

# Local Champions

A Caregivers Manual for At Risk Children in Nigerian Institutions

## Implementing The Participation Rights Of Children In Institutions





# Sponsor A Child

Since 2003, Sponsor A Child has promoted child welfare in Nigerian institutions by providing a range of child rights based interventions to orphanages, community schools, early years centres and other centres for vulnerable children and schools. Our activities fall under 2 programmes: **Community Aid** which improves living conditions through health and hygiene promoting initiatives and **Education** which provides sponsorship for young people, educational and recreational resources. We seek engagement with caregivers, educators, social workers and young people who volunteer to participate in our programs.

The Good Home Quality Service Advocacy Scheme™ is an integration of our approaches to improve child welfare in Nigerian institutions

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Sponsor A Child

Selina House, 53, Adeola Odeku Street, Victoria Island, Lagos

Email: [info@sponsorachildnigeria.org](mailto:info@sponsorachildnigeria.org) or

[sponsormychild@yahoo.com](mailto:sponsormychild@yahoo.com)

Tel: 0803 344 7167

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# Implementing the Participation Rights of Children in Institutions

## **OBJECTIVES:**

1. To understand what is meant by child participation - (Session 1)
2. To identify the participation rights in the Child Rights Act 2003 and UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC 1989)
3. To understand the elements involved and competencies state the child's
4. Right to participate – (Sessions 2 & 4)
5. To look at child participation in activities – (Session 2, 3 & 4)
6. To plan child participation for your institution – (Sessions 2 & 5)
7. To advocate for child participation – (Sessions 2 & 6)



# Session 1: Child Rights

## CHILD RIGHTS

Child rights refer to a set of universal rights and principles, which have been given legal status through their expression in the Articles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

## THE CHILD'S RIGHT TO PARTICIPATE

Child participation can be described as listening to children and giving them space to articulate their own concerns, while taking into account the children's maturity and capacities. It may also include enabling them to take part in the planning, conduct, and evaluation of activities within or outside the family sphere and involving them public discourse and in decision-making.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) recognized that children are active agents in the realization of their own rights. Hence the following references were made to some articles in the Convention with regard to the right of the child to participate:

1. Article 12: States that state parties shall assure the child who is capable of his/her own views:
  - a. The right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child.
  - b. The right to have his view given due weight in accordance with his age and maturity.
2. Article 13: Refers to the child's freedom of expression.
3. Article 14: Refers to the child's right to freedom of association and of peaceful assembly.
4. Article 17: Emphasizes the importance of children's access to information

It is advisable to compare and contrast these articles with the equivalent culturally adapted provisions in the Nigeria Child Rights Act (2003) cited in Session 1 of this module.

## PARTICIPATION RIGHTS

1. Right to name, Family and Nationality (identity) (CRAs 5)
2. Right to Survival and Development (CRAs4)
3. Right to Communicate (impart and receive appropriate information through various media (CRAs8)
4. Right to freedom of thought (independence of thought/mind) (CRA7)
5. Right to freedom of Conscience (CRAs7)
6. Right to freedom of Religion (CRAs7)
7. Right to dignity (CRAs11)
8. Right to freedom of movement (CRAs9)
9. Right to leisure and recreation and participation in culture and artistic activities (CRAs12)
10. Right to Associate and assemble peacefully (CRAs6)
11. Right to best interests of the child being considered paramount in decision making (CRA s1)
12. Right to fair hearing in judicial and administrative proceedings (CRAs 214)

# Session 2

## OBJECTIVES:

To understand the elements involved as we implement the child's right to participate

**Activity:** Read through the elements and competencies related to Child Participation

**Method:** Self-directed study

## A. COMPETENCIES TO PARTICIPATE

For a child to be able to participate, he/she must be competent in the following areas:

1. **Language ability:** The ability to communicate and to use language to collaborate with others.
2. **Empathy:** the ability to understand the feelings and views of others
3. **Abstract thinking:** The ability to conceptualize an unseen process toward a non-concrete goal.
4. **Controlled impulses:** Capacity to keep in check immediate and self-centered satisfaction of needs and wishes.
5. **Sacrifice:** Ability to understand and accept that a particular exercise may benefit other people rather than oneself.
6. **Concentration:** Ability to listen, analyze, and project one's point of view.
7. **Emotional control:** Ability to control emotions when appropriate, especially anger and frustration.

