



# Role of Children's Clubs in Safeguarding of Children in Schools

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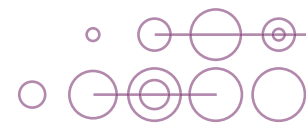




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# Executive Summary

Limited academic literature is available attesting to the impact of children's clubs, and fewer still exist that discuss the role they play in supporting children's safeguarding in schools. This report highlights the important role children's clubs play in promoting safeguarding and addressing violence experienced in schools and enroute to school in various settings around the world. This largely qualitative research examined this in more depth by additionally answering the following research sub questions: what can support and facilitate children and adults who are members of children's clubs to safeguard children; what do children do to promote safeguarding for themselves and their peers; and what role do children's clubs play in supporting reporting mechanisms for violence against children?

To answer these questions, this research drew on four phases, encompassing a literature review, three key informant interviews with Child Protection staff/focal points from the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children civil society organizations, 15 case studies from various children's clubs and five sets of children's consultations across 13 countries.

## Diversity of Children's Clubs

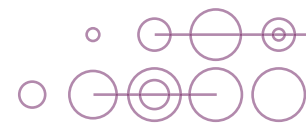
Children's clubs are local structures, often grassroots, that can bridge the gap between informal and formal child protection systems (Johnson, 2010). This is particularly important in places that have less robust formal child protection systems. Across the phases of the research, it was clear that children's clubs around the world fill a variety of informal protective roles. They also cover a range of topics and have different structures. It is also clear that they have been undervalued and little discussed in the academic literature. In the few places where they have been discussed in depth in academic and grey literature, insufficient attention has been paid to the ripple effects that come from children's clubs that support children safety, protection, and safeguarding efforts. Attesting to their diversity, children's clubs represent different sizes, include children of different ages, have different goals and ways of organizing themselves. Some are led by children, while others are led by adults, and sometimes the leadership is shared. They are commonly held in schools, but sometimes in community organizations, and increasingly online.

## Safeguarding - both narrow and broadly defined

While the formal definition of child safeguarding refers to the responsibilities that organizations have to protect the safety of children, it is important to note that few children and young people within the research distinguished between 'child protection' and 'child safeguarding'. They also often used children's rights, child protection, and child safeguarding interchangeably. In this way, it may be assumed that they considered 'child safeguarding' to denote the ways that guard children's safety, including organizational efforts, but also individual efforts. Arguably, the technical definition of safeguarding is less important than the unequivocal notion that adults, particularly professionals working with children, have the ultimate responsibility for keeping children safe and this cannot be outsourced to children.

All of the children's clubs that were involved in this research involved child safeguarding and protection in some way. Many of the 15 case study children's clubs and five clubs included in the children's consultation were involved in providing training on children's rights, child protection, and safeguarding, specific violence against children phenomena, such as child labour, sexual exploitation, bullying, and physical abuse, as well as ways to report violations. They also engaged in awareness raising, risk mapping and mitigation, and peer-mentoring and counselling. Other activities included ensuring a clean safe physical environment, enacting safety measures in schools, in promoting clear reporting mechanisms and in addressing online abuse and cyberbullying. One participant highlighted that children's clubs create a space for "children and adults to discuss rights violations, safety issues and co-solve issues with child-parent-teachers". The research highlighted that children's clubs are an effective way to report violence against children in school (e.g., bullying, harassment from teachers or other students and violence experienced elsewhere).





More broadly speaking, one participant suggested that children's clubs increase key elements of resilience, for example "improved level of confidence, esteem, voice, and sense of school connectedness" and promote school attendance. The research also demonstrated that there are rich processes of meaningful participation happening in children's clubs and members are staking their claim to this right within their schools. Participants articulated that all of these elements collectively add to child protection and promoted safeguarding mechanisms. The ensuing increased awareness about children's safety and the role that everyone can play towards keeping children safe helped to create safety. The research found that children's increased confidence provides them more safety, as noted by one participant, "children have become confident and they can reach out to their teachers and share their concerns without fear, they look out for one another and this has strengthened peer relationships among themselves" (Young Participant).

While many processes were disrupted during COVID-19 restrictions, one participant noted that club members were reaching out to peers to educate them on violence and provide support to those who may be experiencing violence. This support ranged from, as noted by one participant, "encouraging them to speak to a trusted adult or escorting them to report a case of violence to the local authorities". In this time, children also were involved in direct advocacy, either by "demand[ing] the right to have safer classrooms" or directly supporting other children experiencing or at risk of experiencing violence.

