Little Voices: Child Participation in Programmes for Conflict Affected Children

By Clare Back, January 2013

Supervisor: Simon Fisher

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the MA degree in Development and Emergency Practice, Oxford Brookes University

Centre for Development and Emergency Practice, Oxford Brookes University, Headington Campus, Oxford OX3 OBP UK.
Figure 2 Poem 'Yearning for Peace' by a child in Uganda, Save the Children Norway.

POEM

yearning for peace.

"peace, peace, peace.
where are you exactly?
can you meet us please?
we need you in our land.

we are yearning for you peace
we pray for you to come,
though your door is very narrow
children...

to release your suffering

strong people, are standing at
your door
blocking our ways, the young one
and yet we all need you peace.

peace, peace, peace.
inspire the strong men.
government and the rebels.
to have mercy on the innocent children."
ABSTRACT

Child participation is a concept which has been included in humanitarian standards and practised by agencies for years. However, there is no universal framework for involving children in humanitarian work and it is often approached with reluctance, both by humanitarian staff and by children’s communities.

This dissertation demonstrates the relevance of child participation in enhancing children’s protection during conflict, as well the impacts of participation on psychosocial healing and peacebuilding. The research draws upon key informant interviews, academic literature and grey literature to situate child participation within the context of children’s rights and organisational accountability. Next, participation and the benefits and challenges for children and their involvement are explored, along with the ways in which obstacles can be overcome. Children’s participation has the potential to help children to make sense of the changing context that they are in, whilst empowering them to claim their rights as human beings. Moreover, participation can ensure the inclusion of otherwise marginalised children, whilst providing them with an avenue to express their protection concerns to those who are in a position to respond. However, a lack of staff capacity, attitudes, fears for children’s safety and armed groups may act to prevent meaningful participation, whilst also endangering children. As a result, ways of working with children to ensure their safety must be understood and adopted. Moreover, participation should be ethical and avoid promoting existing patterns of discrimination.

In order to paint a picture of how the research applies to reality, two case studies are analysed. The first case study demonstrates the potential impacts of a lack of child participation, while the second offers and insight into participation in practice. The case studies are as follows:

- The release and reintegration of girl soldiers in Sierra Leone, UNICEF and partners
- The Save the Children UK Child Protection Programme in DRC

Stepping back, this dissertation then returns to reflect on what participation and protection really mean in the context of the child, before considering when and how children can be involved amidst a conflict. Relevant tools and approaches are outlined, with their applicability in practice.

Whilst children are actors with their own sense of agency, they also have specific vulnerabilities which must be responded to. This dissertation emphasises that in order for
children’s participation to be practised systematically and at scale, it is necessary for a broader culture shift to occur among communities, agencies and governments. Moreover, a shared definition and understanding of participation would act to minimise negative implications, whilst promoting best practice.

Cover photo

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STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY AND ETHICS APPROVAL

Statement of Originality

This thesis is the result of my own independent work/investigation, except where otherwise stated. Other sources are acknowledged by explicit references.

Signed Clare Back (candidate) Date: 19/01/2013

I hereby give consent for my thesis, if accepted, to be available for photocopying and for inter-library loan, and for the title and summary to be made available to outside organisations.

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Statement of Ethics Review Approval

This dissertation involved human participants. A Form E1BE for each group of participants, showing ethics review approval, has been attached to this dissertation as an appendix.

Please Note

Any views or opinions expressed in this dissertation are entirely my own and do not necessarily reflect those of Save the Children UK or their staff. Effort has been made in ensuring accuracy in the case studies; however they may not provide an up-to-date and objective representation of Save the Children’s and UNICEF’s programmes.
Before introducing this dissertation, I would like to introduce myself and the journey that led and inspired me to embark on this piece of work. I first realised my passion for working with children living in difficult circumstances whilst volunteering on an outreach programme for children living with HIV in Nairobi, Kenya in 2008. I then undertook a degree in Sociology and Third World Development. During this degree I was lucky enough to experience a field course to the Gambia through which I met some Sierra Leonean refugees. They prompted me to seek to understand what life is like for children growing up in fragile contexts.

I continued to study and reflect on the work that NGOs and humanitarian agencies were doing to support children whilst writing my undergraduate dissertation on the use of children in armed conflict. These experiences consequently led me to study this MA and further my field experience in India and Cambodia, and ultimately to writing this dissertation.

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**LIST OF ACRONYMS**

AFRC  Armed Forces Revolutionary Council

APC  All People’s Congress

CDF  Civil Defence Forces

CPWG  Child Protection Working Group

DDR  Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration

DRC  The Democratic Republic of the Congo

FDLR  Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda

HAP  Humanitarian Accountability Partnership

IASC  The Inter-Agency Standing Committee

IFRC  International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

IOM  International Organisation for Migration

M23  March 23 Movement

NGO  Non Governmental Organisation

PWG  Psychosocial Working Group

PTSD  Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

PSEA  Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse

RUF  Revolutionary United Front

SEA  Sexual Exploitation and Abuse

UN  United Nations

UNCRC  United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

UNHRC  United Nations Human Rights Commission

UNHCR  United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

UNICEF  United Nations Children’s Fund
DEFINITIONS

For the purpose of this dissertation, these words have the following definitions:

Child Protection: Child protection, as defined by the Child Protection Working Group is: "the prevention of and response to abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence against children." ¹

Child soldier: “A child associated with an armed force or armed group refers to any person below 18 years of age who is, or who has been, recruited or used by an armed force or armed group in any capacity, including but not limited to children, boys and girls, used as fighters, cooks, porters, spies or for sexual purposes.” ²

Conflict: This dissertation takes conflict to mean violent conflict. Conflict, as defined by the Conflict Sensitivity Consortium, is: “The result of parties disagreeing and acting on the basis of perceived incompatibilities,” while violent conflict expands this definition to mean: “Resorting to psychological or physical force to resolve a disagreement.”³

Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR): DDR is defined by the United Nations as:

“Disarmament is the collection, documentation, control and disposal of small arms, ammunition, explosives and light and heavy weapons from combatants and often from the civilian population.

Demobilization is the formal and controlled discharge of active combatants from armed forces and groups, including a phase of “reinsertion” which provides short-term assistance to ex-combatants.

Reintegration is the process by which ex-combatants acquire civilian status and gain sustainable employment and income. It is a political, social and economic process with an open time-frame, primarily taking place in communities at the local level.”⁴

DDR is the phrase used to describe the formal programmes through which child soldiers reintegrate into their communities. It is used in this dissertation as it was the phrase commonly used during and following the conflict in Sierra Leone. However, it should be noted that since the DDR programmes in Sierra Leone, programmes specifically for children have been re-termed as ‘release and reintegration’ programmes.⁵

Psychosocial: In line with the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Reference Group for Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergency Settings, ‘psychosocial’ is defined as:

“The term ‘psychosocial’ denotes the inter-connection between psychological and social processes and the fact that each continually interacts with and influences the other. [...] the composite term mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) is used to describe any type

of local or outside support that aims to protect or promote psychosocial well-being and/or prevent or treat mental disorder.”

**Sexual Violence:** The World Health Organisation defines sexual violence as: "any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advances, or acts to traffic a person’s sexuality, using coercion, threats of harm or physical force, by any person regardless of relationship to the victim, in any setting, including but not limited to home and work.”

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1. INTRODUCTION

![Image](image_url)

Figure 3 Child at a refugee camp in Mogadishu, Somalia, UNICEF

This chapter will begin by introducing the topic of this dissertation, outlining the background, problem and rationale. Next, it will highlight the aims and objectives of this dissertation, along with the key research questions and limitations. Finally, an outline of the consequent chapters will be given.

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1.1 Background, Problem and Rationale

Child participation is a concept and a practice which has been researched and implemented through different projects across the world for years. However, although it is recognised that involving children in the decisions and actions that affect their lives is a positive shift in programming, and a step forward in the attainment in children’s rights, it is not always so straightforward in practice. There is no universal methodology or model for child participation and its utilisation throughout the programme cycle, by its nature it is dependent on: the children that are involved, the issues being addressed and the context in which an organisation is working. As a result, participation has not been mainstreamed in practice by the majority of agencies, but is instead adopted in an ad hoc manner: “Despite many significant initiatives with and for young people, their protection is not consistently prioritized in emergencies and postconflict, and good practices are not widespread.” Furthermore one of the most difficult contexts to involve children in making lasting changes in their lives is in areas of conflict and instability, and such contexts further compound the challenges that are found in child protection programming. As a result, child participation during and following a conflict is a prospect which has often been considered with uncertainty.

Between 1995 and 2005, one million children around the world were orphaned as a result of conflict, six million children have been seriously injured or have a disability and twenty five million have been displaced. It could be argued that today, more than ever, children are among the most affected of those experiencing conflict. A survey of children in Rwanda found that 96 percent of those interviewed had been witness to direct violence and 80 percent had lost a family member. The role of children in armed conflict is complex and while children tend to be the most vulnerable population affected, they often are also among the main protagonists in a conflict. As a result of growing up during conflict, children may find it difficult to see a constructive place for them in their society.

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Furthermore, many children, particularly those fighting within armed groups may have learnt to adopt violence and as a survival strategy and as a means to support themselves.\textsuperscript{15} This dissertation will explore the concept of meaningful participation and will seek to discover how it can change the lives of children experiencing and recovering from conflict, as well as the futures of their communities. Through meaningful participation, children can have the opportunity to develop their sense of agency, whilst gaining skills which they can apply when responding to challenges throughout their lives. However, questions such as; ‘How does this work in practice?’, ‘How effective is participation?’, and ‘How can children be engaged during a conflict when they may already be severely traumatised and overburdened?’ need to be addressed to make participation a practicality. Nevertheless, the biggest question to be asked in favour of child participation is; how can children be protected from further trauma, violence, abuse and conflict if they are not given a say in the approach adopted to prevent and respond to these issues?

As indicated above, meaningful child participation could be considered an area of neglect in the work of aid agencies and organisations, particularly during times of conflict. This is reportedly for a number of reasons, including a lack of staff capacity, the perception that children have limited abilities and due to a paternalistic approach adopted as a result of fears for children's wellbeing.\textsuperscript{16} In gaining a greater understanding of child participation this dissertation will analyse participation practices in Sierra Leone and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, arguably two of the world’s most severe and complex conflicts.\textsuperscript{17} It will examine the gaps in participation, and the implications that these gaps have for children and their protection and journey through the challenges that can arise in participatory programming, with a focus also on conflict-related challenges.

This research is based on two assumptions, which will be tested in the literature review and consequently illustrated in the case studies. The first assumption is that increased levels of meaningful child participation can have a positive effect on children's protection and their experiences of humanitarian assistance. The second assumption is that there is a lack of effective child participation in programmes for children affected by conflict.

\textsuperscript{15} Wessells, M. \textit{Child Soldiers: From Violence to Protection}, Harvard University Press, Massachusetts, 2006, p.3.
1.2 Aims and Objectives

The specific aims of this dissertation are as follows:

- To explore and understand the effects of the use of child participation in the design, implementation and monitoring and evaluation of programmes for conflict-affected children.
- To assess the benefits and limitations of the ways in which programmes have been designed, in relation to levels of participation experienced by girl soldiers reintegrating during and after conflict in Sierra Leone and children at risk of and child survivors of sexual violence in DRC.
- To understand child participation in relation to psychosocial healing and whether it can valuably contribute to this process.
- To identify child participation tools which could be effectively used by humanitarian agencies and NGOs working with conflict-affected children.

This piece of work does not intend to criticise humanitarian aid organisations and their efforts to protect children in difficult circumstances. Instead, it focuses on the role of children in shaping their own protection and the value of child participation, which when used safely and meaningfully, can improve children’s situations and futures. This could be particularly important in times of conflict when children often have little control over many aspects of their lives. However, it is also recognised that it may be all the more challenging and at times even dangerous. Where do we draw the line in enabling children to decide their own futures and what effects can this have in complex situations, particularly when multiple actors may be seeking control themselves?

1.3 Research Questions

- What are the benefits and challenges involved in enabling children to participate in humanitarian programmes and how is child participation perceived?
- What is the relationship between child participation, child protection and psychosocial wellbeing? How can child participation successfully contribute to this purpose?
- How effective were the release and reintegration programmes for girl soldiers in Sierra Leone, how could they have been improved and how have they impacted on the situation as it is today?
To what level is child participation utilised to prevent and respond to sexual violence against children in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, what have been the outcomes, and how can we move forward?

1.4 Methodology

This dissertation is largely a desk-based study and predominantly draws on secondary research. The secondary research involved analysing and reviewing information from academic and grey literature and internal documents at Save the Children UK.

In addition, primary research has been undertaken in the form of semi-structured interviews with experts and practitioners with substantial experience in child participation, child protection and emergency practice. The key informants have been sought through the author’s work at Save the Children UK and have been selected on the basis of their expertise, interest in the subject and the diversity of their experiences. Those interviewed provide a wealth of knowledge on many, if not all, of the discussions within this research and as a result the interview findings will not be confined to a specific chapter but will be drawn upon throughout this dissertation. In total, eight key informants were interviewed. They have the combined experience of working for organisations and agencies including: Catholic Relief Services, the Danish Refugee Council, Oxfam, Plan International, Save the Children, UNICEF, UNHCR and VSO. Key informants also have the collective experience of working in the following conflict-affected contexts: Afghanistan, Cambodia, Dadaab refugee camp (Northern Kenya), DRC, Haiti, Liberia, Myanmar (Burma), Nepal, the Occupied Palestinian Territories, Pakistan, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Timor Leste, Uganda and Ukraine.

Prior to the interviews taking place, those participating were given a description of the dissertation and its aims and they gave their informed consent. Participants were also informed that they could withdraw from the study at any point. The names of those interviewed have been withheld from the study and they will remain anonymous. This is because some of the answers given could implicate some participants’ current roles as they were speaking directly about organisations and giving their personal views on their work. Seven of the eight interviews were semi-structured and were based on a set of core questions, which every participant was asked. Participants were also asked additional questions based on their expertise and the author’s reflections following previous interviews. One participant was interviewed opportunistically and as a result the
interview was less structured. Two interviews were not recorded, and therefore were not transcribed.

Case studies were chosen to be a core part of this dissertation as they were considered to be the most effective way of relating theories to the current practice on the ground and to the real situations that children are experiencing, without actual field research. Without case studies it would be difficult to analyse the ways in which methods and approaches to participation work in reality. It would also be challenging to show the real consequences of a lack of child participation. Furthermore, case studies enable this dissertation to be more useful in guiding current practice as they clearly demonstrate how participation can be implemented.

The case studies were chosen based on the information available, their relevance to enhancing current practice, their applicability to this study and the way in which they complement each other in terms of learning.

1.5 Chapter Outline
Following this introduction, Chapter two will discuss key definitions of participation and their variations. It will go on to look at child participation within the context of children’s rights as well as the shift that humanitarian actors have taken towards a rights based approach. The chapter will then examine child participation as it is situated within the context of inter-agency standards, commitments and principles as well as child participation within the concept of acting accountably.

Chapter three will seek to understand the ways in which child participation can contribute to ensuring children’s protection and psychosocial well-being, as well as the ways in which participation can contribute to peace. Subsequently it will look at the challenges associated with participation and the dangers that it can present during a conflict or in a post-conflict situation.

Chapter four will explore two case studies which will demonstrate child protection programmes with different types and levels of child participation.

- The first case study focuses on the release and reintegration of girl soldiers in Sierra Leone. The disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR)
programme in Sierra Leone did not utilise child participation to a great extent at any stage of the programme cycle. This case example will be used to analyses low levels of child involvement in terms of successes and challenges. This case study was chosen as it offers the opportunity to look at a child protection programme retrospectively; as a result we can draw conclusions and learn from the recommendations given following its end. Furthermore this programme in particular has been criticised for not reaching all children, especially girls.

- The second case study is Save the Children’s response to sexual violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) which will be used to examine how child participation translates to the field level. This particular case study has been chosen in part because it enabled this research to contribute to child protection programme design. The research drawn out from the literature is being formulated into a literature review and a PowerPoint presentation which will be used to initiate discussion during the design workshop for Save the Children’s Child Protection Signature Programme in the DRC. Signature Programmes are part of Save the Children’s current strategy and it is the intention that they will become beacons of success to spread change, collect evidence, increase the quality of all Save the Children programmes and ultimately improve the lives of children. This case study is also useful as the programme in DRC is still evolving and therefore offers a view of what participation looks like whilst it is still developing and the challenges that can accompany embedding child participation into a programme.

The next chapter will reflect on the connection between participation and protection and will discuss when and how children can safely participate in humanitarian efforts.

Finally the conclusion will summarise the key findings and points of analysis from this research, before recommending actions for improvement to humanitarian actors.

