Child Rights Governance

"Enabling the exercise of civil and political rights: The views of children"

Centre for Children's Rights
Queen's University Belfast
&
Child Rights Governance Global Theme, Save the Children
May 2016

Enabling the exercise of civil and political rights: the views of children

Centre for Children's Rights
Queen's University Belfast
and
Child Rights Governance Global Theme, Save the Children

Dr Karen Orr
Lesley Emerson
Professor Laura Lundy
Dr Lucy Royal-Dawson
Erika Jimenez

Summary of Key Findings

This report presents the views of children collated from a consultation on children's civil and political rights, which involved 1,606 respondents across 60 countries. The majority of participants had experience of being involved in civic action, much of which was supported by non-governmental organization (NGOs). What is evident from this consultation is that children can and do engage in civic action when they are well-supported. However, they meet a range of challenges and barriers, many of which would not exist to the same extent for adults.

What are children's experiences of exercising their civil and political rights?

- Children are interested in engaging in civic action in order to improve their lives and the lives of other children.
- Children are very positive about their engagement, reporting significant personal benefit and enjoyment.
- Adults often act as gatekeepers to these activities, deciding whether, how and when children get to engage in civic action.
- Actions that are open to adults are often restricted for children due to others' concerns about their competence or safety.

What do children think hinders them in exercising their civil and political rights?

- Children have restricted access to information and many have no access to the internet.
- Children are often dependent on adults to provide them with information and to make it accessible to them.
- Children can lack confidence in expressing their views and struggle to be taken seriously by adults.
- Children are sometimes prevented, by their parents or other adults, from meeting with other children or from engaging in public activity.
- Children are sometimes threatened by adults when they are challenging their behaviours.

What are children's views on what can be done to better enable them to exercise their rights?

- Children need adults to listen and take them seriously when they are engaged in civic action.
- Children benefit from the support of interested adults who can facilitate them to access information safely, express themselves with confidence and engage in activity that furthers their cause.
- Children feel that there should be more capacity building opportunities for both children (particularly more excluded children) and adults (including parents) in their communities.
- Children need a wider range of opportunities for association.
- Children's NGOs need greater visibility and to provide longer term and follow-up activities.
- Children think that there should be more formal opportunities for them to access information from and communicate with those in government.
- Many children want further knowledge of and opportunities for engagement in politics.
- Children acknowledge the significance of education in enabling them to understand their rights and in providing them with the skills they need to exercise them.

Contents

1. Executive Summary

- This study examines children's experience of activities in the public sphere from the perspective of exercising their civil and political rights. In particular, it explores what helps and what hinders children in exercising their rights to access information, to freedom of expression, to have their views given due weight, to freedom of association and to peaceful assembly.
- The consultation was conducted using two mechanisms: an online consultation tool (OCT) to which 937 children aged between 11 and 17 years old, from 58 countries responded; sixty-four face to face focus groups discussions (FGDs) involving 669 children aged between 8 and 17 years old, across 12 countries. Ten countries are represented in both data sets. In total, there were 1,606 children in the study from 60 countries. It is likely that some children have responses in both data sets.
- The countries involved were allocated to the five regional groups of the United Nations member states: Africa, Asia-Pacific (AP), Eastern Europe (EE), Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) and Western Europe and Others Group (WEOG).
- Many of the children involved in the consultation had direct experience of taking part in civic action and were therefore in a position to offer their views on exercising their rights whilst taking action.
- It should be noted from the outset that many of the children consulted, particularly in the FGDs, were working in groups supported by Save the Children. Also, the sample of respondents to the OCT was self-selected or encouraged by Save the Children offices. It was not a random sample nor was it representative. Generalisations to the wider population therefore cannot be made from the findings.

Interest and motivation

- The majority (81%) of children who responded to the OCT reported that they were interested (answering 'a little' or 'a lot') in 'decisions made by government and other people in positions of authority about issues and things happening in their community, country or the world'.
- Regionally, a larger proportion of children from LAC (75%) reported being interested 'a lot' in the decisions made by politicians etc. compared to the other regions.
- Greater proportions of respondents to the OCT from LAC also reported experience of facing an issue they wanted to change and self-identified as active in civic activities.
- Children across the study were involved in a wide range of issues, such as: child marriage, compulsory dowries, corporal punishment, child labour, child trafficking, sexual harassment of girls, infrastructure problems, discriminatory practices, measures to ensure their safety in areas prone to natural disaster, and governance issues to improve the mechanisms to take children's views into consideration.
- Across the study, children's motivation to act on issues arose as a result of increased awareness of their rights, and, for many children, from a sense of injustice or concern to see wrongs put right.
- Children across the study were deterred from taking action due to: not knowing how to get involved; lack of resources; being afraid; being told not to get involved; and feeling like action would not result in change.
- Regional differences emerged in the responses to the OCT in relation to children feeling deterred from taking action. Fewer children from LAC selected 'not interested' compared to the other regions; however, a greater proportion from LAC also stated that they did not know how to get involved. More children from Africa and AP reported being afraid and no children from WEOG reported having been told not to get involved in action.

Right to information

- Two-thirds (66%) of all respondents to the OCT said they could access information about issues that affected them online; 56% said they could access information in hard-copy.
- Greater proportions of children responding to the OCT from WEOG, LAC and EE selected online sources as somewhere they would go to for information (compared to children from other regions); a greater proportion of children from Africa selected listening to the radio and reading the newspaper.
- Many children from EE, LAC and WEOG reported being able to access online information freely (90%, 81%, and 76% respectively). Responses for Africa and AP were lower (62% and 59% respectively), with both these regions demonstrating the highest proportion of children reporting that they would *not* be able to access information freely on the internet.
- Over half (58%) of the respondents to the OCT said they feel safe accessing information *online*.
- There were regional differences in the respondents' views on feeling safe when accessing information *offline*. LAC (80%) and EE (77%) registered the highest number of responses to feeling safe, but less than half of the AP respondents said they felt safe (47%).
- Children in the FGDs generally thought that information they received was understandable but this was because it had been made 'child-friendly' by the NGOs who were supporting them.
- Children in the FGDs generally said that they felt safe accessing information about the issues they were working on. However, some groups reported feeling unsafe when looking for information about certain issues such as domestic violence or local spending or those seeking information on security issues in a location experiencing conflict.

Freedom of expression

- Under half the children responding to the OCT felt they were able to express views online (43%) or in public (44%). The response was lower in relation to feeling safe when expressing views (36% saying they would feel safe online; 34% saying they would feel safe in public).
- Regionally, a large proportion of children responding to the OCT from AP said 'no' to feeling safe when expressing their views in public (54%) or online (47%). Many African respondents said 'no' to feeling safe expressing their views in public (48%). LAC respondents had the highest proportion of respondents answering 'yes' to feeling safe expressing views in online (53%) and in public (58%).
- In the FGDs, many children reported that they had no difficulty in expressing their views freely. However, others reported a range of challenges, most commonly parental objections and/or discouragement from adults generally.
- In the FGDs, most children felt safe engaging in their activities, especially as part of a group supported by an NGO. However, some children reported feeling unsafe. This was often related to activities on drug use, child labour or child marriage.
- One of the most frequent issues referred to by the children in the FGDs as a barrier to them expressing views was their lack of confidence. However, many reported that this grew with experience and with support from adult facilitators.

Right to have views given due weight

- The majority of respondents to the OCT (79%) thought they would be listened to by adults who could bring about change.
- For the children who responded to the OCT, levels of confidence in adults taking them seriously or taking action, however, was just over 60% for both.

- Regionally, children responding to the OCT from LAC were most positive about their views being given due weight. The least positive, in terms of adults listening and taking children seriously, were respondents from EE, with WEOG least positive in terms of feeling adults would take action.
- In the FGDs, there was a wide range of responses to questions about whether they were listened to and taken seriously by adult decision-makers. Those that considered that they were taken seriously often credited their success to the fact that they were working as a group of children.
- Many children in FGDs considered that they had influenced decision-making and were able to point out examples of change as proof of being taken seriously. However, children also understood that adults were not always in a position to deliver change
- Other children in FGDs felt that the extent to which their views were given due weight depended on whom they were trying to influence, with parents and adults in the community more likely to listen than those in government.
- Many children across the FGDs reported a struggle to be taken seriously because of their age.

Freedom of association

- Large proportions of children who responded to the OCT felt they could join a group (64%) and that they would feel safe (63%) doing so. However only 49% of respondents to the OCT felt they could set their own group up.
- Regionally, LAC children had the most positive response to joining a group with over 92% saying they could join a group and 90% felt safe. WEOG and AP respondents were less positive that they could join a group (58% and 51% respectively) and only about half in each case said they would feel safe (53% and 51%).
- With regards to setting up a group, the OCT response was the most positive from children in LAC (75% felt able). The least positive responses came from AP where only 39% said they could set up a group.
- The children who participated in the FGDs were clearly enjoying their right to freedom of association and were resoundingly positive about their experiences.
- The majority of the groups in which children were involved were organised and supported by local and international NGOs. In some contexts there was a degree of collaboration with state organisations.
- The children in the FGDs indicated that certain groups of children were less likely to avail of the opportunity to associate with their peers: children in some rural areas where distance prohibits engagement; and working children where free time is the limiting factor.
- Many children across the study also indicated that concerns of parents were potential barriers to freedom of association.

Peaceful assembly

- Over half of the respondents to the OCT said they could meet freely to discuss or take action (60%) and that they felt safe (57%) doing so.
- Less than half of respondents (45%) to the OCT reported being able to attend a public protest or demonstration, and only 38% saying they would feel safe doing so.
- Regionally, greater proportion of LAC respondents to the OCT reported they could meet freely (90%) and felt and safe (86%) when doing so. They were also more positive about taking part in public protests than in other regions.
- Respondents from AP demonstrated the least positivity in relation to meeting freely. Only 47% said they could meet freely, with 44% saying they would feel safe. African respondents were least positive in relation to taking part in a public protest: 33% said they could join public protests; 33% said they would feel safe.

- EE also had a low response towards feeling safe in a public protest with only 32% answering in the positive.
- Children responding to the OCT provided reasons as to why they could not meet freely with other children and/or join public protests, or did not feel comfortable or safe doing so. These related to issues of safety and fear of repercussion, alongside the recurring theme of parents not wishing them to engage in such activities. Some children also indicated that they lacked experience in attending demonstrations and would need adult support in exercising this right.
- In the FGDs, the children were overwhelmingly positive about opportunities given to 'meet freely' and 'work with others'.
- Children in the FGDs indicated a wide range of ways in which they exercised their right to peaceful assembly: being able to meet and associate in groups with their peers (discussed above); being able to participate in public activities. The latter ranged from direct engagement with individual politicians and community leaders, through to attendance at public town hall or national assembly meetings.
- Children in the FGDs also raised safety issues as a concern. For those children who had been involved in public demonstrations, the presence of supportive adults from NGOs and/or their parents provided a degree of security.

Support for children

- Children involved in the OCT reported they were likely to go to friends, family, adults in school and local and international children's organisations for support in taking action on issues.
- Likewise, children in the FGDs acknowledged the support they received from their peers, family members, schools and youth groups, local media, local governance structures, regional government institutions, regional and national children's networks.
- Children in the FGDs indicated that adult support helped them overcome some barriers in engaging with officials from local to national levels and, increased their sense of personal security and confidence. They also identified close collaboration between local NGOs and international NGOs as being key to the success and sustainability of their work.
- Children in FGDs indicated that adults from NGOs (local and international) supported them in a number of ways: providing meeting spaces and resources (including financial support); building children's capacity around international child rights' law as well as local, regional, national legislation and policies; helping children understand local, regional and national adults governance structures; helping children work within these structures; developing children's skills and thus confidence.
- Some children in FGDs stated that adult organisations should take in to account the different schedules of children (school timings, exams, vacations etc.) when planning their programmes.

Enabling children to exercise their civil and political rights

- Children responding to the OCT suggested that more need to be done in relation to: taking children seriously; increasing support from children's organisations; encouraging children's involvement in politics; and developing better mechanisms to assist children in communicating with government. They also indicated the important role played by education.
- Children in the FGDs suggested that in order to enable them to exercise their civil and political rights more fully there should be: greater visibility of child groups and organisations; a wider range of association opportunities; more capacity building opportunities for children (particularly more excluded groups of children) and adults in their community; more proactive engagement with parents; extended and ongoing engagement with children from NGOs once projects had come to an end.

- They also suggested the need for closer connection between children's groups and existing governance structures, particularly at a local level and that more could be done to build the capacities of local stakeholders in considering children's groups as institutional partners and involving them regularly and consistently in decision making processes.
- Some children in the FGDs also noted that engagement with national institutions was difficult; indicating that more could be done to support activity beyond the local level.

Conclusion

- Children can and do engage in civic action when they are well-supported. However, they meet a range of challenges and barriers, many of which would not exist to the same extent for adults.

2. Context, methods and participants

The context of this study was the premise that children's opportunities to act in order to improve their own lives depend on an enabled civil society. In their role of holding states to account, civil society organisations enable and support children to participate in governance as active citizens and agents for bringing about positive change in their societies. When children are involved in activities to improve their lives and to drive their own agendas, they draw on their ability to exercise their civil and political rights. As Save the Children put it in the Policy Brief 'Speaking Out: Safeguarding civil space for children' (2014): 'It is vital to have diverse spaces and places where people, including children, can come together to argue constructively, find possible points of consensus and work collectively'. This study examined children's experience of exercising their civil and political rights when involved in actions intended to bring about change. The focus was the public sphere, not the private sphere. The study looked at what helps and what hinders children from exercising these rights as a means of providing insights into the civic space in which children operate. The rights and freedoms examined were: the right to access information; the freedom to express themselves (on- and offline); the right to have their views given due weight; the freedom to meet in groups; and the freedom to join and form organisations. These civil and political rights are contained in the body of international law, including the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Most of the children in the study were involved in local children's organisations. Their actions ranged from advocating on an issue at school to representing children from their country at international-level meetings.

Save the Children's Child Rights Governance Global Theme, through Save the Children Denmark contracted the Centre for Children's Rights (CCR) at Queen's University Belfast to support this study. The research team from CCR developed the study's methodology and the data collection tools. They also analysed and reported the findings. Child Rights Governance global team oversaw the project and coordinated the in-country data collection in 12 of Save the Children country offices.

The research questions addressed in this study were:

- What are children's experiences of exercising their civil and political rights?
- What are children's views on being able to exercise their civil and political rights when they are involved in child rights activities? What are the enabling and hindering factors to them exercising their rights?
- What are children's views on what can be done to enable them to exercise their rights?

The following sections outline the methods used to answer these questions and a detailed overview of the participants engaged in the consultation.

a. Methods

Methods of data collection involved an online consultation tool (OCT) and face-to-face focus group discussions (FGDs). The methods were informed by a young person's advisory group (YPAG).

Young Persons' Advisory Group

The Centre for Children's Rights adopts a children's rights-based approach to its research. One pillar of this approach is the involvement of a children's or young persons' advisory group which can offer their advice to the research team as representatives of the target population of the study (see Lundy and McEvoy, 2012a; 2012b). In this consultation, the research team

worked with a young persons' advisory group – a YPAG. The YPAG of six children aged 14-17 years (3 girls and 3 boys) were volunteers from a school in Belfast. The research team met with the YPAG three times during the study.