Protecting children also included finding ways to alter local social norms that impede children's clubs (as discussed in more detail later in this report) through community based advocacy, outreach and awareness raising. The research illustrated that children's clubs can be actively engaged in processes and initiatives that promote child safeguarding within and beyond the school in effective and tangible ways, including in supporting their peers in understanding these concepts and enacting these protections. Young participants also noted that there are misunderstandings about these concepts within their communities and families. They also noted that the gulf between what is promised with child rights and what is happening is tangible. One example of this is that corporal punishment was still in practice by some teachers in some schools.

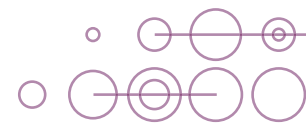
The research findings highlighted a need to ensure that child-led initiatives that support safety and protection are important to recognize and celebrate, they must not put the onus on children to protect themselves. Recognizing and supporting actions children and young people take is valuable and worthwhile, but the responsibility for ensuring protection lies with adults and organizations tasked with keeping them safe. For this reason, one of the recommendations from this research is that training children on child rights, protection and safeguarding, should be augmented by training for adults on how to work with children, to safeguard them, to bolster their safety while also enlivening their right to participation and respecting their thoughts, opinions, and perspectives. There were good examples of children and teachers/school administration working together to promote the agency and voice of children while improving adult practice to support adult approaches to respectfully work with children to promote child safeguarding. This balance is critical, but sometimes messy.

## Benefits and Contributors to Success

The research highlighted a belief that children's clubs were overwhelmingly beneficial for children and their schools, including in helping to promote safeguarding and child rights awareness. The case studies and the children's consultations highlighted the myriad of ways that children's clubs support children and their wellbeing.

In exploring what supports the successful running of a club, research participants highlighted a range of ideas. They suggested that holding regular meetings to establish an effective and consistent process and build trusting relationships were critical. Empowerment was commonly cited as an important goal of the children's club activities and part of this was supported by ensuring inclusive spaces where everyone felt able to share their ideas and opinions, had a role and could participate. Some participants further noted that this was more effective when the whole school or community was also included (where appropriate and possible). Building community and school awareness was a core function for many children's clubs and it was helped with the use of creative approaches, including through posters, art, theatre, dance, debates,





radio broadcasts, workshops and training sessions. Success was also seen as more likely when children's clubs could collaborate with others, like teachers, principals and build off of strong role models. Overall, effective training and education for children and adults provided a platform for success.

## Challenges faced by Children's Clubs

It is noteworthy that relatively few challenges were raised in the case studies, particularly when compared to the plethora of successes and beneficial impacts of children's clubs reported by participants. Some groups reported challenges with some children's clubs, including: difficulty finding space, time and money to support clubs; lack of knowledge about children's rights and safeguarding; adults' fear of children's leadership around violence issues; and some negative impacts of reporting violence.

Participants also articulated that children's club initiatives are stronger when done in consort with adult advocates and allies. However, young participants highlighted that building a trusting relationship with adults, where adults respectfully listen to children and young people is challenging and takes time and perseverance.

It is also helpful to contextualize the scope of the children's clubs. Most of the children's clubs discussed in this research were affiliated with school and while children's clubs were affecting the social norms surrounding violence against children, it is useful to keep in mind that creating space for children to advocate and take action can be harmful if other broader spheres of influence are also not engaged.

## Impacts of Children's Clubs

Research participants articulated a range of impacts, overwhelmingly positive, as a result of children's clubs initiatives, as summarized here:

**Children:** Generally, participants note that children feel positive about being involved and report the development of self-confidence, self-esteem, voice, empowerment, a sense of school connectedness, life skills, leadership experience, organizational and problem-solving skills, and improved communication.

**Staff at School:** Participants suggest they benefit from gaining a better understanding of children's skills in leadership in the clubs and their concerns around safety and violence.

**School:** Participants highlight that they experience an increased awareness of child safety and protection, increased school attendance, an improved safe school environment and an increased awareness of children's ability to promote safety.

**Community:** Participants articulate that it benefits from increased space for children's voice and participation, increased awareness of how common violence against children is and its impacts, and more focus and resources provided to support children's initiatives.