1.6 Limitations
Regrettably, due to ethical considerations as well as economic and logistical constraints this dissertation is unable to draw upon primary research with children living in conflict zones. This is particularly unfortunate given that this dissertation is based on the idea that involving children is best practice. However, in order to compensate for the lack of direct involvement of children; demonstrations of children’s own perspectives have been
extracted from previous participatory studies and they will be utilised and reflected upon throughout this document. Although arguably anecdotal, these experiences from children around the world will embed children’s insights into this work and demonstrate the relevance of the points made in terms of children’s own views and interests.

The desk-based nature of this study means that it relies on existing literature and research although a thorough review of the literature, reports, evaluations and NGO-agency documents as well as interviews with key informants provided a comprehensive approach, literature could be considered a cultural artefact and the nature of this study does not allow for replication. Furthermore, all literature is based on the past and recent experiences and may not account for very new developments and current experiences on the ground. The key informant interviews somewhat limit this implication, though they may not account for experiences in all contexts.

Throughout the world, humanitarian interventions and protection programmes vary widely between contexts and the organisations involved in their implementation. Furthermore, every culture and every conflict is different. Due to the time constraints and requirements of this study, it will only been able to explore two case studies in-depth, both of which are from Africa. This means that it may not be appropriate to generalise the findings at the global level. However, the key informant interviews should ensure greater applicability to other contexts as a result of the participants’ diverse experiences. A systematic study of child participation globally would greatly contribute to practice and research in this sector.

This chapter will seek to define participation and situate it within the context of children’s rights and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). It will then progress to highlight the ways in which relevant key inter-agency standards, principles and commitments approach the concept of participation. Finally, this chapter will explore organisational accountability and its relevance to the participation of children affected by conflict.

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18 Save the Children, Story Central [internal website], viewed on 20 November 2012.
2.1 Defining Child Participation

In defining child participation, the concept of childhood must first be considered. Perceptions of childhood differ across cultures. However for the purpose of this dissertation, The UNCRC definition of children will be used. The UNCRC define a child as anyone below the age of 18 years old.\(^{19}\)

In terms of participation, the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership (HAP) Standard in Accountability and Quality Management outlines what the term ‘participation’ should mean for humanitarian organisations working with communities in a humanitarian context. It states organisations should strive to: “Listen to the people it aims to assist, incorporating their views and analysis in programme decisions.”\(^{20}\) This definition is useful, although it does not indicate a responsibility for agencies to utilise or promote participation beyond a programmatic perspective.

Arguably, in order to promote sustainable positive change and empowerment among children throughout their lives, participation must become embedded into society and adopted by other duty bearers. Enabling children to participate in programmes, whilst not promoting their participation in others areas of their lives, could even be considered to be counterproductive. Furthermore, such contrasting approaches among different duty bearers may cause confusion for children and may even expose them to harm.\(^{21}\) For example; in one instance, following his participation in a humanitarian programme, a child was shot for having spoken out against child recruitment in DRC.\(^{22}\)

In ‘Every Child’s Right to be Heard’, a resource guide on the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child General Comment no. 12, added to Article 12 on the UNCRC in 2011, child participation is defined as:

> “an ongoing process of children’s involvement in decision-making at different levels in matters that concern them. It requires information-sharing and dialogue between children and adults based on mutual respect, and requires that full consideration of their views be given, taking into account the child’s age and maturity.”\(^{23}\)

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\(^{21}\) Key informant interview with participant 2, December 2012.

\(^{22}\) Key informant interview with participant 8, December 2012.

This definition goes beyond HAP’s definition in terms of the context in which child participation should be a reality, it extends from an NGO/agency context to all sectors of society. It highlights the importance of children’s involvement in decision-making at all levels in order for the maximum benefits of child participation to be felt. Examples of different levels could be within the family, schools, local government, national government and at an international level. Lansdown argues that achieving a true transfer of power to children involves a broader cultural change towards regarding children as rights holders who have legal rights and means of redress.24

To really understand child participation, it may also be considered relevant to explore its meaning from a child’s perspective. Two girls from Nigeria and South Africa defined participation as:

“Child participation is when children are being involved in activities and it means that they are taking part in the decision-making. So it is very important for you the staff to be more child friendly, supportive and understanding because that’s the only way to promote partnership and child participation.”25

In describing participation, children used the word ‘partnership’, which is not highlighted in the other definitions offered, the idea of working together to achieve change. It could be understood that while humanitarian practitioners are experts in responding the conflicts and disasters, children are experts with regards to their own lives. Drawing those two types of expertise together in a partnership could be seen to be the most relevant and effective means of achieving change with and for children.

2.2 Child Participation as a Right

Child participation first entered into international human rights law in 1989 in the UNCRC, Article 12, which states that:

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

2. For this purpose the child shall in particular be provided the opportunity to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceeding affecting the child, either directly, or through a representative or an appropriate body, in a manner consistent with the procedural rules of national law.”26

26 Office for the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, op. cit.
In addition, other rights enshrined in the UNCRC also entitle children to be involved in the decisions which affect their lives.

- Article 5 – “Direction and guidance provided by parents must be appropriate and in accordance with the evolving capacities of the child to exercise his or her rights.”
- Article 17 – “Children have the right to information.”
- Article 13 – “Children have the right to freedom of expression.”
- Article 14 – “Children have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion.”
- Article 15 – “Children have the right to freedom of association”.

Moreover, it has been argued that participation is not only a right itself but a means through which other rights are realised. For example, participation can be used to transform the relationship that children have with adults in a way that enables children to become active members of society and hold duty-bearers to account in fulfilling their rights.

The UN Committee on the Rights on the Rights of the Child, General Comment no.12, as mentioned previously, outlines the nine Basic Requirements for Effective and Ethical Participation. The requirements state that child participation must be:

1. “Transparent and Informative
2. Voluntary
3. Respectful
4. Relevant
5. Facilitated with child-friendly environments and working methods
6. Inclusive
7. Supported by training for adults
8. Safe and sensitive to risk
9. Accountable”

These requirements emphasise not only children’s right to participation, but the importance of it being practised in a way that is ethical and meaningful. Unless

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participation is a meaningful process for the children involved, it may not be enough to empower and achieve change in children's lives and communities.

2.3 Child Participation and Inter-Agency Principles, Standards and Commitments

A Global Shift

Prior to the UN Secretary General’s Programme for Reform in 1997, most UN agencies took a 'needs-based' approach to development and humanitarian work. From a human rights perspective, a needs-based or charity-based approach is not sufficient as it does not hold duty-bearers to account through a system of obligations under international law. According to the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNOHCR), a right-based approach helps to “promote the sustainability of development work, empowering people themselves – especially the most marginalised – to participate in policy formulation and hold accountable those who have a duty to act.”\(^{31}\) The relationship within a rights-based approach, between duty bearers and beneficiary populations is summarised in the diagram, shown right.

Prior to this shift, human rights were primarily adopted only by specialist NGOs and lawyers. However, by 2005 the majority of organisations and agencies had adopted human rights in their commitments, their language and in their appeals and campaigns information.\(^ {33}\) The charity approach, needs approach and rights-based approach are summarised in the table overleaf by Kirkemann and Boesen.

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Below are some of the key principles, standards and commitments as set out by humanitarian actors, including consortiums of agencies and NGOs. The order in which they are presented is primarily informed by their date but also their inter-relevance (eg. the Cape Town Principles and Paris Principles are next to each other despite their dates as one builds upon the other).

**The Cape Town Principles**

The *Cape Town Principles and Best Practices* are the outcome of a symposium conducted by the NGO Working Group on the Convention of the Rights of the Child and UNICEF. The symposium was held in Cape Town during April 1997 and it brought together experts and practitioners in order to develop strategies to prevent children from being recruited by armed groups and for demobilising children. Within the ‘Reintegrating into Community Life’ section, the Cape Town Principles emphasise the importance of participation: “Programme development and implementation should incorporate the participation of the children and reflect their needs and concerns with due regard for the context of reintegration.”


does not indicate a need for child participation in the monitoring and evaluation stages of a programme and does not mention the involvement of other conflict-affected children who have not been with armed groups or the participation of children's communities. If could be beneficial to include the participation of other conflict-affected children as this could decrease sources of tension within communities. Tensions may arise if children who are potentially seen somewhat as perpetrators (child soldiers) are reached out to over those children who may be seen only as victims.

The Paris Principles
The Paris Principles, a set of principles and guidelines on children associated with armed forces or armed groups, were produced in 2007 following a review of the Cape Town Principles. The review found that there had been a sector shift to a more inclusive and community based approach and the complexities of children in armed conflict had received greater awareness. These principles were adopted by the United Nations Human Rights Commission (UNHRC) by Resolution 1992/54 and by the UN General Assembly in Resolution 48/134. The Paris Principles expand on the Cape Town Principles in terms of the necessity for child participation in programmes. Section 3.14 of the Paris Principles reads as follows:

“All stages of programmes assessment, planning, implementation and evaluation activities to prevent the association of children with armed forces or armed groups and secure their release, provide protection and reintegrate them into civilian life should include the active participation of those communities concerned, including children. The views of children in particular, as well as the families and the communities to which children return, should always be sought.”  

In this section of the Paris Principles is it evident that participation is not viewed as an additional requirement but is seen as a necessity in ensuring successful prevention and reintegration. This is indicated by the use of the word ‘always’ regarding seeking the views of children, families and communities.

The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Guidelines on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergency Settings
The IASC is an inter-agency forum for coordination, policy development and decision-making by the heads of humanitarian organisations and agencies. The IASC was established by the UN in 1992 in response to the UN General Assembly Resolution 46/182 on the strengthening of humanitarian assistance. Subsidiary bodies

36 The Paris Principles, op. cit.
within the IASC include a Reference Group on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergency Settings (established in 2007), as well as a Task Force on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) (established in 2011). 37

Participation is embedded throughout the Guidelines on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support and is included as core principle. In this core principle it states: "Many key mental health and psychosocial supports come from affected communities themselves rather than from outside agencies . . . Participation should enable different sub-groups of local people to retain or resume control over decisions that affect their lives, and to build the sense of local ownership that is important for achieving programme quality, equity and sustainability."38

In terms of child participation, the guidelines also include references to: youth group participation; peer-to-peer approaches; youth representatives; training for children; parental participation; and the inclusion of marginalised groups.39

The PSEA Task Force is a task force aimed at preventing the sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) of local populations by UN, NGO, IOM and IFRC staff. In addressing SEA they have adopted a four-pillared approach, the first pillar of which is engagement with local populations. The PSEA Task Force advocate that in order to succeed in protection work it is crucial to share information about their organisations with local populations and build effective complaints mechanisms in consultation with communities.40 This approach addresses the power balance between organisations and beneficiaries whilst enabling populations to participate in their work via giving feedback through a formalised system adapted to the cultural context.

The Sphere Project
The Sphere Project, established in 1997, is a collaborative effort by a board of eighteen humanitarian organisations to set common standards for the provision of aid assistance. In relation to participation, the Sphere Project Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards for Humanitarian Action (Third Edition, 2011) state’s in its commitment: “We offer our services in the belief that the affected population is at the centre of humanitarian

action, and recognise that their active participation is essential to providing assistance in ways that best meet their needs, including those of vulnerable and socially excluded people.”41 The Sphere Project's first Core Standard is also focused around participation, “The first Core Standard recognises that the participation of disaster-affected people - women, men, girls and boys of all ages - and their capacity and strategies to survive with dignity are integral to humanitarian response.”42 It is evident that there is consensus among the humanitarian organisations involved in the Sphere Project that programmes must be based on beneficiary involvement, with the handbook also including sub-populations such as children in this standard.

**Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action**

The Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action are a set of inter-agency standards designed to hold humanitarian organisations accountable for their commitments and to improve the rigor and quality of their work. The standards were published by the Child Protection Working Group (CPWG) in 2012 and are based on international human rights law, humanitarian law and refugee law.43 The document frames participation as one of the four key principles of the UNCRC and states:

"Humanitarian workers must ensure that girls and boys are given space and time to meaningfully participate at all possible stages of an emergency preparedness and response. Boys and girls of different ages and abilities, and with different perspectives, should be supported to express their views in safety, and these views should be regarded with respect and taken seriously. Humanitarian workers must be aware of their own values, beliefs and assumptions about childhood and the roles of the child and the family, and avoid imposing these on children. They should enable developmentally appropriate ways of child participation, share power with children in decision making, and be sensitive to how children’s participation can, when done poorly, upset children’s social roles and power relations.”44

The way in which participation is considered in this document is interesting in that the personal views of humanitarian workers about children is taken into account as a barrier to participation that needs to be overcome. It is also evident that the quality of participation is taken into account. However, although this principle refers to taking children seriously and power sharing with children, it does not indicate the weight that should be given to children’s views. Furthermore, it does not highlight the potential need to inform and explain to children when and why their views haven’t been acted upon.

42 Ibid, p.53.
43 CPWG, op. cit., p.5-14.
44 CPWG, o. cit., p.15.
Participation is also referred to within key standards set out in the document, though is not considered a standard itself.

2.4 Child Participation within the Concept of Acting Accountably

NGOs and humanitarian agencies have been increasingly providing more services since the 1970s, with the 1990s seeing a boom in the number of NGOs. Moreover, from 1975 to 1985 government aid being redirected through NGOs rose by 1400 percent. With this growth in the number of NGOs and the range of assistance they provide, has come greater scrutiny, not only from Western donors and the general public, but also from affected populations themselves. For example, during the 2004 Asian Tsunami, populations in Sri Lanka protested against the corrupt distribution of aid. Meanwhile, in Indonesia, the member of staff coordinating one NGO’s response was arrested for corrupt practices.

The HAP International, as referred to earlier, was established in 2003 to promote organisational accountability to those affected by humanitarian crises and to ensure that organisations were recognised as meeting accountability principles. In 2007 these principles were revised and became the 2007 Standard in Humanitarian Accountability and Quality Management, they were consequently reviewed in 2010 to incorporate learning from their application in practice and to maintain their relevance. The purpose of the HAP Standard is to help “organisations that assist or act on behalf of people affected by or prone to disasters, conflict, poverty or other crises to design, implement, assess, improve and recognise accountable programmes.” The Standard consists of six benchmarks: establishing and delivering on commitments; staff competency; sharing information; participation; handling complaints; and learning and continual improvement. These benchmarks demonstrate the necessity for participation in ensuring accountability.

In examining individual organisations and their approaches, CARE define accountability as “a means for CARE to improve the relevance, quality and impact of our work, and an end in itself, as our stakeholders – especially beneficiaries – have a right to hold CARE to account. Humanitarian accountability is an appropriate shift of the balance of power back towards

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45 Bendell, J., Debating NGO Accountability, NGS Development Dossier, UN Non-Governmental Liason Service, New York, 2006, p.9
46 Ibid.
48 Ibid.
disaster affected people.”

Oxfam’s definition of accountability also includes specific ways in which organisations can ensure accountability, specifically: “transparency, participation, learning and evaluation, and feedback mechanisms”. While CARE refers to accountability as a ‘means’, Oxfam refers to accountability as a ‘process’ through which they are able to deliver against their commitment. The way in which it is referred to as a process highlights the necessity for quality in implementing accountability mechanisms, as well the focus on the end goal that they achieve. Two boys from Bangladesh and South Africa, who were part of Save the Children’s Global Children’s Panel, offered their definition:

“Accountability is keeping promises, participation, giving feedback, respectful staff and being faithful. Children do not care how much you know until they know how much you care, so it is very important for you to share information with us because millions of concerns of a billion citizens could do nothing for us until you share information with us. So make sure that you share information with us because we do not want to get on a moving train, we want to start the journey with you.”

This definition enables the reader to reflect on the reasons for accountability and its meaning for children and communities. It also offers an insight into the ways in which inconsistent or non-accountability can lead to a sense of confusion and lack of control for beneficiaries. However, despite the recognition of accountability across many INGOs and through the HAP, one practitioner identified that there is still confusion around its implementation: “The concept of accountability is not entirely clear in many people's heads, people have a vague understanding but they don’t really understand what it looks like in practice.”

A lack of accountability, and a subsequent lack of participation, can arguably lead to less effective programme monitoring and the disempowerment of children and communities. As a result, this could allow for increased levels of the abuse of children and other populations by humanitarian staff. According to a report by Save the Children, children may not speak out about sexual exploitation for a number of reasons including fear, stigma, a lack of knowledge and powerlessness. Accountability enables agencies to readdress the power balance between themselves and communities and it means children

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52 Key informant interview with participant 1, December 2012.

are no longer in the position of 'passive receiver' but are instead able to scrutinise humanitarian work and hold organisations to account. One practitioner described the potential risks associated with not acting accountably: "I think the worst case scenario is that we end up turning a blind eye to abuse and exploitation and children are very vulnerable to that. But I think also by not working accountably you're missing information that children can give us because children see and experience the world in very different ways and they bring a different perspective which can be beneficial to our work."\textsuperscript{54} In relation to reporting on the West Africa refugee sex scandals, which involved the sexual exploitation of children by humanitarian workers, Naik argues that it is fundamental to address the current power imbalance between humanitarian actors and beneficiaries in order to prevent such exploitation recurring. She argues that this should be achieved through the establishment of proper complaints channels as well as the involvement of community members, particularly women and children, in all stages of the programme cycle.\textsuperscript{55} This call for complaints mechanisms echoes the approach of the PSEA taskforce, as described in the previous section. Such mechanisms would not only work to prevent children from being exploited by those who are supposed to be ensuring their protection, but can also result more relevant, safer and more cost-effective programming.

