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SECTION IV. PRESSURES FROM A GLOBAL ECONOMY

Stitching or schooling? - Children and football stitching - A case study from Pakistan

'The mirror of change'* - Kindergartens in a rapidly changing society - A case study from Mongolia

The problem:

- A global economy leads to increased vulnerability

- Pakistan: historical dependence on world markets
- Mongolia: recent entry to the global market

The approach:

- Can schools contribute to reducing children's vulnerability?
- The Pakistan case
- The Mongolia case
- Partnerships to tackle complex problems
- Local analysis combined with international experience

THE PROBLEM:

Section 1 discussed the ways in which poverty and lack of educational opportunity interrelate, and highlighted the fact

that economic vulnerability is created by large-scale forces - political, economic, environmental. The studies in this section are selected to give an insight into these processes through two cases of suddenly increased economic vulnerability, one affecting a district, and one a whole country. They give examples of how global trends affect children, and how this interacts with issues of school provision.

A global economy leads to increased vulnerability

As economic relations across the world are increasingly structured by the dominance of large, powerful, economies, there is an ever more obvious impact of external forces on what happens even in remote parts of poor countries. The framework of economic globalisation is a body of international agreements that has given greater freedom of operation to multinational companies but with a consequent loss of freedom for national governments to protect their economies against adverse terms of trade. There has been a

similar loss of collective bargaining power by workers, since different parts of a production process are located in different countries and can be rapidly moved to take advantage of changing economic trends across countries. In the ethos of the global market, the aim of economic activity is to increase profits for companies; all other goals, such as national development, social advancement or protection against the effects of poverty, are secondary at best.

Children are the most vulnerable group in society and economically the most dependent. They are the most adversely affected at times of economic crisis. Adults having to work longer hours means less adequate care for young children. Loss of work for adults or diminishing value of what they can earn leads to an increase in child labour, and working children are even less protected against hazards and exploitation than adults. The trend to economic vulnerability manifests itself worldwide in more children malnurished, more children leaving home to find work, more children on the

streets.

The very different political histories of the two studies highlights the fact that increased vulnerability is an issue both in countries with long standing economic dependence on the West, as well as those which have only recently entered the global market.

Pakistan: Historical dependence on world markets

The Pakistan case is typical of the situation in many poorer countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America, whose economies have long been integrated into the western market economy. Trade patterns dating from colonial times have led to extreme forms of dependency on particular crops or exports, whose price is subject to fluctuations in the international market. This study illustrates the vulnerability that results from such over-specialisation. The Sialkot district in Pakistan produces the overwhelming majority of the world's

league footballs and was thus highly vulnerable when an international decision that changed employment patterns. Many children were employed as football stitchers until consumer pressure led the international football industry to ban child labour.

Mongolia: Recent entry to the global market The Mongolia case describes a situation typical in countries in Eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union (and, in a somewhat different form, in parts of East Asia.) Opinion-leaders in these countries have been persuaded that the free market system generates wealth and is a natural partner of democratic freedoms. It came as a shock when, almost universally, countries that moved into the global market in the 1990s experienced a rapid growth of an underclass of unemployed, or of people whose incomes could no longer support them. This was accompanied by all the attendant social problems with which western societies are familiar.

THE APPROACH

Because the causes of economic vulnerability are essentially external to the society, it is not within its government's power to prevent them. But national governments nevertheless have to react to the problems caused, and increased poverty among children has obvious knock-on effects for education. The case studies give examples where an international NGO has attempted to support national and local education providers, together with vulnerable communities, to respond to these challenges.

Can schools contribute to reducing children's vulnerability?

In both cases Save the Children became involved because it was clear that international pressures had caused sudden vulnerability to children. Its concern was

- to work with local partners to reduce children's vulnerability where possible,

- to ensure that children's views were taken into account in whatever policies were being proposed,

- to press for policies and practice that were not narrowly sectoral but took account of the whole condition of children's lives.

In neither case was there a prior decision to work on issues of schooling. This emerged as a potential mechanism for reducing young children's vulnerability after a period of engaging with the broader issues, and learning to understand the particular problems and possibilities of that situation.

While approaching poverty issues via education is one important strategy, it is only one, and it is important not to seem to claim too much for it. Improving schools will not

change the underlying and continuing causes of vulnerability. And where schools are very ineffective and inappropriate to children's real needs, they would have to be massively improved to bring about any real change in life chances for the children who go through them. Nevertheless, in both cases Save the Children has been able to contribute to the development of policies and practice which offer some protection to children against the worst effects of the economic pressures. To do this it was necessary to consider:

● How poverty, child work and non-attendance at school interrelate.

● What school systems can do to prevent vulnerability, to diminish its ill effects, or to offer alternative futures to children.

● How school systems need to change in order to respond to changes in society.

● Whether school providers are equipped with the skills it will take to make these changes.

The Pakistan case

The ban on child labour in the football industry in Sialkot called into being a partnership of multi-national companies, government, local and international agencies. Save the Children joined this partnership to contribute its understanding of child labour issues in other countries, and to press for a programme that would take account of children's needs for both earning opportunities and schooling. Through asking children for their views it was able to challenge assumptions among decision makers about the relationship of child labour to school going, for it became clear that low quality of schooling rather than work was a primary reason for non-attendance. From experience in Bangladesh Save the Children argued that a ban on child labour in one sector could lead children into other more hazardous forms of work, and

successfully advocated for a progressive phase out rather than an immediate ban. The research findings became a key input in the design of a programme to build up alternative livelihood options and improved schooling.

The Mongolia case

The Mongolia study shows how an international NGO can draw on its understanding of international economic trends and their impact on children, to support more responsive policies at national government level. By working closely with the government during the critical period of rapid transition from a command to a market-based economy, Save the Children was able to strengthen government capacity to interpret and anticipate the impact of this transition, and to develop new strategies for pre-school provision to respond to changing external conditions.

Partnerships to tackle complex problems

Several themes run through both studies. One is that the complex nature of the challenges requires a style of working through a range of partnerships. The problems were clearly too broad to be effectively tackled by a narrow focus on education: it was necessary to make connections between school providers, communities, and other bodies that could affect what happened to children. And given the international issues involved it was essential in both cases to engage with the UN agencies, donors or multi-national companies who had a role in determining future policies.

- In Pakistan, Save the Children's decision to join the partnership that had been set up in the wake of the ban on child labour was seen by some as an unusual decision for an international NGO that had previously worked on education issues in Pakistan primarily at community level. The partnership included representatives from multi-nationals, local commercial interests, government, and UN

agencies. It has attracted considerable attention because of the high profile nature of the industry, and provides a rare example of collaboration between what would normally be seen as disparate groups. Save the Children used its presence to bring into the partnership local NGOs that could contribute experience of livelihood and school issues. Together they were able to advocate for an approach which took account of all the demands on a child's life, and led to programmes that recognised the need to improve the quality of schooling. Potentially such a partnership provides a mechanism to press the corporations that drive economic changes to be more socially accountable to the communities they affect.

- The Mongolia study describes a role which involved liaison with many different groups. As one of the first international agencies in Mongolia, Save

the Children adopted an explicitly low key approach, gradually building up relations of trust with government officials at different levels and identifying key people through whom to reach other levels. In the early stages it provided opportunities for decision makers to acquire new skills: to analyse the causal links between economic transition and poverty; to gain experience of participatory ways of tackling problems; and to define policy parameters within which international donor funding could operate. Save the Children also supported newly emerging groups of professionals who were taking on roles outside government, and in partnership with them initiated research into the impact of the economic changes on children. This was then used in problem analysis with officials. The context of rapid change also offered the opportunity to experiment with new ideas through a series of pilot

projects to encourage community initiatives. The combination of these practical and analytical experiences created a situation where there is a national commitment to preserve state-supported pre-school education, and a conception of how it can be used it as a means to tackle increasing vulnerability of young children.

Local analysis combined with international experience

Another common feature is that in both of these cases Save the Children was a relatively new player. That it was nevertheless able to play a useful role was due to its philosophical approach and style of work:

- A belief in the need to retain diversity (see Section I)

The aim was to strengthen local stakeholders' ability

to retain control of the direction of their own societies to the greatest extent possible, and to resist the negative impacts of economic globalisation.

- International experience

Save the Children staff in each country were in a position to contribute something of value to local decision makers because they had access to the international experience of the organisation, which had engaged with related problems elsewhere. They could share this understanding with local stakeholders, who had less access to relevant information, and less experience of negotiating with international bodies.

- Local analysis

Contributing an understanding of global issues did not mean presenting a 'global solution'. The programme approach evolved organically, responsive to what was culturally or politically possible, and support was given to local groups to find solutions appropriate to their context.

- Understanding what children experience In both cases documentation of children's experiences and views had a clear effect on policy, through challenging previously unquestioned assumptions.

Stitching or schooling? - Children and football stitching - A case study from Pakistan

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What are the problems for children?

The Child Labour/Education Debate

Throughout the world, education and work during childhood are widely seen as incompatible. Work is generally viewed as preventing children obtaining an education; compulsory schooling then becomes the 'solution' to child labour. This view of education and work as opposites is common both in national and international policy-making and debates. It is based on stereotypes of both work and education, and draws on an image of work as a full-time activity undertaken between certain fixed hours, usually at a workplace away from the home. This is contrasted with education, often seen entirely in terms of full-time school attendance. Of course, it is widely appreciated that meaningful education is much

broader than school attendance. It is less commonly appreciated that children do an enormous range of work, by no means all of which prevents them accessing education. The majority is flexible, done for their families rather than for an external employer. In some contexts, working enables children to pay for parts of their education. In much of the world, work itself is considered an important part of education, enabling children to learn a valuable life skill. Rural children's work in agriculture, herding and domestic work in the Malian Sahel[1] and football stitching in Sialkot are good examples.

Furthermore, most children who work full-time and do not attend school do so because of poverty - their families cannot manage without their labour. Thus it is often not work that prevents children attending school but family poverty. Or as observed above the unattractiveness of education. It is probable that the kind of work that prevents children from

accessing an education is the minority. However, it is this image of work that predominates in debates about child labour and education[2]. Some of the pressure groups who raised the alarm about children's involvement in stitching footballs in Pakistan painted an inaccurate picture using images of children forced to work very long hours in factories, sometimes in order to pay back parents' debts, unable to obtain an education or to play. The intention was to 'give children back a childhood', taking them away from work and putting them into school, seen as the 'proper' place for children.

Why an international/local partnership was formed

The pressure groups against child labour in football production arose from "labour rights" campaigning groups who mobilised American mothers around concern that their children were playing with footballs produced with child

labour. Using the leverage of consumer power, these pressure groups effectively targeted international companies such as Nike and Adidas sourcing footballs in Pakistan, and football industry-associations such as FIFA. By mid-1997, under growing international pressure, the football industry formed a partnership to eliminate child labour from the Pakistani football industry with a range of international and local organisations. The key partners initially were the Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry, representing manufacturers, the International Labour Organisation, UNICEF and Save the Children Fund (UK). Subsequently, a range of Pakistani NGOs and government departments joined the programme, implementing different components[3].

Save the Children's main reason for entering the Sialkot partnership was to ensure that children displaced from football stitching would not be pushed into taking up other more hazardous or exploitative forms of work, as had

happened when child labour was phased out of Bangladesh's garment industry. In this instance, the extent to which households relied on children's earnings from the garment industry had been severely underestimated and the majority of children had thus taken up other kinds of work[4]. In the Sialkot case, mounting consumer pressure to raise awareness of child labour in football production in the run up to the 1998 Football World Cup presented such a threat to the profile and profits of international companies that they would only accept a ban on child labour. With the support of Pakistani manufacturing groups, Save the Children was able to advocate for a gradual phase out of child labour and a programme of education and livelihood options as a realistic response in a context where a ban was inevitable.

Drawing from the experience of Bangladesh, Save the Children stressed the crucial need for a situation analysis to gain a thorough understanding of children's involvement in

football stitching and feed this into programme design. Once the analysis was undertaken, Save the Children drew local NGOs, known to have relevant experience, into the partnership. The local NGO Sudhaar became the main partner to work on programme development and implementation, bringing in first hand experience of programming with working children in the education sector in the Kasur region.

Realities of Education and Work in Sialkot

The situation analysis examined children's involvement in football stitching, the reasons why they work and their experiences of work and school[5]. Broadly the research revealed:

- ***Children stitch footballs to supplement family income and because it represents a better option to poor quality***

schooling

While only twenty per cent of child football stitchers currently attended school, nearly two thirds had attended school in the past. Rather than football stitching preventing them from attending school, the majority had dropped out because their families needed their income or could not afford to pay schooling costs (fees, materials, and 'voluntary' contributions towards school upkeep), or because they saw work as a better option than poor quality schooling. Most of the children interviewed stitched footballs because their families needed the money. The situation analysis thus confirmed that Save the Children's initial concerns that children might be pushed into worse circumstances if they were banned from child labour were valid.

The analysis also reflects the wider national context. Although national statistics on education are notoriously inaccurate, it is clear that over half of school age children are out of school

at any given time and that a high proportion of these are involved in some form of work, ranging from full-time employment to informal, home-based piece rate occupations and seasonal work which tends to get left out of government figures. With such limited life chances, it is little wonder that work is seen to offer a more viable livelihood opportunity than basic education and certainly than continuing beyond primary school[6].

Box 1: How football stitching can help school attendance

Twelve year old Asma is the oldest child in her family. She has two younger sisters, and all three girls go to school. Asma is in class seven. She earns about 240 Rupees per month stitching footballs. This helps to pay school expenses and allows her to have some money of her own. She is not skilled enough to stitch complete footballs, but helps her

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father and sometimes stitches half balls. Her father has been stitching footballs for twenty years and normally stitches three balls per day. With Asma's help, he can now produce four balls per day. If she is no longer allowed to stitch footballs, she thinks she will either do other home-based work or will study full-time. She would like to be a schoolteacher.

● ***Football-stitching is a flexible and desirable form, of labour in relation to alternative work options***

The research also showed that children were not confined to one spot for long hours. Most children stitched footballs in their own homes in order to boost family production, and would intersperse this with other activities, such as agricultural work or household chores. This is not to say that they found football stitching unproblematic. Many of the children interviewed complained of eye strain and pain in their

joints. They were, however, clear that football stitching was preferable to other work available to them in Sialkot, such as working in surgical instruments manufacture, in tea shops, agriculture or as domestics, and that work of some kind was a necessity.

The benefits of football stitching to the local economy of poor households is recognized nationally. It is well-adapted to the geography of small villages in the Sialkot areas because production can be home-based; because it can be done at home it is adapted to women who according to Muslim traditions are restricted to activities around the home and can combine it with domestic responsibilities, and helps prevent migration; it is relatively unhazardous; it does not require sophisticated methods of production and can be fitted around other commitments of workers which could include education activities. Neither the national economy, employers or employees want to lose this source of revenue.

● *Poor quality of education is a higher deterrent to enrolment than availability*

Children's school experiences were illuminating and contrasted with the benign image of education counterposed by campaigners to stitching footballs. The children interviewed complained of being beaten, of teachers not coming to class, or not teaching when they did, and of having to work in the teachers' fields after school. For some children, schools were also inaccessible in the rainy season due to lack of bridges. It was striking, however, that most villages had both a girls and a boys primary school; absolute lack of primary schooling facilities was not the problem, as a number of the partners in the programme had initially assumed, though access to middle and high schools was much more limited, particularly for girls.

The problems with the education system experienced by the Sialkot children are common throughout the country. Pakistan

is at the extremes of education league tables. It has one of the lowest literacy rates (38% according to official statistics[7]), one of the lowest GDP expenditures on education, currently running at 2%, and dismally low levels of enrolment and completion. Almost 50% of primary aged children have no access to school whilst almost 50% of those who do enrol, dropout. The situation is worse in rural areas, where 65% of the population live, and for girls, who represent less than half of enrolments for boys". The poor quality of education on offer, compounded by corruption, widespread teacher absenteeism and physical abuse of pupils is a key factor in whether children go to school or to work. It also explains the significant growth of private schools, particularly in urban areas, where parents who can afford to send their children in the belief that the quality of education is better.

The question has therefore become how to make education more attractive and relevant to children and improve

household livelihood opportunities. Although Sialkot is a relatively better off part of Pakistan (where one might expect greater investment and thus higher quality education), the quality of education is uniformly low in spite of a reasonably high distribution of school infrastructure at village level.

The Response

The Sialkot education programme

Based on experience elsewhere in the world and on these research findings, Save the Children advocated the implementation of a programme that was developmental - that strove to improve the conditions of children's and families' lives in a sustainable manner. There are two main components to the Sialkot programme: the monitoring component that inspects workshops to verify that no children under 14 are involved in football production, and the social protection component which seeks to improve educational

opportunities for children and to assist families to develop alternative sources of income. Save the Children, like the other NGO partners, is part of the social protection programme.

As the situation analysis revealed, enhancing household income is essential for children to access improved educational opportunities[10]. Save the Children and partners are tackling this in two main ways: firstly, through a partnership with an NGO which provides credit and savings facilities to families of child football stitchers, as well as the wider community, in order that they can develop or improve small businesses and agriculture; and secondly through ensuring that the phasing out of child labour does not lead to women losing stitching jobs as well.

Box 2: Importance of women's employment in football stitching

In many households, women's income from football stitching is essential. Football stitching is an attractive job for women since it can be done at home and fitted around other chores. Thus women's reputations are not compromised by working outside the home, and they can combine paid work with other domestic duties. Football stitching also pays better than other home-based work, such as sewing cycle gloves. The move to centralise football stitching in a few large factories that could be easily monitored to ensure no children were present would have resulted in most women having to stop stitching footballs, and many households losing two or more incomes at once. Save the Children's engagement with companies both internationally and locally has therefore focused on the importance for children and families of ensuring that women's income is protected, and encouraging manufacturers to set up village-based units for women. Securing agreement that units of 3-4 women can be considered 'stitching centres' registered with the programme

is an important breakthrough. Save the Children has also advocated, both in Pakistan and internationally, the importance of the sports goods industry paying higher wages, so that the need for children to work is reduced and eventually eliminated[1].

The Education Programme

The intention of the education programme is that education should be both a positive alternative to work for children phased out of football stitching, and a means of preventing children starting other forms of work. The programme is set up to work with the government run primary schools in areas where the concentration of stitcher families is 25% or higher. There are two main aspects to Save the Children's work on education: the first concentrates on enhancing community involvement in school management; the second on improving the quality of education through teacher training[11].

School Management Committees

Pakistan has for several years nominally had a system of school management committees, consisting of the head teacher, other teachers, parents and community leaders, mandated to ensure the effective running of village schools. However, in practice these committees existed only on paper. Save the Children's partner for the education component, Sudhaar, is working with schools and communities to revive school management committees and to use them as a way of making education more attractive to children and families than entering the labour force. An effective mechanism it has found to achieve this revival is to encourage the participation of women on the committees. Formerly, even in the girls schools, the committees were primarily made up of men. In only a couple of months, women are starting to break with tradition and becoming active and regular members on the committees.

The school management committees are mobilising funds within villages for infrastructural improvements to schools; Save the Children has also been providing small grants to active school management committees to enable them to carry out these improvements. These include building walls or fences, building toilets, buying wood to construct benches or floor matting so that the children do not get so cold at school in the winter, making cemented blackboards and repairing broken handpumps so that schools have a water supply. All of these apparently minor issues in themselves can be the final straw that push children to drop out of school when they or their families feel that they are not learning anything useful. However, simply improving the school environment is insufficient to improve the quality of education which is commonly attributed to widespread teacher absenteeism and verbal and physical abuse of children by teachers. This is the other important aspect of Sudhaar's work in Sialkot and the committees have a role in this as monitors of what actually

goes on in the classroom.

Teacher Training

Teacher training is the other main component of the programme. So far, training focusing on improving teachers' communication skills and improving teacher-student interaction has been provided to a small number of teachers and officials of the Punjab Department of Education. Unusually, the school management committees were involved in identifying training needs. Sudhaar is working to establish deeper linkages with the Department of Education, and with UNICEF, to develop a broader teacher training programme, which will eventually reach teachers in government schools throughout the district.

According to the first annual report of the programme, improvements in the attitude of teachers towards children are starting to be seen as a combined result of the committee

organisation and teacher training. The common practice of physical and verbal ill-treatment of children is being tackled head-on in training modules and by the committees. A growing number of teachers have openly admitted to the use of violence for discipline and have committed never to use physical abuse as a means of discipline again. Similarly changes in teaching styles are being observed. In contrast to the traditional "chalk and talk from the front of the class" style of government teachers, teachers are increasingly seen to be engaging children more actively in the learning process, by standing up and moving among students while taking classes.

A Developmental Approach to Education

Save the Children and Sudhaar's developmental approach to education in Sialkot contrasts with the prevailing NGO model in Pakistan (and elsewhere) which is one of 'rehabilitation', restoring child workers to a 'normal' childhood by taking them out of work and putting them into special schools. Whilst this

may be appropriate for children who have had no education and are too old to join primary school classes, it is not necessarily the most appropriate solution in Sialkot, where many football stitchers have had some education, and are thus able to rejoin 'mainstream' classes. The strength of this model as a way to address child labour, and the degree of pressure on international companies and their suppliers to be seen to be acting quickly on the 'child labour problem', has resulted in several 'rehabilitative' schools being set up alongside government schools by companies and other NGOs in the programme.

'The issue is of relevance. Even if we take the working children out of football stitching, how would we be able to prevent new ones from joining the stitching industry? So we have tried to design our programme as a preventative mechanism rather than a rehabilitative one. We have also tried to hit the aggregate number of

working children in all trades. Our component has to be understood in the context of the overall work done by various implementing agencies in the football industry of Sialkot. Its important linkage with the Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry is to be recognised as well.' Bahar Ali, Project Manager, Save the Children Pakistan

Impact and Future Challenges

It is really too early to say what the project's impact has been in terms of changes in children's lives. Initial assessments point to an increase in school enrolment, an improvement in teaching styles and a dramatic fall in football stitching by children.

From the start, Save the Children has argued that the programme will only have been a success if it leads to sustainable improvements in the quality of life of child football

stitchers and their families. Save the Children has therefore led the development of a system for monitoring the impact of the programme. At the time of writing, this has focused primarily on establishing basic data on school enrolment (which has increased) and changes in children's and families' occupations in a sample of households and villages throughout the district. The team now plans to develop ways of assessing what these changes mean for the children and families concerned, and to promote impact monitoring among the different partners in the programme. In addition to its value for the programme, this monitoring should enable analysis of the effectiveness of this approach to child labour issues.

The Sialkot programme is a flagship project for almost all the partners involved and is frequently presented as a model to be transferred to other areas and industries. It is an example of addressing child labour in a high profile industry and of working in partnership with the private sector, an increasing

preoccupation of development organisations.

What has been learnt?

