Claiming Citizenship
Study Summary
Adolescent Participation Fulfills Citizenship Rights and Brings Development Results

Adolescent Development and Participation (ADAP) Section, UNICEF South Asia
In collaboration with
The Concerned for Working Children, Bangalore, India
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This document is a rewritten and updated summary of the original study *Claiming Citizenship: Case Studies of Adolescents Participating in Governance in South Asia* to inform UNICEF's strategies for rights-based adolescent programming. ADAP partnered with the Concerned for Working Children, Bangalore, India for the study. For the full documentation, please refer to the main study.

"We, the *Bal Panchayat* [children's council] members conduct meetings (*Bal Sabha*s) [children's collectives] of children in the age group 11–18 years. In these we discuss child rights and other issues and take them up with *Gram Panchayat*s. … Earlier [gram panchayat members] used to think 'what do children know?' Now our *Gram Panchayat* and people create platforms for us to speak, they respect our views and opinions and act on them.

Kajal,[1] a member of the Bal Panchayat
At the UNICEF South Asia Engaged and Heard Participation Guidance Launch,
5 November 2020

Transformational programming for adolescents requires that they are front and centre in discussions and decisions on policy and programming. This case study series shows that when
a) There are legal and policy provisions for adolescent engagement and participation
b) Adolescents and young people are equipped with information on policy processes and issues and when their critical thinking and advocacy capacities are built, when
c) Adults are professionalised to support adolescent engagement and empowerment, and
d) Adolescents and officials are connected through policymaking and programme design spaces, accountabilities increase, and development results transform for children including adolescents. Results are particularly notable in local government settings.
The study recommendations provide directions for strengthening participatory programming for adolescents.

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[1] Kajal is a 17-year-old member of the *Bal Panchayat*, the committee elected by the children's assembly of the village

Adolescents at the Centre of Decision-Making

Adolescence is an extraordinary developmental stage.[2] As they navigate the world of children as well as adults, they begin to interact with the world in new ways; taking chances, learning skills and experiencing unfamiliar emotions. It is a critical period of identity formation, during which they venture beyond their families to form powerful connections with their peers and communities.

During adolescents, participation in their communities and nations enables their growth and establishes their roles as citizens. UNCRC General Comment 20 on adolescents highlights the importance of "a human rights-based approach that includes recognition and respect for the dignity and agency of adolescents; their empowerment, citizenship and active participation in their own lives."[3]

At the time of this report, many countries in South Asia are going through diverse political, economic and social upheavals. Adolescents and young people in South Asia –who make up nearly 350 million people[4], often face the greatest disparities due to these upheavals. For example, youth unemployment rates are consistently higher than general unemployment rates, violence against children and adolescents have increased, and inequalities push more and more children and adolescents below the poverty line as those with the least economic assets. Gender inequality and other forms of discrimination, conflict and displacement threaten their well-being in distinct and acute ways. Social and economic vulnerabilities are also interconnected, where deprivations in one domain, such as education, results in multiple social, economic and political fallouts. Many adolescents are below the voting age and therefore unable to influence political change. Change for adolescents is difficult not just because of resource scarcity, but because of issues of transparency and accountability in resource distribution and social justice issues in systems that serve them.

At UNICEF, our continuous effort is to bring optimal, holistic results for adolescents and young people. In adolescent programming, we are particularly conscious of the need to affirm and support their evolving capacities and skills for citizenship and productivity and increase their potential to influence decisions affecting their lives. Intentional and systematic shifts are necessary in policy, programming and delivery across goal areasif this vision is to be realized.

This series of case studies demonstrate UNICEF and partner innovation and commitment to

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[2] This study refers to the age group 10–19 as adolescents and 20–24 as youth

[3]UNCRC General Comment 20 (2016) on the Implementation of the Rights of the Child during Adolescents, UNCRC Committee, Issue 2 2017, **CRC/C/GC/20, p3**

[4] UNICEF, 'Adolescents Overview', UNICEF, October 2019, <https://data.unicef.org/topic/adolescents/overview/>,accessed 2 November 2021

placing adolescents at the heart of the way we work. The findings and recommendations of the report are intended to provide learning and insights to all staff and partnersto strengthen policies, structures, mechanisms and capacities to mainstream adolescent participation across sectoral domains.

1. The Case Studies: Highlighting Participation Good Practices

Claiming Citizenship - Case Studies of Adolescents Participating in Governance in South Asia documents how sectoral and cross-sectoral results for adolescents, are being achieved by the UNICEF country teams in ways that place adolescents at the centre of design, delivery and evaluation. The case studies area celebration of partnerships between adolescents and national, sub-national and local governments, working together to build a better world for children. It has shown us that when adolescents are supported with professionalized inputs for self-empowerment and democratic participation, and are equipped with data and information on policy processes, and, are, at the same time, connected to public sector and other mechanisms that deliver for them, results improve. Delivery mechanisms transform from those merely providing services, to those that consult and work with those they serve to achieve better results.

The participation practices in *Claiming Citizenship* emerged through sectoral initiatives in child protection, social protection and governance. In addition to an extensive document review, the research team spoke to 32 government officials, 43 adolescents, 20 civil society representatives and 10 UNICEF staff through focus group and individual engagement. Special, adolescent-friendly engagement tools were utilized with adolescents and young people where possible. COVID-19 restricted face to face interaction.

2. Participation Rights

In 1989, global leaders made an historic commitment to the world's children with the adoption of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, recognizing children's fundamental right to be heard, influence decisions, and participate in issues that affect their lives. This right also entails a right to agency and protagonism; to be informed of policy and programme decisions that affect them and their communities; and to engage and participate in making those decisions. In adolescence, participation rights are particularly significant as they evolve in their capacities and roles in society.

Participation is a powerful democratic right, and it also ensures more responsive planning. It is an essential, and not optional, feature of rights-based programming requiring professionalized inputs in creating policies and strategies for authentic engagement. Articles 12–17 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) enshrine the right of all children,

including adolescents, to participate in decisions that affect their lives, to have access to relevant information and to a conscience and religion. Article 15 recognizes the rights of the child to freedom of association and freedom of peaceful assembly. Article 2 on non-discrimination and Article 3 on the best interest of the child are also integral to realizing participation rights.

The right to participate in governance is the least respected of children's rights the world over.[5] While adolescents and young people are proactively leading solutions to development questions through various voluntary and institutional formations, and have a strong stand on justice and democracy, many feel left out of mainstream decision-making domains.[6] As a recent U-Report poll at UNICEF South Asia showed, ….% of a total of …. adolescents and young people felt they had no place in decision-making in their countries and localities. This culture of exclusion, especially in governance, affects marginalized groups the most, who are the least buffered from unresponsive policy decisions. While good practices for children's and adolescent's participation do exist, they are far from being the norm.

