

CLAIMING CITIZENSHIP

ADOLESCENTS PARTICIPATING IN GOVERNANCE IN SOUTH ASIA



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THEY PAVE THE WAY...

“I am so grateful to be part of CFLG. I have learnt a lot and built on the past experiences of child clubs. In the entire country, every district should be CFLG compliant.

There should be spaces for all children to speak up without fear.”

*Rachana Bhusal, President,
Municipality Child Club,
Nawalparasi, Nepal*



PURPOSE:



Good practise documentation and praxis-based inputs to:

- Mainstream adolescent participation in governance
- Develop capacities – of young people and adults - to integrate adolescent engagement and participation in different sectors
- Advocate, promote and strengthen adolescent participation in sectoral programming of organisations and institutions

METHODOLOGY

Selection of four case studies for detailed documentation

- **Safe City Initiative, Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh, India**
- **Child Friendly Local Governance and Planning, Maharashtra, India**
- **Child Friendly Local Governance (CFLG), Nepal**
- **Adolescent and Youth participatory review of the National Youth Policy, Bhutan**

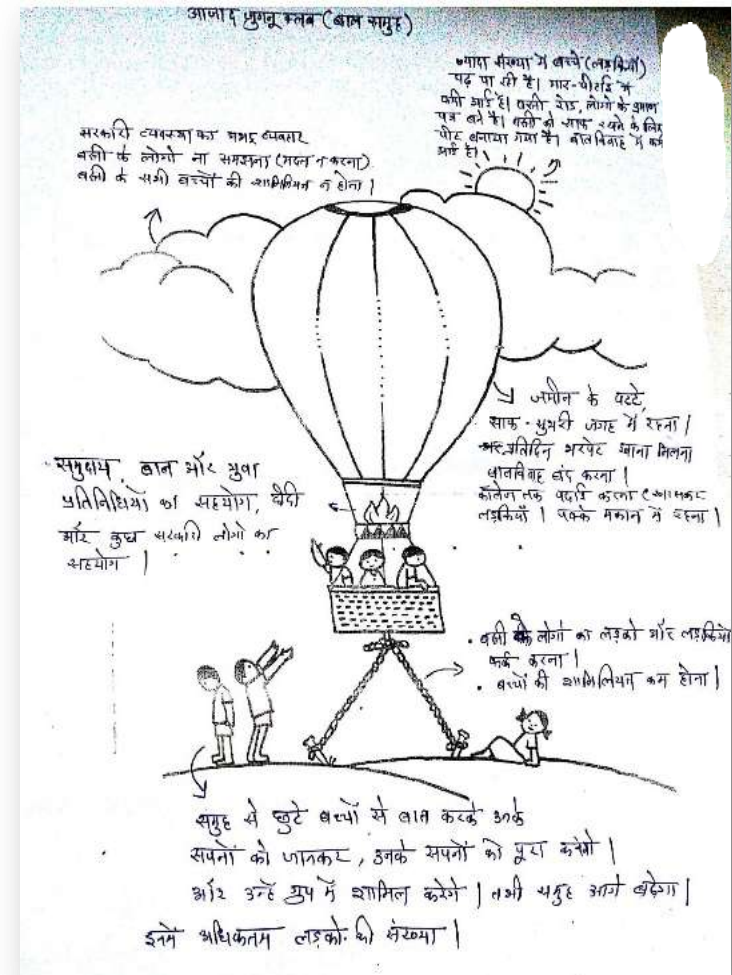
APPROACH: FOCUS ON

- Most vulnerable adolescents, their empowerment and agency
- Interface between rights of adolescents and responsibilities and duties of adults
- Laws and policies in relation to adolescent participation in governance
- Accountability of local, national and federal structures to adolescent participation
- Roles of CSOs and UNICEF: Past, present and way-forward



METHODOLOGY

- Analysis of policy and legal framework related to adolescent participation in governance: international, national & state levels
- Review of historic reports and process documentation
- Online consultations with adolescents/adolescent led groups – discussions & interactive tools



METHODOLOGY



- Online consultations with relevant Ministries/Departments/UNICEF sectors, partners and CSOs including frontline workers
- **Conversations with 43 adolescents, 32 government officials, 20 civil society representatives and 10 UNICEF staff: focus group and individual engagement**
- Micro and macro review; analysis and recommendations

RISKS

- Raising expectations of adolescents
- Dealing with governance structures already under stress
- Different perceptions of governance
- Potential for conflicting ideologies and interests within adolescent groups
- Varying levels of clarity around adolescent development and participation principles



LIMITATIONS

- Covid imposed restrictions on direct field engagement
- Experiential understanding of the contexts limited
- Influence of intermediaries including in the selection of all participants – adolescents, officials, CSOs etc
- Restriction on group consultative processes – including Covid
- Limited access to internet and interactive technology in the communities



OUTCOMES

- Review of the **nature and structures of decision-making platforms**, where adolescents are encouraged to take part in decision-making process
- Exploration of **capacities which enable adolescents** to have optimum impact in informing and **influencing policy level** decision-making processes – over and beyond ‘being heard’
- Identification of **potential platforms and way forward**



FRAMEWORK:ASPIRE

Agency: Young people's agency enhanced to ensure their role as leaders, co-creators and influencers; their capacities to participate strengthened; providing services, policy & information to aid their meaningful participation; ensuring agency and protagonism of excluded groups in decision making

State: The State and duty-bearers have mandated commitments and/or systematic processes and mechanisms for the participation of adolescents in all programme and policy matters affecting them

Participation: Young people's agency and state commitments bring rights holders and duty bearers together for collaborative, supported adolescent and youth leadership, and young people's opinions and aspirations are considered seriously, and youth dissent is acknowledged and constructively addressed.

