Exploring the link between child and youth participation and development effectiveness

Mid Term Learning Paper, March 2015

This research project was made possible through the collaboration of a diverse group of stakeholders.

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>> ChildFund Laos conducting a learning circle with research participants.

Acknowledgements

Executive summary

Background

This Mid Term Learning Paper shares learnings to date of a three-year (2013–2016) NGO research partnership exploring the link between child and youth participation and development effectiveness.

This document is based on the initial phase of field-based research, conducted within three countries (Nepal, Laos and Fiji) by three Australian NGOs (ANGOs – Transform Aid International, ChildFund Australia, and Live & Learn, respectively) and their in-country partner organisations. Each NGO selected a relevant project, and specific project activities related to child and youth participation, for the research to focus on. The projects had a focus on (i) child clubs, (ii) children and youth in sport, and (iii) youth-led environmental management, respectively. The research was supported by an independent consultancy, InSIGHT Sustainability; a university partner, the Institute for Sustainable Futures (ISF) at the University of Technology, Sydney; and a Peer Review Group of child and development specialists.

Research framework

The research centres on two key learning areas which explore how child and youth participation contributes to (i) development effectiveness, and (ii) organisational and programme outcomes. A third learning area focuses on reflection on the research process itself.

Drawing on relevant literature[1], a 'Development Effectiveness Analysis Mapping Tool' was formulated to define key characteristics of development effectiveness given the research focus. This development effectiveness framework can be found in Section 2.1. These key characteristics were: (i) child and youth participation in setting development priorities; (ii) promotion of inclusion and equity, and reducing marginalisation; (iii) knowledge sharing, mutual learning and collaboration to support sustainable change; (iv) evidence of change in personal development and social capital (intangible changes); and (v) evidence of socio-economic change (tangible changes).

Methods

The overarching methodology followed an Action Research approach (Reason and Bradbury, 2008), with participatory activities with children, youth and their communities designed to answer the research questions. The field-based research used two main methods. Firstly, multiple learning circles, which are similar to focus groups with an emphasis on generating learning and learning outcomes, were conducted with between eight and 15 children, youth, parents and staff. Each learning circle used different participatory and reflective activities including sharing stories, drama, photo voice and visioning. Secondly, individual surveys were completed by children, youth, parents, teachers, community leaders and in-country NGO partner staff. The surveys used both quantitative and qualitative (open-ended) questions.

1. Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (2005); The Busan Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation (2012); ACFID Code of Conduct (2010) and Asker, S. and Gero, A. (2012). The Role of Child and Youth Participation in Development Effectiveness: A literature review. ChildFund Australia

Through these methods, research participants (children, youth, parents and village leaders) shared their views of the 'biggest or most meaningful changes' resulting from child and youth participation (see Box 2 for research questions). This data is considered a strong and robust source of evidence concerning links of child and youth participation to development effectiveness, as research participants were able to identify changes resulting from child and youth participation themselves through unprompted open-ended questions (see Learning Area 1 below, and Section 3 of the report).

Research data from these methods was collected in 2014. Analysis was conducted in three tiers: first by in-country partners; then by ANGOs; and finally by ISF in synthesising the data and preparing this Mid Term Learning Paper.

Key findings

The research questions sought to identify the 'biggest or most meaningful changes' resulting from child and youth participation and link these to development effectiveness characteristics defined for the research and to programme and organisational outcomes for the three countries. Research participants identified the 'biggest or most meaningful changes' through unprompted open-ended questions and then those most commonly cited were linked. In addition other changes, though not most commonly cited by research participants, are also explored in this Learning Paper. This additional evidence helps to highlight other potential links between child and youth participation and development effectiveness which can be strengthened in the future. A summary of key findings is noted in Box A on page 7.

Findings for the two main learning areas are found below. Learning area one focuses on the contributions of child and youth participation to development effectiveness outcomes (using the Development Effectiveness Mapping Tool, as described above), while learning area two focuses on how child and youth participation contributes to organisational and programmatic outcomes.

Learning Area 1: Learning about the contribution of child and youth participation to development effectiveness outcomes

The changes most valued and commonly reported by research participants aligned with some of the five key areas of the Development Effectiveness Mapping Tool. These changes related to the areas of 'personal development and social capital' and 'socio-economic changes' among research participants in all three countries.

The changes most commonly described by the research participants were aligned to the focus of the project activities. For example, in Fiji the most commonly described 'biggest or most meaningful change' by research participants resulting from child and youth participation was 'improved environmental management and WASH (water, sanitation and hygiene) practices'. There was also evidence from Fiji that research participants valued changes representing 'promotion of inclusion and equity' and 'knowledge sharing' aspects of development effectiveness. The most commonly reported change in both Laos and Nepal was 'personal development' captured under themes such as 'discipline', 'confidence', 'bravery', 'responsibility and leadership' and 'respect'. 'Personal development' as a meaningful change resulting from child and youth participation aligns with literature and current ANGO project monitoring data. Literature on child and youth participation also cites increased confidence and personal development as a key and valuable outcome of child and youth participation (Harper et al. 2003; Lansdowne, 2005), and an important factor contributing to project sustainability, ownership and mutual accountability (Asker and Gero, 2012).

BOX A: SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

- 'Personal development' was the most highly valued change resulting from child and youth participation by research participants in Laos and Nepal. A different and broader range of changes resulting from child and youth participation were valued by research participants in Fiji, including changes towards improved environmental management through youth participation.

- Parents, community leaders and children and youth themselves were found to value different changes as a result of child and youth participation. There is therefore a need to recognise these different standpoints and perspectives and to consider them when designing activities towards improved development effectiveness.

- Across all three countries, there was a wide range of evidence of child and youth views actively being listened to and taken into account.

- In Fiji, meaningful changes resulting from child and youth participation were chosen since research participants thought the changes had altered the way youth viewed themselves, the way youth interacted with each other, the way youth share knowledge and interact with their families and the community, and/or because of the link to better health outcomes related to the youths' increased knowledge and understanding and action on river health.

- Across all three countries, there was strong and consistent acknowledgment by youth of the role they play as leaders and/or partners for change.

- Across all three countries, the 'biggest or most meaningful changes' of child and youth participation described by research participants were consistent with around half of all programme outcomes (seven out of 13 outcomes in total).

- Changes resulting from child and youth participation, as commonly described by research participants in all three countries, were consistent with some organisational outcomes (nine out of 28). Consistency was related in part to how detailed the outcomes were (e.g. Live & Learn had two broad statements whilst ChildFund has 18 indicators).

- Across all three countries, research participants felt there would have been a lack of progress in achieving development outcomes without the project.

- In-country partner staff, children and youth reflected how the research contributed to strengthened child and youth personal development. The two groups suggested that streamlined research activities could also be incorporated as part of the regular activities to enhance development outcomes.

Within the three countries, different changes were valued by different research participant groups, which were (i) child/youth, (ii) parents and (iii) community leaders. The differences between responses from these three groups highlight the different experiences and understandings of child and youth participation within the community context. For example, in Laos all three research participant groups described 'personal development' as a change resulting from child and youth participation, but only children/youth described 'sanitation/ cleanliness/health' as a change resulting from child and youth participation.

Beyond research participant perspectives of 'biggest or most meaningful changes', the research data also includes evidence of some links between changes resulting from child and youth participation and all five development effectiveness characteristics. Due to the dominantly qualitative research approach and limitations in the resources available for analysis and synthesis, it was not possible to ascertain the robustness of this evidence in terms of how widespread particular changes mentioned by individual research participants were. However, a breadth of illustrative quotes indicates the potential for child and youth participation to contribute to all five areas of development effectiveness. Examples are provided in the main body of this Learning Paper.

Learning Area 2: Learning about the contribution of child and youth participation to programme or organisational outcomes

The most commonly reported 'biggest or most meaningful changes' by research participants resulting from child and youth participation linked to some ANGO programme and organisational outcomes, but not consistently across all outcomes. For example, in Fiji, research participants' most commonly described changes resulting from child and youth participation were consistent with two of the four programme outcomes. In Laos, the most commonly described changes by research participants resulting from child and youth

>> **Sharing high point stories about change**
This activity is about sharing, celebrating and learning about positive project experiences and positive change related to child participation.

Photo taken by Live & Learn.

participation were consistent with three out of five programme outcomes, including research participants valuing the area of education which relates to the outcome of 'children and youth who perform at or above their current grade level in reading'. In terms of organisational aims, in Nepal the most commonly described changes by research participants resulting from child and youth participation were consistent with three out of eight organisational aims. These included one related to protection, which was that 'vulnerable groups and individuals, particularly children, are valued members of society and enjoy lives free from fear'.

The research highlighted a wide range of programme and organisational outcomes that were beyond the focus and scope of the child and youth participation activities, and therefore could not have reasonably been expected to be evidenced in the research data. Furthermore, given that the projects were relatively new in their implementation, it was also unreasonable to expect outcomes to be achieved so early in their implementation. The research did, however, highlight the need to more closely align expected programme outcomes with activities, and to consider how individual projects can be expected to contribute to organisational outcomes.

The research highlights that in all three countries, there were links between some programme and organisational outcomes and child and youth participation. Further exploration over time is required to learn more about the different views between research partners and allow for tracking of longer term outcomes.

Conclusion

Research participant views of their most valued changes resulting from child and youth participation linked to some development effectiveness characteristics defined in this research. Commonly reported links included personal development – an important precursor to project sustainability through ownership and mutual accountability (Asker and Gero, 2012). Links were also identified in relation to socio-economic changes. While links were not consistently reported across all the characteristics of development effectiveness defined for this research, nor across all types of research participants, it is important to recognise that the research has revealed how child and youth participation has contributed to some development effectiveness outcomes. Furthermore, illustrative evidence did provide the basis for further research, which should focus on if and how the evidenced personal development leads to child and youth participation in setting development priorities, promotion of inclusion and equity, and increased knowledge sharing to promote sustainable change.

Different groups of research participants valued different 'biggest or most meaningful changes', reflecting that they have different experiences of child and youth participation. This also suggests that not all participants equally value the contribution of child and youth participation to development effectiveness outcomes. A key learning of the research to date is the need to recognise the different perspectives of the various research participant groups to child and youth participation, in considering programming activities and how best to ensure support from different research participants for development effectiveness.
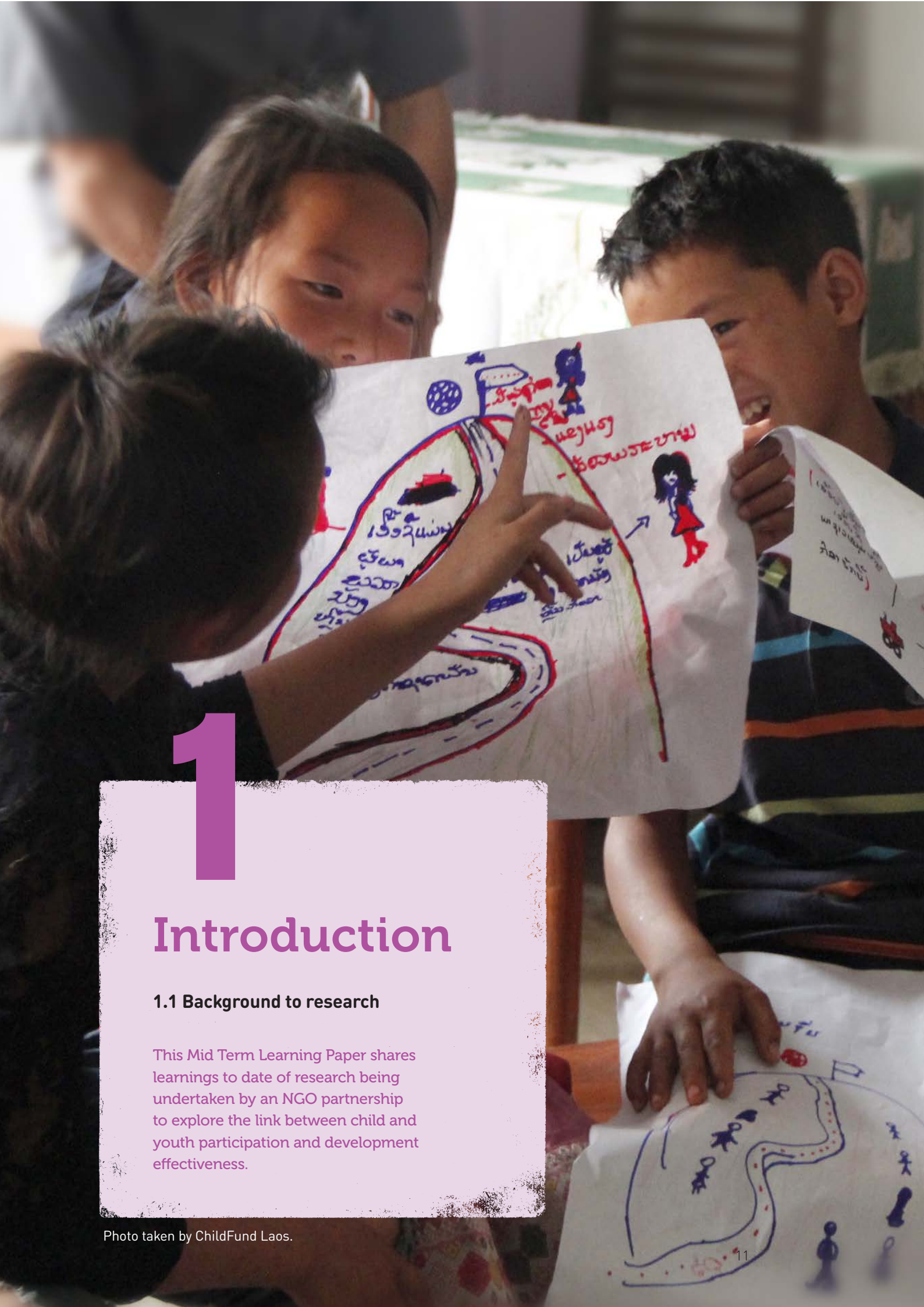
1

Introduction

1.1 Background to research

This Mid Term Learning Paper shares learnings to date of research being undertaken by an NGO partnership to explore the link between child and youth participation and development effectiveness.

Photo taken by ChildFund Laos.

Interest in the role of child and youth participation and its influence on development effectiveness from both practitioners and academics has been growing in recent years. Whilst the international community of development practitioners already knows a lot about different models of child and youth participation and 'how' participation is done, there is less documented literature or evidence available on the links between child and youth participation and development effectiveness.

The research builds on and extends earlier work conducted by ChildFund Australia. Two literature reviews were conducted in 2011 and 2012, which highlighted the need for field-based research to establish a deeper understanding of the role of child and youth participation in development effectiveness. Research documented in this Learning Paper takes some initial steps to address this gap.

The three-year research demonstrates ANGO commitment and interest in conducting field-based research on child and youth participation and its links to good development outcomes. The partnership initially involved three ANGOs (ChildFund Australia, Transform Aid International and Plan International Australia). Due to unforeseen circumstances, Plan International Australia was not able to participate in field-based activities, though it has provided financial support. Live & Learn Australia, through its Fiji office, became involved in the partnership as the third ANGO partner in the field-based research activities.

