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Good Governance: Making Age a Part of the Equation- An Introduction

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Comment on This Article

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There has been a fair amount of confusion about the focus of this issue of CYE—both about the concept of "governance" ("Why don't you just say 'government'?"), and about how we are relating it to children ("Why are you having two issues on participation in one year?").[1] Some explanation is in order here.

The words "governance" and "good governance" appear frequently these days in the discourse of aid agencies, civil society groups and governments at all levels. In the development world, the term *does* refer to the activities of government, but it is understood to go beyond government and to include the relationships between formal government institutions and an active civil society. "Rather than government taking decisions in isolation," explains Diana Mitlin, "there is a growing acceptance (indeed expectation) of an engaged state negotiating its policies and practices with those who are a party to, or otherwise affected by, its decisions" (Mitlin 2004). In this issue of CYE there is a particular focus on this engagement at the local municipal level.

Now for the children. Many of the papers in this issue *do* consider the participation of young people in local governance processes, but this is far from being the whole story. The real concern is this: a lot of the work of local government and its civil society partners is carried on without an explicit recognition of children and youth (think about transportation planning, sanitation, zoning regulations, for instance.). Policy making, planning and resource allocation are often viewed as benefiting some "universal" citizen, without regard to age or gender. A municipal official in the

Philippines, quoted in one of the papers in this issue (Aguirre), put it very clearly: "We don't differentiate the concerns of children and youth from those of adults. We see the project as a whole and cannot target particular groups of people." We know from experience, however, that the actions of local government and its partners are not neutral, and that this hypothetical universal citizen may share few of the needs of a 2-year-old boy or a 15-year-old girl. The participation of young people is only one approach to addressing this problem and there are many other steps that need to be taken.

One of the hallmarks of "good governance" is its inclusiveness and attention to equity and participation for all groups. But even progressive governments that refer carefully in their policies to "women and men," may express an unwitting bias against children. This is not unique to government. This bias can run deep in many quarters. Even in discussions among committed development professionals who are fully aware of the benefits of taking gender into account, it is not uncommon for interest to fade if the topic of children comes up. The unspoken message is that bringing children into the discussion is a not-quite-relevant tangent—that surely their needs are met if their parents' needs are met. To some degree, this is true. But it is also true that boys and girls of different ages experience the world in particular ways, and may be affected in particular ways (sometimes profound and long-lasting) by a range of decisions and actions.

This issue of CYE includes papers that focus on the attention, or lack of it, brought to children and young people in the course of various routine activities of local government and its partners—from the provision of basic infrastructure and services, to the administration of the justice system and local planning processes. We specifically encouraged the submission of work that had followed initiatives over time in order to allow for the learning that this permits. There are case studies here from the Philippines, India, Nepal, Brazil and other countries in South America, South Africa, Iran, the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom. There is also a "conversation" among members of the Growing up in Cities (GUIC) network, considering what they have learned over the years that is relevant to the inclusion of young people in local governance processes. There are also two review papers that examine good practices from around the world. Some of these papers explore successes while others look at frustrating roadblocks; what they share is the common focus of exploring ways forward in the effort to have children and young people responded to as full citizens in all aspects of the governance of their settlements, towns and cities.

All these papers raise, to some degree, the need to integrate a concern for children and youth into all levels and sectors of government and in all governance processes. This issue of "mainstreaming" was raised with regard to gender by Caren Levy in 1996. She discussed the numerous "sites of power" in the web of any organizational landscape that must be addressed to support gender awareness as a routine part of governance (Levy 1996). There are some important differences in this regard between women and children—not least of them the fact that children cannot vote and that they do not remain children for very long. But a number of the points raised by Levy also emerge in the papers presented here, and will ideally

contribute to the development of a set of practical guidelines for making age a cross-cutting issue in local governance.

CYE usually separates papers into “articles” and “field reports.” Articles are longer, more theoretical, more grounded in the literature, and are sent out for peer review. Field reports are practical, less academic accounts of innovative initiatives, and go through internal review. Although a few papers in this issue were clearly academic articles and some were unmistakably field notes, for most papers the distinction seemed arbitrary, given the current nature of work on this topic. Therefore, we eliminated these categories in this issue and instead decided to organize papers according to the concerns they raised or the initiatives they followed over time. Papers that have been through the peer review process are identified accordingly by an editor’s note.

