Most of these preparatory meetings were attended by a mix of official government delegates and civil society representatives, including children and young people. As part of this process, three UN Preparatory Committee meetings [PrepComs] were held in New York in order to help draft the Plan of Action to be finally agreed at the Special Session itself. The Preparatory Committee meetings also made decisions about who could attend the Special Session, what the agenda would look like and how children and young people could participate.

In many countries, events were held to discuss children and young people's views on what needed to be done for children in their country and internationally. Regional preparatory meetings involving government ministers with responsibilities for children were held in the Americas, Africa, Europe & Central Asia, East Asia & the Pacific and South Asia (in Kingston, Cairo, Berlin, Beijing and Kathmandu respectively). These discussed the specific priorities for children in those regions and how they might be tackled. Children and young people were also able to attend - and participate actively in - these meetings.

## Save the Children's Role

In January 2000 Save the Children had offered to lead the work to ensure that children and young people were active participants in the Special Session process. From then until the eventual holding of the Special Session in May 2002, Save the Children invested considerable resources - financial, human and organisational - in trying to secure the meaningful involvement of children and young people at national, regional and global levels.

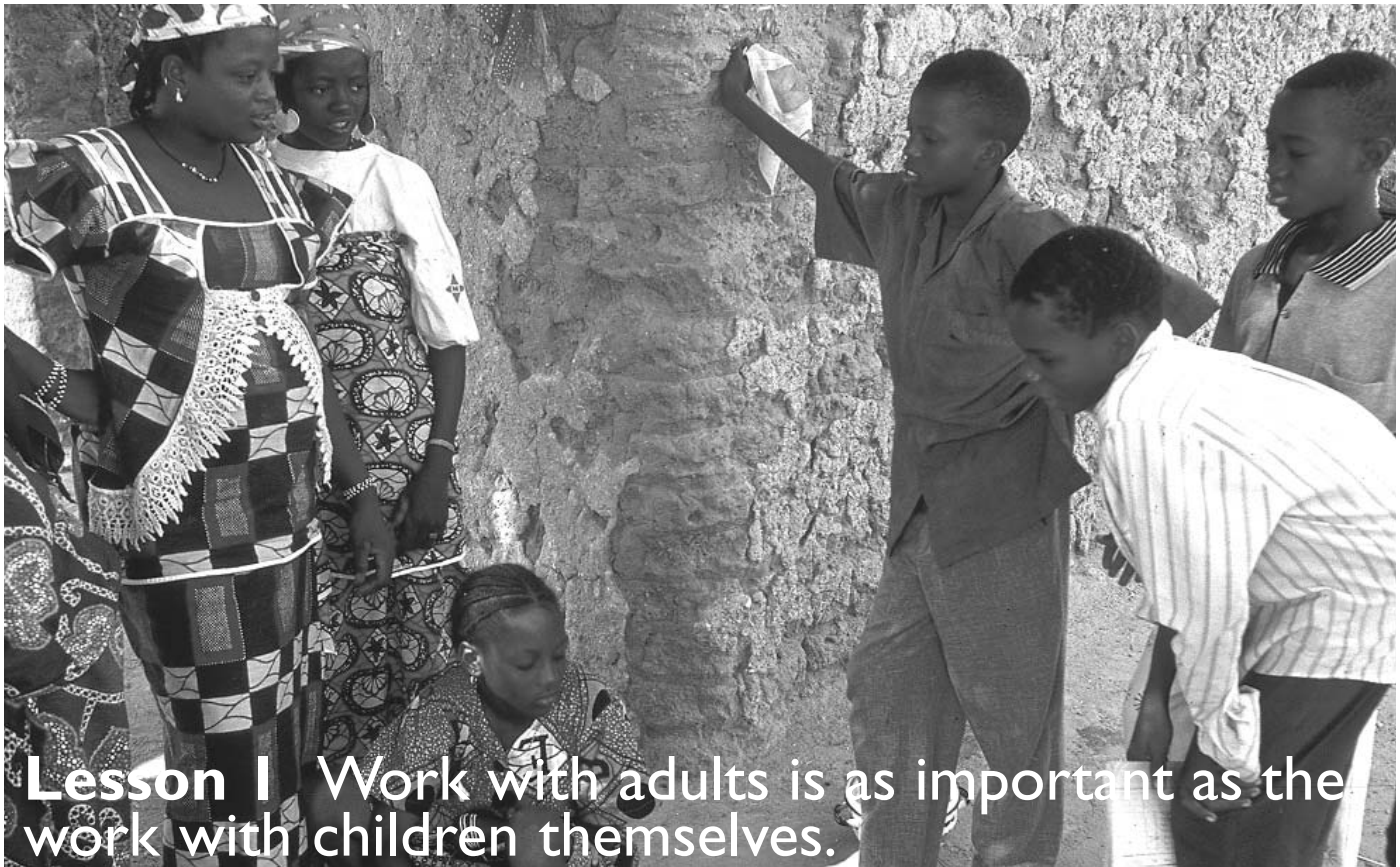
Save the Children's main contribution to this work was to try and create a framework of good practice in children's participation that would guide and support others - governments, NGOs and intergovernmental organisations - in their own work to involve children in the process. Working with its many partners, Save the Children developed guidelines to address key issues that were crucial to promoting good practice. For example they produced guidelines on the role of facilitators, child protection, and the selection of Under-18 'representatives' to

international meetings. Save the Children provided 'child friendly' information to give children and young people better access to technical and other information on the Special Session process. At national and regional levels, Save the Children supported consultations with children on drafts of the plan of action to be agreed at the Special Session.

The results of this work were variable and inevitably did not always reach the high standards that were planned. However, it is widely agreed that the Special Session process marked a significant 'step change' in work on children's participation. By comparison with similar processes in the past, the extent, quality and impact of children's participation were significantly higher. Since the Special Session Save the Children has continued to support children and young people's involvement in follow-up at the national level through their participation in the development of National Plans of Action for Children or through other mechanisms such as the preparation of Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers [PRSPs].

## Key Dates

29-30th September 1990	The World Summit for Children (New York)
30th May - 2nd June 2000	1st Preparatory Committee meeting (New York)
11-13th October 2000	5th Ministerial Meeting on Children & Social Policy in the Americas (Kingston, Jamaica)
29th January-2nd February 2001	2nd Preparatory Committee meeting (New York)
14-16th May 2001	5th East Asia and the Pacific Ministerial Consultation on Shaping the Future of Children (Beijing, China)
16-18th May 2001	Conference on Children in Europe and Central Asia (Berlin, Germany)
22-23rd May 2001	High-level meeting on Investing in Children in South Asia (Kathmandu, Nepal)
28-31st May 2001	Pan-African Forum on the Future of Children in Africa (Cairo, Egypt)
11-15th June 2001	3rd Preparatory Committee meeting
19-21st September 2001	Original date of the UN Special Session on Children (postponed due to the events of 9/11)
5-7th May 2002	The Children's Forum (New York)
8-10th May 2002	The UN General Assembly Special Session on Children (New York)



## Lesson 1 Work with adults is as important as the work with children themselves.

Tim Hetherington/Network Photographers/Save the Children UK

**In the many events** that were held as a part of the Special Session process children, and young people often found themselves working alongside politicians, high-level civil servants, opinion-formers, celebrities and senior representatives from international organisations and NGOs. The attitudes and behaviour of these adults was critical to creating an environment in which the children and young people either felt that their views, opinions and experiences were being genuinely valued or alternatively, that they were being patronised or ignored. As this was a new experience, not only for many of the Under-18 delegates but also for many of the adult delegates, it became clear that adult participants needed to be helped to understand what part they could play in making children's involvement a positive experience.

The quality of children's participation and children's ability to benefit from it are

strongly influenced by the efforts that adults make to provide an 'enabling environment' in which children and young people feel able to participate fully and actively in all aspects of the proceedings. Children have to be made to feel welcome, valued for their views and treated with respect by the adults with whom they are working. In the Special Session process children and young people were very clear that they wanted adults to help create such an environment for them to participate in discussions. Conscious efforts to do this are the only way to counteract the inevitable imbalance between powerful, experienced adults and much less powerful and less experienced children. Otherwise, processes and procedures designed by adults, and for adults, will often prove counter-productive to a genuine desire to hear children's views.



## Lessons Learned

### Creating an enabling environment

- In order for an 'enabling environment' to be created, the adults involved need to be sensitised to the importance of their role in supporting children's participation. This includes helping them understand the importance and benefits of children's involvement, as well as the fact that this is a right enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

