



Creating Space for Children's Participation:

By Karl Dorning
and Tim O'Shaughnessy

Planning with
Street Children in
Yangon, Myanmar

Published in Australia in 2001 by World Vision Australia's
Program Support Unit, Development and Relief Services.

Copies of this publication are available from
World Vision Australia's Resource Centre.
GPO Box 399C, Melbourne, Victoria 3001.
Phone: (613) 9287 2299. Email: info@wva.org.au

This work is not copyright and may be freely reproduced
provided the source is appropriately acknowledged.

Edited by David Henry
Designed by Jamie Tidd
Printed in Australia by The Craftsman Press

Partners in Development is a monograph series on development practice
produced by World Vision Australia's Development & Relief Services Group.

Creating Space for Children's Participation:
Planning with street children in Yangon, Myanmar
Authors: Tim O'Shaughnessy and Karl Dorning

ISBN: 1-875140-51-4

Photo on the front by Kaythee Hlaing and back cover photos from the project by Karl Dorning
Cartoonist – Julie Smith

Creating Space for Children's Participation:

**Planning with Street Children
in Yangon, Myanmar**

By Karl Dorning and Tim O'Shaughnessy

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Project Background	2
Funding	3
Chapter One	4
What was done:	
Preparation for Empowerment Evaluation	
Preliminary meetings	
Election of children to evaluation team	
Stakeholders' evaluation questions	
Refinement of questions	
Identification of informant groups	
Planning the interviews	
Question Guides	
Guide for LPGK children's interviews	
Training for Focus Group Interviewing	
Achievements by the end of the second week	
Chapter Two	9
What was done: Implementation	
Interview teams formed	
Interview schedules and question guides	
Children conduct focus group interviews with informant groups	
Comparison with office records	
Results workshop - a three day event	
Constraints & Difficulties	
Chapter Three	11
Evaluation team recommendations	
Concluding Remarks	
Chapter Four	12
Lessons learned in working with children	
Chapter Five	13
Participatory approaches, some theory	
Appendix 1.	15
Descriptions of the Myanmar Street Children's Program	
Curative: "Lan Paw Kale" (Street Children) Centres	
Preventive	
References	
Acronyms and Abbreviations and About the Authors	

Introduction

Participatory evaluations have been undertaken and described in a variety of ways, including Participatory Action Research and Empowerment Evaluation. The latter approach was explicitly mentioned in the Terms of Reference for this evaluation and is commonly mentioned in all WVA (World Vision Australia) auspiced evaluations. Empowerment Evaluation is designed to assist program participants to develop their capacity to evaluate and improve their own programs (Fetterman et al., 1996).

It was with these thoughts in mind that, in April of this year, with assistance from World Vision Australia (WVA), World Vision Myanmar (WVM) conducted a two-week 'empowerment' evaluation of their Street Children & Working Children (SWC) Program. Consistent with the main aim of Empowerment Evaluation, the key objective of this evaluation was to provide capacity for the project participants (especially the 'users' or 'beneficiaries' - the children) to evaluate and be involved with project decision making.



This was in many ways an unusual evaluation. Whilst eager to find whether or not the project was achieving its stated goals, of more importance was the attempt to find a mechanism for increasing the participation of children. The intention was that this participation would continue throughout the project.

This two-week period was an amazing process, during which children who use the SWC program became evaluators themselves. The children came up with the questions, and designed the methods and systems for answering them.

Over the course of the two-week evaluation period, the children (supported by WVM staff) determined that rather than begin and complete the evaluation process in two weeks, they would lay the groundwork for a much more thorough evaluation process, which would continue for another four months.

The process allowed the children to be the primary evaluators. They spent time interviewing various stakeholders in the programme and analysed the information gathered. Staff members reported being extremely surprised and impressed by the ability of the children to participate in this process and moved by what they were able to learn. In fact, the evaluation was so successful that project management decided to expand the process to cover the mid-term evaluation for the entire SWC project (the remainder of which is being funded through the British Government Department For International Development – DFID). The end of the Street Children based evaluation coincided with the beginning of the evaluation of the parts of the program funded by DFID.