Some of the papers in this issue were originally commissioned by Save the Children Sweden, with funding from the Swedish aid agency Sida, as case studies from which lessons might be drawn about local government and its commitment to children. These papers—from South Africa (Clements), the Philippines (Aguirre) and India (Bartlett)—were completed a year ago and have been available on the CYE website, but have not been formally published until now. Also part of this Save the Children set are two overviews of “child-friendly” practices. One reviews the Habitat Best Practices database for child-focused initiatives involving partnerships among a range of local stakeholders (Varney and van Vliet--); the other focuses primarily on the Child Friendly Cities Secretariat (CFCS) database, and considers the actions of local governments in various domains (Bartlett). Thanks are due to Save the Children and Sida for the stimulus they provided for this issue of CYE.[2]

This issue also includes three reprints from the journal *Environment and Urbanization*, which featured a special issue on children and youth in 2002.[3] These papers are included here to provide an historical context for some of the papers contributed to this issue of CYE. Jill Kruger’s paper described a promising initiative in Johannesburg, which Je’anna Clements’ paper then follows up three years later. The paper by Mary Racelis and Angela Desiree M. Aguirre on child-friendly city initiatives in the Philippines gives the background for Aguirre’s subsequent paper on how this initiative has fared over time in Payatas, site of the notorious dump collapse in 2000. Eliana Guerra’s paper on participatory budgeting for children in Barra Mansa provides background for Marta Barceló’s investigation into how that initiative survived a change in local government. Yves Cabannes’ paper also considers the Barra Mansa case, along with three others in South America. One of the assets of CYE’s web-based format is the fact that issue length is not a concern, and that it is possible to provide readers with this kind of background.

Changing Awareness

A repeated theme in this issue is the fact that specific initiatives for children are often not as important as the changing awareness they can inspire. In the end, individual projects, even showcase projects, are a small part of the picture. What really makes a difference is fostering a more general shift towards thinking of

children and youth as citizens with rights—a shift without which change can never become widespread.

Yves Cabannes pinpoints an important challenge in this regard—the tendency to perceive and treat children as just another special interest group. He notes that

> *municipalities are faced with a number of groups whose interests they are pressured to address. There are various ethnic minority groups, people living in the streets, those with HIV/AIDS, the elderly, gays and transsexuals, among others. Making special efforts to include children in local processes as a routine matter of business can mean intensified pressure to create the same kind of political space for all local groups.*

Children and youth, however, can represent up to half the population in communities in many low-income countries. Relegating the young to minority group status can clearly have profound implications.

This same frustration has been intensively considered over recent decades in the area of gender. Although the battle is far from over, it has become increasingly uncommon for women to be considered a special interest group. An important indication of a shift in awareness has been the distinction drawn between women-in-development (WID) approaches and gender-and-development (GAD) approaches (see, for instance, Moser 1993). Both approaches recognize the critical need for equity for women in development processes. However, WID focuses primarily on initiatives targeted specifically at women, such as access to credit and employment, the creation of women's ministries and so on, whereas GAD focuses on the system of gender relations in which women are historically subordinate and attempts to address women *not* as a special group, but as fully integrated members of society. Instead of a Ministry for Women, then, there is the expectation that women will be routinely considered in the agendas of all ministries. This requires a level of gender awareness on the part of *all* officials, planners, practitioners and policy makers, and it can be far more challenging than the extra-programs-for-women approach.

With regard to children, we are still very much in the extra-programs mode—and we consider ourselves fortunate when even this is taken seriously. There is still little attention to thinking in the more integrated terms of age-and-development. Many municipalities, for instance, like to consider themselves "child-friendly," but few interpret this to mean considering the political implications of age, or making the interests of people of different ages a priority across the board in all decisions and activities. If they *are* willing to take this step, they are perhaps not sure what it might involve. As a result, much of the documented attention to children still has a superficial quality—a matter of allotting some extra space and resources for the special needs of an enormous "minority" group. A good example is the playgrounds built to contain children safely—often just an easy alternative to thinking about how public space can be made more safe and welcoming for people of all ages and abilities. This perspective can also mean a focus on projects that give symbolic attention to "children and youth" through their attention to one small group of children—for instance, responding to the homelessness of street children, while

ignoring the homelessness or totally inadequate housing of those who are still with their families (Speak 2005).

How is this change in attitude—on the part of both government and civil society—to be brought about? The strategy behind establishing special efforts for children (in the extra-program mode), has generally been to rely on awareness-raising campaigns or training efforts, with child rights as the focus. These efforts have been highly effective in many settings. Aguirre, for instance, points to the child rights training of the Payatas *barangay* councils resulting in more child-sensitive perspectives for all members. By contrast, she says, city-level officials whose work does not bring them into direct contact with children receive no such training, and their approach reflects this—public works are still undertaken with little appreciation of the implications for children, even in this city known for its "child friendliness."