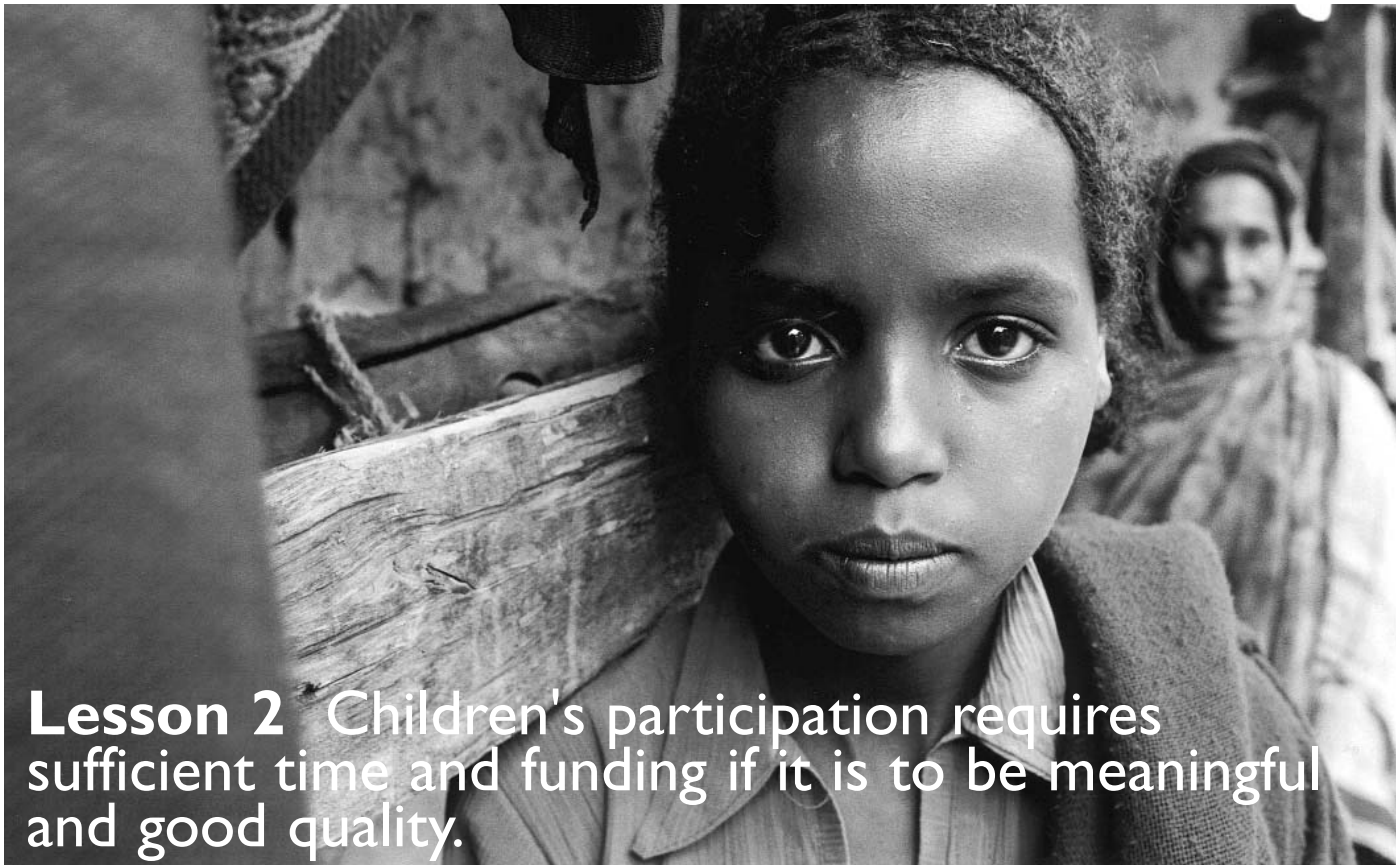
### Adults' attitudes and behaviour

It is important for adults to:

- cultivate a genuine commitment to listening to, and respecting, children's views;
- be sensitive to the experiences that children may have had, to the stage of development and maturity of the children involved and to the context of their day-to-day lives;
- be prepared to modify or change procedures that impede - rather than facilitate - children's participation;
- use child friendly language and give time to explain technical jargon or complex phrases in official documents or discussions;
- explain to children and young people what is happening, what result is expected and what kind of influence they can have on the outcome;
- be vigilant at all times to any threat to the safety or security of the children involved (see Lesson 9).

### During conferences and meetings

- Time should be allowed for children to work together and reach agreement on what they want to say and how they want to say it.
- Children should be allowed by adults to express themselves without interruption - but adults should also sense when it may be helpful to intervene to support children's contributions in a constructive way.
- Where adults and children are both represented on a delegation to a meeting, the adults should encourage children and young people to take on meaningful tasks and roles during the process - such as reporting back from meetings, making interventions and preparing briefings on issues where they have experience.
- As chairs and moderators of meetings, adults should be prepared to be clear with their adult peers about their responsibilities for supporting the children present.



Kalpesh Lathigra/Save the Children UK

## Lesson 2 Children's participation requires sufficient time and funding if it is to be meaningful and good quality.

**Save the Children's** experience of supporting children and young people's participation in the Special Session process is that time and funding are always the scarcest resources and the need for both is often under-estimated. Save the Children had to devote considerable human and financial resources to the task of ensuring that it could deliver on its commitment to support this work. The box below outlines some of the key steps that were taken over the two and a half year period from January 2000 to May 2002. They include a series of international and regional meetings, a full time co-ordinator post, funding to other organisations and liaison with various UN official and NGO networks.

### Preparing and planning for the Special Session

#### The steps involved were:

- Holding an internal meeting in [Kathmandu] in September 2000 to examine how Save the Children could best implement its commitment to support children's

participation in the Special Session process across the world

- Participating in a meeting held in [London] in October 2000 with other partners (including UNICEF, Plan, WAGGS and PeaceChild) to discuss good practice in adolescent participation and how this might be applied to the Special Session process.
- Recruiting a full-time Save the Children Participation Co-ordinator in November 2000.
- Creating a global Task Group on Participation to bring together experienced staff from different Save the Children members to plan and contribute to the work on the Special Session.
- Identifying individuals as regional 'focal points' around the world to encourage and co-ordinate country and regional activities and work with the global task group in supporting children's participation.

- Co-chairing a Youth Participation Task Force established by the NGO Committee on UNICEF in New York. This group took responsibility for many of the logistical and other issues concerned with children's involvement in meetings in the formal UN meetings in New York i.e. the three Preparatory Committee meetings and the Special Session itself.
- Planning and practical involvement in supporting children's participation in the 5 regional inter-ministerial meetings (in Kingston, Cairo, Beijing, Kathmandu and Berlin).
- Organising preparatory children's meetings immediately before the 2nd and 3rd Preparatory Committee meetings in January and June 2001 to share information with the children coming to the Preparatory Committee and give them the opportunity to work together before the meeting began.
- Organising consultations with children around the world on the draft of the plan of action to be agreed at the Special Session and how they wanted to be involved in the follow-up process.
- Developing guidelines with partners on a wide variety of issues that were seen as important to ensuring good quality participation e.g. child protection.
- Making funds available to Save the Children country programmes and their partner NGOs to enable them to select, prepare and bring children to national, regional and international meetings with their accompanying adults.

## Lessons Learned

### Planning time

- The organisers and facilitators of children's participation in processes such as the Special Session need to give ample time to the planning and work required. This is almost always much more than is expected. Ideally, action - not just discussion - needs to begin two years prior to a major event. Good planning is crucial - the more time that can be given to thinking through and designing processes, and considering contingencies and what could go wrong, the better the outcome is likely to be.

### Co-ordination of different agencies

- It is vitally important to co-ordinate the work of different agencies and organisations to encourage the sharing of tasks, avoid the duplication of effort, increase the pool of resources and experience available and raise the overall standard of performance.

### Budgets

Budgets to underpin this work need to be allocated early on and certainly made available by the beginning of the detailed planning process. Budgets need to cover all aspects of the process including:

- travel and accommodation costs for the child participants (and their chaperones) as well as facilitators and interpreters,
- the costs of materials,
- translation,
- hiring of venues,
- resource persons,
- documentation and copying,

- the organisation of leisure or 'fun' activities,
- other miscellaneous expenses,
- Follow-up activities after the event.

### **The selection of children**

Enough time needs to be allowed to ensure that the selection of children can be done in ways that:

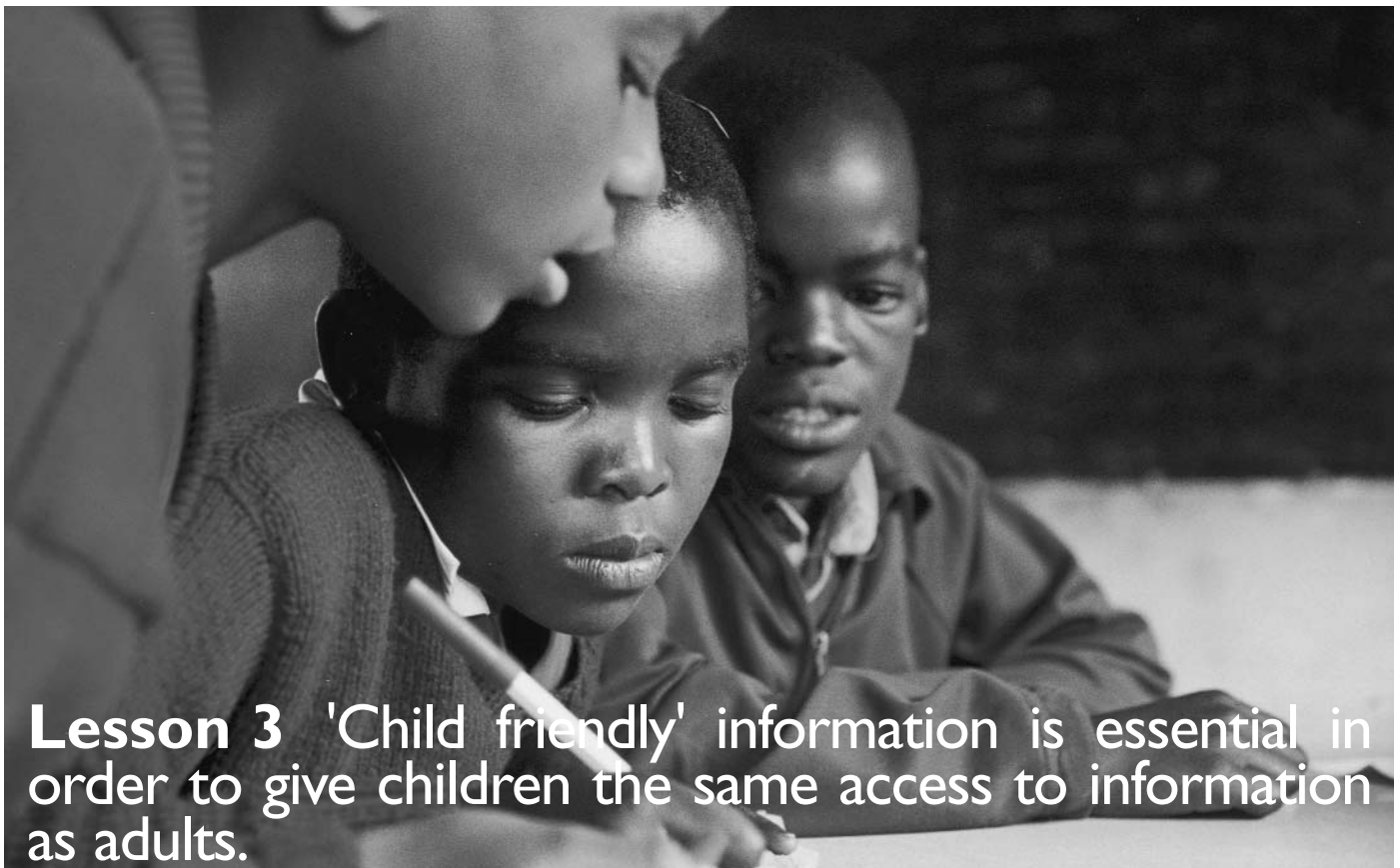
- maximise the experience brought into a process or meeting;
- creates the opportunity for children to select their own representatives;
- enables discriminated-against groups of children to be fairly represented (see Lesson 4).
- allows children involved in peer-to-peer selection processes for child delegates to take into account the inclusion of all children and understand why it is important.