## Impact of COVID-19 ON Children's Clubs

COVID-19 impacted the work of many clubs. Many had to cease their work as schools were shut down. Not everyone could work online or over the phone, so many activities stopped. Some clubs were able to move their projects and activities online, with support from organizations. There are great examples of children's clubs mobilizing to support people to stay safe during the pandemic.

The broader socioeconomic and health impacts of the pandemic were also permeating the children's clubs, with an increase of children experiencing poverty, hunger, and lack of access to soap, water, masks and the internet. Others were forced to cease their school and take up work. There were reports that violence against children was also on the rise.





## Lessons Learned

Across the research, a range of core lessons surfaced, as summarized here.

To support safeguarding from violence against children in schools, children's clubs benefit from:

- open and transparent communication within children's clubs and with teachers and school administration,
- inclusive policies, particularly those that ensure gender inclusivity,
- intergenerational partnerships to build members confidence, capabilities, and competence,
- leading with children, with the support of adults that believe in them and their capacity amplifies the impact of clubs,
- clear roles, responsibilities, and mandates,
- external NGO support to help sustainability, consistent processes and reach,
- not exploiting children and their ability to garner an audience, and
- being protected from victimization and bullying that can emerge as a result of their activities to abate violence in their schools.

## Recommendations

The following recommendations for children and adults leading children's clubs, as well as other organizations supporting them.

### *Safeguarding and Protection from Violence in Schools*

1. Ensure safety from harassment and retaliation for children as they implement processes that challenge local social norms on violence against children, for instance reporting mechanisms.
2. Provide training and capacity building activities for children on child rights, and specifically on child protection and safeguarding,
3. Provide opportunities to empower children to promote child safeguarding.
4. Support school reporting mechanisms for clear lines of reporting abuse, referring to appropriate support and tracking child maltreatment.

### *Supporting Children's Clubs to Thrive Supporting Children's Clubs to Thrive*

1. Provide material and financial support for the creation and functioning of clubs and their activities.
2. Develop mechanisms for all schools to have the ability to establish and run children's clubs.
3. Provide support and encouragement for children's clubs across the school.
4. Provide opportunities within children's clubs for children to voice their opinions on matters that impact them.
5. Ensure that children in children's clubs are not overburdened by challenging tasks and that participation is a net benefit for them.
6. Ensure that in addition to meaningful activities that address challenges related to children's safety that there are also opportunities for activities to be fun, engaging, educative, creative and meaningful.
7. Recognize children's interests and adapt activities to meet both their current needs and future goals.







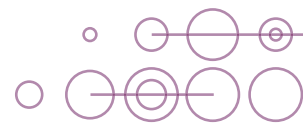
8. Provide opportunities for exploring gender roles, while also promoting girls and boys to be leaders in children's clubs.
9. Encourage regular club meetings and make space for all children's voices to be heard.
10. Build trusting relationships between children and adults.
11. Ensure effective and facilitative support from trusted adults.
12. Support clear processes and mandates within children's clubs.
13. Provide resources as well as ongoing support, guidance, and follow up for school.
14. Foster advocacy and community outreach.
15. Reach out to parents.
16. Foster open spaces for children's clubs to network.
17. Support collaboration.
18. Be bold.

*Further Research and Exploration related to Children's Clubs.* This research only touched the surface of the wealth of information available within children's clubs on the informal processes of protection that are emerging.



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# Terminology and Acronyms

## Terminology

**Child.** While the definition of a child is contextually driven, within this document a child refers to someone aged 18 years or younger in alignment with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989).

**Child or Children’s Clubs.** These loose entities are rarely defined and encompass a variety of adult-led or child-led clubs where children gather, formally or informally, and offer mutual support, activities and sometimes activism. These may be highly structured or loosely organized. They may be affiliated with a school or a community organization. These go by different names, but Children’s Club is used as an umbrella term for a myriad of structures within this document.

**Child Safeguarding.** Drawing on the definition provided by Keeping Children Safe (2014, p.3) “child safeguarding is the responsibility that organizations have to make sure their staff, operations, and programmes do no harm to children, that is that they do not expose children to the risk of harm and abuse, and that any concerns the organization has about children’s safety within the communities in which they work, are reported.” This definition is also included in the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children Safeguarding Policy.