There are numerous examples of children's rights serving as a spark to ignite municipal awareness and attention to children, particularly in Latin America—see, for instance, the paper by Yves Cabannes. But raising awareness of rights is often not sufficient by itself. Many municipalities around the world—short on resources and capacity, and subject to multiple pressures—are averse to undertaking anything that does not have proven practical benefits. Demands based on rights may have little effect, especially in the absence of effective avenues for acting on rights violations. How can a changed awareness of children and youth be undertaken in this context?

My case study in this issue on SPARC and the Mumbai federations of slum and pavement dwellers with whom they work (known as the Alliance) provides some thoughts on this. The work of these groups has been effective in changing the awareness of local authorities, but this happens through the back door. By demonstrating practical solutions to seemingly intractable problems, the Alliance gradually wins government over. The authorities are encouraged first to simply allow a new solution to take place, and only later to support and endorse it. The position of the Alliance is that "policy follows practice," not the other way around. When the Alliance demonstrated that community toilets designed for young children were a practical, economical solution that contributed to better sanitation for all, this led municipalities to add this feature to their own specifications. The awareness of local authorities about children's right to adequate sanitation grew out of their realization that this was a practical and attractive solution to a larger problem, and not the other way around.

The same is true in Cebu City, Philippines where a harsh juvenile justice system is being replaced in some *barangays* by the community-managed system described by Felisa Etemadi. This approach owes a lot to a changing awareness of children and their rights—but it is also true that the *barangays'* experiences with this approach probably is the key to actually changing this awareness. Policy and awareness, again, follow practice. This is evident, too, in many of the participatory projects described in this issue. The papers by Cabannes and by Piran, for instance, point to the surprise of adults when children rise to the opportunities offered them with an unexpected level of commitment and "maturity." An awareness of children as

citizens follows on children having the chance to function as citizens. Cindy Carslon of the Hampton, Virginia (USA) Coalition for Youth, in her paper about the city's successful integration of young people into a range of local governance activities, describes it this way:

> *Repetition has become the strategy of choice to deal with adult skepticism, avoidance or road-blocking. The more adults are exposed to prepared and confident young people, the more accepting they become of the potential of teens to interact in an adult world and the unique gifts they bring to any situation.*

These examples demonstrate that there is more than one way to change awareness of the rights and requirements of people of different ages. In some cases, rights for children or other groups can be productively promoted through mobilization, awareness-raising and training. In other cases, awareness may be achieved more directly through practical example. Especially where there are routine abuses of the human right to adequate living conditions and limited resources for addressing the problems, an awareness and understanding of children's rights will probably need to grow slowly and incrementally, both within communities and local governments. When adults have little experience of themselves as rights bearers, their awareness of themselves may have to change before they can develop an understanding of their children's rights. "From our observations," says Carlson, "communities that do not value the input of their adult citizens will not be inclined to value the input of young people."

Whatever the working method, information and communication are critical. Assessments of the situation for children in any city, and the implications for their well-being should be documented and disseminated. Descriptions of innovations and evaluations of the success of these initiatives should also be shared as widely as possible. Bob Yates' paper describes the development of a child impact assessment tool in Edmonton, Canada—an important practical device for any municipality that takes its responsibilities to children seriously, and one that is surprisingly rare. Changing awareness means changing standards for what is acceptable, and this happens best when people are repeatedly exposed to new ideas.

The Embeddedness of Initiatives for Children

One of the practical implications of a changed awareness of children and young people is a change in the relationship between initiatives for children and more general community development. A frequent source of frustration is the "add-on" quality of many children's projects. At times, initiatives for children are presented almost as an ornamental addition to the "real" work of local government, rather than as part of an integrated response that makes children and youth a more visible component of this real work. Long-term change for young people is more likely when initiatives are well-integrated—for various reasons.

First of all, in a number of domains, responses cannot reasonably be undertaken except in an integrated way. It makes little sense, for instance, to address the

housing of children and adults separately. What *does* make sense is ensuring that, in the course of local development efforts, the concerns of children and other special needs groups are considered—or, conversely, that efforts for children are undertaken with an eye to how they relate to the concerns of the larger community. Rather than complicating efforts, this can ensure the most effective responses. The Active and Safe Routes to School initiative in Peterborough, Canada described by Susan Wurtele and Jillian Ritchie demonstrates this kind of serendipity. The initiative promotes safe physical activity and independence for children, but also contributes more generally to local government efforts to improve air quality, traffic safety, public health and transportation. Similarly, within the slums in Mumbai, the construction of community toilets for small children has become a critical component of the overall solution to local sanitation.