Improving education quality

The Sialkot programme and other studies in this book (Mali, Ethiopia, India) demonstrate how small inputs can help improve the quality of education and, in turn, the number of children attending school. Effective approaches include improving teaching/learning methodology through teacher training and increasing community participation in the identification of problems and solutions to school management and student enrolment issues. Where the Sialkot programme is weak is in tackling the substance of what children are learning and the structural problems at the root of an education system that persistently fails children. Any lasting changes in education quality would need to be backed up by a shift in political will to offset structural issues

such as teacher absenteeism and corruption, and a change in the country's budgetary priorities. Piloting low-cost approaches that can be shown to improve teaching ability and promote community accountability and demand for education offer practical and potentially replicable ways of moving the process of change forward.

The contradictions of abolition

There is genuine incredulity in Sialkot that so much attention and resources have been devoted to phasing out child labour in what was seen by all as a relatively benign occupation, when children work in so many more hazardous occupations. In this context, phasing child labour out of football stitching was the only possible response to prevent a wholesale boycott of the Pakistani football industry, which would have had potentially disastrous consequences for families and communities as a whole, with a huge impact on children as a result. However, many observers believe that a better

solution would have been to find ways in which children could attend improved schools, thus gaining the benefits of school education, while continuing to stitch part-time, thus learning useful skills for the future and making an immediate contribution to family income.

Adapting to the constraints of the operating environment

There is on-going debate about whether, from the outset, the project should have been broadened to address all forms of child labour in the district, rather than singling out child workers in one occupation, thereby avoiding a situation where children may simply shift from one form of work to another. Given the enormous pressures on the football stitching industry, such an approach would have been difficult in this context, but where time pressures are less acute, a more holistic approach would probably be more effective.

Replicability: problems and challenges

The extent to which the Sialkot programme could be replicated is questionable. Given its flagship nature for all concerned, the project has attracted extensive donor funding. This is clearly not replicable. It is ironic that while development organisations view working with the private sector as a way to reduce unsustainable dependence on aid funds, and despite substantial contributions from the industry, in this case most expenditure on the Social Protection programme comes from donor funding. The challenge is to develop solutions to child labour that depend less on external funding, and which promote the involvement of children, families and communities concerned in the analysis of problems and development of solutions, so that issues of genuine local concern are addressed effectively.

The role of the international NGO

The Sialkot partnership is an important example of the growing trend to bring together stakeholders from the private,

international and local sectors and to forge links that can help action at the international level become more responsive to local conditions. It has been especially effective in the Sialkot case as the partnership involves all key players: the government, manufacturers, and relevant international and local agencies.

This case study illustrates four ways in which an INGO can play a key linking role between the relevant international, national and local actors.

● *Understanding local issues:* working in partnership with local NGOs and groups has given Save the Children an insight into the situation of children in Pakistan based on the realities of their experience. This creates the legitimacy and credibility of Save the Children to advocate on behalf of children at both the national and international level and to commission research around the target issue of children stitching footballs.

● ***Wider perspective of issues such as child labour:*** as an international NGO working in a range of countries, Save the Children has built up a body of knowledge on specific issues, such as child labour or children in situations of conflict, which gives a broader perspective to localized issues. For example, Save the Children's advocacy on child labour is based on research and programme experience in Europe, Africa, Asia and Latin America.

● ***Advocacy role:*** the combination of understanding at the grassroots and a wider perspective allows Save the Children to advocate for children and encourage their direct representation in national and international policy-making. This has been especially valuable within the child labour debate, where Save the Children has taken a controversial position. In this case, Save the Children speaks out against bans on child labour where these would force children into more exploitative or hazardous work or would push them and

their families further into poverty; and advocates for improved regulation and working conditions and against forms of labour which are exploitative and hazardous.

● *Acting as a bridge:* Save the Children operates at different points of a spectrum, working at the level of the international community, monitoring global and development assistance trends, as well as at the community level, supporting practical programme initiatives. This equips Save the Children to keep its partners abreast of changes in the international context and to act as a catalyst to bring different actors together, encourage dialogue and mutual understanding and explore new ways of working in partnership. This is a challenging role, which demands sensitivity to the different vested interests involved, and recognition of limitations of an international NGO's sphere of influence.

Editors' Conclusions

- In Sialkot, the need to work is not the only reason why children do not attend school. Save the Children's analysis, based on consulting communities and children themselves, demonstrated that the reasons include both family poverty and the dismal quality of the education available.

- In much of the world, work is seen as a valuable part of education, enabling children to learn essential life skills.

- Campaigning needs to be based on communities' own understanding of their situation and needs. The well-intentioned international ban on child labour in football stitching threatened to push children into more hazardous forms of labour without addressing their need for education.

- Save the Children combined practical initiatives to improve the quality of education at community level, with advocacy to create a better understanding of children's needs among the

groups making decisions about their future. The advocacy ensured a gradual phase out of child labour, allowing time to develop alternative livelihood options.

- Small inputs from Save the Children are beginning to change teachers' attitudes and develop systems for community participation in education. Simply promoting the participation of women on school management committees, for example, is having a clear effect in making local schools more responsive to children's needs.

- Advocacy was successful only in minimising the immediate threats from the international ban: it was unable to address the structural problems at the root of an education system that persistently fails children.

Notes

1 Tod, B., Sogoba, B, 1997. 'Preliminary Observations on the Reality of Children's Work in Mali'. Internal report. Save the Children, Mali

2 The Child Labour/Education debate is covered in more detail in: Boyden, J., Ling, B., Myers, W, 1998. ***What works for working children.*** Radda Barnen, Stockholm & UNICEF, ICDC.

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'The mirror of change'* - Kindergartens in a rapidly changing society - A case study from Mongolia

* 'Children are the mirror of the changes that Mongolian society has been experiencing.' Mandal Urtnasan

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What are the problems for children?

The effects of economic transition

Under globalisation, no country is free from external economic forces which impact directly on the lives of citizens and the ability of governments to provide effective services. This is especially true for the group of countries undergoing economic transition from a centrally planned to a market driven economic system of which Mongolia is a part. The speed and extent of change in Mongolia since the collapse of the Soviet Bloc has had a profound impact on the economy, political thinking, the daily lives of the population, family coping mechanisms and the ability of government to support

the vulnerable.

With the sudden removal of the Soviet ideology and practical economic support on which Mongolia had depended for nearly seventy years, everything is on shifting ground, being questioned, under threat. While this offers new opportunities for greater national responsibility and policy-making, the inherited Soviet system is notoriously ill-adapted to keep pace with the rapid speed of change.

Box 1: A brief profile of Mongolia

• population of 2.5 million, of whom the majority are under 25;

• very sparsely inhabited, with the lowest global population density of 1.4 people per square km. 44% live in sparsely populated rural areas and 56% in the 3 main cities of Erdenet, Darhan and Ulaanbaatar;

- 15% of the population live a nomadic/semi nomadic life, moving gers (circular felt and wood tents) short distances 2 or 3 times a year;

- an extreme and hostile climate, ranging from -30C in winter to +30C in summer;

- a peaceful and stable country, whose last civil war was in the 1920's, and where the use of firearms is rare;

- although independent, from 1924 Mongolia was closely attached to the Soviet block which subsidised one third of its budget until 1991

The disintegration of the communist systems has hit children and vulnerable groups hardest. In addition to the loss of an annual subsidy from the former USSR of up to a third of GDP, Mongolia has suffered from the collapse of main trading partners and a dramatic drop in per capita GNP

which, after 1991, fell from US$ 1,600 to US$ 463. Furthermore, structural adjustment policies needed to secure external loans have contributed to increased inequality and marginalisation in what was formerly a relatively equitable society. The immediate effects on most children are a rapid drop in family living standards as unemployment, falling wages, privatisation and disappearing subsidies have combined with drastic cuts in key public services, such as health and education, to deepen poverty and stretch family coping mechanisms to the limit[1].

'I have read a lot in the papers about what happened in Mongolia and in my society after the upheavals of 1989. Before there was political oppression in our country - I know that now but I didn't know it before. Now we are free - but the prices are so high that people become poor. That is because we have a market economy... we are a little people if we don't develop our production, we

will disappear as a people. You can already see this in lots of places - there are many people in the streets who are very drunk. It wasn't like that before and it makes me afraid.'[2]

'It's the only country in which I have worked that has not been at war. But take away the bullets and there is the same chaos. Market economics is a kind of undeclared war on children. The state is crumbling and families are in collapse - people are so poor here. Men shouldn't have to resort to the bottle as their only source of hope, and women shouldn't be left to shoulder all the responsibility of bringing up children. Family life is so difficult because basic conditions are so terrible.' John Beauclerk, Save the Children Programme Director

'Children are the mirror of the changes that Mongolian society has been experiencing. How their lives have

changed and what prospects the market offers for them, could be argued, is the real measurement of the transition. What took Mongolia decades in improving conditions for children is now under the threat of being wiped away if urgent action is not undertaken.' Mandal Urtnasan, Save the Children Senior Project Officer[3]

The impact of transition on basic education

In common with other Soviet satellite countries, Mongolia enjoyed an extensive and well resourced education system under communism. The role of pre-school education within basic education services was particularly important in the case of Mongolia, where primary schooling does not formally start until age 8. This late start of primary education was due to harsh weather conditions and the isolation of many rural, pastoralist children, whose needs were addressed through a system of primary boarding schools. Mongolia therefore had

an extensive kindergarten system modelled on Soviet lines, offering free day-care (including food) and education to the children of working parents (the majority of Mongolian women are employed).

Basic education provision before transition:

- education was well established in the communist era with an infrastructure of schools throughout the country

- the education sector received the largest share of government expenditure (17.6%)

- an adult literacy rate estimated at 93%

- enrolment of 98% at primary school level, with low levels of dropout

● Free boarding schools to ensure access for rural/nomadic children

● High levels of female participation: 54% at primary school level and more at higher levels

Basic education provision under transition:

● sudden and severe contraction of education resources: a reduction of 56% in education spending between 1990 and 1992

● capital investment halted and non-teaching staff reduced

● huge increases in heating costs leading to use of fewer classrooms and school closures in winter months

- parental contributions introduced for food and clothing

- private, fee-paying schooling was encouraged and local education authorities were encouraged to generate their own income

- closure of many primary boarding schools and pre-schools

- kindergartens in particular were regarded as a non-essential service and many were either closed (reduced from a total of 900 in 1990 to 700 in 1993) or run down

- drop-out and non-enrolment soared to an estimated 23% of children, mainly in poor and rural regions

- attendance at pre-school decreased, particularly in rural and marginal urban areas

- fall in real value of teachers' incomes, leading to increased absenteeism and teachers taking second jobs

The impact of transition on basic education has extended much further than the ability of the state to provide. Rising poverty has also made it difficult for children to access education as parents are now called upon to contribute to food, clothing and other costs at pre-schools and boarding schools. In addition, there is pressure on many children to contribute to the family income in both rural and urban areas. These factors combined have led to a slump in pre-school coverage from 25% of the eligible population before transition to 17%. Ironically, as resources have dwindled, state spending in the pre-school sector has effectively subsidised the education of those children whose parents can afford to

pay a contribution to food costs, while the children of poor families are effectively excluded from kindergartens.

In urban areas, the numbers of children working (most noticeably on the streets) has boomed. The poorest children live in small settlements in the districts or on the edge of towns. Their families are too poor even to herd, and they frequently come from single parent households. These families cannot afford the new kindergarten costs - the food, enough clothing and footwear for the winter, pencils and exercise books.

Rural children, whilst not necessarily living in such dire poverty, present a different problem of inclusion. They are very isolated, and eight is late to start primary school. Where primary boarding schools are available, families are often unable to meet the new demands for contributions. Economic pressures and the privatisation of herds has also had an impact as family survival depends on building up and

maintaining their own herds and children are increasingly called upon to work.

'When there is a market economy there is also democracy. I read that in the paper. It's us who are going to decide. But we can't decide very much if we don't know what to decide about. That's why education is so important.... Lots of pupils have dropped out of school. There was one boy who was very clever but his family decided that he had to tend the... animals. That's because some people think that if children don't get good marks they might as well leave school. But they get bad marks because they don't have the textbooks, or because they don't have time to do their homework. So they just have to leave, I think it's very unfair. It's very very bad for the children and for our country.' 13 year old child

In addition to changes in the ability of the state to provide basic education and the ability of poor and marginalized children to access those services, fundamental changes are under way in the concept of and attitudes towards education. The existing pre-school and primary systems were heavily influenced by the Soviet model which can be characterised as hierarchical, centralised, inflexible and exclusive of marginalized children (poor, vulnerable, disabled). Under transition, the soviet approach which emphasizes the collective character of education and the transmission of subject based knowledge is being questioned in some quarters, and more child-centred education, reflecting the values of a more individualistic, Western society, is being explored as the alternative.

'There is some ambiguity about the quality of the service. On the one hand it is perceived to be very good, and worth going to considerable

lengths to maintain. On the other hand there are uncertainties about the curriculum, and in particular whether or not a more child-centred, Westernized curriculum should be adopted. This dilemma is common to many countries in transition. Experiments are underway... to gradually introduce child-centred methods.'
Helen Penn, External Consultant to Save the Children in Mongolia[4]

The response

What can an international NGO offer?

Save the Children's programme in Mongolia was set up in 1993/4, shortly after the transition process started and when the effects were at their worst. From the start, Save the Children's programme focused on the impact of transition on

vulnerable children, pursuing a number of strategies to address Mongolia's transition-related difficulties by not only providing immediate relief, but also by seeking to address the root causes of vulnerability for children and their caregivers. This approach included programmes for street and working children as well as working with the government to develop a poverty alleviation programme. The emphasis on basic education as a key to tackling poverty and marginalization was identified from the outset:

> *'Save the Children's focus on education stems from the conviction that Mongolia's schools and kindergartens can play a major preventative role in countering vulnerability among children during and after transition. Through its work Save the Children seeks to reverse the accelerating process of exclusion of vulnerable children so that, whatever their home*

circumstances, children can be assured of a place in society through the educational system.[5]

In the case of Mongolia, where children do not start primary school until the age of 8 (as discussed above under The impact of transition on basic education'), it was clear that a strategy prioritising basic education had to focus on the pre-school sector if issues of access to a relevant education for disadvantaged children were to be effectively addressed. In the following paragraphs we outline the different initiatives taken by Save the Children which have contributed to strengthening and improving existing basic education provision through the pre-school system. These initiatives can be summarised in two main areas: firstly, acting as a bridge between key actors to motivate positive action, and secondly, piloting and promoting new approaches which tackle the challenges of both provision and quality of pre-school

education.

Acting as a bridge/motivator

The international perspective and experience which Save the Children as an international NGO was able to bring to its new programme in Mongolia was a defining element in strategic and operational decisions taken. The initial decision to explore the needs of children in Mongolia in the immediate post-communist period was based on an understanding of the processes of economic and political transition and their potentially devastating effect on all areas of society and particularly on children.

Based on this global perspective, the organisation was able, principally through the Programme Director, to see the impact of transition at the local level within the wider international framework. Save the Children subsequently played a key role in communicating this perspective to local actors and

decision-makers, and was well placed to do this as one of the few international agencies operating in the country during the early phases of transition.

In its Mongolia programme, Save the Children has operated at all levels: within national policy making; with government institutions at a provincial and district level; and within individual schools and households. The breadth of the programme has been based on a sound understanding of local politics and administration gained through working contacts at the different levels. Having a small population has made this coverage easier, although the difficulties of travelling vast distances in subzero temperatures have had to be overcome.

Through dialogue, Save the Children has played an important part in redefining poverty in a transitional country. Under communism, jobs and services were available for everyone, and anyone who did not work was seen as merely lazy or

foolish. Under transition and structural adjustment, the nature of poverty changed: people lost their jobs, and services shrank or became costly. But many people held and still hold onto their old attitudes that poverty is a self-inflicted disgrace. Defining who the poor are, how they are identified, and who is responsible for ameliorating poverty, has been a central theme in dialogue with actors at all levels. Save the Children has been pivotal in working with the Government to help it develop its Poverty Alleviation Programmes (PAP) and in mobilizing external and internal support for them. Throughout, Save the Children liaised closely with the PAP Director and together identified research and training needs. On the research side, this included commissioning an initial report on vulnerable groups in transitional Mongolia[6] and a training manual on monitoring. On the training side, a social work course was launched at the university which included training in child rights for staff working at a local level. In addition, many training packages associated with the programme and

its implementation and monitoring were implemented by Save the Children staff for administrators, at national and local level. This in turn has generated wider discussion about poverty and its effects at national and local level.

Through the PAP, Save the Children has helped to raise awareness of the links between poverty alleviation and basic education provision. This was achieved through dialogue with different actors/policymakers and a range of activities including, in 1995, commissioning a key report which was submitted by officials to the Ministry of Education and Science (MOSE). The report outlined ways in which the pre-school sector could be developed to provide more places and address poverty, at little extra cost to the system.[7] These suggestions were adopted by the government under Resolution 46 in April 1995, known as the National Pre-school Strengthening Programme (NPPS). The NPPS aims to support, transform and extend access to the kindergartens,

and to use them explicitly as an inclusionary measure to protect poor and vulnerable children against the worst effects of transition through the following policy objectives:

- to create a relevant educational structure for the children of both nomadic and settled areas;

- to improve pre-school education content and methodology, and to improve the provision of training materials;

- to offer support for non-state kindergartens;

- to increase parental roles and responsibilities for pre-school child development, and promote home pre-school education;

- to improve teacher's skills and capabilities.

Piloting new approaches within the education system

By 1996 the NPPS programme was well established under MOSTEC and kindergartens were slowly re-opening. Through a combination of a small grants programme and other pilot initiatives, Save the Children has been involved in developing schemes to promote the inclusion of poor and marginalized children in pre-schools.

The provision of grants to cover the food costs of poor children attending kindergartens was an initiative started in 1994 in response to a request to cover the food costs of a group of poor children to enable them to attend kindergarten. Save the Children extended this initiative and successfully encouraged support from local businesses and other international NGOs. Through Save the Children's involvement in the design of the PAP, food cost subsidies were included in the range of services that poor families could apply for. Other initiatives have included the establishment of 'shift groups'

which offer pre-school provision for fewer hours per day thereby reducing the need for food costs.

The distribution of grants has been linked to initiatives which promote the inclusion of poor children, such as food cost subsidies to kindergartens which do not segregate groups of poor children (a practice which has been common) but instead group children according to age. In line with this policy of promoting inclusion in mainstream pre-schools, Save the Children has not supported proposals from other kindergartens targeted specifically at poor children.

Through the NPPS, Save the Children has supported the development of creative initiatives aimed at including isolated children in rural areas into pre-school and primary school services. Grants have supported rural kindergartens in developing special outreach programmes for isolated children and short intensive programmes for herders' children in the year before they are due to start primary school.

The small grants programme has also been used to promote the sustainability of kindergartens by supporting pilot projects to demonstrate rationalisation, cost recovery and income generation. Grants are one-off and recipient kindergartens and local authorities are encouraged to aim for self-sufficiency through initiatives such as building up animal herds or cultivating vegetables. The success of these projects has varied from one district to another, and in some cases where income has been successfully generated, it has not necessarily been spent in such a way as to promote the inclusion of poor or marginalized children. Some of the problems encountered in putting these and other initiatives into practice or replicating them more widely are explored in more detail in section II, part 3.

The NPPS has also focused on promoting curricula towards more responsive, child-centred content and methods and one of the criteria for receipt of NPPS funds is that kindergartens must have a 'methodologist' in place. Curricular change was

not initially considered a priority by Save the Children staff, but quickly became so as the importance of and ambivalence about the curriculum emerged in discussion with officials. Mongolians had been proud of their reputation for educational reform and development, along communist lines, and the national curriculum was encoded in weighty documents; yet at the same time there was an uncomfortable and partial recognition that this curriculum should change and become more westernized. Save the Children has been involved in teacher training initiatives and pilot projects to develop the role of the methodologist in kindergartens. In order to support this area of work, specialists were recruited into the programme, and external advisers employed. This was backed up by investment in sending key officials and programme staff to training courses elsewhere in the South East Asia region to study curricular developments and gain exposure to other learning experiences.

In addition to the piloting of initiatives within the education

sector through the NPPS, Save the Children has developed other related programmes which address the needs of vulnerable children including self-help programmes for street/working children and social welfare programmes to train and provide educational welfare officers for schools. These initiatives complement the efforts within the pre-school sector in raising awareness of the needs of disadvantaged children and the role of the education sector in addressing those needs.

Save the Children's approach in Mongolia

While the central strategic objective of working to strengthen pre-school education provision as part of an approach to tackling poverty has been fairly clear since the start of Save the Children's programme in Mongolia (based on an initial needs assessment study in 1992), it would be wrong to give the impression that it was a carefully planned and executed set of steps, each following the other chronologically, and

scientifically designed to achieve the goals identified:

> *'Whatever the intentions of those who introduce it, seen close-up, change rarely seems rational or planned. Far more often it appears patchy and spasmodic, happening in fits and starts in response to a particular event - a new political appointment, an unexpected donor, freak weather, or sympathetic coverage in the press. In transition, the rate of change can be giddy, and what might have been a suitable strategy one week, is no longer viable a month later. Yet at the same time the fiction of orderly change must be maintained; transparent agreed strategies, systematic implementation; documentation, careful monitoring and evaluation.'* Helen Penn, External Consultant to Save the Children in Mongolia[9]

The following paragraphs offer a range of perspectives from the different actors involved in Save the Children's programme to give a picture of the complex process of building trust, animating and challenging ideas, and seeking effective solutions.

Coming in at the right time

Save the Children began its programme in Mongolia at a crucial time, just as the effects of transition were beginning to emerge and at a time when few other international NGOs were active and the agenda for reform was being driven almost entirely by financial considerations. Identifying appropriate responses at key moments, based on an understanding of the local and international context and careful listening to partners and key individuals, has been an important factor in developing the programme within Mongolia.

In the beginning one of the first contacts to be established was with Nordov Bolormaa, then head of the National Children's Centre which co-ordinated activities for children including out-of-school activities. She describes how, through a small investment in a piece of research, it was possible to raise awareness of the importance of preserving the pre-school sector at a time when it was seen as a low-priority and being allowed to become run down:

'When Save the Children opened its office here, no other NGO was interested in the preschool sector. In the socialist period, kindergartens (and other activities for children) were well developed. As transition began, parents were required to pay 50% of the food costs. Many parents could not pay and very quickly coverage slumped from 25% to 17%. Many kindergartens closed down. There was a big unit at the

*Ministry of Education (**MOSTEC**) responsible for the pre-school sector, with many specialist advisers, but the entire unit was disbanded, and only one person was left in charge at the pre-school desk. There was talk of abolishing the entire pre-school sector, and transferring its resources to the secondary sector; it was regarded as too marginal to be worth saving.'*

'We thought the need was there, and with Save the Children, I commissioned a situation analysis. This was undertaken by Enkbat (see below). The situation analysis showed that demand for kindergartens was still strong, and our own complementary research showed that children who attended kindergarten did well at school, but that many parents were simply too poor to afford it.'