"I leave my child with my little sister, who is ten years old, and I dress good and I go where the NGO workers drink or live and one of them will ask me for sex. Sometimes they give me things like food, oil, soap and I will sell them and get money." (Refugee child)

"An NGO worker made me pregnant but now he left me and is loving to another young girl." (Refugee child)

"It's difficult to escape the trap of those [NGO] people; they use food as bait to get you to have sex with them." (Refugee child)

Children's accounts of abuse by NGO staff, Naik.\textsuperscript{56}

\textsuperscript{54} Key informant interview with participant 3, December 2012.
\textsuperscript{56} Ibid.
3. Child Participation and Conflict-Affected Children

Figure 7 Young refugee children in the Kyaka II refugee settlement, Uganda making puppets to talk about their protection during participatory research, Anna Skeels

This chapter will firstly explore the ways in which participation can positively impact directly on children’s lives, as well as on the programmes designed to benefit them. Next, this chapter will look more specifically at child participation in relation to child protection, psychosocial healing and peacebuilding. Finally, child participation will be considered in terms of the challenges associated with participatory programming during conflict and the potential risks involved.

3.1 The Benefits of Child Participation in Humanitarian Programming

Below is a list of the key ways in which child participation can potentially benefit children directly, as well as humanitarian programmes implemented for children. The table is based on publications by the ICRC, ALNAP, the Peace Building Initiative and UNICEF. The benefits listed in bold, although not directly quoted, are those given by children themselves within the publications already listed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benefits to Programmes</th>
<th>Benefits to Children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Increased effectiveness</td>
<td>• It can help children to increase their sense of identity and their self-esteem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Sustainability</td>
<td>• Empowerment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• An enhanced link between relief, rehabilitation and development</td>
<td>• Children feel better understood by adults</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Higher levels of community acceptance</td>
<td>• Children receive a higher status within their communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Increased trust between the organisation and affected population</td>
<td>• Inclusion and decreased levels of marginalisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Increased security of humanitarian personnel through ensuring access to local security information</td>
<td>• Enhanced leadership capabilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Better access and reach to remote or insecure areas</td>
<td>• Better communication skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Programmes are able to build upon existing local knowledge and experiences</td>
<td>• Children learn to form solutions and actions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Children may be more inclusive than adults and may be less concerned about community divisions and class</td>
<td>• Increased levels of knowledge about their peers and communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Children can help to identify those most in need of assistance and those who have been excluded in programming</td>
<td>• Children can support each other through their unique understanding of each other's experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Children can be effective at communicating important messages in the family and among their peers (e.g. behaviour change communication)</td>
<td>• Experiences can be character building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Children can provide organisations with valuable feedback</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Children may have information and insights which adults do not have</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• In humanitarian disasters and conflict, children often represent a large proportion of the population</td>
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</tbody>
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Table 1 Potential Benefits of Child Participation\(^{58}\)

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\(^{58}\) Gussing, A. in Robin, A., op. cit, p.7.


3.2 Participation for Protection

Child protection, similarly to child participation, is grounded in children’s rights. In accordance with the UNCRC, it aims to prevent and respond to the neglect, violence, exploitation and abuse of children.\(^{59}\) In terms of child protection during conflict, in 2005 the UN Security Council identified six categories of child protection violations to be given priority; these are known as *The Six Grave Violations Against Children During Armed Conflict*.\(^{60}\) They are: the killing or maiming of children; recruitment or use of child soldiers; rape and other forms of sexual violence against children; abduction of children; attacks against schools or hospitals; and denial of humanitarian access to children.\(^{61}\)

As indicated above, the threats to children’s protection are said to be exacerbated during an emergency and when children are affected by trauma.\(^{62}\) In the past, protection-based interventions tended to focus on protecting children separately from, or without consideration of, participation and children’s right to self-determination. However, it is increasingly recognised that child participation and child protection can contribute to each other’s fulfilment.\(^{63}\) As one key informant noted:

“...it’s just amazing what you learn from children which you don’t get from adults, that perspective, and I see that again and again in different contexts”.\(^{64}\)

Enhancing children’s societal status could be considered an area in which child participation and child protection are particularly interlinked. It has been claimed that children’s low status is reflected in the acceptance of violence against children across many societies.\(^{65}\) As a result, it has been suggested that the most effective way of ensuring children’s equal status as rights holders is through involving them in activities to end violence and to ensure their protection.\(^{66}\) Through their participation, children arguably become better-informed with regards to their rights and the support they can access to


\(^{61}\) Ibid.


\(^{64}\) Key informant interview with participant 5, December 2012.


protect themselves, whilst demonstrating their capabilities to communities.\textsuperscript{67} Moreover, enabling children to engage in self-expression can also provide them with the opportunity to communicate with each other to further spread information and knowledge.\textsuperscript{68}

Particularly vulnerable or marginalised children are arguably at an increased risk of having their protection rights violated. Sørensen outlines that there are particular children who may be at increased risk of sexual abuse. The groups of children include: particularly young children, disabled children, children with limited life experience, sexually and socially curious children, children who are neglected, deprived of care and frustrated or angry children.\textsuperscript{69} For example, it has been found that children with disabilities are up to four times more likely to experience violence than children without disabilities.\textsuperscript{70} Some of the risks facing children with disabilities include: emotional rejection and abuse within the family; difficulties at school and violence from teachers; being beaten for signing; being beaten as a result of perceived disobedience; and being sexually abused.\textsuperscript{71} During conflict, the vulnerability of children with disabilities may increase if they are separated from the family members and caregivers who are aware of their specific needs.\textsuperscript{72} In addition, it is likely that support from health and social services will decrease and they may not be able to access other mainstream services. For example, in several countries refugees with disabilities have been unable to access food distribution points and mothers have been unable to obtain the correct type of food for children with particular requirements.\textsuperscript{73}

Lansdown, an international children's rights expert, emphasises that children with disabilities face increased risks due to: a lack of understanding around disability; negative social attitudes; and the reduced capacity of children with disabilities to be able to protect themselves and challenge abuse.\textsuperscript{74} As a result, it could be considered that is increasingly important to ensure their participation and empowerment. In Ethiopia, Save the Children have set up child-led disability clubs, through which children use poems, songs, drama and

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{68} Woods, L N., op. cit., p.145.
\item \textsuperscript{69} Sørensen, K. \textit{Understanding Abuser Strategies} (presentation), Save the Children Denmark, date unknown.
\item \textsuperscript{71} Ibid, p.129.
\item \textsuperscript{73} Ibid, p.8-9.
\item \textsuperscript{74} Lansdown, G., 2009, op. cit. p.120.
\end{itemize}
role plays to raise awareness, combat stigma and promote inclusion. In several countries, children have demonstrated through child-to-child surveys that they are able to reach out to the most marginalised and invisible children. For example, as part of one project in India children undertook a mapping exercise and mapped out the homes of all of the local children who were not attending school. This type of information could be valuable to organisations that may be unaware of local social structures and the hidden minorities.

There are also specific aspects of child protection to which participation is considered crucial, such as child protection case management and Best Interest Determinations. Two key informants identified that this was the case with Key Informant Five stating:

“You can’t know what’s in a child’s best interests if they haven’t participated in some way, of course according to their evolving capacity. So, yeah so I can’t see that case management would be effective without child participation. In fact it could do harm, it could be quiet dangerous. So yeah, one-hundred percent.”

Despite the recognition that children’s participation can work to ensure children’s protection, Ackermann et al note that this does not alleviate the responsibilities of parents and other duty bearers who play a key role in protecting children. Moreover, they emphasise that children should not be burdened with high levels of responsibility or costs for their own protection. Enabling children to participate in their protection without the appropriate systems in place can cause further harm if they disclose a case of abuse and consequently do not have a safe place to go to, as one girl in Papua New experienced:

“In Papua New Guinea (PNG), a girl who was sexually assaulted revealed this during a children’s right session. Her case was referred to the Government, but there is no alternative care in PNG. After several volunteer placements, a paid carer was found but the adult was stigmatised because she was being paid. This impacted negatively on the child. In addition, the police did not want to prosecute and the case is still ongoing two years later. This is not an isolated case.”

In a study by Erikson, child survivors of sexual violence listed five key recommendations in relation to their participation:

- "Listen to me and believe what I tell you.
- Talk to me and be there if I need you.

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75 Save the Children Norway, *They All Have Dreams: Community Based Rehabilitation for Children with Disabilities*, Save the Children Norway - Ethiopia Programme, Addis Ababa, 2012, p.36.
77 Key informant interview with participant 5, December 2012.
I need to feel safe and protected and decide how my case is to be handled.
Love me, support me—we know what we need.
Help me get things straight.”

3.3 Participation in Relation to Healing and Psychosocial Wellbeing

During and following a conflict, psychosocial interventions could be considered an aspect of child protection in terms of responding to the psychological impacts of neglect, violence, abuse and exploitation of children, as well as cross-cutting interventions to ensure children’s overall wellbeing. It is increasingly recognised that conflict can impact on children mentally, emotionally, intellectually, socially and culturally. These psychological consequences of war can be deep-rooted and long lasting when not effectively addressed. It has been argued that the fundamental difference between children’s and adult’s psychosocial well-being is that children are still developing. Children are continually learning new coping strategies and a child’s developmental needs do not wait until a conflict or emergency has passed. Graça Machel identifies some of the symptoms children may experience: “increased separation anxiety and developmental delays, sleep disturbances and nightmares, lack of appetite, withdrawn behaviour, lack of interest in play, and, in younger children, learning difficulties. In older children and adolescents, responses to stress can include anxious or aggressive behaviour and depression.” It has been estimated that ten million children are psychologically traumatised as a result of conflict.

The Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) model has been the primary model for working with children affected by conflict. This model focuses on two forms of therapy: exposure therapy and cognitive therapy. Exposure based therapies involve the person being treated confronting the cause of their emotional distress systematically within a therapeutic framework. This tends to involve recounting traumatic events over a number of sessions with an emphasis on the feelings and cognitions associated with the event. Cognitive therapy involve a person’s interpretations of an event and its significance, this

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85 Singer, op. cit., p.6.
method of therapy is aimed at dealing with negative thoughts and feelings and counteracting “post trauma transformation of meaning”.\textsuperscript{87}

However, the PTSD model and its usefulness in assisting children during and after conflict has been questioned. It has been argued that it approaches healing on an individual level, and therefore is unable to deal with trauma at scale in situations whereby entire communities have been affected by conflict.\textsuperscript{88} Furthermore, the PTSD model is based on Western psychology and is therefore not necessarily applicable to other contexts and may even conflict with or neglect traditional values and practices. Children and communities may however, defer to a Western model if it is presented as a solution by aid organisations, as they may feel self-conscious about their perceived “primitive” attitudes and practices.\textsuperscript{89}

In contrast, the framework for psychosocial wellbeing, devised by the Psychosocial Working Group (PWG) is based on human resources. These resources underpin a person’s capacity which is made up of skills, knowledge and physical and mental health. During times of conflict, capacity may be lost as a result of a loss of skilled labour, depression, social withdrawal and disability as well as other factors including a reduced feeling of self-control.\textsuperscript{90} In line with this model, child participation can work to rebuild areas of lost capacity, particularly in terms of increasing self esteem, a sense of control and in restoring social networks. These networks can consequently be utilised in livelihood development and to provide protection in coordination with other community based structures such as child protection committees. This in turn can work towards decreasing tensions which could exacerbate conflict or trigger further violence, and towards increasing community resilience.\textsuperscript{91}

Similarly, a developmental approach to children’s psychosocial recovery during conflict views children as part of a wider social network, made up of relationships which determine their reactions to traumatic events. As a result, this approach views child participation in programme design as highly beneficial to their well being as it can enforce

\textsuperscript{87} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{88} IDRC, ‘Community Approaches to Coping with the Traumas of Violent Conflict’, Peace, Conflict and Development, IDRC Communications, Canada, 2012, p.1.
\textsuperscript{89} Boothby, N. et al, op. cit., p.22
\textsuperscript{90} Ibid, p.9.
social relations, belief systems and coping strategies. This approach to healing allows children to work together with their families, friends and communities to increase their resilience and strengthen coping mechanisms through community involvement. This approach was utilised during the response to refugees fleeing Tibet and as a result "Tibetan refugee children indicated that factors such as solidarity and active community involvement helped them to cope with stress related symptoms." 

Moreover, Lotse, the UNICEF Regional Director for South Asia, advocates that children can find a sense of strength and recovery through supporting each other and becoming active agents during a response. Key Informant Six noted the ways in which participation can enable children to regain a level of control over their situations:

"It helps them make sense of the environment that they're in and it helps them also to shape the environment that they're in. It doesn't necessarily mean that they have taken control of everything and they can get back to how they were before because that's not possible. But they can inform the support that is being provided to them."

In 1996, during peacebuilding efforts in Colombia, UNICEF and partners implemented a programme, 'Retorno de la Alegria' ('Return to Happiness'), which was designed to provide children with psychosocial support and to enable children and their communities to participate in the recovery process. The programme was based on peer support and adolescent children were trained in how to build trust and hope in younger children through play therapy. One child described the benefits of this type of intervention:

"Even if it was hard, working in the programme gave us something constructive to do in a situation where we could otherwise feel quite helpless. Also, trying to understand the difficulties of these children helped me to understand my own problems. I had always found it hard to talk about what had happened to me when my mother left, and when my father was murdered, but listening to other kids helped me to open up."

It could also be argued that failing to involve children in a humanitarian response could negatively impact on children's psychological wellbeing and lead to feelings of disempowerment among children, as indicated during a key informant interview:

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93 Ibid.

94 Lotse, C. in Woods, L. N., op. cit., p.V.

95 Key informant interview with participant 6, December 2012.


"If agencies reinforce that loss of control children and communities can feel like they don't have any involvement in the planning or the access to services then they're more disempowered and it increases that sense of kind of helplessness and fear and kind of after an emergency... I think that denial can only really increase that sense of negativity and despair that everything is out of control and not possible." 98

3.4 The Role of Child Participation in Building Peace

The processes important in ensuring a lasting journey towards peace are argued to be that of healing, reconciliation and justice.99 During a conflict, whole societies can be affected by trauma, which Murithi argues is one of the key barriers for peacebuilding in this century.100 Moreover, conflicts have become increasingly protracted and complex, placing societies at risk of continued cycles of violence.101 Even once a conflict has officially ‘ended’, violence can become normalised and may continue within families and communities.102 In responding to conflict, an emphasis on healing communities could be considered particularly relevant in terms of combating these cycles.103 With regards to participation, children and youth are increasingly becoming a key group to engage, as their complex roles in conflict are becoming progressively more apparent. During the Arab Spring, young people were cited as among the main actors sparking protest movements across the affected countries, reportedly as a result of increased unemployment and unaddressed grievances.104 However, while it could be considered that many young people were engaged in violent movements, many were also playing an important part in peaceful advocacy, using “non-violence as a strategy for change.”105 If children are provided with participatory opportunities related to peace, they are arguably given the choice to act in the midst of a conflict without feeling that they have to use violent means. Consequently, enabling children to participate through providing avenues for them to act constructively could be considered imperative to building peace.106 This is demonstrated through one girl’s account of her post-conflict experiences in Northern Uganda:

“I can help bring peace in Northern Uganda if only my views are heard and acted upon. I don’t hold a gun anymore; I hold the power of my voice. When visitors come to see us in the centers they normally ask us about our experiences and how we managed to

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98 Key Informant Interview with Participant 4, December 2012.
100 Ibid.
101 Ibid.
103 Wessells, M., op. cit., p.20.
105 Ibid.
106 Key informant interview with participant 4, December 2012.
escape... But, they should also be asking us how we can participate in the peace process ourselves because we also fought in the war.”

Through their participation children may also develop their abilities to address discrimination and increase social cohesion within their communities. This could be understood as key given that discrimination can be a cause of conflict and children are the future of their societies. Children may also have a unique understanding of some of the other root causes of conflict as well as the recruitment processes. One key informant described the ways in which children in Sri Lanka were able to bridge the divides between their communities:

“...I'm thinking of a conflict in Sri Lanka a number of years ago where adults have always kept their different ethnic groups apart and religious groups apart and there was a lot of misunderstanding. When children's clubs came together from both sides they were amazed at how they were just children and that they had a lot in common and that they could really understand each other, and they really forged a kind of partnership for peaceful ways forward rather than to be at conflict with each other.”