### **Child Protection Resources**

- Adequate resources need to be allocated to addressing child protection issues including the presence of accompanying adults, the setting out of clear procedures, the establishment of monitoring arrangements, and the briefing of other adults involved in the work (see Lesson 9)

### **Dedicated post**

- Consideration should be given to establishing a dedicated resource/post to support children's participation work.



## Lesson 3 'Child friendly' information is essential in order to give children the same access to information as adults.

James Brabazon/Save the Children UK

**The UN Special Session** process was focused around the preparation and drafting of a global plan of action for children.<sup>4</sup> This plan of action contained crucial proposals about key principles, priority goals and objectives, and ways in which the goals set out in the plan could be achieved. It was written in the style of a formal UN document with a wide variety of technical terms and phrases. It was intended for use by adults - civil servants, diplomats and technical experts - who were familiar with UN processes. As a result it was difficult to understand for any non-expert adult - let alone a child or young person. As the main stakeholders in the plan, children and young people faced a major obstacle in becoming meaningfully involved in commenting on the draft plan.

Save the Children's response to this situation was to develop a 'child-friendly' version of the plan of action which tried to retain the full meaning of the original, official version but expressed it in a much more accessible, simpler style without technical jargon. Where there was no alternative to a technical term, or its use was important, a glossary was provided that explained its meaning in simpler language.

The first draft of this child-friendly version of the plan of action was prepared after the 2nd Preparatory Committee meeting in the first months of 2001. It was disseminated widely in English, French and Spanish (e.g. by being posted on the CRIN website<sup>5</sup>) and used as the basis for a consultation organised by Save the Children with children and young people across the world. As new drafts of the official document were produced the child friendly version was revised to keep it up to date. Translations of the document into other languages were undertaken by Save the Children country offices and partner NGOs around the world. At the end of the process, when the plan of action was finally agreed by the governments of the world, the child-friendly text was revised one more time and published by the Global Movement for Children.<sup>6</sup>

This process was accompanied by the production of child-friendly versions of other official documentation such as the UN Secretary General's end of decade review 'We the Children.' Other information material was produced that provided guidance to why the Special Session was being held, why it was important for children, and explaining the various

stages in the process. As well as providing child friendly documentation, Save the Children and its partners also organised preparatory children's meetings immediately before official meetings in order to brief them about the state of negotiations, give advice on lobbying methods and information on official procedures.

The aim of all this work was to try and give children and young people the same access to basic information as the adults involved in the process. In events where children work closely with adults within adult-determined processes, it is vital that they have all the information and background context that they need in order to assist them in their discussions, meetings and lobbying. Without this information children and young people are disadvantaged from the start, prejudicing their ability to meaningfully engage in important processes where they are the main focus of discussion.

## Lessons Learned

In order to provide children and young people with the information they need, the following steps should be considered:

### Create child friendly documents

- It is important to identify the most important documents that children and young people require in order to understand what is being discussed, and where they should concentrate their efforts. Child-friendly versions of these documents should then be produced. A decision may be needed as to whether to produce a full child-friendly version with all the content intact or whether to produce a much shorter, summary version that captures the main points. These should be accompanied with a clear introduction to the child-friendly document, explaining what it is and how it is being used. These documents may need regular updating as texts are amended and revised.

### Producing child friendly materials

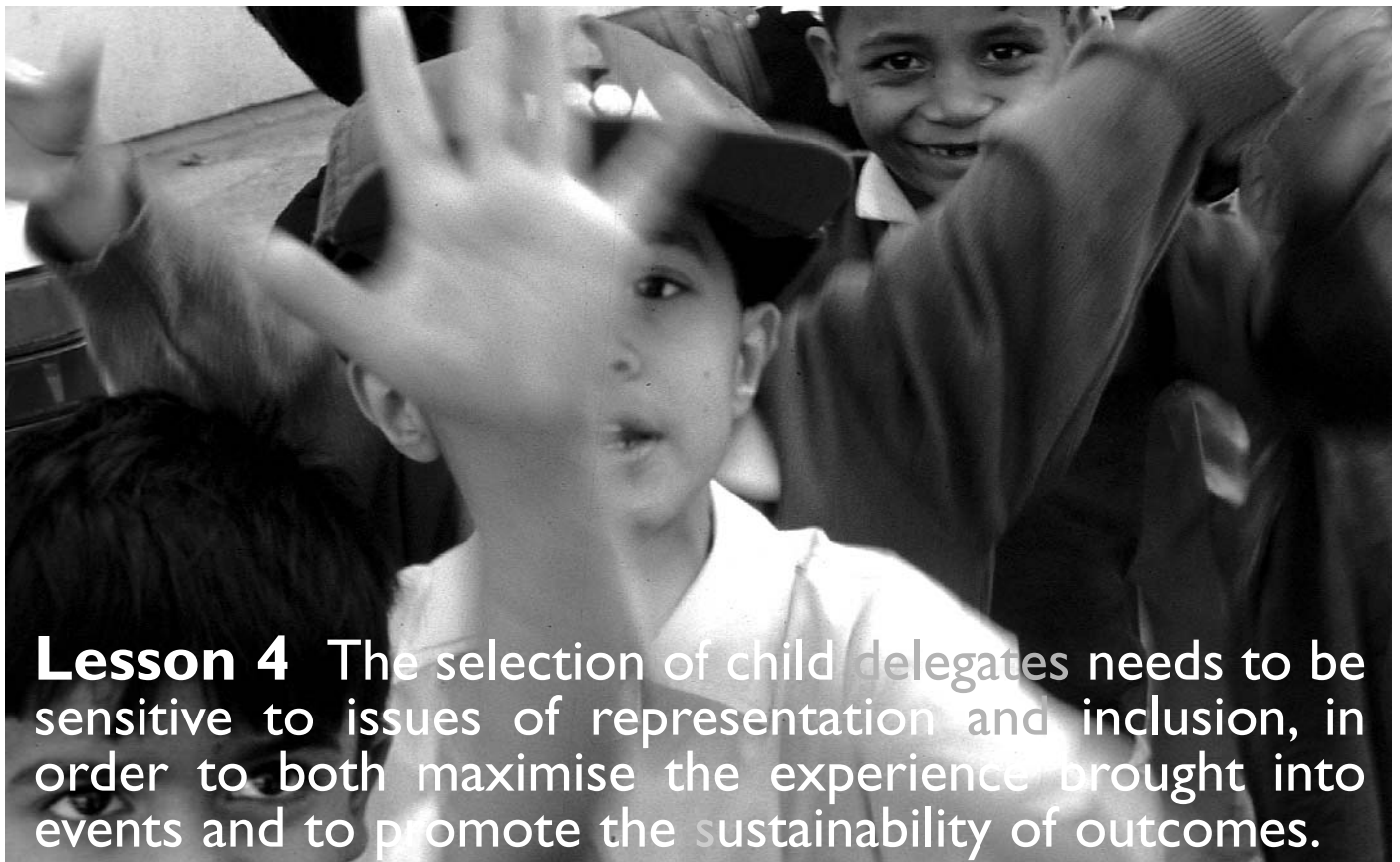
- When producing these documents, different skills are needed for different aspects of the process to achieve a good result - including the ability to write a genuinely child-friendly text, an understanding of technical terminology, a talent for attractive layout and good design.
- It is important to be clear about the age range, literacy levels and different abilities of the children you are trying to support. You may need to consider producing different versions of the document for older and younger children, and for children with differing abilities.
- Where possible, involve children and young people in the preparation of the child-friendly text and in designing the child-friendly document.
- Pictures, photographs and other design features can all be used to make the text more attractive and easier to follow.
- Consider using other media, for example, audio visual materials and story books to provide children with the information they need.

### Translation

- Translation of the document into the main languages used by the children with whom you are working is very important if language is not going to be a further obstacle to engagement. (See lesson 5)

### Other information

- It is important to explain other aspects of the process. Alongside the production of child-friendly versions of official documents, prepare child-friendly information materials that explain what is happening and how to get involved.



## **Lesson 4** The selection of child delegates needs to be sensitive to issues of representation and inclusion, in order to both maximise the experience brought into events and to promote the sustainability of outcomes.

Kerstin Hacker/Save the Children UK

**Throughout the Special Session** process the number of children involved in the process grew steadily. In the case of the official UN meetings in New York the number of child delegates present rose from a few dozen at the 1st Preparatory Committee meeting in May 2000 to over 500 at the Special Session itself in May 2002. These children and young people attended these meetings as members of either official government delegations or as members of the delegations from non-governmental organisations. Some of the same children and many others attended national and regional meetings that were organised during the preparatory process.