Karen Malone of GUIC observes that youth-specific projects are often taken less seriously by local government than projects that involve the larger community. Embedding projects for children into broader efforts gives them higher status—especially at election time. Barry Percy-Smith, also of GUIC, stresses the importance of tying projects for children to existing government goals for service provision. He also notes the strategic value of being open to chance events that can further both children's needs and local development goals. When children's play space was identified as a "problem area" for the larger community, for example, GUIC in Northampton (England) was quickly given the go-ahead on plans for play that had formerly met only "a wall of bureaucracy."

Je'anna Clements describes the lack of response in Johannesburg to a participatory planning process with children that was initiated by the local authorities (as documented in the earlier paper by Jill Kruger), but then forgotten when the administration changed. Despite the frustration around broken promises, it was unrealistic, Clements says, to expect that reminders from a few children and researchers about their small project could compete with the large-scale marches of angry adults demanding corrections to their utility bills, among other things. If the children's concerns had been part of the agenda of larger community groups, she argues, it might have ensured more attention. Clements reminds us that there are many willing adult community members who can become the consistent "on the ground" allies that children need to support their interactions with ever-changing researchers, politicians and bureaucrats.

Varney and van Vliet-- conclude their Habitat Best Practices review with this statement:

> *Perhaps the most significant lesson that emerges from these initiatives is their relationship to broader-based community efforts. It is clear that environmentally focused projects that benefit and involve children and youth can improve living conditions for all community residents and help create sustainable environments that include these characteristics which children and youth need. It is important to recognize that programs that improve children's environments are not a zero-sum game with costs incurred by other population groups. Environments that improve children's safety and*

> *health generally also benefit the safety and health of others. By the same token, it is equally and perhaps more important to recognize that there are opportunities to improve children's environments through programs and policies that originate in other concerns, in particular those related to livelihoods and poverty alleviation, safety, and health. An important challenge, therefore, is to identify, promote, and create arenas for action in which children's needs converge with those of other population groups.*

This convergence can refer not just to the broader needs of a community, but to the framework of governance within that community or city. Felisa Etemadi notes that the community-based response to children in conflict with the law in Cebu City owed at least some of its success to the fact that it adapted local government codes to the specific needs of children, and drew upon existing community structures and processes to implement this restorative justice model.

Lessons on Participation

Most of the contributions to this issue focus on young people's participation in governance processes. In the CFCS and UN-Habitat databases, attention to child and youth participation also appears more frequently than *any* other measure to address the rights of children. On the one hand, this attention is very encouraging. It has been repeatedly demonstrated that young people themselves are the best source of information about their own experience and needs, and that consultation can be the most effective way to introduce these needs into the policy agenda.

However, the weight of attention to youth participation as the definitive governance response to children and young people also presents a risk. There is a danger that "governance *for* children" may be equated with "governance *with* children." This may encourage a new kind of marginalization: the notion that just giving young people a chance to be heard is enough. It is clearly *not* enough. As Roger Hart explained years ago, there are many levels of participation (Hart 1992), and they are not all equally constructive. "There is a vast difference" as Jill Kruger points out, "between 'hearing' children speak and 'listening' to what they say." There is additionally a vast difference between listening and responding. It is an oversimplification to suggest that merely giving young people a voice will lead to age-sensitive policies and practices in the absence of follow-through and attention to many other more mundane factors such as regulatory frameworks, impact assessments, budgets, training and monitoring.

The focus on participation can be dangerous in another way too. It may contribute to obscuring the equally important needs of infants and young children who are not ready to articulate their own concerns in a formal way. Attention to participation must consider the full range of ages. Aguirre's paper, one of the few in this issue to deal with younger as well as older children, makes it clear that consultation on issues affecting children *must* include mothers or other caregivers. The lack of attention to younger children in the discourse on governance is a real concern. UN Habitat's recent document, *Youth, Children and Urban Governance*, for instance, makes a strong case for the importance of youth participation. But it appears to offer this as the key governance solution to the considerable and growing problems

that confront children and youth of all ages in urban environments (UN Habitat 2004). It would be a promising development if the numerous youth councils currently being supported all over the world could operate in parallel with groups of parents or caregivers who could discuss the changes that would make their neighborhoods and settlements safer, healthier, and more welcoming places for their small children.