Despite the positive outcomes that may be associated with children's roles in peacebuilding, they are often perceived as a vulnerable population as opposed to actors in conflict. Therefore, it may not always be deemed necessary or safe to involve children in these processes. As a result, children’s involvement is often patchy in practice or is only facilitated by child focused agencies, as opposed to by the wider international community. During reconstruction efforts in Kosovo, it was found that although youth were involved in some humanitarian efforts, there was generally a lack of consultation with children and young people by those offering assistance. Furthermore, even agencies who were consulting children, reportedly failed to reach those most at risk. It is argued that this lack in involvement and failure to address the violations facing, and increasingly committed by, young people will lead to a less stable future and will leave a legacy of

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110 Key Informant Interview with Participant 4, December 2012.
111 Save the Children Norway, Listen to us! Children’s Rights in Peace Processes and Peace Agreements, Save the Children Norway, Oslo, 2006, p.5.
conflict for generations to come. Lowicki argues that young people play a critical role in rebuilding society and if their views are not heard and responded to other humanitarian efforts may be less effective.113

In order to ensure children's involvement in peace processes, children along with NGOs and international bodies have called for a UN resolution on children, youth and peacebuilding. As one child stated: "The UN resolution should be passed on children so as the world can know that we children can do something in peacebuilding, we can take part and we can help the world cos' we are the future generation."114 This would be particularly useful in terms of defining which peace related processes would be safe and meaningful for children to participate in. This in turn could act to inform guidance around ethics and the relevant procedures.

3.5 Participation: Key Challenges

In any context, there can be multiple challenges associated with children's participation in programming. However, during times of conflict, these challenges may be exacerbated and new problems may emerge with increased tensions among families and communities, as well as increased pressure on international organisations to respond. Challenges may come as a result of armed actors, societal structures, the values and attitudes of communities and humanitarian workers’ perceptions of children.

During or following a conflict, children may come across as unengaged and withdrawn, leading to the perception that they are simply passive receivers of assistance and have little to contribute in terms of informing and directing programmes.115 Based on these perceptions, humanitarian organisations and individuals may not feel it appropriate to opt for a participatory approach in their response. It is arguably too often overlooked that the majority of children have often already had to take steps to adapt and respond prior to the deployment of humanitarian staff.116 Moreover, given their age and specific vulnerabilities, humanitarian actors may take a paternalistic view of children, as one key informant highlights:
“And again, the whole issue of whether people think it’s necessary to inform or to include children, our paternalistic view can ‘oh yeah speak to the community they’ll know what’s best for children’ and you know...whether you’re nine or you know seventeen, eighteen, to sort of have decisions made on key issues for you without your input, pretty maddening and pretty rude...you know the courtesy and respect to people, which are meant to be underpinning all humanitarian action, respect for affected populations, and a key part of that is getting them involved and it’s discussing it.”

Furthermore, in situations where children have had to flee their homes and may have lost parents or other relatives, the child’s role and responsibilities may already be stretched. Children might have taken on extra duties to help their families generate an income or may have adopted caregiver roles due to deaths in the family. As a result, it could be argued that children may be too overworked to participate in the activities of humanitarian organisations. However, during an interview for this dissertation, Key Informant Seven stated that she felt confused by the notion of participation as a burden. She continued to articulate that if child participation is carried out in a way which is ethical and voluntary; children could simply withdraw if they felt that the activities were not of benefit to them. Key Informant Four also felt that the question of whether participation was or was not a burden should be answered by children, as opposed to assumed by adults. She also described participation as a tool to reduce the burden for children:

"quite often adults say ‘oh it’s a burden and they shouldn't participate because they’re already doing too much’ but actually it’s not fair to take that decision away from young people, it's better off to give them the decision and maybe there’s other existing roles that they’re taking on that they’d rather do less of that could be influenced by having a voice or participating"

Social norms, attitudes and values may also act as a barrier to children's participation in certain cultural contexts, as Lansdown indicates: “In some African countries, Article 12 has been one of the most challenging rights to implement, largely because local cultures do not view parents as having a responsibility to consult with their children.” A girl from Ghana explained her difficulties in terms of participating:

“Usually when we children talk about participation and making our views heard, most adults see it as a passport to disrespect ...The adults have forgotten that the world is dynamic and things we know now they didn’t at our age and might still not know. We have

117 Key informant interview with participant 6, December 2012.
118 UNHCR, 1994, op. cit., p.31.
119 Key informant interview with participant 7, December 2012.
120 Key informant interview with participant 4, December 2012.
to move from the stage where children are to be seen and not heard to a stage where children should have a voice in decision making in matters that affect him or her. But unfortunately most adults see this as a rotten tone in which we sing.” girl, age 14, Ghana.122

If children are able to participate in humanitarian efforts, but culture and negative perceptions of participation remain unchanged, then children could be considered social deviants within their societies. These views of children could lead to their punishment and in some contexts they could even be considered witches or devils.123 As a result, it is necessary to prepare adults and communities for child participation, which can be a time consuming process.124 Activities to prepare adults for child participation may include addressing negative attitudes about children and their capacities as well as discussing and highlighting children’s resourcefulness in their daily lives. Another approach could involve consulting with community leaders as to the ways in which children could participate and by inviting community members to presentations made by children to show their achievements.125

The Women’s Commission have reported that in many post-conflict settings, while NGOs and humanitarian organisations tend to engage with adult populations, children are often left out or are involved afterwards.126 This is reported to be as a result of children’s involvement being viewed as a time consuming activity as opposed to an essential part of programming.127 Similarly, during the key informant interviews for this dissertation, all seven of the participants asked, stated that they did not feel child participation was prioritised by aid workers.128 As Key Informant One articulated:

“I do not think children's participation is a priority at all, and I think I can confidently say that . . . there are attitudes against it, there are fears about it and we do not make the time and the resources for it, and that's Save the Children, so that's very sad.”129

Child participation may not be considered a priority for a number of reasons, including the scale to which humanitarian organisations are working. During an emergency, thousands of children could be in need of assistance, and it may be considered that in the midst of a rapid scale up of operations that it is not possible for children to meaningfully

122 UNICEF, Voices of Youth, What Young People are Saying, Number 5, UNICEF, 2003, p.4.
124 Key informant interview with participant 2, December 2012.
127 Ibid.
128 Key informant interviews with participants 1,2,3,4,5,6 and 7, December 2012.
129 Key informant interview with participant 1, December 2012.
participate. In times of extreme need when there is an emphasis on survival rights, participation may be considered less relevant and less urgent. During the response and recovery phase following the Rwandan genocide, one pastor claimed that the CRC was irrelevant on the ground due to a lack of resources, poverty and the psychological withdrawal of children resulting from their trauma. Despite this view, children in Rwanda claimed that the most important right to them was their right to participation and they saw it not just as a standalone right but as a means to access and fulfil other rights. Similarly, from a practitioner's perspective, it was argued during key informant interviews that children must be able to participate in order for survival rights to be met adequately:

"I think it goes back to this thing about it's a way of working, you know how do we know that we're reaching children effectively with our food distribution or immunisation programmes, how do we know what the particular issues are for children in terms of food, in terms of kind of medical assistance? We just won't know it unless we work in that [participatory] way."

3.6 Dangerous Participation

In the context of a conflict, adults may lack a sense of control over their own situation and that of their families; potentially resulting in feelings of disenfranchisement and disempowerment. In these situations, empowering children to achieve change may be unrealistic if even those most prominent in their communities are unable to express their views. Children's participation could potentially result in violence, exploitation and counter-productiveness if parents retaliate and seek to regain control through their children. As a result, it may be argued that child participation should only be utilised as a tool once parents and community members are also in a position of positive participation. In addition, certain groups of children subjected to certain rules and restrictions may be placed at risk if they participate in humanitarian work. For example, during a project in Afghanistan, merely for girls to attend the activities, put both them and their families at great risk.

130 Key informant interview with participants 5 and 7, December 2012.
131 Pells, K. "No one Ever Listens to us": Challenging Obstacles to the Participation of Children and young People in Rwanda.’ in Percy-Smith, B. & Thomas, M., A Handbook of Children and Young People's Participation: Perspectives From Theory and Practice, Routledge, United Kingdom, 2009, p.197.
132 Ibid.
133 Key informant interview with participant 3, December 2012.
135 Ibid.
136 Ibid.
Another danger associated with participation during conflict is the involvement of political or armed actors in participatory processes. Actors may attempt to use participatory programmes as a means to deliver propaganda or to coordinate populations in a way which serves their own interests. In many situations even the legitimacy and intentions of local authorities can be questionable. Moreover, through their participation children’s public profiles could be raised and they may become skilled leaders; attributes which may be perceived as valuable by armed groups. As a result, in some contexts, spaces for participation which bring together large numbers of children could be viewed as potential recruitment sites for child soldiers. When conducting research in Sri Lanka, Nepal and the Occupied Palestinian Territories, Hart found that practitioners in all three countries cited recruitment efforts as a concern when involving children in their work.

Despite the potential dangers associated with participation during conflict, when practised ethically and effectively, participatory processes can act to enhance the security of affected populations. This could occur when security risks and vulnerabilities are identified through participation and as a result agencies can respond to minimise and prevent these factors. In turn, the trust built between humanitarian organisations and those they are assisting can ensure that communities feel comfortable in approaching staff when new security issues arise. Children may also benefit from gaining skills which enable them to better protect themselves through activities such as risk mapping. Furthermore, participation can lay the foundations to ensure that communities are still able to benefit from the assistance provided even if a security situation worsens and humanitarian organisations have to withdraw from certain areas. This is because communities will be able to gain the skills necessary to facilitate their own development through collective efforts, community groups and children’s organisations. For example, children may continue to provide psychosocial support to each other via a peer-to-peer approach, initially implemented with the facilitation of a humanitarian organisation.

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141 Ibid.
142 Groupe URD, op. cit., p.54.
143 Key Informant Interview with Participant 5, December 2012.
144 Groupe URD, op. cit., p.54.
This chapter will explore two case studies in order to understand: firstly, the impact of a lack of participation on child protection programming; and secondly, the benefits and challenges associated with involving children in child protection programmes. This will thus further develop an understanding both of why child participation might be considered important, whilst also demonstrating the implications of involving children in humanitarian practice. The former will be demonstrated through an analysis of DDR programming during and following the civil war in Sierra Leone, and the latter will be demonstrated through an analysis of Save the Children’s programme to prevent and respond to sexual violence in DRC.
4.1 Looking Back at a Lack of Participation: The Release and Reintegration of Girl Soldiers in Sierra Leone

“It's interesting; children were not really prioritised through the process... Save the Children were haranguing them non-stop, people like myself making a real pain of myself.”

4.1.1 Background

Sierra Leone is a country on the coast of West Africa, sharing its borders with Guinea, Liberia and the North Atlantic Ocean. It has a population of 5.5 million, with 42% of the population aged fourteen or below. Sierra Leone has the twelfth highest infant mortality rate in the world with 77 deaths per 1000 live births and it has a life expectancy at birth of 47. Despite Sierra Leone's civil war ending in 2002, women and girls are still vulnerable.

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147 Key informant interview with participant 6, discussing children's involvement in the DDR process in Sierra Leone, December 2012.
149 Ibid.
to sexual violence and harmful traditional practices, with over 90% of girls and women between the ages of 15 and 49 having experienced female genital mutilation.\textsuperscript{150}

The ten-year civil war began when the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) entered Sierra Leone in March 1991 across the Liberian border; Its mission to overthrow President Momoh and All People's Congress (APC) one-party regime.\textsuperscript{151} Led by Foday Sankoh and supported by the then president of Libera, Charles Taylor, the RUF proceeded to seize control of Sierra Leone's diamond mines and the eastern part of the country. In 1992 the government of Sierra Leone was overthrown and Ahmed Tejam Kabbah was elected as President. Sierra Leone's army consequently overthrew Kabbah and formed the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC), headed by General Johnny Paul Koroma, which invited the RUF to form an alliance.\textsuperscript{152} The Kabbah government was reinstalled in 1998 with support from the UN. Fighting continued until January 2002, when the war was declared officially over.\textsuperscript{153} During the war, all armed groups committed international crimes, and children as young as five were recruited.\textsuperscript{154} It was estimated that during this time, 2.5 million people became refugees or were internally displaced and up to 200,000 people were killed.\textsuperscript{155} The exact number of child soldiers in Sierra Leone is unknown and estimates vary between 6,000 (UNICEF) and 48,000 (McKay and Mazuranna).\textsuperscript{156} Shown below is an estimate of the number of child soldiers in comparison to the proportion of which were girl soldiers.

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{153} Ibid.
  \item \textsuperscript{154} UNICEF, 2004, op. cit., p.84.
  \item \textsuperscript{155} Ibid.
\end{itemize}
4.1.2 The Response

In terms of Sierra Leone’s security and stability, the formal DDR programme, of which children were a part of, was very highly regarded. The programme was conducted through reception centres around the country and was implemented in three phases. Phase one began in 1998, phase two began in 1999 and phase three took place between 2001 and 2002, following the British military intervention. UNICEF led the DDR process for children and 189 children, 4272 children and 6485 children entered the DDR programme during each phase respectively. In order to be involved in the DDR process, children had to meet several criteria, they had to be: “between the ages of 7 and 18, had learned to cock and load a weapon, had been trained in an armed group and had spent 6 months or more in an armed group.”

The proportion of girl soldiers who went through the DDR process, in comparison to the total number of girl soldiers, is shown in the graph overleaf.

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Graph 1 Girls Soldiers as a Proportion of the Total Number of Child Soldiers


Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.
In terms of their participation, children were not involved in the planning, design, or monitoring and evaluation phases of the programme. However, children were able to choose from a number of programme options, which were: to reenlist in the new Sierra Leone Army and become a soldier; to go back to school; to learn a skill such as hairdressing, carpentry, masonry, agriculture or soap making, with a small allowance and a toolkit upon completion; or to participate in public employment opportunities, usually for food or a small allowance. Children were also offered psychosocial counselling, family tracing and reunification services and were provided with recreational and educational activities.

4.1.3 Challenges in Relation to a Lack of Participation

UNICEF have acknowledged that the DDR process in Sierra Leone offered little space for children’s participation, which was reportedly for a number of reasons, including: time restrictions in attempting to get children away from armed groups as quickly as possible; fears around children’s safety resulting in high levels of control in the centres; a lack of communication; and cultural resistance towards involving children in decision making.

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164 Ibid.
166 Ibid.
Despite reintegration efforts, in 2003 it was estimated that 2,000-3,000 ex-child soldiers were being exploited in illegal and dangerous diamond mines, while 1,000 girls and women were living with their former commanders. Ex-child soldiers were also found to be regularly taking drugs more than any other groups of children.

When referring to his experiences with ex-child soldiers in Sierra Leone, Dallaire highlighted the problematic nature of adult-delivered rehabilitation programmes. He argued that children who had been with armed groups were not going to buy into simplistic adult-led rehabilitation efforts. He asserts that these children were used to having power and if a programme did not meet their needs then they could ensure its failure. As a result, Dallaire advocates for programmes which enable children to use their leadership capabilities in ways which are beneficial and constructive. Similarly, Peters highlights the capacity of the children who fought in Sierra Leone, claiming that child soldiers are “knowledgeable young people who take rational and active decisions to maximise their situations under difficult circumstances . . . it is dangerous to overlook the agency of youth; it has clearly played a critical role in the Sierra Leone conflict.” Moreover, one of the root causes cited for the conflict is the disempowerment of youth, with the World Bank stating that prior to the conflict, young people without protection or sponsorship were increasingly finding themselves in situations of exploitation and despair. Therefore, enabling children to effectively participate in the reintegration process arguably could have also acted as a positive step towards preventing future violence and achieving sustainable peace.

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170 Dallaire, R., They Fight Like Soldiers, They Die Like Children, Hutchinson, Great Britain, 2010, p.10.
172 Ibid, p.57.
A key neglect of the DDR programmes was that of the inclusion of girls, as one key informant emphasised: “particularly girls were invisible in all the processes, they were very poorly picked up in the process in Sierra Leone.”

During interviews by Mazurana and Carlson, former girl soldiers stated six main concerns which prevented their involvement in DDR programmes: they did not know about or did not see the benefits of DDR; they feared reprisals at DDR centres; it was believed that girls were not part of the CDF so they were not able to enter the process; it was believed that children with the CDF stayed with their families and communities and therefore did not qualify for the benefits associated with being a ‘separated’ child; girls were over classified as wives and followers as opposed to combatants; and culturally childhood and adulthood were defined by experiences rather than biological age, which meant that some girls entered adult DDR programmes which failed to address the specific needs of children.

As shown on page 52, there were specific criteria set out for the inclusion of children in DDR programmes. It could be considered that requiring children to have experience in training and cocking and loading a gun excluded many girls from programmes; particularly those who were abducted for sexual purposes or to fulfil roles such as cooks. Had girls been involved or consulted in determining the entry criteria, it may have been devised in order to include a wider range of children. The criteria also conflict with the Cape Town Principles definition of a child soldier which includes “cooks, porters, messengers . . . girls recruited for sexual purposes and for forced marriage.” Furthermore, had girls had the opportunity to express their fears of social stigma, a less formalised approach to DDR could have been taken, which would not have highlighted their former roles to their communities. More recently, UNICEF have advocated for strategies that ensure girls who do not go through the formal DDR process are still able to benefit from assistance in a participatory and informed way, through networks of other girls who have been involved in armed groups. Denov, a researcher who undertook participatory research with former girl soldiers in Sierra Leone, also advocates for the use of peer support networks.