'As a result of our surveys there was a big public debate which highlighted the way in which the kindergartens were being decimated. We argued that they were an important part of social policy. Save the Children extended these arguments and played a major role in saving the sector from deterioration and collapse, by arguing that kindergartens could be used to promote inclusion and combat poverty.' Nordov Bolormaa, Former Head of the National Children's Centre

Avoiding pre-conceptions and fixed plans

The process of identifying effective interventions at the right time is tied up with a flexible approach to working which avoids assumptions and pre- conceived strategies but instead aims to develop a responsive programme based on a careful

analysis of the local context.

'Changing social attitudes takes time. What was different about Save the Children was that unlike other agencies they did not come in with their own programmes, with no consideration of local needs and local context, but they set out to explore the situation and find local solutions to local problems. Many UN agencies have big bilateral programmes but are oblivious to what goes on underneath. They have no local support - they offer higher salaries, use more funds, and when they go no-one can keep the project going. Also many foreigners come in and they are not really committed and devoted to what they are doing. But Save the Children based their work on local needs and conditions, and did a lot with a very small budget, and did it in such a way that it was easy to take over.'
Nordov Bolormaa, Former Head of National Children's Centre

'The local context is important. We make good use of a wide range of information and do a proper needs assessment. Our programmes are based on the thorough assessment of local needs, close feedback and monitoring. We reach local grassroots levels but we also have the ability to develop small projects into big national programmes.' Save the Children national staff

Adopting a low-key approach and building trust

As one of the first international NGOs in Mongolia in the post-communist period, it was vitally important to tread carefully and sensitively in order to win the trust of the different actors and government departments who were ultimately in a position to achieve practical policy changes at national level. Nordov Bolormaa describes the initial reaction of the Ministry of Education (MOSTEC) to the first pre-school situation analysis, and the strategy Save the Children and the National

Children's Centre adopted in order to encourage them to act on its findings:

> *'At first everyone was surprised and shocked and said it was a Ministry affair and we were not supposed to intervene. They felt offended that outsiders such as Save the Children and the National Children's Centre had revealed the problems. We had to try to make the whole thing look like a MOSTEC initiative, put their name first on all the documents, and keep discussing it with them. As a result MOSTEC reconsidered their position, and instead with our help and prompting, introduced the NPPS.'*
> Nordov Bolormaa, Former Head of National Children's Centre

The process of building respect and trust is complex and

elusive to identify. Save the Children's approach in Mongolia was low-key and gently persuasive; a style of working set by the Programme Director, John Beauclerk, who was given a free hand in setting up the programme in 1994. The vision, attitude and approach of individuals is a factor not often openly recognised in the success or limitations of international NGO programmes. The testimony gathered for this case study repeatedly refers to the contribution of the Programme Director. His personal impact on the programme confirms the view of Majid Rahnema,[11] a persistent critic of aid programmes, that ultimately it is only through personal relationships that international NGO projects have any kind of long-term impact. The ability to build up respect and good communication at all levels has been crucial to the success of the programme, achieved through a combination of personal characteristics and a genuine interest in, commitment and sensitivity to the local culture.

Even practical decisions, such as the location of the office (centrally, but unobtrusively, on the third floor of an office block in Ulaanbaator) and the availability of its staff to all visitors ranging from officials to children, send out messages about how an international NGO sees its own role and status in a host country and have an impact on the response and receptiveness of local partners:

> *'I try to play down my own influence, and not sing the praises of Save the Children. If the programme is successful it doesn't matter whether or not people associate it with me or Save the Children. The institutional needs of donors are usually paramount. I try to reduce the institutional profile and it pays off hugely. Its a paradox that you get a reputation by not seeking one. Profile building is much more subtle than people think.'* John Beauclerk, Save

the Children Programme Director

Identifying and working with key people at all levels

We have already mentioned the importance of identifying and working with key individuals in order to raise issues 'from within' and develop appropriate, locally owned initiatives to tackle the problems identified. The initial contact with Nordov Bolormaa which led to the influential situation analysis of the pre-school sector is one example. Through this contact and others, Save the Children was able to make links with and influence decision-makers in the Ministry of Education and other government departments.

As part of this process, Save the Children also identified and supported local consultants working outside the state structure such as Enkbat who was commissioned to undertake the original situation analysis of young children. He comes from a herding family and herded goats until he was

eight, and like many of his contemporaries, went on to tertiary education. He became a management consultant at the university, but was constrained, like Boloormaa, by official requirements. Save the Children helped set him up to run an independent consultancy, and a social policy adviser was seconded from the UK to work with him for a year. Enkbat describes how he himself took part in the process of identifying and working with the right people in order to bring about change:

> *'Once we had done the needs analysis we had to work out how to get people to take it on board. We had days and nights of discussion. We decided it depended on working with key people rather than storming the system. We set up a working group with wide local representation. John was a key influence. Education was not his field and he did not have*

much direct influence, but he is a communicator and a mobilizer. He gave us impetus. No-one understood how poverty was going to hit us under transition, and he helped raise public awareness, but he did it through other people, and managed to get locals negotiating with locals, rather than doing it all as an outside agency.' Enkbat

Identifying local potential, investing in and developing the skills of individuals such as Enkbat was an approach which was applied across the board: key officials in the education sector as well as local Save the Children staff were sent on training courses in Mongolia and elsewhere in the South East Asia region. Investment in local staff was an important element in building up a strong, committed local team. Tsendsuren, project officer responsible for the pre-school programme describes how her attitudes and outlook have

changed since she joined Save the Children in 1997, having previously worked as a researcher for the School of Educational Development (SED):

'John has a specific way of choosing staff. He knows who is who and he has intuition. He asks around, interviews, picks people well. I am very happy here, although I am a different character, my working style has changed. An NGO is different from a government. In a government job you work for a routine 8 hours. In an NGO you must love your job and be hardworking. I take pleasure from my job. At SED I concentrated on the children, on what they were able to do, and what helped them to learn. I focused on curriculum and methods in the pre-school sector. I was 7 years at SED and everything carried on in the same way. When I

started work at Save the Children my thinking changed. Save the Children is a very different agency from SED. Here the concentration is on poor children and why they can't attend kindergarten. Instead of the curriculum, the priority is poor families and how you reach them, what methods will reach them. Now I understand about poor families.' Tsendsuren Tumee, Save the Children Project Officer

Identifying and building on existing strengths

Seeking to develop the potential of individuals reflects a wider approach to identifying and building on existing strengths within the Mongolian culture and social and state structures. Despite the rapid changes brought about by transition, prevailing attitudes, based as they were on socialist philosophies of social equity, state duty and public service,

combined with an extensive state apparatus, provided opportunities for the development of an international NGO programme which had the potential to be far-reaching, effective and locally owned.

'We've collaborated as much as possible with people at national and local government level; not in any antagonistic way insisting on change, but strengthening what is here. Under transition there has been so much confusion, there are no fixed points of reference, ideas are whirling around. There were strengths here in what they had before transition. People say that communism was no good, that it was finished, but we needed to fix on something which they valued, to develop a strategy of strengthening what was there. People have half resented the collapse of communism and the fact that in the west communism equals failure; yet they also want our ideas, they want to know what options are open to

them. If you confront the system brutally - as the critics of communism often do - you build up resentment or you can only operate with an elite client group. The nursery teachers here really thought they were doing a good job under communism, and it was wonderful to get behind them and support them in seeking to extend their practice. Other strategies would have got nowhere.' John Beauclerk, Save the Children Programme Director

'In all the activities, people's personalities, commitment and good will were of crucial importance. People are driven by their professional values and humanistic motives. At the time when salaries of workers in the sector are scarce, budgets are limited to the basics and the morale is lowering elsewhere in the state sector, the efforts of the teachers and officials who work hard to improve access and quality of the pre-school are much applauded.' Mandal Urtnasan, Save the Children Senior

Project Officer

Being experimental/opportunistic

Flexibility based on listening and encouraging local ideas has underpinned an 'opportunistic policy' of trying a range of short-term pilot projects, developing those that work and abandoning those that do not:

> *'Change under transition is so rapid, it is fruitless to insist on anything or to harp on about projects. You've got to be flexible - if Tsendsuren and Mandal (project officers) don't like it, you can't go on with it, it's their line not our line. It's like building a hut, what sticks, sticks and what falls, falls - if initiatives catch on that's fine, if they don't, abandon them. We've had lots of very small short-term pilot*

projects - if they work that's fine, we try to use them or adapt them, and negotiate with middle management over them, if they don't work, we forget them. Its an opportunistic policy, but our job as an NGO is to be with people at the stage they're at and support them in what they want to do. It's hard for me to plan precisely - the most surprising things catch on.' John Beauclerk, Save the Children Programme Director

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Has the programme made a difference, and who to? As the above accounts illustrate, perceptions about poverty and its causes have shifted. Nordov Boloorma lost her own job with the National Children's Centre in the process of transition, but now runs the Mongolian Child Rights Centre and still works closely with Save the Children. She describes how her own

views have changed:

'As a government official I used to see things from the top down, and we were not in a position to be critical about government policy. We thought poor people were poor because they were lazy, it was their fault. But now I understand that our social policy was wrong. We put people in a position where they could not do anything about their circumstances. I used to blame people. Now I understand they have no opportunities to change their own life, no access to information or power. We were not flexible enough to listen to poor people or address their needs. When a person is a civil servant he is constrained. You cannot disagree with Government statistics. I could not be frank and say yes, I know there are street children. At

> *the NGO level you have less power but more flexibility, you can be more accurate and precise in your estimates, not merely to criticize but to explore the real situation.'*

The PAP and NPPS are partly an expression of this new concern to tackle the real effects of poverty on children, and are funded by a variety of agencies.

But what about impact on the ground? There is still much to learn about how the NPPS has affected access to and quality of pre-school education, and in particular how it has benefited children marginalized through poverty or isolation. The following paragraphs look at the views of those who have been directly affected by the changes being brought about through the NPPS.

The parents views

Groups of poor parents were asked by Save the Children staff and an external consultant how they had come to use the kindergarten, and then encouraged to discuss more generally the points they raised in conversation.[13] Poor parents were understandably very grateful for the service. Almost all of those interviewed had previously been employed, but under transition were jobless. They welcomed the education their children were getting, and with real respect for teachers, did not doubt that it was of a good quality.

But above all they were desperately conscious of their own inability to provide for their children and welcomed the respite provided by the kindergarten service. Their only complaint was that they did not have enough of it. Kindergartens were seen by almost all parents, in whatever category, as a full time service, educating and caring for children for a full working day, and making sure they were properly fed,

properly rested, and properly exercised. The poorer children mostly attended on a part-time or shift basis and this was regarded as insufficient.

Box 2: Parental perceptions of pre-schools

Weaknesses

● *in the sum many people are unemployed, few people can afford the kindergarten, only teachers and doctors and government workers*

● *conditions are not good, we cannot look after our children, the climate is very hard, there is no electricity, fuel costs are very expensive*

● *I have no income, I cannot feed my children, here they get fed*

- *I would like to take the children to kindergarten but I cannot afford it. The food and clothes costs are very expensive. If my children went to kindergarten they would have a chance to improve their future prospects. I want my children to go to kindergarten and to school*

- *we would like full-time kindergarten, 8-1.30 is such a short period, we cannot go out*

- *the shift group is not enough for families who have no food, they only get a cup of milk*

- *the shift group time is very short, it is good for children to have more time*

- *the kindergarten is good but it is only 9-2. After 2pm our children are in the street. They get their hands and face dirty.*

● *I would like a longer time. My child was very stressed because his father died, now he is more calm after coming to kindergarten*

Strengths

● *I cannot express my gratitude enough, I am shelterless and live with this lady in her ger, there are 14 of us*

● *It is very hard for the countryside. Before we had everything. Our clothes were very clean. Now we do not even have clothes for school, there are no notebooks for the children*

● *If children go to the kindergarten they can sing, their clothes stay clean, they communicate with each other*

> ● *I have 6 children, I am happy with the kindergarten as it is warm, clean and there is food here*

Many of the kindergartens visited had integrated poor children as unobtrusively as possible and tried to interpret the policy about inclusiveness as constructively as possible. In others, although poor children had at least been admitted in small numbers, the view was that poor children were a group apart, from families that were less than adequate, and therefore the children should not mix with "normal" children. In one of the kindergartens which pursued this policy of separation, the parents were asked whether they thought it was a good idea.

Q: Should poor children and normal children be in the same class together or have separate lessons?

● *I like a separate group because ordinary children have*

a different level of life, their clothes are different, they are made of different material, even their shoes are different

● *with the younger children mixed groups would be possible, but not with seven year olds, its too late. Ordinary and poor children are really different*

● *you can see in the playground poor children and normal children stand separately*

● *I would like to see them mixed up but our children are aware, they see that I am poor*

It emerged that one of the kindergarten groups closed in winter, because the clothes distribution was not co-ordinated with access to kindergarten, and without clothes and boots, not enough children come to make the class viable. Parents were asked what they thought about this policy:

Q: Should the kindergarten group close in winter?

- *It's true, in wintertime children don't come*

- *some families could manage the clothes and boots and the kindergarten doesn't need to close the group, although it would be hard for teachers with just a few children*

Q. (to kindergarten director, who is still present): 'Couldn't the budget be shared out to provide more resources for poor children?'

- *the state budget is for normal children. The state budget is not for poor children.[14]*

These quotes reveal the difficulties in changing engrained negative attitudes towards poverty at both the level of

parents and service providers. In thinking about how to promote more sensitive understanding of the causes of poverty under transition, Save the Children staff have considered and rejected the use of with-holding grants as a sanction, in favour of a more constructive approach that continues to explore ways of reinforcing the equal status of all children and recognises that a shift in attitudes will be a gradual process.

Paradoxically, in view of the differentiation between 'poor' and 'normal' children, the intention of kindergartens in the communist tradition was to offer an upbringing in citizenship and social solidarity, a much wider role than that assumed by pre-school services in the West. These are some parents' views on citizenship:

Q: What makes a good citizen?

● *As a good father I will give an example to my child*

● *My child knows he must be good*

● *the family is important but the education level makes a difference, so kindergarten is very important*

● *There is a good Mongolian tradition that children should listen to their parents*

Q: What would you like your child to be when he/she grows up?

● *a professional person, a good citizen*
● *to have a good education*
● *he will have a good profession, not be a dependent person*
● *she will have a good professional job, and not be dependent*
● *a good professional job and the ability to help other*

people

Q: What makes a good citizen?

- *intelligence and cleverness*

- *being a professional*

- *listening to parents and listening to others*

- *not dependent*

- *being a help to others*

- *caring for younger brothers and sisters*

- *hardworking*

- *it depends on your personal life. If you come from a*

poor family you will be more generous and less selfish

The demarcations between professional and amateur under communism were pronounced: a professional service had in all respects to be provided by those appointed and trained to do so, and there was little or no tradition of voluntarism. Some of the parents said that they would like to contribute to the nursery in kind, if not in money, but hardly any in fact had been able to make such contributions. The issue of parental involvement in pre-school provision, which has been fruitfully developed in other contexts, offers scope for improved community/school partnerships in post-communist societies.

- ***if they would only open up a new room for the kindergarten, I would do anything, make chairs for the children (father)***

- ***we would clean up the rooms and make them suitable***

The teachers views

What did teachers make of their circumstances? The need for changes had been recognised, partly, on the basis of the need for new, more inclusive strategies towards children for a country in transition, and partly on the basis of a new, more modern curriculum to bring teachers up to date.

Kindergarten teachers were interviewed in the region of Gobi Altai, in the south of Mongolia, where the remoteness of the desert steppes means that young children are brought up in conditions of extreme isolation. Under the lead of the innovative regional Director of Education and his pre-school adviser, the teachers have had opportunities to discuss and reflect on the new policies. One teacher interviewed regularly visited herder's children, travelling by horse, camel, motorbike or whatever transport was available, to carry out an outreach programme devised by the kindergarten. Many poor children in the immediate district come to the kindergarten, and in

addition the kindergarten runs a one month intensive training course for children aged 7-8 who are due to start school. All these activities are carried out without extra staff and with very little extra money, and teachers were asked whether they felt it was difficult or unreasonable to take on such extra work:

> **'Teachers are hardworking because they must do it. If they are not hardworking maybe they will be unemployed. In a market economy whoever works harder gets richer. The governors and citizens will see how hard we work. I hope our kindergarten will be big again with many staff and rich with materials.'**

In other regions, teachers interviewed were less keen to adapt, and would not undertake any extra work, unless paid to do so, referring to their rights and conditions of service.

This teacher works in a provincial capital:

> *'Teachers don't like extra training, because the Aimag (region) cannot pay for extra study. Working with extra children is an imposition'*

The view was also expressed that parents did not bring their children to kindergarten not because they were too poor, but because they were too ignorant, and not convinced of its value. Parents had to be educated about what professionals could provide in pre-school:

> *'parents are beginning to understand the role and value of pre-schools so they are more and more interested in school preparation. But not enough parents want to use pre-school.'*

Under the Save the Children programme, training sessions (carried out by the School of Educational Development) were

organised in every region to induct teachers about NPPS and new teaching methods. Teachers comments from evaluation sessions were collected. The training sessions focused heavily on the introduction of child-centred teaching methods, and the quality of the curriculum of the kindergartens was seen as a central issue at that stage by trainers and teachers alike. Teachers saw themselves as being in need of professional upgrading, although a little uneasy of what this meant in terms of methodologies. The School of Educational Development, with whom Save the Children is closely linked and partly supports, runs annual national teacher competitions for "best teacher award" and "best kindergarten award" and there is public acclaim for teachers who can prove themselves by having well-educated, well-performing children. But as with UK league tables, this striving for the best is sometimes seen by teachers to be at odds with having children from poor families, rather than having an intake of very competent children:

- ***we would like to follow a more flexible curricula in line with the latest international and national developments in pre-school education content and curricula as well as the needs and interests of Mongol children***

- ***there is an urgent need to change the pre-school curriculum***

- ***there are certain achievements in introducing child centred approaches and integrated training***

- ***the pre-school initiatives in terms of teacher retraining, child-centred integrated training and efforts to develop children and encourage their independent learning became broader than in the past***

However some reservations were expressed about the introduction of foreign methods:

> *'we should draw attention to the fact that sometimes we are playing with the mentality of Mongolian children following and introducing foreign models and activities which may not suit our children.'*

Some teachers however are aware of the need to diversify and to be more inclusive: *'Pre-schools are now introducing various alternatives in order to reach out to all pre-school age children in their catchment area, such as shift groups, care groups and non-formal training.'*

The views of Administrators and Politicians

Local government in Mongolia is relatively strong and well organized. At aimag (regional) level there is a Director of

Education who is part of a group of senior officials reporting regularly to the elected aimag governor. Partly as a result of Save the Children intervention there is now in most aimags a pre-school adviser/inspector who draws up the plans for the kindergartens in the region, organizes their in-service training, and carries out inspections of individual kindergartens on a two or three yearly basis. She also compiles the local statistics according to criteria set by the Ministry of Education. At the sum (district) level, there is also an elected governor, reporting to a citizen's horal or assembly, who often works closely with the kindergarten director and school director. The influence of the sum governor can be critical. Where he is positive and interested in the kindergarten, he can make a great difference. This governor of a sum near the Siberian border was very enthusiastic:

'Our future starts from the kindergarten. Last year we had a meeting of the citizen's horal.

The horal said we could not afford two groups in the kindergarten. I said there would be, and I made sure the budget was available for the salaries. I wanted two mixed groups. I did not think poor children should be separated from other children. I make sure the provision of clothes is co-ordinated by the kindergarten so that lack of clothes or footwear does not prevent children from coming to school. The kindergarten teachers work hard because I support them. As a result of the Save the Children project we have established a farm, and with the profits from animal products we have bought toys and there will be money left to upgrade the playground. If possible I want all children to be covered.'

This governor was exceptional. But in the same region, Save

the Children staff also encountered a negative governor, who felt he could do very little, and where, although Save the Children had given a grant, no poor children, as yet, had been admitted to the kindergarten:

> **'Life is very hard here. The Save the Children have imposed hard criteria. It would make more sense to have flexible criteria. We have paid for heating to reopen the kindergarten but although it has empty rooms we do not have any extra money for poor children. The money for clothes from the poverty alleviation fund goes only to schoolchildren.'**

Children's views

Children themselves, and particularly young children, represent the group whose views it is most difficult to obtain. In Mongolia, where children are brought up to respect their

elders and not to contradict them, and the rigidity of the communist system reinforced such views, this is a particularly challenging area. Helen Penn, external consultant to the Save the Children Mongolia programme, explains what happened when she and Save the Children staff tried to gather the views of children in kindergartens:

'We did try to take groups of kindergarten children aside, but they were very shy and tongue-tied, children from herding families especially so. They spoke to us in agonized whispered monosyllables, despite all Tsendsuren's efforts to put them at their ease. We could glean that children had hard lives by Western standards - young boys were expected to herd animals and both boys and girls were expected to show considerable physical stamina and endurance.' Helen Penn, External Consultant,

Save the Children Mongolia 15

While the priority given to encouraging and listening to 'children's voices' is largely prompted by Western based international NGOs, it will be difficult to develop locally appropriate methods for encouraging children to begin to express their views. Many child focused organisations, including Save the Children, who wrestle daily with this challenge in different situations and regions, have learnt from experience that adults asking direct questions of children can often be a counterproductive and inhibiting approach and that a range of different activities and approaches need to be explored in order for children's views to find their expression. Paradoxically, this process itself cannot begin until the value of children's views is recognised on the ground. These are challenges which have only begun to be identified in the Mongolian context, and the international NGO role in this process has yet to be fully developed.

What has been learnt?

Save the Children's programme in Mongolia offers useful lessons about approaches to working with a state system to shape changes in central thinking and achieve positive changes in education practice.

Interpreting poverty

In Mongolia, SCF was able to draw on its international perspective in assisting national government to interpret international economic trends and their impacts on poverty and children at the local level. Operating in an environment where there was no tradition of international NGOs, this experience demonstrates the value of adopting a low key approach that sought to a) build up trust with government officials at different levels; b) identify and work with key people in order to promote a shift in attitudes towards poverty, and; c) build up local skills and inspire locally owned

strategies for tackling rising poverty.

Paradoxically, the context of rapid economic change which gave rise to many of the problems identified, also gave rise to a climate where it was possible to question existing attitudes and practices and to introduce new approaches to poverty and education. The study demonstrates the importance of undertaking thorough analysis, not only as a basis for effective programme planning, but also to stimulate local debate. In this case, research into the links between economic transition and poverty, jointly commissioned by Save the Children and the government, provided a practical framework for officials to interpret events and to introduce more poverty-focused policies. This led, ultimately, to the national government's commitment to preserving and improving pre-school education provision as a means of tackling the marginalization of poor and vulnerable children.