Project Background

The term, “street children” is an odd phrase. We do not talk of “park children” or “garden children”. However, the term expresses a phenomenon that is neither particularly new in our society nor isolated to any particular country or culture. The phrase evokes images of ragged youngsters begging and stealing to survive. Dishonest rascals: something to be cleared off the street with the garbage. Yet anyone who has had the privilege of working with children labelled as “street children” will quickly point out that they possess amazing skills and survival strategies and that, given the opportunity, their potential for educational, social, emotional and moral development is immense. This is not to romanticize the image of children who seem to spend much of their time wandering the streets in order to survive. Indeed such a lifestyle, whilst having a certain element of freedom, is harsh, often violent and destructive, sometimes even deadly.

The notion of “street children” in Myanmar (Burma) is something of an anomaly. The traditional term in Myanmar, “Lan Pyaw Kale” means literally, “children who are happy on the street”. And indeed there are many happy children seemingly roaming the streets and lanes and paddy fields of Myanmar, always ready to share a wave and a smile. Yet, as with any culture and society, some children fall through the cracks: children whose natural parents divorce; those who are badly treated by step parents; children who are orphaned; children who have to work to help support their family and children who just can’t seem to fit in at home. For many reasons, such children end up surviving from day to day with no fixed shelter or effective guardian or parent figure – vulnerable and on the street.

WorldVision has initiated “street children” programs in many countries around the world. In Myanmar a six-month period in 1996 was spent researching the issue in Yangon, the capital. This helped identify a number of major centres around the city which acted as magnets for children who were either working to help support their families or children who had lost all ties with families and were on their own. The result of this research was the development of a centre-based program.

WorldVision's Street and Working Children (SWC) Program in Yangon and Mandalay commenced in April 1997. The Lan Paw Kale (LPK) is an integral part of this umbrella program and focuses on street children in Yangon. The SWC Program has two main components. The first is “curative” and aims to improve the quality of life and status of street and working children in these two cities and when possible, to reintegrate them into mainstream society. The second is “preventive” which seeks to address the underlying factors pushing kids onto the street in a number of poorer communities around Yangon. It offers assistance to children at risk of becoming street children to seek strategies to resolve their problems whilst staying with their families and their communities. The “curative” component commenced first. A short time later the program expanded to include the “preventative” component.

The evaluation described in this report focused on the first component. It was an experience that had a great impact on all involved. It brought about a fundamental shift in the way our staff viewed the children and, equally importantly, in the way the children viewed themselves.

There are many challenges ahead for this program. However, the evaluation described here has given both staff and children a unity and mutual respect and a knowledge that we are “in this together”, not as benefactors and beneficiaries, but as partners. Solutions to the problems facing children living on the street, cut off from family and community support, are not simple. Perhaps the greatest challenge (and opportunity for change) is for adults to reconstruct their understandings of childhood and, with children themselves, to seek avenues that will not only allow their voices to be heard but that will allow them the space and the security to become social actors in their own right.



Funding

The Yangon drop-in centre and hostel are funded through WVA and its involvement with the AusAID NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP) (Australian Government's overseas aid funding agency's block grant program). The ANCP funding for the LPK project had a three-year budget of AUD \$200,000.

The Mandalay centre and other street children activities are funded by the British Government's overseas-aid agency Department for International Development (DFID). The total budget for this program is approximately AUD \$200,000 per year of which 25 percent goes towards the LPK project in Yangon.

what was done: preparation for empowerment evaluation

Chapter One

What was done: Preparation for Empowerment Evaluation

Preliminary meetings

Meetings were held with staff and children facilitated by the authors- WVA's Evaluation Coordinator and WVM's Special Program's Manager. They presented the idea that an evaluation could be lead by the children. As the idea became more understood, local staff and the children took the lead roles and the two authors moved into support roles. This triggered a range of meetings to take place. These meetings passed on the news that an evaluation was being held and the children would be having their say. The idea was being spread. Frequently these meetings were "opportunistic" - happening all over the place wherever people were found, often in small groups of three or four.

A larger number of meetings were held with the children including those from the accommodation hostel and those using the drop in centre. These meetings discussed the evaluation – what it was, why it was being conducted etc. The children were then asked to spend time in groups to discuss what questions they would like answered. The result was a list of well over 200 questions.

Primary Stakeholder groups were identified and meetings established with each:

- ▶ Children (both those from the hostel and those using the drop-in-centre)
- ▶ Staff
- ▶ Steering committee



Election of children to evaluation team

A team of children was needed to be the full time members of the evaluation team, the team to do the survey work. Selection of the team was done over a few days and involved all children from the centre. They defined their election method and then chose their representatives. Two guidelines were given for this: (i) there needed to be a proportionate representation of both boys and girls and (ii) it would be best if elected members were able to read and write. The children elected 15 representatives to the evaluation team. In addition, four WVM staff were asked to be part of the evaluation team along with the two evaluation and the three project staff.