**Child Wellbeing.** “Child wellbeing is a dynamic, subjective and objective state of physical, cognitive, emotional, spiritual and social health in which children:

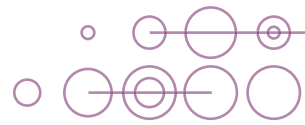
- are safe from abuse, neglect, exploitation, and violence,
- meet their basic needs, including survival and development,
- are connected to and cared for by primary caregivers,
- have the opportunity for supportive relationships with relatives, peers, teachers, community members and society at large, and
- have the opportunity and elements required to exercise their agency based on their emerging capacities” (ACPHA, 2019, p.10).

**Participation.** Participation is the term used to encapsulate activities that ensure a child’s right to participate in matters that affect them are adhered to. Children need space, voice, audience, and influence to effectively participate (Lundy, 2007). This draws on the concept that “children are not merely passive recipients, entitled to adult protective care. Rather, they are subjects of rights who are entitled to be involved, in accordance with their evolving capacities, in decisions that affect them, and are entitled to exercise growing responsibility for decisions they are competent to make for themselves” (Lansdowne & O’Kane, 2014, p. 3). The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child also defines child participation as “ongoing processes, which include information-sharing and dialogue between children and adults based on mutual respect, and in which children can learn how their views and those of adults are taken into account and shape the outcome of such processes” (UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2009, p. 5).

**Youth/ Young Person.** While these terms vary within different organizations, countries, and contexts, within this report they are used interchangeably and refer to people between the ages of 15 and 24, in keeping with the United Nations definition of ‘youth’ (UNDSEA, n.d.).







## Acronym

**ACPHA** - Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action

**GCPEA** - Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack

**IICRD** - International Institute for Child Rights and Development

**ICCRP** - International and Canadian Child Rights Partnerships

**IINE** - Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies

**NGOs** - Non Government organizations

**SDGs** - Sustainable Development Goals

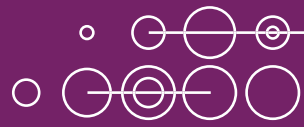
**Tdh** - Terre des hommes

**UNCRC** - United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

**UN** - United Nations

**WHO** - World Health organization

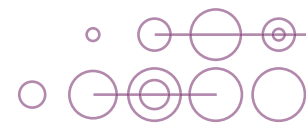




# Introduction

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This research study explores the important role children have in promoting safeguarding in school settings. There is limited literature available attesting to the impact of children's clubs, and even less that discuss the role they play in supporting children's safeguarding in schools. While the responsibility to protect children firmly lies in the hands of adults as duty bearers, including helping professionals, many children take on roles to protect themselves and their peers. As enshrined in Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, and other international legal mechanisms, children have the right to be included in matters that affect them. This research sought to explore what children and young people have been doing within the context of children's clubs around the world. Within this study, this report aims to highlight and analyze existing reporting mechanisms, such as mobile phones, online portals, complaint boxes, and child protection and gender focal points within communities. On these topics, little has been found in the literature outlining this within the context of school-based and other children's clubs.

This research aimed to explore the role of children's clubs in promoting safeguarding in schools and learning environments and the role children take within these clubs. This project took a four-phased approach to gather information. This report summarizes the findings from these four phases of the research, including a literature review, key informant interviews, case study research, and children's consultations. The literature review draws on grey literature and academic literature exploring children's clubs and other child-led safeguarding initiatives in schools intended to reduce/redress violence in school. The summarized findings from three key informant interviews with experts in child safeguarding and child participation and the findings from 15 case studies and five children's consultations are also included in this report.

## Project Overview

This research project strove to explore what children's clubs are doing to prevent and respond to violence against children in schools and how children are actively contributing to promoting child safeguarding in schools through children's clubs. Led by the International Institute for Child Rights and Development (IICRD) in Partnership with the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children, the Role of Children's Clubs in Safeguarding of Children in Schools project aimed to support knowledge to keep children safe and meaningfully participate in their own protection. As rights holders, we know that children are not responsible for protecting themselves or their peers. Regardless, we know that they do have a significant role in protecting themselves and their peers, in schools around the world.