The role of pre-school education in poverty alleviation

Pre-school provision has traditionally enjoyed an important place within education systems influenced by the Soviet system. In Mongolia, where children do not start primary school until the age of 8, pre-school provision has had an even greater impact on children's lives. The rapid contraction of the pre-school sector at the start of the transition period reflected pressures on government to cut back public expenditure, and were not the result of any co-ordinated policy changes.

The research commissioned by Save the Children demonstrated that those worse affected by rising poverty were very young children. These findings stimulated local recognition of the potential for a revived pre-school system to mitigate against the effects of poverty on children. In the Mongolian context, the benefits of pre-school provision on early child development and future educational performance were well understood by officials with a soviet legacy, and the infrastructure was already in place, though badly

neglected. A national commitment to preserving the pre-school sector evolved into a commitment to extend its scope and impact, with ambitious targets to increase attendance to 80% of the eligible population by the year 2000, while pre-transition coverage only reached 27%.

The Mongolia study also demonstrates the importance of combining changes in policy at government level with the development of practical approaches to achieving change at school level. Drawing on experience from elsewhere, Save the children piloted a range of creative and cost-effective ways of improving pre-school education (not all of them successful) aimed at making it more sustainable, accessible and responsive to the needs of poor and disadvantaged children. While a new focus on poverty was compatible with the inherited soviet philosophy of social equity at the government level, it was not easily absorbed at the level of individual schools and parents. This experience underlines that change in attitudes happens in pockets rather than

uniformly, and is inevitably a gradual, and often frustrating process.

Introducing change

In Mongolia there is both loyalty to and dissatisfaction with communist education systems, and changes are met with mixed feelings by both policymakers and teachers. In this context, curricular change and new methods aimed at making education provision more relevant to children's needs must be sensitively introduced if they are to be effective. In order to increase exposure to child-centred learning methodologies, Save the Children arranged for key officials to attend training courses on curricular development within the South East-Asia region. These officials were then involved in the process of curriculum change and the development of teacher training initiatives within Mongolia. In this way, Save the Children sought to promote changes at both policy-making and classroom level.

It is important to recognise that a key element of Save the Children's intervention, the introduction of child-centred approaches to education, comes out of the organisation's Western/European outlook. That Save the Children's analysis is born of its cultural background is as inevitable as the changes which currently rack Mongolian society as a result of its rapid entry into the global economy. In the context of transition, Save the Children concluded that if the pre-school education system was to become more flexible within the changing environment and more responsive to children's needs, it must include child-focused teaching approaches. Save the Children's approach, which targets both policymakers and teachers at classroom level, aims to develop local skills and capacity in order to develop curricula and approaches which, while being more child-centred, are adapted to the Mongolian context. The initial outcomes of this approach have been positive, though it has yet to be evaluated more formally.

The approach of the international NGO

While the focus of this study is on education, it also charts the start up of Save the Children's programme in Mongolia, showing the rationale for initial operational and programmatic choices. In the absence of a local NGO structure, Save the Children concentrated on working with government, gradually building up the trust of key officials who had little or no previous experience of working with external agencies.

Intervening at a crucial moment of economic transition offered opportunities for influencing at the heart of a policymaking structure which was still centralised, but also receptive to ways of interpreting and tackling the effects of the overwhelming social and economic changes brought by transition. Save the Children was able to use this opportunity to help redefine attitudes to poverty, recognising its particular impact on children, and prioritising the pre-school system as a tool in tackling the negative effects of economic transition.

The recruitment and training of culturally sensitive and competent staff who were themselves open to new ways of working has been an essential element of this process. The importance of individuals in development programmes tends to be underplayed in the quest for more strategic working approaches. However, this case study demonstrates clearly that individuals can make or break a programme.

Editors' Conclusions

● The speed of change in Mongolia (as in other societies in economic transition) compromised the ability of government to provide basic education just when, more than ever, children needed the skills and knowledge which a responsive education could give them to prepare them for life in the new context.

● Save the Children's pre-school education programme in Mongolia developed as a response to the problems thrown

up by rapid economic transition, but was also based on the organisation's (primarily western) ideas about the value of child centred learning and the developmental purpose of education.

● Former centrally-planned economies lack experience of developing systems that are responsive to community needs. There were particular difficulties in developing locally appropriate methods for encouraging children to express their views, in a culture where this has generally been discouraged.

● The introduction of ideas that were essentially external required a high level of sensitivity but by increasing local understanding of the links between poverty and education, Save the Children acted as a catalyst to a process of education reform which is locally owned. The vision, attitude and approach of key staff was critical in gaining acceptance and influencing policy-makers.

- The programme aim was to protect and improve the pre-school system. The broader aim was that this would serve to alleviate poverty in the present as well as prevent future poverty. There is little evidence to date that this has been achieved, and in many places pre-school provision continues to benefit the better off children, while poor children still have limited access.

- Nevertheless, there is evidence that without the changed attitudes of key policymakers with whom this programme has worked, there would be no pre-school system in Mongolia today within which to tackle these issues.

Notes

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SECTION V. LINKING SCHOOLS AND SOCIETY

'As different as ground and sky'* - Involving children and communities - A case study from Ethiopia
Listen to those who use the schools - Civil society and education policy - A case study from Peru

The problems:

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- Under-resourcing, and the problems for school providers
- The quality of human interaction
- A culture of non-responsiveness

The approach:

- Strengthening the voice of school users
- The Ethiopia study:
- The challenge of how to support service delivery
- Does responsiveness make a difference to quality?
- The Peru study:

     A stronger role for civil society

Issues:

- Children's participation vs. adult attitudes
- Making decentralisation work
- The language of school - a key to participation + quality

In Section I we identified that one of the fundamental causes of poor quality schooling is that in many societies there is no organic link between school systems and the society they serve. The case studies in this section describe attempts to improve schools by re-establishing this connection between the providers of schools and the users.

THE PROBLEM

The two studies are set in very different political and institutional settings, one in Africa and one in Latin America, yet there are underlying similarities to the problems they attempt to address. Both cases describe situations where it

is widely acknowledged that state schools fail to deliver an effective education to many children, and particularly for children of the poor. Under-resourcing is a major reason, but the assumption behind both these studies is that there are other factors about how schools are set up and run which stop them being effective, and that to bring about long term improvements it will be necessary also to tackle these.

Under-resourcing, and the problems for school providers

Ethiopia, one of the poorest countries in the world, serves as an extreme example of how poverty and under-resourcing limit school opportunity. An estimated 65% of the population live below the poverty level, unable to afford an adequate diet or obtain basic necessities. Rates of access to health, education, welfare services and water are extremely low. Government school provision currently serves fewer than 20% of children of school age, with large disparities between

rural and urban areas. (The equivalent figures for access to health services are a national average 45%, while in rural areas this often falls as low as 2%.) But even where schools exist they are often under-utilised, reflecting their poor quality and irrelevance to the lives of people facing serious survival problems.

The Somali-speaking Region, where the Ethiopia study is set, is one of the poorest and most under-developed in the country. When political change led to decentralisation in linguistic-based regions, the newly-set up Education Bureau in this region started from an extremely limited base of resources, both human and financial. It also faced unusually difficult obstacles for any service provider: an area of low population density, where many people have to move periodically in search of grazing, plus a large refugee population being resettled. While the switch to Somali as the medium in schools was welcome, in a population with few school-educated people it was impossible to find a supply of

trained teachers able to teach in Somali, or people with the experience to prepare a new curriculum and text books.

The quality of human interaction

While not all of these problems are caused by under-resourcing, all are made much more difficult to solve when resources are limited. But in similar contexts elsewhere donor-supported reforms that have concentrated on resource inputs have failed to turn poor quality school systems into more effective ones.

The Peru case study takes the analysis of problems one step further. A group of education professionals who form the NGO featured in this case study, Foro Educativo, have criticised the national processes of education reform, led by the World Bank, on the grounds that there is too little involvement of school users in defining problems. Foro Educativo, with Save the Children's support, attempted to

define what criteria one would use to judge quality from the point of view of what children experience. Schools are social institutions, and whatever the level of resourcing, the quality of the school experience for children is primarily determined by the human interactions. In this teachers have the definitive role, and Foro Educativo consider that the national reforms do not pay sufficient attention to the critical question of teaching quality. This is a situation paralleled in many other donor-supported education reforms. Though they may include elements of teacher training this is usually not a major component, and the issue of teachers' pay is usually specifically excluded - yet only with adequate rates of pay can one expect to keep trained people working in schools.

To upgrade existing schools in these contexts to an acceptable level of quality (let alone extend such provision to all children) would require a massive increase in resources, and this cannot be achieved in any sustainable way without changes in international economic relations. Meanwhile many

school systems will continue to be under-resourced, and generations of children will receive a sub-standard experience of schooling. Are there other points at which some of the problems for children can be tackled?

A culture of unresponsiveness

Section I made the case that many problems of poor quality schooling are not essentially resource-related. [See **What is wrong with schools?**] This is true particularly in the critical area of human interaction. Most poor quality school systems are over-bureaucratic, run by officials with little contact with the actual problems faced at school level, and dominated by rigid assumptions. Curricula are fixed from above and cannot be locally adapted by teachers to the reality children face. Relationships of teachers to children do not provide the kind of atmosphere in which children can learn and flourish. A narrow conception of progression through school prioritises examinations. Lack of experience by teachers of other

approaches leads them to fall back on rote-learning of often irrelevant 'facts'. Parents have no role in determining what happens in school. Little about the way school is run encourages children to develop the ability to think for themselves. While it would take a considerable effort and some short term resources to bring about change in each of these areas, once change is set in motion it is not more expensive to run a flexible and responsive school system than a rigid and inappropriate one.

These negative features can be summarised as *a culture of unresponsiveness:* an assumption that schools are to be set up by centralised decision making processes, with no requirement to involve the people who use schools. But this is only one side of the problem. Rigid and inappropriate systems could not continue unless teachers, parents and children accepted that they have no role in deciding what happens in schools. The culture of unresponsiveness has been in place for so long that school users are

disempowered.

THE APPROACH

The premiss of both case studies is that it is possible to move to a more responsive relationship between school providers and users, and that if this can be done it will result in better schools, even within the parameters of lack of resources.

Strengthening the voice of school users Section II gave examples of how energy could be generated in poor communities to build and run their own schools. These studies describe programmes that seek to release similar energy in communities that **do** have schools, but poorly functioning ones. At the same time they seek to encourage school providers to be open to listening to these contributions, and to act on them. The two cases approach the task from opposite starting points, but both with the

intention to strengthen the voice of school users (children, teachers, parents) in decisions about what happens in schools.

The Ethiopia study

Here Save the Children's primary relationship is with government education providers. Its efforts have been directed at encouraging officials to listen to what parents, teachers and children could tell them about the problems in schools, and to plan how to use their limited resources accordingly. Additional resources brought in by Save the Children were allocated within the plans produced in this way, and the key inputs enabled officials and teachers to acquire the skills and orientation to be able to continue running a more responsive school system.

● The challenge of how to support service delivery

This approach was in fact a considerable departure for Save the Children's own staff, who were experimenting with this approach learnt alongside their partners. Most local staff were new to work on education issues, and their formative experience of development work was either within the framework of relief operations in a refugee camp. Expatriates were more used to Save the Children's style of support to government service delivery (in health, food security, etc) where a standard mechanism was to attach technical advisers to ministries, with the aim of supporting better planning and policy development. In certain cases this approach has demonstrably brought about change more wide-reaching than one could hope to achieve through discrete community-based initiatives. But the fragility of governments' capacity to deliver effective services has become more evident in many countries in sub-Saharan Africa, and has led staff in Save the Children to question the value of centrally placed technical support.

The Ethiopia programme was one of the first to demonstrate the potential for an external agency to play a catalytic role in building linkages between the two sides of the "systems and users" spectrum. Middle managers in Save the Children recognised the need to build their own staff capacity to work with communities, not just as receivers of services but as a primary participants in the planning. Training was given at various points in Participatory Rural Appraisal methods, Child-to-Child approaches, how to tackle disability issues, and the importance of listening to children. Regional Education Bureau participated in each type of training, so the partnership between government and international NGO took on new skills simultaneously, and together experimented with putting them into practice.

● **Does responsiveness make a difference to quality?**

The qualitative changes that one would hope to see as a result of a more responsive type of school system are difficult

to measure. The Ethiopia study made a concerted effort to do this, through a participatory review of how parents, children and teachers perceived the changes in schools since the start of the programme. They looked not only for specific outcomes from specific inputs (e.g. was there a perceptible improvement in teacher-pupil relations after the teachers had been on training courses?) but also on the more long term question, whether there were indications of a change in the general culture of responsiveness. When people identified problems, did they attempt to do anything about them?

The review shows clear benefits of this 'linking' approach. The Regional Education Bureau has understood through practice the advantages of consulting communities, and while schools continue to suffer from all the problems of resource constraints (human and financial), they are nevertheless able to give children a more effective start towards a basic education.

The Peru study

In the Peru case the primary relationship is with school users. Here Save the Children has supported a local grouping of education professionals to initiate a series of activities that aim to equip teachers, children and parents to be a stronger voice on what goes on in schools. One way of doing this is to give them regular access to information about national debates on education reform, so that they have a context into which to voice opinions. The other main set of activities aims at building their experience of articulating their views, and finding ways to get them heard publicly.

● A stronger role for civil society

This study demonstrates the role a local NGO can play in building connections between civil society and the government. There has been a growing recognition internationally of the vital role of 'civil society', but the term is

vague and there is not much clarity about strategies. Within each social or political context, different possibilities open up or are closed. The task is to develop mechanisms that are politically feasible within that context; and the aim is to enable a variety of groups in society to act as a force to monitor the impact of national policies, to pressure government to be more transparent, and to open up national debate on education. This study builds on the strong Latin American tradition of social participation and organisation. It provides an example of a process through which many individuals who are not currently organised can be equipped to collectively press for education policy and practice that is more responsive to children's real needs. A pioneering series of national and regional consultations empowered groups such as parents to see that they had a valid contribution to make to the education debate, and similarly put government officials in a position where they recognised the value of listening to practitioners and users of schools.

ISSUES

Children's participation vs. adult attitudes

Both studies the issue of children's participation emerged out of a more general set of processes to encourage participation by adults with an interest in what happened in schools. In neither case was this a simple progression. In the Peru case, while the NGO initiators were conscious (at a conceptual level) of the importance of seeing what happened in schools from the perspective of what children experience, it was the process of participation itself that led them to realise they needed to place more emphasis on promoting children's participation, and to challenge prevailing paternalistic social attitudes to children. In the Ethiopia case the programme worked within a culture in which 'consulting the community' meant 'consulting the adult males'. Specific attempts had to be made to set up situations where women and children were involved in the discussions. These situations are typical of

what would be encountered in many societies. The cases are interesting in highlighting the limits on children's participation, and also the possibilities that exist for challenging those limitations.

The language of school - a key to participation and quality

The Ethiopian case also highlights the issue of the language used in schools, which has direct relevance both for more participatory approaches, and for improving the quality of the experience of schooling for children. Participation is overwhelmingly oral; for parents and children, and also for most teachers, to have a serious input into discussions about what goes on in schools, they need to be free to do this in the language in which they are most articulate. But the aura associated with the official state language, which is usually the language of school, excludes such participation. The move to providing the first years of schooling in the language

of the community opens up new possibilities of a real link between schools and society.

A change in language policy, and backing that up with practical support, is also a key to access and quality. With some notable exceptions most governments in Africa have only recently made provision for local language use in the first years of schooling, and in many other contexts there is still no recognition of the issue. In Ethiopia it was the move to regionalisation that brought with it a change in language policy. Amharic was historically the only permitted language of instruction in primary schools, which meant that all non-Amharic speaking children were having to learn in a foreign language. Now it is up to the region to decide the language of the first stages of schooling, and in most regions this is the language of the majority group of that region. In Region 5 the great majority of children are Somali speaking, were previously seen as a 'minority' and had to learn through a language they did not understand. They are now the majority

group in their region and are able to learn in their own language.

But there are many practical challenges in making a reality of such a change in policy. New skills are required to develop a curriculum and materials in the new language, and to train a new intake of teachers who can teach in the new language. There are also knock-on effects for other groups of children: what can be done to give an equally positive start to children from language groups other than the majority one of the region?

Making decentralisation work

The Ethiopian study also illuminates questions about education provision within the context of decentralisation. In theory, decentralisation allows education provision to be more responsive to local needs. In practice there are many obstacles. There is typically a lack of clarity about the

responsibilities of the centre and local levels, and lack of skills and capacity at local levels to carry out their new roles. The resource problems remain, and are in fact more extreme in remote districts which have little capacity to raise revenues but are expected to carry out a much increased range of functions. Even given the best circumstances, a fundamental change of philosophy about service delivery would be required to bring about the hoped for advantages. Local level officials may be nearer the ground but they lack the experience and usually also the orientation to work effectively with communities. Without support to communities to encourage their active participation, 'decentralisation' will remain an affair of bureaucrats. And without specific support to officials to make the required transitions, and the chance to experience participation in action, the potential that decentralisation offers to involve local communities is unlikely to be realised.

'As different as ground and sky'* - Involving children and

communities - A case study from Ethiopia

* Adapted from a comment of a school committee member during the evaluation, 'This year is as different from last year as the ground is different from the sky.'

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What are the problems for children?

Life in Somali Region 5

About 3.5 million ethnic Somalis form the second-largest
geographical region (called Somali National Regional State,
or Somali Region 5) in the new federal Ethiopia. Somali
speakers live throughout the Horn of Africa: in the late 19th
and early 20th centuries these areas were divided by colonial
powers, dividing Somalis among five East African countries.
A large number of Somali-speaking people now live in the
eastern lowlands of Ethiopia. Most Somalis are herders
whose economy depends on grazing and on finding water for
livestock. Because they have a shared ancestry and a shared
way of life, this area has strong cultural and economic ties
with Somalia and Somaliland, and cross-border trade and

migration are common.

Life in Somali Region 5 is challenging. For the past twenty years the region has suffered from the effects of conflict, drought, floods, and from large scale population movements. From 1987, the area was treated as a war zone, during which the Somali government fought to unite ethnic Somalis within its own borders, but the situation has stabilised since 1993 and the change in government. In addition to the Ethio-Somalia war, many parts of the region have been affected by clan conflict and unrest, typically over the use of natural resources and the control of trade links. As a result, the area has received only minimal development investment, and there is little social infrastructure outside of the relatively more settled Jijiga zone. As one author writes, there is '...hardly a road, a telephone, a school, or a clinic...' in this sparse region of the country[1].

'I was born here in Turanod, but I left in 1991. I lost all of my livestock, my house was burnt down, I had nothing. I had heard about the refugee camps so I went there. I stayed there for a few months and then rumours of guerrilla fighting forced the government to take us to a camp near Djibouti. But then there was conflict there, the government stores were looted, and we were forced to flee on to Boroma.' 35 year old woman[2].

Education is a particularly neglected area. When the Transitional Government of Ethiopia was installed in 1991, Region 5 had the lowest primary enrolment rates per capita[3]. There were few formal schools, and the majority had been destroyed or abandoned. Doors and tin roofs had been taken off their hinges. Bricks had been dismantled and used to build other structures. In one school not far from Jijiga town, primary classrooms were in such bad condition (broken desks, no blackboard, crumbling walls) that they were being

used as toilets and as shelters for livestock.

'Before all of the trouble there used to be a school here…. One of my sons, and my daughter used to attend it. When we were away, the children did not get the chance to get to school, as there were none. There is no longer a school here: it was destroyed in the fighting[4].'
35 year old woman

What Children experience in School

Only about 20% of children of school age in Ethiopia actually attend school, and the percentage is even lower for children living in Region 5 (For some of the reasons, see Box 1). Inside the few schools that are functioning, children struggle to learn. Teaching materials and text books are in short supply, and most are still written in Amharic - the former national language of instruction - even though the language of

the majority of children in the region is Somali. Children often complain that they have to share one textbook among a large group of students, and spend significant time each day just looking for the few that are available. According to Ministry of Education (MoE) reports, only 40% of schools in Ethiopia had textbooks in 1992, and the national student-book ratio was 4:1[5]. In one of the schools visited for this review, students said they had not seen any textbooks the entire school year.

Teachers also face difficulties trying to teach. At the start of the regionalisation process, teachers had little or no formal training: the Regional Education Bureau (REB) estimated that at least 75% of primary school teachers in Region 5 had no formal qualifications[6]. As a result, many teachers understandably could not teach well: they didn't prepare lesson plans, they didn't use teaching aids, and they didn't check to see that students understood the lesson. Outside of Jijiga town, teachers receive salaries irregularly and are

poorly motivated. Many do not come to school, or if they do, they come late. Some come to school, but do not show up to class. In one of the schools visited, students reported that the behaviour of their teachers was so poor - they smoked in class, insulted and fought amongst one another - that outsiders wouldn't be able to differentiate between them and the students!

National Policy and Decentralisation

Following the overthrow of the Dergue regime in 1991, a new Federal system was created which grants autonomy and substantial administrative authority to nine regional states, constituted on the basis of ethnic and linguistic criteria. The creation of a federal system has uge implications for the delivery of services, which historically have been highly centralised.

Box 1: Schools - what are the problems?

A Community Management Workshop in Jijiga Zone in December 1997, listed the following as major problems:

- poor condition of schools
- lack of school facilities such as water tanks, latrines and fencing
- shortage of educational materials such as desks, windows, doors and textbooks
- shortage of teachers in rural areas
- shortage of classrooms in bigger towns, and lack of secondary schools
- lack of rooms for pedagogical centres in rural schools
- need for material supply and follow-up of school pedagogical centre activities
- poor students' attendance
- high work load at home for children

- early marriage for girls
- poor relationships between teachers, parents committee, administration, head teacher and REB

In the education sector, major policy changes under regionalisation include:

- using the majority language of the region as the language of instruction, enabling the majority of children to learn in their mother tongue

- decentralisation of central ministry services (e.g., curriculum development, materials production, educational radio production, adult education)

- reorganisation and decentralisation of systems of management and administration[7].

Box 2: The Central State - Changing concepts of schooling

The history of education provision in Ethiopia is one of sweeping changes and reforms. Ethiopia has a long history of religious education (both Christian and Muslim) but modern education was only introduced as recently as the early 1900s. The emergence of central state authority, the arrival of diplomats and missions from abroad, and the growing demand for foreign languages increased the demand for modern education. Emperor Menelik II launched the first official government policy for the expansion of the education sector. From 1935-45, the Italian occupation resulted in the massacre of 3,000 educated Ethiopians and the introduction of the Italian education system. After 1941, Emperor Haile Selassie took forward the expansion of education, introducing secondary and tertiary education and establishing the first long-term plan to deliver primary

education to all children.