3. The 3 Ps

The right to participation is one among three facets of human/child rights; provision, protection and participation, often called the 3 Ps:

- *Provision* of services – which are the responsibility of primary duty bearers such as the State and other duty bearers like the family
- *Protection* from harm and abuse – again the responsibility of duty bearers
- *Participation* – the right of rights holders to determine the nature and quality of the protection and provision that is provided

The 3Ps are inseparable and indivisible. While much of our programming focuses on *provision* and *protection* dimensions, children's rights cannot be fulfilled where their *participation* in determining the quality and nature of provision and protection has not been given due respect. This goes beyond adolescents "participating" in contributing to society in an instrumentalist sense,[7] to engaging proactively in decision-making that defines which services are delivered, and how they are delivered.

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[5] UNICEF, 'Adolescent Development and Participation', UNICEF, undated, <www.unicef.org/adolescence>, accessed 8 October 2021.

[6] Quote Reimagining Humanitarian Action

[7] See the ADAP ROSA model for lenses of perceptions of adolescents in planning and decision-making
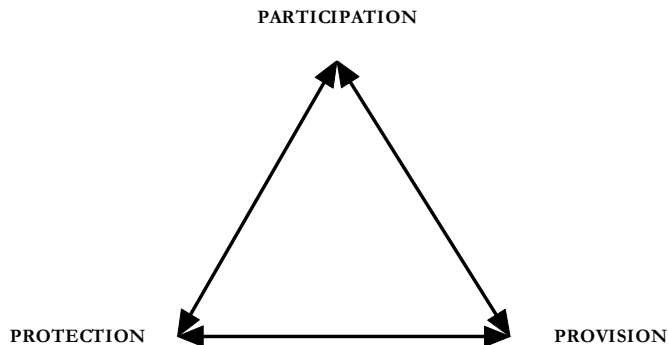
The right to participate in decisions that affect their lives, therefore, is a core principle in child rights. It is through this rights-based programming that civil society strives to realize all other rights.[8]For children, including adolescents, participation is also an opportunity for growth, development and emancipation. Therefore, fulfilling participation rights is considered an end in itself, as much as the means to an end of responsive, results-based programming.

4. The ASPIRE Framework for Participation in Governance

The *Claiming Citizenship* case studies look specifically at adolescent participation in *governance*. Governance here denotes structures and processes for decision making within institutional arenas for policy and programme design, particularly in relation to the State, the principal duty bearer. The study also resulted in five dimensions through which to analyse the effectiveness of programmes promoting adolescent participation in governance. These are **Agency, State, Participation, Inclusion** and **Resolutions**, or the **ASPIRE Framework,** as elaborated below:[9]

   a. **Agency:** Social accountability relies on strengthening rights holders' capacity and ability to voice their demands before their duty bearers[10].Agency, in this regard, is defined as the evolving capacity and confidence of adolescents to engage with decision makers and structures, and their autonomy in expressing opinions and acting for change: did we support the self-empowerment of adolescents and young people? Did they drive, initiate, or manage projects? Did they make choices? What was the impact of other actors on their agency?

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[8] Reddy, Nandana, and Kavita Ratna, *Introduction to Child Rights Programming*, Dhruva, the Concerned for Working Children, Bangalore, India, 2019
[9]These definitions are rewritten versions of those in the *Claiming Citizenship* study
[10]Quote the child-friendly accountability paper

b. **State/Institutions:** The mandated role of the state, the primary duty bearer, and its different arms, and other institutions serving adolescents, is to integrate and sustain their participation in governance and ensure subsidiarity (or resolutions at the lowest level) in planning. How are States and other institutions able and willing to integrate adolescent participation? At what levels of planning – strategic, operational/procedural, monitoring/evaluation-- do these participatory mechanisms exist? Do State and sectoral policies commit to adolescent participation? Do practices translate policy to action through formal, mandated mechanisms? Are State functionaries trained to engage and work with children, including adolescents? Is accountability towards children and prioritizing their concerns manifested in the way decisions are made? Do current macro-economic and ideological structures enable or disable State commitments to child participation and children's rights?

c. **Participation:** Participation is the interface between the agency of children and participatory governance structures. Do children's agency and capacitated State structures result in the meaningful participation of children including adolescents in policy and programme decisions at different levels of governance? What are the boundaries and limits imposed on adolescent participation (direct and indirect; individual and collective; local and national) by state actors, adults, and hierarchical structures? What are the opportunities for adolescents to represent themselves within State mechanisms so that they can question and change those boundaries?

d. **Inclusion**: Within adolescent groups, there are those individuals who are socially, culturally and economically stronger and likely to be more articulate, thereby excluding the already marginalized from participation processes: What actions were taken to promote inclusion, particularly in relation to viewing and working with the most marginalized groups as agents and partners?

e. **Resolutions:** Adolescents participate in governance so that they can influence change. Listening to and acting on their concerns ensures accountability to them. Organizational structures and attitudes of decision-makers define the nature of adolescents and young people's ability to exercise agency and influence resolutions and decisions. How are they able to influence?

5. The Case Studies

The case study series covers four initiatives representing local/national contexts as well as rural and urban governance contexts from India, Nepal and Bhutan:

a. The Safe City Initiative, Bhopal, India

The Safe City Initiative (SCI), Bhopal, India is led by the Child Protection Section of UNICEF Madhya Pradesh. Working in close collaboration with the Government of Madhya Pradesh and civil society organisations, they began the Safe City Initiative (SCI) community-based initiative within an urban governance framework in informal settlements. It was aimed at building safe communities for children, and in operationalising child protection services in urban areas. It was initiated as a response to the high levels of violence against children in the state. Local self-governance structures and CSOs played an integral role in the initiative.

The SCI fell broadly under UNICEF's child protection mandate where child participation was systematically built in. The initiative also included the most marginalized as agents of change, instead of seeing them merely as beneficiaries. UNICEF's strategy was to render children visible, enhance their role in designing processes for protection and participation and enable child-led research to identify their protection needs.

This informed child-led advocacy on child protection, and formal linkages to decision-making spaces to ensure needs are met, with periodic review of participation modalities and outcomes.