A rights-based approach to research and consultation requires that children's capacity is built to engage with the issues under investigation (Lundy and McEvoy, 2012a). While children are experts in their own lives, they may not know much about their civil and political rights and the role of civil society in assisting them to uphold and claim their rights. Therefore the first meeting with the YPAG not only covered the aims of the project but also focused on their understandings of democratic processes, civic space and engagement and the exercise of civil and political rights. In the second meeting, they were asked to advise the research team on the applicability and ease of use of the data collection tools, as well as the questions they contained. They also provided child-friendly definitions of the civil and political rights being investigated. In the third meeting, they advised on a child-friendly version of the report.

Two data collection tools were developed by the research team with the advice of the YPAG. The first was an online consultation tool aimed at children with access to the internet (Appendix 1). The second was a face-to-face consultation tool to be used in focus group discussions with children (Appendix 2).

Note that the limitations to using only one Western advisory group are recognised. Ideally, additional groups from other regions would have been involved. However, this was not feasible due to resource and time restrictions. Nonetheless, attempts were made to ensure the suitability of the data collection tools to all regions (see below).

Online consultation tool

The introduction to the online consultation tool (OCT) oriented the visitor to the web-page. It explained that the study was interested in children's role in a healthy democracy, one where children alongside other citizens have a say and can bring about change. It was clearly stated that the OCT was anonymous. The OCT itself consisted of tick-box and open-ended questions about the respondent's experience of, motivation for and interest in taking part in actions that are intended to bring about change. Children were also asked for their views on whether they can exercise their civil and political rights and whether they feel comfortable and safe doing so. Specifically, they were asked about accessing information, expressing their views freely, being listened to, meeting others to take action and joining groups. The OCT was made available in English, French and Spanish. They were hosted on Questback (an online, professional consultation resource) and made available on Save the Children's Resource Centre website. The OCT was also promoted through several children's networks with much of the promotion and encouragement to participate was through Save the Children's country and member offices. In some offices, children's familiarity with computers was low, so a paper-based version of the questionnaire was provided for the children to complete. The paper-based responses were then keyed into the online tool by Save the Children staff or the research team. The OCT was available for completion for five weeks over February and March 2016.

Face-to-face consultation tool

A set of questions with associated prompts and an optional activity was developed by the research team and the YPAG. The questions and prompts explored children's experience of exercising their civil and political rights and their views on what could be improved to ensure that they feel safe and empowered to take action on issues that matter to them. The tool was developed for use by facilitators appointed by Save the Children to guide a focus group discussion (FGD) with children who had experience of taking action to bring about change. A

response form was provided for the facilitators to use to report the views and discussion of the focus groups. The facilitators and some coordinators of the consultation based in the offices of Save the Children attended an online webinar, which was delivered by CCR. Its purpose was to acquaint the facilitators with the FGD questions and provide the opportunity for questions about the consultations. A facilitation pack, which included information on research ethical considerations, the FGD questions and response form, was also provided for all facilitators. The focus group discussions took place in February and March 2016.

Ensuring suitability of consultation tools across regions

All focus group facilitators across all regions were invited to take part in an online webinar. During this webinar, the research team introduced the facilitators to the tools and explained the research process, whilst also answering any questions the facilitators had regarding the research. The facilitators were advised during the webinar, as well as in the facilitator's pack, that the focus group questions and protocols offered were a guide; they were encouraged to address the key research questions, but to adapt their language and methods as necessary to suit their cultural context. Whilst there was not the same opportunity for the online consultation tool, which was standardised across all regions, it is important to highlight that this was translated into French and Spanish by native speakers. Additionally, whilst the online tool was standardised for the most part, there were numerous opportunities within this tool for children to offer free responses also.

b. Participants

The findings of this study are based on the views of children who either completed the OCT or took part in a FGD or both. In total, there were 1,606 children in the study across a total of 60 countries (58 countries were represented in the data collected via the OCT; 12 countries participated in the FGDs; 10 of which were represented in both data sets). It is likely that some children have responses in both data sets. The number of participants in each of the data collection methods is given in more detail below.

Online consultation tool

The final OCT sample consisted of 937 children from 58 countries, of which 55% were girls and 45% were boys, aged between 11 and 17 years.

The OCT actually attracted 959 respondents from 59 countries, but 22 responses were removed from the analysis because the respondents were beyond the target age (they were 18 years old or over).

The OCT was offered in English (which had 727 responses), in Spanish (which had 166 responses) and in French (which had 53 responses).

Children from 58 countries were represented in the data, but 9% of children reported that they were living in a country different to the one in which they were born. The countries were allocated to the five regional groups of the United Nations member states[1]: Africa, Asia-Pacific (AP), Eastern Europe (EE), Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) and Western Europe and Others Group (WEOG). According to the UN grouping, the Asia-Pacific region stretches from the Middle East to eastern Asia, incorporating Central Asian states, but not Russia, which is included in the Eastern Europe region. The number, proportion, mean age and sex of

[1] www.un.org/depts/DGACM/RegionalGroups.shtml

respondents from each region are given in Table 1 (no other demographic identifiers were asked of the children). The over-representation of Asia-Pacific must be noted, and the results interpreted in light of this - 49% of the sample is from Asia-Pacific (see point below regarding the sampling techniques employed).

The mean age of the 937 respondents was 15.6 years old. The youngest regional cohort was the Asia-Pacific respondents whose average age was 14.3 years. The eldest was the Eastern Europeans with the average age of 15.8 years.

Table 1: Number, proportion, mean age and sex of children in the sample of respondents to the online consultation tool by UN region

UN Region	Number of countries	Number of children (%)	Mean age	Girls	Boys
Africa	15	218 (23.3)	14.7	117	100
Asia-Pacific	15	463 (49.4)	14.3	248	212
Eastern Europe	9	62 (6.6)	15.8	39	23
Latin America and Caribbean	10	118 (12.6)	14.5	62	52
Western Europe and Others Group	9	76 (8.1)	15.2	42	33
Total	58	937	15.6	508	420

Note: Nine respondents chose not to disclose their sex, so the sum of girls and boys is less than the total.

It is important to highlight that the OCT had a non-probability sample. The sample of respondents to the questionnaire was self-selected or encouraged by Save the Children offices. It was not a random sample nor was it a representative sample. Generalisations to the wider population cannot be made from the sample findings.

The OCT results must therefore be viewed with caution. It is also difficult to attribute any differences between regions to general population characteristics and not to the nature of the sample of children who responded.

Face-to-face consultation tool

There was a total of 64 focus group discussions (FGD) held in 12 countries by 34 facilitators and note-takers. Using the views and discussion from the focus groups, the facilitators completed the response form provided in the facilitator's pack and sent them to the research team. The response form addressed the consultation questions and allowed space for direct quotations from the children in the FGDs. In all, 669 children took part: 51% were girls and 326 (48.7%) boys, and they ranged in age from 8 to 17 years old. The number of children in each region and their age-range is given in Table 2. Again, the over-representation of Asia-Pacific must be noted, as the majority of FGDs were in the Asia-Pacific region.

Regarding the sampling criteria for the FGDs, groups were invited to take part by Save the Children. All groups identified by Save the Children were invited to take part. The children who were consulted in the focus group discussions were members of children's groups or child-led groups which have been formed to promote the interests and, in many cases, the rights of children to the wider community. These groups were mostly established as part of Save the Children's programmes. Others came about as a result of other children's governance or empowerment initiatives in the country.

The profile of the membership of the groups varied greatly, often centring on location or other identity markers. They included school-based groups, village-based groups, urban groups, refugee camp members and migrant workers' children. Their governance structures differed too, ranging from child parliaments, leadership groups, radio stations, child councils and assemblies and voluntary child groups. Most of the groups are facilitated by adults, but the children themselves decide on the issues they want to change.

Table 2: The number of focus group discussions and the number of children who participated in them by region.

UN Region	Number of countries	Number of focus groups	Number of children	Girls	Boys	Age range
Africa	3	5	76	35	41	10-18
Asia-Pacific	6	50	490	252	238	10-18
Eastern Europe	1	4	28	18	10	12-18
Latin America and Caribbean	2	5	75	38	37	8-17
Western Europe and Others Group	0	0	0	0	0	-
Total	12	64	669	343	326	-

c. Analysis

Facilitators' response forms from the FGDs and the responses to the OCT were collated and analysed by the research team.

Data collated via the OCT were explored using SPSS, a statistical data analysis package. Descriptive statistics were derived to summarise the findings. The data were further explored for any patterns related to regional and gender differences. Some regional variations emerged and disaggregated data by region are reported in the findings sections as appropriate. However, **no notable variations emerged for gender**, with boys and girls responding similarly across all questions, therefore no gender variations are reported. The open-ended questions in the OCT yielded responses from children, which were analysed thematically. Reports from the FGDs were also analysed thematically, with direct quotations from children selected as appropriate to illustrate these themes. Throughout the report children's oral or written views are presented in ***grey italics***. Where it is possible, the gender, age and region of the child are given.

d. Limitations and associated caveats

As in any consultation, it is important from the outset to recognise its limitations. In this consultation the limitations relate largely to sample bias.

As noted above the OCT had a non-probability sample. Many of the respondents to the OCT also self-identified as having some experience of civic engagement (see Table 4 below). There is also a significant 'over-representation' of children from AP (almost half the sample). Overall findings from the OCT should be read in light of this. Since the sample is neither random nor representative, generalisations to the wider population cannot be made from the sample findings.

There are two important caveats to consider in relation to regional variations from OCT findings. First, as noted above, it is difficult to attribute any differences between regions to general population characteristics and not to the nature of the sample of children who responded. Secondly, regional variations in percentage responses do not necessarily mean that overall percentage responses have been, as a result, distorted. For example, whilst percentage responses from LAC children are at times much higher than those from other

children, given that children from LAC represent just over 12% of the respondent to the OCT, proportionally an analysis of the OCT findings has demonstrated that this has not affected the overall percentage responses to any significant degree. As such, regional variations should be read in the light of sample bias (noted above) and in light of the proportion of children from each region responding.

Children consulted in the FGDs were specifically chosen as 'active children', and many were working in groups supported by Save the Children. Findings from the FGDs must therefore be understood in this context.

The limitations of using only one Western child advisory group have been noted above, alongside the ways in which actions were taken to overcome this.

Nevertheless, the OCT responses from nearly one thousand children and the themes emerging from the FGDs with over six hundred children offer rich insights into *their* views and *their* experiences of exercising their civil and political rights.

3. Consultation Findings: how have children exercised their civil and political rights?

This section outlines and integrates the findings from the online and face-to-face consultations. It begins with a discussion of the respondents' interest in civic action and motivation to exercise their civil and political rights, before discussing the findings in relation to their experience of taking action.

a. Interest and motivation

Levels of interest in civic action

As noted in section 2, the children who were involved in the FGDs were selected because of their involvement in children's groups and were thus asked primarily about their *experience* of exercising their civil and political rights. However, it could not be assumed that the children who responded to the OCT were predisposed towards civic action. The OCT thus presented an opportunity to ask a more general population of children about their level of interest in civic action. Therefore the data discussed in this section relates only to the OCT.

Children who responded to the OCT were asked about their level of interest in, and understanding of, the 'decisions made by government and other people in positions of authority about issues and things happening in their community, country or the world'. The majority (81%) of children reported that they were interested (answering 'a little' or 'a lot') in such matters and that they understood such issues (84% answering 'a little' or 'a lot'). This high level of interest may be due to the topic of the OCT attracting those with an interest, and it may also be a reflection of the large number of children who were encouraged to complete the OCT by Save the Children.

Regionally, some differences emerged. A larger proportion of children from LAC reported being interested 'a lot' in the decisions made by politicians etc., compared to the other regions (see Table 3). More children from EE reported understanding these issues 'a lot', compared to the other regions. However, when 'a little' and 'a lot' are combined, LAC children rated higher (see Table 3). Very few LAC children (2.5%) reported that they could not understand the issues at all, while about a fifth (21%) of AP respondents said they did not understand them.

Table 3: Percentage of OCT respondents who answered 'a lot' and 'a little' to how interested in and how much they understood decisions made by governments, etc. by region

UN Region	% not all interested	% interested in these issues 'a lot' ('a little' + 'a lot')	% don't know if interested	% do not understand at all	% understand these issues 'a lot' ('a little' + 'a lot')
Africa	14.2	45.9 (81.2)	4.6	15.1	29.4 (84.9)
Asia-Pacific	16.2	27.9 (76.5)	7.3	21.0	14.9 (79.0)
Eastern Europe	0	62.9 (90.3)	9.7	8.1	35.5 (92.0)
Latin America and Caribbean	2.5	75.4 (95.7)	1.7	2.5	26.3 (97.5)
Western Europe and Others Group	9.2	47.4 (80.3)	10.5	10.5	27.6 (89.4)

Levels of experience in civic action

The high levels of interest reported are also likely to be a reflection of the types of children who completed the OCT, the majority of which were children with some experience of civic action. They were asked if they had ever faced an issue they wanted to change and whether they had done anything about it. Almost two-thirds (63%) said they had faced an issue that made them feel they should do something, and 74% said they did something about it (see Table 4 below).

This high degree of activity and understanding is corroborated by the respondent's self-nomination as being someone who is actively trying to bring about change (see Table 4). There were positive responses from 70% of the children.

Table 4: Percentage of children in the OCT who responded Yes or No to questions about their experience of civic action

	% Yes	% No
Have you ever faced an issue that has made you feel you should do something to bring change?	62.6	37.4
Did you do something about it?	73.5	26.5
Do you consider yourself to be someone who is actively trying to bring about change?	70.2	29.8

Regional patterns emerged across these questions also, with greater proportions of children from LAC reporting experience of facing an issue they wanted to change, and identifying as actively trying to bring about change. More children from LAC reported having faced an issue that made them want to bring about change (see Figure 1 below). More LAC, EE and African children identified themselves as actively trying to bring about change more than children from AP and WEOG. The children who self-identified as active also responded with more detail about the issues and actions they have taken than the children who answered in the negative.