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173 Key informant interview with participant 6, December 2012.
175 Cape Town Principles and Best Practices, op. cit., p.12.
176 Grusovin, K. et al, op. cit., p.156.
The safety of girls during the programmes was also cited as a key issue. Arguably, adults may have been unaware of risks to girls’ safety as children were not involved in risk assessments. One girl who did not complete the programme expressed her concerns during a later participatory research project:

“The [demobilisation] centre became chaotic and disorganised . . . [T]here was no order . . . The officers [at the camp] who were on night duty were not able to control the boys [former combatants], so the boys were coming over to [the girls] and harassing us for sex. I didn’t feel safe and my friend and I decided to leave and go to Freetown because of that. Since we came to Freetown I have been living in the street.” (Girl)  

The involvement of girls in the planning stage would have meant this threat to their protection could have potentially, with their input, been prevented. Or, had they been able to feedback on the success of the programme during the implementation phase, risks to their protection could have been minimised and responded to.

Despite participation being highlighted as a key issue, it has also been argued that there were flaws in the DDR process in Sierra Leone in terms of a focus on children’s communities. It has been indicated that an important factor in the reintegration of girls is purification ceremonies and rituals. Although peer-support structures could very much involve child participation, it appears that ritual healing would be more of a community-based approach. As a result, it could be considered that while a participatory approach to DDR is important, the wider-community should also have a level of participation in order to reduce stigma and allow girls to be accepted back into their societies. Failing to address the needs of other children affected by conflict, and those of the wider community, could also lead to frustrations which could have negative consequences for children’s reintegration. Key Informant Four noted that this had been achieved successfully during reintegration efforts in Nepal and Uganda. Children’s groups welcomed home young ex-combatants and were able to forgive them and offer support in a way in which adults could not.

In response to the lack of girls present in the DDR programmes, UNICEF set up a short term project called ‘Girls Left behind’. Through this project, 560 girls received basic

179 Ibid.
181 Key informant interview with participant 4, December 2012.
skills training and education, as well as other services such as psychosocial support.\textsuperscript{183} However, it has been argued that this programme still to an extent, failed to take girl’s views into account, and was not based on girls’ own testimonies.\textsuperscript{184} The perception of girls by humanitarian organisations is reflected in the name of the project, which indicates that girls were vulnerable and helpless, as opposed to capable people with their own agency.\textsuperscript{185} The entry criteria for the programme also viewed girls as victims, with only those either abducted or at risk of sexual abuse being eligible for the project.\textsuperscript{186} 

Despite the lack of participation in DDR programmes, later Sierra Leone’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission was acclaimed for its use of child participation and is considered to have had the first child friendly forum.\textsuperscript{187} This indicates that, given the right approach is taken; war-affected children can effectively participate within the cultural context of Sierra Leonean society.

\textsuperscript{183} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{185} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{187} UNICEF, 2005, op. cit., p.35.
4.2 Participation in Progress: Responding to Sexual Violence in DRC

“we’re not children, therefore we can only have, we can have some very good ideas and ways of protecting children from sexual violence but we’re not the children themselves so there’s always going to be something missing.”

4.2.1 Background

The Democratic Republic of the Congo is a country in central Africa approximately the size of Western Europe. It shares its borders with Angola, Burundi, Central African Republic, Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, South Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia. There are over 200 African ethnic groups in DRC and it has a population of 73 million, of whom two million are internally displaced. Children make up a large proportion of the current population; with 44% of people being between the ages of 0 and 14 years. Between 1998 and 2008 it was estimated that 5.4 million people had died as the result of conflict in

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188 Key informant interview with participant 6, discussing sexual violence in DRC, December 2012.
DRC, and according to the UN around 200,000 women and girls have suffered rape of sexual violence over the last fifteen years.

The current conflict in DRC began following the 1994 Rwandan genocide, when an influx of Hutu rebels crossed the border from Rwanda into DRC (then Zaire). In 1997 anti-Mobutu rebels seized control of the capital, installing Laurent-Désire Kabila as president and renaming the country the Democratic Republic of the Congo. However, Kabila was consequently accused by Rwanda of not acting against the Hutu rebels and Rwanda sent forces to overthrow him. In response to this, Kabila called upon Angola, Namibia and Zimbabwe to support him in a war against Rwanda, which officially lasted for five years until 2003. However, a proxy war continued between Rwanda and DRC until 2008, when the governments joined forces to fight an armed group known as the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR). A peace agreement was signed between the two governments in 2009. The conflict has continued and despite receiving backing from the United Nations, the DRC government has failed to defeat the FDLR. During 2012 another armed group re-emerged, known as the March 23 Movement (M23), named after the date of the 2009 peace agreement, which they accuse the DRC government of violating. In November 2012, M23 seized control of Goma, the provincial capital of North Kivu in Eastern DRC. Human Rights Watch report that M23 have received support in terms of weapons, ammunition and recruits from the Rwandan government, though both parties denies these claims.

Throughout the broader conflict described above, local conflicts have also erupted and other countries and armed groups have been involved. Due to constraints on the length of this dissertation, these have not been outlined but the complexity of the DRC conflict should be acknowledged.

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193 Ibid.
194 Ibid.
According to Bosmans, impunity and the breakdown of socio-cultural barriers through the conflict in DRC has created an ‘ethical vacuum’. She claims that this has led to an acceptance of adults engaging in transactional sex with children who are working to survive.\(^{197}\) Perpetrators of sexual violence reportedly include: community members\(^{198}\); aid workers and peace keepers\(^{199}\); the police; military personal; and members of armed groups.\(^{200}\) A study of 440 children in DRC found that 90% of perpetrators of sexual violence were identified as civilians with 84% being known to the child’s family.\(^{201}\) However, there is a wide belief that ex-combatants are among civilian perpetrators, potentially as a result of the failure of DDR programmes and a lack of psychosocial support and economic recovery.\(^{202}\)

During a focus group study with men and women, the first war and the influx of foreign armed actors was cited as the starting point of widespread rape in Eastern DRC. They acknowledge that it has now become a norm for men and boys who grew up during the violence.\(^ {203}\) The conflict has also resulted in an increased number of female headed households and women have had to seek new income earning strategies. Whilst some women have been able to participate in initiatives such as farming cooperatives, others have engaged in transactional sex due to a lack of opportunities or risks of theft and violence involved in working in the fields.\(^ {204}\) This in turn has arguably contributed to the normalisation of sexually violent behaviour and encourages further sexual violence against both women and girls.\(^ {205}\)

As a result of the breakdown of families and communities, the structures that worked to make decisions and uphold societal values have been depleted and it is believed that children have grown up more isolated and with a decreased understanding of their cultural roots.\(^ {206}\) Combined with this, feelings of trauma and a lack of trust within

\(^{199}\) Save the Children, Sexual Exploitation and Abuse of Children By Aid Workers and Peace Keepers, Policy Brief, Save the Children, December 2009, p.1.
\(^{206}\) Ibid, p.2-3.
communities have resulted less guidance for children and greater impunity for the perpetrators of sexual violence.207

“Children are especially reliant on a myriad of critical social structures—family, religious communities, education and health systems—in order to ensure their health and development. These are the very systems that have been undermined or destroyed as a result of the pervasive and public violence that characterizes this prolonged conflict”208

Furthermore, in some cases families have encouraged their daughters to engage in prostitution to make up for the losses inflicted through conflict and support the family.209

Both societal stigma and self-stigma have occurred as a result of sexual violence in DRC, leading to a lower acceptance of survivors and increased impunity for perpetrators.210 This could be partly as a result of gender perceptions. During a study in DRC for International Alert, young people said that girls are not viewed as important within the family and that when children are counted, nobody counts the girls. One male noted: “women in Kaniola are human beings who are there first and foremost to satisfy.”211 However, in order to prevent and respond to sexual violence, a programme focused only on women and girls could neglect their wider needs. Kelly explains that if the needs of the family and community of the survivor are not addressed then the holistic needs of the survivor are ignored.212 For interventions to be effective, working only with those directly affected is not enough as they “cannot truly heal if their support networks are broken.”213

It should also be noted that men and boys are estimated to make up 4-10 per cent of the survivors of sexual violence who seek treatment in DRC.214 During a study of street children, Human Rights Watch found that only a few boys would talk about incidences of experiencing sexual violence, though it was claimed that the majority of street boys are survivors of rape.215

207 Ibid.
208 Ibid, p.35.
209 Ibid, p.16.
211 Ibid, p.35.
213 Ibid.
4.2.2 The Response

Save the Children's approach to preventing and responding to sexual violence in DRC has been made up of three types of activity: activities to ensure that communities are protective; providing adapted care for survivors; and advocating for better and improved support for child survivors of sexual and gender based violence.\(^{216}\) This approach is utilised in programmes in Kinshasa, Province Orientale, North Kivu and Kasai Orientale. The initial design for the child protection programme was formulated using information from previous focus group discussions with 2,000 children and adults as part of a child-rights situation analysis.\(^{217}\) Despite levels of child participation in Save the Children's response to sexual violence in DRC, it has been acknowledged that participation has not yet been fully embedded throughout programme.\(^{218}\) Below is an outline of some of the key participatory elements of the programme.

Within the types of activity listed above, Save the Children has supported children's clubs and girls’ clubs to develop risk mitigation strategies and projects aimed at reducing their vulnerability to sexual violence. For example, through this initiative two girls’ clubs identified that there was no electricity to support lighting on the route that children had to take to access their community water pipe. As a result, children were experiencing abuse on their way to fetch water in the dark.\(^{219}\) Through children's participation, Save the Children was able to set up a lighting system to prevent children from being attacked. Another group wanted to have a discussion workshop with government authorities and asked Save the Children to support them in this process. Staff found the discussion workshop effective and there were some clear decisions made by local authorities as a result of children's views.\(^{220}\) The clubs also provide feedback to Save the Children on the work that they are doing. Each club is allocated an amount of money per month and children are able to determine the ways in which it is spent.\(^{221}\)

\(^{216}\) Save the Children UK, *Child Protection Signature Programme for DRC: Addressing Sexual Violence Against Children*, 2012. [Internal document at Save the Children UK]

\(^{217}\) A child rights situation analysis is a type of situation analysis designed to incorporate principles of the rights of a child in planning child-based programmes, for more information see: Save the Children Sweden, *Child Rights Situation Analysis*, Save the Children Sweden Regional Office for Southeast Asia and Pacific, Bangkok, 2008.

\(^{218}\) Key informant interview with participant 8, December 2012.

\(^{219}\) Ibid.

\(^{220}\) Ibid.

\(^{221}\) Ibid.
Save the Children has also developed child advocacy tools to empower children and give them the opportunity to lead their own advocacy initiatives towards local authorities.\textsuperscript{222} This has included a Theatre for Development project which involves local advocacy and is based on risk mapping and theatre training for children. Children first identify the problems and develop messages that they want to send out. They then perform a short play and hold a question and answer session. Another child advocacy initiative involved small group talks held by street children and communities in between door-to-door awareness raising.\textsuperscript{223} They then held two-hour discussions on children rights and views on street children and witchcraft.\textsuperscript{224}

Save the Children has also supported children to identify their own child protection community focal points through a process which is validated by engaging the children's wider communities in the discussions. Staff felt that this was necessary because without a facilitative and supportive environment, participation can be counter-productive and have negative implications for community dynamics.\textsuperscript{225} This was done through an exercise with children to identify key qualities and behaviours they would like in an 'Uncle' or 'Aunty'. Staff then presented children's list to communities to open up a discussion. Afterwards, children selected five community members who met the criteria. The names were then counted and those listed most frequently were selected to be focal points. As communities had seen that there were good criteria in place and that children were capable of making good decisions, it was easier to gain community acceptance of their choices.\textsuperscript{226}

\textbf{4.2.3 Benefits and Challenges Associated with Participation}

In Save the Children’s DRC programme there have been several key challenges associated with children’s participation. Firstly, staff members do not receive any formal induction or training in child participation, which has led to confusion around what it looks like in practice and how to ensure that it is meaningful.\textsuperscript{227} Similarly, it has been suggested that some staff members view participation as an additional activity or optional extra, as opposed to a way of working. As a result, it is felt that child participation needs to be further embedded as a regular practice:

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{222} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{223} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{224} Children often become street children as a result of being accused of witchcraft and consequently experience sexual violence as street children.
\item \textsuperscript{225} Key informant interview with participant 8, December 2012.
\item \textsuperscript{226} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{227} Ibid.
\end{itemize}
"I think what's key for me is staff and partners just getting into the habit of automatically doing some key activities or key participation requirements rather than saying it's something in addition."\textsuperscript{228}

A lack of staff capacity can also put children at risk if staff do not understand the relevant ethical procedures in terms of the security situation and sensitivities around sexual violence. Moreover, the dangerous context limits the amount of time that they can spend in some areas which means they have limited contact time to involve the local children in their work. Time is further reduced as funding is often provided on a short term basis, though child participation is arguably most effective when developed and built upon over a long period of time.\textsuperscript{229}

There have also been issues in terms of follow-up with children as to the outcomes of their participation and in ensuring that their views are incorporated into ways of working in the long-term. Low literacy levels have inhibited the involvement of more vulnerable children in certain activities.\textsuperscript{230}

It is evident that this programme has the potential to increase awareness in communities around sexual violence and to reduce the stigma for survivors as well as to influence the decisions of local governments. Furthermore, it is intended that children’s self-esteem will be increased and young people will have the increased ability to claim their rights to protection. As indicated by Kelly in the previous section, addressing sexual violence should involve a community-based approach, which has arguably been recognised and ensured through the use of children's clubs and community involvement. However, this project is ongoing and therefore has not yet been evaluated and the impact of children's participation has not been measured. Key Informant Eight noted that it has been problematic to gain a full understanding of the ways in which children's participation has been successful in protecting them from sexual violence.\textsuperscript{231} Though it was felt that children were better able to understand risks and appropriate actions as a result of the work:

"Child participation definitely has potential to help children in the long term as it can help them to determine how to work out what they key risks or problems are, how to address them and what their role can be in this process,"\textsuperscript{232}

\textsuperscript{228} Key informant interview with participant 6, December 2012.
\textsuperscript{229} Key informant interview with participant 8, December 2012.
\textsuperscript{230} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{231} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{232} Key informant interview with participant 5, December 2012.
Looking forward in the DRC child protection programme, it could be considered relevant to utilise tools to measure the impact of child participation. This could therefore increase staff buy-in for the process to ensure its systematisation and would enable the programme to advocate with donors for funding on a longer term basis. It would also enable staff to gain an increased understanding as to which specific participatory activities are the most effective in reducing sexual violence so that the approach could be refined and replicated elsewhere.

It should be noted that participatory programmes for children in the DRC should arguably act as part of a broader response sexual violence. Impunity is still cited as a critical challenge in addressing sexual violence with only 2% of 14,200 perpetrators of rape being called to account in South Kivu between 2005 and 2007. Moreover, in order for child protection to be sustainable, it is important that the local and national relevant child protection systems are built upon and strengthened. Save the Children aims to contribute to this by working within the national child protection framework and by supporting child protection community networks.

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5. **Discussing Participation & Protection:**

**What, When and How?**

![Adolescents from the Children’s Movement for Peace conduct a Return to Happiness workshop, Quindio, Colombia, UNICEF/Jeremy Homer](image)

**Figure 12**

**This chapter will progress from discussing the benefits and challenges around participation to reflecting on participation and protection in the context of the child. It will then seek to explore when and how participation should be practised, in light of the previous chapters.**

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5.1 Participation and Protection: Resilience and Vulnerability

"I think we need to have a very complicated view of children, they're not totally vulnerable but they're equally not adults, child soldiers are a perfect example you know it's a child but it's also a soldier you know and there's all sorts of mixed experiences that go with that. So I think that's why kind of protection and participation, they come together but we need both really, we need that protection angle but we also need to kind of recognise and sort of respect what those children have been through as well." 236

It is apparent through this dissertation, that child participation and child protection are linked and are both able to form part of the response to children facing violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation. Before humanitarian actors arrive, children are already considering the risks to their protection, and are actively working to reduce those risks. In light of this, child participation should build on children's existing coping mechanisms. 237 However, humanitarian actors are well positioned to further reduce those risks and to set up appropriate mechanisms to protect children. As a result, both children and child protection practitioners could be considered to complement each other in terms of their knowledge regarding how to better protect children during and following conflict.

It could be considered that protective mechanisms such as family tracing and reunification activities, child-friendly spaces, child protection case management and building child protection systems respond to children's vulnerability. 238 Whilst child participation could be seen to build on children's resilience: "...in spite of often extreme adversity, most children show considerable resilience and ability to cope, provided their basic survival needs are met and they have sufficient security and emotional and social support." 239

Responding to children's vulnerability, whilst also increasing their resilience, could be seen as a sustainable approach to child protection. This is because, whilst threats to children's protection are being reduced in the short-term, children are also gaining the capacity to better protect themselves in the long-term.