## B. APPROACHES TO INVOLVING CHILDREN

1. **Consultative process:** Adults initiate processes to obtain information from children through which they can improve legislation, policies, or services.
2. **Participative initiative:** The aim is to strengthen processes of democracy by creating opportunities for children to understand and apply democratic principles, or by involving children in the development of services and policies that impact them.
3. **Promotion of Self-advocacy:** The aim is to empower children to identify and fulfill their own goals and initiatives.

## BENEFITS OF CHILD PARTICIPATION

1. Enables children to make valuable contributions to the society and to implement Child Rights Act 2003 Section 19 which calls for children to be not only subjects of rights but bearers of responsibilities towards their families, their peers, their communities, their nations and the world.
2. Builds effectiveness and sustainability of rules and policies.

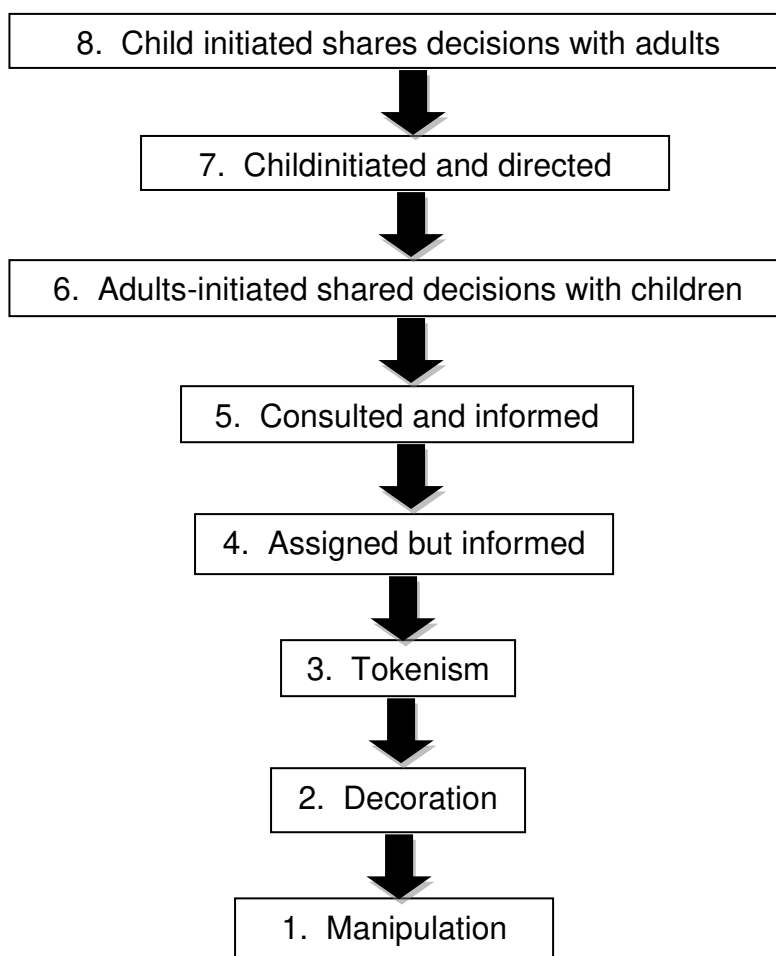
3. Enhances confidence and self-esteem.
4. Encourages acquisition of practical and social skills.
5. Improves relationship between caregivers and children.
6. Makes caregivers proud of their children.
7. Enables self-protection.
8. Creates a wide network among children.
9. Fosters learning
10. Prepares children to implement democratic processes in childhood and in adult life.

**D. LADDER OF PARTICIPATION**

(LEVELS OF PARTICIPATION)

In descending order of participation:

- |   |   |           |
|---|---|-----------|
| 8 | - | very high |
| 1 | - | very low  |



## **E. COMPETENCIES FOR DECISION MAKING**

Caregivers should help their children acquire the following competencies through regular appropriate communication with them and loving guidance. Helping children to make informed decisions, is a protection issue.

1. Ability to understand and communicate relevant information. The child needs to be able to understand the available alternatives, express a preference, articulate concerns and ask relevant questions.
2. Ability to think and choose with some degree of independence. The child needs to be able to exercise choice without coercion or manipulation and be capable of thinking through the issues for themselves.
3. Ability to assess the potential for benefit, risk and harm. The child must be able to understand the consequences of different courses of action, how they will affect him or her, the risks involved and the short and long term implications.
4. Achievement of a fairly stable set of values. The child needs to have some value base from which to make a decision.