In-country partner organisations of each ANGO (referred to as 'in-country partners') have been key to conducting the research. As detailed in the methodology section below, in-country partners were primarily responsible for carrying out data collection and analysis with support from ANGO staff. In addition, data analysis was supported by an Australian intern hosted by the ANGOs.

BOX 1. A NOTE ON TERMINOLOGY

The following terms and meanings are used throughout this report:

Project: The in-country activities which this research is focused on as a source of evidence of the links between child and youth participation and development effectiveness.

Programme: The broader suite of projects NGOs implement in-country.

Partners: Organisations and individuals undertaking the research. This involves ANGOs, in-country partners implementing the research (note some are participating in the research – see below), ISF and InSIGHT Sustainability.

Research participants: Children, youth, parents and village leaders. In-country partner staff also participated and within the report are specifically identified.

The research was supported by three additional partners:

* Firstly, the research was supported by a university partner – the Institute for Sustainable Futures (ISF) at the University of Technology, Sydney – which provided technical support in research planning, ethics processes and analysis procedures. ISF was also responsible for the consolidation of ANGO-led analysis and synthesis of learnings presented in this Mid Term Learning Paper.

* Secondly, an independent consultancy, InSIGHT Sustainability, provided detailed technical design, training and support to the fieldwork and data analysis at the country level.

* Finally, a Peer Review Group, comprised of seven Australia-based experts spanning child rights, development and research, provided valuable periodic technical support and advice to the partnership.

1.2 Purpose and objectives of the research

The overarching objective of the research is to explore the links between child and youth participation and development effectiveness.

The research focuses on two main learning areas, with an additional learning area that reflects on the conduct of the research. Learning areas and key research questions are noted in Box 2. Definitions of child and youth participation and development effectiveness are provided in Section 2.

BOX 2: RESEARCH LEARNING AREAS AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Learning Area 1: Learning about the contribution of child and youth participation to development effectiveness outcomes

How and why does child and youth participation contribute to development effectiveness?

1. What are community and other research participants' views and perceptions on the 'biggest or most meaningful changes' resulting from child and youth participation?

2. Why were these changes chosen as 'biggest or most meaningful' by these research participants?

3. What are the perceived enablers that research participants think helped to make the changes happen?

Learning Area 2: Learning about the contribution of child and youth participation to programme or organisational outcomes

How and why does child and youth participation contribute to organisational outcomes and/or programme outcomes?

4. To what extent are research participants' views of the 'biggest or most meaningful change' resulting from child and youth participation consistent with or different to expected organisational and/or programme outcomes?

5. What do research participants think the outcomes would have looked like without child and youth participation?

6. How do children and youth view their own contribution and role in the achievement of organisational and/or programme outcomes?

Learning Area 3: Learning about child and youth participation for development and research practice

What challenges, opportunities and good practices exist for child and youth participation?

7. What challenges, opportunities and good practices exist for child and youth participation?

1.3 Audience of this Mid Term Learning Paper

This paper is intended to be of interest to a variety of stakeholders. One audience is the in-country partner staff and ANGO partners of the research. The learnings shared are also expected to be of interest to development practitioners more broadly, as well as donors, academics and governments interested in child-centred and child- and youth-focused development, particularly how such programming links to achieving good development outcomes. As a Learning Paper, this document also offers a chance to reflect on what has been learnt to date and shape the next phase of this research.

1.4 Background to NGO in-country project sites

The research was carried out in South Asia, South East Asia and the Pacific to allow learning to span different geographical and cultural contexts.

Three ANGO/in-country partner projects (or more specifically, project activities within broader programmes – see schematic below) were chosen as research case studies for their diversity in thematic focus and child and youth participation activities.

NGO Programme	>	Project	>	**Project activities** This research draws on specific child- and youth-focused activities as an evidence base
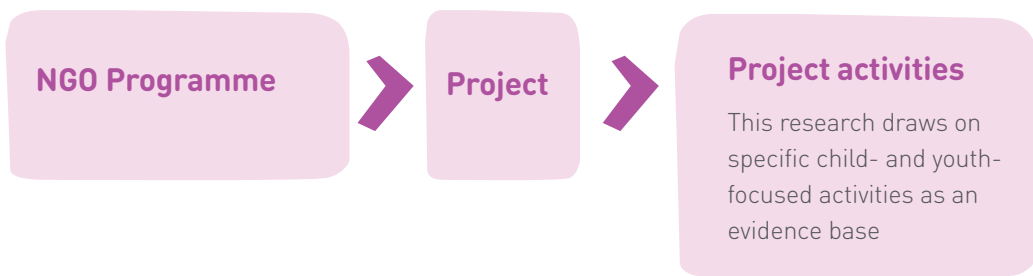
Different NGOs used different sets of activities as a way to engage communities, children and/or youth in the research. The child and youth participation activities included natural resource management, child clubs and sporting activities. Activities were undertaken in both community- and school-based contexts. The projects in which the activities sit have been established for up to five years and are planned to continue into 2016, when the second data collection for this research is scheduled.

Table 1 below provides details of the selected projects in South Asia (Nepal), South East Asia (Laos) and the Pacific (Fiji) by in-country partners, and highlights the main development approaches used. As outlined in Section 3, key learnings from the research to date need to be understood in relation to the practice and type of participation, age of children and youth, and cultural contexts in which the projects were implemented.

Case study location	ANGO	In-country partner	Project and activities for research and learning	Child and youth participants	Main development approaches used
Fiji	Live & Learn Australia	Live & Learn Fiji	River Care Project, (youth-led environmental management focusing on water testing) June 2013–2015	Late teens to early 20s youth out of school	Building youth capacity to test and identify healthy waterways and develop initiatives to conserve waterways (from ridge to reef), and to communicate with families, broader community and leaders to improve local river management
Laos	ChildFund Australia	ChildFund Laos	Children and Youth in Sports (sports for development as part of a broader child participation project) January 2012– 2020	8–12 years 16–18 years	Training and mentoring of older youth to be coaches and organisers of children's (boys and girls) sports
Nepal	Transform Aid International	United Mission to Nepal and Prayas Nepal	Children and Youth in Community Development (Child Clubs as a strategy implemented within a broader child-centred community development project) July 2010–2019	6–11 years 12–18 years	School- and community-based Child Clubs with age-appropriate activities, including play, leadership training, skill development and public speaking, child rights orientations and community development activities. Older children develop their own work plans and activities for community development initiatives and campaigns

Table 1: Joint research and learning partnership: project details

1.5 Research schedule

This research extends from 2013 to 2016. The key phases of the research include two rounds of data collection, analysis and reporting (2014 and 2016) and a reflection process in 2015 as described in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Research schedule

2013-14
PLAN RESEARCH
(ANGO and in-country partners)

2013-14
STRENGTHEN CAPACITY FOR RESEARCH
(data collection and analysis)

2014
CONDUCT RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS

2014
REFLECT ON RESEARCH FINDINGS
Mid Term Learning Paper

2015
REFLECT ON RESEARCH PROCESS
Learning Paper

2015-16
PLAN RESEARCH
(ANGO and in-country partners)

2016
STRENGTHEN CAPACITY
for research data collection and analysis

2016
CONDUCT RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS

2016
REFLECTION ON RESEARCH FINDINGS
Research findings reports

1.6 Structure of this Mid Term Learning Paper

The Learning Paper is structured into three sections:

✳ **Section 1**: Introduction.

✳ **Section 2:** Research methodology and process. This includes the use of a 'Development Effectiveness Analysis Mapping Tool', which was specifically designed for this research to explore links between child and youth participation and development effectiveness.

✳ **Section 3:** Learning and discussion. Rather than discussion of each country, project or NGO, the learnings are synthesised to provide overarching themes of similarity and difference. This section includes key lessons for the research partnership moving forward, next steps, and a conclusion that highlights key findings from the research so far.

2

Methodology

This section provides an introduction to the methodology and process used to carry out the research. It explains the characteristics of 'development effectiveness'; research locations and timing of the research; researcher teams, research participants and specific tools for data collection; and limitations of the research.

Photo taken by United Mission to Nepal.

2.1 Methodological approach

The overarching methodology followed a predominantly qualitative research approach, drawing on Action Research[2], with participatory activities with children, youth and their communities to answer the research questions which are described in Box 2. Given the importance of development effectiveness to the research, characteristics of development effectiveness were defined and became the guiding framework for research analysis – see below for details. Learning circles and individual surveys were used to implement this methodology, and are consistent with this approach given the emphasis on participants being active and equal members of the research.

2.2 'Development Effectiveness Analysis Mapping Tool'

The ANGO partnership prepared a 'Development Effectiveness Analysis Mapping Tool' to help explore links between child and youth participation and development effectiveness. The tool comprises a description of development effectiveness characteristics relevant to child and youth participation.

The tool was prepared recognising the complex nature and variety of interpretations of development effectiveness within the development sector and the need to make sense of development effectiveness within the context of child and youth participation. A literature review of key documentation including the Paris Declaration, Busan Agreement, Istanbul Principles, and the ACFID Code of Conduct informed the chosen development effectiveness characteristics. The Development Effectiveness Mapping Tool is provided in detail in Table 2 below.

The research did not seek to resolve the varied and contested definitions of development effectiveness that exist in the development sector. Instead, the proposed framework served as a practical guide to support the research process and a way of exploring linkages between child and youth participation and development effectiveness.

>> **My personal high point**

Photo voice is a participatory project that uses cameras. Research participants were provided with cameras and asked to take photos that showed positive changes that occurred because of their participation in project activities.

Photo taken by UMN research participant.

2. Reason, P., & Bradbury, H. (Eds.). (2008). *Sage Handbook of Action Research: Participative inquiry and practice* (2nd ed.). London: Sage Publications; Stringer, E.T. (2007) *Action Research* (3rd ed.). London: Sage Publications.

BOX 3: DEVELOPMENT EFFECTIVENESS MAPPING TOOL

Development effectiveness characteristics	Relevance to child and youth participation
Participation in setting development priorities	• Child and youth participation (lead or partner) in setting NGO project strategies or actions via design, monitoring and evaluation • Child and youth participation (lead or partner) in setting informal or formal community development activities (i.e. family, school or community) • Child and youth views are considered in local development activities and local policy formation • Child and youth views are actively listened to and feedback is provided regarding how their input has been taken into consideration
Promotion of inclusion and equity, and reducing marginalisation	• Child and youth participation makes progress towards equitable access to participate in project activities (e.g. regardless of caste, disability, sex and ethnicity) • Child and youth participation makes progress towards addressing the causes and symptoms of marginalisation • Child and youth participation makes progress towards shifts in power dynamics (particularly at household level) to enable effective reduction and management of protective behaviours and conflict • Child and youth participation makes progress towards inclusive partnerships, learning and trust developed between peers, children and youth, parents, adults and community leaders • Child and youth participation has led to an increased understanding of individual and collective rights • Child and youth participation enables children and youth to negotiate with others (e.g. parents) without fear of conflict • Children and youth are increasingly valued and treated as partners (by other stakeholders) through shared project goals and values, mutual respect, trust and integrity
Knowledge sharing, mutual learning and collaboration to support sustainable change	• Child and youth participation enables new and existing knowledge and wisdom from local communities to be used as central to change • Projects apply a quality approach to design that emphasises child and youth relationships, and learning with other stakeholders • Children and youth are able to share knowledge/skills with peers, family and/or others in the community that support change • Children and youth, and other stakeholders, are collaborating to achieve sustainable outcomes from their development actions by focusing on lasting change for children and youth, their families and their communities, to ensure an enduring legacy • Child and youth participation in projects is laying the foundation for current and future active and critical citizenship
Evidence of change (across all areas mentioned above)	
Personal development and social capital (intangible change)	• Positive changes to children and youth and flow-on effects to families and community are occurring, including intangible changes (e.g. in self-esteem, empowerment, confidence, voice, agency, trust and power) that reduce the causes or symptoms of poverty
Socio-economic characteristics (tangible change)	• Positive changes to children and youth and flow-on effects to families and community are occurring, including tangible changes (e.g. better school results/attendance, improved health and increased access to assets) that reduce the causes or symptoms of poverty
Negative impacts	• Negative changes and their impacts are minimised

2.3 Research teams

The research was carried out by in-country partner staff with support from ANGO staff. Following in-country capacity building workshops with partners, research teams of in-country partner staff already working with the communities and projects were formed to carry out the research. These teams comprised:

✳ in Fiji, four researchers (two male and two female);

✳ in Laos, seven researchers (five male and two female); and

✳ in Nepal, six researchers (one male and five female).

2.4 Timing and location

The research was carried out in multiple locations in Fiji, Laos and Nepal, as noted in Table 3 below. Country and local maps are provided in Appendix 3.

Table 2: Research locations	
Country and NGO	**Participating communities**
Fiji Live & Learn Fiji	• Three communities within Wailevu District, Cakaudrove Province. • Additional discussions and learning circles were carried out with Live & Learn staff.
Laos ChildFund Laos	• Three communities within Nonghet District, Xieng Khouang Province. • Additional consultations were carried out at the district level (sport leaders, ChildFund staff and local authorities) and in Vientiane (Lao Rugby Federation).
Nepal Transform Aid partners, UMN and Prayas Nepal	• Six communities within Dhading District, Central region. • Included two project sites, and the Prayas and UMN staff site.

2.5 Description of research activities

Research activities were similar across all three countries. The same research questions, data collection tools and approaches, and format for analysis were designed for use by all in-country partners. This ensured consistency across the three research locations and enabled synthesis of findings and learning across the three countries. The chosen research methods were also considered to be accessible to in-country partners that contextualised the tools as required. For example, in Nepal participatory processes were modified by local partners to reflect the local context.

Two main methods were used:

* **Learning circles**[3] were facilitated and recorded by in-country partners with separate groups of children and youth and in-country partner staff[4]. Learning circles are similar to focus groups, with an emphasis on generating learning and learning outcomes, where participants physically sit in a 'circle of equals'. Multiple learning circle events were held as part of the research, with between eight and 15 children, youth, parents or staff participating in each. Each learning circle event used different participative and reflective activities and sought to inquire into different aspects of the research questions. Methods included sharing stories, drama, photo voice, visioning and reflection processes. Areas of inquiry within the learning circles included the following: changes made through child and youth participation activities (in youth themselves, their families and communities), power and relationship dynamics that enable (and challenge) child and youth participation, and knowledge, attitudes and practices. Importantly, it was through the learning circles that the 'biggest or most meaningful changes' resulting from child and youth participation were discussed, which relate to Learning Areas 1 and 2 (see Box 2).