Figure 1: Proportion of OCT respondents who responded Yes to having faced an issue that made them want to act by region

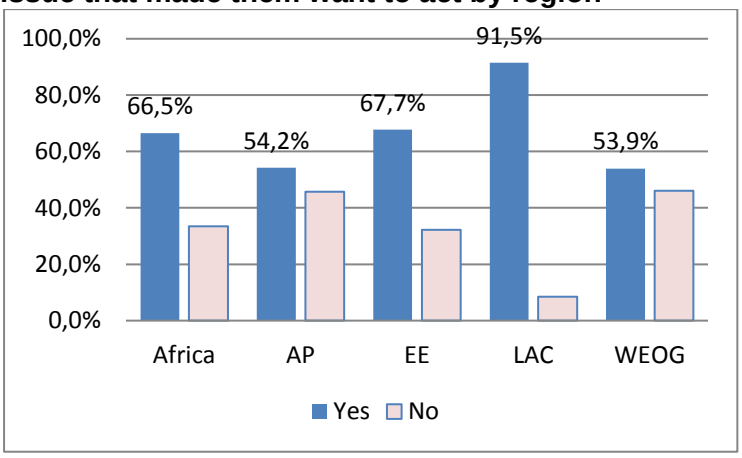
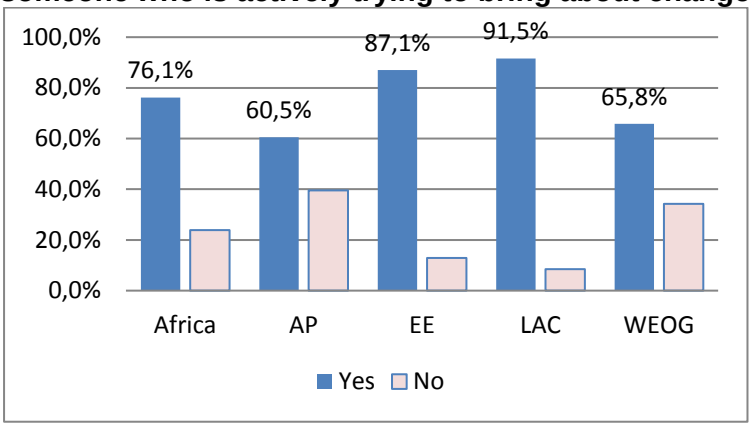


Figure 2: Proportion of OCT respondents who said they consider themselves to be someone who is actively trying to bring about change by region



Issues of interest

Both consultations offered insight into the variety of issues that children want to change. They ranged from harmful practices, such as violence at home, child marriage or compulsory dowries, denial of access to education, corporal punishment, child labour and trafficking or sexual harassment of girls, to infrastructure problems, such as lack of a school wall or street lighting or electricity or a play area, and to discriminatory practices, such as excluding children with disabilities or children from some ethnic backgrounds from school and discrimination against LGBT people.

People drink and fight among themselves, they push others. I feel scared and insecure. (Boy, 10, Asia-Pacific)

Children are not the source of income but we have to invest in them (Child, Africa)

We work on eradicating eve teasing (a form of sexual harassment of girls) also. When going to school, we often get teased by local boys. If we tell our parents about it, they feel afraid and many parents tend to marry their child off as early as they can as a result! This is one of the reasons behind the increase of child marriages. (Girl, 15, Asia-Pacific)

School is not complete without compound wall (Child, Asia-Pacific)

When drawing up the proposals we were ... thinking about the children from communities and neighbourhoods that don't have a space where they can play and there wasn't anyone to speak for them (Girl, 13, Latin America and Caribbean)

Parents do not want their daughters to attend school they say "don't pollute their minds" (Child, 13, Asia-Pacific)

Children without birth certificates are not able to write their ordinary level examination. (Child, Africa)

Some children living in insecure areas or areas prone to natural disasters worked for better security and proper measures to ensure their safety. Some children worked on multiple issues as representatives of children in a children's assembly or group.

One day we were in the street and somebody told us, go away there is something will explode and we started running. (Child, Asia-Pacific)

We decided to take action on different topics such as obligatory classes/courses from different school teachers, the improvement of the quality education and the un-free charge medication care for children (Child, Eastern Europe)

Others again worked specifically on governance issues to improve the mechanisms to take children's views into consideration. For example, a child-led initiative in Eastern Europe has worked to increase the participation of children in decisions that affect them, such as by signing memoranda of understanding with regional education offices to ensure their voices are taken into consideration in decisions related to school infrastructure, teaching materials and the creation of child-friendly environments in school. In some instances, the children worked on issues that were part of a national campaign of the government or one of Save the Children's thematic areas, but in many instances, the children themselves identified the issues they want to change.

Motivation

The children consulted in the focus group discussions (FGDs) were asked about their motivation to get involved in the action they took. Many children said their motivation arose as a result of being more aware of their rights, often as a result of training. Once they were sensitised to not only issues of concern and the neglect of their rights but also to their potential to bring about change, they felt motivated to act. This is a positive reflection on the work of the children's groups' facilitators. Many other children reported the source of their motivation arose from a sense of injustice, empathy, concern or moral obligation to see wrongs put right. Many spoke about other children who were worse off than themselves and they wanted to be part of the process to eliminate injustices. Others spoke about being motivated to act on problems that affected them and children like them. It was notable that many children reported feeling good or fulfilled by taking action, which further motivated them.

We are lucky enough to have received so many trainings, and it is our responsibility to help spread the information we have learnt. Once a girl was set to be married off against her will, and she sought our help. These incidents make us feel important and further motivates us to work. (Boy, 16, Asia-Pacific)

We have to understand that there are other children who are more affected. (Girl, 14, Latin America and Caribbean)

I saw that nobody wanted to report the problem so I told myself that if they can't do this I have to try, it was a challenge for me, but I did it. (Child, Latin America and Caribbean)

This success is grounded in the passion, engagement and the belief that children themselves can have a positive impact on their lives and on the lives of their peers by practicing the right to participation and collaborating with adults and the institutions. This is the power of children. (Girl, Eastern Europe)

This group had a super good impact on me because the trainings and activities taught me more on children's rights. (Girl, Eastern Europe)

b. Experience

Types of action

Many of the respondents to the OCT and all of the FGD participants had experience of taking part in some form of civic action on an issue. As noted above, the FGDs were intentionally held with groups of children who had taken action.

The OCT was open to all children, and there was no prior expectation that the respondents had taken part in some form of civic action. Figure 3 shows the proportion of children completing the OCT who responded positively to having taken various forms of action. Most common amongst the actions was speaking to friends about an issue, and least common was

using a blog or another online forum for discussing an issue. Indicative of the active nature of the sample, 54% of them belonged to a club and or had worked with a children's organisation.

Some regional differences were noted in responses to this question. For all regions, except EE, speaking to friends was the most popular selection (the top three selections across all regions are presented below in Table 5). EE's most frequently selected action was working with a children's organisation on an issue. Other popular choices included working with a children's organisation and being part of clubs/ groups. For children in WEOG online activity was the second most popular selection (after speaking to friends about an issue).

Figure 3: Proportion of children in the OCT who responded 'Yes' to each of the following actions

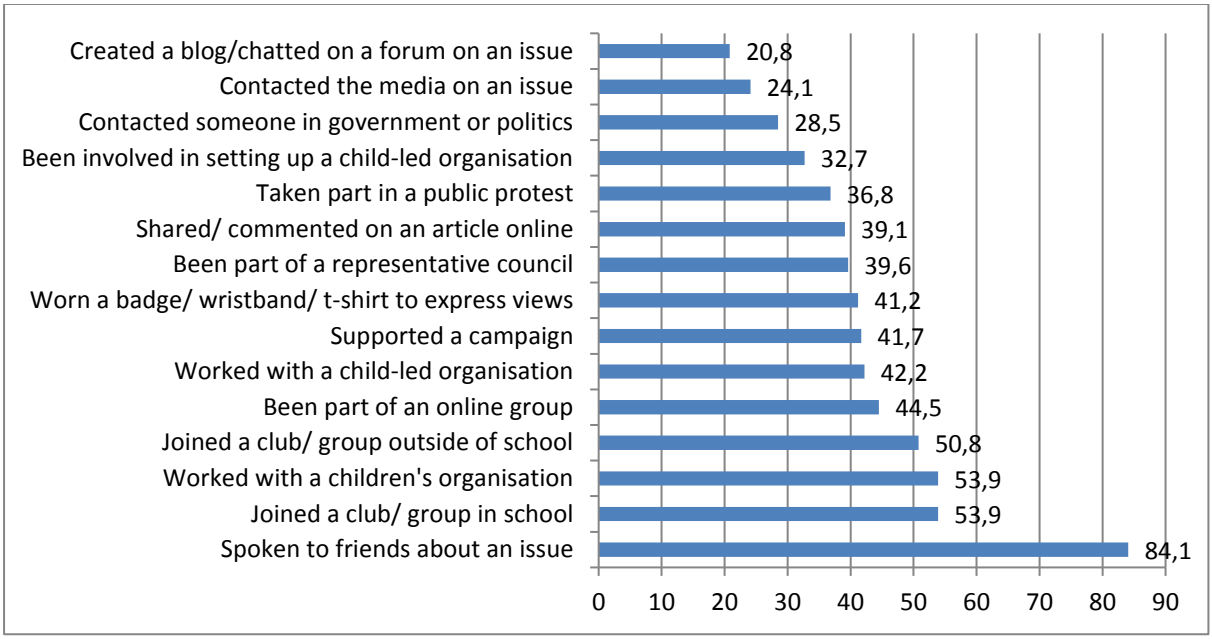


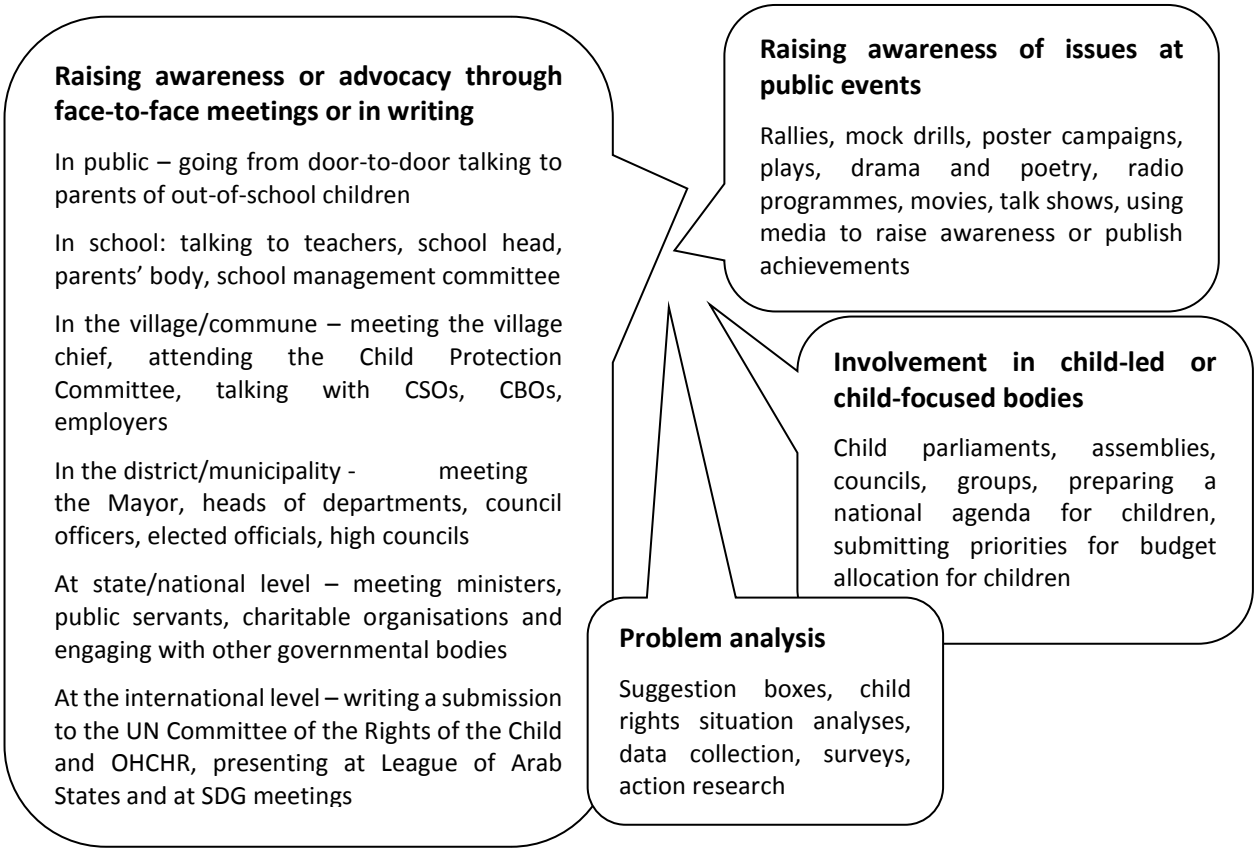
Table 5: The three most frequently selected actions by region

UN Region	Top 3	% Yes
Africa	Spoken to friends about an issue	78.0
	Joined a club/ group in school, e.g., debating club	59.6
	Worked with a children's organisation on an issue	53.7
Asia-Pacific	Spoken to friends about an issue	87.0
	Worked with a children's organisation on an issue	45.6
	Joined a club/ group in school, e.g., debating club	44.9
Eastern Europe	Worked with a children's organisation on an issue	85.5
	Spoken to friends about an issue	80.6
	Been part of an online group	80.6
Latin America and Caribbean	Spoken to friends about an issue	92.4
	Joined a club/ group in school, e.g., debating club	78.0
	Worked with a child-led organisation	78.0
Western Europe and Others Group	Spoken to friends about an issue	73.7
	Supported a campaign, e.g. by signing a petition online/offline	56.6
	Shared or commented on an article you seen online, e.g. retweeted	53.9

The FGDs offered a richer view of the types of activities that children have engaged in when they were trying to bring about change. This is because, for the most part, they were members

of a children's group and had met, discussed and planned their tactics and approach, and so tailored their actions to suit the decision-makers they were targeting in a culturally appropriate manner. It is difficult to do justice here to the many strategies named by the FGD participants. Figure 4 presents these activities, organised by type.

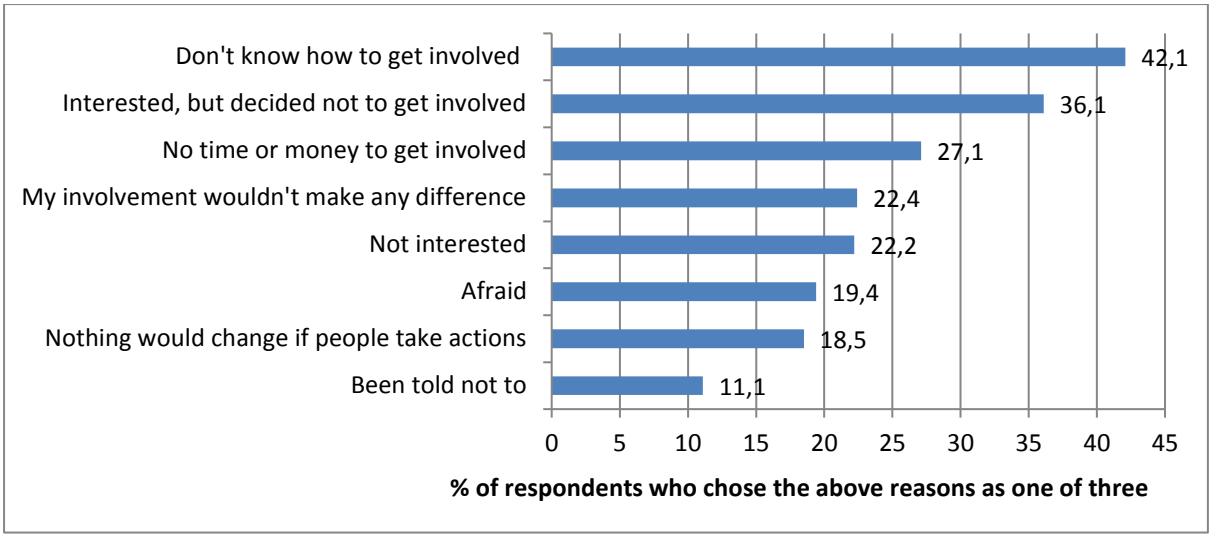
Figure 4: Types of activities in which FGD children had taken part



Reasons for being deterred to take action

The children who responded to the OCT were asked about their reasons for not taking part in the activities depicted in Figure 3 on any occasion in order to gauge the deterrents they faced. They could choose up to three from a selection of reasons, resulting in 1,855 responses in total. Figure 5 shows the percentage of children who selected the different reasons. The two most common reasons chosen were: not knowing how to get involved (selected by 42% of the sample) and being interested in the issues but deciding not to take action (36%).