The imperial regime was overthrown in 1974 and replaced by the Dergue, a socialist, military regime. Under the Dergue the education system was reformed to produce 'socialist citizens with all-round personalities', emphasising education for production, education for socialist consciousness, and education for scientific enquiry[i]. This Marxist approach to education gave priority to mass education and communities in rural areas were mobilised to finance and construct schools. This campaign resulted in a rapid expansion of enrolment, particularly in primary education in rural areas.

> [i.] Initially, fourteen new regional states were created

However, the increase in pupil enrolment was not matched

by an increase in quality, which has declined steadily over the past two decades. Falling quality has been linked primarily to a decline in per student expenditure, scarcity of instructional materials and facilities, and inappropriate curriculum and teaching methods[i]. According to a recent research report: The curriculum lacked relevance with no clearly defined objectives, and instruction concentrated more on theoretical knowledge with little connection to daily life. The approach also had a high tendency towards rote learning which did not prepare young people for living in the community'.

Table: Regionalisation - who does what?

Area of responsibility	Ministry of Education	Regional Education Bureau	Zonal Education Department
Policy	Proposes and	Contributes to	Proposes

	contributes to national policy	national policy, & makes plans for region on basis of national policy. Formulates regional policy.	plans to the REB
Standard setting	Sets standards	Implements standards	Implements standards
Examinations	Prepares national examinations	Implements and supervises national examinations	Implements and supervises national examinations
Curriculum	Sets curriculum for secondary and	Prepares primary and junior	Provides feedback and

	higher education; assists in preparation of other school curricula	secondary curriculum	implements curriculum
Inspection		Inspects schools	
Teachers	Sets standards and requires qualifications (above); posts secondary teachers to regions	Pays teachers; recruits teachers and trains primary teachers	Pays primary teachers; provides in-service training
Instructional materials	Bulk procurement	Provides text books and materials	Distributes materials

School establishment	Establishes higher education institutions; licenses private higher institutions; sets standards for institutions (above)	Establishes schools and junior colleges; licenses private schools	Establishes schools and vocational training centres
Data	Collates national school census data & assists in system development	Collates regional data	Compiles zonal data

Regionalisation also provides for an additional level of

decentralised authority; the **woreda** (or district) level of administration. Hence, the new administrative structure will comprise the centre, the regions, the zones, and the woredas[ii]. The plan is or the administrative centre of each of these, as well as each school, to have a Pedagogical Centre to support the development of educational materials. There is provision in principle for budgets to be devolved to the school level, but this has as yet not happened.

> [ii.] There are currently 9 regions in Ethiopia, with about 55 zones and over 650 woredas. Each region has an Education Bureau (REB), each zone has a Zonal Education Department, and each woreda has a Woreda Education Office.

The central feature of the new policy is that the responsibilities and power of the Federal MoE have been greatly reduced. Under regionalisation, the main role for the

MoE will be to determine national standards, while the other three levels will be responsible for their implementation. For example, under the new policy the MoE will be responsible for setting standards and required qualifications for teachers in all regions, while the regions will be responsible for recruiting, training and paying them[8].

The limits of Regional Capacity

Regionalisation has undoubtedly opened up new opportunities. But it happened suddenly, with little preparation to build up local skills. There was little support or infrastructure at local level to enable the new authorities to put the new policies into practice. In a previously highly centralised system, the people who were suddenly given the authority to make important decisions or implement aspects of centrally determined education policy had themselves never had experience of that level of responsibility. To take

advantage of the new arrangements required a sophisticated understanding of systems and budgetary processes. Budgets that were officially available to the regions were not forthcoming, and to extract them would require an ability to manoeuvre through a rapidly changing political context where relations between central and regional authority were often complicated by political/ethnic tensions.

These features took more extreme forms in the more remote regions. In Somali Region 5, they were further compounded by security problems and a history of border conflicts which had left much of the infrastructure (including many schools) destroyed and large concentrations of refugees and displaced people requiring resettlement. Given the poor legacy of investment, ensuring even the most basic provision of education has been difficult. The capacity of the Regional Education Bureau to deliver any kind of educational service is extremely weak. Management of education is affected by the paucity of local, skilled personnel and the high turnover of

government officials. Offices in the more remote areas do not function. Budgets are low, or non-existent. Schools and villages are widely scattered, yet there is little money in the budget for transport to enable officials to visit the schools for which they are responsible. For all these reasons, Region 5 lags behind others in many aspects of implementation of the new education policy and strategy, such as developing a new primary school curriculum and opening a Regional Teacher Training Institute.

In adapting to the new policy there have been particular problems associated with teacher employment and language of instruction. Under the Mengistu regime, primary education was in Amharic and secondary and tertiary education in English, with English taught as a subject from primary grade 3. The new policy allows for a diversity of languages of instruction at the primary level and the introduction of English as a subject from grade one. For the first time, the medium of instruction in primary schools is the language of the

majority ethnic group. When the Somali language was chosen as the medium of instruction for primary schools in Region 5, more than 300 Somali speakers were recruited to teach in local schools. Unfortunately, this was done in haste, without properly screening for suitable candidates. Many of the teachers who were subsequently employed had never taught before, and did not know how to do basic things, like prepare a lesson plan, use teaching aids, or evaluate student's learning. Some of the teachers had little more than a primary education themselves.

The complexities of divided authority are shown up by a bizarre situation that has arisen out of the transition to a new school language. The issue is, what should become of the primary school teachers who were already in post but who do not know Somali? In contrast with the newly recruited Somali speaking teachers, the established teachers are Teacher Training Institute (TTI) trained, but are now only able to teach the few lessons a week of English or Amharic. Most

do not live in the villages where they are allocated to teach and so (theoretically) journey out daily from Jijiga; in practice, they often do not turn up or are seriously late, their motivation dulled by their low workload. Yet as qualified teachers they are on full pay, whereas the unqualified Somali teachers, who now do the bulk of the teaching, have an ambiguous status. The initial solution to pay the Somali teachers at the level of new TTI graduates was not acceptable to the Ministry of Finance and ways of formalising their qualifications are being explored. Viewed from the point of making a rational use of resources, some decision to resolve this situation is clearly needed. But the REB does not have the power to resolve the issue since the role of setting standards (e.g. on teacher qualifications) is retained by the central Ministry. Nor do the regional officials (mainly Somalis) feel it politically advisable to raise the issue, because it could be interpreted as an attempt to oust non-Somali teachers. The situation thus remains: in a state of extreme scarcity of resources, there is

an inefficient use of those little available.

The response

Working between Ground and Sky

Save the Children was already working in region 5 at the time when these far-reaching changes were introduced or expected to happen. Save the Children's experience here began in the early 1970s[iii]. From 1988 it has been working in five refugee camps in Jijiga zone with a mixed population of returnee refugees from Somali camps or those internally displaced due to civil strife. The agency's involvement in education began in 1994 when Save the Children commissioned a study of the camp populations to identify the constraints to their successful return home, and investigate how to support people who chose to settle in the areas surrounding the camps[9]. Lack of education was identified as

a major constraint for those who wanted to return to their areas of origin, as educational facilities were much better in the camps than in the rural areas of Jijiga.

iii. Save the Children collaborated with the government to assess the severity of the 1973/74 famine. This led to the establishment of a nutrition surveillance programme, which developed into a long-term presence in the area when Save the Children intervened in the 1988 refugee emergency, setting up health and nutrition programmes.

Towards the end of that year, Save the Children and the Zonal Education Department jointly carried out a needs assessment of the educational sector, from which developed the current programme of work. The needs assessment highlighted a number of problems:

● The regional education structures were newly

formed and scarcely functioning: there were few trained staff and a limited budget.

● More than 75% of teachers had no formal qualifications or training[10]. They had been recruited to respond to the urgent need to provide teaching in the Somali language, but recruitment had been done without adequate technical screening.

● Communities had not been involved in decisions affecting the delivery of educational services. As a result, during the chaos surrounding the fall of the Dergue regime, lack of ownership in the school system had led to the widespread looting and destruction of schools.

It became evident that one of the main stumbling blocks was the lack of communication between the new authorities and people in the community. In trying to help get the newly

decentralised education systems in place, Save the Children has chosen to work at the interface between the 'Ground' - what children actually experience - and the 'Sky' - education policies and provision. The programme is not conceived as a set of 'Save the Children' activities, but as a series of supports to encourage more people to be actively involved in learning what children and communities want from schools, what actually goes on in schools, solving the problems, and influencing the planning of school provision to be more appropriate to the needs of local children.

From participatory assessments of the issues facing schools, the following were selected as areas where support from Save the Children could contribute towards such processes:

- Providing support to regional officials on planning and supervision;
- Involving the community in what goes on in the school;

- Improving the school environment;
- Developing a training course for teachers to upgrade their teaching skills.

Two other priorities emerged after a review of the initial two-year phase of the programme and were incorporated into the next phase:

- Reaching children who aren't in school: participatory research on adapting schools to be more inclusive

- Supporting the Region to develop the Somali curriculum and Somali language textbooks.

What has been learnt, and how has it been used?

Through the years of Save the Children's involvement, children, parents, teachers, and education authorities have

met together, expressed their problems and needs, discussed issues, and argued about possibilities. Linking all these activities is the assumption that one mechanism for improving schools is to encourage more sets of people to be involved; and specifically, that if adults in the community are given a framework for taking a more active role in their children's schooling, and can learn about the kinds of problems that children are experiencing, they will be in a position to use that information to improve what happens in schools. This is an assumption that could be said to apply anywhere, but its implications are particularly far-reaching in situations of severe resource constraints.

In April 1998 field research was conducted to gain a better understanding of these processes. The researchers aimed to learn:

- To what extent have Save the Children-supported activities created opportunities for more people to

learn about and be involved in what goes on in schools?

● Whether there has been an improvement in the quality of schooling, from

  - better planning and supervisory capacity among officials
  - more parental involvement
  - the skills-upgrading course for teachers

● What children and parents think about the changes that are still scheduled to happen under regionalisation, including the new curriculum.

Data was collected through semi-structured interviews from six primary schools over a period of two weeks, conducted by small teams who met periodically to record and classify results. A detailed checklist of questions was developed to

guide interviewers, and responses were analysed to show:

- what people had learned about the problems children were experiencing in school;
- how this information is shared;
- what (if anything) they were doing to help address these needs.

The team of interviewers included regional and zonal officials, members of parents' committees, and students, making a total of eleven people external to Save the Children. In addition there were eight representatives from Save the Children and one representative from Radd Barna (Norwegian Save the Children.)[iv]

> [iv.] For further details of the research methodology, see appendix A.

An important part of the methodology - new to many participants - was the central place given to asking children what they thought:

> **'We never used to ask children. We just talked to other adults and drew our own conclusions. When you ask the children, they tell you and you see it in a new way. For instance they say clearly, I don't want to be beaten'.** Elizabeth Mekonnen, Save the Children Programme Officer

Findings from the review suggest that school children in Region 5 *do* benefit from more people knowing about, and being in a position to respond to, the problems that they face learning in school. Specifically, the findings suggest that children benefit by:

- having more people know about the problems they face;

- having more people (and more people at different levels in the system) share information about these problems;

- having more people available to try to address these problems;

- having more people available to check-up on what other people are doing to address these problems.

Because people with different roles in relation to the schools (such as officials, parents, students, and teachers) are learning more about what children are experiencing in school, there is more potential for action to be taken at different levels. This is not to say that everyone **does** take action: in some cases it was found that people were in a position to help solve problems that arose, but chose not to help, or were blocked by others in their attempts to assist.

The following sections highlight what has been learnt about the problems faced by children in the schools visited; and describe the mechanisms that have been created to encourage wider local involvement and sharing of information, so that these problems can be addressed.

Regional Officials: learning from users

A major component of Save the Children's activities has been to support the Regional Education Bureau (REB) to learn firsthand about the problems of schools in the region, as experienced by children, parents and teachers, so that this understanding can inform the Region's planning. Because of the severe resource constraints facing the REB, there is not the budget locally to cover the cost of visiting the schools within their area. One important mechanism adopted by Save the Children has been to provide the means in terms of vehicle and per diem to get regional officials out to visit the schools they manage. These have often had an immediate

practical impact, enabling the officials to sort out specific problems (e.g. the practical difficulties for teachers of where and when they get paid), as well as serving the more general purpose of letting them talk with students and other members of the community to better understand what hampers the effectiveness of school provision.

Training and awareness activities for a core team of school supervisors have aimed at developing their planning, supervision and management skills so that they can genuinely support school heads and classroom teachers. Topics have included:

- how to get community members involved in planning discussions;
- how to improve communication between teachers and head teachers;
- how to collect base-line information about the schools for planning purposes.

Trips have also been organised to other regions for regional officials to see how the process of regionalisation is being implemented elsewhere and to get a comparative sense of provision in their region in relation to others. Through the combination of all these activities regional officials have been stimulated to consider:

- what features of life in Region 5 might inform the needs of the schools, and the broader school system;

- which national policies and procedures seem to work well at local level, and which do not.

The possibilities opened up by these activities have been enthusiastically received. As one official told the research team,

'We can only identify needs across schools if we

> ### *go to the schools and see what the needs are.'*

But the findings from the review also make it clear that lack of resources often stops people from acting once they become aware of a problem. One regional official admitted:

> ### *'I don't have the means to follow-up.'*

If action is to be taken on some of the issues that have come up, donor funding will be required, though not necessarily large amounts. One outcome of the programme is that it has put regional officials in a stronger position to define for themselves and negotiate for the kinds of funding that **they** prioritise, based on their own analysis of the problems. For instance, REB officials pressed Save the Children to include in the second phase of the programme support for developing the new Somali curriculum, which had not initially been one of the areas Save the Children expected to get involved in, but which regional officials insisted was a priority, even though

they recognised that they did not have the resources (human or financial) to implement it.

There is also evidence that being exposed to the views of children and parents has given regional officials the confidence to tailor national policies to local situations. For example, the REB issued a statement in response to guidance from the MoE that schools must not take in more than 45 students in Grade One. But in some zones in Region 5 this meant that so many children would be left out of school that parents went to the region and complained - so despite the fact that reversing this decision would result in crowded classrooms the REB retracted this statement and suggested that all children be enrolled.

The Community and School Management

● *'Sometimes parents come to class, but they don't ask us anything' (student)* Prior to 1994, the government ran

and managed schools. Although parent forums had an official place within the school structure, parents were not actively involved in educational planning, and did not generally feel as though the schools 'belonged' to them or to their community[11]. Under the new education policy, roles and responsibilities of parents have been clarified and given new emphasis. Specific structures have been developed to allow community members to participate more broadly in school management and administration, including the formation of 'parents committees' (selected by other parents at the beginning of each academic year), 'school committees' (composed of parents and other interested members of the community) and 'education guidance committees' (composed of head teachers, parents, teachers, students and a representative from the local government administration).

Save the Children has been involved in helping to raise awareness about the role of parents in school planning and

administration through organising workshops at community level. Efforts have focused on helping to activate a community management structure that had been set up by the national government. Save the Children has helped to formalise a forum for parents, elders, and local authorities to share information about - and work together to improve - different aspects of the school environment. A series of workshops has been held involving students, teachers, community leaders, parents and education officials to raise awareness about the importance of participating in educational planning and management, and to help clarify and better understand their roles and responsibilities in running the school. Follow-up activities have included helping parents set up parents' committees, identifying projects to rebuild or rehabilitate the school facilities, and helping parents to mobilise other members of the community to get these projects underway.

Improving the Learning Environment

- ***'The classrooms were in complete disarray' (parent)***

During transition, one of the first problems to be noted by members of the community was the poor state of the local schools. Consequently, a key component of Save the Children's education programme in Jijiga has been working to rehabilitate primary schools in the region, through joint efforts initiated by local communities. One of the functions of the parent's committees is to mobilise the community to contribute towards rebuilding the school. In all of the schools we visited the community had provided contributions like labour and raw materials (such as sand and wooden poles) to build latrines, water tanks, new classrooms, and fences. In some schools the committees had been able to raise additional contributions, including funds for staff salaries and learning materials/teaching aids. In one community the local authorities were even persuaded to donate ten cents from every kilo sold of 'qat'[v] to the school to ensure ongoing material support. Both students and parents in the schools

we visited said that renovating the schools had helped to improve the learning environment.

V. A local herb widely used as a stimulant

Part of this strategy involves raising the profile of the schools - both within and outside the local community - so that the conditions of the schools are more widely known. This involves documenting and sharing basic information about the schools, and creating opportunities for officials to visit the area to actually witness the environment and poor conditions for themselves. Seeing the situation often stimulates action. For example, when the Minister of Education visited the region a few years ago, she also visited one of the schools where the classrooms were being used as toilets. ***'Everyone was embarrassed because the classrooms were in complete disarray'*** one parent remarked. This collective embarrassment led to change: soon after the Minister's visit

the community elected a parents' committee and began to raise funds to help renovate the school. In an unprecedented move, the zonal office donated several bags of cement.

What does Parental involvement achieve?

The committees are the main vehicle through which people not directly involved in the school system can learn more about and influence what goes on inside the school. *'Now parents feel comfortable with school activities'* students at one school said. All of the schools we visited had recently formed parents' committees, although participation in school activities varied widely between schools; from infrequent visits to handle major complaints to daily meetings with teachers and students to monitor classroom learning. In most of the schools parents played a key role in helping to resolve problems facing teachers and students, including problems that arose between these two groups. In our review, typical problems reported to parents by students included: late or

absent teachers, wrongdoings by teachers, and bullying by other students. Typical problems raised by teachers were: lack of or late salary payments, and lack of teaching materials. Problems that could not be resolved by parents were usually reported to the school supervisor, who commonly visited the school once or twice each year.

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TEACHERS AND PUPILS

Do Teachers come more regularly?

● ***Why are we the ones going after the teachers?'*** ***(student)*** Teachers can't teach if they don't come to school. Before Save the Children began the skill upgrading programme, getting teachers to come to school - and to class on time - was reportedly a common problem for children in Region 5. ***'The teachers used to come when***

they wanted' a student at one school told us candidly. Five out of the six schools we surveyed reported that teachers' attendance rates had generally improved over the past year, but a few schools still had a few problems with a few teachers, and getting teachers to come on time was a nagging issue in four schools. In another school, students said that they 'struggled' to get one of their teacher's to come to class, while students at a different school had even gone to one of their teacher's home to 'beg' her to return.

Findings suggest that teachers may not have been inspired to come to school regularly because they weren't always paid promptly for being there. However, the main reason why teachers didn't come to school consistently appears to be lack of awareness by people outside the schools that teachers weren't showing up, and lack of enforcement[vi]. One strategy now being used in several of the schools we visited is establishing a system of joint reporting in which students

and parents act as 'class monitors'. The role of the student monitor varied in each of the schools we visited, from simply taking attendance (of both teachers and students), to following up on cleanliness, reporting student illnesses, and monitoring the morning processional to raise the flag. Schools that had elected class monitors kept two kinds of records: daily attendance records that were maintained by the head teacher, and records for each period that were maintained by students, to help ensure that all periods were occupied every day.

[vi] This problem was probably also related to weaknesses in school supervision, and lack of community involvement in school administration and management.

Schools that had the fewest problems with absent teachers actively monitored this information. More importantly, in those

schools with the fewest problems, information about attendance was also monitored by people who did not work directly within the school system. For example, in the only school that did not report problems with absenteeism there was an active, three-way reporting system: students reported problems to members of the parents committee; committee members constantly asked students whether things had improved; and if they hadn't they reported this news back to the head teacher. In other schools, the more problems there were with teachers, the fewer the links' in the reporting chain.

When teachers don't attend school regularly, students are less inclined to show up. In one school where students said their teachers were frequently absent, students admitted that they lacked discipline themselves, and usually **'disappeared to town'** if their teacher didn't show up. In most of the schools we visited, the same mechanisms that were being used to monitor teachers' attendance were also being used

to monitor student's attendance. In this school, however, there were no reporting systems in place, so parents were not always aware that their children or the children's teachers were not in school.

Can they teach better?

● **Not all teachers are good - some get off the topic'** **(student)** Teachers now come to school more regularly, but can they teach? According to the students we surveyed, many of their teachers used to teach poorly because few of them had received any training. **'Our sports teacher used to give us a ball and remain behind, without giving us instructions'** students at one school said. Students in another school said that their teachers used to be **'uninterested in teaching'**. And our findings suggest that these teachers continued to teach poorly because few people (other than the students) **knew** that they were teaching

poorly.

Tests were subsequently given to ensure that teachers had at least a 12th grade education. To help upgrade the teaching skills of those who had passed this qualification, Save the Children has supported a series of short-term training courses, focused on basic teaching methodologies and subject areas. Training courses in school management have also been developed for head teachers. Save the Children's contribution has been largely organisational and financial; the courses themselves have been run by Ethiopian educationalists, and the approach to both content and methodology have therefore been fairly traditional. Save the Children has also facilitated awareness-raising sessions on issues where they could draw on the organisation's wider experience, such as strategies for including children with disabilities.

Students in five schools say that there has been a 'great

change' in classroom teaching since their teachers attended the training courses, and these improvements were only noted for teachers who had participated in the training programme. A central component of the training has been supporting teachers and administrators to learn more about the process of teaching and learning. Students say that their teachers now use a range of techniques to involve them in classroom activities, such as organising group discussions and school debates. They also prepare and integrate teaching aid materials into the lesson plans, and encourage students to choose and make their own learning materials. These changes were highly appreciated by the students. ***'I understand when I make maps myself'*** one student said. There is some evidence to suggest that these new methods have helped to improve the student's grades. Teachers in three schools also say that these methods have improved their own teaching skills.

With the advent of the parents committees, people outside

the school now have the authority to visit the classrooms to monitor the teachers' performance. This gives parents and other community members the opportunity to witness problems for themselves. ***'I sit in classes and I see'*** one parent told us. ***'I can tell if they are learning. If not, I follow it up.'*** One of the things this parent found was that many of the Somali speaking students had difficulty understanding instructions given to them by their Amharic-speaking teacher. Since he understood both languages, he was able to act as a translator. ***'Now the teacher asks if he doesn't know how to explain in Somali',*** the parent said. Sitting in on classes also gives students the opportunity to talk to parents and supervisors about problems they experience with individual teachers. For example, students in one school told a visiting supervisor that ***'Some teachers just write on the blackboard and sit down without any explanation'***. Unfortunately, however, not all of the parents committees take the opportunity to sit in on classes or talk

with students, and - according to the students - not all of their complaints have been addressed: in the case described above, the students said that there had been 'no reonse' from the supervisor about this issue.

Another component of the skill upgrading programme involved providing information about how to identify and work with children who have disabilities. Responses from teachers suggest that this information was illuminating, helping them to be more responsive to the needs of their students. For example, one teacher told us that - at first - he thought that one of his students who was deaf was slow. **'I *saw that his attention was poor',*** the teacher said. ***'I went to the back of the class and repeated the lesson and he understood, so I realised that the problem was his hearing. He wasn't slow. Now I put him up front near me during classes.'*** Since the training, teachers in most of the schools now take different measures to assist students with disabilities: such

as rearranging seating plans so that children with poor hearing and eyesight can sit up front; allowing children with physical disabilities more time to get to class; speaking louder, or writing larger on the blackboard; tutoring slower learners; and instructing other students to assist children with disabilities.