* **Individual surveys** were also conducted for different research participant groups: youth, parents, teachers, community leaders and in-country NGO partner staff. A specific survey for children and youth was prepared, while parents, community leaders and in-country NGO partners completed a similar but modified survey. The surveys used both quantitative and qualitative (open-ended) questions. The questions explored a range of issues including perceived changes resulting from child and youth participation; skills and knowledge learnt through child and youth participation activities, and the extent to which this benefited the children/youth, families and community; and the extent to which children's voices are heard.

Research data collected in 2014 included three tiers of analysis:

1. The first tier data analysis was carried out by in-country partners, and included data entry to Excel spreadsheets and mapping themes of research participants' responses to development effectiveness characteristics and organisational and programme outcomes.

2. The second tier of analysis was carried out by ANGOs, and drew on the first tier analysis. Second tier analysis responded specifically to the research questions. Data recorded in the second tier analysis included a summary response to the research questions, representative quotes, and staff ranking of linkages between programme and organisational outcomes and the development effectiveness characteristics.

3. The third tier of analysis comprised the synthesis for this Learning Paper, which primarily drew on the second tier of analysis undertaken by ANGOs.

3. See, for example, LaVrene, N. (2003) The Power of Circles: Using a Familiar Technique to Promote Culture Change, Culture Change in Long Term Care, A.S. Weiner and J.L. Ronch, Editors, The Haworth Social Work Practice Press, New York, NY. 2003; Reinelt, C., Yamashiro-Omi, D., and Meehan, D. (2010). Learning-Circle Partnerships and the Evaluation of a Boundary-Crossing Leadership Initiative in Health. The Foundation Review. 2:1, 40-52.
4. In Nepal only, learning circles were facilitated with parents.

Figure 2 illustrates the process undertaken to conduct the research and develop the Mid-Term Learning Paper, including consultation and feedback from partners in-country.

Figure 2: Data analysis for Mid Term Learning Paper
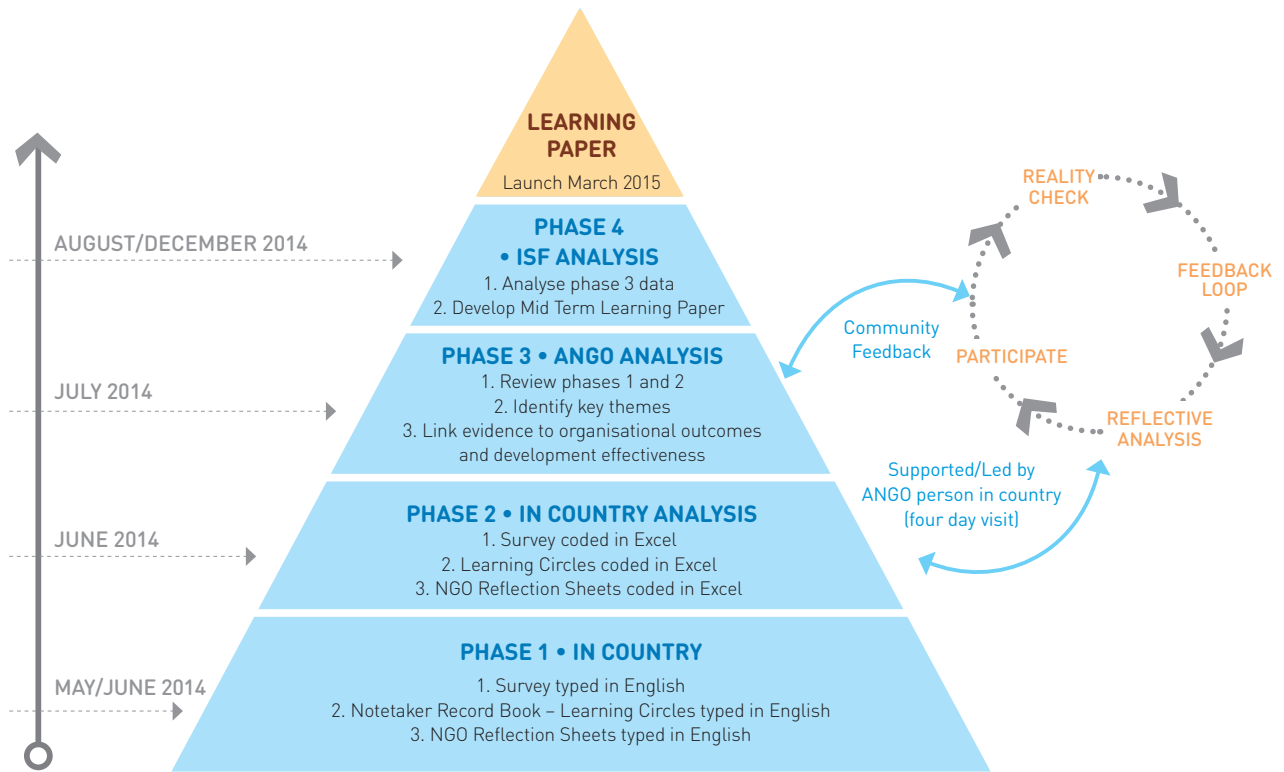
2.6 Research participants

Research participants are outlined in Figure 3 below. The majority of research participants were children and youth active in in-country partner programmes (61% of research participants).

Detailed gender disaggregated data provided in Appendix 4 highlights equitable participation of men, women, boys and girls in the research. Of the total 275 research participants, 126 were female and 149 male. Gender disparity was most evident within the community leaders group (six female, 36 male), highlighting existing gender roles in the workforce (political and administrative government). Only slightly more male in-country partner staff participated in the research (13 female, 18 male).

Figure 3: Research participant group participation in the research

Legend:
- Child and youth
- Parents
- Village leaders
- In-country partner staff

61% Child and youth
24% Parents
5% Village leaders
10% In-country partner staff
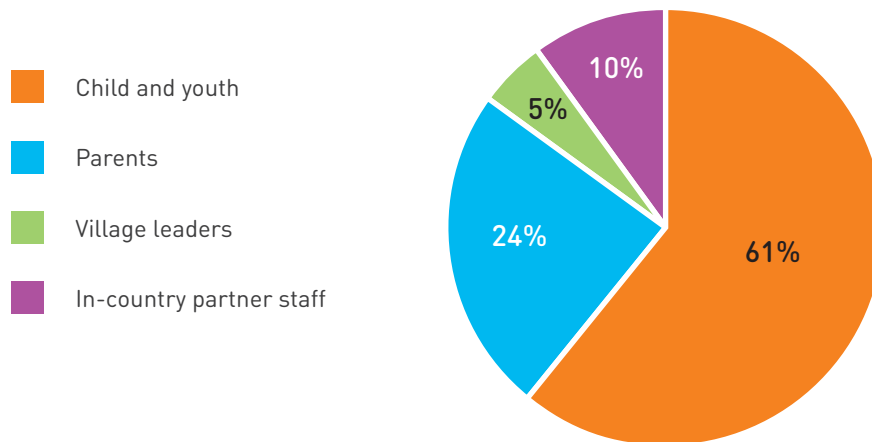
2.7 Limitations

It is helpful to note limitations of the research to help the reader make sense of the research learnings to date. Several limitations of this research have been recognised by the research partners in relation to planning and design, conduct of research, analysis and write-up. Practices that the research partnership have used to mitigate the limitations are also noted.

Children's participation throughout a project cycle, and beginning from its inception, can lead to multiple benefits to their wellbeing (Hinton, 2008; Hart, 2002). Due to the innovative nature, logistics, budgets and multiple partnership arrangements of the research, it was not possible to include child and youth participation in the initial design of the research in the way that partners desired. The research partnership recognises that supporting child and youth to decide the research focus themselves is best practice. Efforts will be made to ensure that partners, children and youth inform and guide the next phase of the research. As part of the review and refinement of the research, consultations will be held with both in-country partners and children and youth, to ensure their experience from the first round of research and their perspectives contribute to the ongoing research.

Translation and language challenges were identified as an issue when contextualising and translating research tools into different country contexts. In some locations, multiple languages (local dialects) were used in one community, and only some in-country staff spoke unwritten languages. Translation of data into English for the write up of the Learning Paper was also challenging and time-consuming, and is recognised as a contextual factor of conducting multi-country research.

The research teams experienced a variety of local context challenges. These included political strikes, power cuts, flooding, and difficulties in accessing project sites. The in-country partners also described challenges of limited research skills and capacity, as well as resource constraints (time and financial). Despite these difficulties, research teams were reported to have carried out planned research activities with all key research participants. They also described how they enjoyed the capacity development through participating in the research and learning which resulted.

A central challenge of the research relates to issues of *contribution* and *attribution,* i.e. 'how do we know whether changes noted by research participants are the result of child and youth participation in the project activities, or due to other influences?' The research partnership recognises that defining attribution, or even contribution, is extremely difficult. However, the partnership feels that this should not be a barrier to exploring the research topic. The research process also sought to overcome this challenge by focusing on unprompted/ open-ended questions to community-based research participants, so that they could identify themselves changes resulting from child and youth participation. The unprompted responses provide a strong basis to demonstrate links between child and youth participation and development effectiveness.

Finally, this Mid Term Learning Paper has been prepared primarily through the use of research data which has been interpreted through two tiers of analysis (first tier by in-country partners and second tier by ANGO partners). As such, ISF has sought to document research learnings and findings which have a substantive evidence base and also identify further illustrative examples of linkages between child and youth participation and development effectiveness. The Mid Term Learning Paper is intended to provide a quality research approach to enable learning on past practice and support further research endeavours for the research partnership.

2.8 Ethical considerations

Engaging in ethical research with children presents a number of challenges (e.g. informed consent and the developmental age of the child participants[5]) and as such, research activities were informed by ethical research practice. The ANGO partnership, ISF and Peer Review Group developed 'Guidelines for Ethical Research' which outlined principles, practical steps and an ethical research checklist to guide researchers through the conduct of ethical research. In developing their Research and Learning Plans, in-country partners detailed how they would ensure ethical practices, including ensuring appropriate informed consent from research participants (with appropriate methods developed for children and youth) and ensuring equitable opportunity to participate in the research. Research activities were also informed by the ACFID Principles for Ethical Research and Evaluation in Development[6.]

5. See Lundy (2011) and Graham et al (2013).
6. Ethical principles and guidelines were informed by the ACFID Principles for Ethical Research in evaluation and research and development.

3

Mid term learning and discussion

This section provides key findings and learnings across the three research Learning Areas. Box 3 clarifies the different types of evidence used in structuring the presentation of the findings.

Photo taken by UMN research participant during photo voice activity.

BOX 4: NATURE OF THE EVIDENCE AND STRUCTURE OF FINDINGS

To answer the research questions for Learning Areas 1 and 2, analysis involved identifying research participants' views and perceptions of the 'biggest or most meaningful changes' resulting from child and youth participation, and exploring linkages of these to development effectiveness characteristics. This Mid Term Learning Paper has described these changes as those most commonly reported by the research participants.

The first section (3.1.1) in Learning Area 1 provides an overview of the most commonly reported ('biggest or most meaningful') changes resulting from child and youth participation. This evidence is considered strong and robust, as research participants responded to an open-ended question designed to reveal the changes they most valued.

The second section (3.1.2) in Learning Area 1 explores examples of a wider range of linkages between child and youth participation and development effectiveness, though not identified as those most commonly reported by research participants. It also explores responses from in-country staff surveys related to linkages between child and youth participation and development effectiveness. Responses to Learning Area 2 also draw on analysis which identifies research participants' views and perceptions of the 'biggest or most meaningful changes' resulting from child and youth participation and explores the linkages of these to organisational and programme outcomes.

3.1 Learning Area 1: How and why does child and youth participation contribute to 'development effectiveness'?

Findings against Learning Area 1 are described first using evidence from the 'biggest or most meaningful changes' reported by research participants. This section also includes linking participant views of meaningful changes to development effectiveness characteristics (Box 4) and learning regarding the variations in different participant views and perceptions (Box 5). The second part of Learning Area 1 draws from other illustrative examples of linkages between child and youth participation and development effectiveness (as described in Box 3).

Most valued changes described by research participants

This section draws on evidence from research participants when they described the 'biggest or most meaningful changes'. Findings against the three key research questions under Learning Area 1 are included in this section:

✳ **Research Question 1:** What are the community's and other research participants' views and perceptions on the 'biggest or most meaningful changes' resulting from child and youth participation?

✳ **Research Question 2**: Why were these changes chosen as 'biggest or most meaningful changes' by research participants?

✳ **Research Question 3:** What are the perceived enablers that research participants think helped to make these changes happen?

Research Question 1

What are the community's and other research participants' views and perceptions on the 'biggest or most meaningful changes' resulting from child and youth participation?

Changes most commonly reported by research participants were aligned to the focus and intent of the projects and broader programmes (see Learning Area 2). Laos and Nepal are described first, followed by Fiji.

As background context to these findings, in Laos, child and youth participants were from two groups: 8-12 years and 16-18 years. In Nepal, they were 6-11 years and 12-18 years.

In Laos and Nepal, the most commonly described change by research participants was 'personal development', captured under themes such as 'discipline', 'confidence', 'bravery', 'responsibility and leadership', and 'respect'. Such changes were described by all community-based groups (children and youth, parents and community leaders). Personal development was the most described change resulting from child and youth participation in Laos. In Nepal, there were also other changes commonly described as noted below 'sanitation/cleanliness/health' and 'education and training'.

Research participant views that 'personal development' was the biggest or most meaningful change resulting from child and youth participation aligns with literature (see for example Harper et al. 2003; Lansdowne 2005). The research learning also confirms existing ANGO project monitoring which identifies increased personal development, described as 'intangible positive changes' for children and youth as key outcomes of ANGO programming. This finding aligns with literature on child and youth participation which cites increased confidence and personal development as a key and valuable outcome of child and youth participation (Asker and Gero, 2012).

In Laos, the majority of changes described by participants were related to 'personal development' (69%[7]). In Nepal 34%[8] of all descriptors of change concerned 'personal development'.

Typical descriptions of 'personal development' described by children include the following quote from a male youth in Nepal: "*After joining the Child Club, my behaviours changed a lot. I now feel myself disciplined and laborious. I have learnt to love my juniors and respect my seniors. So these are the good things I feel*". A female youth from Laos noted: "[I] *have knowledge, skills, and [am] brave to make a decision by myself*".

Other participant descriptions of 'personal development' were similar to those described by children and youth themselves. For example, a mother from Nepal noted: "After the involvement in the Child Club my daughter has gained leadership in speaking and writing, there is a positive change in her behaviour. [She] has started to respect elders and love young ones". A further example came from a teacher in Laos: "*We see changes in the individual because they are playing sport, [this is] shown through increased confidence and bravery. [They] are more brave to ask teachers questions*".

After 'personal development', the next most commonly described change resulting from child and youth participation in both Laos and Nepal was in relation to 'sanitation/cleanliness/ health'. In Laos, 11%[9] of respondents described this change, while in Nepal, 31%[10] described this change.

> "We see changes in the individual because they are playing sport, [this is] shown through increased confidence and bravery. [They] are more brave to ask teachers questions."
> **(Teacher, Laos)**

> "Skills and knowledge I gain will lead me to graduate from school in the future"
> (Female youth, Laos).