Figure 5: The percentage of OCT respondents who selected each reason as one of their three options



Regionally, variations emerged. For example, in line with the level of interest demonstrated in such matters, fewer children from LAC selected 'not interested' compared to the other regions, however, surprisingly, a greater proportion from LAC also stated that they did not know how to get involved. More children from Africa and AP reported being afraid and no children from WEOG reported having been told not to (percentages by region can be found in Table 6).

Table 6: The percentage selecting each reason for not taking action as one of three by region

	% selecting each option as one of three reasons				
Reasons	**Africa**	**AP**	**EE**	**LAC**	**WEOG**
Don't know how to get involved in activities like these	49.0	40.0	42.6	60.8	43.7
Interested, but decided not to get involved	37.5	44.7	34.0	26.5	36.6
No time or money to get involved	31.7	28.1	21.3	38.2	26.8
My involvement wouldn't make any difference	25.5	27.9	17.0	9.8	28.2
Not interested	31.7	26.5	14.9	3.9	25.4
Afraid	27.9	22.5	4.3	20.6	7.0
Nothing would change if people take actions	25.5	21.8	23.4	6.9	12.7
Been told not to	17.3	10.1	17.0	16.7	0.0

4. Consultation Findings: can children readily exercise their civil and political rights?

This section outlines the findings from the online and face-to-face consultations. It begins with a discussion of the extent to which respondents could exercise their right to information before discussing in turn freedom of expression, the right to have views given due weight, freedom of association and freedom of assembly. Clearly, these rights are interrelated and connections will be made as appropriate.

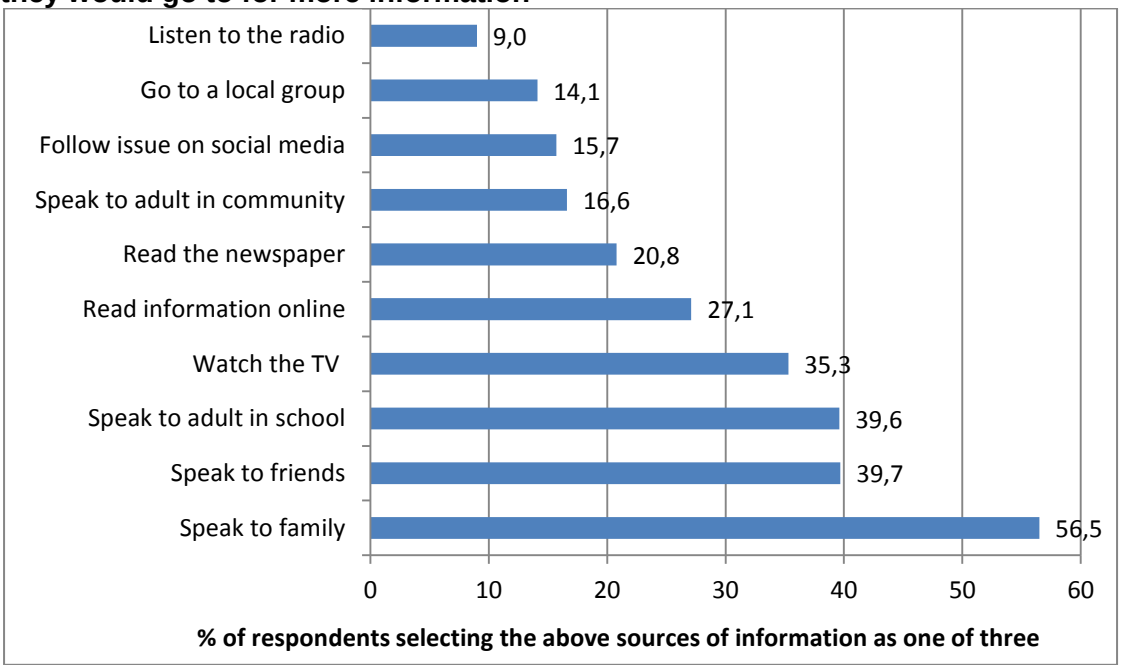
a. The right to access information

Children responding to the online consultation tool (OCT) and involved in focus group discussions (FGDs) were asked about sources of information, the extent to which these were accessible to them and the extent to which they felt comfortable and safe in accessing information.

Sources of information

The OCT addressed the sources of information children were likely to turn to if they wanted to find out more about issues and things happening in their community or more widely. They were asked to select three from a range of options, which gave rise to 2,751 responses. Figure 6 shows the percentage of children who selected each of the options as one of their three options. The most popular selections included: speak to family, speak to friends, speak to an adult in school, and watch the news or TV programmes. Reading the newspaper was selected less often than going online to read information. Speaking to an adult in the community was less favoured than speaking to an adult in school. Listening to the radio and going to a local group were selected least often.

Figure 6: The percentage of children in the OCT sample selecting the people and places they would go to for more information



Regional variations emerged. For example, greater proportions of children from WEOG, LAC and EE selected online options in their top 3 sources of information, whereas a greater proportion of children from Africa selected listening to the radio and reading the newspaper. These were the least favoured options in EE. More EE children than in other regions selected a local group as a source of information, which is in line with their reported experience of joining children's groups discussed in Section 2b. Very few WEOG children (1.3%) selected talking to an adult in the community. Percentages by region are shown in Table 7 below.

Table 7: Percentage of OCT respondents who selected different sources of information by region

% selecting each option as one of their three choices					
Source of support	**Africa**	**AP**	**EE**	**LAC**	**WEOG**
Speak to family	52.3	60.9	43.5	59.3	47.4
Speak to friends	42.2	43.4	19.4	41.5	23.7
Speak to teacher/ adult in school	37.2	43.6	37.1	35.6	30.3
Watch news/ TV programmes	34.4	38.0	37.1	21.2	42.1
Read information online, e.g., online news reports	22.9	21.8	53.2	35.6	36.8
Read the newspaper	26.6	21.8	11.3	13.6	17.1
Speak to an adult in community	14.2	18.1	19.4	23.7	1.3
Follow issue on social media	11.5	14.0	24.2	18.6	26.3
Go to a local group	7.3	11.0	33.9	28.8	13.2
Listen to radio	25.7	1.9	0.0	11.0	7.9

Children in the FGDs generally considered that they had access to the information they needed, although they recognised that not all children were in this position and that all children should be able to access information they need on issues affecting them. It was clear that the main and trusted source of information for most children was the adults in their lives, in particular the NGO workers who were facilitating them, many of whom were able to access this information and present it in accessible ways. Generally, children reported a dependency on adults to source information they needed. Other important sources of information were teachers and other adults in the community.

When [NGO facilitator] gives us information on child rights, age of work and education and our school teacher also says the same things, we know for sure its correct information. (Child, Asia-Pacific)

One group pointed out that accessing information was difficult for everyone in their community – adults and children alike.

"In X, having access to and getting to know what's going on is a problem even for an elderly person, leave alone children" (Boy, 15, Africa)

Children also identified other children and their own experiences as being a key source of information. However, some recognised the need to have other 'official' or more detailed information on the issues children were observing in their lives and said this could be difficult for them to access. For example, one group working on child migration highlighted the difference between what they were seeing on the ground and the challenge in finding official data that supported their lived experiences.

Ability to access information online and offline

Children responding to the OCT largely felt it was possible to access information freely on issues that affect or interest them, both online or offline. Overall, 66% of all respondents said they could access information online and 56% said they could access information in hard-copy (see Table 8). It is notable that about 20% of all respondents did not know whether they could access information online and 22% did not know if they could access information offline, which may be a reflection of inexperience, not knowing what information is available online or offline, or disparate availability of the internet.

Table 8: Views on the right to access information from the OCT

		% Yes	% No	% Don't know
Can you...	get information freely on the internet?	65.6	14.8	19.5
	understand this information?	58.8	19.2	22.0
	get information offline?	56.4	22.1	21.6
	understand this information?	58.9	20.4	20.7
Would you feel comfortable...	getting information freely on the internet?	63.5	18.5	18.0
	getting information offline?	57.6	23.9	18.5
Would you feel safe...	getting information freely on the internet?	57.8	22.9	19.2
	getting information offline?	57.0	24.7	18.4

There were some regional variations (see Table 9), highlighting the variations in internet accessibility across the regions. For example, whilst many children from EE, LAC and WEOG reported being able to access online information freely (90%, 81%, and 76% respectively - see Table 9), responses for Africa and AP were lower (62% and 59% respectively), with both these regions demonstrating the highest proportion of children reporting that they *would not* be able to access information freely on the internet (both with a response rate of 18% - see Table 9).

With regards to accessing information offline, i.e. as the question posed - 'straight from organisations, libraries, government departments and any other sources' - again regional variations emerged. A greater proportion of LAC children reported being able to access such information (78%) compared to the other regions (see Table 9). Furthermore, 40% of WEOG respondents said they did not know in response to this question. This suggests either differences in what is actually accessible or in the respondents' perception of whether they could access it.

Those children in the FGDs who had access to the internet recognised that it was an important source of direct information for them with one group commending a government website that provides direct public access to information. However, most of the children in the focus groups did not have access to the internet. In one instance, it was reported that this was a particular problem for girls as access to computers was reserved for the boys in the family.

Children who did not have access could see the potential value of being able to use the internet.

We don't know much about the internet, that's why we can't use it to its full potential. We could get information about the birth and death rates of children in different incidence, the rate of street and working children, number of children engage in drug addiction, political demonstration etc., We'd be able to plan our work better around those information. (Child, Asia-Pacific)

In the absence of access to online resources, children's suggestions for improving access to information often focused on the media.

Understanding information

Most children responding to the OCT indicated that they would be able to understand the information they access online or offline (see Table 8). This was relatively consistent across all regions (see Table 9).

Children in the FGDs generally thought that information they received was understandable. This was often attributed to the work of the NGOs who were supporting them. When particular difficulties about understanding information were reported, they were in relation to complex laws or financial information and budgets. Children reported a need for adults to translate information in ways that they would understand it:

Some of the information needed further explanation because of graphs etc. so that it becomes child-friendly and understandable (Child, Africa)

Some children in the FGDs also reported that there were additional difficulties accessing information on issues that are sensitive. Sometimes the challenge was getting that information (one example related to the reasons why children drop-out of school). In other instances, the barrier was that adults such as their parents and community elders did not take them seriously when they asked for information or thought that they should not be discussing certain issues and discouraged them from seeking information.

Some issues like child marriages are difficult to address, even community elders do not encourage us to discuss those. (Child, 13, Asia-Pacific)

Safety in accessing information

Please note, throughout the OCT children were asked questions in relation to safety in exercising their rights. The children were first asked about being 'comfortable' and then asked about being 'safe'. This was because there was a concern that children might read 'comfortable' as either meaning 'confident' or 'safe'. The responses should be read in this light.

With regards to feeling comfortable accessing information, 64% of respondents to the OCT were comfortable accessing information online and 58% were comfortable accessing information offline (see Table 8). However, 18% and 19% of respondents said they *did not know* if they would feel comfortable getting information online/ offline (respectively), perhaps suggesting a lack of familiarity in obtaining such information.

There were some regional differences with respect to feeling comfortable accessing information online or offline. Greater proportions of children from EE and LAC were comfortable accessing online information (79% and 81% respectively answering yes) and offline information (77% and 83%). Those least comfortable were the AP respondents, 23% reported not feeling comfortable accessing information online and 29% reporting the same for offline information (See Table 10 for percentages by region).

With regards to feeling safe, 58% of the respondents said they felt safe accessing information online and 57% said they felt safe accessing information offline (see Table 8).

There were some regional differences in the respondents' views on feeling safe also, particularly when accessing information *offline*. LAC (80%) and EE (77%) registered the highest number of responses to feeling safe, but less than half of the AP respondents said

they felt safe (47%). Indeed, the highest proportion of 'not safe' answers came from AP, with 31% saying they did not feel safe accessing information offline.

Children in the FGDs generally said that they felt safe accessing information about the issues they were working on, although that was in general due to the fact that they were accessing it through the NGO staff who were facilitating them. It was reported that feeling safe depended on the child, the issue and the context. For example, the dependency on adults posed particular problems for children who had been abused by adults.

Children sometime don't trust adult that they are not familiar with especially those children that might have been abused in one way or the other (Children, Africa)

Some groups reported feeling unsafe when looking for information about certain issues such as domestic violence or local spending or when seeking information on security issues in a location experiencing conflict. Several groups reported threats from people they were exposing (such as drug dealers or parents of children being presented for child marriage) and a fear of violence and possible revenge for their action in working on issues such as these. One concern of children working on child labour issues was that they would lose their jobs.

If the child laborers ask for opportunities to go to school, there is always a threat of getting fired. It is a huge risk, because the children need their income to survive (Male, 14, Latin America and Caribbean).

I am afraid as if they do not answer but threaten me. We concern about their feeling, sometime they do not happy with me, they might violence on me; they threaten me; they blame me. (Child, Asia Pacific)

Encouraging greater enjoyment of the right to information

Children's views, in the FGDs, on what would enable them to enjoy the right to information included:

- child-friendly information;
- support from adults to access and understand issues;
- access to online information.

Table 9: Views on the right to access information from the OCT - Can you? By region

	Africa			AP			EE			LAC			WEOG		
Can you…	% Yes	% No	% DK	% Yes	% No	% DK	% Yes	% No	% DK	% Yes	% No	% DK	% Yes	% No	% DK
get information freely on the internet?	61.5	17.9	20.6	58.5	18.1	23.3	90.3	0.0	9.7	81.4	11.9	6.8	76.3	2.6	21.1
understand this information?	67.0	20.2	12.8	53.1	21.6	25.3	69.4	3.2	27.4	61.9	18.6	19.5	56.6	15.8	27.6
get information offline?	56.4	24.3	19.3	50.8	26.8	22.5	66.1	11.3	22.6	78.0	11.9	10.2	48.7	11.8	39.5
understand this information?	66.5	21.1	12.4	52.9	24.0	23.1	66.1	12.9	21.0	65.3	15.3	19.5	57.9	10.5	31.6

*DK = Don't know

Table 10: Views on the right to access information from the OCT - Would you feel comfortable and safe. By region

	Africa			AP			EE			LAC			WEOG		
Would you feel comfortable…	%Yes	% No	% DK	%Yes	% No	% DK	%Yes	% No	% DK	%Yes	% No	% DK	%Yes	% No	% DK
getting information on internet?	67.9	20.6	11.5	54.2	22.5	23.3	79.0	6.5	14.5	80.5	8.5	11.0	68.4	13.2	18.4
getting information offline?	55.5	25.2	19.3	49.7	28.7	21.6	77.4	6.5	16.1	83.1	13.6	3.4	56.6	21.1	22.4
Would you feel safe…															
getting information on internet?	63.8	22.5	13.8	51.4	24.8	23.8	59.7	24.2	16.1	65.3	22.9	11.9	67.1	11.8	21.1
getting information offline?	60.1	21.1	18.8	47.3	31.1	21.6	77.4	8.1	14.5	79.7	16.1	4.2	55.3	22.4	22.4

b. *The right to freedom of expression*

If you have courage then everything is possible. (Child, 15, Asia-Pacific)

Children responding to the OCT and involved in FGDs were asked about the extent to which they could express their views freely and safely.