In situations such as this, where only a relatively small number of children are able to attend meetings, a range of dilemmas are raised: how should they be selected? Who should select them - their peers or adults? On whose behalf are they speaking? Where there is a series of linked meetings, should the same children attend all the meetings to ensure continuity and learning, or should opportunities be created for a variety of children to become involved? This issue of the selection of children and young people as delegates was identified as one of the most sensitive and

important issues needing further attention in the evaluation commissioned by Save the Children.

In the early stages of the Special Session process it seemed likely that both governments and NGOs might follow the traditional routes to selecting children to be on their delegations.<sup>7</sup> In other words, adults would do the selection, the same 'young leaders' would be invited to attend all the meetings. This meant that young family relatives of the adult delegates or children from 'elite' families would be more likely to be selected than children with relevant experience of such areas as child work, sexual exploitation or armed conflict.

Save the Children and its partners therefore prepared guidelines on the selection of child delegates which were made available to governments and NGOs in advance of the 2nd and 3rd Preparatory Committee meetings and revised again before the Special Session itself. These guidelines encouraged governments and NGOs to make their selection procedures transparent, to use peer selection processes wherever possible and to strive to reflect diversity in the backgrounds from which the children came.

The impact of these guidelines was mixed. Some governments and NGOs continued to select the same young people that they used for every meeting, or selected children from elite backgrounds through completely secret processes. However, others made greater efforts to broaden their selection of children, sometimes handing it over to NGOs to run some kind of competitive process to select children. Others invited children's groups and organisations to play a part in the selection process and made a serious effort to involve disadvantaged and discriminated-against groups. By the time of the Special Session the criteria used for the selection of children were still very mixed, but there was a noticeable shift towards children able to represent a broader range of experience who had better connections with children's groups and organisations.

## Lessons Learned

### Time and resource constraints

- The selection of child delegates is always likely to be problematic - the aim must be to do it as well as possible in the circumstances. Limited funding and resources are a major constraint and another may be the limit set on the total number of delegates from each government or NGO. Often only relatively short notice is given for the selection of a delegate - the meeting organisers can help here by giving as much time as possible for a good selection process to be followed.

### Representation

- The use of 'youth leaders' or 'star children' should be avoided. Instead, opportunities should be given to a broader group of children and young people to participate.
- As far as possible, child delegates should be selected by their peers. This makes the process and criteria for their selection much more transparent, gives them a stronger

mandate from which to speak and a clearer channel for feedback when they return. It is easier to do this if you are building on a local or national process which has created a pool of children and young people who are informed about the issues.

- It is very important that child delegates should be fully informed about the meeting they are attending.<sup>8</sup> Their role and responsibilities before, during and after the event should be discussed and agreed with them.
- It needs to be agreed whether a child delegate is speaking simply from their own personal experience or is in any sense 'representing' the views of other children. If the latter, sufficient time and support needs to be given before the event to enable them to consult with relevant groups of other children and young people - including 'harder to reach' children such as those in remoter regions, in institutions or on the street.
- Child delegates should have the support to conduct the necessary feedback in their community, region or country on their return.

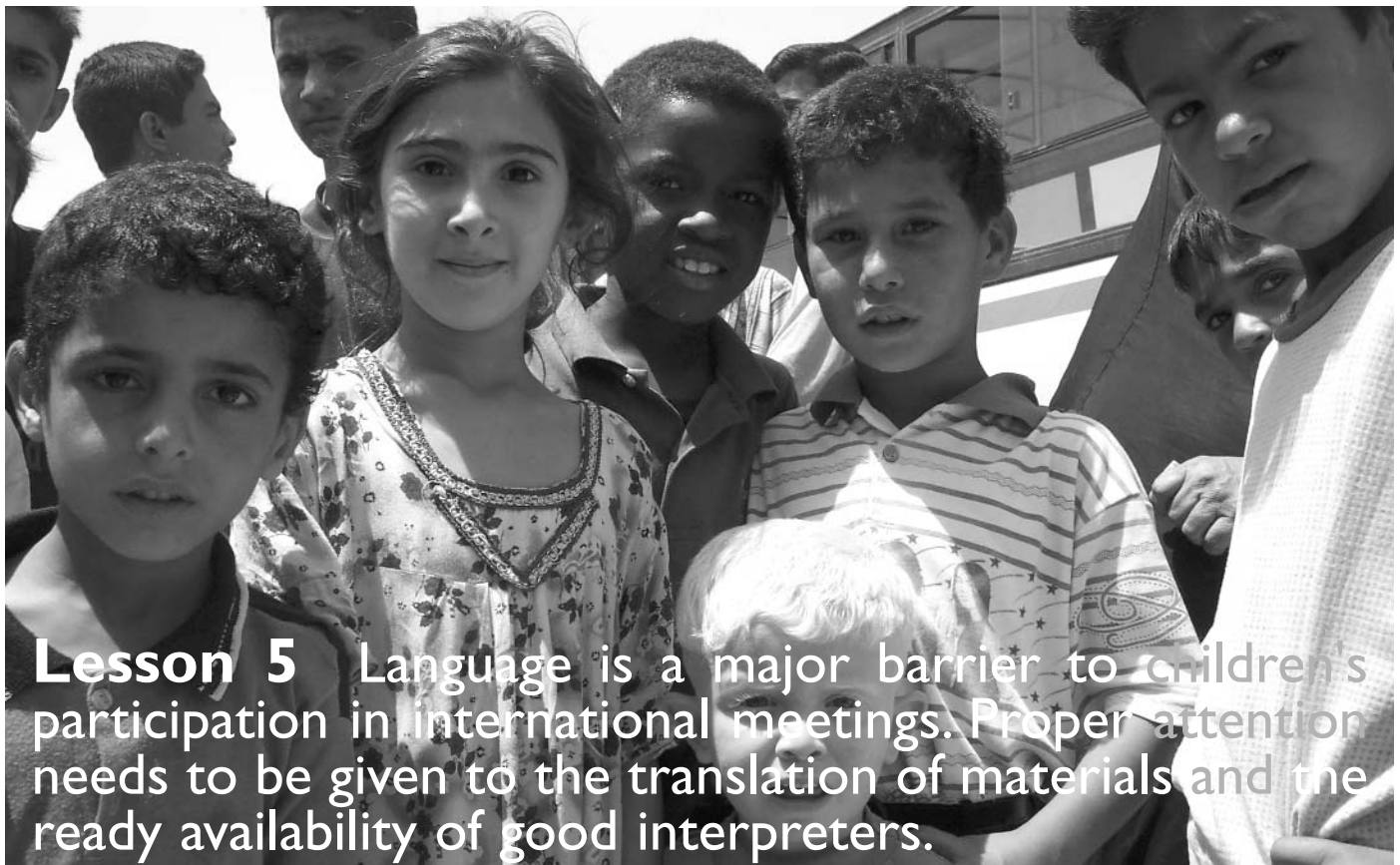
### Diversity

- However selected, strong consideration should be given to ensuring diversity of representation in terms of age, gender, religion, urban/rural residence, levels of (dis)ability, ethnic origin, geographic region and socio-economic background. Once selected, appropriate support should be given to facilitate the involvement of children who might otherwise be marginalised by such factors as disability or speaking a minority language.

### Parental involvement

- Parental consent is vital, and should be obtained as early as possible, and communication with parents and carers should be ongoing before, during and after the event.





Nicole Amoroso/Save the Children Canada

## **Lesson 5** Language is a major barrier to children's participation in international meetings. Proper attention needs to be given to the translation of materials and the ready availability of good interpreters.

Language was one of the key issues for many children involved in regional and international meetings during the Special Session process. Children coming from smaller language communities found their access to information and decision-making was much less than that of children who came from one of the larger language groups. The availability and quality of interpretation played a crucial role in determining whether all children had the same understanding of both the process being followed and the content of what was being said. But even children from a large language group such as Spanish speakers began to feel marginalised when their language was not being used to the same extent as English in plenary discussions. Children who were unfamiliar with working with an interpreter found the process frustrating and excluding.

Only when children and young people have access to the same information (both written and verbal), and the same opportunity to express their views, will they all have the same opportunity to meaningfully participate.

During the Special Session process, Save the Children made efforts to limit the impact of language as a barrier to meaningful participation. Wherever possible - and the cost of overcoming language barriers is a major obstacle - translation and interpretation was provided, and child friendly documents were translated (see lesson 3).

### **Lessons Learned**

Good interpretation is key to the success of a meeting involving children speaking different languages. Ways of increasing the likelihood that interpretation will assist rather than frustrate children's participation include:

#### **Working with interpreters**

- It is helpful to brief interpreters before the meeting about the purpose of the event, what will be happening, the background of the children involved and the importance of interpretation to the success of the meeting.

- Make sure that interpreters understand the importance of showing respect for children and treating them exactly the same as they would treat an adult.
- Encourage the interpreters to develop a good rapport with the children with whom they are working while at the same time ensuring that they have a good understanding of the importance of child protection issues. Organising interpreters into pairs who work with the same group of children can be helpful as children often prefer to keep the same interpreters. The understanding that can develop between children and interpreters can be a key ingredient in ensuring that interpretation works well.

accompanying adults ('chaperones') do not have to 'double up' as interpreters. It is very difficult for them to undertake this role along with their other critical tasks and responsibilities relating to good child protection (see Lesson 12).

- Make sure that interpreters and children have a key contact person among the organisers with whom they can liaise if problems with interpretation arise.

### **Working with child delegates**

- It is helpful to explain to children why interpretation is important, how difficult it is and how they can give feedback on any problems they experience. Children should be encouraged to speak out if they are having difficulty in following a discussion.
- Regularly check on children's satisfaction and comfort with interpretation services during the course of meetings.

### **Working with meeting organisers**

- Maintaining a high standard of interpretation is a demanding task. Meeting organisers need to recognise this and either give interpreters enough breaks and rest, or invest in providing coverage for a longer period.
- Meeting organisers, the chairs of sessions and facilitators need to recognise the importance of interpretation and pay sufficient attention to it in their roles.
- Ensure that, wherever possible,



## Lesson 6 Follow-up to meetings needs to be an essential part of the process of children's participation - not an afterthought.