> "After joining the Child Club, my behaviours changed a lot. I now feel myself disciplined and laborious. I have learnt to love my juniors and respect my seniors. So these are the good things I feel"
> (Male youth, Nepal).

7. 105 responses (n=153)   8. 82 responses (n=239)   9. 17 responses (n=153)   10. 5 responses (n=239)

In Laos, improved health of youth was emphasised, as noted by a male youth: "*I am glad when participating in a competition. Playing a lot changed me, I am healthier*". In Nepal, environmental management was emphasised, as illustrated by a male youth: "*I used to make places dirty before. Now I don't like making a mess and I clean dirty places. I like to stay in a clean place*". A female youth in Nepal noted: "*Parents have understood the activities conducted by Child Club in the community as a result there is clean public places*".

> "People of this village didn't used to send their children to school. So after being involved in the Child Club we spread awareness. Now people have started to send their children to school. At that moment I feel very happy"
> (Female youth, Nepal).

Changes related to 'education and training' were the third most commonly described change resulting from child and youth participation in Laos and Nepal. In Laos, 7%[11] described this change. In Nepal, 21%[12] described this change.

A female youth from Nepal described her response which related to school attendance: "*People of this village didn't used to send their children to school. So after being involved in the Child Club we spread awareness. Now people have started to send their children to school. At that moment I feel very happy*". A female youth from Laos also had a firm eye on the future, noting that: "*Skills and knowledge I gain will lead me to graduate from school in the future*". A mother of a student noted that: "I used to drag my son to school (literally drag). But still he would end up playing in the neighbourhood. After he stayed in Child Club he has become wiser and he attends school regularly".

> "We have learnt ways to keep our drinking water clean such as monitoring of water quality indicator species. It has enabled us to be more aware to prevent further pollution to the river" (Male youth, Fiji).

Other changes resulting from child and youth participation included 'collaboration', 'harmony', 'teaching others and passing on skills' and 'safe environment.' These were described by the research participants, but to a much lesser extent than the three dominant themes described above.

KEY FINDING

'Personal development' was the most highly valued change resulting from child and youth participation by research participants in Laos and Nepal. A different and broader range of changes resulting from child and youth participation were valued by research participants in Fiji, including changes towards improved environmental management through youth participation.

In Fiji, child and youth participants were aged in their late teens to early 20s, and some were out of school youth. A different and broader range of changes resulting from child and youth participation were described by these research participant groups in Fiji than those changes noted in Laos and Nepal. Like the case of Nepal and Laos, where the commonly described changes align with the project focus and expected outcomes of the project, commonly described changes by research participants in Fiji also align with the programme objectives (see Learning Area 2).

The most commonly described change by participants in Fiji resulting from child and youth participation was 'improved environmental management and WASH practices'. This was described by 25%[13] of research participants.

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11. 10 responses (n=153)   12. 50 responses (n=239)   13. 33 responses (n=130)

The second most commonly described change was 'increased knowledge of water management' (22%)[14]. This is noted by a male youth: "The village is now enjoying better water because we have been educated on what and what not to do to keep our water sources clean and safe". The third most commonly described change was 'working together and strengthened community' (21%[15]), as noted by a male parent: "*They [children and youth] have actively participated in community work that has brought the village together. We were a divided village but with youths' participation in the River Care activities, they have brought us together*".

The fourth most valued change was 'changed attitudes towards environmental management' (17%[16]). Further changes were described by community-based participants, but to a lesser extent: 'increased skill and capacity' and 'improved health consciousness and health'.

A comment from a male youth in Fiji also highlighted progress and change as a result of youth participation: "*We have learnt ways to keep our drinking water clean such as monitoring of water quality indicator species. It has enabled us to be more aware to prevent further pollution to the river. Also, the broken pipes in the school have been fixed after an assessment from the River Care committee*".

Research participant responses concerning the 'biggest or most meaningful changes' resulting from child and youth participation were mapped to the five development effectiveness characteristics defined for this research (see Box 4). This summary makes clear that certain aspects of development effectiveness were not represented amongst the most valued changes by research participants. Box 4 highlights that perceived changes resulting from child and youth participation link to areas of development effectiveness which are the focus of the development activities. This is explored further in Learning Area 2.

> "We have learnt ways to keep our drinking water clean such as monitoring of water quality indicator species. It has enabled us to be more aware to prevent further pollution to the river" (Male youth, Fiji).

>> Increased confidence

This photo represents the research participants Biggest Change. It demonstrates that her confidence has increased as she can take the lead in school based activities.

Photo taken by UMN research participant.

14. 28 responses (n=130)   15. 27 responses (n=130)   16. 22 responses (n=130)

BOX 5: LINKING PARTICIPANT VIEWS OF BIGGEST OR MOST MEANINGFUL CHANGES TO DEVELOPMENT EFFECTIVENESS CHARACTERISTICS

Amongst those changes described by research participants as 'biggest or most meaningful,' only some changes resulting from child and youth participation linked to the five key characteristics of development effectiveness. Table 4 below details where development effectiveness characteristics linked, or did not link, to changes commonly described by the research participants. Note the source of evidence for this data is the unprompted responses from research participants regarding their biggest or most meaningful change – which is considered robust and strong when compared to other forms of evidence (e.g. Table 8 and 9 and corresponding text).

Table 3: Research participant responses concerning the 'biggest or most meaningful changes' resulting from child and youth participation to development effectiveness

Development Effectiveness Characteristic	'Biggest or most meaningful changes' resulting from child and youth participation ✖ denotes that this development effectiveness characteristic was not represented in the research participant responses about 'biggest or most meaningful change' from this country ✓ denotes that this development effectiveness characteristic was well-represented in the research participant responses about 'biggest or most meaningful change' from this country		
Participation in setting development priorities	Laos ✖ Nepal ✖ Fiji ✖		
Promotion of inclusion and equity and reducing marginalisation	Laos ✖ Nepal ✖ Fiji ✓	'Working together and strengthening community unity' comprised 21% of research participant responses [a]	
Knowledge sharing, mutual learning and collaboration to support sustainable change	Laos ✖ Nepal ✖ Fiji ✓	'Increased knowledge of water management' comprised 22% of research participant responses [b] 'Changed attitudes towards environmental management' comprised 17% of participant responses [c]	
Personal development and social capital (intangible change)	Laos ✓ Nepal ✓ Fiji ✖	'Personal development' comprised 69% of research participant responses [d] 'Personal development' comprised 34% of research participant responses [e]	
Socio-economic characteristics (tangible change)	Laos ✓ Nepal ✓ Fiji ✓	'Sanitation/cleanliness/health' comprised 11% of research participant responses [f] 'Sanitation/cleanliness/health' comprised 31% of research participant responses [g] 'Improved environmental management and WASH practices' comprised 25% of research participant responses [h]	

a 27 responses (n=130) d 105 responses (n=153) g 75 responses (n=239)
b 28 responses (n=130) e 82 responses (n=239) h 33 responses (n=130)
c 22 responses (n=130) f 17 responses (n=153)

Analysis was also undertaken of differences between the changes valued by different groups of research participants (see Box 5).

BOX 6: VARIATIONS IN DIFFERENT PARTICIPANTS' VIEWS AND PERCEPTIONS

Different perceptions of 'biggest or most meaningful change' resulting from child and youth participation were revealed between the different research participant groups to a lesser or larger extent in the three countries. The biggest difference between research participants was revealed in Fiji and Laos, with only slight differences between participant perceptions evident in Nepal.

The different participants' perceptions of changes resulting from child and youth participation may reflect the different experiences of child and youth participation.

Parents and community leaders could only appreciate what they observed, whereas children and youth could also reflect on their lived experience of participation and what resulted for them individually. The different participant perspective also suggested that not all research participants equitably valued the contribution of child and youth participation to development outcomes.

A key learning of the research to date is the need to recognise the different standpoints and perspectives of the various participant groups to child and youth participation, in considering programming activities and how best to ensure support from different research participants for development effectiveness.

Different participant views of changes resulting from child and youth participation in Fiji are noted in Table 5 below.

Table 4: Fiji's commonly described views by participants of changes resulting from child and youth participation

'Improved environmental management and WASH practices'	...described by parents, community leaders and youth
'Increased knowledge of water management'	...described by parents, community leaders and youth
'Working together and strengthened community'	...described by parents and community leaders, but not by youth

In addition, the two further changes cited less often were described by single participant groups: 'increased skill and capacity' described by youth only (5%) and 'improved health consciousness and health' described by parents only (10%).

In Laos, whilst all three research participant groups described 'personal development', only children described other changes, as noted in Table 6 below. Only three responses were recorded in these two themes for parents and community leaders.

Box 5 continued overleaf

Box 5 continued...

Table 5: Laos' commonly described views by participants of changes resulting from child and youth participation

Personal development'	...described by children/youth, parents and community leaders
'Sanitation/cleanliness/health'	...described by children/youth, but not by parents and community leaders
'Education and learning'	...described by children/youth, but not by parents and community leaders

In Nepal, all three research participant groups consistently cited the same three changes as resulting from child and youth participation (personal development; sanitation/cleanliness/health; education and training). However, 'personal development' was more commonly described by youth as a change resulting from child and youth participation, whilst parents and community leaders more commonly spoke of changes to 'sanitation/cleanliness/health' as resulting from child and youth participation. Table 7 highlights the variations between the different research participant groups in Nepal.

Table 6: Nepal's commonly described views by participants of changes resulting from child and youth participation

'Personal development	...described by child and youth, parents and community leaders (most commonly described by youth)
'Sanitation/cleanliness/health'	...described by child and youth, parents and community leaders (most commonly described by parents and community leaders)
'Education and learning'	...described by child and youth, parents and community leaders

KEY FINDING

Parents, community leaders and child and youth themselves were found to value different changes as a result of child and youth participation. There is therefore a need to recognise these different standpoints and perspectives and to consider them when designing activities towards improved development effectiveness.

Why were these changes chosen as 'biggest or most meaningful changes' by research participants?

The research results were not substantive in this area and hence only minor points can be made to answer 'why' research participants chose particular changes as 'biggest or most meaningful'. A key learning from the research process is the difficulty of asking an analytical question such as 'why' – this is especially the case for younger age groups. Translation across multiple languages also limits the inquiry. It is recommended that within the next phase of the research, more specific resourcing and data collection methods are employed to explore this question in more detail.

For example, the research analysis for Fiji suggested that the meaningful changes resulting from child and youth participation were chosen because research participants thought the changes had:

a. altered the way youth viewed themselves; and/or

b. altered the way youth interacted with each other; and/or

c. altered the way youth shared knowledge and interacted with their families and the community; and/or

d. because of the link to better health outcomes (related to increased youth knowledge and understanding, and action on river health).

KEY FINDING

In Fiji, meaningful changes resulting from child and youth participation were chosen because research participants thought the changes had altered the way youth viewed themselves, the way youth interacted with each other, the way youth shared knowledge and interacted with their families and the community, and/or because of the link to better health outcomes related to increased youth knowledge and understanding, and action on river health.

What are the perceived enablers that research participants think helped to make these changes happen?

Across all three countries, 'support' was cited as the key enabler of changes resulting from child and youth participation. 'Support' was cited from similar and various actors in the community, including NGOs; 'the Project'; and parts of community including parents, elders, siblings, peers and local government. In Nepal, in addition to support, teaching topics within the Child Clubs were also cited, including health and sanitation; speaking skills; child rights; education; and, to a lesser extent, education on alcohol, drugs and the environment. As noted in Section 4, it might be useful to explore in more detail what constitutes 'support' for youth and the broader community, and what are the key factors that best enable support from the different research participant groups in community.

Examples of child and youth participation contribution to development effectiveness

This section explores examples of a wider range of linkages between child and youth participation and development effectiveness. These linkages were revealed through other parts of the research process and methods, beyond the 'biggest or most meaningful changes' that were the focus of Section 3.1.1. As mentioned in Box 3, further research and analysis is required to develop conclusive findings based on the illustrative examples provided in this section. However, much can be learnt from the illustrations provided, demonstrating the potential for child and youth participation to make valuable contributions to development effectiveness across all key characteristics. The next section focuses on broad evidence against the five development effectiveness characteristics, after which findings of the in-country staff survey are explored.

Illustrative linkages to the five key Development Effectiveness characteristics

The analysis mapped research data to each development effectiveness characteristic, illustrating linkages between child and youth participation and development effectiveness. This analysis included synthesised data and key quotes as evidence. It is important to note that the research findings presented below sit outside and beyond findings against the key research questions[17].

Illustrative findings are presented against the following key characteristics of development effectiveness:

✳ Participation in setting agendas

✳ Promotion of inclusion and equity and reducing marginalisation

✳ Knowledge sharing, mutual learning and collaboration to support sustainable change

Participation in setting agendas

The Development Effectiveness Mapping Tool identified a range of aspects of 'participation in setting agendas', all of which were demonstrated in analysis. Aspects included child and youth participation in project activities and formal and informal community development activities (beyond the scope of the NGO project), as well as children and youth views being listened to.

The research revealed practice of 'youth leading and/or partnering on project activities and leading community development activities more broadly'.

17. The research questions focus on what are the community and other participants' views and perceptions on the 'biggest or most meaningful changes' resulting from child and youth participation.

Table 7: Illustrative examples of child and youth participation in setting agendas

FIJI - Youth leading river care activities in both the project and a broader community setting, for example:

- providing advice on drinking water quality and water management plans
- youth representation on district meetings
- "It is one of the first few activities where youths are engaged and they (youths) actively participate" (Female parent, Fiji).

LAOS - Children and youth organising sporting competitions and influencing community development agendas, for example:

- leadership of organising sporting competitions
- leadership of sporting events without any financial support
- establish a protective environment for women in the village

NEPAL - Children and youth active in project planning and monitoring, and influencing community development agendas, for example:

- participation of Child Clubs on VDC level planning
- participation of Child Clubs at District Child Welfare board meetings
- collaborating with mothers group to reduce alcoholism
- monitoring punctuality of teachers
- leading campaign to end child marriage
- leading campaign in community for cleanliness and child rights
- raising funds to lead local road renovation

""I'm grateful for the River Care project which has increased youths' confidence in participating and being more proactive in matters of the village. Youths now feel that [what] they are doing in the village is of value and the importance which has increased confidence in themselves and makes them happy" (Female youth, Fiji).

"Village accept responsibilities of youth leaders by trusting and supporting their leadership skills" (Female youth, Laos)

"After being involved in the Child Club, all friends of the Club had organised rally shouting slogan to stop child marriage in our communities, I feel happy about this. All our friends took out time and carried out one day rally, because of this rally people didn't do child marriage and have succeeded to take care of their life and health. This has helped to stop ill practice and I feel happy" (Female youth, Nepal).

KEY FINDING

Key finding: Across all three countries, there is a wide range of evidence of child and youth views actively being listened to and taken into account.

> "We counsel adults in the community to join literacy class and as a result they have started to study at home. Now they won't be cheated in maths. This is what make me most happy"
> (Female youth, Nepal).