Drawing on the broad definition provided by Keeping Children Safe this report takes child safeguarding to mean (2014, p.3) "the responsibility that organizations have to make sure their staff, operations, and programmes do no harm to children, that is that they do not expose children to the risk of harm and abuse, and that any concerns the organization has about children's safety within the communities in which they work, are reported." For many children involved in this research, child safeguarding meant keeping themselves safe from harm and prompting others to keep them safe. Further, the participants in the research saw children's rights, child protection and child safeguarding with a holistic lens, where the concepts mutually reinforce one another. As one young person in Kenya suggests, "so child rights are not only about trying to recognize the rights and not being abused, as much as we are fighting all that, we are also being empowered". Further, some children also took child safeguarding into their own hands, as one young person noted when one young person in Uganda stated, "we recommend that our fellow club members stick to our advice that they learn lessons during the child rights sensitization so that they would remain safe all the time at the school and in the community".

While international actors may have a more nuanced definition of child safeguarding, on the ground the understanding of this term focused on keeping children safe from harm caused by adults.

The core research question for this research was:

- What is the role of children in children's clubs in safeguarding children in schools and learning environments?





Sub questions included the following:

- What can support and facilitate children and adults who are members of children's clubs to safeguard children?
- What do children do to promote safeguarding for themselves and their peers?
- What role do children's clubs play in supporting reporting mechanisms for violence against children?

## Setting/context: Violence experienced in schools and enroute to school, globally

In exploring children's roles in safeguarding against violence enroute to schools<sup>1</sup>, the emerging findings focused on an exploration of multiple dimensions of children's safeguarding roles, including:

1. The role of children's clubs in safeguarding from violence in schools.
2. The role of children's clubs in protecting themselves and their peers from violence.
3. The role of children's clubs in empowering other children to promote safeguarding.

As an overview of the overarching research framework, the researchers developed four key iterative phases:

1. **Literature Review:** This included a desk-based review of the literature review to better understand academic and grey literature around children's role in safeguarding from violence in schools. A sub question sought to find evidence of the role children's clubs have in reporting violence against children.
2. **Key Informant Interviews:** Findings from the interviews with Child Safeguarding staff/focal points from the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children civil society organizations helped to contextualize and shape the Case Study questions.
3. **Case studies:** A review of 15 case studies, sourced from the Civil Society organization Forum of the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children and the researchers' professional networks, was done. A summary of which was provided as the framework for seeking to affirm findings with children and young people in the children's consultations.
4. **Children's Consultations:** Online Children's consultations with children from five organizations that submitted a case study, using art and play-based participatory activities, was organized to ask further questions emerging from the research and to triangulate findings.

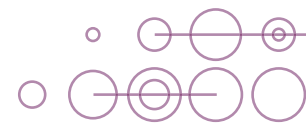
A child friendly report will also be produced to widely share learnings from children and communities on the role of children's clubs in safeguarding children in school.

It is the goal of this report to feed into the international dialogue around the role of children's clubs in safeguarding and protecting children from violence in schools, so that programs and policies can be improved to better support children.

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<sup>1</sup> Note, the purpose was to explore violence in schools, as well as on the way to and home from schools. However, the participants did not always distinguish the location they were referring to. As a result, throughout this document violence in schools may also encompass violence experience enroute to school.





# Situating Safeguarding and Protection of Children within the Wider Literature on Violence Against Children

## *Conceptualizing children*

In order to contextualize this research within the broader pantheon of children's rights and child protection literature, this section situates child safeguarding and child protection within violence against children, as well as child wellbeing. Violence has a significant and widespread impact on children. It influences children in the short and long term, but also across generations. Despite the three decades that have passed since the international community came together to launch the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, Hillis and colleagues (2016) found that over half of all children between the ages of 2-17 had experienced violence, abuse or neglect within the previous year of their study. According to the UN Violence Study (Pinheiro, 2006), children routinely place violence as a key concern.

Understanding children within an ecological system helps to understand the interrelated and interconnected aspects of their experience of violence and how an effective redress may be introduced and indeed the research participants contextualized their own experiences within a nested system. Childhood has been contextualized by some as a nested culturally influenced system (e.g., Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Vygotsky, 1967). A social ecological approach, first introduced by Bronfenbrenner (1979), helps to frame the discussion on child safety, children's rights and children's participation. It moves away from a disjointed and individualized approach and illustrates the connectedness of children's social and physical ecology. This model "place[s] responsibility upon institutions and society" (Hart et al, 2016, p.2). This places the onus of child protection on a broad array of adults with the caveat that they listen to the perspectives and wishes of children. Attesting to this, Fattore, and colleagues (2017) redefined their definition of child wellbeing once they asked for meaningful feedback from children who informed them that emotion and relationships were far more important than had previously been considered. Bottrell (2009) rejected individualized notions of resilience in favour of recognizing the collective experiences and social identities tied up with resilience and wellbeing. Community resilience shifts from an individualized perspective to a relational understanding of wellbeing in a social ecological framework (Gotts, 2007).