Teachers and the new School Language

● ***'Some teachers are guests in our school' (student)*** In 1994, the Somali language was chosen as the medium of instruction in schools in Region 5. For the majority of the groups we surveyed this was a very welcome change, because it meant that most children in the region could now ***'easily understand what is learned'.*** Students and parents were particularly vocal about the advantages of learning in their mother tongue: in two schools Somali-speaking teachers were even described as being the 'best' teachers in the school, simply because the children could understand them.

However, in those schools and communities that were more ethnically diverse, reactions to the new choice of language were more subdued. Parents from a mixed community near Jijiga town mentioned that the perception of the school among Somali speakers had improved as a result of this change, while it had declined for those who spoke other languages.

The decision to adopt Somali in schools affects many aspects of the school system, including staffing requirements (both in schools and local government), curriculum development, management and administration. Teachers who speak Amharic now have to learn to teach in a different language, and face being replaced by teachers who speak Somali: those who already do are in very short supply as described in the opening section. New textbooks need to be developed, and other materials need to be translated from Amharic. Because this decision has widespread implications, implementing the policy has been slow, and erratic. This has

caused unique kinds of complications for students that are only beginning to be recognised and addressed. For example, national examinations were developed in Somali before the Somali textbooks were completed, so in one of schools we visited students had been taught in one language and set examinations in another. Teacher's guides are not likely to be ready in time to be distributed with the new texts. Staff hired to develop the radio programmes to supplement the primary curriculum do not have sufficient resources to complete them, so students may be examined on material they haven't yet learned.

In the majority of schools we visited, problems related to language were being raised and addressed through the parents' committees. The earlier example of a parent fluent in both languages volunteering time to help in lesson translation is a good illustration of the practical benefits of parental involvement. In another school, parents responded to student complaints about the arrival of examinations in Somali by

requesting zonal officials to send the exams back in Amharic 'so that children's performance wouldn't suffer'.

Teachers and Discipline

● ***'Teach our teachers not to punish us' (student)*** In one of the schools we visited, students reported that the behaviour of their teachers was so poor - they smoked in class, insulted and fought amongst one another - that outsiders wouldn't be able to differentiate between them and the students! Our findings suggest that disciplinary problems among teachers (and in two cases with head teachers) had been an issue for most of the schools we visited, but had largely been resolved by removing the principal offenders. In most cases these problems were well known to people both inside and outside the schools, but were seen to be too great to be resolved internally. The majority of cases were subsequently resolved by local education officials, but in one instance the offenders had to be disciplined by the local police. In the majority of

schools we visited parents and head teachers said that teachers were now more self-disciplined in school. A representative from the zonal bureau even said that he had noticed that teachers were better behaved outside the school: for instance, they paid more attention to personal hygiene (combed their hair, wore smart clothes), and no longer chewed qat in public.

A more troubling issue for children is how teachers discipline them. Students in half of the schools reported that at least some of their teachers punish them physically, although this was not confirmed by parents or teachers in one of these schools. According to some of the students, some teachers routinely 'slapped and kicked' them, made them sit in painful positions 'holding our ears', and beat them over the head with books or sticks. There was substantial evidence from the review that children did not prefer this style of discipline. Children in one school labelled this kind of punishment 'abuse', and children in another school said that the way they

were punished was 'severe'. Eight out of eleven students we surveyed in one school said that they preferred to be given advice rather than be beaten. However, statements from regional and zonal supervisors suggest that physical punishment is still widely accepted and practised in schools. ***'How can a child learn without a stick?'*** one teacher asked a school supervisor during a routine visit.

Findings suggest that the use of physical punishment has decreased since the beginning of the training course, and that participants on this course have begun to discover how children can learn without being beaten. In one school children said that there was a great difference between teachers who had and had not attended the course, in terms of the way they were treated. Similar statements were made by parents in another school. Both groups said that the teachers who had attended the course were 'better teachers' because they didn't beat their students. Teachers in half the schools we surveyed said that they used other methods to

discipline children, such as talking with and advising them, giving them extra chores on the school compound, speaking with their parents, and expelling them from school. Neither head teachers nor parents in these schools reported significant behavioural problems with students, suggesting that students did in fact respond to these methods

One of the mechanisms suggested during the training course to address discipline problems in school was to create school disciplinary committees composed of students, teachers, head teachers and parents. Two of the schools reported that they had established such committees, and two others indicated that they had some sort of reporting system in place. These structures appear to be very valuable channels through which children can keep tabs on each other's behaviour - both inside and outside the school. In one school, just having a committee appears to have raised students confidence: *'we know we have the right to be heard'* a student told us. Students also said that because they were

involved in the committees, they could report quarrels that occurred outside the school grounds. Perhaps not surprisingly, there was a strong negative correlation between the use of physical punishment and the use of disciplinary committees: in schools where teachers did not beat students, active reporting mechanisms or formal discipline committees were in place.

Teacher-pupil relationships

● *Some teachers leave and go out without saying anything'* (student) Although the majority of teachers do not beat their students, students in a few schools still felt that some of their teachers 'lacked respect' for them, by making rude remarks, 'mocking' them, or otherwise treating them unfairly. In one school a student reported that this behaviour was more pronounced in interactions between teachers and children with disabilities: *'Some teachers treat children with disabilities differently'* he told the research team.

Another student in this school said that teachers had more respect for the girls than they did for the boys, because the girls were 'quieter'.

Findings suggest that students want better relationships with their teachers. ***'Teachers shouldn't see us as their enemies.'*** a female student at this same school told us. ***'They should try to understand us.'*** Some students say they try to be better understood by reporting incidents to the school disciplinary committee, the parents' committee, their head teacher, or the school supervisor. But in most cases this behaviour was not reported.

Relationships appear to have improved when teachers learned more about the nature of childhood and adolescence provided through the summer training course. ***'We learned how to handle students better because of the child psychology'*** one teacher said. The head teacher at this

school remarked that after this course the teachers in his school were more aware of the 'life situation' of the students because they were more sensitive to the children's needs. They paid more attention to what was bothering them, tried to find out if they were sick, hungry, or having problems at home. One teacher described how this information helped him to assist a student at his school:

'There is a slow learner in Grade 3. I tried to provide additional assistance, but she was not improving. Then I asked about her family background and found that she lives with her elderly grandmother and she is very poor. I brought her case to the attention of the head teacher and the school agreed not to collect money from the family.'

Students in one school also said that those teachers who had gone on the training course treated them with greater respect

than teachers who had not been on the course. *'The trained teachers thank us at the end of class, so we know the class is over'* a student explained. Other teachers simply walk out, leaving the students confused. *'We even think he may come back, but he doesn't.'*

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A RESPONSIVE SCHOOL SYSTEM?

The New Curriculum

● *'It is not our culture' (student)* There is significant anticipation about the new primary curriculum currently being developed for Region 5, which will be written in the Somali language and seeks to reflect Somali lifestyle and culture. Each region is responsible for developing primary school textbooks, teacher's guides, and supplementary materials in a majority language for children in grades one through six.

The MoE sets national standards for the curriculum by providing an outline of the syllabus and objectives in each subject area. These outlines are then used by the regions to emphasise local situations, culture and lifestyle. For practical reasons, the books are being prepared in stages: in Region 5 textbooks have been developed for Grades 1 and 5, and those for Grades 2 and 6 are currently being written. Save the Children has helped to train curriculum developers in technical production and provide funds for their salaries.

Most of the people surveyed - including the majority of students - were aware that a new curriculum was in the process of being developed, and had similar ideas about what they hoped it would include. Their comments also illustrated what they didn't like about the current curriculum. Their primary objection was that the old curriculum didn't reflect Somali culture and religion. This was expressed in different ways. Several groups described items in the textbook as being 'unfamiliar' to people in the region, such as

different kinds of food, household articles, and different styles of architecture. Other things were described as being 'inappropriate' culturally, like illustrations of a woman wearing shorts, and a picture of someone washing a dog. The absence of Somali images - pastoral scenes of herders, pictures of mosques, and the use of Somali names and stories - was mentioned by groups in almost every school. While groups in two of the schools said that it was equally important to learn about things outside Somali culture, respondents clearly wished to see more of their own history and culture represented in the texts, and learn more about their surrounding environment.

Community responses to new concepts

● *'We only see pictures of girls in home economies' (student)* The involvement of outside agencies in discussions about curriculum raises new issues about responsiveness. UNICEF has had a role in framing the centrally designed

curriculum, Save the Children in framing questions to ask communities in Region 5. Both have a child rights perspective, which leads them to raise issues that are in some senses age-old (e.g. gender), but are raised in new ways that may not be seen as relevant by local communities. How have the communities responded to such questions?

On issues of gender and disability students' statements indicated that they were open to new ideas about how the curriculum could reflect all children's potential involvement in schools. They wished to see a balanced representation of males and females in the textbooks, and positive portrayals of people with disabilities. The current lack of a 'gender balance' was reported in five out of the six schools we surveyed (in the sixth school children said that they didn't have any books, so therefore couldn't comment about what they contained). Two schools reported that their texts contained more pictures of men than women, and teachers in one school reported that male names were used more

frequently than female names. Groups in two schools also expressed concern about the way in which females were portrayed: for example, girls in one school said that pictures of females were only found in the home economics subject. Similarly, teachers in four schools observed that people with disabilities had not been adequately portrayed in the old curriculum and said that there should be illustrations of disabled children playing and learning alongside children who do not have disabilities.

- **'We have nothing to do with AIDS' (parent)**

The question of HIV/AIDS was much more contentious, touching as it does on areas that most people do not speak about even outside school. While information about AIDS will be included in the new national syllabus (and is already the topic of a national radio programme), teachers and parents we spoke to in Region 5 were divided as to what aspects of this subject should be taught, and by whom, and there is

concern about the way in which information will be presented in the classroom. Teachers in four of the schools we visited reported that this is a subject they now teach following Save the Children supported training in HIV/AIDS; usually alongside other health issues, and with the assistance of local health personnel. Teachers in another school said they did not apply what they learned in the training in the classroom, because they felt it would encourage children to have sexual intercourse, and they felt that primary school children were too young to learn about the issue (however, the head teacher in this school reported that children do learn about HIV through the national radio programme!).

While there was general agreement among the adults we interviewed that children should be informed about the **effects** of the disease in school, overall, parents were more likely to say that information about transmission and **methods of prevention** should be left to them or to religious

educators, or not taught at all. **'We have nothing to do with AIDS'** one parent remarked **'we have the Holy Quran'**. A parents' committee member in another school said, **'Learning about condoms in school is not good. Religion allows us to teach this and how to prevent it'**. In contrast, children generally appeared to be comfortable with the level and type of information that they were getting about HIV in school, particularly in those schools where students were also actively involved in disseminating messages about the disease.

Since the textbook that will include this subject has not yet been written, Save the Children and the REB are currently exploring ways to bring people together to discuss how this can be done sensitively. Overall, the findings suggest that issues about what children are or should be learning in school have not yet been actively raised in general forums and discussion groups. During the review it became clear that

members of the community had not had a formal opportunity to influence what would go into the new curriculum, but wished to help determine what children would learn in school.

Why are children not in school?

Save the Children's initial activities have aimed at improving the quality of what goes on in schools; this is therefore what the review questions also emphasised. But the majority of children in Region 5 do not attend school; because they have to work, their parents won't allow them to go, school is too far away, or a multitude of other reasons. [Box 3 gives the reasons that people gave for this].

More recent Save the Children activities have been directed towards trying to understand the kinds of changes in the pattern of school provision that might increase access possibilities for children. One group of issues relates to children in families with a pastoral life style. Participatory

research in pastoral areas has highlighted the significant fact that while relatively few children of pastoralists attend formal school, almost all children (and a large percentage of girls) attend at least a few years of Koranic school. There are at least three reasons why this is so: 1) Koranic schools are mobile, and move with communities at certain times of the year; 2) the school day is flexible, and organised around children's work day (Koranic schools typically open in the early evening, for example, when children have returned from grazing animals); and 3) the community values the kind of education that Koranic schools provide (such as knowledge of the Quran, and basic literacy in Arabic) so they help make it possible for children to attend, for example by constructing ponds for water use by students.

In some places, basic literacy and numeracy have been incorporated into the Koranic school curriculum. These initiatives suggest an alternative model of schooling that bridges the gap between, and tries to maintain the best

qualities of, both Koranic and formal schools. Save the Children is now working with the REB in Region 5 to see whether some of the features of Koranic schools can be more widely introduced so that girls and children of pastoralists have a greater chance to attend school.

Do improved schools attract more children?

- *'We are waiting for you and Allah' (child, not in school)* Another approach to the question of access is to consider the effects of school improvements on enrolment patterns. There is a common perception that more parents would encourage their children to be in school if they felt school was useful to them. The review sought to discover whether there had been a perceived change of this kind in Region 5, and also the extent to which members of the community were helping to raise awareness about the plight of children who were not in school.

Four of the schools we visited reported increases in enrolment over the past year. Groups attributed increases in enrolment to two main factors: efforts by parents to raise awareness about the value of education, and overall improvements in school facilities. A central role of the parents' committees is to motivate other parents to send their children to school. **'We tell them to bring their children'** one parent said. **'We tell them that education can bring them out of darkness.'** In most schools parents said they went about this by talking with other parents, and in two schools parents said they also helped other students financially. Students reported that these efforts had helped to change parent's attitudes towards schooling; particularly their attitudes toward the value of schooling for girls. **'Parents know that girls may marry and divorce and come back to the family uneducated, so they had better have their own skills and education'** one student said. Physical renovations appeared to have both direct and indirect effects

on enrolment. Students in one school said that enrolment had increased because there were better facilities within the school like latrines and water tanks. Teachers said that renovations had improved the learning environment by providing better protection from harsh weather, and causing fewer distractions on the school compound. Two schools reported that enrolment had increased for specific groups of children who had particular problems getting to school: girls; children of pastoralists; children with disabilities; children who are very poor; and over-age children. **'Students who weren't here before have come back'** one student said. One girl mentioned that it had been possible for more children to come to school because of the recent federal exemption from paying school fees[vii]. Another girl said that the reason for the increase in female enrolment in her school was that girls were now able to 'plan work around school' due to introduction of shift systems: one month they went in the afternoons, one month they went in the mornings.

vii. Under regionalisation, responsibility for financing primary and junior secondary education has been devolved to the regions. While official school fees have been banned by the central MoE, schools and communities will still be expected to supplement operational budgets for infra- structural improvements through income generation activities (USAID, 1993)

While enrolment increased in the majority of schools we surveyed, two schools reported that certain groups of children (girls and students in higher grades) were more likely to drop out earlier than other children. Girls had a tendency to drop out when they reached maturity - around the age of 13 or 14. One school had attempted to address this by establishing a 'girls-only' class for Grade 2, but found that this wasn't very effective. Parents in two schools reported that the lack of a junior school in the area was a disincentive for

children who made it through to the higher grades: since there was nowhere to go when they graduated, finishing the last few years of school was less important. Parents in one of these schools said they are now lobbying for a new school to be built.

Box 3: What keeps children out of school?

Only about 20% of children of school age in Ethiopia actually attend school, and the percentage is even lower for children living in Region 5. One factor is the long distance to school, particularly in the more rural areas, where classes for children in upper primary grades are often non-existent. Some children in these areas have access to schools for grades 1-3, but then have to walk long distances to attend higher grades, and travel even farther to attend high school. In the town of Heregale, for example, once children complete grade three the closest school available to them is 12 km (or 2 hours walking distance) away. The only high

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school available is located in the regional capitol, Jijiga: because of the long distance to this city (42 kms) most children will be forced to drop out at this stage: others who are more fortunate will have to spend the weekday or semester with relatives in town and then return to their villages over the weekend or when school closes.

Another factor is time. Because children are closely involved in the agro-pastoral activities of their families, many are unable to combine learning at formal schools with their household responsibilities. A primary feature of pastoral life is mobility: moving with the seasons to find water and grassland for herds. Depending on the degree of pastoralism, most children of school age are expected to accompany elders during periods of migration. The main migratory period, called the 'jilaal' dry season, typically occurs between October and March each year. Since children also assist in agricultural activities in April, their ability to attend formal primary schools is limited from May

to September. However, during this five month period children have a different set of obligations that also limit the amount of time they have for school. Both boys and girls, for example, are expected to herd animals, sow crops, and collect firewood, while girls are also expected to collect water, prepare food and sell milk. Some children are also involved in wage labour, either as domestic labourers in towns, or as paid herders.

'My youngest son does go to... school here. He is ten years old, and in addition to his schooling he is looking after the cattle of my son-in-law. My older son is too busy to go to school, he helps my son-in-law with the farming.'[i] 35 year old woman

Girls are particularly disadvantaged in the current system, with few attending - even in the early years -and high drop out rates throughout the primary cycle. In Jijiga zone,

available statistics show that 28% of children enrolled in primary school are girls, falling to 17% at secondary level[i]. The reasons for low girl enrolment are complex and cultural, closely connected to the heavy domestic responsibilities of girls and their future role as wives.

'There is no school in this village, if there was one then I would like to go. There is a Koranic school, but my parents don't let me go, I don't know why. Everyone can go to the school, but as they get older, the girls are too busy to carry on'[i] 9 year old girl

Children with disabilities face similar challenges. One consequence of the ensuing conflict and of poor health conditions in the region is the large number of children with traumatic disorders and physical disabilities. The majority of poor families cannot afford the mobility aids that might make it easier for children with disabilities to attend school, so

> many are simply kept at home.

What has been learnt?

The effect of local involvement

The benefits of involving a wide range of people in the design and development of local education are complementary, with effects at different levels multiplying together to bring greater improvements for children. Information and ideas about problems and solutions are shared across the system; people with power to act at different levels of the system begin working together to achieve change, and others bring in different kinds of resources from their various backgrounds. Finally, it is important to have a variety of people at different levels with an interest in checking up on what others are doing to resolve the problems.

Making a reality of the possibilities of decentralisation

The new national policy of decentralisation provides a framework for community involvement, by giving people the authority and leverage to respond to challenges at different levels. However, it does not automatically lead to more community-responsive education: because of resource and capacity constraints, regionalisation created significant new problems, alongside new opportunities. In particular, officials at regional and zonal levels, as well as teachers themselves, lacked the experience to take on new roles expected of them.

Participatory frameworks need to be created at all levels within the school system - and connections made between them - if benefits are to reach children in schools. Unless responsive mechanisms are created all the way down to classroom level - and children allowed to be part of those mechanisms by providing their own version of events - people responsible for managing schools won't have the proper information on which to act.

Linking providers and users

Seeing what children experience allows officials at regional level to tailor national policies to local situations. In Region 5 regional officials are using their broadened view of the education process and a base of information informed by local realities to begin to shape the school system around the needs of the local community.

The importance of children's own perspectives

Children's views have had a significant effect in challenging adult's perspectives on the purpose of education and on methods used in schools. Perhaps because children are not traditionally consulted, their ideas have had a greater impact through providing a fresh vision: for example, many adults in the community were simply unaware that there were problems with teaching methods and teachers' behaviour in schools. Children's own descriptions of their experiences in

school made this rapidly clear. Children were also more much more open to contentious innovations (such as education on HIV/AIDS) than adults had expected.

A facilitating role for external agencies

External agencies can help to create responsive frameworks by helping people get the information on which to act, and by helping to provide the resources for people to act on what they find. Though lack of resources often stops people from acting once they become aware of a problem, meaningful contributions do not have to be large: in Region 5, Save the Children began with small-scale, well-targeted and relatively low-cost interventions (like funding the cost of transport, exchange visits and teacher training) that could foreseeably be within the reach of the government's education budget.

The style of international NGO work

The review concentrated on processes that had been stimulated among local people, and did not ask participants to comment on the role played by the international NGO in facilitating these processes. But there are some pointers from the experience in Region 5 as to what factors may have contributed to the generally positive results.

● Before the start of the programme Save the Children had considerable knowledge of the area and culture, built up through work in other sectors.

● Management of the programme rested in the hands of local Save the Children staff, who built up relations of trust with both communities and government.

● Save the Children staff was genuinely concerned to support local processes rather than control them, and did not see themselves as experts on education, but rather as facilitators of a process whereby local groups would become

increasingly proficient. Communities and officials were centrally involved in planning, prioritising, implementation and evaluation.

● The programme offered a medium-term involvement in the development of better schooling rather than short discreet inputs, and developed organically in response to what was continually being learnt about the specific nature of the problems to be tackled.

Editors' Conclusions

● Decentralisation of authority within the school system needed to be accompanied by support to build the capacity of officials and teachers to take on new roles.

● Save the Children provided support for planning and supervision, curriculum development, adapting teacher training courses, sharing experience across regions, and

facilitating systems for community involvement. These low cost interventions could be undertaken within resource-constrained government budgets, with a disproportionately high impact on the quality of schooling.

● Mother-tongue teaching was one of the most important factors in making school worthwhile for children. But simply recruiting Somali-speaking teachers (to meet policy requirements), without addressing their lack of understanding of basic teaching methods, failed to solve the problems children experienced in schools.

● The participatory evaluation of the programme involved a wide variety of groups with an interest in education. Their ideas and perspectives were fundamental to the schools' success.

● Before training, many teachers were unaware of children's diverse needs; similarly, before asking the children their

opinions, many adults had no idea that there were problems with teachers' behaviour and teaching methods.

- Capacity-building has an impact not only locally, but also puts regional education officials in a stronger position to define for themselves the needs of their region, and to negotiate for the kinds of funding they prioritise based on their own analysis.

Notes

1 Parker, B., 1995. Ethiopia: Breaking New Ground, Oxfam Country Profile, Oxfam, Oxford

2 Save the Children, 1997. 'Evaluation of Community Resettlement and Reintegration Programme Activities', internal report, Save the Children, Ethiopia

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4 Save the Children 1997

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Listen to those who use the schools - Civil society and education policy - A case study from Peru

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What are the problems for children?

The provision of state education in Peru has expanded steadily since the 1950s. Basic education provision was seen as an essential pan of the state-led development approach of successive governments and achieved rising enrolment figures and falling levels of illiteracy. Nevertheless, these achievements were eroded during the 1980s and early 1990s by the reduction in real terms in education spending as a result of population increase, economic crisis and structural adjustment policies.[1] Education expenditure as a proportion of GDP stood at 3.2% in 1970 falling to 2.22% in 1980 and made a weak recovery to 2.86% in 1996. whereas annual expenditure per pupil declined by 78% in real terms in the period 1970 to 1990.[2]

Although education spending has recovered somewhat in recent years (including increased investment in education by the World Bank), there have been growing concerns about the relevance, quality and effectiveness of primary education

provision given increasing rates of drop-out and repetition of school years. For example, the repetition rate for primary schools was 14% in 1991 rising to 21% in 1996.