The programme focused on **systems and policy-based, as opposed to issue-based,** initiatives that places adolescents and young people at the heart of processes and resolutions. The initiative goes beyond siloed approaches to child labour, child marriage or children on the streets, and takes on a systemic, whole-child and whole-city approach to safety for children. At its core is addressing the roots of vulnerability that fulfils principles of social justice, democracy and human rights, and in institutionalizing accountability and transparency to children including adolescents.

b. Mandated *Bal Sabhas* (Children's Collectives) in Maharashtra, India

The Child-Friendly Local Governance (CFLG) initiative in Maharashtra, India, was visualized and led by the Social Policy division of UNICEF Maharashtra, in partnership with the state government of Maharashtra. The focus of the case study is on how child participation was mainstreamed in this social protection initiative. It documents the evolution of child participation in governance at the local *gram panchayat* level, including formal requirements for children's participation in gram panchayat annual planning. The child participation process has had a transformative impact on inclusive and responsive planning, both upstream at the state level and downstream at the community level.

UNICEF Maharashtra's strategy was to institutionalize the participation of women and children in local governance, through the *mahila sabhas* (women's committees) and *bal sabhas* (children's collectives), to advocate for bal panchayats (children's committees parallel to local government committees), and to qualitatively influence the children's budget. Through the

facilitation of training and technical support, and continuous capacity building, UNICEF has been instrumental in influencing the evolution of adolescent participation in villages in Maharashtra, both directly and indirectly.

c. Child Participation in Child-friendly Local Government (CFLG) in Nepal

The participation of adolescents and young people in **Nepal** is the strongest among the four case studies, with national to local legal and administrative sanctions in place. Decision-makers also valued such participation for its relevance.

As a relatively young democracy, Nepal has been very open to progressive ideas and to children's rights related advocacy. In 1990, a year before a multi-party parliamentary system was established,[11]Nepal ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). The CSOs of Nepal, the UN, and other national and international agencies have a history of almost four decades of working for children's rights, including child participation. Since the early 1980s, their efforts to establish child clubs, the foundations for children's self-empowerment, have had the support of local administrations and recognition from national governments.

Nepal became a democratic republic in 2008. Children,[12] CSOs, UNICEF and international agencies sustained a campaign for the recognition of children's rights in the 2015 Constitution and, consequently, the rights of children, including their right to participation, were upheld in the Constitution, as part of fundamental rights.[13]The new Act Relating to Children (2018)[14] translated the provisions of the UNCRC and the Constitution into a national legal mandate. The National Child Rights Council of Nepal was set up in 2018 under this Act, as a special body, in accordance with Clause 59 (1) for the protection and promotion of the rights of children.

The Child-Friendly Local Governance (CFLG) programme, introduced across the entire country in 2011, presents an excellent example of promoting and nurturing children's participation in governance on a national scale through *Bal Bhelas* (children's councils).Even though some of the policy and programmatic links are yet to fully emerge, the extent to which the national legislation and policies of Nepal uphold children's right to participation and their engagement in governance is unprecedented in South Asia.

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[11] It had been established briefly in 1951, but replaced by the Panchayat system in 1960 (see <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nepalese_democracy_movement>)

[12] Government of Nepal, *Naya Sambhidan ko Nirman, Bal Adhikar ko Purna Samman*, National Campaign, Government of Nepal, 2008–2009

[13]Part 3: 39. (3) "Every child shall have the right to elementary child development and child participation," *Constitution of Nepal 2015,* Government of Nepal, 2015

[14] Government of Nepal, *Act Relating to Children, 2075 (2018)*, Act Number 23 of the year 2075, Law Commission, 2018 <www.lawcommission.gov.np/en/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/The-Act-Relating-to-Children-2075-2018.pdf>, accessed 23 November 2021

After several iterations, the National CFLG Strategy and its Operational Guidelines were adopted by the Council of Ministers in 2011 and initiated in 34 districts and 14 municipalities by 2012. After the federal system of governance was introduced in 2015, the Operational Guidelines were revised to align with the federal structure. The CFLG Implementation Guidelines[15] were announced in March 2021 as the core policy document for CFLG.

The role of UNICEF in theconceptualization, piloting and mainstreaming CFLG – both in policy and practice – has been outstanding. A flagship programme of UNICEF Nepal, it has an exciting history of bringing together two core strands: children's participation and making local governments accountable to children as citizens. Children, the Consortium of Organisations Working for Child Participation, UNICEF and international agencies like Save the Children have made significant contributions in defining CFLG.

d. Review of the National Youth Policy, Bhutan:

Bhutan's National Youth Policy (NYP) 2011 aims to respond to the needs of young people (which includes older adolescents aged 15-19) in Bhutan by "providing a broad framework within which all stakeholders can contribute comprehensively and in a coordinated manner to youth development".[16]It is strongly rooted in the philosophy of Gross National Happiness[17] and its four pillars of good governance, sustainable socio-economic development, cultural preservation, and environmental conservation.

The review of the NYP 2011 began in 2020, led by the policy's custodians, the Department of Youth and Sports (DYS) of the Ministry of Education[18] supported by UNICEF,[19] employing an inclusive[20] and participatory approach.[21] The *Youth Voices in Youth Matters*[22]participatory component was a contained process of engagement with diverse youth groups, including marginalized groups, designed by the Bhutan Centre for Media and Democracy (BCMD) in collaboration with UNICEF Bhutan.Eleven different youth groups consisting also of marginalized groups were part of the review process. These included those engaging in creative

[15] Ibid. As the document is in Nepali, our reflections about it are based on the unofficial translation of the document, which was translated for our reference by ADAP, UNICEF ROSA

[16] Government of Bhutan, *National Youth Policy*, Department of Youth and Sports, Ministry of Education, 2011, <www.youthpolicy.org/national/Bhutan_2011_National_Youth_Policy.pdf>, accessed 20 August 2021

[17]Describe GNH

[18] BCMD, *Youth Voices: Youth Matters Report*, 2020, p. 14

[19] UNICEF, *Youth People Lead Research to Inform the National Youth Policy in Bhutan*, Case Study Series: Experiences In Adolescent & Youth Engagement, UNICEF Bhutan, Thimphu, December 2020 <www.unicef.org/bhutan/media/2296/file/Bhutan_AY-Engage_Case_Study.pdf>, accessed 8 October 2021

[20] BCMD, *Youth Voices: Youth Matters Report*, 2020, p. 6

[21] UNICEF, *Youth People Lead Research to Inform the National Youth Policy in Bhutan*, 2020

[22] Ibid

arts and sports, monks, nuns, those living with disabilities, in rehabilitation, in conflict with the law, students, those in entertainment [drayang], seeking employment, and LGBTQI groups.