Stakeholders' evaluation questions

Stakeholder groups had differing motivations and different interests which they wanted answered. It was clear that the main issues for the children was related to their future: "What is our future?", "What will happen.....?", etc.

Questions the hostel children asked:

- How long will the centre be open?
- Why have we opened the LPK centre?
- What do you want to have happen to the children through the LPK Centre?
- What is the children's understanding/feeling/perceived harm of the program?
- What are the differences between street and LPK life?
- Do we have a plan to open more centres and hostels?
- What more can we do? How far can the project go?

Questions from children using the drop-in centre:

- What is our progress over three years?
- Why do you give this kind of opportunity to street children?
- Why did we open the school for many children?
- What is the purpose of the centre?
- Why do staff do such unpleasant work?
- How does the committee perceive street children?
- How long will the centre be open?
- Why doesn't the government open a centre like this one?
- What will happen to us when the centre closes?
- Do you have any idea to extend this centre?

Questions the project steering committee asked:

- What is the goal, has it been reached?
- What will we do for teenage girls (12 and above)?
- Is the centre promoting unsustainable life styles for the children?
- If we are to start again, how can the project work better with the community to bring about a better result for the children and the community?

Questions from the first meeting with WVM staff:

- If the drop in centre never existed, what would you do?
- If you had the time again, what would you do?
- Is there any impact of the program on children who have come to the LPK Centre?
- What should happen in Insein?
- What should the program be doing with other street children?

Questions the LPK staff asked:

- What is the qualitative and quantitative progress of the program?
- What happens when the program finishes?
- What do we do about problems beyond our control?
- Does the LPK Project meet the children's needs?
- What are the programme's strengths and weaknesses?

Questions from local NGO (CARE Myanmar):

- Is the project cost effective?
- Do the staff feel well equipped?
- How can we help other children?
- How can we help parents of SWC?

Refinement of questions

From the lists eight major questions were defined:

- (i) How long will we keep the centre and hostel open?
- (ii) Why did we open the LPK Centre?
- (iii) What do we want to have happen to the children through the LPK centre?
- (iv) What are the differences between street and LPK children?
- (v) How can we help other children like us?
- (vi) How far can we go?
- (vii) What will happen to us if the centre closes?
- (viii) Do you have a plan to open more centres and hostels?

what was done: preparation for empowerment evaluation

Identification of informant groups

The evaluation team decided to add more groups to their stakeholder list. This was to be the list of groups approached for their answers. Groups to be consulted were:

- Children (both those from the hostel and those using the drop-in-centre)
- Staff (both WVM management and project staff)
- Steering committee
- Other NGOs
- Parents of the children
- Children who never came to the centre
- Children who no longer came to the centre
- Department of Social Welfare
- Donors
- Shop owners in the market
- Street Families

Planning the interviews

The evaluation team then did the detailed planning concerning:

- (i) who would be interviewed and from which stakeholder group;
- (ii) how the informants would be located and contacted;
- (iii) who would do the interviews;
- (iv) where & when the interviews would be carried out.

This refined the questions and classified them according to particular groupings.

Table 1: Type of Informants and Samples

Type of Informant	Type of Sample
Children in the centre and the hostel	Census of current users in both centres. All current children who could be contacted
Parents of children	Convenience sample of parents who were available and had some involvement with the project.
Children who never came to the centre	Convenience – wherever met.
Children who do not come to the centre anymore	Convenience – wherever met.
Department of Social Welfare	Unable to participate
Donors	Convenience – when available.
Shop owners in the market	Convenience – when available.
World Vision Staff	Stratified sample (project staff, World Vision Myanmar staff involved with project or with fundraising)
School teachers	Convenience – when available.
Project Steering Committee	Convenience – when available.

what was done: preparation for empowerment evaluation

Question Guides

The process of developing question guides for each informant group was a little arduous but necessary to ensure that all the major focal questions would be addressed with all the informant groups. An example of a question guide:- the guide used for the interviews with children at the LPK centre. Similar guides were developed for all informant groups.