5.2 When to Involve Children

During the key informant interviews for this dissertation, it was indicated that it can be very difficult to involve children during the first four to six weeks of an emergency. Key

236 Key informant interview with participant 3, December 2012.
Informant Five explained that there is a general rule not to involve children at this stage due to time pressures and a lack of capacity among some agencies to practice ethical and safe participation.240 This argument is somewhat reflected in the case studies. The DDR programme in Sierra Leone was an immediate response to the end of the conflict; and time pressures along with safety were cited as a reason for non-participation. Contrastingly, the DRC child protection programme has been in place through a protracted conflict, which therefore allows adequate time for planning and risk-assessments. On the other hand, Key Informant Three argued in favour of child participation from the outset of a response. She indicated that although it may be difficult to support child-led or collaborative participation, it is still possible to begin to build relationships with children and to create a culture of listening to children’s views. She also viewed this as an opportunity to let children know that they can approach organisations for assistance in light of any protection concerns.241

Moreover, although Sierra Leone was an immediate response, it could have been foreseen that children would at some point be demobilised and therefore programmes could have been planned in advance to include the voices of children, as indicated by Key Informant Four:

“particularly in conflict situations and a number of emergencies, they are much more complex and they are slow onset so there’s no reason not to start at any point in ensuring processes and spaces to engage children and listen to their views. I think part of the focus on the four to six weeks is just another excuse used by organisations.”242

It is apparent that in order to ensure children’s participation throughout a humanitarian response, it is necessary to build capacity across the sector regarding how to practise participation ethically and effectively. It could also be considered important to set out the types of participation which can be utilised in short time periods as well as strategies to engage children without causing them harm. Ways in which children can participate during a rapid response is something which the frameworks and standards set out in chapter two fail to clarify or provide further insight on. However, the Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action, as cited on page 30, do specify that children should be involved “at all possible stages.”243 Though they do not continue to define what is possible, and therefore that could be open to interpretation.

240 Key informant interview with participant 5, December 2012.
241 Key informant interview with participant 3, December 2012.
242 Key informant interview with participant 4, December 2012.
243 CPWG, op. cit., p.5.
5.3 How to Involve Children

The key informants for this dissertation were asked to give any tools or approaches which they felt could be used in protection programmes across all contexts and situations of armed conflict. These are shown below, with explanations of the approach where necessary. Numbers in brackets indicate the number of participants who cited the tool, where it was given by more than one participant.

- **Using child participation ethical standards (2)**
  There are a number of standards for child participation, the primary ones being the UN Basic Requirements for Effective and Ethical Participation, as shown on page 25. These can be used to assess and continually improve the quality of children's participation throughout a programme. These standards could also be used to review the inclusiveness of programmes and the involvement of vulnerable children and children with disabilities.

- **Body mapping (2)**
  This involves children drawing a body and assigning different thoughts or feelings to each body part. This activity can be used to evaluate the impact of programmes. A suggested meaning for each body part, as summarised using the 'Creating a Step Change in the Monitoring and Evaluation of Children’s Participation' toolkit is shown in the table overleaf.

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244 Key informant interviews with participants 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7.
Head | changes in their knowledge or how they feel
---|---
Eyes | changes in the way they see their themselves/ their family/ their community/ their school
Ears | changes in how they are listened to or how they listen to others
Mouth | changes in the way they speak and communicate with others
Shoulders | changes in the responsibilities taken on by girls or boys
Heart | changes in the way they feel about themselves and others
Stomach | changes in what they eat
Hands and arms | changes in the activities they do
Feet and legs | changes in where do they go

Table 2 Body mapping

This tool could be useful in monitoring and evaluating different forms of child participation utilised in Save the Children's child protection programme in DRC. This is particularly relevant as it was concluded in the previous chapter that an increased level of staff buy-in, and an ability to advocate with donors was required. Additionally, body mapping can act as a tool to measure levels of psychosocial healing.

- **Forming or supporting existing children's groups (2)**
  This would involve working with existing groups of children or setting up children's groups. This could be an effective, tried and tested approach and it echoes the approach adopted in DRC.

- **Peer education / behaviour change communication (2)**
  This involves children sharing information and teaching each other about important issues such as children's rights, prevention of sexual violence and re-recruitment. This would be a useful approach during an emergency whereby an agency is trying to reach large numbers of children at scale, as well as in more protracted situations of conflict, such as DRC.  

- **Spider tool**
  The spider tool can be used by child led organisations to evaluate their success, consider what they're trying to achieve and explore areas which could be

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247 Key informant interview with participants 4 and 7, December 2012.
improved. This could be used in DRC to increase the effectiveness of the children's clubs.

- **Safety and danger mapping (2)**
  Children draw maps of their communities and identify safe areas, as well as those that hold risks to their protection. As a result, agencies can be made aware of the risks to children and can act to prevent or minimise these. This approach was also used, and found to be effective, with children’s groups in the DRC case study.

- **Participatory ranking**
  Children rank either the risks in their lives by their significance, or their priorities in terms of assistance. Participatory ranking may have been particularly useful in planning programmes to meet the needs of girl soldiers in Sierra Leone and is cited as a key tool for emergency contexts. Through ranking activities, agencies could have been made aware of the priorities of girls during the planning stages of programming.

- **Focus group discussions**
  This involves facilitating discussions with groups of children, either to plan, monitor or evaluate programmes.

- **Mapping communities (for family tracing and reunification)**
  Children map out their communities to show where they believe their families to be located. Agencies can use this information to trace their families or to seek knowledge of their whereabouts. This could be a useful tool during situations in which children are displaced, or for children demobilising from armed groups who are looking to be reunified with their families.

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249 Key informant interview with participant 8, December 2012.


252 Key informant interview with participant 5, December 2012.
• **Mapping with a child their journey and the markers on the road to get there**

  Working with refugee children and children on the move to map out their journey, marking the problems that could occur on the way and discussing how these can be overcome.\(^\text{253}\) This could be adapted and used as a peacebuilding activity with children.

• **Problem analysis**

  Children identify problems and devise solutions.\(^\text{254}\) This could have acted as a useful programme monitoring activity for girls during the DDR programme in Sierra Leone. Through problem analysis, the issues preventing girls from completing the DDR process could have been explored and potentially addressed.

• **Child friendly spaces (CFS)**

  CFS are defined by UNICEF as “places designed and operated in a participatory manner, where children affected by natural disasters or armed conflict can be provided with a safe environment, where integrated programming including play, recreation, education, health, and psychosocial support can be delivered and/or information about services/supports provided.”\(^\text{256}\) CFS could be used to facilitate the activities listed above.

![Figure 15 Syrian children refugees play in the Child Friendly Space in Domiz, refugee camp, ACTED\(^\text{254}\)](image)

\(^{253}\) Key informant interview with participant 5, December 2012.


6. CONCLUSION

Figure 16 Edeline, age 7, Haiti, UNICEF

This chapter will conclude the findings and analysis of the previous chapters of this dissertation and will outline some recommendations for key actors including governments, humanitarian organisations, donors and researchers.

6.1 Conclusions and Reflections

Conclusively, research indicates that children are capable of making informed decisions and taking positive action to ensure their protection in the midst of conflict. Children have also shown that they are able to act inclusively, whilst contributing to psychosocial healing and peacebuilding efforts. However, participation is not something which should be approached without consideration of the context and associated risks. Whilst children are actors in their own right, they also have specific vulnerabilities which must be understood and responded to.

Children’s actions prior to a humanitarian intervention should be built upon and their coping mechanisms strengthened. During participatory processes their talents and potential should be fostered. Children’s ability to create sustainable change can be dictated by adults and the culture of their society. If children are respected and given safe spaces during conflict, they can think creatively and offer adults a unique insight into their lives and the world around them.

There are existing tools which have been utilised in involving children effectively in the work of NGOs and agencies. For children to thrive it could be considered necessary for the international community to gain a shared understanding of: what child participation looks like in practice; what the limitations around participation are; and when and to what extent participation can be practiced. However, a broader culture shift is required if children’s right to participation is to be fully recognised, with a need for communities, governments and other duty bearers to appreciate and respect the views of children. Humanitarian organisations should aim to advocate for and foster this broader level of acceptance in their approach. They should also involve the wider communities in children’s participation where possible.

One issue in terms of the evidence for participation is a lack of quantitative data demonstrating a direct link between participation and protection. Quantitative research analysing a causal link between child participation and child protection would enable a greater understanding as to the exact extent to which participation as a factor can increase children’s protection.
Participation should not be considered a one-stop solution to the risks facing children, but instead a way of working to ensure that protection outcomes are achieved effectively and through the appropriate mechanisms.

6.2 Recommendations

Recommendations for Humanitarian Agencies and Organisations

1. Organisations need to ensure that child participation is recognised at the highest level and is embedded into core standards, practice documents and success indicators.

2. Relevant organisations and agencies acting in humanitarian contexts should adopt a shared vision of, and approach to, involving children in their work.

3. Humanitarian staff should be systematically trained in practising participatory approaches with both children and adults, as well as other aspects of organisational accountability such as information sharing and responding the feedback and complaints.

4. Children, communities and governments should be sensitised on children’s rights and be made aware that children have a right to be involved in the decisions that affect them.

Recommendations for Donors

1. Donors should require organisations to involve children and communities throughout the lifetime of any project at an ethical standard, and to show evidence of this practice.

2. Donors should offer more flexible and long-term funding so that participation can be fostered and programmes can be adapted with children’s input.

Recommendations for Governments

1. Uphold and promote children’s participation, as enshrined in the UNCRC, in all areas of governance relevant to children’s lives. Enable children’s participation both in practice and through national laws and legislation.

Recommendations for Further Research

1. Quantitative research examining the relationship between participation and protection in humanitarian action.
2. Further research is required into involving marginalised or particularly vulnerable groups, including children with physical and mental disabilities.

3. Research should be undertaken looking at children’s roles in peacebuilding and transitional justice, with a focus on safeguarding children and to international law.

“If you think children can’t make a difference, you are very wrong. Who else can describe all the world’s harm if not children? Children should be heard, and their ideas and opinions should be listened to. Maybe then the leaders of the world would think about all the harm that they are doing to the world and maybe just try to help all the children in the world.”

16 year-old Urska Korosec, Slovenia.\(^{258}\)

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS
APPENDIX 2: INTERVIEW SAMPLES
APPENDIX 3: INTERVIEW DIARY
APPENDIX 2: RESEARCH ETHICS FORM
**APPENDIX 1: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

Below is a list of all of the questions asked in interviews, divided into ‘core questions’, ‘additional questions’ and 'spontaneous questions'. **Core questions** are questions which were deemed relevant to all participants, though some were not asked during specific interviews due to time restrictions and the prioritisation of questions most relevant to their area of expertise. Core questions 4.b and 5 were added during the interview period and therefore were not asked to the first three participants. **Additional questions** are those which were asked to participants based on their areas of expertise. **Spontaneous questions** are questions which were not planned for but were asked as a result of the topics discussed during an interview. The wording of each question is listed as it was planned, but may have varied slightly between different interviews. Similarly, the order in which questions were asked varied between interviews, depending on which additional questions were selected.

The number of participants to which each question was asked, is listed in brackets after the question.

**Core Questions**

1. Please could you start by explaining to me how you would define child participation or what it means to you? (7)

2. Do you believe that participation can be used as a tool to enhance children's protection, if so, how? (7)

3. a) Do you think children participation is different, or needs to be approached different, in a conflict situation in comparison to a development situation, and if so how? (7)
   
   b) What do you think are the likely benefits related to participation during a conflict? (7)

4. a) Do you think that children's participation can have an effect on a child’s psychosocial healing during and following and conflict? (5)
   
   b) Do you think that if children are denied the opportunity to influence the way in which aid and related services are provided to them following and armed conflict, that this could cause further negative implications for their psychological wellbeing? (4)

5. Do you feel that in some situations during or following conflict participation can be a burden for children? How can this be prevented? (4)

6. Do you feel that child participation is considered a priority by aid workers and humanitarian organisations? If yes how? And if no, how do you feel about this and what would be your suggestion for improvement? (6)
7. Some people might argue that all humanitarian funds should be spent on interventions which have direct measurable outcomes, such as food distribution and immunisations, how would you respond to this? (5)

8. How do you think child participation can be adopted systematically by NGOs and humanitarian agencies at both a project level and a global level? What do you believe needs to happen? (6)

9. Are there any specific child participation tools or approaches which you believe could be applied in protection programmes across all contexts and situations of conflict? (7)

10. And finally is there anything you feel I’ve missed or anything you would like to add? (7)

**Additional Questions**

1. Do you think it’s possible to empower children during conflict without impacting on the dynamic of the conflict? How do ensure that through empowering children you’re not empowering one side? (1)

2. Do you feel that child participation can contribute to building peace? (1)

3. During a humanitarian response, some people might say that it’s difficult to involve children during the first four to six weeks, do you think it’s acceptable to begin to involve them after that four to six week period or do you feel that more needs to be done to involve them from the outset? (4)

4. When protection programmes in many conflict countries are already underfunded and under resourced is participation a realistic requirement or expectation in practice? (2)

5. In societies where children are traditionally seen but not heard, how can we overcome barriers to participation? (2)

6. In your opinion, what could be the expected outcomes or risks of not acting accountably when working with children in conflict? (2)

7. Do you feel child participation can be used to enhance the quality and practice of child protection case management? (1)

8. Do you feel that it’s important to ensure that child participation is adopted by other duty-bearers in a society in which children are living as well as implemented by us? (1)

9. Do you think that there’s a risk that actors in the conflict could try and manipulate participatory processes with children or activities with children’s clubs and have you had any experience of that happening? (1)

10. During a complex conflict with multiple actors involved, how do you balance being accountable to those most vulnerable, whilst not undermining the status of armed groups? (1)
11. Do you think child participation is considered a priority by protection workers? (1) (This question was originally a core question but was adapted to form core question 6)

12. How do you feel about participatory projects which have psychosocial healing as an objective in comparison to more traditional approaches to psychosocial healing? (1)

13. How do you feel about participatory approaches to psychosocial healing as opposed to more standardised, Western models and approaches? (2) (this question was adapted from the question above, as the one above caused confusion)

14. How do you think the concept of accountability is perceived by aid workers? (1)

15. During the release and reintegration programmes in Sierra Leone, from your knowledge, were children, and more specifically girls, able to participate in the programme cycle? (1)

16. Considering the PAR study, do you think that that kind of methodology or approach could be applied in other contexts? (1)

17. Looking at the protection programme in DRC, what do you know in terms of what’s currently being done to utilise child participation, or what's been planned during the signature programme workshop? (1)

Spontaneous questions

1. You talked about forming a relationship which enables children to participate, how do you think you could approach this or what would be the first step in kind of building this kind of culture of participation? (1)

2. In terms of that kind of an approach [referring to PAR study], do you think it could have been improved upon in any way or do you think there’s any components that could be added to it to make it better? (1)

3. What do you think are the major challenges that face child participation in the DRC programme? (1)

4. Are there any countries that you think it's particularly, or regions, where it's particularly difficult to implement projects which have elements of participation? (1)

5. When you’re working with children on sensitive issues such as sexual violence, are there any special considerations that should be taken into account and would you have any recommendations for somebody that was doing that kind of project? (1)

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259 The PAR study was a participatory action research project with young mothers in Sierra Leone, Uganda and Liberia.
The length of the key informant interviews conducted for this dissertation ranged from thirty minutes to one hour and the transcripts for each interview were between 3,000 and 8,000 words in length. As a result, a few questions from each of the six transcribed interviews (two were not recorded, and therefore were not transcribed) have been included as a sample. Some parts of interviews have not been included to ensure anonymity of the participants, where words have been removed this will be indicated in the text.

**Participant 1**

**Interviewer:** Do you think child participation is different or needs to be approached differently in a conflict situation in comparison to a development situation and if so, how?

Participant 1: I think, I mean I tend to think of this as you know, I guess we can think about it as in, as they say a humanitarian kind of versus development context, and I think child participation will probably be a little bit different, say if you’re in a displaced camp, people running away from conflict. There are still debates in our sector [text removed to ensure anonymity]. Very you know, early on in the crisis people are kind of in shock or traumatised and there are limits to how much you can expect them to kind of get their, get themselves together to actually you know, from that initial shock and also trying to, I don’t know build themselves a little shelter or just you know do the bare minimal for their own survival, to them come out of that space and be able to communicate with communities and actually you know start working with the agencies. And this is, you know, especially difficult for children, I think children need a lot of support in order to feel safe and comfortable to be able to kind of interact and participate in communal activities that is outside of their familiar environment.