Penny Tweedle/Save the Children UK

**Involving children** in national and international events becomes a compelling focus of attention for the adults concerned. Simply organising for children to attend them demands a great deal of time and energy and it becomes all too easy to lose sight of the broader picture. Planning horizons tend to end abruptly at the end of the meeting with the safe return of the children to their everyday lives.

Lack of follow-up was highlighted as a major issue in the evaluation of children's participation in the Special Session process. A sudden end to children's involvement in this way was for some a bewildering and unsatisfying experience. Having participated in high-level discussions on issues that directly concern them and their peers - such as child labour, poverty, education or conflict - they then found that too often they had no means to take forward these discussions, no opportunity to work on the issue, or let other children know what happened. They received no information about what happened next, what resulted from their attendance or how they could use their experience to stay involved and

contribute to the process in the future. Furthermore, their desire to stay in touch and continue to work with the other children they met at the meeting was frustrated.

One way to deal with this issue is to support children and young people's involvement in any official follow-up processes arising out of the original meeting or conference. In the case of the Special Session, Save the Children has made efforts to enable children and young people to become active participants in national level follow-up processes such as the development of National Plans of Action for Children. As part of the preparation for this, Save the Children organised a consultation on this subject with over 4000 children and young people in 14 countries in the seven month gap following the postponement of the Special Session in September 2001.<sup>9</sup>

As discussed in relation to Lesson 4, another way to reduce the likelihood of a lack of follow-up is to ensure that child delegates are selected by their peers and have some existing links to a larger group of children or an organisation. In

this way there is a natural constituency with whom to 'reconnect' after the event and there is more chance of support being available to facilitate follow-up e.g. by providing access to email to keep in touch with other child delegates. Media work before and after an event is another way in which children can communicate with a wider group about what is happening before they leave and to report on their return. During the Special Session process children and young people were involved in press conferences, writing to the media and developing information materials (e.g. newsletters, audio-visual materials).

## Lessons Learned

### Planning for follow up

- Discussing and resourcing the need for follow-up is important in the early stages of planning. It is crucial that well-thought out follow-up initiatives are planned as early as possible, including identifying the resources that will be needed.
- Motivation, interest and energy levels are at their highest immediately after a major event and advantage should be taken of this to undertake communications, media or evaluation work. Early follow-up will also ensure that key information and experiences are not forgotten.

### Consulting with children and young people

- Consulting with children and young people is a good way to collect their views on the kinds of follow-up they would find useful and what part they could play in making it happen.

### Using information technology

- Electronic communication, especially email and internet, is a cheap and easy way of helping

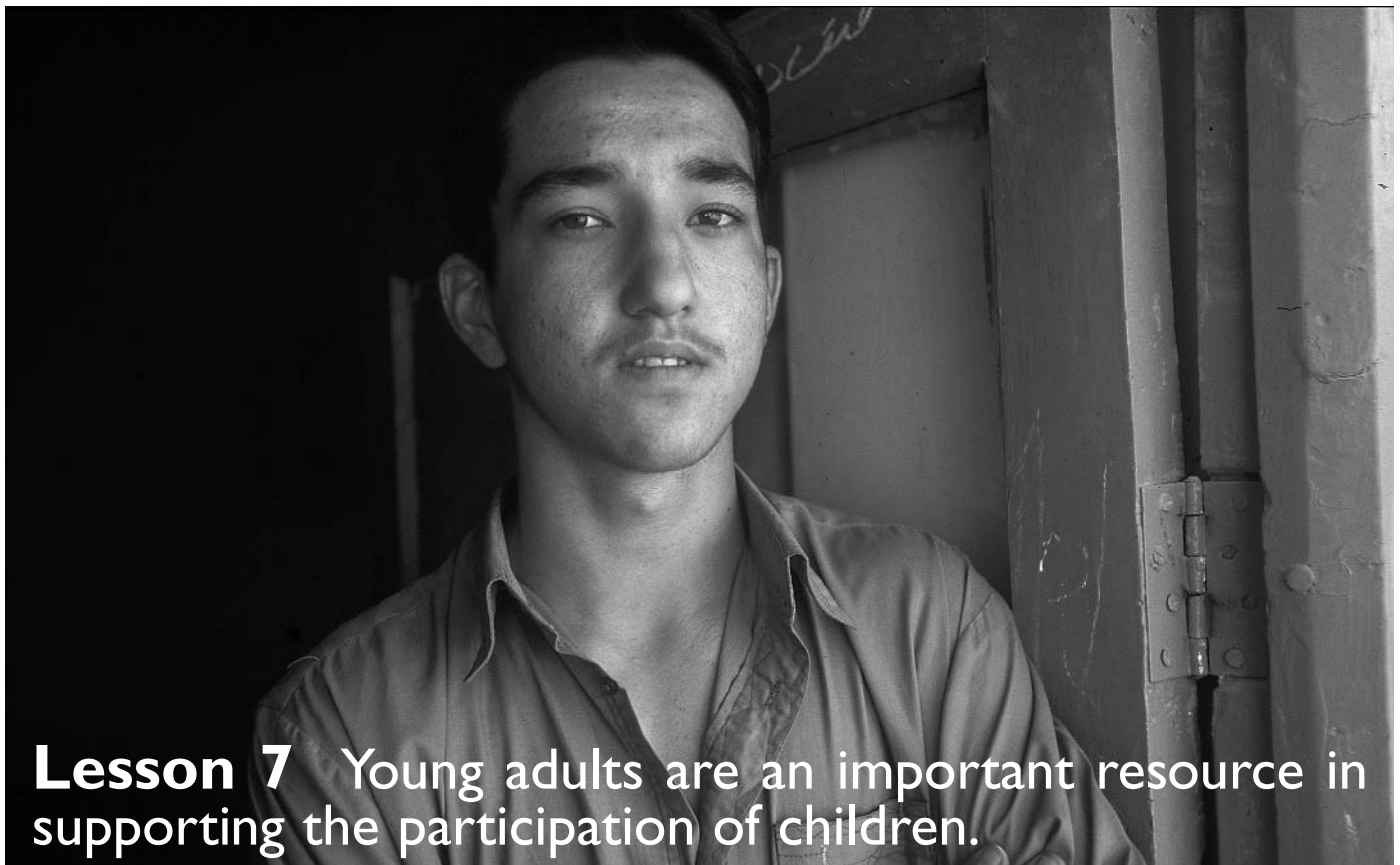
children stay in touch and continue to work together once they return to their different countries. Adult agencies and organisations with access to this technology need to consider how they can make this available to the children they supported to attend meetings.

### Supporting organisations

- National coalitions of adult organisations that form to prepare for major events need to give some thought to remaining active after the event is over, working on both overall follow-up and, more specifically, ensuring follow-up with the children involved.

### Promote on-going processes

- Much more generally, there needs to be a move away from one-off events per se towards longer-term processes. Involving children in one-off events is time-consuming and frequently unsatisfactory. Children express higher levels of satisfaction with processes that provide more opportunities for engagement and the chance to see how their involvement influences decisions over a period of time.



## Lesson 7 Young adults are an important resource in supporting the participation of children.

Stuart Freedman/Save the Children UK

**One of the questions** provoked by children's participation over an extended period of time is, 'what happens once a child/young person becomes a young adult?' Children involved in the first phase of a piece of work may then find themselves excluded once they pass their eighteenth birthday.<sup>10</sup> Over the two and half years of preparations for the Special Session several young people found themselves in this situation. A number of children and young people under 18 were very active at the time of the 2nd Preparatory Committee meeting. Having turned 18, they then found themselves unable to contribute that experience either at the 3rd Preparatory Committee meeting or, a year later, at the Special Session itself.

Many delegations, both governmental and NGO, recognised what was happening. On a case-by-case basis, they were able to find creative ways of incorporating young adults without compromising the principle of child participation being restricted to under 18 year olds. For example, young adults were able to act as mentors to children on their delegations, ensuring that younger children had a

support person close to their own age who had been through similar processes in the same position. Other young adults acted as facilitators during child-only events and meetings. Still others were able to identify special roles for themselves - for example, helping to facilitate the evaluation of the Children's Forum held immediately before the Special Session. Young adults were also able to continue to participate in activities that were open to both adults and children, such as participation in civil society lobbying caucuses organised on a regional or thematic basis. Panel discussions, lobbying efforts and other side events were also very open and welcoming for the participation of young adults.

Generally however, planning for the involvement of young adults was very much on an ad hoc basis. As a result, some young adults felt lost or superfluous. The emphasis on hearing the voices of children, especially at the Special Session, meant that those young adults without specific responsibilities were often left without a sense of direction or purpose. Many of these young adults had previously been child delegates but were now

entering a very similar situation, but without the support they had had in the past.

## Lessons Learned

### Young adults are a valuable resource

- While it is clear that participatory advocacy by children should continue to be seen as being carried out by those under the age of 18 years, there is value in involving young adults where possible, especially those who were former child delegates. The potential for experience-sharing with, and further support of, children is an important and under-tapped resource.
- Whether or not young adults who were not child delegates in the past could be invited for these purposes is a question that remains open, as neither the possible benefits nor potential drawbacks of this have, as yet, been fully explored.

### Planning a role for young adults

- Idea- and experience-sharing should be built into preparations for meetings so that, in the same way as young adults might support the participation of Under 18s, adult delegates and organisers are creatively engaged with supporting and enabling those aged 18 and over. Clarity and imagination are critical to ensure that the full potential of young adults as a resource is engaged to support the participation of children.

### Supporting young adults

- The support capabilities of young adults needs to be built into planning for the process; clear roles and responsibilities are essential to ensure that young adults are well-equipped to enable the participation of others.

- In situations where a process may span a length of time that includes the transition from child to adult, there must be continual learning to ensure that young adults are not surprised or alienated by the new roles they are expected to play. Older children should be prepared, even while participating in earlier stages of a process, for roles they may play in later stages. In this way, they themselves can observe and ask questions of those around them before making the transition from participating as a child to participating as an adult.