Inclusion: All young people, particularly the most marginalised are prioritised in participatory processes

Resolution: Resolutions/decisions are informed by young people's aspirations and opinions as relevant and appropriate

SAFE CITY INITIATIVE IN BHOPAL, MADHYA PRADESH, INDIA

- Anchored in Child Protection
- By design energising urban local governance
- Engagement with highly vulnerable children – such as children from de-notified communities, socially and economically poorest communities in urban setting
- Capacity building of government officials on adolescent participation
- Adolescent-led protection assessments/audits
- Crucial role played by CSOs, Anganwadi workers and other Front Line Workers
- Mechanisms to link children to local governments through community based children groups and child protection committees – with effective information management

SAFE CITY INITIATIVE, BHOPAL, MADHYA PRADESH, INDIA

- Creating platforms for children to directly communicate with decision makers from local to state level – violence reduced, roads built, identity papers received...
- Facilitating convergence between multiple departments – including DWCD, Police and Revenue
- Has increasingly gained political support and likely to expand to many other cities



CHILD FRIENDLY LOCAL GOVERNANCE AND PLANNING, MAHARASHTRA, INDIA



- Anchored in Social Policy Sector
- Supported by Constitutional provisions & Maharashtra's State Child Policy
- Harmonised with rural decentralised governance and bottom-up planning
- Builds on history of children's participation in communities supported by CSOs through programmes such as Deepshika
- Multiple capacity enhancement programmes for adolescents contributing to their agency and empowerment

CHILD FRIENDLY LOCAL GOVERNANCE AND PLANNING, MAHARASHTRA, INDIA

- Mechanisms to link children to local governments through community-based children's groups (Bal Sabhas) and their representatives (Bal Panchayats)
- Mandated Bal Sabhas
- Budget allocation ear-marked at the state level for issues related to children and women – a shift from an infrastructure focus to a child rights focus
- State's capacity building programme joining hands in multiple-tier training & mainstreaming for creation of child friendly panchayats

CHILD FRIENDLY LOCAL GOVERNANCE (CFLG), NEPAL

- History of active children's clubs supported by CSOs – and crucial presence of former child club members across sectors
- History of Decentralised Action for Children and Women (DACAW) and the Local Government Community Development Programme (LGCDP)
- Children's participation enshrined in the Constitution; CFLG included in the National Children's Policy: Unique example of a model with a national level mandate
- Progression in harmony with rural democratic decentralisation – and ward level responsibilities

CHILD FRIENDLY LOCAL GOVERNANCE (CFLG), NEPAL



- National CFLG Guidelines are both expansive and in-depth. Includes monitoring indicators for child friendly panchayats
- Former members of children's clubs active in National CFLG processes building on organisational memory
- With new structure of governance local governments have resources which may be utilised for CFLG

ADOLESCENT AND YOUTH PARTICIPATORY REVIEW OF THE NATIONAL YOUTH POLICY, BHUTAN

- Anchored by the Department of Youth and Sports of the Ministry of Education
- Democracy in Bhutan rooted in Gross National Happiness - Youth Policy mandate to contribute to it
- Adolescent and youth participation process facilitated by Bhutan Center for Media and Democracy – building on the history of the Youth Initiative Programme
- ‘Youth Voices in Youth Matters’ review exercise – a concerted effort to include young people from a variety of backgrounds and interest groups

ADOLESCENT AND YOUTH PARTICIPATORY REVIEW OF THE NATIONAL YOUTH POLICY, BHUTAN

- CFLG is at a nascent stage – with potential for youth participation in governance at the local level
- Young people very welcoming of opportunities to be part of participatory processes in all matters affecting them



INCREASED ADULT ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSFORMATION



- When legal and policy provisions support adolescent engagement and participation
- When adolescents are equipped with relevant information (policy & processes), critical thinking and advocacy skills
- When adults are committed & capable and take initiative to support adolescent engagement and empowerment

INCREASED ADULT ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSFORMATION

- When adolescents and officials are connected by design through policy making and programming
- When adolescents are able to hold decision makers accountable – including through robust complaints mechanisms



STRATEGIES FOR EXPANSION



- Piloting to mainstreaming: Expansion of geographical reach and access to higher tiers of governance
- Facilitation for empowerment of young people
- Stakeholder capacity building
- Policy provisions
- Programmatic provisions
- Budgetary provisions

GOING FORWARD

- Early intervention: Sectoral leadership
- Pilot setting: Contextual clarity
- Enhancing Agency of adolescents and young people: Processes & structures
- Mainstreaming: Policy, programme implementation support, capacity building; organic and dynamic
- Convergence of sectoral interventions within and outside UNICEF, CSOs etc
- Phasing out: Ensuring sustainability





MAY THEY INSPIRE..