So of course in a conflict environment that’s going to take some time to provide that space both mentally and physically for children. And, but at the same time you see that children are very adaptable and very, what’s the word, and have that inner strength in way. I’ve seen in Gaza situations where right next to their homes that were bombed UNICEF had gone in just a little bit further out and put up these tents for children for them to have that immediate kind of environment to go in and be able to play and do drawings and things like that. So you know, such things do help normalise a few things for children, so it’s not that difficult but it does take time. When you look at the kind of lifetime of the, of a crisis response, beyond the initial six to eight weeks I think things get quite similar to development programming where you want to have some sort of plan together with children as to how you want to work with them. So by that time hopefully you are making the time to sit down with them and plan with them and prepare some sort of physical environment and start engaging them a bit more fully in the crisis. One more difference might be that crisis situations can be more volatile, in you know that other armed conflicts can break out, insecurity continues, if it’s a camp situation there’s a cholera outbreak, this and that, so various sicknesses that come about, so all of these sometimes really are not very big crises keep coming up, that will affect continuously your programme and the participation of children. So you might find yourself that you have to very frequently adjust your programme, stop activities, and then for indefinitely, and then you have to start all over again. So that makes it, the continuity and the empowerment elements of say

**APPENDIX 2: INTERVIEW SAMPLES**

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your programme or the safety or protection element of your programmes to have less impact than you would have hoped for because of that lack of continuity.

**Interviewer:** And do you think that if children are denied the opportunity to influence the way in which aid and related services are provided to them following an armed conflict, that this could cause further negative implications for their psychological well-being?

Participant 1: Oh absolutely I think, you know the more, I mean if they are in a camp situation and they are, everybody’s getting something and they’re not that’s going to cause not only probably psychological harm, but also add to their feelings of isolation and helplessness and deprivation. But also, generate a lot of anger and frustration at the NGOs, at the you know at the system they find themselves in, of you know, unfairness and mistrust and injustice and that sort of thing.

**Interviewer:** Do you feel that child participation is considered a priority by aid workers and humanitarian organisations? If yes, how? And if no, how do you feel about this and what would be your suggestions for improvement?

Participant 1: I do not think children’s participation is a priority at all, and I think I can confidently say that working for Save the Children and seeing all the, you know, kind of anti-participation attitudes amongst our own humanitarian staff, fears around you know child participation even, saying ’oh how are we going to do this? Are there safety and security issues involved? How are we going to be able to protect the children and do no harm? We don’t have the skills necessary for this sort of thing, that we need specialists and we need extra time and resources which we don’t have in a response, we have to go and save lives’. So there are attitudes against it, there are fears about it and we do not make the time and the resources for it, and that’s Save the Children, so that’s very sad. What I think needs to happen is I think is we need to identify and showcase responses where that has successfully happened, we need to identify for the staff basically, I don't think there's enough, there's enough understanding of the different forms that participation takes. So you know from consultation to collaboration to being led by children and other members of the community, so if we identify those and say ’all of this is valuable and that we need to be facilitating all of these different forms of participation across the programme life time’ I think it will help them because when you ask them ’so can you give me some examples of how people have participated in your response’ they're like, they generally go, ‘we’re humanitarian response, we don’t do that’, but then you probe further and you ask them ‘well didn’t you form community committees? Didn’t you form child friendly spaces and you know, do activities with children?’ So it just you know, it doesn't, it's not, it’s almost like it's not thought about as participation, all these things that people do. So it's there to certain extents, it's not there at the initial stages which is understandable, you know which we need to try to improve, especially within that four to six week time frame when we’re setting up the project. The more we can actually plan with people, the more we can improve. So clarifying different forms of participation, identifying success examples and showcasing them and making people see that it works and we’re actually doing it, and I think identifying messages that will help break people's preconceptions and kind of prejudices about this and fears and all those anti-participation attitudes. And banging on about those messages I think is very important at this point, because that’s I think the major barrier, it's very much here in the head for people.
**Interviewer:** Some people might argue that all humanitarian funds should all be spent on interventions which have a direct, measurable outcome such as food distribution and immunisations, how would you respond to this?

**Participant 1:** Vis-a-vis, other sorts of, what other sorts of programmes are you thinking?

**Interviewer:** Rather than sort of participatory programmes or putting a lot of money into accountability and things like that. Some people might argue that the money should all go directly on sort of food and water and...

**Participant 1:** So within is given programme you're saying because you know participatory programmes or accountability aren't necessarily separate programmes, they are approaches in a given programme, in any good programme they should be there. And you know I don't really buy that argument because I obviously think that the more participatory and accountable programming you have, the better quality you will have because of increased understanding of the situation, your adaptability, your relevance will improve, you'll be listening more and acting on feedback more and you will be empowering people through their participation, you will be increasing their ownership of the programme through their participation, therefore you will have probably a more sustainable impact. So for all those reasons I think it's worthwhile investing in accountability and participation and I think these things do not really cost much, in a humanitarian response we're talking in large scale emergency, we're talking millions of pounds, so these things do not cost much and for quality reasons, and for sustainability, for relevance, effectiveness, all those reasons they need to be there and it should be just a way of working it should not be you know. And I think we will get there, I mean a few years ago we weren't even budgeting for M&E, now we are doing it, so I think we'll get there.

**Participant 2**

**Interviewer:** Please could you start by explaining to me how you define child participation and what it means to you in your role.

**Participant 2:** [Text removed to protect participant’s anonymity] How I would define child's participation? I don't have one stock definition and I think it's up to every child to define what participation means to them. In a nutshell, to me it means creating opportunities for children and young people to have a say about issues that are important to them and to take part in devising action to bring about change relating to issues that are important to them. And I think there are lots and lots of other things related to child participation which have equal importance things like access to information, accountability, children's right to freedom of association. And so it's very difficult for me to give one stock definition, there are so many things are involved in it. That would be my answer to that question.

**Participant 3**

**Interviewer:** Do you believe that participation can be used as a tool to enhance children's protection? And if so how?

**Participant 3:** Yeah I think there's a really strong link between child participation and child protection because I think that in order to protect children properly they have to have a voice and we need to be able to hear that and listen to that. So at a very basic level, if
children are not able to give their views and opinions and if there's a climate that doesn't sort of foster that then we are not going to find out about the risks that children are facing and we're not going to learn about how best to protect them. And we're not going to learn about to get information from children on what works and what doesn't work because ultimately, in terms of their protection, they're the ones that have a lot of very useful information on what would be effective. And then I think there's a sort of strong link between participation and particular aspects of child protection, so for example, psychosocial protection, I think that a lot of people write about participation as part of a kind of the healing or the kind of therapeutic process for children when they've experienced either trauma of just generally very difficult situations and emergency situations. So I think there's quite a strong link there, between being able to express views, opinions, being involved in things, having control over decisions and sort of recovery. But I also have come across people who fear that kind of encouraging children to give their views and opinions and get involved in things can actually be contrary to their protection, can be sort of negative, either because people feel that talking about upsetting sort of issues and concerns can cause further trauma or upset, or that people think that in kind of difficult contexts and emergencies or contexts which are complicated by a conflict or other issues that you have to be very careful when you're engaging and involving children because you don’t know what the repercussions are. And I think that those things are definitely risks and dangers and I think we have to be very careful about the way that you promote and support child participation. However, I think that those children are already experiencing those difficult environments, you know they are the ones that are in them and so in a way they do need that outlet to be able to talk about them and be able to participate in how we address those difficult situations.

Interviewer: Do you think child participation is different or needs to be approached differently in a conflict situation in comparison to a development situation?

Participant 3: Um I think the right is the same so I think if you take a rights-based approach then all children, whatever setting they’re in, have the right to participation and I think we therefore, as kind of duty-bearers or adults, need to look at how we facilitate that. I think, yeah I think you always have to be kind of sensitive and aware of context, so for example, when we were doing some work in Dadaab we had to think about how is child participation seen in this sort of Muslim community, and how are children viewed and children giving their views and opinions viewed and how the community would react if we encourage children to do certain things or get involved in certain things? So I think that can be even more complicated like we’re saying if you’re in a conflict situation or post-conflict situation, because the relationships between children and adults and different groups in the community are very politicised and sensitive and there’s all sorts of repercussions. So yeah I do think we need to be careful. But then I mean I’ve also read some work by [text removed for anonymity] I don’t know if you've come across those but I can send them to you but you know really what they’re saying is that children in these contexts are already, as I was saying before, are already engaged in all of this, you know they’re already having to find protection strategies for themselves and in a way approaching it as though almost we are these adults coming in from outside and initiating participation and their protection from scratch is very unrealistic really, they are already engaged in it.

Interviewer: And in your opinion what could be the expected outcomes or risks of not acting accountably when working with children in conflict?
Participant 3: Well I think there’s a lot of issues around accountability, and child participation is very much a part of accountability but not exactly the same thing. But I think we’ve seen very major examples of where humanitarian response has not been accountable to children, so the sort of abuse in West Africa by humanitarian organisations and peacekeepers of children and women. And reports written about that saying one of the key things by looking into what had happened was that women and children felt that they hadn't had the opportunity to kind of talk about what was happening, that there weren’t avenues to complain or express their views. So I think the worst case scenario is that we end up turning a blind eye to abuse and exploitation and children are very vulnerable to that. But I think also by not working accountably you’re missing information that children can give us because children see and experience the world in very different ways and they bring a different perspective which can be beneficial to our work, particularly if that's [name of organisation removed for anonymity], they are our main target group you know we have to engage with them, we have to learn from them, we have to kind of be accountable to them in order to do our work effectively.

Participant 4

Interviewer: And do you believe that participation can be used as a tool to enhance children’s protection and if so how?

Participant 4: Yeah I think it's a really, I actually think it’s hard to protect children without listening to their views. And I think one of the reasons children face a lot of protection concerns is because they've had no voice. So if you look at issues around sexual abuse and sexual violence in particular one of the reasons they've really been targeted by adults is because they can threaten them not to tell anyone and to keep it silent. So I think giving children a voice is key to their protection and both and in terms of having a voice and how that can prevent or minimise the chance of some forms of protection issues. But also that children in coming together collectively in their own children's groups and through their actions as being kind of agents of change really kind of enhances their own protection as well and is one of their main protection mechanisms. And just from so many examples over the years I really feel for me, participation and protection go hand-in-hand, they kind of mutually reinforce each other, and particularly looking at the most marginalised groups, kind of one of the main ways of protecting themselves is through their expression and is through their own association and children's groups and kind of voicing concerns about protection issues affecting them and making sure to get involved in the kind of prevention or increasing the response to those concerns. So especially, whether it's street children or children affected by armed conflict or trafficking whatever the issue, I think good participation is key to their protection. And also in the very individual level in case management, child protection case management, it can only really be done well where children's individual views and feelings and experiences and options are heard and really taken seriously.

Interviewer: And do you think it’s possible to empower children during conflict without impacting on the dynamic of the conflict? How do ensure that through empowering children you're not empowering one side?

Participant 4: Yeah I mean I think again this needs very careful analysis of who has power and what are the kind of social dynamics, I think it is possible but it needs more analysis of again the kind of social and power dynamics. And particularly looking at opportunities to allow some of the most marginalised groups too at least come together themselves, but again where it isn't going to put them at more risk for coming together and if it could be
perceived in a negative way within the community or by military or kind of armed forces from different groups. So I think everything is in a context, so there might be implications, but again it comes back down to some of the good analysis of the social political situation and a risk analysis. And I think again even in non conflict situations there's power issues among different young people and some participation work might further empower the kind of better off children that can increase future marginalisation or increase chances of conflict in the future. So I think key to the work is just enabling children themselves to analyse and understand the root causes of conflict and to analyse and understand forms of discrimination and marginalisation and the see how through their participation and association initiatives that they're kind of addressing discrimination issues rather than contributing to them. And I think sometimes we need to work more with the most marginalised in order to address that, but it also needs to be recognised that the kind of the better of children need to understand what their power is and how to kind of reflect themselves on discrimination and how to reduce that.

**Interviewer: And what do you think are the likely benefits related to participation during conflict situations?**

Participant 4: I think there's, again if it's done meaningfully and safely that children can have more confidence, I think it can reduce the fear and the insecurity that's there during conflict time if children can have a more sense of control so the kind of psychosocial benefits of being organised, and particularly where in work in Northern Uganda where children have been abducted into the armed forces and then released they felt very isolated on their return to communities, but through being part of children's groups that were often inclusive of returnee children as well as children from the community that had never left. They really felt that sense of solidarity and community and again the kind of psychosocial side of that of belonging and support that enabled them to better integrate into their own families and their communities and schools. And again in Nepal there's been a lot of very good examples of children supporting, child clubs supporting, the reintegration of former child soldiers into schools and communities. And I think children can be again, sometimes more forgiving and more able to support reintegration than adults can be and they can help adults or social institutions overcome the barriers to inclusion or to the kind of, just that positive support that children need even more during times of conflict and insecurity. And again I think through the, the benefits in terms of protection, through being through their expression children can identify concerns or fears they have, whether again it's about further recruitment or sexual violence, whether in communities or in camps or the landmine issue so by listening to children and involving children in kind of risk and resource mapping or other kind of processes to identify their concerns they can increase their protection. And I think that's possible with very young children as well as older children and adolescents and in refugee camps in Pakistan on the border of Afghanistan there was some really good examples of the post-conflict situation there where they had like what they called children's circles, reflect action circles, and children as young as five, girls as young as five raised concerns about the distance of the latrines from the tent where they lived and the, and how they faced sexual harassment at night when they just had to go that far to the toilet. So they were able to bring these issues up in kind of camp management meetings, every month children were able to raise their concerns and so that increased their protection and again just their sense of safety within the refugee camp setting. So I think they're a few examples but I think there's many benefits, and also just the wider benefits for families and communities. Children often identify issues that need to be improved, whether it's in a community or camp or refugee or IDP setting and they're able to take very positive action that can improve that. And again benefits in terms of peer education and awareness raising and information sharing.
Children can be often the most effective in reaching their peers, whether it’s information about prevention of sexual violence or HIV, or prevention of re-recruitment, or information of accountability mechanisms, or child rights, whatever it is, children can be some of the most effective messengers.

**Interviewer:** And do you think if children are denied the opportunity to influence the way in which aid and related services are provided to them following an armed conflict that this could cause potentially further negative implications for their psychological wellbeing?

Participant 4: Well yeah because I think part of the insecurity in conflict is the whole loss of control, that something big has happened and it’s impacted your individuals and families and communities and there’s that sense of loss control. So I think again if agencies can either reinforce that loss of control and children and communities can feel like if they don’t have any involvement in the planning or the access to services then they’re more disempowered and increase than sense of kind of helplessness and fear and kind of after an emergency. Whereas if they are involved and given information and consulted it can increase and there’s something that they can kind of influence and get that sense of security back. So I think that denial can only really increase that sense of negativity and despair that everything is out of control and not possible. And also just by not listening to children again the risks can be increased, so again the example earlier with the girls in the camp highlighting the distance of latrines and the sexual harassment they face, so by denial and if that girl hadn’t had the chance to speak out then that situation would have continued. So there’s kind of increased risks of the whole design of programmes not responding to children or girls or boys or specific needs of different ages that can kind of not only be less effective but can increase tension risks of children.

**Interviewer:** And are there any specific child participation tools or approaches which you believe could be applied in protection programmes across all contexts and situations of conflict?

Participant 4: Well I think approaches of supporting children's groups I would recommend in any context again ensuring there’s kind of the risks assessment, I think just as a vehicle to provide an ongoing space for children and young people to join their own space and to be able to express themselves and share information and analyse issues affecting them and have that kind of collective negotiating power. And looking at children's representation in local community, whether it’s in local camp governance or IDP camps or community development processes, so there’s really an opportunity for children to regularly share their views and experiences with whoever’s the kind of local decision makers and that’s also relevant in schools. And I think around, in a kind of emergency response the child friendly space could be used as a space to really promote meaningful participation and to enable children to have kind of more influence on programme planning and the longer term transition of space for kind of children agency. And in terms of tools there’s a lot on risk and community risk and resource mapping, body mapping, and a whole range of tools [text removed for anonymity] in the ARC resource pack on preparing the module on participation and inclusion and there’s a whole range of case examples and participatory tools that can be used in assessment with children in assessing or in analysing or planning and monitoring that are already kind of written up that could be used in a wide range of settings.
Participant 5

Interviewer: So please could you start by explaining to me how you would define child participation or what it means to you?

Participant 5: Okay, that’s a really interesting one because I struggle with it a bit I have to say. So, how I’d define children’s participation, I mean I suppose the theory of it, the whole ladder of participation comes to mind, participation being tokenistic and then sort of being, going up the ladder towards being more negotiated and then child-led. Um, so I guess I’d define child participation as a range of degrees of engagement where children are sort of active agents within the work that we do, whether that’s patronising or yeah to whatever degree. But I do, I struggle with it, the reason I struggle with it is because we often come to these conclusions that in a given context child participation is not appropriate. Participation can be really technical, I think in a way the more guidance we have on it the more technical it becomes, the more specialised it becomes, the more mystified it becomes. And then so I have conversations with colleagues where there’s been a sort of perception where participation isn’t appropriate in this context, and then the conclusion of that is that you should never talk to a child. And I’m sort of, that’s where it becomes a real struggle to look at different forms of participation and what’s appropriate, you know you’ve got opportunistic engagement with children is an opportunity, is that participation? Yeah so it’s a good question, I don’t really know but yeah.