## Lesson 8 Participation processes are vulnerable to adult manipulation and measures need to be taken to combat this and build in tolerance and respect for the views of others in the process.

**For any event** where there will be both adult and child participants, it is important to be prepared for situations where adults may try to manipulate the participation process in support of their own objectives. Furthermore, strong differences of opinion may arise where some participants are unwilling to respect the views of others or to conform to the agreed ground rules. However much you try to address these situations in advance, and to ensure an atmosphere of respect is created and upheld, there may be a need to tackle unforeseen circumstances during the course of an event.

There was a significant example of these difficulties at the 2nd Preparatory Committee meeting in January 2001. The children and young people attending that meeting were provided with a space each day, for a few hours, where they could meet as the "Youth Caucus". However, the ambiguity of the term 'youth' presented challenges - including the involvement of younger and older adults who felt that they had the right to be present. These difficulties were compounded by the organised mobilisation of

special interest groups who targeted this space. As a result, the space did not serve as a useful tool for children to meet and plan for their own participation as originally intended. In effect, a few groups took advantage of the Caucus's poorly defined purpose and attempted to manipulate the proceeding, preventing the children from making the best use of the time and space with which they had been provided.<sup>11</sup>

As a result of this experience a number of changes were made for the 3rd Preparatory Committee meeting. More efforts were made, for example, to ensure the integration of children into the full range of caucus meetings and side events rather than to create a separate 'child' or 'youth' caucus. Children were, however, still provided their "own" space during this meeting (and at the Special Session). It was located just outside of the UN building and was available for informal meetings and computer access throughout each day of the events. This space was closed to adults. This rule was also applied in the case of the children's workshops prior to the 3rd Preparatory Committee meeting and the Special

Session. In order to provide children with a safe place where they could prepare and discuss the issues together, these meetings were also closed to adults except for facilitators and resource persons.

Furthermore, in order to reinforce the message about the separation of children and young adults the name of the 'Youth Participation Task Force' (responsible for the logistical planning of children's involvement) was changed to the 'Under 18 Participation Task Force'.

As noted above, a major international event will naturally bring together people of different backgrounds, experiences and beliefs. Save the Children and its partners took special efforts after the 2nd Preparatory Committee meeting to ensure that facilitators working with groups of children were aware of possible challenges that might emerge in terms of dealing with diversity and tried to provide them with the skills needed to handle any situations that might arise.

## Lessons Learned

### Providing child-only spaces

- Some children and young people want adults to help to create the enabling environment for them to participate. At the same time they also want their own space in which their ideas and collective strategies can emerge. These conflicting needs must be discussed and negotiated in a fair and open way. The possibility of adult manipulation should be explained to them.
- If a space is designated solely for children, only adults serving a clear and relevant function should be in attendance (e.g. facilitators, interpreters and organisers). No exceptions should be made.

### Preparing facilitators and accompanying adults

- It is important that, prior to their departure, accompanying adults (also known as 'chaperones') are clear that they are responsible for supporting and protecting their children but should not attempt to manipulate them in order to achieve adult agendas (see Lesson 12).
- Facilitators need to ensure that a culture of openness exists among the children to enable any issues or concerns to be raised and discussed. There needs to be a preparedness to challenge either inappropriate behaviour and/or any attempts to take over a process in pursuit of an exclusive or narrow ideological agenda.
- Facilitators need to be prepared to deal with conflicting political and ideological issues, including supporting children themselves to deal with them.





## Lesson 9 Child protection must be built into every aspect of the planning for an event or process involving children.

Jenny Matthews/Save the Children UK

**Concern for the safety** and well being of children is at the core of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Despite this fundamental concern, it took considerable efforts before child protection issues were adequately addressed in relation to children's participation in the Special Session process.

The first substantial gathering of children and young people in international preparations for the Special Session took place in New York at the 2nd Preparatory Committee Meeting in late January 2001. At that time it was surprising to see how many Under 18s arrived in New York without the presence, support and guidance of an accompanying adult. The intensity of the meetings, the new experience of New York City itself, the bewildering choice of many different events to participate in, the cold weather and the different food were stressful for most of the adults present, let alone the children and young people.

Wiser as a result of this experience, the organisers of the 3rd Preparatory Committee meeting that took place in New York in June 2001 insisted that all under 18s be accompanied by an adult and issued guidelines to this effect on the role and

responsibility of such 'chaperones.' These guidelines drew heavily on the models prepared by Save the Children and UNICEF for the South Asia regional high-level preparatory meeting held in Kathmandu in May 2001. While these guidelines were reproduced for widespread use at the country and regional level in preparatory events and processes, they were still not enough in themselves to ensure that accompanying adults fulfilled their role of supporting and providing guidance to the young delegates in their care.

Preparations for the Special Session originally planned for September 2001 attempted to further improve on previous practice by such measures as drawing up a 2-page Child Protection Policy statement that was circulated to all accompanying adults and including an obligatory child protection briefing for accompanying adults in the programme of events.

The events of 11 September 2001 threw all the planned child protection policies into stark relief. There was concern over how safe it would be for children and young people to go to New York for a reconvened Special Session. The imperative to set quality standards on security and child protection

issues, reflecting a balance between protection and participation, then became an overriding concern for the organisers of the rescheduled Special Session held in May 2002.

Save the Children felt strongly that there needed to be a system in place that enabled protection from the child's point of departure to its return and ensured that all under 18 delegates could be easily contacted. Save the Children therefore prepared a list of recommendations on security and child protection issues for discussion with UNICEF and other partner organisations. This included:

- Revising the registration forms to ensure that they asked for all the information needed to fully cover child protection issues.
- Compiling a 'master list' of all Under 18s coming to New York so that it would be much easier to contact people in case of an emergency, both before and during the event.
- Setting up a "check-in" system upon arrival.
- Organising medical and other insurance cover for all Under 18 delegates. This had become a matter of acute concern in the previous preparatory meetings where it became apparent that many Under 18s were either not at all or inadequately insured. Prior to the rescheduled Special Session this had been a matter left up to individual organisations or delegations. Finally it became an issue dealt with by the lead UN agency, UNICEF.
- Housing Under 18s together in a small number of hotels in New York with adult 'focal points' in each hotel responsible for protection issues.
- Ensuring that accompanying adults were properly briefed on their role prior to their departure and again in New York.
- Ensuring police checking of all volunteer chaperones who were assigned to accompany those under 18s who arrived in New York without an accompanying adult.
- Briefing children on security and protection issues prior to their departure to New York and again in New York.

## Lessons Learned

### **Plan child protection early**

- Child protection needs to be systematically integrated into all aspects of planning for any event involving children. Good practice in child protection is essential to creating an enabling environment in which children can meaningfully participate. Setting standards in child protection takes time, preparation and adequate resources - both human and financial.

### **Clarify responsibilities**

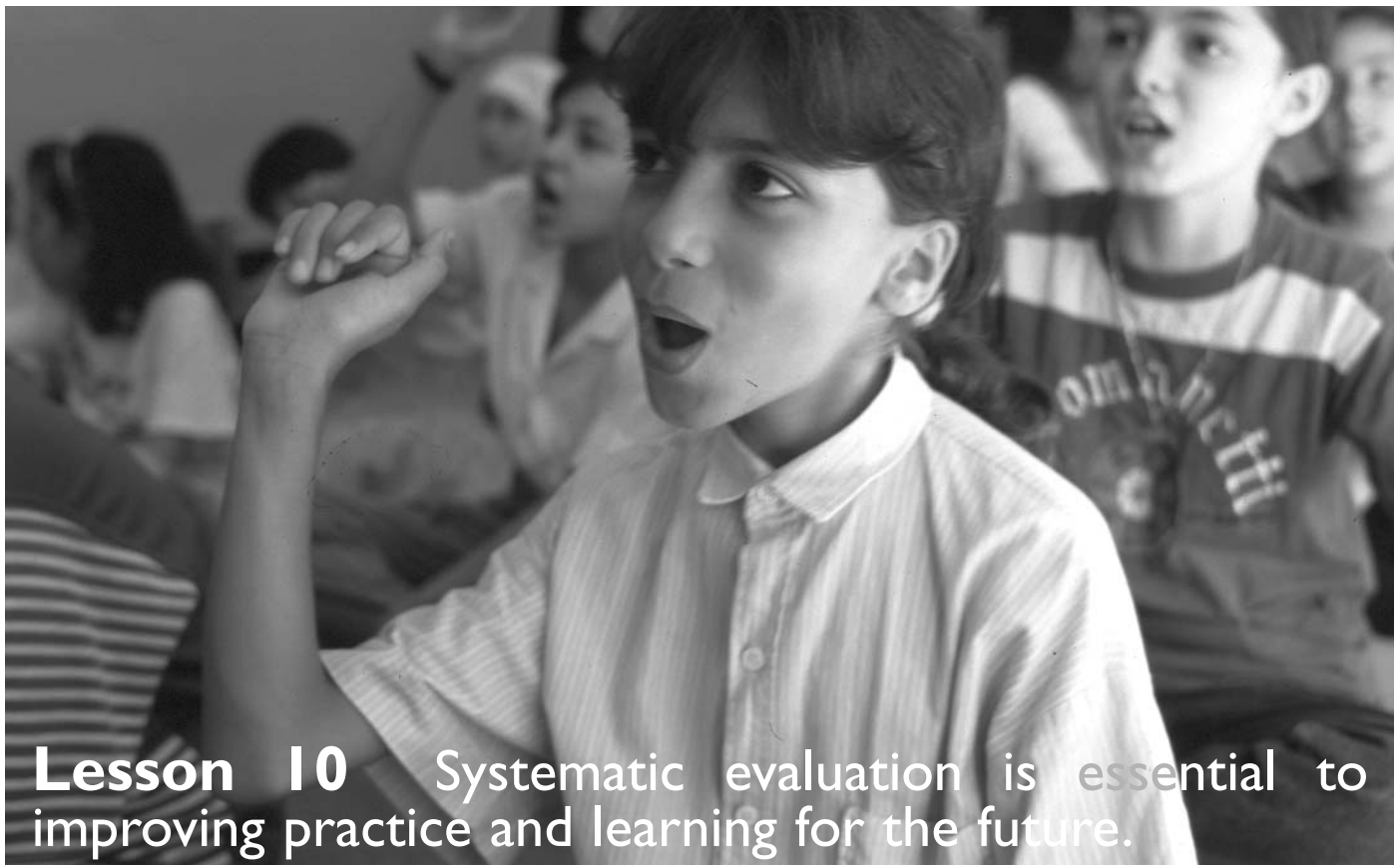
- It must always be clear to all involved who is legally and morally responsible for child protection issues, for example between the meeting organisers and accompanying adults.