Freely

In general, large proportions of children responding to the OCT reported that they felt able to, comfortable and safe to express their views in *private*. However, fewer children felt able, comfortable or safe to do so in *public*, whether online or in public (see Table 11).
The degree of discomfort and feelings of a lack of safety varied between the regions. These differences are discussed in the following section.

In the FGDs, many children reported that they had no difficulty in expressing their views freely. However, others reported a range of challenges, most commonly parental objections and/or discouragement from adults general, most often their parents and community leaders.

My parents were hesitant in letting me out for these meetings, but after the facilitator explained many times they agreed. (Girl, 15, Asia-Pacific)

We are children and if a child gets to the point where it's not expected of them by the authorities and even the community, people can consider you a misbehaving child. (Girl, 17, Africa)

One group reported that children, particularly boys, are under pressure to achieve maximum marks in their exams and that a competitive routine that includes school, tuition, homework and religious studies meant that they are often left with no time to invest in interaction with other peers on issues other than studies.

Table 11: Responses from the OCT on freedom of expression

		% Yes	% No	% Don't know
Can you express your views freely ...	in private?	77.4	14.3	8.3
	online without being anonymous?	43.1	34.8	22.1
	in public?	44.1	38.3	17.6
Would you feel comfortable expressing your views freely ...	in private?	79.5	11.5	9.0
	online without being anonymous?	41.2	37.7	21.1
	in public?	39.2	42.9	17.9
Would you feel safe expressing your views freely ...	in private?	80.7	12.2	7.2
	online without being anonymous?	35.8	41.4	22.8
	in public?	34.2	46.0	19.9

Safely

As noted earlier, low proportions of respondents to the OCT felt safe when expressing views in public or online (see Table 11 above). With regard to being able to, feeling comfortable and feeling safe to express views in private, online and in public, numerous different regional

variations emerge (see Table 12). For example, a large proportion of children from AP said 'no' to feeling safe when expressing their views in public (54%) or online (47%). Many African respondents too said 'no' to feeling safe expressing their views in public (48%). LAC respondents had the highest proportion of respondents answering 'yes' to feeling safe expressing views in online (53%) and in public (58%), however, these are still quite low rates. More EE children than in other regions reported they did not know if they would feel safe expressing their views on online (37%) or in public (39%), suggesting a lack of experience or lack of knowledge of how safe they would be.

In the FGDs, most children reported feeling safe engaging in their activities, usually because of the level of adult support received. However, many also reported that there was a general concern among children about expressing their opinions. Moreover, many children in the FGDs reported feeling unsafe when expressing their views.

Don't let yourselves be ordered around by someone else. We all have the same rights and duties. Let's not be afraid of stating our opinions! (Girl, 12 Latin America and Caribbean)

Our activities are hindered by communal violence and revenge killings and even our cultural practices and beliefs sometime keep us from doing activities actively" (Girl, 17, Africa)

As noted above, a number of children in the FGDs reported receiving threats from those who were the focus of their campaigns when they were engaging in civic action. This was often related to work on particular issues such as campaigns against drug use, child labour or child marriage. One group listed the challenges as follows:

(i) getting scolded or (ii) not being permitted to stage dramas at all; and active threats, which included (i) risks of revengeful action by the person reported for eve-teasing (a type of sexual harassment of girls) and (ii) getting fired for demanding rights. (Children, Asia-Pacific)

Another group, in Africa, identified the use of 'vulgar' language by adults making them feel insecure and a need for police escorts at events.

Need for support

One of the most frequent issues referred to by the children in the FGDs was their lack of confidence. However, many reported that this grew with experience and with support from adult facilitators and other children.

If adults and we move together then we feel safer and in this way our organization will also sustain its work (Child, 16, Asia-Pacific)

When doing the interviews, it was difficult at first because I didn't know how to ask people, but when the kids taught me I felt more confident. (Boy, 10, Latin America and Caribbean)

Table 12 Responses from the OCT on freedom of expression by region

	Africa			AP			EE			LAC			WEOG		
	%Yes	%No	%DK	%Yes	%No	%DK	%Yes	%No	%DK	%Yes	%No	%DK	%Yes	%No	%DK
Can you express your views freely…															
in private?	81.2	12.8	6.0	74.3	17.7	8.0	80.6	4.8	14.5	85.6	9.3	5.1	69.7	13.2	17.1
online (no anonymity)?	47.7	31.7	20.6	31.7	43.0	25.3	54.8	24.2	21.0	69.5	22.9	7.6	48.7	21.1	30.3
in public?	46.3	40.4	13.3	33.7	48.4	17.9	56.5	19.4	24.2	70.3	19.5	10.2	50.0	15.8	34.2
Would you feel comfortable expressing your views…															
in private?	80.3	11.5	8.3	79.3	14.0	6.7	79.0	6.5	14.5	90.7	5.1	4.2	61.8	10.5	27.6
online (no anonymity)?	47.7	31.7	20.6	29.4	46.2	24.4	51.6	29.0	19.4	68.6	22.9	8.5	43.4	32.9	23.7
in public?	42.2	42.2	15.6	29.2	51.8	19.0	56.5	22.6	21.0	68.6	23.7	7.6	31.6	36.8	31.6
Would you feel safe expressing your views…															
in private?	84.9	8.7	6.4	78.6	16.0	5.4	85.5	4.8	9.7	89.0	6.8	4.2	64.5	13.2	22.4
online (no anonymity)?	47.2	36.2	16.5	26.3	**47.3**	26.3	25.8	37.1	37.1	**53.4**	34.7	11.9	40.8	34.2	25.0
in public?	38.1	47.7	14.2	27.2	**54.0**	18.8	24.2	37.1	38.7	**57.6**	27.1	15.3	36.8	28.9	34.2

Forms of expression

Broad findings from the OCT and FGDs in relation to how children have expressed their views and/or taken action were discussed above in section 3b. In addition to these findings it was apparent that children in the FGDs rarely used social media. Most often they expressed themselves orally through attending meetings and giving presentations. Some children identified songs, poetry, theatre and puppetry as their priority tools to give their messages to adults in a non-threatening way, in order to avoid any backlashes or further resistance/ problems for children. Some children also reported the need to express themselves in these formats to be understood by the adults in their communities who were not literate.

I have written many poems and two of them are Meri Baat Ji (My Words) and Bal Mandal Ke Bachche (Children of Children Groups). Both the poems explain my views. (Child, Asia-Pacific)

Representing the views of other children

Children in the FGDs often referred to the fact that they were not there just to express their own views but to represent the views of others who could not attend the groups that they were working in. The responsibility of representing other children was felt keenly.

"I felt like a big person, although I'm a girl, that was interviewing someone with authority to change our living conditions. Being surrounded by adult journalists, I took the floor to ask my question, attracting everyone's attention. So I took advantage to talk in the name of all children. No more violence, no more human trafficking." (Girl, 12, Latin America and Caribbean)

The children who were from Brick Kilns expressed, their peers are not interested to form or attend group activities as they have to work hard. (Child, Asia-Pacific)

I feel more myself, more secure about myself, particularly when I'm representing other children that can't say to those people 'I'm here, come, help me, save me, stop any more human trafficking. (Girl, 11, Latin America and Caribbean)

c. The right to have views given due weight

Children who completed the OCT were asked whether they thought the adults who could bring about change would actually listen to them, take them seriously and then act on their concerns.

Overall, nearly four-fifths (79%) of the respondents thought they would be listened to, but levels of confidence in the adults taking them seriously or 'doing anything about it' reduced slightly to 63% and 62% respectively. Table 13 outlines the findings.

Table 13: Responses to the OCT on the right to have views given due weight (n=937)

Do you think the adults who could bring about change...	% Yes	% No
would listen to you if you approached them?	78.9	21.1
would take your views/ concerns/ suggestions seriously?	62.8	37.2
would do anything about it?	62.3	37.7

Looking at regional differences, it seems LAC respondents were most positive about their views being given due weight (see Figures 7-9 below). EE respondents were the least positive

in relation to adults listening and taking children seriously. WEOG were least positive in terms of believing adults would take action (see Figures 7-9 below).

Figure 7: Responses to the OCT on whether adults would listen to children by region

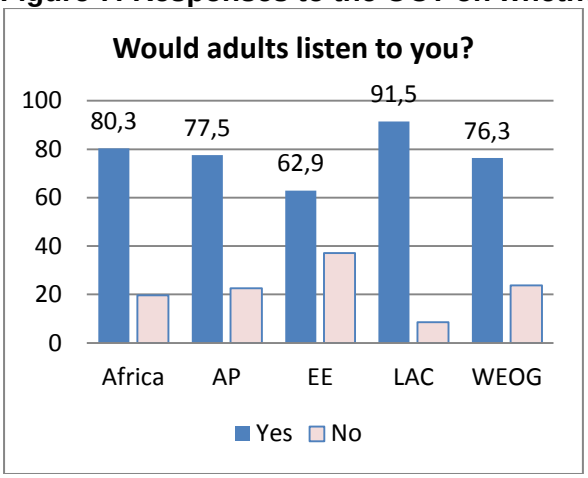


Figure 8: Responses to the OCT on whether adults would take children seriously by region

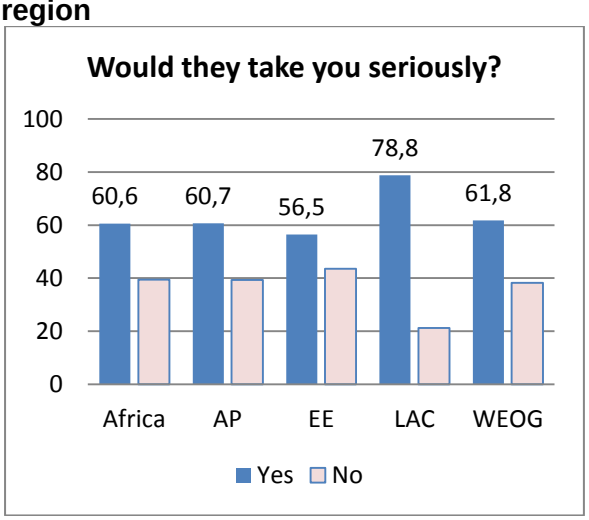
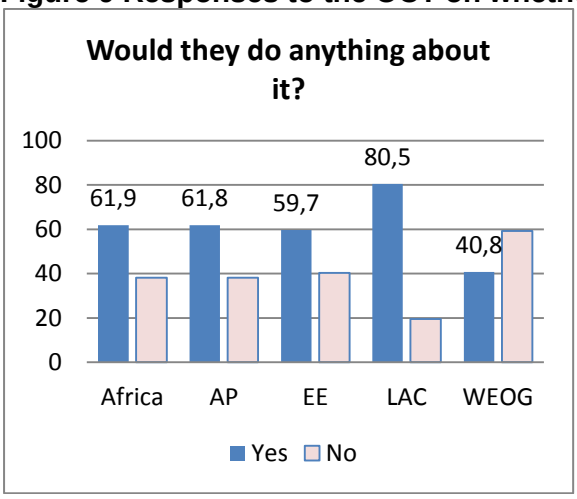


Figure 9 Responses to the OCT on whether adults would act by region



For children in the FGDs, there was a wide range of responses to questions about whether they were listened to and taken seriously by adult decision-makers. Those that considered that they were taken seriously often credited their success to the fact that they were working as a group of children.

Whenever we face any obstacle in conducting our activities, the mere identity of working for [name of NGO] helps us overcome those. (Boy, 16, Asia-Pacific)

Because it was the collaboration force and spirit among children which enabled them to put senior governmental officials "with their back against the wall" in order to take responsibility for the survival of children" (Children, Eastern Europe)

Since the CG [children's group] has been formed, people in village have started listening to us and they consider our views. Otherwise they never listen to us. (Boy, 13 years, Asia-Pacific)

Notably, in FGDs with refugee children, they felt that they might be listened to or taken more seriously by adults if representatives on adult-led governance structures, such as children's committees, were made up of different nationalities to represent the children in their areas.

Change as proof of impact

Many children in FGDs considered that they had influenced decision-making and were able to point out examples of change as proof of being taken seriously. Success stories were the source of pride and motivation for further action. However, children also understood that adults were not always in a position to deliver change.

There have been positive results: children's games were installed in the park, the Municipal Policy for Children was drawn up and approved in a participatory way, and an ordinance was passed recognising the Child Council. As a result of the children's demands, funds have been provided for sports equipment, musical bands, an arts centre, the park and toys. The municipal government has approved a budgetary line for children (LAC)

I can see the change brought in my community after installation of street lights. I don't feel scared of darkness anymore area. (Boy, 14, Asia-Pacific)

I didn't have evidence to report it, but when were the last days in my school, my classmates came to me and they told me what happened in that moment, then I take courage and I went to the Head master´s Office, he told me that those teachers would not be working anymore at school because they were coming late so I didn't need to be worried. Although I couldn't do more than that, I feel happy with myself because I could express what happened. (LAC)

They hear us but they tell us that they cannot do most of the things we ask for. (Child, Asia-Pacific)

The struggle to be taken seriously

Other children in FGDs felt that the extent to which their views were given due weight depended on whom they were trying to influence, with parents and adults in the community more likely to listen than those in government.

Many children reported a struggle to be taken seriously because of their age.

People listen to adults more carefully and children's opinion is given less attention as compared to adults. (Boy, 13, Asia-Pacific)

Hamare baat nahin suntethe! Boltethe-Bache hein, kya jantehen (They were not listening to us. They were saying we are children, what do we know. (Child, Asia-Pacific)

Children also identified the following as indicators that adults were not taking their views seriously:

When we talk to them and they ignore, they talk to phone, they do not pay attention…
If they do not attention with us, their faces are not serious and bored with us; and sometime they look at other.
They ask us if this information is correct or not. (Children, Asia-Pacific)

Some children expressed a range of emotions including anger and frustration at not being taken seriously. One child described it like this:

When we're not listened to, we feel as if we're not worth anything, that what we're saying isn't logical, that it doesn't matter what we say or feel, let alone what we're thinking. We feel like a fumigated cockroach. ☺. (Child, Latin America and Caribbean)

A recurring theme for those that had experienced adults who did not appear to be listening was not giving up but instead finding new ways to convince adults.