Interviewer: And do you believe that participation can be used as a tool to enhance children’s protection?

Participant 5: Yeah definitely, absolutely, yeah I mean I’ve seen that so many times and particularly in that assessment process and information gathering as a primary form of child participation actually, and the most common form, where children participate. It’s just amazing what you learn from children which you don’t get from adults, that perspective, and I see that again and again in different contexts. Yeah so definitely.

Interviewer: And do you feel it can be used to enhance the quality and practice of child protection case management?

Participant 5: Yeah I mean it’s an essential component of case management, I mean child participation is a key aspect of Best Interest Determinations, Best Interest Assessments, so you can’t know what’s in a child’s best interests if they haven’t participated in some way, of course according to their evolving capacity. So, yeah so I can’t see that case management would be effective without child participation. In fact it could do harm, it could be quiet dangerous. So yeah, one-hundred percent.

Interviewer: And do you think child participation can have an effect on a child’s psychosocial healing following a conflict?

Participant 5: Yeah definitely, definitely yeah, yeah, I think we had some good examples of that from South Sudan. There was just cases of children who we supported to feed into peace dialogues and then they went on to, they sort of, like the programme checked back and after about 5 years and they’d gone on to take on leadership roles. I mean they were you know children who had really, they had been recruited, they’d been through all sorts of things so they’d had a really tough time, but I think that really gave them a sense of their own empowerment if you like and just being able to make change, I think that can be really profound.
Interviewer: And do you feel that participation is considered a priority but aid workers and humanitarian organisations? If yes, how? And if no, how do you feel about this and what would be your suggestion for improvement?

Participant 5: Um no, definitely not, I mean definitely not. [laughs] Imagine trying to get a WatSan engineer, they're just getting their heads round they have to talk to anyone! I mean there's definitely a driving culture can be in many contexts is appropriate, we've just got to get in and get it done bam bam bam, and that's totally appropriate in a lot of contexts, not all contexts. So I think yeah it's good to have a bit of a shift. I think that we can do ourselves damage, when we, child participation, similarly to child rights, if we try to tell people that they've got to have children's participation without making it meaningful for the people we're talking to, and giving them the tools to do it and demonstrating to them how it works. So I think that often we're a bit to blame for a reaction against it[text removed for anonymity]. I mean what we're trying to do there is sort of define the red lines and look at where the opportunities are and where the constraints are and work with that. So I mean what I was saying about emergency preparedness and partnerships is really coming out strongly. You can get that pre-emergency, you can use that without sort of having to have the surge capacity thinking about participation it's sort of already pre-existing which is good. I think there's also something which I'd like to see is like the key thing is when you transition from a first-phase towards the next phase, but you actually stop and think and work with children to reflect on what went well and then what they're priorities are for the next, as you sort of realign your strategies as well. That's when children's voices can really and there's sort of put less pressure on you know save lives and things like that.

Participant 6

Interviewer: Please could you start by explaining to me how you define child participation and what it means to you in your role.

Participant 6: For me it is ensuring that children are able to safely participate in all elements, potentially of our programme work and our advocacy work, where appropriate, and, and other pieces of work that we might do. So they are part of a design process and obviously the implementation and are able to feedback appropriately to what we're doing and how we're doing it, and the impact that what we're doing has on them and obviously in the evaluation. That we are consulting them and working with them in a manner that is not condescending or patronising and is respectful of them whether they are, you know, particularly young or within the older age group.

Interviewer: Do you believe that participation can be used as a tool to enhance children's protection? And if so, how?

Participant 6: I think it's very important, as regards to protection, because children are obviously experts at saying what their protection concerns are, and what, not just sort of things that potentially happen to them, but it's also what they feel about it as well. So it's their considerations and we can't necessarily assume that we know everything that's going through, you know were not sort of a twelve year old child and we won't necessarily know what's going through their minds. So it's very important to be able to see things from their perspective and see what actually concerns them, um yes, as well as the way that all the actual theatrical element of it.
Participant 6: Yes I do, mainly because they are different, very different contexts, and what is appropriate in one context will not be, or may not be, appropriate in another. Um, and with the general assumption that children are even more at risk or are at deplete of their protective environment in an emergency or in a conflict. Therefore, and the general sort of the situation for many people who are affected by emergencies, their agency has changed, their circumstances have changed, they are in a far more vulnerable environment and it’s very easy in emergency settings just for agencies like ourselves to go in and say 'yes we know this we know what to do', and the pressure to respond at the same time as you need to be doing or before you're doing assessments, things like that. It's always the challenge in emergency settings, particularly in first-phase, rapid onset emergencies but also you know, in more cyclical or chronic emergency settings. And therefore obviously there is a difference between the two, and you do need to look at participation in a different way. Knowing that participation, it’s not just NGOs, UN agencies who need to be doing participation it needs to be sort of local or national authorities and obviously their ability to function and to be involved in things and their role and responsibilities within the emergency context will be very different to a development context.

Participant 6: I think very much so, I think if either something has been done to a child or for a child without their involvement and it’s not explained very clearly they'll just go 'what’s this, what’s happening, what's going to come out of it and who else is involved' and I mean it's just outside of a humanitarian context a child’s going to have a lot of you know, potential concern and anxiety because it's the completely unknown or a new experience. And on top of that, if you’re in emergency context you’ve got so many other things going on, you know there might be displacement, loss of a family members, friends, a completely different environment, lots of other dangers. And so to be, even if you’re providing a service to that child, for that child, if you’re not involving them properly, um so looking at participation from a particular perspective and the lack of information given, then that can be very disconcerting and can have a big impact on the child's well-being, mental health and well-being. But on the flip side of that, you know getting children involved in things, getting the community involved in things is a good way of helping them make sense of what’s happened to them so, so if you imagine you have a family of you know: father had a business, mother was a teacher or a nurse and had two children, they’re displaced, they end up in you know in very difficult conditions, living in a camp, and their whole world’s been turned upside down, they're not working any more, they’re reliant on handouts, they can’t earn any money, they’re not in their own home and the sense of disempowerment is phenomenal. And this is why you know, you often have, well within child friendly spaces you go into the community to get volunteers and you'll often find sort of teachers doing some activities for that. And in places like Dadaab you’ve got maybe much longer term people who have been there a very long time, but it’s still you know, when you’re in an environment where things are being done for you, you’re reliant on others, you know for your food, for your water, for your shelter, you have use a latrine, you know you’ve had a flushing toilet before and now you have to you know sort of walk several yards or wherever to use a latrine and there's no privacy. I think it's essential in that environment
participation, proper participation and good participation is essential for well-being, I wouldn't say psychosocial support but for people's mental health and well-being it's essential. It helps them make sense of the environment that they're in and it helps them also to shape the environment that they're in. It doesn't necessarily mean that they have taken control of everything and they can get back to how they were before because that's not possible. But they can inform the support that is being provided to them.

**Interviewer:** Some people might argue that all humanitarian funds should all be spent on interventions which have a direct, measurable outcome such as food distribution and immunisations, how would you respond to this?

Participant 6: Well that's quite frustrating to hear that, I mean participation isn't a standalone intervention it's part of, you know you need participation to be an element of a number of interventions. It fits very well into protection, but there'd also be links into education and health and WatSan [water and sanitation] and things like that, and food distribution. So for me I see it being part of, or a necessary part of the planning, the design, of interventions across the humanitarian sector, whatever sector it's in. So you know when you're looking at water and sanitation humanitarian responses consulting, and you may sort of consult with affected communities and with the authorities to sort of say 'where's the best place to put latrines or where's the best place to dig boreholes?' You need to have participation or the views of children in that, because of protection concerns, or for other things, you know you're putting your standpipes at a height that can be used by children. You could put them at a distance which causes protection concerns if they have to go to the edge of a camp environment or you know or settlement where they might be at risk of a number of things. Are you placing latrines for children close to latrines for adults? So there's a sort of safeguarding issue there. And there's similar sort of things. It's as much the way you look at these sorts of interventions, rather than sort of saying participation is a standalone or it only sits within protection. So in my response to that I would say it's the way that you look at it and the way that you have to look at it, you know to me it's not an option.
APPENDIX 3: INTERVIEW DIARY

This diary provides an insight into the interview experience and the ways in which my thoughts evolved throughout the process. Each entry is a reflection on a key informant interview, dates have not been included.

The order of the interviews in this diary does not reflect, and bares no relationship to the numbers allocated to participants in the body or other appendices of the dissertation.

First Interview
Today I had my first interview. I was slightly nervous beforehand as I wasn’t sure how the questions would be received and I hadn’t conducted an interview for a long time. However, I actually really enjoyed the interview and the participant’s answers were so interesting and really led me to think over some aspects of the dissertation again. There were two questions which I felt could have been improved upon slightly due to a small misinterpretation of what they meant, though the answers were still useful. I also feel lucky having the opportunity to spend up to an hour learning from people who have such interesting experiences.

Second interview
This interview was particularly interesting in that it was with a fairly close colleague whose work I know well but whom I hadn’t had the opportunity to ask these questions to before. What came across most in this interview was the need for conflict sensitivity during child participation as well as its psychosocial benefits. This was really useful because although there is a lot of literature on children’s psychosocial wellbeing during a conflict, and also a lot on participation, I don’t feel there is enough work solidly linking the two issues. This led me to think about not only the psychosocial benefits of participation, but also the negative implications that non-participation may have for children. As a result, I amended my questions to include a question on the negative implications of non-participation in relation to psychological well-being.

Third interview
I learnt a lot from this interview, not only about participation but also about my own preconceptions. One of my interview questions was phrased “do you believe that participation can be used as a tool to enhance children’s protection?” The participant in this interview then pointed out to me that child participation should not be considered a ‘tool’, but is a process in itself and something that is important regardless of its protection outcomes. In addition, I asked how the participant defined participation. I primarily asked this as the other questions are based on participation and it is useful to know the participant’s actual definition of the term so I could pinpoint exactly what they were referring to during the interview. It is also a fairly straightforward question which sets the scene for the interview and could be considered less demanding than some of the others. The participant then suggested that it is not necessarily up to adults to define child participation, but it is instead up to children to define what it means to them. I really hope that I can find some children’s definitions of participation to include in this piece of work as it will really set the tone for the dissertation from the beginning and will embed children’s views from the outset. Lastly, upon being asked if they had anything they would like to add, this participant reminded me not to get too ‘bogged down’ in theories and remember why I’m doing this and what would children think of all these academic terms. I
struggle with this comment a bit as I completely agree that going too much into the theories may go beyond the point of the work in relation to children. However, at the same time it is difficult to write an academic piece of work which would be considered completely child friendly, whilst also being suitable for academics and practitioners alike.

Fourth interview
I really loved this interview because the person I was interviewing had also been thinking a lot about participation and protection. The key things which directed my thoughts in relation to the dissertation were the links made between the two concepts. The participant pointed out the ways in which we need to have a very complicated view of children because although they are vulnerable, children in conflict may have also developed many other attributes, particularly those who have been child soldiers for example. This led me to think about my undergraduate dissertation which was about the use of child in armed conflict and the types of resilience that child soldiers developed. Through this way of thinking I developed the idea that while protection primarily responds to children’s vulnerabilities, participation utilises and further develops their resilience. As a result, the two approaches are very complimentary, and are in my view, very much linked to each other’s success in preventing and responding to abuse, neglect and exploitation, as well as in promoting confident, capable and happy children in the long-term. Another issue that this interview led me to consider was the relationship and the difference between something being child-friendly and something being participatory for children. For example, if a response is child-friendly does this mean that it is also participatory? Can child-friendly just mean child-friendly information sharing and fun activities for children or not?

Fifth interview
This was a very interesting interview. I removed some of the core questions for this interview as the participant had limited availability and I didn’t want to take up too much of their time. I also wanted to use the time that we did have to focus on areas that were most relevant to their expertise. One of the key insights I gained from this interview was the issue of child participation becoming too overcomplicated and ‘technical’. The participant indicated that this meant the concept of ‘child participation’ had become mystified for some people working in humanitarian response and had actually made them feel more apprehensive and less confident about involving children in their work. This issue is a difficult one because on the one hand child participation needs to be very guided in certain areas to ensure children safety and to prevent it from being tokenistic. However, I think one of the issues might be the different ways in which organisations and agencies define it and guide on it. For example, if all organisations used the same definition for child participation, with the same ethical standards and a key set of guidelines, we would be able to lay out very clearly the different things that need to be taken into account. In the humanitarian sector people often move from one organisation to another and there is a high turnover of staff generally, with a lot of people also being hired on a short-term consultancy basis. When moving from one organisation to another, if people are each time given different guidance relating to participation and what it means for them this can become very confusing, especially where the theoretical aspects of it are outlined as well. If this were too become standardised, at least people could spend some time getting their head around it and understanding its relevance to their work. Sector wide acceptance and promotion of it in the same way could also lead to less push back against the concept in terms of the fact that it would have the endorsement of so many relevant humanitarian actors. One of my favourite things about this interview was the light hearted nature of the person I was interviewing and how much they laughed during the interview. As somebody
hoping to work in a similar area, it is inspiring to see somebody not being serious all the time, but instead still having fun and being so passionate about their work.

**Sixth interview**

This interview was great in that the participant offered a large number of examples to demonstrate the impact of participation in practice and they really bought into the concept of participation through years of experience of working with children during conflict. It was really inspiring to hear these stories and to gain a greater understanding of the application of participatory tools and activities in practice. The participant also offered very interesting insights into the links between participation, peacebuilding and inclusion, and indicated that marginalisation was a key trigger for conflict which could be addressed through meaningful participation.

**Seventh interview**

This interview was extremely interesting as the participant had just returned from working on a protection programme during conflict. The participant offered a very interesting view into the difficulties in embedding participation in programmes as well as the complications that can arise in zones of conflict. Despite some difficulties, this participant really seemed to appreciate the value of participation but also shed light on the ways in which it could become better understood and applied by practitioners. This led me to consider the ways in which participation could be ensured through basic ways of working, without neglecting the stark differences between the contexts and cultures in which it is practiced.

**Eighth interview**

This participant offered an insight into the challenges around participation and its application in interventions which are underfunded, but are trying to reach very large numbers of children. This was interesting to hear and led me to think more about approaches to participation which don't require large amounts of funding. She also noted that participation was a slippery concept and was often referred to without an understanding of children’s rights. However, she was keen on participation when it is used effectively, and felt that developing the concept is something which is necessary.

She felt that it was possible to broadly design an intervention for children based on previous experience without their participation, but felt that the danger was that it may not cater for the needs of the most marginalised children. This focus on marginalised groups was an issue raised in a number of interviews, which brings back the importance of inclusion through meaningful participation.
APPENDIX 4: RESEARCH ETHICS FORM
RESEARCH ETHICS FORM E1BE FOR STUDENTS ON TAUGHT COURSES
Please read the Guidance Notes at www.brookes.ac.uk/res/ethics/forms

Section A - You & your project
What is your name?
First name: Clare
Surname: Back
What is your student number?
11084291
What is your email address?
11084291 @brookes.ac.uk
What is your supervisor's name?
First name: Simon
Surname: Fisher
What is your supervisor's email address?
SimonFisherHaus @gmail.com @Ropps.2013.uk
In which Department are you studying?
Architecture
Planning
REC
What course are you taking?
MA Development & Emergency Practice
What is the topic area of your research?
Child Participation
On what kinds of topics will you be collecting data from the participants in the research?
Child Participation in humanitarian programmes during conflict

Section B - Your participants
What kind of participants will be involved in your research? (Please tick one - if more than one, then complete a separate form)
Professional/management group
Members of the general public
Vulnerable individuals
Briefly describe these participants
Child Participation / Protection Technical Advisers
How many participants will be involved?
Number of people: 8
How will the participants be selected?
availability + expertise

Section C - Your data collection
When is your data collection likely to start?
01/01/2012
What will be your method of data collection?
In-depth interviews
Face-to-face surveys
Direct observation
Other, please specify
Semi-structured interviews
What kind of data will you be collecting?
Quantitative/statistical/numerical
Qualitative/written/textual
Images/drawings/maps
Will it be possible to avoid asking for personal data from the participants?
Yes [ ] No [ ]
Will it be possible to ensure the participants are not being deceived in any way?
Yes [ ] No [ ]
Will it be possible to ensure the participants remain completely anonymous?
Yes [ ] No [ ]
Will it be possible to ensure the participants do not suffer any negative consequences?
Yes [ ] No [ ]

Section D - Declaration
I declare that I will:
- give all participants an information sheet: conforming to university guidelines
- not contact any participant until my supervisor has approved my information sheet, research questions and methodology
- be sufficiently well-trained in necessary methods of data collection and analysis

Student signature: [ ] Date: [ ]
Supervisor signature: [ ] Date: [ ]
Module Leaders signature: [ ] Date: [ ]

You may only start fieldwork when this form has been signed by your supervisor & your Module Leader.