Guide for LPK children's interviews

Time :

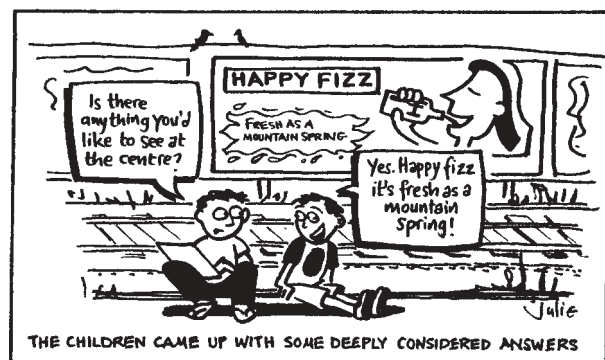
Participants :

Facilitator: :

Note taker :

The questions to ask the children are as follows:

1. What do you like about living on the street?
2. What do you dislike about living on the street?
3. What do you like about living in the LPK?
4. What do you dislike about living in the LPK?
5. Where are you happier, in LPK or on the street?
6. Do you think that your situation is getting better since you have been in LPK?
7. What can the children do to have a better programme?
8. What can the staff do to have a better programme?
9. Is there anything else the LPK scheme can do to help you?
10. What other programmes are LPK doing apart from the centre and hostel?
11. How can you help other children facing the same situation as yours?
12. What do the children from the centre want to do when they grow up?
13. What will happen to the children when the centre is closed?
14. What is the purpose of opening this centre?
15. Do you have a home?
16. What do you dislike at your home?
17. What do you like at your home?



Training for Focus Group Interviewing

Some children volunteered to become interviewers, others opted to be note-takers. A series of practice exercises were developed to provide the opportunity to develop the necessary skills. This process took a number of days. It was stressful for some children wishing to be note takers as many of them had either a very rudimentary education or none at all. This was resolved as some interviewers gained confidence and expertise in note-taking and switched roles, allowing some note-takers to cross over to interviewing.

At first, the children were reluctant to ask follow-up questions to clarify answers. With practice, they developed their communication skills and were able to have a sense of the questions and the possible answers. Interviewers improved their listening skills and use of follow-up questions, as they began to 'get the hang' of doing semi-structured interviews.

The first Focus Group Interview the children conducted was with the 'donors' informant group as represented by the authors. This provided a situation where 'practise' could be gained and at the same time it was not entirely practice as the children had the opportunity to ask questions that had been on their minds but had never had the opportunity or invitation to ask before this exercise.

Achievements by the end of the second week:

- Election of children (by their peers) to the Evaluation Team (16 children elected);
- Development of lists of questions to be answered during the evaluation (see below). Contributions came from all stakeholders groups;
- Refinement of the questions into a form suited to interviews, ie the development of question guides;
- Identification of informant groups to be interviewed;
- Completion of training for children in interviewing and note-taking techniques;
- Formulation of a plan of action for completion of the evaluation;
- Decision to duplicate this process with the other areas in which the SWC project was operating and that the children from the LPK Centre would help to facilitate;
- Decision to employ a project worker to support the children in their evaluation activities.

Chapter Two

What was done: Implementation

Over the next two months the evaluation process became incorporated as one of many activities in the busy and complex life of the project. This two-month period of the evaluation was completely directed by the children.

During this time the following 'Phase II' activities were undertaken:

► Interview teams formed

The children broke into groups of three or four. A staff member joined each of the teams. At first, teams were a mix of girls and boys and this was not successful. There may have been a number of reasons for this including: general Myanmar culture of male confidence and female docility, the greater number of boys than girls and the concern expressed later that the girls felt the project staff favoured the boys.

► Interview schedules and question guides

An interview schedule was drawn up outlining which teams would interview which informants and when. The schedule was busy and aimed to finish all the focus group interviews within a two-month period. Question guides were finalised within team groups.

► Children conduct focus group interviews with informant groups

The children then set about interviews with informant groups. They took themselves into the community to interview other children, parents, authority figures and people in the markets. Over 50 interviews were conducted. The quantity of information collected was astonishing. This summary report does not do justice to the amount of work that was involved. Unfortunately, the Department of Social Welfare was unable to participate in any interviews.

► Comparison with office records

As the children were collecting the interview data, staff in the evaluation team looked through records that already existed in the project records to address the same eight primary questions. This provided a "triangulation" check for the evaluation data.