## Conceptualizing violence against children

Violence against children happens in schools, in homes, in their communities, and across systems. All children may experience violence, but specific groups have higher risks and may require more protection, this may be due to contextual constraints that disadvantage or stigmatize children from specific genders, sexualities, ethnicities, or other groupings, or because of physical and intellectual disabilities (UNESCO, 2016; Jour, 2005). Poly-victimization may further stigmatize and entrench the impact on some children. Direct and indirect experiences of violence in childhood undermine our prevention and protection investments in children in health, education, and development. This research focuses on further understanding how children's agency can be better catalyzed to promote psychological, social, and physical safety within school settings to work towards the aims of the Safe to Learn initiative (Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children, n.d.). Efforts to enhance child protection and child safeguarding are growing, but it currently includes actors who share a vision to end violence for children in schools, including United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the UK Department for International Development (DFID), the United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI), the Civil Society Forum to End Violence against Children, the World Bank, Education Cannot Wait (ECW), the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), the Global Business Coalition for Education, and End Violence.

A multitude of mechanisms have been formulated to categorize, dissect, redress, prevent, respond to, and tackle a variety of types of violence against children. Key international mechanisms include the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence Against Children, the Sustainable Development





Goals (in particular, SDG 16.2) (UN, 2015), the INSPIRE framework (WHO, 2016), as well as national and local initiatives, and significant work by International Non-Governmental Organizations, Non-Governmental Organizations, statutory and voluntary agencies.

To consolidate a myriad of strategies and integrate an evidence base, the INSPIRE Framework was launched by various high profile international child protection agencies to monitor and support government, communities and civil society bodies to redress violence against children and support key priorities towards the Sustainable Development Goals. It has attempted to catalyze various actors at the international level focused on children's protection and wellbeing. The seven strategies embedded in the framework include implementation and enforcement of the laws, norms and values, safe environments, parent and caregiver support, response and support services, and education and life skills.

These strategies interweave with the mandate of Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children End Violence. This focuses on the extent to which children's clubs that are attached to schools have a role in tackling specific SDG's within school settings. This research focuses on how to tackle specific SDGs within school settings, namely SDG 16.2 (end abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence and torture against children), 5.2 (eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation) and 16.1 (promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels) (UN, 2015; WHO, 2016). This sits within the general framework of SDG 4- Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all (UN, 2015). The INSPIRE framework also sought to redress risk factors known to exasperate violence against children (e.g., poverty, ill health, inequality, unsafe environments, insufficient or unstable justice institutes, and poor education) and support education and life skills through increasing "children's access to more effective gender-equitable education and socio-emotional learning and life-skills training, and ensure that school environments are safe and enabling" (WHO, 2016, p.66). This provides a further framework to support the direction for this research. This is done alongside a focus on the realization of child rights, in particular the recognition of the rights to participation (Art. 12, 13, 14, 15, 16 of the UNCRC) and protection (Art. 19 of the UNCRC) in order to fulfil the right to education (Art. 28) (UNCRC, 1989) and the aims set out in the Committee on the Rights of the Child's General Comment 1- The Aim of Education (UNCRC, 2001).

Researchers and international child protection workers believe that school offers an important protective role for children and for communities. For example, The Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) suggested that a school's protection is effective because it:

- (1)** Provides physical, psychosocial, and cognitive protection;
- (2)** gives children a sense of hope and stability;
- (3)** gives children access to other critical, lifesaving services;
- (4)** strengthens social cohesion and supports peacebuilding and conflict-resolution efforts;
- (5)** supports gender equality and provides women and girls, who are often marginalized, with skills they need to empower themselves; and
- (6)** enhances children's wellbeing over the long term (INEE, 2018, p. 5).

Conversely, it can also be a space where violence occurs, and protections are eroded. There is a dearth of literature in other regions, and thus we included these examples from what literature was available. However, as an example, UNICEF launched a report on the levels of violence in schools in South Asia (Jones & Holmes, 2016) and noted both the prevalence and the acceptance of violence in schools, particularly impacting girls. They also noted the adverse impact various forms of violence have on children beyond academics. Similarly, the Manara Network (2011) noted the levels of impact of sanctioned violence (from corporal punishment through to psychological violence) in schools in Lebanon, Morocco, and Yemen and called on actors to ban corporal punishment in schools.