6. The ASPIRE Framework and the Four Case Studies

This section summarizes the analysis of the four case studies against the ASPIRE framework. This enables an understanding of the practical opportunities and challenges of multi-dimensional adolescent participation in governance initiatives.

a. ASPIRE Dimension 1: Agency

Building adolescent agency and ensuring structures through which they can organize and engage with each other is critical to building capacities for participation. Building children's agency has often, in the case study locations, also resulted in the fulfilment of UNCRC article 15 on realizing children's right to forming groups and collectives in the form of child clubs and networks.

Projects such as the Safe City Initiative, the Maharashtra Bal Panchayat process, and Nepal's CFLG were built on the foundations of long-term, intentional strategies that promoted the leadership and agency of adolescents and young people. The community-based children's groups and child protection committees in Madhya Pradesh, the Deepshika (girls') empowerment programme,and training children received from community mobilizers in Maharashtra, initiatives such as Decentralized Action for Children and Women (DACAW),[23]and the historic Hetamalo children's radio programme begun in the early 80s in Nepal (often considered the first child clubs in Nepal and later transforming to child clubs), helped create the foundations of children's voice and engagement with decision-makers.

In Bhutan, while older structures that enabled youth agency[24]such as democracy clubs, the Bhutan Children's Parliament,[25]the "Mini Election Commission" and other structures had largely been suspended, independent, volunteer-driven and CSO-led youth movements such as the Young Bhutan Network (of the Department of Youth and Sports), Young Volunteers in Action (YVia), Team Change, the Bhutan Scouts Association, Pride Bhutan on Gay rights and Youth Advocacy Network continue to engage and raise issues across local and national platforms. However, these groups were not involved in the initial consultative process for the youth policy review.

Children's clubs and other participation mechanisms were also a space that enabled children to understand democratic governance, develop consultative forms of identifying club leadership

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[23] https://un.info.np/Net/NeoDocs/View/4643

[24]<www.bcp.ecb.bt/index.php/map-of-democracy-club>

[25] Ibid

and committees and practice microcosms of democracy, an important learning for these cohorts who are potential future national leaders.

Professional inputs to inform adolescents and enhance their knowledge of their rights and freedoms is critical to build adolescent agency for engaging with public affairs. In Maharashtra, this included a host of children's mobilization programmes through *preraks* and *prerikas* (community mobilizers), guidance through creative, child-friendly booklets on children's vulnerabilities and child rights policies, on the way a gram panchayat is run and make decisions, and on opportunities for influencing local government decisions. This resource kit helps implements Article 17 of the UNCRC on children's right to information.

In many cases, particularly where there had been long-term inputs to building the collective agency of children, children's sense of entitlement and their clarity on accountabilities of duty bearers towards them, as well as their own commitment to raising issues, was clear. It was also a reciprocal and progressive process, where children's confidence to interact and influence results increased when government officials showed positive attitudes towards them.

These processes were also educative and empowering for adolescents who realized their own potential as citizens. They have become active campaigners on child rights, changing community and state narratives, and continuing to campaign for change. This self-empowerment also enabled children's critical awareness in building solidarity and partnerships with marginalized groups not so far involved in participation mechanisms.

b. ASPIRE dimension 2: State/Institutions

In all the case studies, at different levels of intensity and consistency, the State showed commitments to engaging with adolescents and young people for policy and programmes. They did this through policies that strengthened power sharing, child rights policy and procedures, training and study visits.

Power-Sharing

Macro features such as power sharing and devolution of powers also greatly strengthened the capacities of the State at local and sub-national level to implement effective participation mechanisms. Democratic devolution in Maharashtra for example, ran parallel with people's rights-based movements. However, while there has been a focus on devolution in the formative years of the CFLG up to now, this has been in terms of tasks and decisions, as opposed to the decentralization of power and finances.While deliberations and discussion on power sharing and devolution is strong across the case study locations, adequate legislation, policy and practice is yet to be realized.

Policy and Procedures for Participation

In Maharashtra and Nepal, distinct policies and procedures existed for integrating engagement and participation to decision-making processes.In Maharashtra, The Government of Maharashtra's guidelines on child participation in *gram panchayat* plannings[26] requires*bal sabha* participation in annual panchayat planning. Systems to embed participation in district-level development planning was ensured through UNICEF engagement with YASHADA, the administrative training institute of the government. The earlier model of collaboration with CSOs was replaced by partnerships with *gram panchayat*s established through YASHADA's Centre for Community Managed Programming (CCMP), which acted as the key training facilitator. State institutions became responsible for transforming training into implementation, with the support of YASHADA.

The underlying principle throughout the programming has been community – and adolescent – led initiatives, volunteerism, and the creation of social capital. The institutions for children's engagement were formalized at the village level to ensure that they had a platform to discuss issues, and were heard in community decision-making processes.

Although the policies of **Maharashtra** are aligned with the 73rd Amendment (1993) to the Constitution of India, which made the Panchayati Raj system a part of the Indian Constitution,[27] the state has yet to devolve rights and responsibilities to the *panchayats* in full measure, as has been done in States such as Kerala and Karnataka (?), in order to fully realize children's meaningful participation and influence in local spaces.

In Nepal, the CFLG National Strategy, 2011 is an overarching policy document. Although revised in the latest Guidelines,[28] this strategy indicates the state's prevailing position on CFLG from a decade ago and builds in children's participation through minimum indicators requiring that a)children aged 12-18 years participate in decision-making processes of local bodies through formal mechanisms, b)arrangements are in place for an institutional mechanism for hearing the voices of children in local school management committees, c)child clubs are represented in local health management committees, and d)a functional child club network is formed in each Village Development Committee (VDC) and municipality ward. The new 2021 guidelines attempt to

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[26] Eka, *We, the Children – The Making of a Child Friendly Panchayat, An Activity Book for Children,* Department of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj, Maharashtra State Commission for Protection of Child Rights and UNICEF Maharashtra, February 2018

[27]This amendment recognises *panchayats* as units of rural local self-government in India. It gives them a constitutional basis and position. It provides them with certain functional mandates and gives them a significant degree of autonomy for self-reliance and self-sufficiency through fiscal transfers, taxation powers and tax assignments

[28] Ministry of Federal Affairs and General Administration, *Child-Friendly Local Governance Implementation Guidelines*, 2021

specify participatory monitoring and evaluation processes and mechanisms in relation to the CFLG indicators. It also commits to rewarding excellence by stakeholders, including children and adolescents, in realizing CFLG.[29]

In Madhya Pradesh, while child participation is yet to be integrated into policies and systems officially,[30] extensive efforts have been made to engender discussions on participation and build the capacities of government officials to work with children. **In Bhutan**, sector-specific guidelines require listening to children, as in other countries, and the right to participation is embedded in the stakeholder discussions for the Action Plan for the National Youth Policy 2020, and to some extent in the new Child Policy.