Sometimes older people did not like what we were saying, so we went back and changed the lines of the play, but we never stopped going there. Eventually they came around. (Girl, 12, Asia-Pacific)

Focus and focus by re talking with them on the issue that we need. (Child, Asia-Pacific)

For children in the FGDs, indicators that children *were* being taken seriously included the following:

- Adults listening with attention
- Adults responding and ask questions back
- Adults looking at children's face during the discussion or sharing
- Adults not coercing them to take particular positions
- Adults supporting and joining them in their actions
- Adults playing their parts in educating other adults
- Adults giving children their time
- People talking about their activities in the media
- Actions resulting in a change in their lives

d. Freedom of association

Unity is our strength. When the children and our other colleagues are united then we achieved our goal. (Child, Asia-Pacific)

Exercising their right to freedom of association was reported positively by the majority of the respondents to the OCT and by the participants in the FGDs.

Opportunities for association

Children who completed the OCT were asked about the extent to which they could join or set up groups working on issues of interest to them, and the extent to which they felt comfortable and safe doing so.

Large proportions of children felt they could join a group (64%) and that they would feel comfortable (62%) and safe doing so (63% - see Table 14). A different picture emerged when the children were asked about setting up their own groups – 49% felt they could set one up, 47% felt comfortable and 51% felt safe. The less positive responses to setting up a group may be related to a lack of familiarity because proportionately more children selected 'I don't know' on this question than did for joining a group.

Table 14: Responses from the OCT on freedom of association (n=937)

		% Yes	% No	% Don't know
Can you...	join groups that work on issues that interest you?	63.5	22.0	14.5
	set up your own group to work on an issue?	48.7	29.8	21.6
Would you feel comfortable...	joining groups that work on issues that interest you?	61.6	22.7	15.7
	setting up your own group to work on an issue?	46.5	30.9	22.5
Would you feel safe...	joining groups that work on issues that interest you?	62.9	21.1	16.0
	setting up your own group to work on an issue?	50.5	27.6	21.9

There were regional differences – see Table 15. LAC children had the most positive response to joining a group with over 92% saying they could join a group, 90% felt comfortable and 90% felt safe. WEOG and AP respondents were less positive that they could join a group (58% and 51% respectively) and only about half saying they felt comfortable (49% and 51%) or safe (53% and 51%). WEOG respondents reported they did not know whether they would feel comfortable or safe joining or setting up a group more often than any other region, apart from EE who were even more uncertain they could safely set up their own group.

With regards to setting up a group, the response was the most positive from children in LAC (75% felt able, 75% felt comfortable and 79% felt safe). The least positive responses came from AP where only 39% said they could set up a group, 38% said they would feel comfortable and 41% said they would feel safe.

Table 15: Responses from the OCT on freedom of association by region

	Africa			AP			EE			LAC			WEOG		
Can you…	% Yes	% No	% DK	% Yes	% No	% DK	% Yes	% No	% DK	% Yes	% No	% DK	% Yes	% No	% DK
join groups that work on issues that interest you?	71.1	18.3	10.6	51.4	32.4	16.2	79.0	3.2	17.7	92.4	4.2	3.4	57.9	11.8	30.3
set up your own group to work on an issue?	50.9	36.2	12.8	39.1	35.6	25.3	62.9	11.3	25.8	75.4	11.9	12.7	47.4	18.4	34.2
Would you feel comfortable…															
joining groups that work on issues that interest you?	69.3	17.4	13.3	51.0	30.7	18.4	75.8	16.1	8.1	89.8	7.6	2.5	48.7	18.4	32.9
setting up your own group to work on an issue?	49.5	32.6	17.9	37.8	36.9	25.3	64.5	12.9	22.6	74.6	13.6	11.9	32.9	31.6	35.5
Would you feel safe…															
joining groups that work on issues that interest you?	75.7	15.6	8.7	51.2	31.5	17.3	66.1	6.5	27.4	89.8	4.2	5.9	52.6	11.8	35.5
setting up your own group to work on an issue?	54.6	34.4	11.0	41.0	32.6	26.3	53.2	11.3	35.5	78.8	10.2	11.0	50.0	18.4	31.6

*DK = Don't Know

Many children who completed the OCT provided additional responses, through an open-ended question, to explain why they could not join or form groups, or did not feel comfortable or safe doing so. Reasons tended to centre on a lack of awareness of organisations or groups they could join, difficulty in accessing groups or organisations that did exist and a lack of resources to support self-directed activities.

You cannot join a group that tries to discuss the community and children issues and you definitely can't create your own group. (Boy, 16, Asia-Pacific)

Because we have no like this activities in our town. (Boy, 14, Asia-Pacific)

Setting up my own group will need resources. (Girl, 13, Africa)

Some children also indicated that a lack of confidence hindered them from joining groups, whilst others explained that they were just not interested in this type of activity.

I feel uncomfortable to meet people in public places and also cannot express my opinions and also distance is one another constraint to participate. (Girl, 14, Asia-Pacific)

The children who participated in the FGDs were children already involved in children's groups and thus in forms of civic action. They were clearly enjoying their right to freedom of association and were resoundingly positive about their experiences. Mirroring the findings from the online consultation, the vast majority of the groups, in which children were involved, were organised and supported by local and international NGOs. In some contexts, there was a degree of collaboration with state organisations, such as ministries of education.

The children in the FGDs felt safe exercising their right to freedom of association, due largely to their trust of the adult facilitators from the NGOs. This degree of trust was attributed variously to the fact that secure relationships had been established over a period of time and that children were confident that appropriate safeguarding procedures were in place.

The nature of association

The activities in which children in the FGDs were involved focused largely on rights-based projects with a particular focus on capacity building for children, and, notably in some cases, for adults (see section 3b for an overview of activities). However, in some contexts association was encouraged through a range of cultural and sporting activities and opportunities provided for the development of 'life skills'.

Children in the FGDs indicated a range of locations for their association with others. In most cases public spaces, such as schools and community centres were used; in some contexts it was more appropriate to go to where 'children spend their time' such as streets, cafes and homes. As some children indicated, flexibility was key to encouraging successful association.

For most children in the FGDs, the groups in which they were involved met on a regular basis and activity was focused on a clear programme of work; for some the activity involved 'one-off' events and conferences. Most children, regardless of the nature of their involvement, suggested that more regular and frequent meetings would support more children in enjoying their right to freedom of association.

Some children also explained the value of association with their peers when taking action on issues that mattered to them, in terms of the impact of the action and the positive impact involvement had on them personally. This echoes the positive reinforcement children felt when seeing the impact of their work and feeling motivated to act, as discussed in section 2a.

We always work in a team, so all the changes brought about for us is due to our team effort. (Boy, 11, Asia-Pacific)

I have conquered insecurities and emotions; I have made new acquaintances; I learned how to work in a group and how crucial this was and I have had fun. I think all of us have taken away something. (Child, Eastern Europe)

Barriers to freedom of association

The children in the FGDs were aware that the enjoyment of this right did not extend to all children. They indicated that certain groups of children were less likely to avail of the opportunity to associate with their peers: children in some rural areas where distance prohibits engagement with group activities; and working children where free time is the limiting factor. Most children suggested that there was a need to extend the activities of the groups they were involved in to more children.

Need to have more children to participate. (Child, Africa)

Some children had tried to overcome this barrier through outreach workshops, campaigns and use of the radio to disseminate their work and encourage greater participation.

Many children also indicated that concerns of parents were potential barriers to freedom of association. For example, children were aware in some contexts that parents were supportive of their children associating with peers for educational reasons or for study, but were concerned that more general association could expose children to 'bad influences' or distract them. Some children also noted that more general cultural reasons might lie behind parental concerns regarding their child's involvement in these activities.

Once there was a girl who whose family was not comfortable letting her join the activities. They told her, if you interact with boys, you'd get spoilt! Other than that single incident, we've never had any problem from our families. Our parents also attend the meetings, and thus have a clear idea what we do here. (Girl, 13, Asia-Pacific)

Most parents do not feel safe to allow their children to participate. (Child, Africa)

The children in the FGDs gave examples of how this particular barrier could be overcome through engaging with parents, building their capacity in relation to children's rights and, as noted above, inviting parents to participation in group meetings.

Awareness raising sessions for parents about child rights are really needed. (Child, Asia-Pacific)

Encouraging greater enjoyment of the right to association

In addition to the points noted above, some children in the FGDs indicated a number of ways in which their right to freedom of association would be realised more fully. These included: great visibility of child groups and organisations; closer connection between these groups and existing governance structures, particularly at a local level; proactive engagement with parents; extended and ongoing engagement with children from NGOs once projects had come to an end; extending the range of association opportunities to include sporting and cultural activities.

e. Peaceful assembly

Children involved in the consultation were asked about the extent to which they enjoyed their right to peaceful assembly. In the OCT, the focus was on two aspects of this right: meeting freely with other children to discuss an issue or take action; joining a public protest or demonstration. In the FGDs, the children were asked about how free they were to meet with other children and to take part in public protests or campaigns, as prompts for discussing their right to peaceful assembly. As noted below, the children in the FGDs indicated a wide range of ways in which they exercised this right, beyond meeting with others and public protests.

Notably, whilst the majority of children in the FGDs indicated enjoyment of their right to peaceful assembly, this particular civil and political right received the lowest number of positive responses in the online consultation.

Given the relationship between freedom of expression and assembly, the findings in this section should be read in the light to findings in section 4b above, particularly in relation to safety.

Opportunities for peaceful assembly

Children who completed the OCT were asked about the extent to which they could meet freely with other children to discuss an issue or take action and join public protests, and the extent to which they felt comfortable and safe doing so. Sixty per cent said they could meet freely to discuss or take action and 59% and 57% (respectively) reported that they felt safe and comfortable doing so. However, fewer reported being able (45%) or feeling comfortable (43%) or safe attending a public protest (38%) (see Table 16). More respondents said they would not feel safe joining a public protest than those who said they would feel safe.

Table 16: Responses from the OCT on freedom of assembly (n=937)

		% Yes	% No	% Don't know
Can you...	meet freely with other young people to discuss an issue/ take action?	59.7	25.2	15.2
	join a public protest or demonstration	44.8	37.4	17.8
Would you feel comfortable...	meeting freely with other young people to discuss an issue/ take action?	58.8	26.5	14.7
	joining a public protest or demonstration?	43.2	38.5	18.2
Would you feel safe....	meeting freely with other young people to discuss an issue/ take action?	57.3	27.1	15.6
	joining a public protest or demonstration?	38.0	40.4	21.6

There were regional differences which suggested more familiarity and ease when exercising their right to peaceful assembly in LAC than in the other regions (see Table 17). Greater proportions of LAC respondents reported they could meet freely (90%) and felt comfortable (89%) and safe (86%) when doing so. They were also more positive about taking part in public protests than in other regions, but less so than meeting freely: 68% said they could take part, 64% said they would feel comfortable and 49% said they would feel safe.

With regard to meeting freely, respondents from AP demonstrated the least positivity. Only 47% said they could meet freely, 46% said they would feel comfortable and 44% said they would feel safe.

The response towards taking part in a public protest was the least positive from African respondents: 33% said they could join public protests, 38% said they would feel comfortable and 33% said they would feel safe. EE also had a low response towards feeling safe in a public protest with only 32% answering in the positive.

Again, many children who completed the OCT provided additional responses to explain why they could not meet freely with other children and/or join public protests, or did not feel comfortable or safe doing so. The reasons offered related to issues of safety and fear of repercussion, alongside the recurring theme of parents not wishing them to engage in such activities.

Public demonstrations always end up violently. (Girl, 13, Africa)

In my country every single move, action or opinion you try is being spotted or observed by the occupation you can't have the right of protesting without being afraid of getting killed. (Boy, 16, Asia-Pacific)

Some children also indicated that they lacked experience in attending demonstrations and would need adult support in exercising this right.

I think I am not so experienced to take part in a public protest, we need an adult who teach us and help us because we are just children and our opinions can be influenced. (Girl, 16, Eastern Europe)

In the FGDs, the children were overwhelmingly positive about opportunities given to 'meet freely' and 'work with others', which is unsurprising given that they were accessed through child rights and advocacy groups. They were similarly positive about opportunities to engage in public activities. However, as noted below, these public activities varied in type and scope and were not necessarily the 'public protests' or 'demonstrations' asked about in the online consultation.

The nature of peaceful assembly

Resonating with the themes explored in the OCT, many children in the FGDs identified two distinct (but related) aspects of the right to assembly: being able to meet and associate in groups with their peers (discussed above); being able to participate in public activities. The latter ranged from direct engagement with individual politicians and community leaders, through to attendance at public town hall or national assembly meetings. Some children noted that their right to assembly could be realised virtually, through internet collaboration. Most children indicated that the strategies they had employed in public settings involved awareness raising campaigns (for example, street drama, walks and races, radio broadcasts) and attendance at conferences, public rallies and demonstrations. Some children gave examples of assembling with peers to distribute gifts and provisions to other children, visit children injured by conflict in hospital, clean public streets and to engage in research and consultation.

I liked participating in the race because I don't want any more children under the age of 5, or of any age, to die from preventable causes. (Boy, 10, Latin America and Caribbean)

Table 17: Responses from OCT on freedom of assembly by region

	Africa			AP			EE			LAC			WEOG		
Can you…	%Yes	%No	%DK	%Yes	%No	%DK	%Yes	%No	%DK	%Yes	%No	%DK	%Yes	%No	%DK
meet freely with other young people to discuss an issue/ take action?	67.0	19.3	13.8	47.1	34.8	18.1	75.8	14.5	9.7	89.8	6.8	3.4	55.3	21.1	23.7
join a public protest or demonstration?	33.0	50.9	16.1	42.5	43.0	14.5	59.7	16.1	24.2	67.8	13.6	18.6	44.7	18.4	36.8
Would you feel comfortable….															
meeting freely with other young people to discuss an issue/ take action?	69.7	17.4	12.8	45.6	37.8	16.6	71.0	17.7	11.3	89.0	9.3	1.7	51.3	17.1	31.6
joining a public protest or demonstration?	37.6	45.9	16.5	40.0	43.0	17.1	46.8	30.6	22.6	64.4	21.2	14.4	43.4	23.7	32.9
Would you feel safe…															
meeting freely with other young people to discuss an issue/ take action?	68.2	21.2	10.6	44.3	38.9	16.8	64.5	9.7	25.8	86.4	7.6	5.9	53.9	17.1	28.9
joining a public protest or demonstration?	32.6	52.3	15.1	36.9	43.0	20.1	32.3	32.3	35.5	49.2	27.1	23.7	47.4	18.4	34.2

Barriers to peaceful assembly

As was noted above in relation to freedom of association, the children in the FGDs were aware that the enjoyment of this right did not extend to all children. Some children indicated that this could be due to access issues and, as noted above, related to parental concerns for child safety.

More children from the communities and rural districts should participate, as it's almost always those of us from the urban areas there. (Girl, 16, Latin America and Caribbean)

Echoing the findings in the OCT, many children in the FGDs raised safety issues as a concern when engaging in public activities. However, for those children who *were* involved in public demonstrations, the presence of supportive adults from NGOs and/or their parents provided a degree of security.

Further, for some, cooperation and communication with police, local authorities and the community reduced their safety concerns.