Results workshop - a three day event

The culmination of the Focus Group Interview schedule and the staff data collection was a three-day workshop in which findings and recommendations were presented. The workshop was conducted in a highly participatory manner with 15 boys, three girls (the initial evaluation team), 18 staff and six parents taking part including two staff members from WVUK (Programme Officer and Communications Officer).

Textbox 2.

Children's roles in the Results Workshop:

The boys were shouting and scrambling in answering the questions whereas the girls were initially shy and scared, hesitant and sitting quietly among the staff members. The boys overreacted. The girls were older than the boys and they only participated when the staff called out their name and asked. The parents remained silent during the presentation. This time it was not necessary to motivate the children as much as in the preliminary workshop for planning the evaluation. They developed their sense of understanding through weekly meetings and focus group discussion.

Methods used in the workshops included lectures, group discussions and interactive presentations. These conventional methods didn't always hold the children's interest, so dancing, singing and role-plays were arranged. The idea of singing caught their attention and release their creative energies.

After the welcome and introduction of the participants, the first day started with a data presentation. It was observed that the children were not finding the presentation at all interesting and some of them kept talking. At the outset of the data presentation, the children got bored as the staff presented in English. Then, when staff members presented in Myanmar and more to the children than to themselves with visual charts, the children

seemed to be more interested and answered the questions without hesitation.

As the meeting progressed, the interest amongst the children grew and they participated actively and presented their views more freely. The boys talked more than girls did. However, when the girls were encouraged closely by their teachers, they answered the questions very openly. After the SWOC analysis (Strengths, Weakness, Opportunities, Constraints) of the Focus Group Interview data was considered we realised why girls were reluctant to be involved: because the girls thought that the teacher was biased against girls. They felt that the teachers did not favour them as much as the boys. Though the boys dominated the whole process, the effect was wonderful, invigorating and exhausting.

The children wanted more frequent breaks to relieve the pressure of the work. However, the workshop's designers found it difficult to allow these because of the extra time needed to finish the evaluation meeting. Recreational events such as dancing and singing were organised every two hours during the meeting.

It was observed that the problems raised by the children were far removed from the thinking of the adults. They identified issues that affected negatively their daily lives.

Excerpt from diary of WVM staff member.

Constraints & Difficulties

The main constraints faced by the evaluation team were:

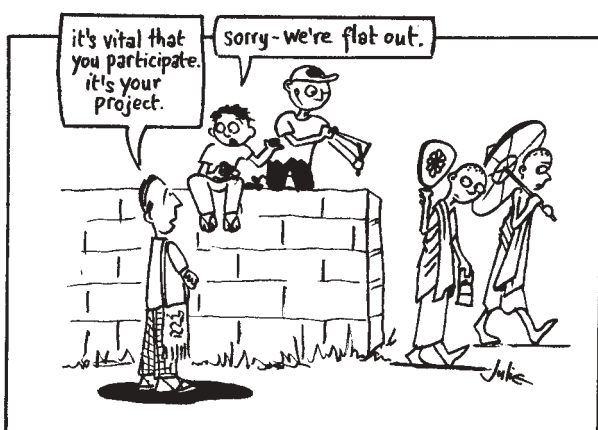
- ▶ The time required for children and staff to become accustomed to interacting and relating in collegial ways. (This was WVM's first participatory evaluation.);
- ▶ Inability of Department of Social Welfare officials to participate in the Focus Group Interviews;
- ▶ The small number of interviews with children who did not attend the centre, (both the street or working children);
- ▶ Under-representation of working children, (most come just for meals and few participate in most other LPK activities);
- ▶ Technical difficulties with recording equipment, leaving the written notes as the only record of the focus group discussions.

Evaluation team recommendations

Key recommendation:

Move to a children's empowerment philosophy. Seek more to develop the children's capacities to be the central actors in shaping their own futures.

The children could and should be involved to a greater degree as active participants in project planning, implementation, management, monitoring and evaluation. The project should refocus from its current service-delivery approach (expressed in the design and practice of the project) where children are beneficiaries of "adult-dominated" services. It should focus toward promoting the principle that children be allowed the opportunity to speak for themselves rather than having others (usually adults) speaking on their behalf.