## **F. REPLICABILITY OF ACTIVITY**

- |   |   |                                  |
|---|---|----------------------------------|
| 4 | - | Fully Replicable                 |
| 3 | - | Replicable with some changes     |
| 2 | - | Replicable but with many changes |
| 1 | - | Not suitable for institution     |



# Session 3: Child Participation in Action

## **OBJECTIVES:**

To view 'Raised Voices' – a UNICEF film which showcases child participation in action in different countries of the world

**Activity: Film** - Questions for discussion

1. Describe or name one or more of the activities that the children engaged in e.g. conference?
2. What category of participation does the activity fall into?
  - Consultative (adults consulting children's opinions)
  - Democratic participation (application of democratic processes e.g. voting, opinion poll)?
  - Self advocacy (project work designed, implemented and reported by the children)
3. What are the benefits of the activity/activities which you have named or described?

**To answer these questions, refer to Session 2**

# Session 4: Child Participation in Action

**Activity:** Evaluate the case studies below using the Assessment Scales in the appendix. The scales measure the levels and kinds of child participation the activities.

- What kind of activity is it e.g. referendum, conference, survey etc?
- What participatory approach does it showcase?
- What is the level of child participation/involvement in the activity? (See the ladder of Participation in Session 2)
- Which competencies are needed to engage in the activity?
- What benefits are expected from the activity?
- Which rights are advanced by the activity?
- Is the activity replicable in your institution given the resources available and the culture of your institution?

## 1. PARTICIPATION IN A REFERENDUM

### What is a referendum?

A referendum is a direct vote in which an entire electorate or student body, in the case of student participation, is asked to either accept or reject a particular proposal. This may result in the adoption of a new policy, constitution, constitutional amendment, a law (school or class rule), recall of an official etc. Referenda are a form of direct democracy.



Children recently expressed their opinion on the Convention on the Rights of the Child throughout Ecuador. While children cannot be expected to have any sophisticated understanding of the relative importance of each of the different Articles of the Convention, such a referendum offers a useful opportunity to engage in a dialogue with the children, and introduce the important concept of voting to them.

## 2. PARTICIPATION IN AN OPINION POLL

### What is an opinion poll?

An opinion poll is a survey of public opinion from a particular sample. In the case of student participation, the public is the student body. Opinion polls are usually designed to represent the opinions of a sample by conducting a series of questions and taking the aggregate opinion as guidelines for decision making.

### **Example**

#### **SHOULD THERE BE DISABILITY ACCESS IN KING'S KIDS SCHOOL?**

Instructions: Respond to this poll by ticking one answer and making a comment if you wish.

1. Disabled children should be encouraged and enabled to attend our school?

| YES | NO | NOT DECIDED | Comment |
|-----|----|-------------|---------|
|     |    |             |         |

2. There should be a ramp for wheelchairs at every entry and departure point in our school

| YES | NO | NOT DECIDED | Comment |
|-----|----|-------------|---------|
|     |    |             |         |

3. There should be lifts on each floor of the school and a standby generator

| YES | NO | NOT DECIDED | Comment |
|-----|----|-------------|---------|
|     |    |             |         |

4. Our playground should have 1 or 2 play equipments which disabled children can enjoy

| YES | NO | NOT DECIDED | Comment |
|-----|----|-------------|---------|
|     |    |             |         |

5. There should be at least 2 toilets for students with wheelchairs

| YES | NO | NOT DECIDED | Comment |
|-----|----|-------------|---------|
|     |    |             |         |

6. Teachers trained to care for and educate children with disabilities should be employed by the school

| YES | NO | NOT DECIDED | Comment |
|-----|----|-------------|---------|
|     |    |             |         |

7. Children with disabilities should be included in classes with regular children

| YES | NO | NOT DECIDED | Comment |
|-----|----|-------------|---------|
|     |    |             |         |

### **3. PARTICIPATION IN A CONFERENCE**



#### **What is a conference?**

A conference is a meeting of people who discuss about a topic or topics usually with desired outcomes in mind. Conferences can be positive democratic experiences for children when they are well designed. Usually, however, the children are not elected by any larger group of children to represent them, they do not report back to any other children. Consequently, these are usually token events with a 'lot of photographs taken by the press but little serious attention given to the substance of the children's comments.