> "Some families don't let women go (to sport)…Girls have had to leave the programme because they have gotten married….I never heard of this problem with boys"
> (Female youth, Laos).

The research analysis provided survey results from Laos and Nepal which indicated child and youth views were listened to, with significant change perceived before and after the formation of Child Clubs[18]. In several Fijian communities, youth occupied more prominent positions on village decision making committees (where they previously didn't), as noted by a male leader: "*Youth are involved in spreading the news of youths' attitude transformation to youths in other communities through youth representation in district meetings*". Youth roles included providing advice on drinking water quality and water management plans. Youth had also expanded their role to influence decisions in other areas, as noted by a male youth in Laos: "*Clever children help to advise and give knowledge for adults in some issues*" and a female youth in Nepal: "*We counsel adults in the community to join literacy class and as a result they have started to study at home. Now they won't be cheated in maths. This is what make me most happy.*"

Promotion of inclusion and equity and reducing marginalisation

The research analysis provided examples to suggest that most aspects of this development effectiveness characteristic are evidenced in the three research sites (see Table 2 for details of the development effectiveness characteristic). Whilst child and youth participation includes marginalised populations within the community, the research data also shows that child and youth participation has not changed broader context and cultural aspects.

Examples of difficulties to influence change highlight the limitations of child and youth solely leading change, recognising the cultural dimensions, roles and decision making which historically have not included children and youth. For example, in Laos, whilst a link between child and youth participation and progress towards equitable access to participate in the project (especially in relation to gender equity) was noted, it was also acknowledged that child marriage remained an ongoing and complex issue. This highlights the broader challenge of addressing entrenched cultural practices through child and youth participation. Gender inequality was highlighted as an issue, as described by a female youth in Laos: "*Some families don't let women go (to sport)…Girls have had to leave the programme because they have gotten married….I never heard of this problem with boys*".

In Fiji, the cultural context was also highlighted as a barrier to child and youth participation progressing development effectiveness outcomes. The analysis identified shifts in power dynamics, particularly at the community level, as evidenced by both male and female youth participating in project activities and influencing more broadly community development activities and village-level decision making processes, but the analysis notes that "this one area [shift in power dynamics] has not been quite observed at the family level".

Knowledge sharing, mutual learning and collaboration to support sustainable change

The research analysis identified evidence of NGO practice linking across all five aspects of 'knowledge sharing, mutual learning and collaboration to support sustainable change' (see Table 9).

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18. Laos: from 33% to 78%, Nepal: 9% to 61%, Fiji: 34% to 83%.

Table 8: Illustrative examples of child and youth participation that link to 'knowledge sharing, mutual learning and collaboration to support sustainable change'

Aspects of 'knowledge sharing, mutual learning and collaboration to support sustainable change' (drawn from Development Effectiveness Mapping Tool)	Examples of practice
• Child and youth (C&Y) participation enables new and existing knowledge and wisdom from local communities to be used as central to change.	• knowledge sharing is occurring from peer to peer (youths), from youth to families and youth to elders, and through decision making (Fiji) • youth are sharing information on a range of issues including environmental management, nutrition, child protection and safety, and punctuality of students and teachers (Nepal)
• Projects apply a quality approach to design that emphasises C&Y relationships, and learning with other stakeholders.	• piloting and co-development of learning tools with community (Fiji) • use of child-friendly tools, participatory approaches, involvement of stakeholders and community in local level planning (Nepal)
• C&Y are able to share knowledge/skills with peers, family and/or others in the community that support change.	• knowledge sharing is occurring from peer to peer (youths), from youth to families and youth to elders, and through decision making (Fiji)
• C&Y and other stakeholders are collaborating to achieve sustainable outcomes of their development actions by focusing on lasting change for C&Y, their families and their communities, to ensure an enduring legacy.	• children, parents and community leaders worked together to improve the sanitation of their communities and households (Nepal) • sustainable outcomes identified by stakeholders include personal development, leadership, teaching others and passing on skills (Laos)
• C&Y participation in projects is laying the foundation for current and future active and critical citizenship.	• monitoring of teacher punctuality and representation of Child Club members at government meetings (Nepal)

An example of new knowledge gained comes from a female youth in Laos, when she noted: *"I feel glad that myself have gain more skills and I am brave and I am student representative of secondary year 4 to join student contest in the district"*. In terms of working with others, leadership and new relationships to support change, an example is illustrated by a male leader in Fiji, noting: *"The youths are more into working with other youths and community groups in the villages"*, while a female youth from Laos notes: *"I can be a leader in the future, use my new skills to study and become a good student at school"*. An example of collaboration with others – in this case adults – was seen in Nepal, from a female youth: *"Adults have supported us financially while renovating pathway (small road) connecting to our school and market"*.

> "I feel glad that myself have gain more skills and I am brave and I am student representative of secondary year 4 to join student contest in the district" (Female youth, Laos).

Results from in-country staff survey

Research results include an in-country survey where staff were asked to "rank the progress you think that child/youth participation in the project makes toward each characteristic" on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 = weak link, 5 = strong link).

Staff ranking of links between child and youth participation and development characteristics varied both within and between the different research sites, but the reported link by staff was consistently higher than that reported for community-based research participants. A 'weak' link was only noted in two instances. In Laos, 'children's voices are considered in local development activities' and 'contribution to local policy formation' were ranked 1 (strong link). The research analysis notes that "no explanation for this rating is provided". The majority of local staff rankings were 3 to 4 in Laos and Nepal, whilst in Fiji the dominant ranking was 4 to 5.

While still highly useful and a relevant source of data, results from the in-country staff survey require separate analysis, given common issues around self-reporting and the inevitable bias associated with this form of data (a common issue in research), stemming from their desire to create positive change with those with whom they work.

3.2 Learning Area 2: How and why does child and youth participation contribute to 'organisational outcomes' and/or programme outcomes?

Links between most valued changes and programme and organisational outcomes

This section presents findings in response to the following research question:

Research Question 4

To what extent are research participants' views of the 'biggest or most meaningful change' resulting from child and youth participation consistent with or different to expected organisational' and/or programme outcomes?

Changes described by research participants were consistent with some organisational and programme outcomes, but not all. Since organisational and programme outcomes are unique, the discussion provided below is presented in relation to each NGO and relevant project/ research case study. Links to programme outcomes are presented first, after which links to organisational outcomes are described.

Programme outcomes

KEY FINDING

Across all three countries, changes resulting from child and youth participation commonly described by research participants were consistent with some, but not all, organisational outcomes (nine out of 28). Consistency was partly related to how detailed the outcomes were, e.g. Live & Learn had two broad statements whilst ChildFund had 18 indicators.

In Fiji, the most common changes described by research participants resulting from child and youth participation were consistent with two of the four programme outcomes, as noted in Figure 4. Outcome 1 ('Communities have increased access to relevant project networks') and Outcome 2 ('Target communities have increased food yields from their rivers') were not evident in changes most described by the research participants.

Figure 4: Fiji's links between development effectiveness, programme outcomes and 'biggest or most meaningful change' resulting from child and youth participation

Fiji Program Outcome:
Communities are utilising their aquatic resource management plans to effectively manage their waterways [Outcome 3]

⟷

Development effectiveness characteristic
Socio-economic characteristics (tangible change)

⟷

Biggest or most meaningful change:
Improved environmental management and WASH practices

Fiji Program Outcome:
Target beneficiaries have improved knowledge and skills to monitor water quality and manage aquatic resources [Outcome 4]

⟷

Development effectiveness characteristic
Socio-economic characteristics (tangible change)

⟷

Biggest or most meaningful change:
Increased knowledge of water management
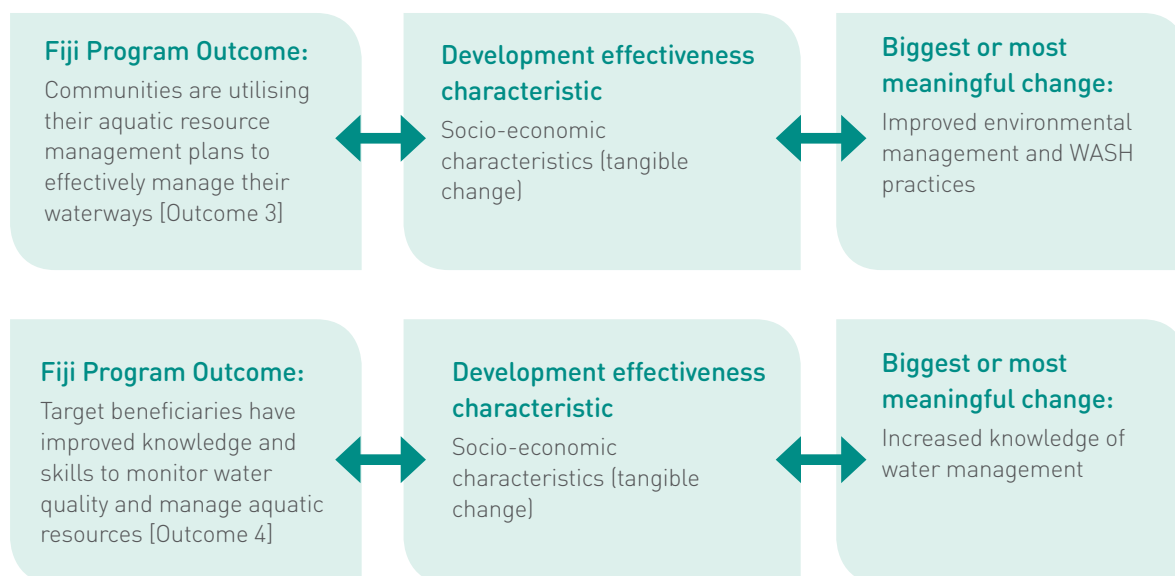
In Laos, the most commonly described changes by research participants resulting from child and youth participation were consistent with three out of five programme outcomes – these are seen in Figure 5. The most valued change ('personal development') described consistently by community-based research participant groups (children and youth, parents and community leaders) linked to the programme outcome associated with personal development: '% of children and youth with a sense of belonging and a positive outlook for their future' (Outcome 4).

Two other changes were commonly described by youth and children only, which related to two programme outcomes associated with education (Outcome 1 and Outcome 2). It is important to note that whilst the research identified a link between commonly described changes and programme outcomes, the types of measurements are different: children and youth perceptions of benefits, versus quantifiable completion rates and reading performance. As the programme develops, it is expected that measures against the quantifiable indicators will be assessed, but this is beyond the scope of this research.

Figure 5: Laos' links between development effectiveness, programme outcomes and 'biggest or most meaningful change' resulting from child and youth participation

Laos Program Outcome: % of children and youth with a sense of belonging and a positive outlook for their future [Outcome 4]	←→	Development effectiveness characteristic Personal development and social capital (intangible change	←→	Biggest or most meaningful change: Personal development
Laos Program Outcome: % of children and youth with a sense of belonging and a positive outlook for their future [Outcome 4]	←→	Development effectiveness characteristic Socio-economic characteristics (tangible change)	←→	Biggest or most meaningful change: Education / Learning
Laos Program Outcome: % of children and youth with a sense of belonging and a positive outlook for their future [Outcome 4]	←→	Development effectiveness characteristic Socio-economic characteristics (tangible change)	←→	Biggest or most meaningful change: Education / Learning

Figure 6: Nepal's links between development effectiveness, programme outcomes and 'biggest or most meaningful change' resulting from child and youth participation

Nepal Program Outcome: Families have learnt new skills of income generation and enterprise development and have willingness and accountability to provide improved life skills to their children (Economic and child development) [Outcome 2]	←→	Development effectiveness characteristic Personal development and social capital (intangible change)	←→	Biggest or most meaningful change: Personal development
Nepal Program Outcome: Communities have adequate knowledge, skills, resources to acquire quality health, sanitation, nutrition, and lifesaving options for family and children (Survival) [Outcome 3]	←→	Development effectiveness characteristic Socio-economic characteristics (tangible change)	←→	Biggest or most meaningful change: Sanitation / cleanliness / health

In Nepal, the most commonly described changes by research participants resulting from child and youth participation were consistent with two out of four programme outcomes (Figure 6). Other programme outcomes which focused on child rights and participation (Outcome 1) and protection (Outcome 4) were not identified by community-based research participant groups (youth, parents and village leaders) as the 'biggest or most meaningful changes' resulting from child and youth participation.

The findings highlight that research participants identify the achievement of some programme objectives through the practice and changes resulting from child and youth participation.

In all three countries, different views were apparent between in-country partner staff and project research participants relating to the link between child and youth participation and programme outcomes.

Responses to an in-country partner staff survey provided a different finding to mapping most commonly described changes by research participants to programme outcomes. Whilst in-country partner staff identified strong links across all project outcomes, these were not all described by community-based research participants. The staff survey recorded child and youth participation as contributing to all the programme outcomes, though with slightly different rankings (1 = low link, 5 = high link):

✳ In Fiji, in-country partner staff recorded a high link between programme outcomes and child and youth participation ranging between four and five[19]

✳ In Laos, in-country partner staff recorded mixed links between programme outcomes and child and youth participation ranging between two and four[20]

✳ In Nepal, in-country partner staff recorded a relatively high link between programme outcomes and child and youth participation ranging between three and four[21]

The comparison between mapping research participant views of 'biggest or most meaningful changes' to programme outcomes and the in-country partner staff survey highlights differences between the two. The different responses could be associated with unprompted open-ended questions (for research participants) and closed question surveys used for in-country partner staff. This difference, as noted above, suggests the need for further investigation in the next round of the research.

Organisational outcomes

KEY FINDING

Across all three countries, the 'biggest or most meaningful changes' of child and youth participation described by research participants were consistent with around half of all programme outcomes (seven out of 13 outcomes in total, see Appendix 1 for details of programme outcomes).

In Fiji, the most commonly described changes by research participants resulting from child and youth participation were consistent with the two organisational aims for Live & Learn.

Organisational outcomes for Live & Learn Fiji are defined through two statements and four aims, all of which were consistent with the most meaningful changes described by research participants, as detailed in Learning Area 1. The two broad statements for Live & Learn were consistent with research participant descriptions of 'improved environmental management', 'increased knowledge and understanding of water quality' and 'strengthened community and working together'.