### **Improve organisational understanding of child protection issues**

- Organisations involving children in events or processes need to enhance their knowledge base and skills on child protection issues. There is a clear need for organisations to develop and rigorously apply minimum quality practice standards on child protection issues. It is important that organisations consider how to deal with the ethical issues around children's participation.

### **Key elements of good practice include:**

- ensuring that there is insurance coverage for under 18s and accompanying adults
- insisting all under 18s are accompanied by an adult
- providing guidelines to accompanying adults
- using parental/guardian consent forms
- co-ordinating a database of under 18s and accompanying adult details
- issuing badges that include emergency numbers to all child participants
- designating child participation focal points
- providing a briefing on child protection for under 18s
- ensuring the availability of a rest room, medical supplies and a doctor/nurse.



## Lesson 10 Systematic evaluation is essential to improving practice and learning for the future.

Peter Fryer/Save the Children UK

**Bringing children** in significant numbers, in an organised and meaningful way, into a major UN meeting had never been done before the Special Session. Although many children and young people had taken part in national and regional events it was a new experience for children to meet at a global level in a UN setting.

The first organised meeting took place in January 2001 when around 50 children attended the 2nd Preparatory Committee in New York. Immediately before that meeting a preparatory workshop for the children was organised to prepare them for their participation. The adults involved were eager to get feedback from the participating children. They wanted to know if they found the workshop had helped them participate in the UN meeting. If so, what helped? What promoted their participation? What were the obstacles for children to get their voices heard and be listened to? Children needed to be given the opportunity to express their opinions about such issues so that their ideas and recommendations could be taken forward into the planning for future meetings.

With children's involvement, evaluations were organised for the three child preparatory

workshops organised prior to the UN meetings and for children's participation in the official meetings themselves - the 2nd and 3rd Preparatory Committee meetings, and the Special Session itself. This enabled the learning from one event to inform and improve the planning and organisation of the next event.

It was felt that as far as possible children and young people had to be an integral part of the evaluation from the very beginning. However, there were a number of challenges to this:

- How to include children in preparing the evaluation while they were also taking part in the workshops or the official meetings;
- How to prepare, print and distribute and translate into three languages evaluation forms over a very short period;
- How to ensure that all participants got their evaluation form in time and in a language they could understand;
- How to ensure that everyone returned the form either during the event or once they had left;
- How to try and build-in children's participation in the preparation of results,

when they were from different countries and returned home immediately after the end of the meeting.

Fortunately it proved possible on each occasion to establish a reference group of adults and children committed to supporting an evaluation process. These groups took collective responsibility for developing evaluation instruments and ensuring that they were widely distributed. Although it was not always possible for all members to attend all these meetings and share tasks, the groups continued to work well throughout. The involvement of young people just over 18 was extremely important, both in terms of commitment and communication with the children and under 18's (see Lesson 7).

The results of this work were very important in establishing what had worked and not worked for the children attending the event. They enabled problems to be addressed in the planning of the next event which reduced the frustrations that children had experienced and enabled them to concentrate on their effective participation.

Inevitably not everything went smoothly, notably dealing with matters outstanding after the dispersal of the participants back to their home countries. It was agreed, for example, that the writing of the evaluation report of the Children's Forum would be mainly done by the reference group which had organised the evaluation. However, the time needed for this was greatly underestimated leading to substantial delays. This, and language barriers, made it difficult to keep contact with all members of the reference group.

Since the end of the Special Session, Save the Children has made considerable efforts to evaluate and learn the lessons from children's involvement. This began even before the Special Session itself when, following the postponement caused by the tragic events of September 11th 2002, it commissioned an evaluation of the national, regional and international processes that

had taken place up to that point in order to make sure that lessons were not lost because of the passage of time.<sup>12</sup> In addition to this publication, other publications have been produced including guidelines on consulting with children, and practice standards for children's participation. A number of individual countries and regions also carried out evaluations of their work to support children's participation at that level.<sup>13</sup>

## Lessons Learned

### Uses of evaluation

- Good evaluation must be an integral part of the process. It is key to learning lessons which can then be used to guide the future participation of children in similar events or processes. Evaluation can help to assess the fulfillment of children's participation rights and the benefits and disadvantages for the participating children.
- Evaluation is also a means of considering what has been achieved in terms of individual and group learning and outcomes.
- Most evaluations concentrate on process issues - it is also important to assess the impact of child participation. For example, have the proposals made by children had an impact, can their contributions be linked to decisions taken by policy-makers and has their participation influenced the attitude of adults?

### Planning the evaluation

- Consideration should be given to establishing a small evaluation committee of children, supported by over 18s and adults, at the beginning of an event.
- Time and resources need to be given to evaluation, both in terms of dedicated time set aside in the programme, the provision of interpreters and translation and for writing up an evaluation report.



Kalpesh Lathigra/Save the Children UK

**Lesson 11** Children want to speak with the media but should be supported to do so and need to be protected at all times.

**At many gatherings** of children and young people, the media, dignitaries and decision-makers are very interested in what the young delegates have to say. This is a great opportunity for the children and young people to have their voices heard. However, there are also risks that need to be considered and prepared for in advance.

In order to support children's media work during the Special Session, a number of steps were taken to build children's capacity in this area. This included the preparation of a child-friendly document, 'Mastering the Media', that was prepared in English, French and Spanish and given to all children attending the 3rd Preparatory Committee meeting and the Special Session. A briefing on working with the media had been included in the agenda of the children's preparatory meetings prior to the 2nd Preparatory Committee meeting and was also included in the agenda of the 3rd Preparatory Committee meeting and the Children's Forum. In the case of the Children's Forum, a separate briefing was also organised for children unable to

attend that event because of the restriction on numbers or the delay in their registration. At the Special Session itself a Save the Children staff member was on hand to provide support to the children and ensure their protection in this area of their work.

Save the Children also supported the involvement of child journalists in the Special Session process, ensuring that there was a 'child's eye' view on what was happening. Adult support staff were recruited to advise and facilitate the work of the child journalists and technical support was organised to enable them to file stories.

## Lessons Learned

### **Media Preparation before the meeting**

Consider assigning a media co-ordinator (press officer) beforehand to ensure thorough planning on practical arrangements for media work with child participants. These arrangements should cover:

- child protection issues,
- identifying Under 18 spokespeople,
- booking rooms for media briefings or one-to-one interviews,
- briefing Under 18 interviewees,
- developing codes of conduct

Preparation for children should be made in advance. For example, media guidelines for young people should be prepared and sent to participants ahead of the event. It is also a good idea to include space in the agenda for briefing Under 18 participants on dealing with the media in any preparatory event.

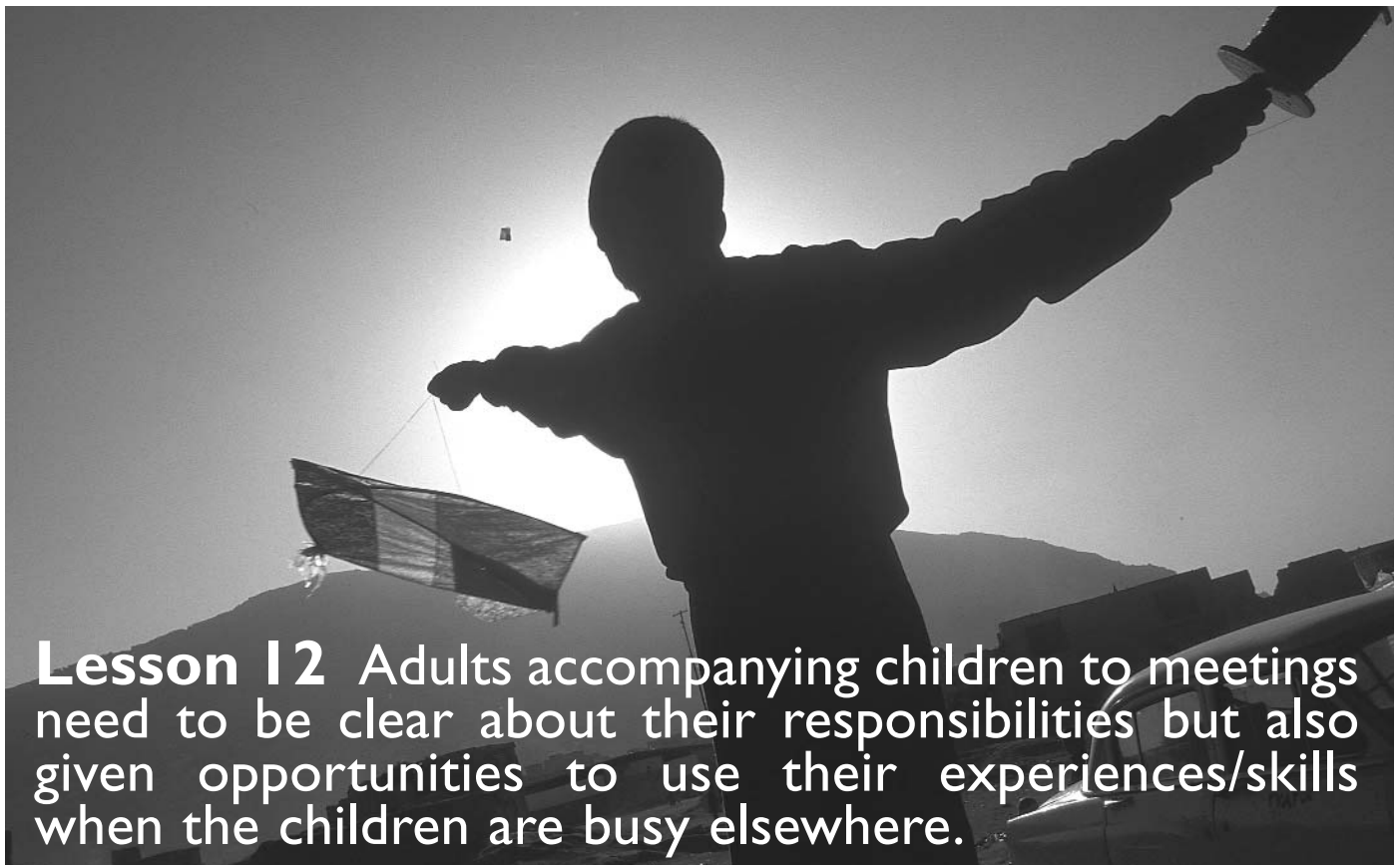
It is important to have the full consent and agreement of both individual young participants and their respective parents or guardians to the child's participation in media work. This can be done by asking the children and their parents/guardians to sign a media consent and release form prior to the event.