#### 4. PARTICIPATION IN STUDENT COUNCIL

##### **What is a student council?**

Student councils are a curricular or extra curricular activity within primary and secondary school systems around the world. Student councils often serve to engage children in learning about democracy and leadership by allowing students to share their ideas, interests and concerns with teachers and school principals. They often also help to raise funds for school wide activities, including social events, community projects and school reform.

The school Student council is a representative structure for students only, through which they can become involved in the affairs of the school, working in partnership with school management, staff and parents for the benefit of the school and its students.

##### **Example**

**British International School, Lekki, Lagos State**, has a dynamic Student Council comprised of 2 elected councilors from each academic year/class of the school. Every Friday, at lunch time, the Council meets with the head teacher in the head teacher's office where other key staffs as the site manager, catering staff and administrative officer, are already gathered. The Councilors table their concerns, and make sure the younger councilors are given a chance to speak out. They are listened to respectfully and are given feedback by staff with the head teacher presiding over discussions. Concerns considered legitimate by the staff are auctioned without delay.

One example of a successful petition by the BIS Student Council is the installation of water fountains outside each classroom. Prior to that, thirsty students had to walk a distance to the available water fountains which led to missing large amounts of class time. Another example is the colour change of the girls PE shorts from white to blue due to the monthly menstrual cycle of girls and the risk of embarrassment.

#### 5. PARTICIPATION IN MAKING POLICIES AND RULES



Sixth-grade students, after years of experience in school, understand a kind of behavior that is conducive to maintaining a safe and productive learning environment. Accordingly, they could draw upon this knowledge in constructive dialogue with educators about school/classroom rules and regulations. If children were given the opportunity to make decisions (according to their level of maturity), regarding issues such as student behaviour, they may develop a greater sense of ownership in the school environment.

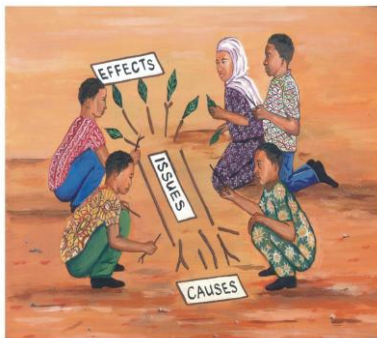
Correspondingly, they may have more respect for the rules and more inclined to follow them. In this sense, it could be beneficial for adults to share power with youth.

##### **Giving Children Choice**



Staff in a nursery school decided that the children, aged four, could decide for themselves when they wanted fruit and water rather than having to wait for the adults to offer it. At first, the children asked permission, until they got used to the idea that they could help themselves. Some spilt water, but then helped to mop up the spills and learned to pour it more carefully as they became used to doing so. In being allowed to exercise choices for themselves, the children became more responsible and the staffs were freed to do other things.

## 6. PARTICIPATION IN A SURVEY



### Young people demonstrating competence as researchers:

A project on sexual exploitation in Eastern Europe gave 15 – 24yrs cohort respectable sample. They were responsible for:

Gathering baseline data on the awareness and extent of sexual abuse and the available services, and developing training and advocacy materials and strategies for challenging sexual abuse of children.

These young people were directly involved in about 100 questionnaires each, more than 5,700 survey responses were returned, producing a wealth of information from which to build strategies for addressing sexual exploitation. Interestingly, there was initial resistance from some of the partner organizations who felt that young people lacked the competence and expertise to take responsibility for research in such a sensitive and complex field. It was suggested that, in order to test their concerns, a pilot should be held using first the adult professional researcher and then the young people themselves. The outcome was that the young people elicited more comprehensive responses, in large part because the children in the survey felt more at ease with their own generation when responding on issues of sexual exploitation and abuse

## 7. PARTICIPATORY TEACHING METHODOLOGIES

### Round Robin

In this setting, each student has an opportunity to share some information or ideas in a small group format. Everyone participates equally and taps into the collective wisdom of the group.

### Interviewing

This format may include the personal interview, in which one person talks with another person. It may also involve the group interview, in which several people talk with a single individual.

### Brainstorming

Brainstorming can be a valuable instructional tool which you can incorporate into almost any lesson. Simply defined, it is the generation of lots of ideas (without regard for quality) about a single topic. This method is particularly appropriate at the start of a lesson to tap into the background knowledge students may or may not have about a topic.

Effective brainstorming is governed by four basic rules:

Generate as many ideas as possible - the more the better.

There is no evaluation of any single idea or group of ideas. There is no criticism about whether an idea is good or bad. Zany, wild and crazy ideas are encouraged and solicited. Individuals are free to build upon the ideas of others.