---

19. Outcome 1: 4; Outcome 2: 4; Outcome 3: 5; Outcome 4: 5; (1=low link, 5=high)
20. Outcome 1: 2; Outcome 2: 2; Outcome 3: 4; Outcome 4: 4; Outcome 5:4 (1=low link, 5=high)
21. Outcome 1: 3; Outcome 2: 4; Outcome 3: 3; Outcome 4: 3; (1=low link, 5=high)

Figure 7: Live & Learn Fiji's links between development effectiveness, organisational outcomes and 'biggest or most meaningful change' resulting from child and youth participation
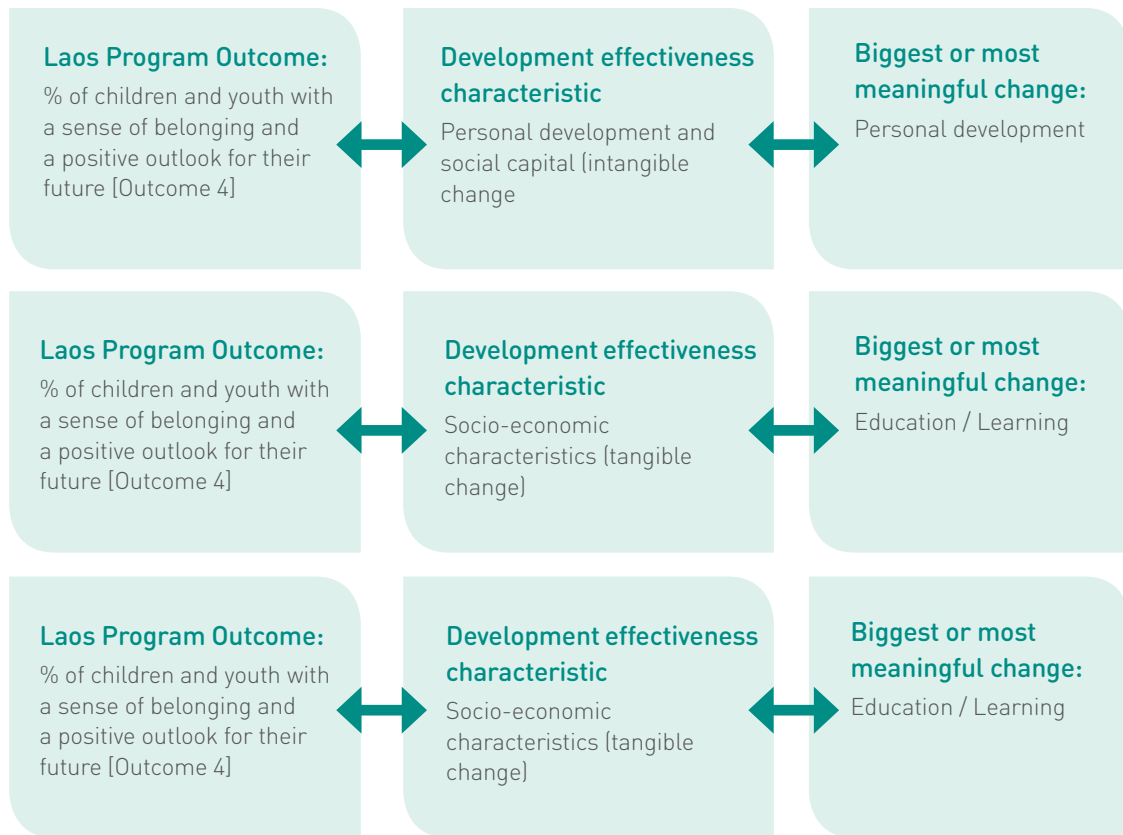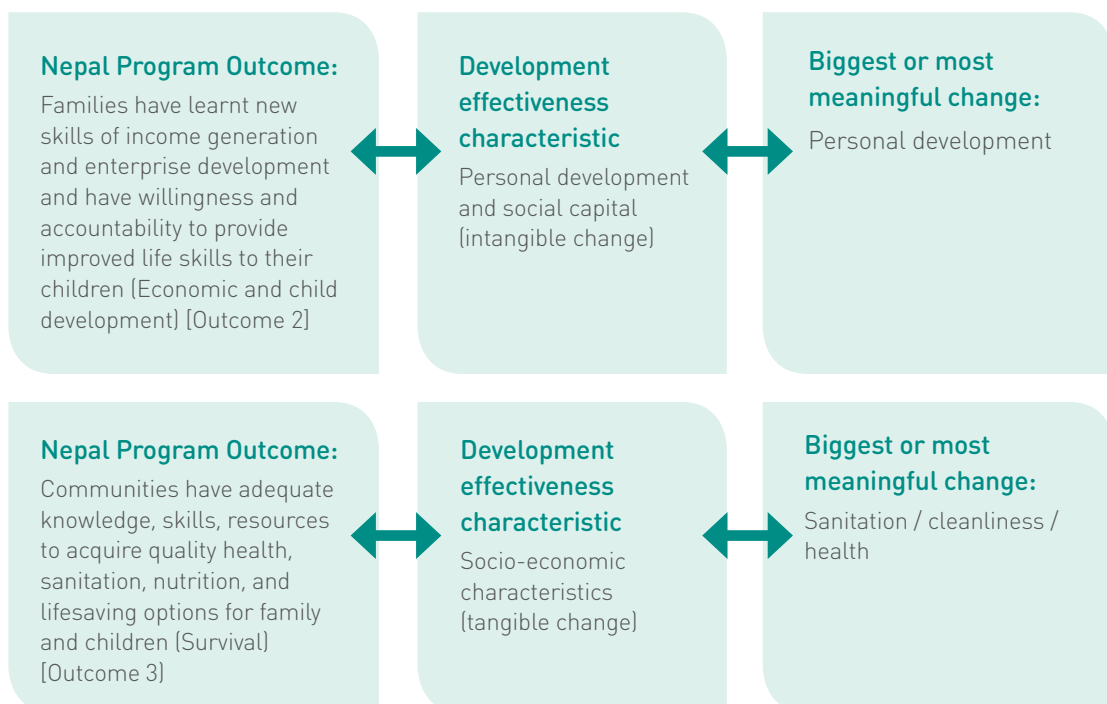
Live & Learn Organisational Outcome:
Live & Learn's Vision is for a sustainable and equitable world free from poverty [Live & Learn Aim]

Live & Learn Organisational Outcome:
Live & Learn educates, mobilises communities, and facilitates supportive partnerships in order to foster a greater understanding of sustainability, and to help move towards a sustainable future [Live & Learn Aim]

Development effectiveness characteristic
Promotion of inclusion and equity and reducing marginalisation

Knowledge sharing, mutual learning and collaboration to support sustainable change

Socio-economic characteristics (tangible change)

Biggest or most meaningful change:
Improved environmental management

Increased knowledge and understanding of water quality

Strengthened community and working together

In Laos, the most commonly described changes by research participants resulting from child and youth participation were consistent with only three out of the 18 organisational indicators for ChildFund (see Figure 8 below). The 18 organisational indicators are defined for ChildFund as detailed in Appendix 2. ChildFund's five programme outcomes are sourced from within these organisational indicators. The remaining organisational indicators relate to a broad range of areas including child and maternal health, sexual health, nutrition, access to safe water, economic development, child protection and disaster preparedness, which are beyond the scope of the research case study which is focused on child and youth participation in development activities through sport.

In Laos, because many of the organisational outcomes were not related to children and youth in sports development, there was no strong consistency between these outcomes and what research participants commonly described as changes resulting from child and youth participation.

Figure 8: ChildFund's links between development effectiveness, organisational outcomes and 'biggest or most meaningful change' resulting from child and youth participation

ChildFund Organisational indicator: % of children and youth with a sense of belonging and a positive outlook for their future [Outcome 4].	⟷	Development effectiveness characteristic Personal development and social capital (intangible change	⟷	Biggest or most meaningful change: Personal development
ChildFund Organisational indicator: % of 12-16 year old boys and girls who have completed primary education [Outcome 1]	⟷	Development effectiveness characteristic Socio-economic characteristics (tangible change)	⟷	Biggest or most meaningful change: Education / Learning
ChildFund Organisational indicator: % of children and youth who perform at or above their current grade level in reading [Outcome 2]	⟷	Development effectiveness characteristic Socio-economic characteristics (tangible change)	⟷	Biggest or most meaningful change: Education / Learning

In Nepal, the most commonly described changes by research participants resulting from child and youth participation were consistent with three out of eight organisational aims for Transform Aid (Figure 9).
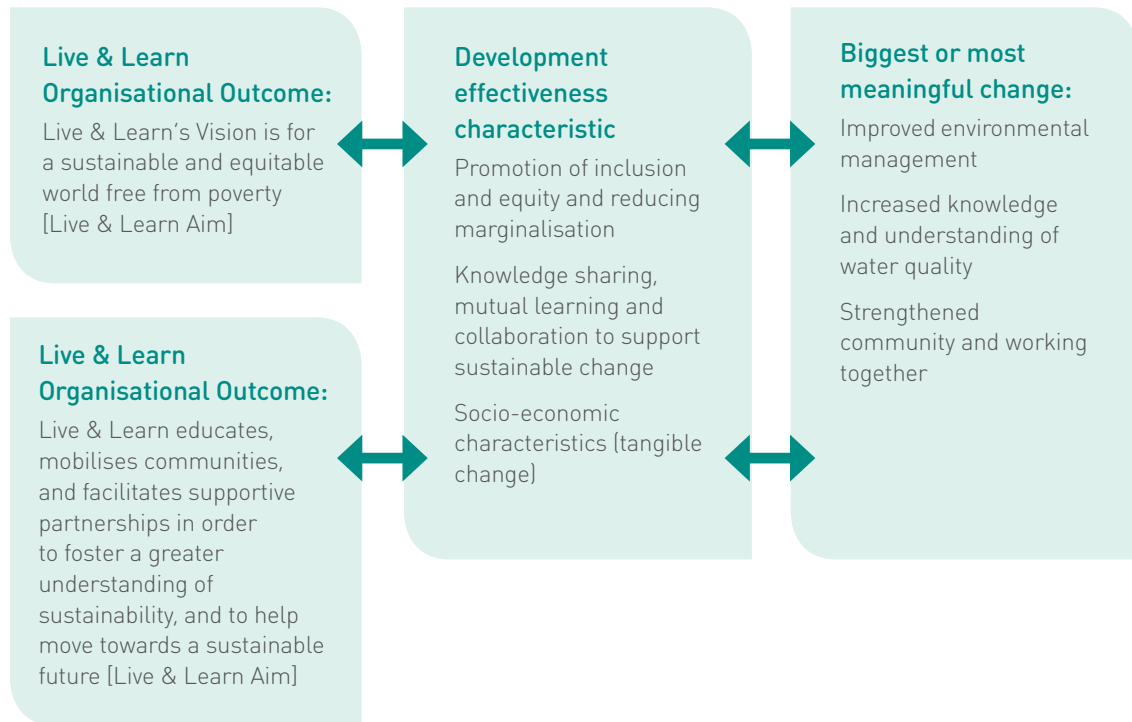
Transform Aid defined eight impact areas, three of which had strong links to commonly described research participant views of changes resulting from child and youth participation. Links were revealed in the impact areas of 'health', 'learning' and 'protection'.

The value of education was described in the community, as expressed by one mother: *"My daughter asked if I would not give her so much household chores and let her go to school regularly"*.

The research revealed no strong links between commonly held research participant views of changes resulting from child and youth participation and the impact areas of 'livelihoods', 'resilience', 'disaster response and recovery' and 'partner organisational capacity'.

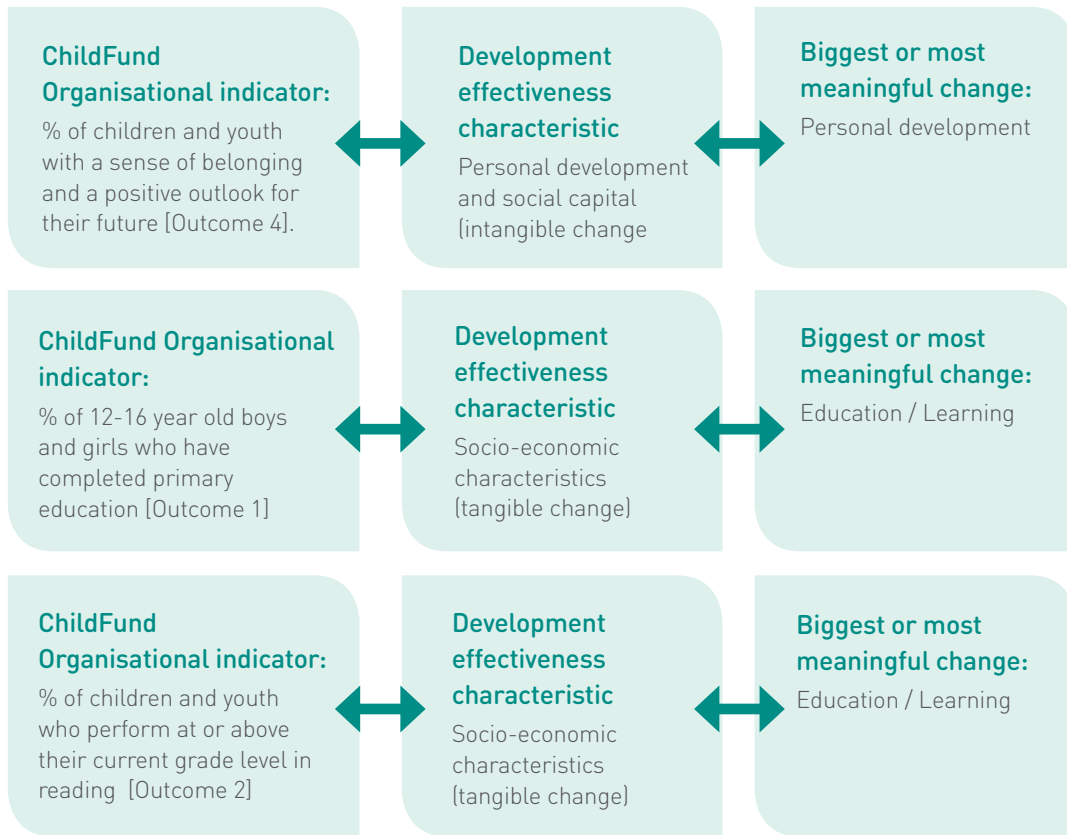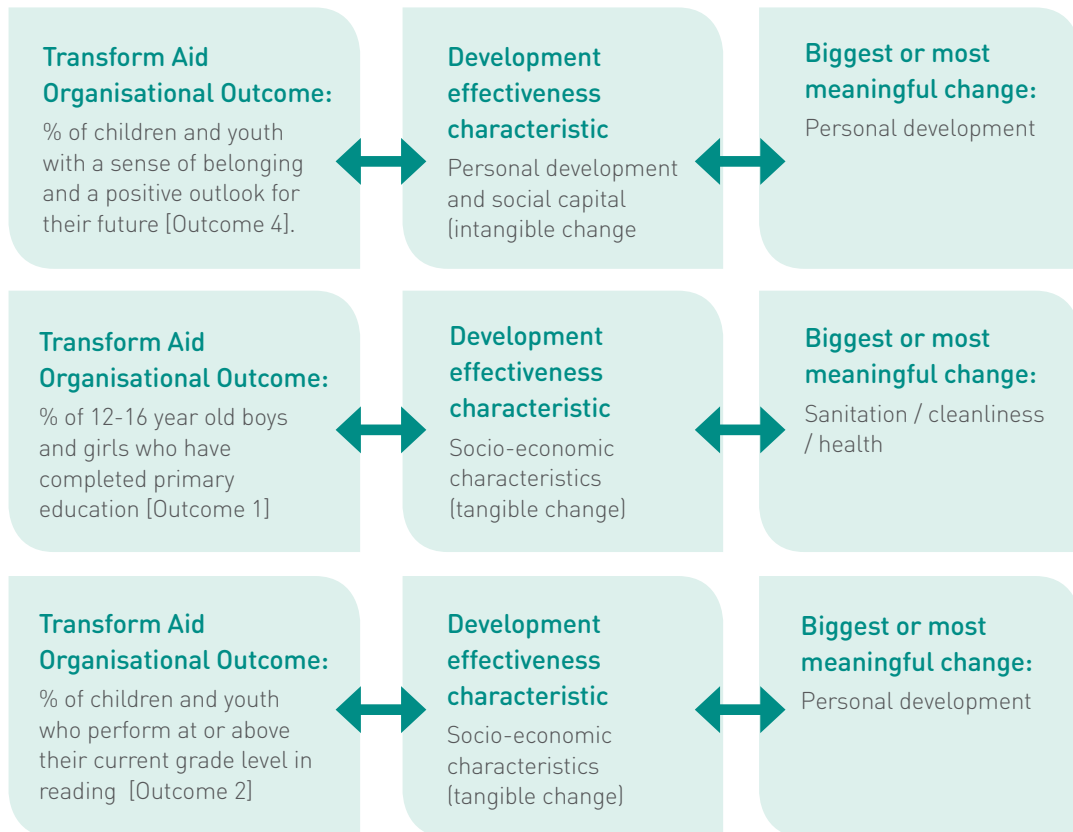"My daughter asked if I would not give her so much household chores and let her go to school regularly" (Mother, Nepal).