The changing political and socio-economic climate in Peru has impacted on attitudes to education as well as the ability of families to access the education on offer. The prolonged economic crisis, combined with the effects of internal conflict (the terrorist MRTA and Sendero Luminoso movements of the 80s and early 90s) have put strain on family survival strategies as poverty, displacement and rural-urban migration have increased. Where family income is falling or becoming less secure, children not only need to work to supplement family incomes, but also seek a wider range of practical skills and experiences which will ensure a livelihood in the future. In this context, a traditional, academic approach to education seems less relevant or useful to children.

A diagnosis of primary education in 1993 (carried out by

World Bank, UN Development Programme, German Technical Assistance, UNESCO and the Ministry of Education)[3] concluded that state education provision was deteriorating and highlighted 4 main characteristics of this decline:

- lack of basic facilities and materials, and inadequate teaching methods in schools;

- low teachers' salaries (leading to a situation where the profession is demoralised, new recruits are less well qualified and teacher training standards are falling);

- inefficient and over-bureaucratic financial and administrative management;

- breakdown of Ministry of Education capacity to operate at a national level (sphere of influence to

the metropolitan area of Lima/Callao).

There are strong links between the changing political and socio-economic context and the deterioration in effective education provision. The above diagnosis identified a number of key factors which, over the previous two decades, had impacted on education provision:

- population explosion and rapid increase in demand for educational provision

- public finances did not increase in line with the increase in coverage of schools

- changes in national political situation which reduced traditional democratic structures and practices in favour of a more centralised and authoritarian style of government which was reflected in educational policymaking

● economic crisis leading to a drastic programme of stabilisation and structural adjustment policies demanded by international monetary organisations which impacted negatively on social spending and policies including education

● the growth of the terrorist organisation Sendero Luminoso which had an important influence in the teaching profession. Teachers and educationalists viewed with suspicion by the state

● institutional weakness within the Ministry of Education due to the restructuring of the state apparatus and the departure of the most able and qualified civil servants to the private sector.

● lack of continuity in the Ministry of Education: 7 changes of minister in 5 years and resulting constant change in policies (training, school texts, curriculum,

structure of MoE etc.)

Education policymakers at the national level, as well as the World Bank, have recognised that state education is currently failing many children, and educational reform is under way. Initially, this process was predominantly based on analysis gathered by consultants working for the Ministry of Education or World Bank. It resulted in an education policy between 1990 and 1995 which focused on school construction and a management reform programme which sought to decentralise funding by providing state funding per pupil at school. The policy was later abandoned due to strong opposition from teachers, unions, educationalists, the church and public opinion, concerned about the quality of education. During this period the majority of World Bank and Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) social credits for education were spent on construction projects, including a high-profile schools construction programme in the run up to the 1995 presidential election.

Since 1995 there has been a major shift in education policy including: a wide-ranging reform of the overall education system (pre-school to tertiary); addressing issues of quality in primary schools; training of teachers and school managers. This fundamental change of approach was due in part to increased World Bank funding for primary education and improved institutional stability within the Ministry of Education. In addition, as explored in the following sections, the increased role of civil society in identifying educational needs and developing appropriate policy responses has been an important factor in this process of change.

The origins of 'Foro Educativo'

Foro Educativo has its origins in a Save the Children seminar, 'Human Development and Education', organised in June 1992 by a group of educationalists and other members of civil society who shared a concern about the quality and relevance of state education, and a conviction that a more

effective and responsive education system was fundamental to social development. The very factors which had contributed to the decline of the education system also conspired against an NGO-led response of this kind, as severe recession, violence, and political crisis polarised Peruvian society and put NGOs in a precarious position vis-a-vis the government:

> *'1992 was the worst year in Peru's political history in the last half of the century. Shining Path, Fujimori's coup d'etat, recession; all those factors make the political environment fragile and highly unstable. Despite all this, (here was) a small group of people coming from the spectrum of the political rainbow and involving themselves in a seminar to discuss long term policies for education! It was a groundbreaking experience after years of biased partisanism, in*

that most of the NGOs were still hard line supporters of 'popular education' (i.e. non-formal education).' Ricardo Villanueva, Save the Children Peru Coordinator

An outcome of this seminar was the establishment of Foro Educativo, originally set up as a think-tank of educationalists working in both the state and non-governmental sectors with the objective of identifying educational needs and making concrete recommendations for state education reform. The creation of this new NGO was based on the conviction that in order to develop and put into practice effective educational reform, it was essential to promote wider participation of members of 'civil society' in educational analysis and policymaking. As its work developed, Foro Educativo also evolved into a national network through which actors at all levels (educationalists, NGOs, teachers, school directors and students) were encouraged to form an alliance and

participate in educational policy debate and policymaking. This has now been formalised within Foro Educativo's structure in that it operates both as a national network and as a research/influencing NGO with a core team of paid professionals who conduct research, produce publications, and develop the network. The NGO is managed by an elected committee made up of members of the Foro Educativo network.

The consensus leading to the initial seminar and subsequent creation of Foro Educativo grew out of an existing dialogue within an already established civil society including educationalists and NGOs, both national and international. Save the Children's decision to fund both the original seminar and the establishment of Foro Educativo as an NGO was based on existing contacts; the then Save the Children Deputy Director was one of the original group who conceived and organised the 1992 seminar and took the initiative forward to establish a permanent forum. It is this ongoing

dialogue with key educationalists which led to a shared outlook and approach to improving the quality of state education in Peru, and the initial consensus on which the work of Foro Educativo has been based (this is explored more fully below under The role and development of an education forum').

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CONSTRAINTS TO EDUCATION POLICY-MAKING

An essential part of Foro Educativo's work has been to reflect upon and analyse the educational context (social, cultural and political as well as economic) within which they, and the policymakers in government, operate. This section looks at factors identified by Foro Educativo as determining the educational context and limiting the development of 'relevant' educational policies which can respond more effectively to children's needs. This interpretation has been

developed (and continues to be debated) through discussion, research and analysis by the core team of Foro Educativo with input from the other members of the network (the mechanisms for ensuring wide participation in this process are explored later under The role and development of an education forum).

The purpose of education

The purpose of the Peruvian state education system has traditionally been seen in terms of producing good citizens who will contribute to and benefit Peruvian society. This view has been reflected at all levels, by policymakers, teachers and parents:

> *'The main characteristic for a relevant education is that it should contribute to local development... an education system which prepares the student to play an active role in*

the local economy' Teacher in Piura

'In general, parents in rural areas do not want their children to have the kind of education they had. They want changes in the education system, but they see it more in terms of a child going through the formal education system in order to benefit the family; for example, whether they will come out better prepared to be good fishermen...' Teacher in Piura

While this view of the purpose of education is legitimate, it often differs from the views of children themselves: *'We have our dreams and plans, but the teachers don't let us carry them out'* (Girl in Piura). An education which focuses solely on preparation for future economic development at the local and national levels tends to ignore the present reality, needs and dreams of the subjects of the education system, the

children themselves. This approach implies that children's own personal development and their current social role (as **children**) is less important than, and even unconnected to, their future role as productive adults.

Through a series of papers developed in consultation with all levels of civil society, Foro Educativo has been able to challenge this traditional Peruvian view of the purpose of education, defining a relevant education as one which places emphasis on the reality of children's present as well as their future opportunities.

Centralised planning/national diversity

A perspective which sees education principally in terms of preparing future citizens for their role in national society also begs the question of how this 'national society' is defined. Given the diversity and complexity of Peruvian society, and the rapid changes under way, it is impossible to define a

single, homogenous vision of national identity, culture and society. An exclusive focus on an abstract future 'goal' characterised by uniform national identity and aspirations has hindered the development of a relevant educational system which is able to respond to the differing realities of children's experience and opportunities:

'They still make the mistake of planning from Lima, without considering that there are different places and environments, and therefore different adults and children... urban interests are completely different from rural interests, and the perspective of a child on the coast is completely different to the perspective of a child in the mountains or the jungle: so it's very easy for the planner to focus on an area of certainty such as knowledge, rather than looking at wider individual development because this is too abstract.'[i] Interview with President of the Piura regional education network

[i] Piura is a northern coastal city which was heavily affected by the 'el niño' storms.

The dominant perspective of Peruvian society generally shared by policymakers within the state structures is one which is principally urban, Spanish speaking, based on 'Western' culture, and 'modern' aspirations. This view is both a cause as well as a symptom of a centralised approach to planning which ignores the cultural, linguistic, religious and ethnic heterogeneity of Peruvian society, leaving large sectors of the population alienated from 'mainstream' culture within the education system:

'The users of the Peruvian education system found themselves in a hidden conflict with an educational system which favoured an imaginary national society and which ignored individual needs and interests while excluding the elements of ownership and identity of

those who did not fit in with the identified cultural, linguistic, religious and ethnic norms.[4]

While educational reforms in the 1970s sought to recognise and respond to cultural diversity in Peru, the underlying aim was to seek effective ways of facilitating the integration of different groups into an overall national framework: *'The emphasis of educational reform was based on a vision of an ideal society which the different state reforms were working towards creating. Although modified, the same concepts of nation and citizenship determined the course of Peruvian educational policy.*[5]

Limited participation in policy-making

As well as being geographically and culturally centralised, the process of education policy-making has also been politically centralised in terms of lack of participation of the different

actors and stakeholders involved in the education system, including teachers, parents and children themselves. In common with most countries, education reform has traditionally been seen as the responsibility and domain of the state. In the past, seeking the agreement of teachers (those, after all, responsible for putting policies into practice at the classroom level) has not been seen as a priority by policymakers. The importance of teacher participation in the decision-making process to ensure that reforms are relevant, workable and effective has been even less recognised. This approach has led to a situation where teachers on the ground may be unaware of new policies, or may simply decide to ignore them, regardless of their usefulness.

Parents have also been ignored as potentially important actors in policymaking. both by government and the teaching profession. Their participation tends to be considered by teachers and educationalists as at best irrelevant and at worst disruptive, a view voiced by this teacher in the Andean

department of Cusco:

> *'The best parent is the one who sends their child to school and then doesn't make a fuss, doesn't come in to school, or doesn't appear. On the other hand, a bad parent constantly comes in, follows his/her child around and constantly asks questions and shares opinions.'*

In all areas of social policymaking, there is growing recognition of the value of wider civil participation, both in terms of giving legitimacy to new policies adopted and ensuring that those policies are appropriate. This approach to policymaking is still new and practical ways of facilitating the process are still being developed and tested, (as described in greater depth in the following section). As part of this process, the value of the participation of children and adolescents is only just beginning to be recognised. Children are still seen as passive beneficiaries of social policies,

including education reform, rather than actors in their own right: ***'I don't think it's a problem of a lack of channels for participation or forms of organisation, but a lack of confidence in the ability of children to take part themselves.'*** Interview with member of Foro Educativo.

Since the introduction of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, there has been a growing recognition in Peru, and throughout the region, of the importance of children's right to participation, reflected through initiatives such as the creation of a youth parliament. However, the nature and level of children's participation through such initiatives is often ambiguous, limited and symbolic, with the voice of children defined and channelled in adult terms and through adult structures. Within the education system, even where children are encouraged to voice their opinions, the extent of their participation is often limited by adults, as highlighted by children themselves: ***'The adults listen to us, but when it***

comes to making decisions they don't support us'

Existing attitudes to children and perceptions of their role and abilities are deeply ingrained and slow to change. The process of change is complex and challenging, even for those adults with the best intentions:

> *'Everybody; teachers, parents, people who work with children, do so with the best intentions. So what is it that makes all of us surpress the autonomy of children? I think we have to look more closely at what it means to be a responsible adult in terms of how we deal with children, because what happens in practice is that if someone gives liberty and independence to children, he/she is seen as irresponsible'.*
> Interview with member of Foro Educativo

The next section outlines how Foro Educativo has embarked

on the process of building up a broad-base for participation in education policy-making and changing attitudes towards children.

The 'culture of childhood'

The attitudes to children (and their participation) discussed above stem from what Foro Educativo refers to as the predominant 'culture of childhood' which needs to be explored and challenged if more relevant approaches to education are to be developed. In Peru, children have not only been absent from the process of educational policymaking, but also from the process of education itself.

As mentioned above, the ratification of the Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC) has served as a catalyst for stimulating national debate on children and their role in development policy. However an enormous gulf between the provisions of the CRC and the reality of children's lives

persists, and rights relating to children's participation continue to prove the most challenging for adults to accept.

'The spirit of the Convention appears formally in the policies developed, but it is not connected to the cultural changes which are required, or the elements which are needed in order to create new attitudes and ways of conceptualising the role of children and the relationship between children and adults.' Ricardo Villanueva, Save the Children Programme Coordinator, Peru

Traditional attitudes to children in Peru are characterised as authoritarian and protective. Childhood is defined as an inferior state of human development - children are seen as incomplete adults in the making while adults are mature and superior. Because children's needs tend to be defined in terms of what they lack, their weakness and limitations, the rights focus tends to relate to provision and protection. A focus on these rights alone, while ignoring the right to

participation and development, runs the risk of legitimising an authoritarian and hierarchical perception of the relationship between adults and children:

'Not only children, but also adolescents in different social sectors suffer repressive and negative conduct from the authorities, their parents and teachers in a bid to subjugate their will to the iron will of adults. They are seen as rebels, badly behaved, insolent, lacking respect and violent'[6]

'Too much protection and emphasis on provision can compromise the independence of the child, his/her development, discovery, the establishment of the norms needed to live with others, making decisions and taking part in putting them into practice.'[7]

This view leads to an assumption that children are, or should be, passive and dependent within the educational process, and that the problems faced by children can only be tackled by adults. This attitude is part and parcel of an outlook which sees the role of formal education as preparing children for a future in an adult world (as yet unknown, but predicted by adults) and ignores how children deal with challenges in their daily lives.

Within the formal education system, this outlook translates as the provision of different items or sets of knowledge deemed relevant to each age group, rather than building on the skills which children bring to the classroom and are developing to address real problems and social situations.

'knowledge is given out in doses based on an idea of what the children can or cannot do, without giving them challenges to resolve... The idea of taking into account the previous knowledge of children (not just in terms of

information, but rather the body of theoretical and practical knowledge, values and attitudes which influence their way of thinking, feeling and acting) in order to make links between what they know and what they are learning is not yet widely practised.'[8] Ramirez De Sanchez Moreno. A view of children as passive victims of their circumstances leads to the predominant 'deterministic' view of childhood which sees the future development of children as determined entirely by the constraints presented by their environment such as poverty, isolation, etc.

'The opinion that environmental conditions alone determine a child's development opportunities has led some authors to conclude that the high risk conditions which 70% of Peruvian children live in, affect beyond remedy the possibility of a healthy development.[9]

While it is important to recognise the challenges that children

face, it is also important to recognise that these challenges provide opportunities for children to develop their own problem-solving skills. An approach that focuses on what children lack and responds by 'providing' the knowledge adults think they need can even become a self-fulfilling prophecy: children identified in terms of their 'problems' can become children with learning difficulties, poor self-esteem, insecure, conflictive etc.

Linked to these assumptions about the capacities of children are a range of gender-related assumptions; for example, that girls have less capacity for abstract reasoning than boys, or have more limited aspirations. These kind of assumptions make up the prevailing 'culture of childhood' and need to be identified, unpicked and challenged if that culture is to be shifted.

Given that the capacities of children and the realities of their lives are currently absent from the process of formal

education itself, it is hardly surprising that policy-makers and adults generally find it difficult to recognise the potential of children as key actors in educational policymaking, and to find ways of facilitating their active and effective participation.

'When we talk about policies we are talking about decisions which involve or should involve the whole of society. One of the biggest obstacles in promoting change in the educational system is a culture of childhood and education shared by the media, families, teachers, pupils, academics, teacher trainers, international bodies and technical teams in the Ministry of Education. We need to involve every one of these sectors, in one way or another, in the process of building consensus.' Member of Foro Educativo

The Response

A shared vision of development

The point of departure for Foro Educativo was a vision of development which places the ***individual*** at the heart of policy, as opposed to approaches which focus principally on economic growth. In terms of education, the focus of Foro Educativo's work from the outset has been on human (and therefore child) development in defining both educational objectives as well as processes.

This focus on human development argues that basic education provision should respond to a range of key human needs shared by all individuals throughout their lives. In order to structure this approach, the Foro Educativo team has adopted the analytical framework of Chilean economist Manfred Max Neef[10], who identified the following basic human needs:

- survival

- protection
- affection
- understanding
- participation
- recreation
- creativity
- identity
- liberty

As explored below, Foro Educativo's focus, analysis and recommendations have evolved as a result of the input of a wide range of actors through the network. Nevertheless, the basic principles outlined above continue to form the foundations of its thinking, and the organisation's achievement has been to bring others on board and build a shared understanding (what Foro Educativo calls "building consensus") among those involved in education in the governmental and non governmental sectors as well as those

working on the ground.

Building a national consensus on education

The first stage of Foro Educativo's work was to start a process of internal debate within Peruvian civil society, with the objective of building a consensus on the purpose of education based on the vision of human development in education outlined above. This was carried out in two phases:

- *Phase 1, 1994-5:* formulating a set of educational principles and approaches based on a diagnosis of the basic needs of Peruvian children and adolescents, with input from a wide range of actors involved in education.

- *Phase 2, 1995-7:* based on the educational needs identified in the first phase, production of a series of documents, exploring and proposing policy changes

in early, primary and secondary level education in Peru.

Under Phase 1, more than 2,000 people in 18 of the 24 departments of Peru participated in a series of 'National Educational Debates' to discuss an initial 'proposal' formulated by Foro Educativo's technical. These people represented different sectors of civil society including teachers and other education professionals, as well as with Ministry of Education representatives, to ensuring that input reflected a wide debate around educational issues.

Through these consultations, participants took part in identifying key needs of the population in relation to education and fed in comments and suggestions from both national and local regional perspectives. The consultations aimed to explore not only the problems that children and adolescents face, but also the resources which they draw on to tackle these problems, as well as exploring adults' and children's

attitudes to and expectations of education in responding to these challenges.

This process culminated in the production of a publication **Bases para un Acuerdo Nacional por la Educación** (Foundations for a National Consensus on Education) in 1997, which was then presented and debated in a national conference on 'Education for Human Development'. In addition, the final document was debated at smaller regional conferences organised by **Mesas Regionales** (local education networks) which have been set up or strengthened, as a result of the consultation process initiated by Foro Educativo. Through the participation of these networks in the main regions (Cusco, Iquitos, Piura) it has been possible to ensure the development of educational proposals sensitive to local regional needs.

The extensive process of consultation and national debate on educational issues has generated a climate of excitement and

renewal within both governmental and non-governmental educational institutions. The proposals produced have been well received by the technical teams of the Ministry of Education who were involved in the consultation process and thus share a sense of ownership. The recently published Basic Curriculum for Primary Education now includes within its theoretical framework a focus on human development and attention to the basic needs of children:

'Education should be orientated towards human development, including within this concept, the integrated development of the abilities, skills, competencies and knowledge needed to face a changing world. As part of our commitment to the national population, early years and primary education should take account of the needs of children and contribute to satisfying them'[11]

In practical terms, this means the development of educational provision which responds to the needs of children and adolescents in their daily lives and helps develop the skills needed to secure a better future for both the individual and the country. There is, for example, a growing consensus around the need to develop a series of educational approaches focusing on 'life skills' such as problem solving, risk assessment, initiative, and the tools needed for the 'modern world' such as English and information technology.

The consultation process sought to give equal weight to both academic (educational specialists, Ministry of Education etc) and non-academic (teachers, local education officials etc) input, and this distinctive approach proved successful in stimulating national debate. As a result of the consultation process, Foro Educativo has come to be regarded as a legitimate representative of a wide range of perspectives in the field of education.

Building capacity for wider participation of civil society

As the process which led to the production of the **Bases** document evolved, Foro Educativo and its members became increasingly aware of low levels of participation of key stakeholders. In response, the organisation has developed a number of initiatives aimed at encouraging broader, more effective participation.

Once Foro Educativo recognised that participation of teachers and local authorities in the first stages of their work had been limited, efforts were made to bring them in more closely to the second phase, through the local **Mesas Regionales** (local education networks). Foro Educativo established a wide ranging information network, and initiatives such as teachers' workshops designed to promote the active participation of those working on the ground in testing new policies. Direct input from parents and children, however, was still absent, and the need to find ways of

including them in the process of national debate on education was identified as a priority.

- ***Information network***

To improve information exchange across regions, Foro Educativo pioneered the establishment of a fax-based information and policy network. The network makes accessible information on education policy initiatives which does not normally reach local education professionals and schools, and in turn also provides a channel for grass-roots responses to be fed into the national debate.

Twenty institutions are involved in managing the network, working in the regional departments of Ayacucho, Cusco, Cajamarca, Ica, Iquitos, Lambayeque, Piura and Puno as well as the metropolitan department of Lima-Callao. Information is disseminated and exchanged through ***Contacto Foro,*** a bi-monthly publication which presents and analyses

up to date information on educational policies. It is targeted principally at teachers, who use the information to introduce changes at the classroom level, and education authorities at the regional level who also use it as a resource in decision-making and the introduction of educational innovations:

> *'I have tried to link the information I receive (through Contacto Foro) with the reality here in Cusco. For example, I have begun to use some indicators developed by Foro Educativo in supervising the work of early years teachers. We have developed a 'sheet' so that the young children can tell us in a spontaneous way their views about their kindergarten, their teacher, and other things that can give us an idea of what the children themselves want. We include the information gathered using this 'sheet' in sessions arranged by the Local Education*

Authority where teachers learn from one another using a range of worksheets and resource packs which help them to turn these ideals into practice.' Interview with Nohemí Estrada, Specialist in Early Years Education at the Local Education Authority in Cusco

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Box 1: Selected themes covered under *Contact Foro*

Contacto Foro No 8 is entitled 'Barefoot Youngsters with Empty Dreams', and tries to put forward the 'other face' of youth. Under the title of 'Youth and adolescence; nothing more than violence?' this issue covers university brigades who have spontaneously organised themselves to offer practical assistance to those left homeless through the 'El Niño' floods and storms throughout the country.

'It was challenging to face people's prejudices about

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young people, like, for example, when they say we don't care, or that we won't be able to do what we say we will - it was sad and disappointing to find so many doors closed because of lack of confidence in us, but we realised that we could achieve a lot when we worked together, and that we are able to get together.' (interview with member of university brigade for Contacto Foro)

Contacto Foro No 11, 'Vulnerable but not beaten', aims to challenge perceptions of children. Under the editorial title 'Education in difficult situations' the following questions were explored: 'Is it possible to educate in situations of risk or disadvantage? Is it possible for girls and boys who are undernourished, who work, who are victims of violence or who come from poor homes to get on in life?'