Possible steps in this direction could include:

- (i) Creation of a children's committee (of between six and 10 members) elected by the children themselves to suggest initiatives, seek feedback from other children about the program and ways to improve it. This sub-committee should sit on the Steering Committee of the project and take part in regular staff meetings;
- (ii) Continued involvement of the 18 elected children evaluators in the monitoring of the Yangon LPK Centre and in M&E training of other project participants (in Hlaingtharyar and Mandalay);
- (iii) Children's participation in all forums that focus on children's issues such as the recently formed International NGO Theme Group on the Convention of the Rights of the Child that meets regularly in Yangon;
- (iv) Training of children to become project implementers eg outreach street-life-skills educators; street-children advocates; literacy trainers of other street children;
- (v) Formation of a "pen pal" relationship with ANCP/DFID representatives and other potential future donors and stakeholders, such as UNICEF;
- (vi) Future funding proposals to reflect the "children's empowerment philosophy" as a central theme.

Concluding Remarks

The key aim of this Empowerment Evaluation was to improve the capacity of program participants, especially children, to evaluate and improve the program. This made for many fascinating moments, a lot of fun and occasionally some tears. The process was, for all involved, an exhausting yet exhilarating experience. The adults who took part were particularly privileged. Project staff were surprised, even amazed at what the children were capable of saying and doing. We were all challenged by the need to reconstruct our understanding of childhood and, with the children themselves, to seek avenues that would not only allow their voices to be heard but that would allow them the space and the security to become even more capable social actors in their own right. We all took the first steps on a longer journey.

Lessons learned in working with children

- Participatory empowerment evaluations take time;
- A new concept of childhood is needed in which children are regarded as being capable of speaking for themselves;
- Children should be involved in the on-going monitoring of LPK project activities;
- The children were able to design their own methods if given the opportunity and motivation to do so;
- Given enough time, children can produce very valuable results;
- It is useful to have a full-time documenter/ translator;
- When working with children, it is essential to mix work with games;
- Children of different age groups can work together, with older children leading younger ones;
- Explanations to the children about the goals, design and funding source of the program instilled in them a greater sense of responsibility;
- The children were enthusiastic workers and had great access to the community so working with them meant more could get done;
- Relationships between staff and children and among children themselves improved as a result of the process;
- Special attention needs to be paid to girls (particularly if they are outnumbered by boys) to ensure that their voices are heard. (It may be useful to separate boys and girls for some activities, but bring them together to share their opinions);
- It was often difficult to talk with the girls, they were often frightened and shy;
- Presentation with visual aids is more effective than just verbal presentation in stimulating children to be involved. The use of pictures as a medium enhances participation. Children enjoy writing and drawing;
- Games, energisers and singing are necessary to motivate participation and maintain interest;
- Group work is always productive if monitored carefully;
- Staff need to monitor and support the children's participation to see they have understood the methods and are doing the activity correctly;
- Evaluation facilitators and staff should try to make children feel more comfortable and confident about their own ideas and more free to do things in their own way. To a certain extent, this was successful;
- One of the most important issues diminishing children's participation is poverty. Poverty disempowers everyone, especially children;
- True participation depends on provision for children, and protection of children and childhood;
- The provision of material and social resources is crucial, so that children are healthy and well educated enough to participate;
- It is important to give all children the chance to be active participants, not just those perceived by staff to be the 'smarter' kids;
- Often the children who have attended school will dominate the discussions. Training is needed for the others to support them with skills to understand and participate in evaluations and project planning discussions;
- Special efforts should be made to promote active and equal participation of all types of children, e.g. the creation of groups in which the less confident children feel comfortable.

Participatory approaches, some theory

The benefits of the past decades of development aid are increasingly coming under scrutiny. As Escobar (1995:p4) summarises:

For instead of the kingdom of abundance promised by theorists and politicians in the 1950s, the discourse and strategy of development produced its opposite: massive underdevelopment and impoverishment, untold exploitation and oppression.

Prominent authors (Korten, 1994, Campfens 1997) have suggested that the 'failure' of development has been a direct result of neglecting people's empowerment through increased participation in their own development. This notion of empowerment is not particularly new. As early as the 1930s, projects existed that stressed empowerment and collective local action (Eyben and Ladbury in Guijt and Shah 1998). More recent interest in participation and empowerment within development projects has been traced to the 1970s (Guijt and Shah 1998) when the failure of many projects led to a need to understand the perspective of local communities and brought into question the hegemony of the 'external expert'. This realisation combined with some earlier methodologies of social transformation (Freire, 1972) helped to provide basic principles to guide people's empowerment over their own development process.