Institutionalized Training on Child Rights and Participation

Maharashtra's YASHADA, primarily a training Institute for State officials, takes on capacity building on child participation, and ensures that training is translated to practice in establishing and implementing Bal Sabhas and Bal Panchayats. YASHADA, in partnership with UNICEF has been instrumental in linking children's rights, community participation and bottom-up planning, laying the foundations for CFLG and its emphasis on the formation of bal panchayats. Training has also included institutionalizing capacity building of elected members of local governments and local officials in CFLG. UNICEF Maharashtra has submitted a draft induction policy for elected representatives to cover regular trainings for all, including on child rights, gender, and CFLG.

Study visits

For state officials, study visits have created significant inspiration and insights for the establishment of child participation systems in their own locations. In Maharashtra, this included the visit of government officials to India's State of Kerala, to observe the highly evolved bal panchayat system. These visits enabled transformative perceptions of development that embraced social development as much as infrastructure development. It also led to the inclusion of *bal sabhas* and *bal panchayats* in decision-making, and local task-based training of new officers in adolescent participation. In Nepal, study visits to the Philippines facilitated by

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[29] (1) Inform the stakeholders regarding the minimum indicators related to child-friendly local governance, and monitor the effectiveness of the conducted programme; (2) Develop a mechanism so that the local level voluntarily takes responsibility for managing the child-friendly local governance programmes and engage in a participatory monitoring; (3) Make arrangements to include indicators related to child-friendly local governance while evaluating and monitoring the work executed by the government and non-government bodies; (4) Encourage and duly reward child groups, community bodies, ward, rural municipality or municipality, development partnership organizations and individuals displaying excellent performance while working in the field of child-friendly local governance.

[30] Josantony, Joseph, et al., *Review and Upscaling of Strategies That Emerged From "Safe City Initiative"*, 2018

UNICEF to observe CFLG processes inspired officials to think about development differently and embrace the government functionary roles as duty bearers in a meaningful manner.

c. **ASPIRE Dimension 3: Participation**

This section looks at how the agency of young people, and prepared and equipped institutional structures within state mechanisms resulted in the meaningful participation of children in these four settings. There were proactive positions taken by officials in the initiatives studied to ensure that empowered and informed adolescents and young people actively participated across the mechanisms set up for their engagement, whether at local or national level. How systematic this engagement was depended on the level of sustainability built into participation structures, and skills and capacities of officials.

In Madhya Pradesh, the CSOs agreed that adolescents and young people are beginning to understand the government system and are learning to advocate in a way that yields positive results. As a result of adolescent participation, structures such as Parent Teachers' Associations were engaged in reviewing the priorities of the PTA. Adults also gained confidence about the impact and richness of adolescents' contributions.

In Maharashtra, adolescents observed how officials who had initially failed to pay attention to them gradually paid more attention as the *bal panchayats* were instituted in every village in the relevant Districts. Adolescents explained that they regularly sat in on *bal panchayat* meetings and asserted their collective strength. Officers felt that information and communication technology has assisted in making governance accountable to children including adolescents. Elements such as community complaints boxes also enhanced the linkages between adolescents and local government. The **Maharashtra** example also shows that participation mechanisms became embedded and successful mostly in the long-term. A master trainer observed that it took about five years for *bal panchayats* to really become active and for the *gram panchayat*s to understand that adolescents will eventually become aware citizens. Strengthening these processes will rely to a large extent on continuing and strengthening technical assistance.

In **Nepal,** child clubs have been active for three decades and it is the activism of children that has built the CFLG structures for consultation; Children stated that through the *bal bhela* (children's councils), children of the village are able to discuss issues with government officials. This has enabled child participation in planning; enabled representation in various governmental committees and CBOs; and built child club networks. In some areas, children are also in discussion with forest groups, mothers' groups, and CBOs.

Their participation has prompted adults in the community, including religious leaders, to learn about the rights and entitlements of young people. District and municipal child networks ensure

child-participatory implementation of the CFLG process. Financial allocations of about Nepali Rupees 50,000 – 60,000 per local government also strengthened the participation mechanisms. The study observes that the more long-standing the relationship with children's clubs and CFLG, the more impactful were engagement processes with adolescents.

Since federalization in 2015, however, clarity related to CFLG has been lacking and consultations with children have been discontinued or become tokenistic, lacking opportunities for children to think, discuss, formulate their views, express their opinions, and be heard.

In Bhutan, while the number of adolescents and youth consulted were small, many marginalized groups such as children in monasteries, LGBTQI groups were intentionally targeted. The policy process enabled the agency of groups hitherto unable to influence decisions. Their voices critically informed youth policy priorities, with LGBTQI youth, for example, finding satisfaction in this involvement.

However, the consultative process did not involve major children and youth networks in operation at the time of the process. This limited reach was acknowledged in the BCMD report, attributed to COVID-19 social restrictions and to resource limitations. Going forward, substantial resources are needed to ensure wide-ranging and representative face-to-face consultative processes. To address this, plans of the Department include ensuring the participation of this left out groups in the development of the Action Plans for the implementation of the 2020 NYP. Young people felt that wider participation would have resulted in a greater focus on issues such as job creation and violence against children including adolescents.

Several challenges persist in ensuring the full participation of children in decision-making spaces across the case studies. While CSOs were an important arbiter of this interaction between decision makers and children in cases such as in Madhya Pradesh, this link often depended on their relationship with officials, as opposed to strong accountability mechanisms and processes. Trends were also observed of weakening links between CSOs and participation-based initiatives. Across all settings, COVID-19 was highlighted as a factor that weakened existing participation structures.

d. ASPIRE Dimension 4: Inclusion

The more marginalized and vulnerable adolescent groups are, the greater the necessity to ensure their participation in issues that affect their lives. Ensuring that the most marginalized adolescents and young people participated in these mechanisms was an integral part of the initiatives but implementing this to its fullest remained a challenge due to cultural norms, capacities and resource limitations.

In **Madhya Pradesh, India** the Safe City Initiative placed a clear focus on girls, marginalized adolescents and their communities (including ethnic minorities) in Bhopal. Despite this focus, many still remain outside the reach of the initiative on account of socio-cultural constraints and other pressures. According to adolescents, those who are yet to participate include: younger children, working children (as they are away at work during meetings and activities), and children who are married or are studying. They also mentioned that there are several girls who are not allowed by their families to participate.