'We are 9 siblings, but not all with the same mother. In

my house I live with my little sister. I have lots of animals: duck, cock, dog, iguana, white mouse. I breed and sell iguanas at 5 soles each, 10 for a pair. I set the price. But I won't sell the mouse. It's called Willy and goes about on my shoulder. My family sell pigs and I help with the selling. I like the religion and pastrymaking classes. We sell them and they give us some of the earnings. I invest my earnings in buying animals. I'd like it if there was a secondary level at this school so I could study languages' (Johnny, working child.)

Far from implying that environmental conditions do not impact on children's development, this issue underlines the danger of assuming that, because of their circumstances, underprivileged children cannot benefit from education and get on in life. This issue of Contacto Foro highlights the capacity which a group of working children have for

maintaining their humanity and dreams for the future. The publication concludes that however hard children try, if the education available to them assumes that they are not capable of moving on, they will effectively be condemned to repeat the cycle of poverty and its associated ills.

Contacto Foro is circulated to some 4,000 people - it is also circulated by each centre that receives it, so the full extent of coverage is higher and yet to be calculated. Information from different sources (statistical data, official information from the Ministry of Education, specialised information and interviews with teachers and pupils) is presented accessibly in each 4 page issue covering a specific theme. Themes covered to date include:

- Taking the pulse of PLANCAD (teacher training plan)
- The start of the school year

- How much does school cost and who pays?
- Survival and protection: the needs of children and adolescents
- An educational information network based on the perceptions of children
- And after school...what? Educational options
- Barefoot youngsters with empty dreams
- Competencies...the key word in the new curriculum
- Youth and adolescence: nothing more than violence?
- Vulnerable but not beaten. Education in difficult situations
- A living school which learns from children

- ***Teachers' workshops***

Teachers' workshops have been an important tool in making

links between policy and practice. Through these workshops, teachers learn about new policies and practical educational approaches which can help them identify the needs of the students in their classes, and put forward their own ideas for workable responses to those needs.

These are not workshops on teaching methodologies or concrete innovations to be tried out in the classroom, but an opportunity for teachers to rethink the purpose of the education they are giving their students. Teachers are encouraged to analyse the policies developed by the Ministry of Education, as well as their own views of the purpose of education, their role as teachers and that of their students, their practical approach to teaching, and different ways of interpreting and implementing new policies.

Giving children a voice

As discussed earlier in this case study, one of the greatest

challenges for Foro Educativo and its members has been to find effective ways of promoting the participation of children in the monitoring, analysis and development of effective education policy. Inextricably linked to this process has been the process of challenging adult perceptions of children and the prevailing 'culture of childhood', discussed below.

Children have a dual role in the process of developing educational policy: they represent a key point of reference for analysing the impact of the education system, but are also actors in their own right with opinions of the education system and their requirements from that system. Foro Educativo has developed the following strategies to facilitate children's involvement in these two processes:

- ***A set of child focused indicators***

The term 'child focused' is used to describe approaches which take as a starting point what children experience. Foro

Educativo's child focused indicators have been designed to evaluate educational quality based on an analysis of children's needs. Based on the basic needs identified at the start of Foro Educativo's consultative process (survival, protection, affection, understanding, participation, recreation, creativity, identity and liberty - see Section II, part 1.1), a set of indicators were developed to test how the education provided addresses children's basic needs. Seven indicators were identified for each basic need, including the following examples:

- students who work
- schools that offer occupational skills workshops
- students who drop out of school due to pregnancy
- children who are insured against accidents happening within school
- teachers trained in sex education
- teachers who call their pupils by their first name

- teachers using active teaching methods in their classes
- student counselling offered by the school
- number of pupils who belong to a youth organisation
- schools which offer extra-curricular activities
- number of recreational facilities/resources per student
- schools which use the mother tongue as the principle teaching language
- schools which use self-assessment as an instrument of evaluation
- schools which develop activities based on student initiatives

The indicators evaluate factors related to what a school can offer (e.g. number of schools that offer occupational skills training workshops) as well as factors which relate to

educational demand and which, while affecting educational opportunities, are not necessarily linked to the school system (e.g. number of students who drop out of school due to pregnancy). In this way, factors previously seen as abstract or secondary, such as the relationship between teachers and students and student participation are included in an approach to evaluating educational quality for the first time in Peru.

'It is not enough to analyse the possibilities available to groups or individuals in addressing their needs, but it is also important to examine how the context limits or encourages, the development of those possibilities by the groups or individuals.' Max Neef, Manfred[12]

The focus on children's needs as a starting point for evaluation represents a new departure from more orthodox approaches used by policymakers and investors (i.e. local

and national government as well as international bodies such as the World Bank) which have focused on indicators such as repetition and drop-out rates, or factors related to economic investment in education such as infrastructure, materials, teacher training etc. within a framework of inputs and outputs.

The new set of child focused indicators are currently still being tested and Foro Educativo is exploring ways of incorporating them into work with schools through the network. In the long term, it is hoped that they will be taken up by the Ministry of Education (some senior MoE officers have already been involved at the development stage) and other key policymaking and funding bodies such as the World Bank. The use of child focused indicators in evaluating and developing education policy are part and parcel of a new way of looking at childhood and the purpose of education, the process of their uptake by policy-makers is liable to be long and slow.

● *A mechanism for children's participation: The 'Dream Game'*

The Dream Game is a board game which facilitates the active participation of children in the policy debate, gathering their opinions and perceptions of education. The dissemination of this information provides policymakers, education officials and teachers with a basis to incorporate children's perspectives into new educational approaches. The game was developed and piloted by Foro Educativo (initially with 7 to 11 year olds) and has since been used with children and adolescents at both state and private schools in Lima and other urban and marginal urban areas of the country (Iquitos in the Amazon region, Piura on the northern coastal strip, Arequipa in the arid region in the south).

Through an activity which is designed to be enjoyable and non-threatening, the children and adolescents express their dreams, interests and perceptions of their own experience of

school, providing reference points for the analysis of educational policies. For example, a secondary school pupil playing the game in Iquitos had the following to say about the curriculum:

> **'A subject I would add in the first place is guidance for young people to help them with some of the problems they have, like gangs' While the same child suggested dropping the following subject: 'religion, because everyone has their own belief and school, through religion classes, can sometimes create divisions. I would let everyone choose for themselves.'**

● **Youth consultations**

These give adolescents the opportunity to express their opinions on the education they receive, as well as their needs. The meetings promote open dialogue on the problems

and challenges faced by young people now and in the future. Discussion is stimulated through a range of newspaper cuttings: the young people choose the subjects of most interest to themselves and discuss the issues raised, reflecting on how changes in educational policies can contribute to addressing these issues and challenges.

As an example, the government is currently proposing the creation of a further two years of secondary school (the 'bachillerato' - equivalent to sixth form in the UK). A fifth grade student had the following response: *'why don't they increase the number of classes instead of adding an extra year? Because those 2 years might be a waste of time for lots of young people. We already go to school for 11 years which is tiring enough, and now they're going to add two more! I think they should think very carefully before they impose the 'bachillerato'. It would be better to improve what we've already got, taking into*

consideration the views of the students and teachers.'

Changing attitudes to childhood

As already discussed, for participation of children and adolescents to be truly effective a shift in the 'culture of childhood' is needed. Paradoxically, as the work of Foro Educativo highlights, the current 'culture of childhood' can be challenged by the very process of child participation itself, both in terms of focusing on their educational needs as well as including them in the policymaking process.

The importance of child participation and of challenging perceptions of childhood in order to build a more effective and responsive educational system was not recognised by the members of Foro Educativo when the organisation was established. It only became increasingly clear as the consultative process developed. This area of work represents a new departure for Foro Educativo, and new

approaches are being explored:

> *'Foro Educativo started out with a focus on developing proposals for educational policy reform, teaching practice, management etc. But placing children at the centre of their work was not there at first It comes out in the books on indicators and early years education. This is an important step, but... I don't yet see a permanent focus at the heart of Foro Educativo's work on this issue of the 'culture of childhood' or child participation and protagonism... it's not completely there yet.'*
> Member of Foro Educativo

Nevertheless, the development of Foro Educativo's work to date points towards a clearer focus on children, based on the initial focus on the development of the individual, the

identification of basic needs, and the focus on the potential and capacities of children. This focus is evident in **_Contacto Foro,_** both in terms of the underlying purpose of the information network as well as through the themes covered by the publication.

Partnership and the role of an INGO

As we have seen, Foro Educativo's approach is to link the grass-roots and policymakers by building local partnerships between government, local education authorities, academics, NGOs, teachers and students. Their relationship with international organisations is an extension of this approach and has the potential for influencing policy beyond the national sphere. Foro Educativo has working links with the World Bank and with UNESCO, as well as other INGOs who have followed and supported its work. This section looks more closely at the relationship between Foro Educativo and Save the Children.

Foro Educativo is a distinctively Peruvian initiative which came about at a critical historical moment as a result of local conditions. Nevertheless, from its inception in 1992, Save the Children has had an important role in shaping the organisation and its work. Save the Children's initial decision to fund the first seminar, and subsequently fund the establishment of Foro Educativo as an NGO, was based on the existing dialogue with key individuals and organisations who shared similar concerns about education and perspectives on development. It is important to recognise that Save the Children staff in Peru are local actors in their own right and are well linked in to local networks and debates. This means that, through local staff, the attention of Save the Children as an INGO (working nationally, regionally and internationally) can be drawn to innovative and effective initiatives as they emerge, so that priorities can be identified and appropriate responses developed. The history of Save the Children's relationship with Foro Educativo is a good example of this

process.

Despite the convergence of outlook and priorities, Save the Children was initially concerned that Foro Educativo would become purely a think-tank, divorced from the reality of children's lives and education provision on the ground. However, through renewed involvement with Foro Educativo since 1996, Save the Children has actively contributed to the development of the NGO's ideas and strategies, leading to the piloting of child focused approaches to analysing education needs and influencing policymaking through specific projects such as the children's board game (The 'Dream Game' - see above):

> ***"This was groundbreaking work for Foro Educativo and in many ways for our (Save the Children's) work in South America, because it was investing in the design of a methodology to access young people's opinions.'*** Martin Kelsey,

Save the Children Programme Director South America

In addition, through its partnerships with other local actors, Save the Children has also been able to give practical support to Foro Educativo as its work has developed. To balance the concern that, for logistical reasons, the focus of Foro Educativo's work to date has been largely concentrated in urban areas, Save the Children has facilitated links with another partner, ADAR (The Association for the Development of Rural Amazonia), to ensure that rural children are brought into the network.

The partnership between Save the Children and Foro Educativo represents a two-way process of discussion and mutual learning. As one of Save the Children's key partners in the region, Foro Educativo had an important role in helping Save the Children to define a new regional strategy which focuses on education as one of the key themes. The

experience with Foro Educativo has shown formal education to be an area where Save the Children can work effectively with local partners to develop child focused indicators and methods for facilitating child participation in monitoring education quality and developing policy changes. It has also helped Save the Children to focus on these approaches and apply them to other areas of work beyond education.

By involving Foro Educativo closely in the regional strategy and programme, Save the Children also aims to ensure that the approach being developed in Peru achieves a wider impact in the region. As part of the regional strategy, Save the Children will embark next year on similar work with partners in Colombia and Brazil:

> *'What is important about the Foro Educativo project is that although it is obviously set in the Peruvian context, addressing very specific education issues in Peru, the methodology, how*

you work with small children in the classroom, thinking about information linkages, etc, is obviously a methodology which can be applicable in other countries... there is interest in both Colombia and Brazil to take that model and make changes as appropriate.' Martin Kelsey, Save the Children Programme Director South America

Challenges for the Future

Since its creation in 1993, Foro Educativo has been successful in stimulating debate around education and facilitating broad participation in that debate. The demand for participation has in fact proved greater than anyone had anticipated; as word has spread, schools in different pans of the country have requested to be linked to the information network, and offered themselves as 'nodes' (a regional

centre for disseminating Contacto Foro, receiving feedback and channelling it back to Foro Educativo). Members of Foro Educativo consistently report a sense of excitement and new consensus on the purpose of education and a shared commitment to consultation at all levels of the education system.

The consultative style of Foro Educativo's work, based on communication, feedback and cross-referencing, facilitates the identification of gaps and limitations. It was through this approach that the importance of bringing children more actively into the policymaking process was identified early on. Other limitations to participation and representation have also come to light, raising new challenges for future work including the following examples:

- How can parents become more involved in the national education debate through the information network? One obvious way to approach this is

through Parent Teacher Associations, but this would only involve parents who already take an active role in their children's education. Innovative ways of accessing parents who are more removed from the education system - those who either do not support their children's school attendance or decide remove their children from school - are being explored.

● How can children who are not in school (non-enrolees or dropouts) be involved in the process of consultation? Seeking the opinions of children in school may help explain why children lose interest and decide to drop out, but more effort needs to be directed towards accessing the educational attitudes and needs of children outside the system.

● How can the rural perspective be brought more closely into the process? To date, rural schools and children have been under-represented, although

links have recently been established with organisations in the Amazon region. The challenge to open up the network more extensively to rural areas is important given that these are the areas where problems of non-enrolment, absenteeism and drop out are highest. Logistical problems of lack of resources and effective communication systems in rural schools are a limiting factor: Contacto Foro may reach rural towns by fax, but not isolated communities and schools. A first step towards addressing this issue is to find out more about how Contacto Foro is already being distributed informally beyond the established fax network.

● How can cultural differences, particularly where minority languages are involved, be taken into account by the network to ensure that it is more accessible to and reflects the concerns of children from diverse cultural groups? Minority languages

and bilingual education are crucial issues within national education policy to which Foro Educativo has not yet given priority. The absence of new debate on these issues within the network may reflect the problem of reaching and engaging isolated and rural areas, both because of technical and resource limitations and the fact that the language of the network is Spanish.

A crucial challenge facing Foro Educativo, in common with all NGOs involved in the process of influencing policy, is how to track effectively the impact of its work on policymaking and, in the long term, on the educational opportunities available to children. As we discussed in the first section, since 1995 there has been a shift in education policy away from infrastructure development to more of a focus on the quality and effectiveness of education provided in schools. This shift has coincided with the 'proposals' published by Foro Educativo based on input through regional consultations and

the information network. While it is known that key Ministry of Education officials are involved in the consultative processes and receive material produced by Foro Educativo, it is difficult - perhaps impossible - to measure the extent to which Foro Educativo's input impacts on the policy decisions made by the Ministry of Education. In an attempt to track the impact of their work, Foro Educativo systematically logs its activities and involvement on different education issues, setting them against policy decisions made by the Ministry of Education, but recognises that many other external factors also influence how decisions are taken.

A further problem in gauging impact is that while lip service is often paid to the proposals developed by Foro Educativo, this may not translate into changes in practice. For example, child focused indicators may generate a lot of interest, but are not necessarily adopted and used effectively. The very nature of Foro Educativo's work requires a long-term view: the fundamental goal of changing attitudes both to children and to

education is part of a process which is necessarily long, slow, diffuse and difficult to track.

To date, Foro Educativo has concentrated its work within Peru and this provides a sound basis for it to build alliances with other education networks and organisations working towards similar objectives in the wider Latin American region. Building links, together with finding ways of engaging more proactively with influential multilateral agencies such as the World Bank represent new strategic aims for the organisation to take forward in the coming years.

The financial sustainability of Foro Educativo is also a major challenge. During its establishment, the organisation has been relatively dependent on Save the Children[ii]. However the fact that it now has a growing profile and has demonstrated capacity to generate materials and reach a wide-ranging public stand it in good stead to diversify its funding base both

through existing and future links with other agencies.

ii Foro Educativo raises funds through annual fees
from associated members

Finally there are macroeconomic factors which could impact
on the work of Foro Educativo (and all those involved in
education reform) in the future. As economic recession
looms, with Brazil already in financial crisis and instability set
to spread across the region, there are fears that education
may once again slip down the public spending priority list.

What has been learnt?

The Peru case study shows how a local NGO can play a key
role in building connections between civil society and the
government sector to open up the debate on education and
stimulate a process through which education policy and
practice can become more responsive to children's real

needs. The study describes an approach which offers useful lessons on how to build capacity for broad-based participation on education issues and challenge existing attitudes towards children.

Making links between civil society and government

Operating within the structure of civil society at a time of social division and distrust, a local NGO can play a crucial role in rebuilding links between different individuals and organisations in the state and non-state sectors. In this case, the fact Foro Educativo was established by people with a long-term commitment to education gave it the legitimacy to engage with both users and providers of education systems and to pioneer a process of dialogue between the groups. Foro Educativo's catalytic role in this process demonstrates three important components:

- providing a starting point for debate (here a

developmental vision of education)

● organising opportunities for dialogue and ensuring broad-based participation from both the academic and non-academic sectors (regional consultations, the network)

● managing the process of consultation and feedback and synthesising the outcomes into working outputs (education policy proposals)

Building capacity for broad-based participation

The process described above seized an opportunity, at a particular moment in the Peruvian political and social context, to develop wider social participation in policy-making. It encouraged stakeholders to see that they had a valid contribution to make to the education debate and similarly helped government officials to recognise the value of listening

to teachers and users. Foro Educativo's experience demonstrates:

- the power of a common voice among stakeholders in influencing policy-makers

- the importance of a sense of shared ownership between civil society and government in relation to proposals for policy change

- the legitimisation of policies through broad-based participation in their development, ensuring that they are more responsive to children's needs and reflect regional and cultural differences

- the importance of participation of teachers and users in translating policies into practice in the classroom.

In terms of measuring the impact of its influencing work, Foro Educativo has faced a common problem: how far can policy change be attributed to the network's activities, and how far have other external factors influenced policymaking? Although there has been a shift in education policy-making in the direction of Foro Educativo's proposals, the organisation is realistic about the dangers of over-emphasising its role in this process.

As we have seen, Foro Educativo's experience also highlights some of the challenges and limitations of participation, alongside the opportunities it offers to review and adapt strategies. Some of these limitations are being addressed by, for example, shifting emphasis towards more parent and pupil participation. But Foro Educativo has yet to tackle some more complex issues, including how to engage out-of-school children and their parents in the process, and how to ensure the participation of groups which are most culturally marginalised or geographically isolated.

Promoting the value of children's participation and child-focused indicators

Achieving meaningful children's participation is notoriously difficult. The Foro Educativo experience demonstrates some common barriers to effective participation, namely social attitudes to children. The members of Foro Educativo are aware of their own limitations within the traditional mindset of Peruvian society which tends to perceive children as passive recipients of adult knowledge. It was largely the process of participation itself that provided the impetus to challenge assumptions about children and promote their active involvement in the education debate.

Foro Educativo is taking a lead nationally in developing ways of ensuring effective participation of children in the consultation process, and indicators of education quality which focus on the real lives and development needs of children. The growing willingness of government officials,

teachers and parents to listen and respond to children's perspectives shows that an approach such as this which is interactive rather than didactic can offer real scope for changing ingrained social attitudes at all levels.

Promoting communication between providers: the role of a network

The creation of a regional network in schools has been instrumental in improving practice at the classroom level and providing a body of practical experience to feed into the policy-making process. The network was pioneered through fax communication which has proved highly effective in facilitating rapid exchange of information, quickly building up momentum. It makes accessible up-to-date information on educational policies and examples of good practice and is considered a useful resource among both teachers and local education authorities. Its value is corroborated by growing requests from new schools to join the network and to channel

information to and from other schools in their area. The scope of a fax based network remains restricted due to the isolation of certain regions and communities where fax may be inaccessible or unreliable, and ways of making the network more inclusive are being explored.

The role of an international NGO

In Peru, as we have seen, Save the Children was in the right place at the right time to support the development of a pioneering process of broad participation in the national education debate. This support has been concentrated in four main areas:

- *Financial support:* towards the establishment of Foro Educativo and its evolving work programme

- *Capacity building support:* sharing Save the Children's wider experience of developing child-

focused analysis and methodologies

● ***Building links:*** at national and regional level with other educational NGOs and networks in order to share and inform the work of Foro Educativo

● ***Mutual learning:*** involving Foro Educativo in the development of Save the Children's regional strategic plan and drawing on the organisation's practical experience in order to inform Save the Children's work globally

Plans to make a more effective contribution to Foro Educativo's development and promote wider learning are currently being shaped as part of a regional strategy. In addition to broadening Foro Educativo's exposure to other organisations and networks working on education in the region, Save the Children hopes to use the experience of Foro Educativo to influence initiatives more widely. This

process has already begun with a workshop (hosted by Save the Children in Brazil, July 1999) on practical approaches to influencing education, where Foro Educativo were able to share lessons learnt with organisations from Latin America and other regions.

Editors' Conclusions

● In a highly centralised education system, where national policy reflects the interests of powerful urban, Spanish-speaking groups, the NGO Foro Educativo has developed practical approaches to facilitate broader participation, such as its fax-based national information and learning network.

● Foro Educativo's initial approach was academic and centralised, seeking to develop its own "national consensus" on quality education. Although its vision of education was clearly child-centred, it initially ignored the fact that adults did not accept children as actors in their own right, and it

was not attuned to the needs of groups not represented in Foro Educativo.

- However, through its consultative style and receptiveness to external ideas (including those from Save the Children), Foro Educativo was able to facilitate new debates and act on issues that came out of them. These included rural perspectives, involving parents and children excluded from the education system, the importance of minority languages, and the challenge to traditional views of childhood.

- The culture of assuming that children are passive recipients of education has been challenged both through facilitating debates and demonstrating children's own independent successes, for example the university brigades which gave practical support to people made homeless by the El Niño storms.

- Save the Children has explicitly sought to ensure that the

learning process is two-way. Foro Educativo was involved in developing Save the Children's strategy and programme for the wider Latin America region.

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This publication is the outcome of a co-ordinated research project by staff of Save the Children (UK), co-funded by the Department for International Development.

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Ethiopia	Somalis in Chinacsen, Region 5 (photo, Liba Taylor)
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- writing/editor - drafting text and balancing the perspectives of different participants
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Felicity Hill	***Cost sharing in basic education (examples from Africa and South Asia)***

Pholoho Khatleli, Lilian Mariga, Lineo Phachaka and Sue Stubbs, *Schools for all: National*

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Rachel Lambert	**Education for children of pastoralists**
Marion Molteno	**Education at the margins,** keynote paper prepared for a conference of that name, Cambridge, April 1998
Lynette Mudekunye, Karen Eyres, Chris McIvor, Sarah Hands, **Basic education for children on the**	
	commercial farms in Zimbabwe
Helen Penn	**The education of children in ex-communist countries,** Social Science Research Institute, Univ of London, 1999 (based on experience with Save the Children)

Joachim Theis	*Education of ethnic minority children in Vietnam*

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Helen Penn	*The education of children in ex-communist countries*
Rita Bhatia	*Education Advocacy in Africa*

Patrick Proctor, with Vanessa Herringshaw, Bill Bell *An Education Advocacy Toolkit for NGOs*

Emmanuelle Abrioux (ed) *Education in Conflict:* a *'Minimum Requirements Package'*

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