



Taking a Right Turn

Children lead the way in research



"We missed our playtime, free time and even marriage celebrations! But, we are very proud that we were able to do something for our village. We have identified our problems, we know the solutions and also how to get them solved....."

- A Child Research Protagonist

If you are working for and with children

If you believe in Children's Right to Participation

If you wish to empower children... then 'Children Taking a Right Turn: Children Lead the Way in Research' is a publication that you must have!

This latest publication from The Concerned for Working Children deals with the issue of the right of children as citizens to participate in an informed manner in local governance. It advocates for information management by children as generators and owners of information to the rightful users of such information to transform their lives.

This publication describes the process and methodology for enabling children to become Research Protagonists and also explores some of the ethical issues involved.

The document describes various stages of the research that was wholly owned children, and how the children conducted it from the point where the children identified the need for the study, set the research framework, designed the methodology, developed tools, collected data and compiled it. It describes how children designed and used several participatory research methods, planned the administering of the tools and ensured validation of the information. The publication shows how the entire process can be an empowering experience for children who demystified the complex concept of research.

The document provides an in depth understanding of the process, methodology and ethics of children doing their own research. It also provides logical arguments for why children should do their own research and illustrates them with examples. The document goes on to narrate how children's research leads to action-oriented advocacy, and enables children to solve their problems in a child-centred manner.

It is the outcome of a research project undertaken by children in Karnataka, India in 2005 to study issues relating to their transport, mobility and access. The research project was commissioned by DFID, with a view to inform their policy. The other partners in the study were the University of Durham, UK, University of Cape Coast, Ghana and CSIR, South Africa. The Concerned for Working Children (CWC), India, besides, facilitating the research by children in Karnataka, designed the process and methodology that enabled the study, trained children and adults in Ghana and South Africa and facilitated the study in Ghana.

All the three country studies were conducted by children from marginalized communities, who face constraints due to inadequate transport facilities and poor access to resources.

"I did not expect such an marvelous experience and it was totally different from what I thought before coming here. The kids sitting here have been marvellous. They have taught me things that I have never known before. I have been doing research in transport for the last 24 years and I have learned more in these 5 days than those 24 years, from you children. I have also realised that I had ignored a very significant group of people in all my research, that is children. Staff here have been excellent. I am carrying back to Ghana very memorable ideas. Something interesting is going on here that we have not seen before - children planning their own life. I will leave a promise with you that I will do my best to uphold what you are doing here in Ghana as well, which some day you could come and see."

Prof. Albert Abane, University of Cape Coast, 2005



Crossing an unsafe bridge

The project got off to a great start with a participatory, child-centred workshop organised by the Concerned for Working Children (CWC) in Karnataka, India...In the space of the five day workshop, the children used their knowledge of their transport problems to develop a research framework, and pilot test three tools for conducting research into these problems. These three tools, a transect walk, focus group discussions, and mapping access and mobility indicators for different children, were field tested in one Panchayat by the children. CWC aims to continue working with the children to develop two additional research tools: a house-to-house survey and a PRA map.

For the adults the children's perspectives were revealing. Children engaged in a range of transport activities: they had to go school, they fetched water and firewood, they transported the harvest and collected rations from the shop, they take milk to the market, and they accompany older people to the health centre. Their transport responsibility result in late attendance in school and tires them out, making it difficult for them to concentrate. It also takes up a lot of their time. They face very different hazards to adults: they cross busy roads; they climb over rocks or big roots of trees, jump over gullies, ford streams or walk on slippery bridges.



Child Research Protagonists during an interview

Working with CWC who have over twenty-five years of experience working in partnership with children, made the project team realise that if the project is to do more than pay lip-service to children's participation, it needs to widen its scope. Children must be empowered to use the information generated by the research to advocate on their own behalf, to be in control, and to be a part of decision-making processes and interventions. This is their right to participation, as enshrined in the Convention of the Rights of the Child. IFRTD, the University of Durham and CWC will assist the members of the project team in Ghana and South Africa to lay the foundations for the structures that can make this possible. This requires commitment to continuous involvement of children in all aspects of the research project, and to developing children's organisations.

- Priyanthi Fernando, Former Secretary of IFRTD, UK, 2005

Ordering Information

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