Figure 9: Transform Aid's links between development effectiveness, organisational outcomes and 'biggest or most meaningful change' resulting from child and youth participation

Transform Aid Organisational Outcome: % of children and youth with a sense of belonging and a positive outlook for their future [Outcome 4].	⟷	Development effectiveness characteristic Personal development and social capital (intangible change	⟷	Biggest or most meaningful change: Personal development
Transform Aid Organisational Outcome: % of 12-16 year old boys and girls who have completed primary education [Outcome 1]	⟷	Development effectiveness characteristic Socio-economic characteristics (tangible change)	⟷	Biggest or most meaningful change: Sanitation / cleanliness / health
Transform Aid Organisational Outcome: % of children and youth who perform at or above their current grade level in reading [Outcome 2]	⟷	Development effectiveness characteristic Socio-economic characteristics (tangible change)	⟷	Biggest or most meaningful change: Personal development

The research also revealed a link between the impact area of 'leadership' and changes resulting from child and youth participation.

Whilst leadership was not a commonly described change by research participants, the research data did highlight the role of child and youth participation in initiating development projects. As explored in the next section in more detail, participants interviewed during the research felt that without the Child Clubs, change would have been "impossible" or "possible but slow". A variety of examples were provided by participants where children were taking leadership roles in the development agenda, including awareness campaigns about sanitation and cleanliness in the village and child marriage. One example is provided from a female youth in Nepal:

"After being involved in the Child Club, all friends of the club had organised rally shouting slogan to stop child marriage in our communities, I feel happy about this. All our friends took out time and carried out one day rally, because of this rally people didn't do child marriage and have succeeded to take care of their life and health. This has helped to stop ill practice and I feel happy."

These examples provide evidence of the importance of children and youth participating in Child Clubs, and child forums more generally, as a means to support child leadership.

Consideration of outcomes in the absence of child and youth participation

What do research participants think the outcomes would have looked like without child and youth participation?

Research participants were asked to assess whether changes would have resulted 'without the project', rather than specifically 'without child and youth participation' as is noted in the research question. The results in response to this former question are provided below. It is useful to note the interlinked nature of 'project' and 'child and youth participation' and research participant responses still provide an important learning for the research.

KEY FINDING

Across all three countries, research participants felt there would have been a lack of progress in achieving development outcomes without the project.

In Fiji, research participants believed that without the project, there would have been a lack of progress in the areas of water management and planning and therefore quality, sanitation, health outcomes and community unity. It is important to note that these results were self-reported by youth, because this question was only asked in learning circles and not with parents and community leaders, who participated only in the research surveys. As noted by one male youth in Fiji: *"If there was no River Care and the trainings, there would be negligence in the community of our natural resources"*.

> "If there was no River Care and the trainings, there would be negligence in the community of our natural resources" (Male youth, Fiji).

Participants in Laos perceived there would have been a lack of progress across a number of areas without the project. Lack of progress was most commonly described in the areas of personal development and understanding of sports/fitness. Other responses included lack of progress in the areas of sanitation/health/cleanliness, education/teaching, equality/harmony and child rights.

A response from one male youth in Laos is illustrative of youth comments about the absence of the project: "Without the sport activity, the change also happens because we learn from other places. [We are] more brave to ask teachers questions. More brave to answer teachers' questions. If no project we lack skills and bravery".

Research participant responses for Nepal also indicated anticipated lack of progress across a number of areas if the project were not present – as demonstrated by a male youth: *"If there was no Child Club we would not have known about child rights...and then we wouldn't have been able to lead assembly. There would have been no cleanliness or plantation...after being in Child Club they have made attendance of teachers"*. The most commonly cited areas where lack of progress was expected were sanitation/health/cleanliness, education/training and personal development.

Mixed views were recorded in Laos and Nepal in relation to the extent to which change created by child and youth participation would have happened without the project.

In Nepal, there was a general split by participant views, with seven noting that change would be impossible and five noting change would be possible but slow without the project. A further two responses noted that change would be inevitable (n=14).

Similarly, in Laos the responses were split. The statement requiring response was: 'Without the project, changes created by child and youth participation would be the same as they are now'. The responses were split against agree (six) and disagree (five). A further three types of responses were noted: impossible (two), possible but slow (two) and inevitable (one) (n=16).

While the research findings provide mixed results, they do highlight the value of projects which include child and youth participation as contributors to development outcomes.

Child and youth perceptions of their contribution to outcomes

This brief section reports on findings against a third research question:

<div style="background-color:#00a99d; color:white; padding:5px;">Research Question 6</div>

How do children and youth view their own contribution and role in the achievement of organisational and/or programme outcomes?

Children and youth defined themselves as both leaders and partners in the achievement of organisational and/or programme goals, though there is a slight variation across the three countries.

In Nepal, youth viewed themselves as both leaders and partners. A similar position was stated in the Fiji analysis. The analysis noted that 31% perceived youth as leaders of change and 65% thought youth were partners for change. In Laos, the overarching view of children and youth towards their contribution and role in the achievement of organisational or programme outcomes was that they were predominantly leaders and, to a lesser extent, partners in change. This is supported by results which show that 66%[22] of youth described participation as leaders of change, 32%[23] as partners of change and 2%[24] as not involved in change.

The research identified strong acknowledgement of child and youth participation to contributing to development.

>> **What do you think?**
The activity explores the power dynamics and relationships that help/support change and the power dynamics that hinder or challenge change towards organistaion and/or project outcomes.

Photo taken by Live & Learn.

22. 31 responses (n=47)   23. 15 responses (n=47)   24. 1 responses (n=47)

Across all three research sites, there was strong and consistent acknowledgment by youth of the role they play as leaders and/or partners for change.

3.3. Learning Area 3: What challenges, opportunities and good practices exist for child and youth participation?

Challenges, opportunities and good practices

This section presents learning against the following research question:

Research Question 7

What challenges, opportunities and good practices exist for child and youth participation?

Drawing on group reflection and facilitator debrief sheets, the research analysis responded to this question in slightly different ways. The analysis for Laos and Nepal provided comments and insights generated from the research practice. The Fiji analysis similarly included this comment, but also provided broader comment on the practice of child and youth participation in the Fijian context and opportunities for further development of the practice of child and youth participation.

Opportunities for good practice - child and youth participation

The analysis included group reflection and facilitator debrief notes on the research process. Opportunities and good practice for child and youth participation identified through the research and described in the context of Fiji included:

* Valuing as part of the project, the contribution that child and youth participation provides to personal development and social capital, investing further in these areas including through resources, reporting against these outcomes and promoting the value of these outcomes to donors.
* Further develop youth participation activities already started, included peer-to-peer education and promoting youth participation in village decision making on broader development issues.
* Further consideration of best practice to enable child and youth participation which includes a mandate provided by the headman (village leader) to provide space for youth participation, to express their voice and for these to be responded to within the public realm.

> "I have really learnt a lot from fellow participants and it was a good way of sharing the different ideas. It revealed a lot about what we have done and what is left" (Male youth, Fiji)

> "I am happy about todays' learning circle. All said, we like it very much. I am happy that the research team taught me the things I didn't know. I like that I could share about work done by the Child Club and the challenges we faced" (Young person, Nepal).

Strengths and challenges of child and youth participation in the research

Youth self-reported the value of reflection as a result of participating in this research and described it as contributing to further personal development. Confidence and self-esteem were developed as youth shared and reflected together about their past experiences. The value of research as reflection is captured by one male youth research participant in Fiji: *"I have really learnt a lot from fellow participants and it was a good way of sharing the different ideas. It revealed a lot about what we have done and what is left".*

*In Fiji, it was suggested that regular reflection processes (shorter form*s) such as those conducted in this research would be of value in encouraging morale, programme implementation and reporting on programme progress to different participants.

Daily facilitator debriefs in Laos noted that the "children understood the games quickly", "children enjoyed the learning circle activities" and the children enjoyed the "Q&A structure of the games". They also highlighted the presence of peer to peer support in conduct of the research.

In Nepal, the facilitator debrief notes similarly described the value of the children's games and participatory processes. The debrief notes also highlighted that facilitators perceived participants to have increased self-esteem and increased confidence from their participation in the research process. Of particular value was the ability "to speak out, to share their stories". This was described by a young person in Nepal: *"I am happy about todays' learning circle. All said, we like it very much. I am happy that the research team taught me the things I didn't know. I like that I could share about work done by the Child Club and the challenges we faced".*

In Laos, observations by the in-country partner staff within their debrief notes highlighted benefits resulting from the research, including "child and youth peer aid; children are brave and self-confident to share their views". Notes from the facilitator debrief in Laos also included the following: *"Child Club was surprised by the result – that child and youth participation had experienced such a big change due to the Child Club".*

In response to the research question, the in-country partner staff noted challenges to the research and child and youth participation activities. In Laos and Nepal, similar challenges were described including challenges in note-taking (particularly for the learning circles), and the desire to make questions simpler to ensure that they are completely understood by community research participants. Other challenges described were unique to the country context. For example, in Nepal it was suggested to use a more culturally appropriate version of the learning circle, to allow more time for the learning circles, and to conduct learning circles with parents so that they can also learn about the Child Clubs and cater better for illiterate participants. Challenges noted in Laos included limited time for training, field work and that the survey took a long time to administer.

KEY FINDING

In-country partner staff, children and youth reflected how the research contributed to strengthened child and youth personal development. The two groups suggested that streamlined research activities could also be incorporated as part of the regular activities to enhance development outcomes.

4

Next steps

The next steps of the three-year research include:

- a review of the research partnership and research approach;
- drawing on lessons learned from the first round of research, and planning of the next phase of the research;
- additional data collection and analysis, and preparation of final research findings; and
- exploring changes over time related to child and youth participation within the case study sites.

Photo taken by ChildFund Laos.

Based on the learning to date, possible further research areas have been identified and are set out below. These areas will be refined through the ongoing partnership between ANGOs, in-country partners and ISF. Importantly, they will include children and youth and other stakeholders at the project sites.

4.1 Learnings for ongoing research and possible further research

The following themes have emerged from undertaking the first phase of research, which would be interesting to consider both for the ongoing research, as well as beyond this research in undertaking additional investigations into child and youth participation.

* **Enablers of child youth participation** – In response to the key research question, the research to date has identified 'support' from a variety of research participants as the key enabler of child and youth participation. Within the ongoing research, it would be interesting to investigate 'support' in more detail. Some questions might include: how does this support manifest? How can parents, community leaders, teachers and others provide support for child and youth participation? Are there any characteristics unique to context which enable support? What actions can an NGO and in-country partner staff take to leverage support to enable child and youth participation?

* **Why is child and youth participation valued** – Whilst research question two ("Why were these changes chosen by research participants?") sought to answer this question, the research data to date has not explored this issue in detail. This is an analytical question and as noted by in-country facilitators, it is challenging for community members and youth to describe reasons why they valued particular changes resulting from child and youth participation. It might be worthwhile including this area of inquiry in subsequent research activities, and, as noted earlier, more specific resourcing and revised data collection methods to explore this question employed in more detail in further rounds of research.

* **Changes to socio-economic characteristics relating to reduction of symptoms and causes of poverty** – It would be helpful to have more systematic before/after comparisons (e.g. school attendance and school results) as a means of assessing the contribution of child and youth participation. This information was not included as part of the research, and instead the research relied on reported perceptions against such changes. It is unknown whether the in-country partners recorded baselines in order to capture this information. Of course, such information could only say something about the contribution of child and youth participation to socio-economic changes. However, such information would give more weight to the perceptions of research participants (as presented in this research) that child and youth participation has contributed to meaningful change related to socio-economic characteristics (for example, improved education outcomes in Laos and Nepal).

* **Methods and type of child and youth participation** – The research to date has not explored what methods and levels of child and youth participation were carried out within each of the projects. It might be useful to consider the research findings for Learning Areas 1 and 2 in respect to different types of participation and the extent to which this influences the link between child and youth participation and development effectiveness. Different frameworks which describe different types of participation could be explored as a framework to investigate types of participation. It also might be helpful to explore the extent to which child and youth activities are internally focused (on youth development) or directed towards broader community development outcomes (socio-economic characteristics) and the linkages to development effectiveness.

* **Cultural context of child and youth participation** - It would be useful to explore different methods and levels of child and youth participation in relation to the different cultural contexts of each country. It would be interesting to explore with community research participants and in-country partner staff the extent to which cultural practices enable child and youth participation, and in what ways cultural practices might be employed within ANGO/in-country partner programming to support child and youth participation.

5

Conclusion

Field-based research across three countries (Fiji, Nepal and Laos) sought to explore the links between child and youth participation and development effectiveness, with the purpose of learning and informing NGO practice.