Guijt and Shah note that a 'participation boom' took place in the 1980s which saw an explosion of grassroots activists and local NGOs in which the focus was on understanding and respecting insider knowledge. The early 90's saw, "frenzied levels of global interest in participation" (Maguire, 1987:p4) with participation becoming a prerequisite for funding.

Participation in today's development discourse is characterised by two growing paradoxes. The first is the trend to the standardisation of approaches, which, in a sense completely contradicts the notion of participation whereby direction is moulded by the participants and, therefore, impossible to standardise. The second paradox relates to the growth of a body of technical knowledge on empowerment that threatens to take the empowerment aspect of the participatory process out of the hands of communities and place it in the hands of the 'experts' once again.

The notion of participation is complex and often ambiguous. It can mean anything from consultation to full empowerment and has even been likened to a Trojan Horse that can hide coercion and manipulation, as its basic motivation (Slocum and Thomas-Slayter, 1995). A number of authors and development practitioners have developed typologies, attempting to identify the types and degrees of participation (for example, Biggs, 1989; Cornwall, 1995; Guijt, 1991, Hart 1992). It is now generally recognised that participation must be part of the development process.

participatory approaches, some theory

Recently, the development discourse has begun to feature the participation of children. Initiated partly by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (the most widely ratified human rights convention in the world), in which participation of children in all matters that affect them is one of the underlying principles. More recently the "New Global Agenda for Children"¹ has been developed by the United Nations. As part of this, a report "A World Fit for Children" is being developed for discussion at the forthcoming Special Session.

For adolescents, the opportunity to develop fully their individual capacities in safe and enabling environments that empower them to participate in, and contribute to, their societies. (UNICEF, 2000:14)

Similar themes appear in the discourse on monitoring and evaluation of overseas-aid programs. For example, Marsden, Oakley and Pratt (1994: 31) note calls for an alternative, participatory approach:

'not only to evaluation but also to the dominant modernisation paradigm'.

They note that the call for such an alternative participatory approach

'finds its roots in the failure of the development efforts to significantly improve the standard of living of all but a few in the so called 'Third World', and to circumvent the many barriers that prevent the effective and efficient disbursement of resources to those most in need'.



They add that

'the result has been a call for people to define and take greater responsibility for their own development, on their own terms, and pursue it in their own way.'

Participatory evaluation becomes not only the means by which to create the dialogue necessary for such a process to develop but an integral part of the process itself' (ibid.).

Space precludes elaboration of debates on development and research/evaluation paradigms and their interrelationship, but those interested may wish to consult Hettne, 1995 and Carmen, 1996.

Partly fuelled by the failures of the dominant approach and by the calls for an alternative participatory practice described above, 'The past two decades have seen an increased recognition of the importance of participation by beneficiaries (and a wide range of other stakeholders) in decision-making' ('eldis' development-information website: <http://ids.ac.uk/eldis/hot/pm1.htm>).

¹ A UNICEF initiative

Appendix 1: Descriptions of the Myanmar Street Children's Program

Curative: "Lan Paw Kale" (Street Children) Centres

This approach was taken in order to meet the needs of these children, all of whom are at risk of physical and sexual abuse and general exploitation. This may occur for some in their own homes, which explains why they are on the streets in the first place. WVM operates drop-in centres and conducts street education for children in both downtown Yangon and Mandalay. The centres are called "Lan Paw Kale" (LPK), or "Street Children" Centres.

The LPK Centre in Yangon, the subject of this evaluation report, was WVM's first direct intervention for street children, and opened in June 1997. By October 1, 1999, this centre had provided 494 children, mostly boys, with a caring, safe place to seek shelter from the street. An average of 70 to 80 children enjoy the centre's services each day, and 17 children enrolled in formal school during the most recent year. Based on the success of the Yangon LPK Centre, a sister centre opened in Mandalay in May 1999, and by October 1, 1999 had provided services to a further 158 children, with an average of 70 to 80 children sleeping in the centre each night.

The LPK Centres provide any street and working child between the ages of 4 and 16 who comes through their doors the opportunity to benefit from, or participate in, any or all of the following services:

- Basic nutrition - three meals a day are available at little or no cost;
- Basic healthcare and emergency intervention if required;
- Clothing, bathing facilities and shelter;
- Non-formal education and skill training;
- School support and lessons supported by employed teachers;
- Recreation, including field trips and sports competitions;
- Counselling eg. family reconciliation and family support, including income generation opportunities.