A number of papers in this issue describe examples of youth participation that demonstrate the truly significant contributions that young people are able and eager to make—many of these contributions involving simple, practical suggestions with benefits not just for children but also for others in their communities (see the papers by Cabannes, Barceló, Carlson, Hipskind, Guerra, Piran, Swart-Kruger, GUIC, Sarkar et al.). It is clear from these papers that inclusion, consultation and the delegation of responsibility to children and youth can have very practical benefits, and that young people can contribute a unique and often unexpected and independent perspective. A good example comes from the Bolivian Children's Parliament, described by Sarkar and colleagues in this issue. The young participants shocked their NGO facilitators when they advocated a change to national law which would allow children aged ten and over to work.

These papers also provide some valuable warnings and constructive criticisms of participatory projects, which can serve as an antidote to any tendency to treat the voice of young people as a panacea. There is plenty of evidence here that simply establishing participatory structures and opportunities for young people is no guarantee of their effectiveness. Leyshon and DiGiovanna, for instance, found that in the United Kingdom, where policy requires the inclusion of youth in local planning, only 12 percent of the young people the authors surveyed felt they really had a voice in local affairs. Louise Sylwander, former children's ombudsman in Sweden, in an evaluation described in the CFCS overview, points out that although most Swedish municipalities have a process for ensuring the involvement of young people in local decision-making, only 3 percent of young Swedes surveyed felt that they had a practical opportunity to influence local decisions.

Aguirre's case study from the Philippines explores some reasons for this kind of limited success. The youth council in Barangay Payatas, despite its establishment as a formal component of local governance, was an ineffective mechanism. It never managed to engage the energy and enthusiasm of local youth, let alone act as a serious voice for their concerns. Among the reasons given for the failure of this body was the poor choice of leadership, but also the fact that the council became a means through which adult political rivalries were expressed.

A number of papers remind us of the problems in participatory processes for young people when they take place within a framework which allows little scope for meaningful action. Marta Barceló notes that a change in municipal administration resulted in a number of alterations to the children's participatory council process described by Guerra three years earlier. The revised school-based program became more adult-defined and didactic, focusing in large part on a civics curriculum; it

limited the space children were formerly given for identifying and discussing their local problems and making decisions about how to respond to them.

The common emphasis on the educational potential of participatory projects for young people, to the exclusion of the practical value of their input, is problematic. It is important to educate children in the values and skills of citizenship, but this is most likely to happen if they can actually use these skills to make a difference. If the primary objective of an initiative is the learning for the young people involved, this can shift attention away from adults' responsibility to learn from, or to follow through on the contribution of young people. "The emphasis," argues Barry Percy Smith, "needs to swing more towards action…. My feeling is that children's participation often remains tokenistic because there is a lack of organizational and systemic learning, and therefore no action."

Clements points to the ethical dangers in this lack of action: the risk of exploiting and disillusioning young people when their sincere efforts and commitment are drawn on without a serious intent to follow through. No matter how "child-friendly" a municipality is, young people's efforts and ideas are unlikely to have the weight of some other concerns. A proposal from a corporation to do business in Johannesburg would probably not have fallen between the cracks in the way that the children's invited recommendations did. Measures have to be built in, says Clements, to ensure that these kinds of participatory efforts can be carried through; it is critical that someone actively supportive of children's involvement be present on the committees responsible for making decisions and ensuring implementation. This implies a more extended role for child-focused organizations than simply setting a participatory relationship or structure into motion. Whether such measures require formalized processes within institutions or a more informal culture of support that can respond to situations as they evolve is a question that is raised by both Cabannes and by the GUIC team, and is discussed in more detail below.

A proposition that emerges from some of these examples is that, in the spirit of "embeddedness," children's participation be more frequently integrated into the efforts of adult community members. Although most of the participatory work documented in this issue describes specially organized programs for children or youth, two papers explore successful examples of young people working alongside adults.

Anne Hipskind and Chistine Poremski describe an initiative in San Mateo County, California, where the Youth Commission trains and supports interested young people to take seats on county commissions and the boards of non-profit organizations. The young people, assisted by trained mentors, attend the regular meetings of their boards as full members, offering a youth perspective on issues under discussion. They also meet regularly with the other youth commissioners to operate as a body of youth leaders for the area, taking the initiative on relevant local concerns. An example is described in this paper: the young people serving on the Mental Health Advisory Board designed, conducted and analyzed a survey assessing youth perceptions of mental health services—information from which will influence the distribution of funds within the county.