## **PARTICIPATORY LECTURE**

Lecture is often the method of choice when introducing and explaining new concepts. It can also be used to add insight and expand on previously presented material. Teachers recommend that the number of concepts (within a single lesson) be limited to one or two at the elementary level and three to five at the secondary level.

It's important to keep in mind that lecture need not be a long and drawn-out affair. For example, the 10-2 strategy is an easily used, amazingly effective tool for all grade levels. In this strategy, no more than 10 minutes of lecture should occur before students are allowed 2 minutes for processing. This is also supportive of how the brain learns. When 10-2 is used in both elementary and secondary classrooms, the rate of both comprehension and retention of information increases dramatically.

During the 2-minute break, you can ask students several open-ended questions, such as the following:

"What have you learned so far in this lesson?"

"Why is this information important?"

"How does this information relate to any information we have learned previously?"

"How do you feel about your progress so far?"

"How does this data apply to other situations?"

These questions can be answered individually or in small group discussions, or as part of whole class interactions. The value of the 10-2 strategy is that it can be used with all types of content. Equally important, it has a positive effect on brain growth.



# Session 5: Action Planning for Your Institution

## OBJECTIVES:

1. To identify, from the list, structures of opportunity to participate and activities that can be delivered immediately on your return to your centre.
2. To identify from the same list, structures of opportunity to participate and activities that can be delivered only when appropriate resources (time, funds, expertise) are in place in institution

|  |                                   |  |                              |  |   |                        |
|--|-----------------------------------|--|------------------------------|--|---|------------------------|
| Student membership of SBMC via Student Council or via School Captains (Public Schools) | Student Council                   | Clubs / Associations eg photography, drama, music, writers | Class Monitor/Prefect System | Formulation of Annual School Calendar                                      | School Improvement / Development Plans    | Conferences/ Workshops |
| Voting in Class/ in School Affairs   | Environmental Sanitation projects | Wall painting  | Tree and Garden Planting     | Surveys to gather information for School Improvement/ Development Planning | Inter-house events/ Inter – School events | Opinion Polls          |
| Referenda  | Peer Counseling                   | Workshops for Peer Education                               |                              |  |   |                        |

# Session 6: Arguments Regarding Child Participation

## **OBJECTIVES:**

1. To discuss arguments for and against child participation in institutions.
2. To advocate for child participation

The following arguments and counter arguments have been raised against the right of a child to participate:

### **1. CHILDREN HAVE NO COMPETENCE OR EXPERIENCE TO PARTICIPATE.**

On the contrary. Children have levels of competence in different parts of their lives. For instance, a small child can tell what he/she likes or dislikes and why, provided they are given appropriate support, adequate information, and opportunity to express themselves in ways that are meaningful to them.

### **2. CHILDREN MUST LEARN TO TAKE RESPONSIBILITY BEFORE THEY CAN BE GRANTED RIGHTS**

But one of the ways of encouraging children to accept responsibility is to first respect their rights. If given the chance to share their ideas in a group, children will learn that others have a right to be heard and must also be respected.

### **3. GIVING CHILDREN RIGHTS TO BE HEARD WILL TAKE AWAY THEIR CHILDHOOD.**

Article 12 provides the Right for Children to Participate. Small children in much protected environments might be involved in making decision about friendships, coping with parental divorce, negotiating between parents in conflict, and deciding the games to play.

These are all decisions related to childhood, not in conflict with the concept of childhood.

### **4. ADVOCACY FOR THE CHILD'S RIGHT TO PARTICIPATE IN CHILD CARE INSTITUTIONS**

There is a pressing need for training to help address problems centering on the relationship between authority and childhood. Such training would teach child focused organizations how to create environments that are respectful and supportive of children. In child care institutions, caregivers should learn to identify the numerous opportunities to (1) promote and develop a child's skills and talents. (2) Use language which can be understood by all children, and (3) encourage all children to take part and to establish democratic structures that are appropriate to their needs. In this way, appropriate child participation – one that defers to the children's evolving capacities – can be encouraged.



## ABOUT THE MINI MANUAL

*'Implementing the Participation Rights of Children in Institutions Manual'* encourages a culture of self-evaluation, questioning of practice and informed discussion among practitioners to identify the institution's strengths and priorities for development. This child friendly scheme promotes continuous and measurable improvement of care, protection and education services for all children. The Good Home Scheme™ advocates the sharing of best practice among practitioners through community, state and nationwide networking.