I felt safe when I join these events because we normally cooperate with police and local authority before doing those activities. (Child, Asia-Pacific)

If people from the neighbourhood are supportive, the risks will be minimized since we will have a lot of protection then. (Girl, 15, Asia-Pacific)

Some children also noted that exercising their assembly rights in familiar locations increased their sense of safety. However, a few children noted that it was sometimes easier to exercise this right where you were not known:

I felt more safe and confident speaking in front of 6000 people at old fort, as I didn't know anyone, I feel more scared talking to people in the community, as all of them know me. (Girl, 12, Asia-Pacific)

A person is not respected in her/his home town (Child, Africa)

Encouraging greater enjoyment of the right to peaceful assembly

In addition to the points noted above (the need for supportive adults; cooperation and communication with authorities; and secure and safe spaces), some children in the FGDs indicated a number of ways in which their right to freedom of assembly would be realised more fully. These included: flexibility in relation to meetings space; financial support and resources; keeping parents informed and involved.

5. Consultation Findings: who supports or facilitates children in exercising their civil and political rights?

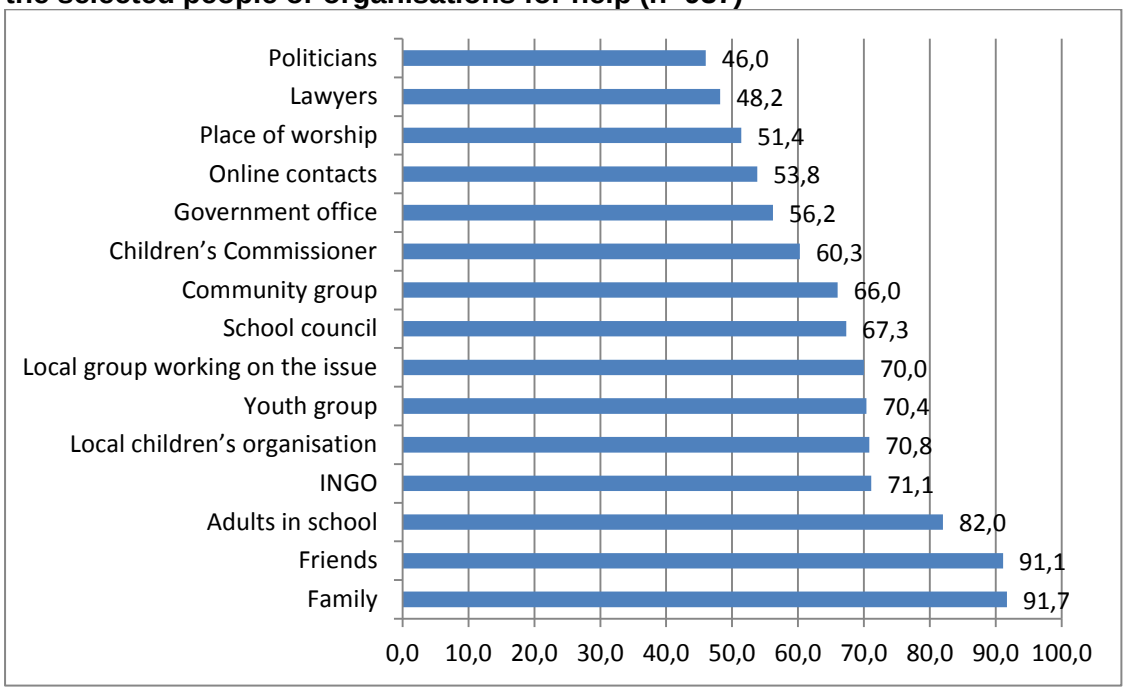
What can I do as I don't know the processes? I need someone to guide me but not take away my ideas and leave me behind. (Child, 16, Asia-Pacific)

This section outlines and integrates the findings from the online and face-to-face consultations in relation to who supports children in civic action. It begins with a discussion of the range of individuals and groups who children identified as supporting or facilitating them in exercising their civil and political rights and/or those they would be likely to seek support from. It should be noted that for some children 'support' was aligned to who would act on their concerns. As such these findings should be read in light of findings in section 4c. The nature of support and the value of collaboration are then discussed before children's suggestions as to how support could be improved are outlined.

Sources of support

When children involved in the OCT were asked how *likely* they would be to go to a range of different people/organisations for support, the top three selected by children were: to go to friends, family, adults in school (see Figure 10). The sources of possible help selected the least were politicians, lawyers and places of worship.

Figure 10: The proportion of children who said they were (a little or very) likely to go to the selected people or organisations for help (n=937)



There were minor regional differences. The percentage of respondents by region selecting each of the options is given in Table 18. While the most popular choices for Africa, AP and WEOG were family, friends and adults in school, EE and LAC varied slightly from this pattern, and more of them selected a local children's organisation and an INGO than going to adults in school. The least favoured people to go to for help were politicians in all regions apart from WEOG, whose least favoured place of worship, and selected politicians more often than lawyers, Children's Commissioner, community groups and government offices.

Table 18: The percentage of people or organisations that OCT respondents were 'a little' or 'very likely' to go to for help by region.

	% Africa	% AP	% EE	% LAC	% WEOG
Family	88.1	92.7	91.9	96.6	89.5
Friends	86.2	92.7	93.5	93.2	89.5
Adults in school	79.8	81.4	83.9	89.0	78.9
Local children's organisation	74.8	62.4	91.9	89.8	64.5
Youth group	73.9	61.6	85.5	88.1	73.7
INGO	73.7	61.6	90.3	92.4	73.7
Local group working on the issue	69.9	61.8	88.7	87.3	77.6
Community group	67.4	60.0	82.3	83.1	57.9
School council	66.1	62.6	71.0	87.3	64.5
Children's commissioner	62.8	52.7	67.7	85.6	53.9
Place of worship	59.6	42.8	59.7	70.3	44.7
Government office	59.2	46.7	64.5	79.7	63.2
Online contacts	53.2	46.2	58.1	73.7	67.1
Lawyers	48.6	41.3	58.1	65.3	53.9
Politicians	45.4	37.6	51.6	65.3	64.5

Most children in the FGDs acknowledged the support they received from their peers in exercising their civil and political rights (as noted in section 4d). Some identified a range of other sources of support: family members; schools and youth groups; local media; local governance structures; regional government institutions (such as ministries of education or electoral commissions); regional and national children's networks.

The District Commissioner, sub-inspector of the police, the influential people of the community, directors of NGOs, education officer of the district, guardians of children -- everyone attends our meetings, and supports our activities. (Boy, 16, Asia-Pacific)

Our parents helped us to contact with the parents of out of school girls and also helped us to convince them. (Child, 12, Asia-Pacific)

Some children identified occasions when they had sought support from adults but had not received it: once in the context of NGOs who had not responded to their request; several times in the context of ministries who were not supportive.

However, most children in the focus groups identified local and international NGOs as the primary vehicle through which their activities and actions were facilitated.

The nature of support

It was apparent across all the FGDs that adults from NGOs (local and international) supported children in a number of ways: providing meeting spaces and resources (including financial support); building children's capacity around international child rights' law as well as local, regional, national legislation and policies; helping children understand local, regional and national adults governance structures; helping children work within these structures; developing children's skills and thus confidence.

As part of a child-led-group supported by Save the Children we have had many facilities and opportunities in terms of mechanisms and spaces to raising our voice. (Child, Eastern Europe)

Children in the FGDs indicated that adult support helped them overcome some barriers in engaging with officials from local to national levels and, as also noted in sections 4b and 4e above, adult support increased their sense of personal security and confidence. Adult support was also identified by some as essential for the sustainability of the work.

We faced a lot of problems. The village Pradhan [Head] didn't cooperate with us but the other member [of local governance institution] and Save the Children partner NGO community mobilizer helped us and as a result we got success in our process. (Child, Asia-Pacific)

However it was also very clear across the FGDs that whilst activities and actions were facilitated by adults, decisions were taken by children themselves (see also section 3).

The value of collaboration

Children in the FGDs identified close collaboration between local NGOs and international NGOs as being key to the success and sustainability of their activities. Local NGOs were familiar to the children and understood the local context and could work with international NGOs to provide necessary resources and support in engaging with government official from local to national level. Many children indicated that the NGOs were also able to facilitate collaboration between child-led groups, local government and regional/national structures.

Improving support

As noted in section 4d, some children across the FDGs suggested that the organisations that supported them could provide more capacity building opportunities for children (particularly more marginalised children) and adults in their community and also increase the regularity and frequency of meetings.

Some children suggested that despite the positive situation regarding the recognition of child led groups and their engagement with local stakeholders, the collaboration happens mostly on the occasions of 'big events'. This indicates that more could be done to build the capacities of local stakeholders in considering children's groups as institutional partners and involving them regularly and consistently in decision making processes.

Some children also noted that engagement with national institutions was difficult (see also section 4c), indicating that more could be done to support activity beyond the local level.

At our towns everybody knows us, we are in our home. But when going to national events is still very important to us, we feel like we are observed with doubt. National institutions are more difficult to reach. (Child, Eastern Europe)

Some children felt that it was important for adults to continue engagement with child-led groups once projects had been completed. As noted in section 4d above, this, they suggested, would support them in exercising their right to assembly and also ensure that community leaders saw their activities as sustainable.

Some of the elders discouraged us that what is the use of getting together now that the local organization people have concluded the project and are not there anymore. (Child, 13, Asia-Pacific)

Finally, some children stated that adult organisations should take in to account the different schedules of children (school timings, exams, vacations etc.) when planning their programmes and or interventions with and for children.

6. Consultation Findings: what can be done to better enable children to exercise their civil and political rights?

Some suggestions from the children involved in the FGDs have already been outlined in sections 4 and 5 above. Overall these children suggested that in order to enable them to exercise their civil and political rights more fully there should be:

- greater visibility of child groups and organisations;
- a wider range of association opportunities;
- more capacity building opportunities for children (particularly more excluded children) and adults in their community;
- more proactive engagement with parents;
- extended and ongoing engagement with children from NGOs once projects had come to an end.

They also suggested the need for closer connection between children's groups and existing governance structures, particularly at a local level and that more could be done to build the capacities of local stakeholders in considering children's groups as institutional partners and involving them regularly and consistently in decision-making processes. Some children in the FGDs also noted that engagement with national institutions was difficult; indicating that more could be done to support activity beyond the local level.

The remainder of this section focuses on views of children who responded to one open-ended question on the OCT: 'What needs to change in your country to make it easier or safer for you (or children like you) to voice your opinion or take action?'. The themes emerging from an analysis of these responses are discussed in turn below: taking children seriously; support from children's organisations; encouraging involvement in politics; better mechanisms for communicating with government; and education.

Taking children seriously

As noted above in section 4c, the majority 79% of respondents to the OCT thought they would be *listened to* by adults who could bring about change but only 63% of children felt their views would be *taken seriously* and only 62% felt their views would be acted *upon*. It is therefore not surprising that many children responding to the open-ended question mentioned that the barrier to the realisation of civil and political rights was the fact that adults do not take them seriously when they are trying to bring about change.

Politicians and people with power to listen to our opinions and take them seriously. (Child, Eastern Europe)

Freedom of expression should be given to children as the current scenario only favours the elders not the children (Boy, 15, Africa)

ils doivent comprendre que nous sommes pas que des enfants qui doivent obéir mais plutôt des être humains qui ont vraiment des problèmes et qui doivent être écouter (Boy, 16, Africa)

Que los adultos y ministros publicos tomen en cuenta que eso que seamos adolescentes o incluso niños tambien miramos los aspectos que nos afectan y quien mas que nosotros para decirlos, no somos marionetas para ser controladas somos seres humanos que estas desarrollando y las actitudes y decisiones que ellos tomen

por nosotros tambien repercutiran en un fututo muy cercano y en nuestro desarrollo con la sociedad... Queremos ser tomados en cuenta, pero que sea verdad y no solo por cumplir con una obligacion... Quiero que escuchen mi voz y si sea tomada en cuenta. (Boy, 17, Latin America and Caribbean)

Support from children's organisations

Resonating with the findings in section 5 above, one of the main ways of addressing the issue of children's struggle to be taken seriously was the need for children's organisations who could support them to act and be heard.

The number of organisations and group led by children in my country is very limited, so children are not able to raise their voice because they lack in information in two very important directions: where? how? So on my opinion the first step to a better society is to create opportunities for development such as child led groups who offer training, provide information and new experiences for children so as to help them face the reality and speak out when it is needed (Girl, 15, Eastern Europe)

I need to make a children's group to talk freely about their rights and plan for activities to practice our rights. (Girl, 15, Asia-Pacific)

tienen que haber mas interés de parte de las autoridades para garantizar el cumplimiento de nuestros derechos, y tiene que haber un compromiso fundamental de parte de toda la sociedad en general. en mi pas si no existieran ONG S difícilmente se trabajarian los temas relacionados con la niñez. (Boy, 17, Latin America and Caribbean)

Encouraging involvement in politics

Linked to this was a view about the relationship between children and politics. Some children identified apathy towards politics as an issue for both children and adults. Many children expressed views about the challenges for children becoming in engaged in politics.

Change and democracy in political parties which need to uplift the ban on students politics (Boy, 16, Asia-Pacific)

Child politics. Holding Government authorities especially politicians for them not to involve children into politics. (Boy, 15, Africa)

We need political leaders who are intelligent and well informed of matters that affect children after all the have signed international documents on our rights and they do know that children are most affected by the decisions they make. they should involve us in political issues and allow us to bring out our views by making a children's platform were we tell them what we want done for us. they should train us so we can even be greater leaders when we get older. … people here also must be more into politics as to encourage the people that are and also to understand what's going on. (Boy, 14, Africa)

Better mechanisms for communicating with government

Children also emphasised the need for government to take responsibility by setting up appropriate structures that enable children to access information and give their views. Many children referred to the need for youth parliaments and for more general opportunities for children who have concerns to raise them directly with government.

The adults must respect children's rights. Support youth who want to contribute to a change. Not only the NGO's must promote children's rights, but the state also must promote it. (Girl, 17, Eastern Europe)

Access to information produced by the government at all level and information sharing-safe environment. (Girl, 14, Africa)

There needs to be some way that young people can get involved with government and talk to our leaders about the issues that are important for us. Schools should get involved and maybe ask students what issues are important to them and send them on to the government so they can look at issues that effect young people of all ages, religions and backgrounds. (Girl, 13, Western Europe and OG)

I think that the government should create a channel in which children could give their opinion freely (e.g. a website or blog where the children could post their opinion). (Girl, 15, Asia-Pacific)

I would like to be a part of an official children or youth parliament that can represent the needs of the children, this way we can make the possibility of an effective changes increase if the parliament was supported by international organizations, by that we could creat a platform that can represent the children's requires and need for change safely and by the children themselves. (Boy, 15, Asia-Pacific)

Education

Education was mentioned frequently as playing an important role in enabling children to exercise their rights. Children emphasised the role of schools in teaching them about their rights as well as enabling them to access information and giving them confidence and communication skills to speak out.