Since the early 1990s, Hampton, Virginia has gone even further in supporting young people to take positions of influence alongside adults within various governance functions of the city. Cindy Carlson describes an active Youth Commission with a budget, and the incorporation of young people as voting members or advisors in various boards and commissions, serving as advisors to schools principals, and teaming up with adults to identify and respond to issues within their communities. The planning department has two paid positions for teenagers to work 15 hours a week as city planners; with training and technical support, these young people are busy "researching, drafting, promoting, monitoring, or implementing policy that is youth-focused or youth-driven." They report to both the city's Planning Commission and to its Youth Commission.

Leyshon and DiGiovanna document a more discouraging case. In villages in the south of England, growing numbers of retirees and second home owners make affordable housing scarce for local youth. Parish councilors feel that young people's concerns can best be represented through attendance at adult meetings. Young people themselves, however, express reluctance to attend these meetings, feeling that they would not be taken seriously. Nor are they interested in a youth council, but prefer to have their concerns communicated through a youth worker. A closer look at the context indicates the extent to which these young people have become socially and economically marginalized in their own villages; for most of them, moving away seems the only realistic option. The paper highlights that structures and processes for including young people are irrelevant where there are few options for their more general inclusion in local life, and where there is a deeper problem of alienation.

The Critical Need for Persistence and Accountability

The two overviews of good practice in this issue suggest that more energy is given to attention-grabbing initiatives for children than to the small, difficult-to-effect organizational changes and tasks that are essential to lasting change. Whether this is a reflection of reality or just an artifact of documentation is unclear. The Johannesburg example documented by Kruger and then by Clements is a reminder that without attention to these more mundane aspects, even the most promising projects may fail to produce the intended results. Undertaken with the highest expectations, the Johannesburg project demonstrated an exciting readiness on the part of local authorities to consider children in their planning and to take their opinions seriously; but there was a disappointing failure in the practicalities of following through. If *this* project failed, we can imagine how many other apparently hopeful and constructive initiatives have met the same end. The difficulty I experienced in tracking many of the initiatives within the Child Friendly Cities database, and the very limited response rate in the survey conducted by van Vliet-- and Varney as part of their Habitat Best Practices analysis suggests that this may be quite common. Racelis and Aguirre make this observation: "Limited programs with top-down approaches all too often rest on their laurels once they have some results. In reality, they reach only a small proportion of the needy." Reasons for the failure of projects to last and to go to scale come up in several of the papers in this issue.

A critical part of follow-through has to do with participants' attitudes towards problems and mistakes. It is all too common for flawed initiatives to be scrapped as failures that did not perform as intended. The Mumbai Alliance and other successful organizations, in contrast, look on mistakes as an opportunity for learning. Too often learning from mistakes means "we won't try *that* again!" Alliance partners, however, do immediately "try that again," and they view their flawed attempts as simply the vanguard of an on-going exploration. Jill Kruger, along the same lines, raises the issue of how "success" is defined, and offers this reminder: "Although we want to learn from our mistakes, we should be careful what we label a 'failure'."

A good example of learning from experience comes from the San Mateo case documented by Hipskind and Poremski. The Youth Commission was first set up as a resource on which local commissions and organizations could draw when they needed a youth perspective. When this did not happen, instead of being dropped, the project was redesigned so that it actually placed young people on local boards and commissions as voting members. When it became clear that the young people were still not participating in a sufficiently meaningful way, the project was rethought yet again to include better training and support for both the young people and their adult mentors, and to ensure that the young people's understanding of the work of the boards on which they served was deepened through their involvement in relevant hands-on projects, not just attendance at meetings.

Limitations in both staying power and the capacity to go to scale are in part a reflection of the level of dedication of local government and its partners, and the willingness of local people to demand accountability—but they can also reflect the expectations and limited project cycles of donors. As SPARC staff point out in the Mumbai paper, few projects are given the time and space to learn from mistakes, and to reinvest this learning in improved processes. In addition, the emphasis of large donors is likely to be on fewer, larger projects—rather than the rapidly available small amounts of funding that can often make all the difference to the survival of an innovative but developing initiative. When local organizations or local authorities are dependent on outside funding, they may have little alternative to "resting on their laurels once they have some results."