Social and cultural determinants that impact inclusive participation included the community marginalization of denotified tribes in Madhya Pradesh where there are social taboos against tribal communities even crossing the path of members of other communities. Institutional biases of police, teachers and other professional groups against denotified tribes were also pervasive. The police treated them as criminals, while the teachers would beat them, make them sit in the dirtiest part of the classroom, or make them do the cleaning. Many complaints about police violence, particularly against members of the DNT communities, were filed by children's groups and reported in the media or through CSO partners.

In Maharashtra, working children did not have the time to participate. The ex-*sarpanch* (head of village)asserted that caste hierarchies were very strong, and he had to struggle to challenge them. The *prerika* also mentioned discrimination against the *pardhi tola* (the settlement of the DNTs formerly classified as 'criminal').[31]Girls expressed their own issues around protection somewhat differently from what experts had to offer, and even from what came out of the Safe Communities Mapping.

These observations of exclusion in Maharashtra are supported by a 2021 study[32] which reported that the needs of children from marginalized sections were not prioritized in Maharashtra when budgets were prepared. Children from marginalized groups were more likely to drop out of school early, because they and their families were excluded from welfare schemes with low budgets. The stunting levels among children from Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes were much higher than for children from other social and ethnic groups. Caste-based violence was frequently experienced by children from Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes in schools in the form of corporal punishment, bullying and verbal abuse. In addition, the study reported that children with disabilities also faced social exclusion and were often discriminated against. There was less likelihood of children from these communities being heard through the *bal sabha* and *bal panchayat* platforms.

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[31]*Pardhi*s are a tribe that was notified as being a 'criminal' tribe during the colonial period and de-notified after independence, but the discrimination against them is still visible, evidenced by the fact that they have to live in a *tola* (settlement) outside the village

[32]Singh, Chandrika, and Anuradha Nair, *Child Responsive Budgeting for Maharashtra – A Way Forward*, June 2021

In Nepal, all children in the local community are encouraged to be part of the clubs. Those who are not are encouraged to participate. Children's clubs also took proactive measures to engage with families where families discouraged adolescents, particularly girls, from participating in the CFLG process. Some street-connected children have also been able to raise their issues before concerned authorities, with CSO facilitation, when the situation demanded. Girls from the Balika Peace Home, a transit centre run by Child Workers in Nepal (CWIN), have been able to play a leading role in ward and municipal child advisory committees, after initiating dialogue with the respective local governments. However, efforts to ensure inclusion are ad hoc, rather than systemic.

Inclusion of marginalized groups, and marginalized opinions was not without its challenges in Nepal. Raising issues that were controversial still posed problems for children including adolescents. Challenges of inclusion included the poor participation of working children in clubs, who were often engaged in exploitative work.

A review of child clubs in 2012[33] expressed concern of the exclusion of the most marginalized children. It is not clear if children on the street, Bhutanese refugee children in Nepal, or those in care environments are currently involved in the CFLG programme, although advocacy efforts are underway to include them. Sanjog Thakuri, a commentator and former child club member, also observes how there is a clear gender divide in roles played by men and women in children's clubs networks, with exclusively male leadership and no inclusion of Dalit[34] representatives, or women.[35]

Proactive measures were often taken by civil society organizations, UNICEF and government to address challenges in including the most marginalized. In the Safe City Initiative, one CSO, Uday, had learnt that, in order to encourage more participation, they had to engage in activities that were meaningful to other adolescents and youth, strengthened through continued discussion and engagement.

The SCI, especially with the reach and thrust that CSOs such as Muskaan brought in, started to focus on specific police stations in terms of interventions, training and sensitization, with the backing of senior officials and advocacy by UNICEF to ensure that the need of marginalized groups were addressed empathetically. This has put pressure on the police to respond and be more vigilant, creating decreases in policy violence (see Resolutions section).

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[33]Ratna, et al., *Strategic Review of Support to Child Clubs*, 2012

[34]A marginalized caste group

[35] Thakuri, S., *Feminist Analysis of Nepali Child Rights Movement*, National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, Kathmandu, 2021

The root causes of barriers to equity lie in pre-existing prejudices. More exposure to, and understanding of, the challenges of marginalized adolescents such as those from rural and tribal communities, girls and those with disabilities and so on, and acknowledgement of the capacities of these groups, helps us appreciate their own insights on their problems, and the way they see solutions. Instructional materials that specifically include the context of discrimination due to caste, gender, tribal status and disability will better enable marginalized groups to voice their agency as a primary need.

e. ASPIRE Dimension 5: Resolutions

This section looks at how far resolutions, or decisions, are impacted through adolescent participation. Across the four case studies, the ability of adolescents to inform decisions varied depending on the rigour of participation and decision-making structures and the strength of accountability mechanisms, including that of budgeting and monitoring and evaluation. However, the impact they had on decisions in the long and short term were clear across the initiatives.

In the Safe City Initiative in **Madhya Pradesh**, children had access to several decision-making spaces, most often at the local level and occasionally at the state level or departmental/judicial level, and clear changes in decisions and actions have been visible. For instance, adolescent groups have frequently flagged the issue of school enrolment and successfully taken it up with education officials. Tribal and working children and adolescent groups have intervened to stop child marriage and child labour and reported anti-social activities in their locality (at the risk of being treated as informers). They have also protested against police harassment and violence, especially against children from Denotified Tribes (DNTs).Consequently, over the last two years, reports of police violence against children have decreased, as corroborated both by UNICEF Madhya Pradesh and Muskaan.[36] Adolescents also pointed out that while earlier, repeated visits to the same office were required to get an issue heard and be addressed, that now, greater recognition of their identities as youth groups result in swifter solutions.

Yet, resolutions to certain issues were yet a challenge, according to adolescents. These included decisions around a) issues considered sensitive or controversial in communities such as violence against children, need for police patrol, repeated arrests of children from DNT groups, harassment by thugs, street harassment and selling liquor near schools, b) decisions that required higher level action such as on the availability of food grains, construction of community halls, and so on.

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[36] Corroborated by UNICEF Madhya Pradesh in a personal communication (WhatsApp message), 3 November 2021

In Maharashtra, clear transformations were visible as a result of children's engagement where social development was getting priority, as much as infrastructure development. Issues children raised were included in gram panchayat plans, and children felt heard in gram panchayat meetings.