Photo taken by ChildFund Laos.
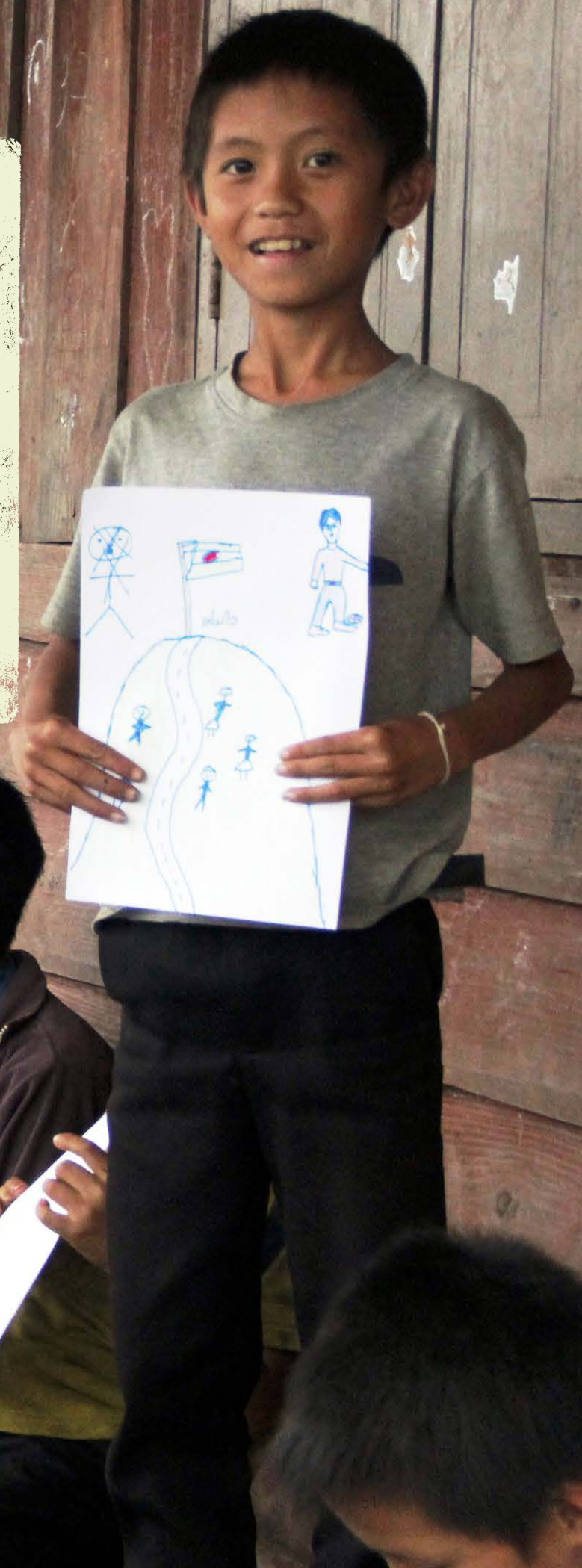
The research identified research participant views and perceptions of the 'biggest or most meaningful changes' resulting from child and youth participation to explore linkages of these to development effectiveness characteristics. This Mid Term Leaning Paper has described these changes as those most commonly described (and therefore valued) by the research participants. The most meaningful changes to research participants were presented in Learning Area 1.

For Learning Area 1, the changes most valued by research participants aligned with some of the five key areas of development effectiveness. 'Personal development' was the most highly valued change resulting from child and youth participation by research participants in Laos and Nepal. A different and broader range of changes resulting from child and youth participation was valued by research participants in Fiji, including changes towards improved environmental management through youth participation.

In addition to 'personal development', 'socio-economic change' was highlighted by research participants in all three countries. Participants from Fiji projects valued changes representing 'promotion of inclusion and equity' and 'knowledge sharing' aspects of development effectiveness. Research participant responses about their 'biggest or most meaningful change' did not include a focus on 'participation in setting development priorities'. It is useful to note that the most commonly described changes resulting from child and youth participation linked to the broad area and focus of in-country partner development activities.

Across the three countries, different changes were valued by different research participant groups, as seen through the most common 'biggest or most meaningful changes' described by each group. The differences between responses from the participant groups highlight the different experiences and understandings of child and youth participation within the community context. They also reveal the need to recognise these different standpoints and perspectives, and to consider them when designing activities towards improved development effectiveness.

Beyond research participant perspectives of 'biggest or most meaningful changes', the research data also includes evidence of some links between changes resulting from child and youth participation and all five development effectiveness characteristics. It was not possible to ascertain how widespread particular changes mentioned by individual research participants were. However, a breadth of illustrative examples indicates the potential for child and youth participation to contribute to all five areas of development effectiveness.

Learning Area 1 also aimed to understand why these changes were chosen as 'biggest or most meaningful changes' by research participants. While evidence was thin for Nepal and Laos, in Fiji, meaningful changes resulting from child and youth participation were chosen because research participants thought the changes had altered the way youth viewed themselves, the way youth interacted with each other, the way youth shared knowledge and interacted with their families and the community, and/or because of the link to better health outcomes related to increased youth knowledge and understanding and action on river health.

Learning Area 2 aimed to link the 'biggest or most meaningful changes' to ANGO programme and organisational outcomes. For the former, some links were present. However, links were inconsistent across programmes. Furthermore, consistency was partly dependent on how detailed the outcomes were (e.g. Live & Learn had two broad statements whilst ChildFund had 18 indicators).

The research highlighted the wide range of programme and organisational outcomes which were beyond the focus and scope of the child and youth participation activities, and therefore could not have reasonably been expected to be evidenced in the research data. Given that the projects were relatively new in their implementation, it is also unreasonable to expect outcomes to be achieved so early in their implementation. The research does, however, highlight the need to more closely align expected project outcomes with the way in which activities are designed, and to consider how individual projects can be expected to contribute to organisational outcomes.

The research to date highlights opportunities for further scope of inquiry and further learnings within the next phase of the research. Areas which are of interest include exploring different methods and levels of participation, relationships of child and youth participation to broader community development outcomes, and deeper research into the enablers of child and youth participation. These areas of inquiry will further enhance understandings of the linkages between child and youth participation and development effectiveness.

6 Appendices

Appendix 1: NGO programme outcomes

FIJI	Fiji Community Development Project (FCDP) Youth-led environmental management
Outcome 1:	Communities have increased access to relevant project networks
Outcome 2:	Target communities have increased food yields from their rivers
Outcome 3:	Target communities are utilising their aquatic resource management plans to effectively manage their waterways
Outcome 4:	Target beneficiaries have improved knowledge and skills to monitor water quality and manage aquatic resources
LAOS	Children and Youth in Sports (Sports for Development as a part of a broader participation project)
Outcome 1:	% of 12-16 year old boys and girls who have completed primary education (Education)
Outcome 2:	% of children and youth who perform at or above their current grade level in reading (Education)
Outcome 3:	% of children and youth who report having opportunities to voice their opinions in decisions that concern them (Child participation / voice)
Outcome 4:	% of children and youth with a sense of belonging and a positive outlook for their future (Personal development)
Outcome 5:	% of children and youth who participate in youth groups, clubs or other social or community organisations (Child participation)
NEPAL	Children and Youth in Community Development (Child Clubs Activity implemented within broader Child Centred Community Development Project)
Outcome 1:	Community awareness on child rights and non-discrimination have been enhanced and children have opportunities to express their opinions and make decisions in accordance with their development ability (Participation)
Outcome 2:	Families have learnt new skills of income generation and enterprise development and have willingness and accountability to provide improved life skills to their children (Economic and child development)
Outcome 3:	Communities have adequate knowledge, skills and resources to acquire quality health, sanitation, nutrition and lifesaving options for family and children (Survival)
Outcome 4:	The knowledge skills and attitude of children and communities from the target area will have been enhanced and are able to combat all forms of abuse and exploitation (Protection)

Appendix 2: NGO organisational outcomes

Live & Learn Organisational Outcomes [FIJI]

Live & Learn's Vision is for a sustainable and equitable world free from poverty.

Live & Learn educates, mobilises communities, and facilitates supportive partnerships in order to foster a greater understanding of sustainability, and to help move towards a sustainable future.

- encourage networks and partnerships between schools, children, youth, teachers, governments, chiefs, elders, parents, the media and non-governmental organisations (NGOs)
- share knowledge, skills, learning experiences and resources with others for the benefit of the physical and human environment
- promote the integration of the concepts of human rights, environmentalism, humanitarianism, culture, gender equality and peace in all projects and programmes
- promote action-based, effective and creative learning models and teaching methodologies.

ChildFund Organisational Indicators [LAOS]	
1.	% of women 15-49 years with children age 0-59 months who delivered their last child while being assisted by skilled and trained personnel
2.	% of children aged 0-59 months whose most recent case of diarrhoea was acceptably managed
3.	% of 12-16 year old boys and girls who have completed primary education
4.	% of children and youth who perform at or above their current grade level in reading
5.	% of boys and girls 0-59 months who are not below minus two standard deviations from median weight for age of reference population
6.	% of households (with children age 0-59 months) with year-round access to an improved, affordable water source
7.	% of households (with children age 0-59 months) with year-round access to basic sanitation
8.	% of women who report a significant increase in household income over the past three years which was spent on family needs
9.	% of children aged 0-5 years whose mother/caregiver can produce a birth registration certificate
10.	% of children and youth who report having opportunities to voice their opinions in decisions that concern them
11.	% of children and youth with a sense of belonging and a positive outlook for their future
12.	% of children and youth who participate in youth groups, clubs or other social or community organisations
13.	% of youth not doing exploitative, harmful or dangerous work
14.	% of women of child bearing age and youth can identify and articulate at least two ways of preventing HIV infection
15.	% of youth being able to access and having knowledge of how to use condoms effectively
16.	% of women/caregivers, youth, children and local authorities aware of potential risks and disasters and can say what to do in response
17.	Number of communities with a Community Action Plan for Risk Reduction (and, if considered necessary, a Disaster Preparedness Plan) based on a participatory assessment of risks, including those related to climate change, relevant to local conditions, known to the community, and consistent with national standards
18.	% of mothers/caregivers/children/youth and local authorities who a. can name at least three different kinds of child abuse b. can say what they would do if they had a friend, relative or community member told them something bad had happened to a child c. can give an example of a response to a situation in which something bad had happened to a child

Transform Aid IMPACT/OUTCOMES [NEPAL]

IMPACT AREA: HEALTH
Community members are leading healthy and productive lives in supportive environments.

Outcome 1	Community members have improved knowledge of health issues and practise behaviours which engender good health and see lives saved.
Outcome 2	Community members have access to improved health services.
Outcome 3	Community members enjoy healthy physical environments which benefit their health and wellbeing.

IMPACT AREA: LEARNING
Community members are engaged in meaningful learning that leads to holistic human development, vocational opportunities and fulfilment of their potential.

Outcome 1	Community members are participating in quality education and learning and using their skills to improve their situation.
Outcome 2	Communities are accessing institutions, materials and means to pursue quality education throughout their lives.
Outcome 3	Children are developing mentally, emotionally, physically, morally and socially through in all levels of educational and recreational activities.

IMPACT AREA: LIVELIHOODS
Community members are engaged in sustainable livelihoods, that leads to increased well-being and dignity, reduced vulnerability and the ability to fulfil family and community responsibilities.

Outcome 1	Community members are engaging in viable income generation activities that contribute towards an improved standard of living.
Outcome 2	Community members are accessing the necessary resources, capital and markets to ensure the viability of their activities.
Outcome 3	Community members are using resources sustainably and making informed choices to optimise their livelihoods and respect the rights of all.

IMPACT AREA: PROTECTION
Vulnerable groups and individuals, particularly children, are valued members of society and enjoy lives free from fear.

Outcome 1	Vulnerable groups and individuals, particularly children, are protected from human rights violations including exploitation, abuse and discrimination.
Outcome 2	Vulnerable groups and individuals, particularly children, are empowered to protect themselves and claim their rights.
Outcome 3	Community members are committed to protecting and upholding the rights of vulnerable groups and individuals.

IMPACT AREA: RESILIENCE
Community members, including children, are physically and psychologically prepared for and able to recover from internal conflicts and external shocks.

Outcome 1	Vulnerable communities have increased their resilience to external shocks, including man-made or natural disasters and climate change, and are working together to mitigate the impact of hazards.
Outcome 2	Vulnerable communities are better able to manage community conflict, violence and trauma through access to psycho-social support and skills training.
Outcome 3	Communities have increased social capital and are engaging in the appropriate protection and development of their own cultural practices and knowledge.

IMPACT AREA: LEADERSHIP
Communities have leadership in place that enables community members, including children, to work together to create a progressive, just and peaceful society, free from corruption.

Outcome 1	Communities have strong leadership models that adequately protect and represent their interests whilst being free from corruption.
Outcome 2	Community members, including children, are aware of their rights and responsibilities and are actively participating in their local communities.
Outcome 3	Local civil society organisations are providing and modelling effective leadership and working with communities to address their opportunities and needs.

IMPACT AREA: DISASTER RESPONSE AND RECOVERY
The subsistence and protection needs of those affected by a disaster are met and communities are rebuilding their lives.

Outcome 1	Lives are preserved through the provision of basic needs such as food, shelter, water and sanitation and health care.
Outcome 2	Communities are able to resume everyday activities following the restoration of physical infrastructure and emotional, social, economic and physical wellbeing.
Outcome 3	Vulnerable groups such as children, women, the elderly and people living with disabilities are identified, protected and engaged in disaster response and recovery programmes.

IMPACT AREA: PARTNER ORGANISATIONAL CAPACITY
Partner organisations have improved capacity to operate with good governance, comprehensive management and an ability to develop, implement, monitor and report on effective development programmes.

Outcome 1	Partner Organisations are increasing in capacity as local development organisations to deliver programmes and provide services that are effective and efficient.
Outcome 2	Partner Organisations have a clear purpose, structure, culture and operational systems to implement good practice development programmes and operate ethically and lawfully.
Outcome 3	Partner Organisations model effective leadership, accountability and transparency to all stakeholders.

Appendix 3: Research locations

FIJI, Wailevu District, Cakaudrove Province

LAOS, Nonghet District, Xieng Khouang Province

NEPAL, Dhading District, Bamati Zone, Central region

Appendix 4: Research activities and research participants

	Learning Circles (locations)	Surveys (locations)
Fiji		
Children	3	3
Parents		3
Village Leaders		3
Live and Learn Staff	1	
Laos		
Children	3	3
Parents		3
Village Leaders		2
Teachers		3
Sports Leaders	1	1
Local Authorities		1
Laos Rugby Federation	1	
Nepal		
Children	6	4
Parents	2	2
Teachers		2
Community leader		1
Staff	2	

	Female	Male	Total
Fiji	16	19	35
Laos	22	24	46
Nepal	39	21	60
Child and youth	77	64	141
Fiji	8	9	17
Laos	12	12	24
Nepal	10	10	20
Parents	30	31	61
Fiji	4	8	12
Laos	0	6	6
Nepal	2	22	24
Village leaders	6	36	42
Laos	3	3	6
Nepal	1	17	18
Teachers	4	20	24
Fiji	2		4
Laos	4		6
Nepal	7		21
In-country partner staff	13		31
Laos (sporting reps)	7		15
Others	7		15
Fiji			68
Laos			88
Nepal			143
Total research participants	126	149	275

Exploring the link between child and youth participation and development effectiveness

Mid Term Learning Paper, March 2015

This Mid Term Learning Paper shares learnings to date of a three-year (2013–2016) NGO Research Partnership exploring the link between child and youth participation and development effectiveness.