In addition, the project has established a hostel offering longer-term support to children who have no prospect of family reunification and outreach support provided from the local market.

Preventive

This approach aims to engage children before they become street and/or working children in the first place. WVM operates community-based programs in Hlaing Thayar Township on the outskirts of Yangon, and Chan May Tharzi Township on the outskirts of Mandalay. These poor communities are slum areas that serve as feeder communities for the children living on the streets in these two cities. A number of different interventions are operated out of these centres with the help of community volunteers, including:

- Non-formal education for working children unable to attend school;
- Non-formal education for illiterate adults;
- Small loans to parents of street and working children;
- Formal school support for children at risk;
- Basic health training and health care;
- Assertiveness and awareness training for children, particularly teenage girls, at risk of being caught in the activities of those who traffic in girls for the sex industry;
- Training of community members – children and adults – and local authorities in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC);
- Formation of steering committees and other local community groups that direct their own development processes.

References

Biggs, S. (1989) *Resource-poor Farmer Participation in research: a synthesis of experience from nine national agricultural research systems*, ISNAR, OFCOR Project Study No 3, The Hague.

Campfens, H. (Ed) (1997) *Community development around the World: Practice, Theory, Research, Training*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto.

Carmen, R. (1996) *Autonomous Development*, Zed Books, London.

Cornwall, A. (1996) *Towards Participatory Practice: participatory rural appraisal (PRA) and the participatory process*, in Koning and Martin (eds), *Participatory Research in Health*, pp. 94-103.

Escoba, A. (1995) *The Making and Unmaking of the Third World*, Princeton University Press New Jersey.

Fetterman, D, Kaftarian, S, Wandersman, A. (eds)(1996) *Empowerment Evaluation: Knowledge and Tools for Self-Assessment and Accountability*, Sage, London.

Gujit, I. and Shah, M. (1998), *The Myth of Community, Gender Issues in Participatory Development*. Intermediate technology Publication 1998.

Hettne, B. (1995) *Development Theory and the Three Worlds*, 2nd edition, Longman, Scientific and Technical, Essex.

Korten, D. (1984) *People Centered Development, Contributions toward Theory and Planning Frameworks*, Kumarian Press, Connecticut.

Maguire, P. (1987) *Doing Participatory Research: a feminist approach*, The Centre for International Education, Amherst Massachusetts.

Marsden, D., Oakley, P. and Pratt, B. (1994) *Measuring the Process: Guidelines for evaluating Social Development*, INTRAC, Oxford.

Slocum, R. and Thomas-Slayter, B. (1995) *Participation, Empowerment and Sustainable Development*, Intermediate Technology Publications, London.

UNICEF (2000) *Draft Provisional Outcome Document of the UN Special Session on Children*.

Acronyms and Abbreviations

NGO	Non-government organisation
AUD	Australian dollars
FGI	Focus group interview
LPK	<i>Lan Paw Kale</i> ('street children' in Myanmar)
UN	United Nations
ANCP	AusAID NGO Cooperation Program
AusAID	Australian Agency for International Development (Government)
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Funds
DFID	Department For International Development (UK government Development Agency)
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
WVA	World Vision Australia
WVM	World Vision Myanmar
SWC	Street Children and Working Children

The Authors:

Karl Dorning, Special Programs Manager for World Vision Myanmar, has worked in Myanmar for the past five years in Programs involving street and working children and HIV/AIDS. For the past year and a half he has coordinated an international (five country) study into child abuse and neglect and is presently undertaking PhD study into children and participation in the development process. He has a background in education and social work. His previous work has included developing programs for refugees and migrants in Australia and homeless youth programs in Melbourne, Australia.

Dr Tim O'Shaughnessy has been active in social development for the past 20 years as an evaluator, researcher, program developer and trainer. He has experience in planning and evaluation with children as well as youth and adults in over 15 countries. Dr O'Shaughnessy has been World Vision Australia's Evaluation Coordinator since 1995.





Produced by World Vision Australia on behalf of the World Vision Partnership.

World Vision International
6 ch de la Tourelle
1209 Geneva
Switzerland

World Vision International
220 Street, NE Suite 270
Washington DC
20002-4373
USA

World Vision International
800 W. Chestnut Avenue
Monrovia, CA 91016
USA