Yet, there were challenges in resourcing these priorities. Officials and community mobilizers mentioned that funding decisions went up the chain to the district level, sometimes to the collector and even the secretariat, and there was a long wait for children's issues to be addressed. Adolescents said that while 10% of the State budget was meant to be reserved for women and children, there was no mechanism through which they could monitor the distribution of funds. Deficits in the gender budget were also highlighted in Maharashtra. All the other discussants agreed that financial powers had to be devolved to the *gram panchayat* level, which had not been done so far. Those with vested interests also became uneasy about higher allocations for children's rights and lower allocations for civil works.

In Nepal, while the former CFLG mechanisms required a minimum budget for children of 15% of the local government budget where CFLG has been declared, this requirement has now been repealed. Respondents said that more clarity is required in the new iteration of the CFLG in relation to the systems for decision-making and accountability in place that ensured accountability to child club members. This is critical for the planned national coverage of CFLG, which will involve thousands of children in over 700 local government constituencies.

In Bhutan, according to respondents, the youth policy review process enabled adolescent and youth perspectives and experience as service users to be heard and be considered, including establishing the relevant opening hours for youth centres, and highlighting the mismatch between skills and education and existing livelihoods opportunities.[37]Chencho Lhamu, Executive Director of BCMD, also reported how the process and young people's voices had led to mental health being placed more strongly on the youth policy agenda.[38]

The lack of coordination and collaboration between agencies is fracturing efforts at meaningful implementation of decisions. One of the intentions of the National Youth Policy (NYP) is to create structures and processes through which youth can impact on decisions that affect their lives. It is reassuring that the proposed NYP and Action Plan have been partly shaped by advocacy by youth groups, opening the space once again for recommendations by youth to influence decisions that affect their lives.

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[37]Ngawang Rigsar, BCMD, interview (online) with CWC, June 2021
[38]Chencho Lhamu, Executive Director, BCMD, interview (online) with CWC, June 2021

Drawbacks in translating adolescent inputs to results existed across the board. These included bureaucracies that prevented organic responses, siloed approaches to work that made it difficult to connect the issue to the solution, the lack of capacities to direct child and adolescent concerns to relevant authorities when "heard" in spaces that are unable to effect decisions, and children's growing agency and confidence to participate that was not often reciprocated because of closed governance systems. Officials across the case studies also partially attributed this to the inability of local level structures to inform decision-making at higher levels. Lack of budgets to enact resolutions also came up regularly, particularly as a result of welfare cuts.

7. Additional Findings

a. Civil Society Plays a Vital Role in Enabling Meaningful Adolescent Participation

Across all case studies, civil society organizations (CSOs) have played a major role in encouraging the formation of children's groups, strengthening capacities, and advocating for spaces for the participation of adolescents and young people. There was clear evolution from former approaches of 'doing something for children' to advancing children's protagonism and their participation in governance.

CSOs have supported children and their communities to optimize opportunities for engagement across programmes, especially in India and Nepal, where there has been a long history of their engagement. This has resulted in the vibrant response of adolescents to child-friendly initiatives. However, in some cases, CSO roles appear to diminish by design after the pilot phase, and this seems to have adversely affected adolescent participation, especially as the plans for expansion are being developed. In most cases, there is a further limitation that CSOs have not been able to fully apply child rights-based participation to traditional programme models.

In Madhya Pradesh, access to public decision-making spaces was not the same for all CSOs, as they have different constituencies and approaches. However, UNICEF has been able to bring some level of integration between CSO and state initiatives. CSOs have made optimal use of UNICEF's leveraging ability for advocacy at the state level in favour of children's rights. The role of CSOs in creating a mutual synergy between them and UNICEF on behalf of the children is appreciable.

In Maharashtra, before UNICEF linked directly with villages/communities, local-level work was facilitated by community-based CSOs, the Master Trainers' Alliance and those working for political decentralization. The Resource and Support Centre for Development, a network of over 161 core partners from regional networks, women groups, cooperatives, NGOs, community-based organizations(CBOs) and people's movements, which was associated with the earlier phase of child participation, have done important work on prioritizing women's governance in

Panchayati Raj institutions and mobilizing people on issues of food security and violence against girls.[39]

Their approach and skill set in facilitating children is quite unique. They have played an important role in both laying the ground for CFLG and supporting children and their communities to make good use of the opportunities created by CFLG mechanisms. While master trainers and *prerak*s/*prerika*s were trained on child rights, and implemented this training to the best of their capacities during CFLG, there was a limitation imposed by the absence of support from CSOs, which have historically encouraged strong discourse and action around child rights.

In Nepal, CSOs have observed how conceptual clarity related to children's agency and citizenship needs to be strengthened in local government representatives and functionaries. A member of the CFLG Forum has observed in a press note that while local representatives have been progressive to declare their areas 'child friendly' that their competencies need to be strengthened in implementing CFLG. It also noted a considerable gap in capacity building programmes targeting policy makers, child club members and relevant stakeholders.[40]

b. Adolescent Participation Strengthens Holistic, Convergent Programming for Adolescents

Adolescents raise issues in ways that transcend traditional programme silos. For them, their education, protection, financial and other vulnerabilities and aspirations are connected and inseparable. Holistic programming that links adolescents' social, economic and political realities and vulnerabilities is essential in order to bring effective and sustained change for them. Adolescent participation and voices in the case studies encouraged programming staff to better ensure collaboration among multiple internal sectors towards addressing the diverse issues raised by children. While partners working with children have begun with theme-specific initiatives in child protection, social protection and so on, they now take on other issues and are able to better refer issues they cannot address to relevant authorities and other stakeholders.

In Madhya Pradesh, the UNICEF CSO partner Muskaan, for instance, tried to get tribal children admitted into formal schools, but children communicated how they felt alienated by the language and textbooks, and how they faced prejudice from teachers. The organization realized that issues of malnutrition, gender and ethnic violence also had to be addressed, together with school enrolment, to sustain their education. Similarly, Aarambh, another CSO partner, began capacity building for the self-employment of street children, while training them on their legal rights as child labourers. Aarambh's focus was also directed to inadequate water and sanitation

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[39] Resource and Support Centre for Development, 'Journey', RSCD, 2016, <www.rscdgovernance.org/index.php/journey/>, 8 October 2021

[40] Khanal, Ashok, *Press Note*, National CFLG Forum, undated

by the children. CSOs have also connected children's issues to community issues and have been able to better appreciate the links between education and empowerment. Linkages have also improved between children's issues and government schemes.

c. Adolescent Participation Shifts the Focus to Social Welfare and Social Justice

The case studies document how perceptions of development have shifted from that of infrastructure development and delivery to meaningful social development initiatives as a result of engagement with children, and understanding issues through their eyes. The establishment of child budgets and a focus on child and youth rights in identifying planning priorities is clear in all cases.