I think that in every school it should be classes about children rights and duties and about the importance of NGO who are involved in protection of children because this is how students or other people will know that everyone has the power to change something in this world starting with them doing volunteering. And promoting NGO I think can solve a lot of problems like children who can't afford to do a school, human trafficking, or children rights that are not respected. Because a child doesn't know when a right it's not respected until he knows his rights. (Boy, 17, Eastern Europe)

One child summed up the conditions for enabling children to exercise their rights as follows:

Literacy. Good education system with cooperative teachers and staff. Broad minded family and friends to understand and support you. A good helping hand and encouragement from adults to change the things as i Believe 1 Person is enough to change the situation. (Child, Asia-Pacific)

7. Conclusion

This study set out to answer the following questions:

- What are children's experiences of exercising their civil and political rights?
- What are children's views on being able to exercise their civil and political rights when they are involved in child rights activities? What are the enabling and hindering factors to them exercising their rights?
- What are children's views on what can be done to enable them to exercise their rights?

How are children exercising their civil and political rights?

The majority of children involved in this consultation were motivated to take action to improve the situation for themselves and other children in their communities. The activities in which the children, particularly in the FGDs, have been engaged require a high level of advocacy skills and involve a range of strategies: meetings and written submissions, research and consultation, public events, involvement in child-led or child-focused bodies. These activities are played out at school, community, district, regional national and international levels. Moreover, these activities are dependent on the children being able to exercise their civil and political rights.

What hinders children exercising their civil and political rights?

Across all aspects of the study, it was evident that children's exercise of their rights is often contingent upon the support of the adults in their lives, including their parents, teachers and community elders. Moreover, their rights are hindered when their views are not taken seriously or not consistently taken into account by adult decision-makers. This was particularly evident in contexts where children did not feel that the adult-led structures of governance in the local communities represented them and when access to regional and national structures was difficult. It was also clear that children are hindered from exercising their civil and political rights if they are not aware of groups that can support and facilitate them and/or if they cannot access these groups due to their location or circumstances. Notably, children across the FGDs who were enjoying their rights to freedom of information, expression, association assembly and their right to have their views given due weight, were concerned that other children should be enjoying these rights too.

What can enable children to exercise their civil of political rights?

The children in the FGDs were by and large more confident in exercising their civil and political rights (in terms of being able to, and feeling comfortable and safe to do so) than the respondents to the OCT. From the findings it is evident that this is due to the efforts made by local and international NGOs to build children's capacity in relation to children's rights in general and in relation to taking action in the public sphere. In terms of the latter, it was apparent that the children in the FGDs had been supported by adults in understanding local laws and policies and local, regional and national adult-led governance structures. Support was also provided in accessing resources and information. Collaboration between local NGOs and international NGOs, and collaboration between NGOs and local governance structures was seen as critical for children's views to be acted upon and for the work in general to be sustainable. The support of adults was also crucial in order for children to feel safe in exercising their rights. Across the study, children were able to identify the decision-makers who took them seriously and who engaged with their views. Institutionally or systemically supportive mechanisms in which children can engage were described by many of the FGD children, but, for the most part, their meetings with decision-makers were *ad hoc* or were set up to address a particular issue.

What emerges from the data overall, is that children can and do engage in civic action when they are well-supported. However, they meet a range of challenges and barriers, many of which would not exist to the same extent for adults.

References

Lundy, L. and McEvoy (Emerson), L. (2012a) Children's rights and research processes: assisting children to (in)formed views. *Childhood*. 19(1) pp.116-129

Lundy, L. and McEvoy (Emerson), L. (2012b) 'Childhood, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and Research: what constitutes a rights-based approach?' in M. Freeman (ed.) *Law and Childhood*. Oxford: Oxford University Press pp.75-91

Save the Children (2014) *Speaking Out: Safeguarding civil society space for children*. Child Rights Governance Policy Brief.

Appendix 1: Online Consultation Tool (English)

Children's Experiences of Civil and Political Rights

What is this questionnaire about?

We are a research team from Queen's University Belfast working with Save the Children (an international children's charity) on a research project that is asking children about their role in a healthy democracy. Healthy democracies are those where citizens, including children, can have a say and also try to bring about change on issues that they feel strongly about.

These issues might be different in different countries, for example, some children might feel strongly about the lack of equipment in their schools and others might feel strongly about child marriage.

To do something about such issues, children need to be able to freely say what they think and to meet and organise in groups. Speaking freely and meeting in groups to discuss issues are so important that they are recognised as 'rights' - they are called civil and political rights.

In this questionnaire, we are asking questions so we can better understand children's experience of their civil and political rights. This might include playing a part in public decision making, e.g. being a member of a youth parliament, voicing your opinion in public or by taking action.

We want to hear from children everywhere, aged from 12-17 years.

What will happen to the information I give?

The information you give here will be completely anonymous (we will not ask for any child's name). The information will be sent to Karen Orr. Karen is a researcher at Queen's University Belfast. Karen and the research team, as well as the staff at Save the Children, will have access to this information.

Karen will make sense of all the information and it will then be written up in a report.

Do I have to take part?

Taking part in this questionnaire is completely voluntary. If you are aged between 12 and 17 and would like to take part, you can tick the next box to show that you would like to proceed. You can withdraw at any time (simply click out of the questionnaire). Once you hit send your information will be included in this research.

2) * I would like to take part in this questionnaire

☐ Yes

Tell us about yourself

This first section of the questionnaire will ask some questions about you. But we WILL NOT ask for your name.

We are asking these questions so we can make comparisons, for example, to see how girls respond compared to boys, and how children from one country respond compared to those from another country.

3) * Are you a:

☐ Boy ☐ Girl

4) * What age are you ?

12 ☐ 13☐ 14☐ 15☐ 16☐ 17☐

Other: write your age here (note this questionnaire is aimed at 12-17 year olds)

_____

5) * Which country do you live in?

_____

6) * Is this the same country that you are from ?

☐Yes ☐No

7) If not, which country are you from ?

_____

How interested are you in...

The decisions made by government and other people in positions of authority (e.g. politicians, teachers, local officials, leaders etc.) about issues and things happening in your community, country or the world.

8) * How interested are you in these decisions and issues?

☐ Not at all

☐ A little bit

☐ A lot

☐ I don't know

9) * How much do you understand these decisions and issues?

☐ Not at all

☐ A little

☐ A lot

10) * If you wanted to find out more about these decisions and issues, which of the following would you be most likely to do (you can select your top 3)?

- ☐ Speak to family
- ☐ Speak to friends
- ☐ Speak to a teacher / adult in school
- ☐ Speak to an adult in your community
- ☐ Read the newspaper
- ☐ Read information online, e.g. online news reports
- ☐ Follow people / issues on social media, e.g. via Facebook / Twitter, etc.
- ☐ Watch the news / TV programmes
- ☐ Listen to the radio
- ☐ Go to a local group

What is your experience of...

Your civil and political rights when you face an issue happening in your community/ country/ the world. By civil and political rights, we mean:
- **voicing your opinion,** e.g. writing a blog or contacting a TV or radio station
- **taking part in a group or activities**, e.g. involvement in a youth parliament, campaigns or protests.

11) * Have you ever:	**Yes**	**No**
Spoken to friends about an issue?		
Worn a badge/ wristband/ t-shirt to express your views?		
Supported a campaign, e.g. by signing a petition online/offline?		
Shared or commented on an article you read online, e.g. retweeted?		
Been part of an online group, e.g. on Facebook?		
Created a blog/chatted on a forum on an issue?		
Contacted someone in government or politics on an issue?		
Contacted the media on an issue, e.g. phoning a radio or TV station		
Joined a club/ group in school, e.g. debating club?		
Been part of a representative council, e.g. student council or youth parliament?		
Joined a club/ group outside of school, e.g. human rights/ environment group?		
Worked with a children's organisation on an issue?		
Worked with a child-led organisation on an issue?		
Been involved in setting up a child-led organisation?		
Taken part in a public protest/ demonstration?		
Other		

12) If you answered NO to any of the above, is it because… (you can select up to 3 answers):

☐ You are not interested?

☐ You are interested, but decided not to get involved?

☐ You don't know how to get involved in activities like these?

☐ You can't get involved in activities like this due to time/ money etc.?

☐ You've been told not to?

☐ You're afraid?

☐ You don't think anything would change even if people get involved in such actions?

☐ You don't think your involvement would make any difference?

☐ Other, please explain

13) * Have you ever faced an issue that has made you feel you should do something to bring change?

☐ Yes ☐ No

14) What was the issue?

---

15) Did you do something about it ?

☐ Yes ☐ No

16) Tell us about what you did and if you were happy with how it went ?

_____

17) * Do you consider yourself to be someone who is actively trying to bring about change?

☐ Yes ☐ No

18) * If you wanted to take action on an issue and needed help, how LIKELY would you be to go to:

	Not at all	A little	Very
Family			
Friends			
Adults in school			
School council			
Online contacts			
Place of worship			
Community group			
Youth group			
Local group working on the issue			
Local children's organisation			
Lawyers			

Politicians			
Public body, e.g. government office			
Children's commissioner			
International organisations, e.g. Save the Children, Unicef			

19) * Do you think the adults who could bring about change:

	Yes	No
Would listen to you if you approached them		
Would take your views/ concerns/ suggestions seriously ?		
Would do anything about it ?		

Can you use your civil and political rights?

Remember, by civil and political rights, we mean:
- **voicing your opinion,** e.g. writing a blog or contacting a TV/radio station
- **taking part in a group or activities**, e.g. involvement in a youth parliament, campaigns or protests.

20) * Can you:	**Yes**	**No**	**I don't know**
Get information freely on the internet (on issues that affect/interest you)?			
Understand this information?			
Get information offline, i.e. straight from organisations, libraries, government departments and any other source?			
Understand this information?			
Express your views freely in private e.g. with family and friends?			
Express your views freely online without being anonymous e.g. social media?			
Express your views freely in public e.g. on the street/in a café?			
Meet freely with other young people to discuss an issue/ take action?			
Join groups that work on issues that interest you?			
Set up your own group to work on an issue?			
Take part in a public protest/ demonstration?			

You might feel that **you can do** these things, but would you feel **comfortable** doing them?

21) * Would you feel COMFORTABLE :	**Yes**	**No**	**I don't know**
Getting information freely on the internet (on issues that affect/interest you)?			
Getting information offline, i.e. straight from organisations, libraries, government departments and any other source?			
Expressing your views freely in private e.g. with family and friends?			
Expressing your views freely online without being anonymous e.g. social media?			
Expressing your views freely in public e.g. on the street/in a café?			
Meeting freely with other young people to discuss an issue/ take action?			
Joining groups that work on issues that interest you?			
Setting up your own group to work on an issue?			
Taking part in a public protest/ demonstration?			

22) * And would you feel SAFE:	**Yes**	**No**	**I don't know**
Getting information freely on the internet (on issues that affect/interest you)?			
Getting information offline, i.e. straight from organisations, libraries, government departments and any other source?			
Expressing your views freely in private e.g. with family and friends?			
Expressing your views freely online without being anonymous e.g. social media?			
Expressing your views freely in public e.g. on the street/in a café?			
Meeting freely with other young people to discuss an issue/ take action?			
Joining groups that work on issues that interest you?			
Setting up your own group to work on an issue?			
Taking part in a public protest/ demonstration?			

23) If you answered NO in the last 3 questions, can you explain why?

_____

Finally, think **about an issue that you would like to voice your opinion or take action on.**

24) * What needs to change in your country to make it easier or safer for you (or children like you) to voice your opinion or take action?

Appendix 2: Focus Groups Discussion Tool

Facilitators were provided with a pack providing guidance on ethical issues and procedures, conducting focus groups, child-friendly definitions of key terms as well as the protocol below. They were also provided with a feedback proforma.

Phase 1 – experience

1. ***What were the issues that you decided to take action on?***

2. ***What motivated you to take action?***

3. ***What action did you take? How did you take action?***

Probe for:
Did you do this on your own? With other children? As part of a child-led organisation? With adult support? With the support of adults in an organisation? Did you set up your own group or organisation?

4. ***What was the outcome of the action?***

Phase 2 – Enablers of and barriers to rights

5. ***What helped you to act?***

*Please note: We would like to hear children's experiences of exercising their civil and political rights. Some of this information will come out naturally in response to the questions above. However, below are some **prompt** questions that you can use to encourage children to think and talk about their experience from the perspective of their rights?*

Prompts:
(Rights to information, expression, have views given due weight):

- *Were they able to access the information they needed on issues affecting them (generally and on the internet)? Could they get information that was easy for them to understand?*
- *Could they express their views freely (generally and/ or using social media)?*
- *Do they think that adults they spoke to listened to them and took their views seriously?*

(Freedom of assembly and association).

- *Did certain organisations help you with your action? How did they help? How could they have helped more?*
- *Could they meet freely with other young people?*
- *Were they able to take part in public protests? (in person and through internet-based campaigns)?*

*Note: in all cases, we are interested in finding out whether children consider they can do these things **easily** and **safely** (without fear of repercussions or reprisal). **Also**: be aware that there may be differences in the ease and safety of acting depending on whether their actions were local or national, more or less private or public, with different types of target decision-makers, such as schools or government offices. So, if a child talks about a local action, was similar action at a national level experienced differently?*

6. ***What made it difficult to act? Did you overcome these? If so, how did you overcome these?***

*Use the **prompts** about civil and political rights **above** (e.g. access to information, ability to speak freely, to join groups, meet with other young people etc.) and about different decision-makers.*

Phase 3 – What could be improved?

7. ***If you were to do this again, would you do it differently? If so how?***

*Prompt**:** what needs to change to make it easier and safer to act?*

ADDITIONAL OPTIONAL ACTIVITY

If you feel the participants still have more to say and there is time, you could use this optional activity. It is based on a scenario familiar to the participants.

1. **Choose a scenario** – choose one which is familiar to the children and which they might be motivated to act on. Here are some examples, but choose one that suits your context:

- Discrimination against a minority group (including young people as a minority group)
- Under-resourced schools – e.g. no toilets, no computers,
- Lack of clean water
- Having to work instead of study

2. **Ask the children to identify the ideal (i.e. the most effective) way of effecting change in this context (what they would want to do).**

Participants could identify all the ways in which they might want to act and write them on post-its. Ask them to rank these actions from what they see as the most effective to the least effective.

3. **Ask the children what the action would look like in reality in their own context (what they would be likely to do in reality)?**

Participants could put the suggestions in two sets. One set will be those things they think they would want to do but couldn't do in practice (ask why? Is it not practical or safe? Do they not have the skills/ resources/ support?). The second set will be those things they think they could in fact do. Ask them how confident / empowered they would feel to actually do them.

4. **Ask what would they need in order to feel more empowered? i.e. What would they need to be in place in terms of support to get closer to the ideal (most effective) way of effecting change?**

*Throughout this activity, please include **prompts** related to the core civil and political rights:*

- *Children can access information that they can understand (on- and off-line)*
- *Children can express their views freely (on- and off-line)*
- *Children feel their views are taken seriously by adults*
- *Children can join groups (on- and off-line)*
- *Children can meet with other children to discuss issues*
- *Children are able and safe to take part in public protests*
- *Children's education gives them the knowledge and skills they need to engage in civic action*
- *Children are able to influence public decision-making by engaging in dialogue with government officials and having their demands/opinions taken into consideration.*