Political Realities and Relationships

Responses to children and youth by local government can depend on political relationships and alliances. It is small wonder that poor children's needs are often neglected. Children don't vote, and poor children are doubly marginalized. Aguirre's paper points to the significance of political alliances in ensuring attention to particular priorities. Barangay Payatas, we learn, was doing well on resource allocations in part because of the friendly relations between the mayor and the *barangay* captain. Cabannes also indicates, in his assessment of four participatory experiences in South America, that "the mayor's leadership during the initiative, or that of his or her representatives, has been essential in determining the disposition of other local participants, and has given legitimacy to the decisions and agreements reached, as well as the implementation of specific projects."

But both Aguirre and Cabannes make it clear that these political alliances can be a chancy strategy when it comes to longer-term success. Examples from the CFCS database also describe situations where a change in administration resulted in the abandonment of a previously favored project. As Clements points out, "While bodies like UNICEF might consider a 'Child Friendly Cities' agreement to have been made with a particular city, the city itself may consider this agreement to have been made with a particular mayoral individual and may have mixed feelings about sustaining the agreement once that individual is no longer in office." The papers by Cabannes and Barceló demonstrate that even if a project manages to survive through a change in administration, it may change quite radically.

A more productive approach appears to be an effort to sidestep these tenuous political alliances in favor of something more solid and enduring. The purposeful non-affiliation of the Alliance in Mumbai, for instance, has been described as a deliberate pragmatic, goal-oriented strategy (see, for instance, Appadurai 2004). Recommendations in this regard have been numerous, and come especially from experiences in Latin America. Ronald Ahnen, in his discussion of four municipal-level Child and Adolescent Rights Councils in Brazil (referenced in the CFCS overview), points out that, while the sympathy of the mayor is a significant advantage, there are also distinct benefits to political independence on the part of these councils. It allows them to deal effectively with both opposition and ruling parties and to weather changes in administration. A well-organized NGO coalition, Ahnen argues, can make all the difference in ensuring that a council does not become a rubber stamp for the mayor's office.

Many of the papers in this issue make the case for partnerships—not just for particular projects, but to enable more long-term development and planning. Such partnerships should involve the public and private sectors as well as civil society groups. They have benefits in terms of mobilizing political support across multiple stakeholders as well as raising funds from multiple sources. Cabannes' description of four participatory budgeting initiatives in South America demonstrates that the more solidly grounded these were in strong, broad local partnerships, the better their chances of success. Robin Moore and Nilda Cosco of the GUIC program in Buenos Aires point out that it is "imperative to partner with respected, neutral, stable community institutions." They describe their naïve partnership with leftist NGOs which left them in a poor position for negotiating with a centrist local authority.

Karen Malone of GUIC stresses the importance of a broad base of support within government:

> *By working across council departments and not depending too narrowly on specific individuals, we have helped make projects resilient to council changes and more likely to be sustained when funding is spent. Other tactics that have helped us ensure actions in response to children's priorities are to have adequate lead time to develop partnerships, and to make sure that both*

> *short and long-term strategies to sustain the project are in place in the council and community.*

These positive relationships can endure and be reinforced even where individual projects have floundered. Jill Kruger, referring to the bureaucratic hole that the Johannesburg project fell into, says, "We should be clear that lack of completion does not equal acrimony between partners. We all understand work overloads, red tape and other bureaucratic nightmares."

This issue of CYE includes two papers on initiatives that have taken place despite a political climate that was far from conducive to success. Parviz Piran's account of the School Mayors of Iran describes the establishment of a democratic, participatory structure for students in a context where both democracy and participation are hotly contested issues. The strategic establishment of liaisons with local government and an acceptance that some projects would be halted when "the political atmosphere was not favorable" has allowed thousands of Iranian school children to have the experience of working together democratically, and achieving such results as the renovation of poorer schools, the mentoring of weaker students, and even the improvement of conditions within the 500 meter radius of the schools that became the official jurisdictions of the elected children.

Save the Children Norway's account of political maneuvering in war-torn Nepal provides a good example of the potential for making children a focus for collaboration among local stakeholders in even the most unlikely circumstances. Many parts of Nepal are under the *de facto* control of Maoist forces. While government structures continue to function in formal terms, in many areas they have little or no practical influence. The paper describes an initiative of Save the Children and its local partners, working to make the school system stronger and more accountable in a conflict-affected district. The government's district education staff had not actually visited schools in the project area for several years, and the rebels' self-proclaimed local authorities had shown little involvement in education—beyond closing down schools on a regular basis to demonstrate their control. Yet project staff managed to represent children's interests to both parties, persuading them that it was their responsibility to take a more active role in ensuring adequate education for local children, and actually bringing rebels and district education officers together to discuss the construction of a new secondary school.