### **During the meeting**

- It is helpful to plan and agree designated 'slots' (i.e. specific times) when media (including film crews) and dignitaries have access. For example, opening and closing sessions, press conferences, space for pre-arranged interviews. This avoids a situation where the presence of media or dignitaries can cause disruptions to an already tightly scheduled event.
- Plan and co-ordinate proactively for the participation of child journalists who can cover the event from their own perspective.
- If appropriate, consider the creation of a Media Committee at the beginning to ensure that media activities are undertaken according to the interests and needs of the young

participants. This is also a good means of bringing together a group of Under 18 media spokespeople.

- Brief media representatives so that they are aware of considerations in interviewing children.



Stuart Freedman/Save the Children UK

**Key to the meaningful** participation of young people is ensuring that their adult support person (also known as their 'accompanying adult' or 'chaperone') fully understands their role, and that they are able to offer all that is needed to support or facilitate the meaningful participation of the young people in their care. Although they themselves may have a great deal of experience and knowledge on an issue, their objective should be to ensure the voice of the young person is being heard.

The behaviour of accompanying adults during the Special Session was variable. Many behaved with great responsibility while others seemed to feel that their only role was to deliver their child or young person to the meeting, leaving them free to go shopping! During the course of the Special Session considerable efforts were made to increase the awareness and understanding of the role of the accompanying adults and to improve practice. This included understanding the need for the organisers to be on hand to ensure that, for example, logistical arrangements were well understood

and carried out according to good child protection practice.

Prior to the New York-based events of the Special Session process, Save the Children and its partners distributed guidelines to all accompanying adults to ensure that all important and relevant information was easily accessed. An ongoing challenge throughout the Special Session process was establishing a common understanding of the boundaries or rules and regulations that should be understood between an accompanying adult and the young people for whom they were responsible. Although guidelines were widely distributed there were often different interpretations. For example, some accompanying adults permitted the young people to walk by themselves from the hotel to the UN building and to walk outside without supervision, while others would ensure that the young people were never outside the UN building unaccompanied. In many situations, there were also different rules for older young people (16 -18) and younger children, often

leaving the younger children to feel that the 'rules' were being unfairly applied.

## Lessons Learned

### Role of the accompanying Adults

- All accompanying adults need to understand the importance of their roles and responsibilities and have a clear understanding of child protection policy. An accompanying adult should understand that their first and most important responsibility is to ensure the safety and comfort of the young people. Proper support of child participants cannot be combined with other tasks and responsibilities.

Beyond ensuring the safety and comfort of the young people they should also:

- serve as a resource for information and event details for their child delegates
- advocate to the rest of the delegation (NGO or government) to ensure their child delegate is fully involved. This means having good links with other members of the delegation of which their child or young person is a part (see Lesson 1)

### Mutual understanding of roles

- Children need to understand the role of their accompanying adult and what they should expect from them. Support starts at home when the children participating in an event, together with their caregivers, need to have a clear understanding of the nature of the event, safety issues, travel arrangements, expectations and responsibilities. Rules and regulations should be set, understood and agreed between the adult and young person(s).

### Accompanying Adults working together

- If opportunities arise - for example, when children are in children-only meetings - it may be possible to organise activities to enable them to share experience or work together as a group.

*Other key lessons learned in relation to accompanying adults can also be found elsewhere in this publication, notably in Lesson 10 on Child Protection.*



# Appendix I - Resource Guide

G. Cockburn 'Meaningful Youth Participation in International Conferences: a case study of the International Conference on War-Affected Children' CIDA, Hull, Quebec, 2001.

Save the Children 'So you want to consult with children?' Save the Children, 2004

United Nations Association of Canada 'Navigating International Meetings: A Pocketbook Guide to Effective Youth Participation' Ottawa, 2002.

Available electronically at

[http://www.unac.org/en/pocketbook/intl\\_meetings\\_eng.pdf](http://www.unac.org/en/pocketbook/intl_meetings_eng.pdf)

G. Lansdown 'Promoting Children's Participation in Democratic Decision-making' UNICEF, Innocenti Insight, Florence, 2001.

Available electronically at

<http://www.unicef-icdc.org/publications/pdf/insight6.pdf>

For more background on the UN Special Session see:

UNICEF 'Building a World Fit for Children', UNICEF, 2003

Available electronically at

[http://www.unicef.org/publications/pub\\_build\\_wffc\\_en.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/publications/pub_build_wffc_en.pdf)

UNICEF 'A World Fit for Children' UNICEF, 2002

Available electronically at

[http://www.unicef.org/specialsession/docs\\_new/documents/A-RES-S27-2E.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/specialsession/docs_new/documents/A-RES-S27-2E.pdf)

A child-friendly version is also available:

Global Movement for Children 'Child-friendly version of A World Fit for Children'

Global Movement for Children, 2002

Available electronically at

[http://www.gmfc.org/Child\\_Friendly\\_wffc\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.gmfc.org/Child_Friendly_wffc_FINAL.pdf)

Etherton, M. 'Creating A Process Fit For Children: children and young people's participation in the preparations for the UN Special Session on Children', Save the Children, 2003.

# Endnotes

1 Etherton, M. 'Creating A Process Fit For Children:

Children and young people's participation in the preparations for the UN Special Session on Children', Save the Children 2003.

2 Those readers looking for more guidance are advised to begin with the materials listed in the short 'resource guide' at the end of this report. In particular, Save the Children has produced a companion publication to the present one that discusses these issues in much more detail and provides practical advice (see 'So you want to consult with children?' Save the Children, 2004). That publication includes an extensive list of other resources.

3 Hereafter referred to as 'the Special Session'. For more background information on the Special Session on Children see 'Building a World Fit for Children', UNICEF, 2003 Available electronically at

[http://www.unicef.org/publications/pub\\_build\\_wffc\\_en.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/publications/pub_build_wffc_en.pdf)

The Special Session had originally been planned for 19-21st September 2001 but had to be rescheduled following the September 11th attacks on New York and Washington.

4 During the Special Session process this plan was referred to as 'the Outcome Document'. Since the Special Session it has been known by its title, 'A World Fit for Children'.

5 The Child Rights Information Network website at <http://www.crin.org/>

6 Available as the 'Child-friendly version of A World Fit for Children' Global Movement for Children, 2002 and electronically at

[http://www.gmfc.org/Child\\_Friendly\\_wffc\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.gmfc.org/Child_Friendly_wffc_FINAL.pdf)

7 The Canadian government was an outstanding exception to this rule, being one of the first governments to bring children on its delegation, rotating participation between different meetings and following a open selection process. Other governments such as the UK later followed their example.

8 At least one youth delegate found herself selected to go to one of the Preparatory Committee meetings at two weeks notice with no information at all about what the meeting was about.

9 The results of this consultation were published as 'Shaping a Country's Future with Children and Young People' (Save the Children, 2002) and are available electronically at

[http://www.savethechildren.ca/specialsession/Worddoc/National\\_English.doc](http://www.savethechildren.ca/specialsession/Worddoc/National_English.doc)

10 The Convention on the Rights of the Child defines a child as a human being under the age of 18 years. When children's issues are being discussed it is important that children themselves are given priority in opportunities to participate. In the past young adults have often been used to 'speak for' children because of a preference by adults for an 'older' young person and because children were seen as more in need of protection than participation.

11 Nor was this the only instance of this, as this example from the Africa regional high-level preparatory meeting clearly illustrates: "Without other distractions, many of the [accompanying] adults passed the time lobbying the children and putting pressure on them to vote within their language groups for the positions of children's representatives at the PAF [Pan African Forum]... Children were made to feel that they had to be elected to be one of the special delegates to present at the PAF, or be deemed to be a failure." Source: Michael Etherton 'Creating A Process Fit For Children: Children and young people's participation in the preparations for the UN Special Session on Children', Save the Children 2003.

12 This has now been published as Etherton, M. 'Creating A Process Fit For Children: Children and young people's participation in the preparations for the UN Special Session on Children', Save the Children 2003.

13 Examples include: 'The Cairo Experience: A report on children's participation in the OAU-UNICEF Pan African Forum on the Future of African's Children, Cairo, May 2001,' Save the Children. 'Lessons on Child Participation in the Pre-UNGASS Process: The Philippine Experience.' C. Lakan, 'Review of In-Country Processes Related to Special Session: Key Issues and Learning' Save the Children Alliance Bangladesh, November 2001.