8. Key Lessons

Lesson 1. Wherever opportunities have been offered to adolescents to participate in the processes of governance, the expression of their agency and protagonism has been remarkable, their engagement with governance invigorating, and, in some cases, the development outcomes transformative.

Lesson 2. Adolescent participation has been greatly facilitated through efforts by CSOs, trainers, frontline workers and local governments supported by UNICEF, to inform, train, build capacity, and organize adolescents.

Lesson 3. Advocacy, policy guidance and capacity building by UNICEF at all levels of government have paved the way for adolescents to collectively present their views and ask for accountability.

Lesson 4. The enthusiastic participation by adolescents has also had positive impacts on their families, elders, communities, CSO workers, government functionaries and elected representatives, at personal and inter-personal levels.

Lesson 5. If officials are to support the empowerment of adolescents, they themselves need to feel empowered within their institutions. Many of the structures reviewed supported the capacities of officials to work with adolescents and young people, and also recognized their contributions through reward schemes.

9. Good practices

Practice 1. The recognition of child participation as a core area of rights-based programming requiring professional inputs and explicitly enhancing the capacities of UNICEF staff and partners in child participation paved the way for successful programming and results.

Practice 2. The integration of adolescent participation into child protection, social protection and governance efforts through mapping, research, campaigns, and policy reviews; as well as building alliances of adolescents organized at multiple levels of governance, including building community support for these, strengthened adolescent empowerment.

Practice 3. Accessible and simple capacity building courses for adolescents for sharing information, principles, and good practices, when they are widely disseminated through training of trainers and peer learning, served to build capacities, organize groups, and provide pathways for participation and engagement by adolescent groups.

Practice 4. A holistic approach that connects children's wellbeing and development to the concerns of their families and communities about issues of livelihood, shelter, citizenship, safety, welfare, education, health, transport, and all other social and civic services empowered all sections of society.

Practice 5. Engaging with all levels of government to persuade officials, functionaries and agencies of the importance of adolescent participation and to build their capacities to uphold children's rights provided opportunities for decision makers to engage with children and to be accountable to them.

Practice 6. Building the capacities of institutions in ensuring adolescent and youth participation across the programme cycle and at various levels of planning equipped institutions and made them conducive to community and adolescent-engaged planning and provision.

Practice 7. Rural and urban local government structures were strengthened and leveraged to promote and advance adolescent participation, through training, exposure visits and model building.

10. General Recommendations

The following are minimally revised general recommendations from the report for overall UNICEF and partner programming, and for adolescent and youth groups. Detailed recommendations for each case study have been offered in the full report.

Recommendation 1. Adolescent groups must inform themselves; organize democratically within; build linkages; include members of vulnerable and marginalized communities as agents and partners; carve out structures for debate and advocacy; and learn to use development and humanitarian policy platforms as an opportunity to influence policy and governance.

Recommendation 2. Civil society organizations should support adolescent groups to construct processes for greater participation and democratic leadership; help them to build capacities and alliances; and share and nurture collective learning, visioning and action. They also need to democratize digital technology for participation, as this is creating another inequity in relation to participation and voice in governance. CSOs should also ensure that current policy processes, decision-making timelines for relevant authorities, and political and social interests are shared and discussed with adolescents through existing club and network structures.

Recommendation 3. Central/federal governments must uphold international and national commitments to adolescent participation; ensure policy commitments to realizing participation rights; provide public institutions with support for wider inclusion and monitoring; implement legal instruments for the devolution of governance to local levels and uphold the principle of subsidiarity where decisions are made at the lowest level possible. Participatory disaster mitigation measures are also required at all levels. Adequate resources must be allocated at the appropriate levels to realize these agendas.

Recommendation 4. Provincial governments and their partner institutions have to strengthen the understanding, empathy and capacity of their functionaries to assist child-friendly participation processes and structures; suitably recognize and reward their frontline workers; evolve laws, guidelines and safeguards for promoting adolescent participation in governance; provide for devolution to the lowest tiers of governance; and sustain a continuous process of evaluation and review.

Recommendation 5. Local governments need to demand the devolution of power and finances; build more structures in which adolescents can participate; and build convergence in their procedures and policies so that the participatory expression of the needs of adolescents and their communities can be met in the shortest time possible. In addition, local governments should develop indicators and processes for social/children's monitoring and the continued participation of adolescents and young people in creating communities that are inclusive.

Recommendation 6. UNICEF should celebrate what has been achieved and continue to strengthen the ability of its thematic sectors to embed informed adolescent participation in policies, programming, technical assistance and policy advocacy by strengthening the capacities of staff, governments and stakeholders, including communities, for enhancing adolescent participation in decision making.

Recommendation 7. UNICEF must continue to invest in systematic and intentional initiatives to build the agency of adolescents to be informed and capacitated participants in governance processes across goal areas. The four UNICEF supported initiatives here, which need to be

sustained, also provide examples of policies and practices to be adopted after suitable modification.

Recommendation 8. UNICEF must also develop operational guidelines, and support their implementation, for strengthening institutional capacities, with specific guidance on adolescent participation in policy processes, planning, implementation, information provision, budgeting, review and evaluation, institutional governance, and capacity building regimes. The 'Claiming Citizenship' ASPIRE framework (agency, state, participation, inclusion and resolutions) may be included as the lens that governs the implementation of the operational guidelines. Investing in enhancing the potential of youth service officers, youth workers (a professional category involved in youth empowerment), and ministries holding portfolios and liaising for youth, children and women's issues to mainstream adolescent participation can bring lasting impact.

Recommendation 9. UNICEF must create platforms for adolescent and youth participation that are connected to decision-making spaces and invest in developing resources for building the capacities of adolescent and youth groups.

Recommendation 10. UNICEF should strengthen the capacities of social workers, health workers, community workers, frontline workers, and decision makers in health, education, child protection, water and sanitation, climate change and social protection to enable adolescent participation.

Recommendation 11. UNICEF must invest in strengthening local governance, both urban and rural, and through these structures, develop models for adolescent and youth participation.

Recommendation 12.UNICEF must ensure participation strategies that include marginalized groups and voices. Structures and mechanisms, including translation and transport facilities, and data services to bridge the participation gap need to be in place.

This is a historic moment for UNICEF to strengthen the participation pillar across sectoral areas and to create a long-term strategy to embed rights-based programming principles and participation principles across all goal areas to transform programming and improve results for adolescents.

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