Sustaining and Institutionalizing Change

Many of these case studies, as discussed in the section above, raise the issues of "sustainability" and "institutionalization." The question is not only, "how good a project or process is this?" but, "what capacity does it have to stick around and contribute to lasting change?" The term "institutionalization" often implies an initiative becoming part of the formal machinery in some way so that it can outlast a project cycle or a pilot phase. In the Cebu City restorative justice project, for instance, it meant a city ordinance allowing for the appropriation of funds for the community-based Children Justice Committees. In the case of the school mayors' project in Iran, it meant the establishment of a formal liaison office within the municipality. However, it is made clear in a number of these papers that formal

structures and forms of representation, while they may be guarantees of protection for newly gained political space, may also be mechanisms of control.

Caren Levy (1996) puts the question this way: "How can a new perspective become institutionalized, but still remain fresh enough to be flexible to changing needs?" Her definition of institutionalization stresses the dynamic social potential of this concept, rather than its more rigid structural and procedural implications, although it is clear that both are needed in the right combination. Levy is interested in the "room for maneuver" that allows organizations and individuals to make changes. Writing specifically about institutionalizing gender in policy and planning, she sees the integration of a gender perspective as requiring not only changes in policy and structures, but the active involvement of both women and men in strategic choices at all levels of intervention. The fact that children have no political power, that they cannot run for office or apply for jobs within the governance apparatus (except in such rare instances as that described in Carlson's paper) limits the extent to which their own presence within a system can be part of the integration of an age-sensitive consciousness in routine governance activities. However, Levy's emphasis on social norms in her definition of institutionalization is critical. Two of our contributors with a particular breadth of experience in this area direct us to precisely this more dynamic, social interpretation of institutionalization when they consider "success" and "failure." Louise Chawla, who re-established the Growing up in Cities program, has this to say:

> *As the project moves into a site, it is meant to be used as a tool to help community leaders and government agencies understand the issues that young people face and to see ways to integrate young people into community development as constructive, insightful partners. If institutions see ways to include the methods that they learn into ongoing operations, that is great. But if the project is just used to help solve a particular problem, that is okay too. What we hope it will leave behind is a new configuration of better, more equal relationships between adults and young people, and a public that sees young people in a more accurate and more hopeful light—as partners in collaborative processes to create more livable cities for everyone.*

This involves, as Chawla notes, "faith in the ripples we cannot see."

Yves Cabannes is equally clear that this change in consciousness is the most vital kind of "institutionalization:"

> *The process is anchored in the people it affects as much as in local structures and laws. The experiences in these four cities can fairly be said to have stimulated events and processes that go well beyond the consultation process and any attempts to formalize it. In returning to visit some of the young councilors in Barra Mansa after five or six years, it is striking to see these outspoken, thoughtful, socially active young people who continue to carry their experience into their adult lives. Even when the formal processes deteriorate with changes in administration, or disappear entirely, it is important not to see them as failures, but to consider the impression they*

> *have made on a generation and the ripple effects for those around them. These new adults are the real sustainability factor in building citizenship and participatory democracy.*

Despite the challenges discussed here and the need for work in many areas, it should be acknowledged that lessons *have* been learned and progress made. Many documented initiatives contribute to a comprehension of what it means to recognize children of all ages as citizens with rights. We have a growing understanding of the fact that acting in the best interests of children means not only more children's projects, but more attention to the implications for children of *any* initiative. We have examples of training programs that recognize that it is not only those who deal directly with children who need to be trained, but also those whose work affects children indirectly. We have examples of participatory projects that not only focus on educating young people to be citizens, but that recognize and use the contributions they are capable of making for the benefit of all. Beyond the logistical factors—the creation of special councils or advocates, the development of plans, the attention to disaggregated information—lies a more fundamental rethinking that acknowledges a widespread blindness towards certain age groups, and that, ideally, allows for genuine and system-wide shifts in awareness, priorities and responsibility. These various efforts are not ends in themselves, but means towards expressing an authentic commitment to the human dignity and rights of people of all ages.

Endnotes

1. Volume 16, issue number 2 (2006) of *Children, Youth and Environments* will be devoted to aspects of participation.
2. Save the Children Sweden has a number of free downloadable publications, which are available at **http://seweb01.rb.se/Shop/Products/ProductCategory.aspx?menu=1§ionId=968**
3. This issue, "Building Better Cities with Children and Youth," can be accessed for free at **http://caliban.ingentaconnect.com/vl=1759982/cl=61/nw=1/rpsv/cw/iied/09562478/v14n2/contp1-1.htm**

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