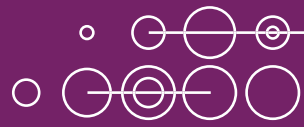




In addressing safety in schools, traditional approaches should be reimagined. “Child protection [and safeguarding] has historically tried to ‘save’ children from difficult or harmful circumstances and in the process has often failed to recognize children’s agency or respect their participation rights” (Collins & Wright, 2019, p.8). Children are highly competent and agentic beings with expertise to contribute to their own safety and wellbeing in partnership with adults (who hold responsibility as duty bearers for their protection), yet they are often disempowered and prevented from being engaged in transforming child safeguarding and protection systems (Duncan, 2019). In practice, child participation is too often reduced to rhetoric (Naker, et al, 2007), with the result that we are left with adult-centric implementation of children’s rights. Importantly, for framing this discussion, children, and youth activists themselves called on the international community, including individual children, parents, teachers and governments to do better. In the #ENDviolence Youth Manifesto (UNICEF, 2018), youth demanded that violence enroute to school and within schools stop, so that they can safely benefit from their learning opportunities. In order to fulfill this desire, they demanded to be taken seriously, to establish clear rules, to restrict weapons, to ensure safe travel to school, to provide secure school facilities, to train teachers and counselors, and to teach consent and respond to sexual violence.

Despite the importance of drawing on children’s perspectives and including children in research about them, it is rarely done. In a literature review conducted by the International and Canadian Child Rights Partnership’s (ICCRP) research project (2016-2020) on monitoring children’s participation in child protection, a dearth of research and evidence on children’s role in this process was identified. Ensuring that children’s meaningful participation is at the center of efforts to protect them is crucial and this was carried through in this project. The efficacy of child’s participation goes beyond supporting good citizenship and preparing future adults. Children have unique and important contributions based on their lived experience that better inform policies, processes, and practices that support their wellbeing and safety. Meaningful participation requires effective communication and transparency with children about their role, and level of participation. It also requires follow-through and acting on children’s contributions to inform decision-making (Ruiz-Casares, et al, 2013; Manion & Nixon, 2012; Bessell & Gal, 2009; Hill, et al, 2004; Horwath, et al, 2012).





# Overarching Methodology

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The project employed a gendered, generational, inclusion and diversity lens and is informed by a social constructivist theoretical underpinning, recognizing the relevance of social relationships and the socio-cultural setting to the risk environment among children. This project also considered how gender and power dynamics in the social environment impact the nature of both supportive and abusive relationships that girls experience and how this impacts their well-being in the context of their broader communities, as well as all children. Special attention was paid to the most vulnerable children, including those with different abilities, to ensure that all voices were heard.

This research followed a Case Study approach to the methodology using mainly qualitative approaches (Yin, 2003), with the addition of some basic quantitative analysis of case study results. Children's consultations were undertaken online to gather young people's voices and perspectives around the role of children's clubs in safeguarding in schools. The mixed methodology relied on fairly standard data collection and analysis (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Miles, & Huberman, 1994). Analysis included looking for initial themes and then checking these against incongruencies in order to finalize themes (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). The case studies, key informant interviews and children's consultations were coded within NVivo 12 Pro by the research team to identify themes and support analysis.

The core research question for this research was:

- What is the role of children in children's clubs in safeguarding children in schools and learning environments?

Sub questions included the following:

- What can support and facilitate children and adults who are members of children's clubs to safeguard children?
- What do children do to promote safeguarding for themselves and their peers?
- What role do children's clubs play in supporting reporting mechanisms for violence against children?

To answer these questions, the research covered four key iterative phases: a literature review, three key informant interviews, 15 case studies, and five children's consultations. This section provides a brief overview of the overarching research methodology, methods, sampling and ethical consideration, however a more detailed articulation of the specific methods and analysis used in each of four phases of the research are discussed at the beginning of each chapter covering the four phases.

## Research Methods

In addition to a case study approach, the project drew on document analysis, play and arts-based participatory methods with children and young people, and semi-structured key informant interviews. Document analysis included grey literature (on children's clubs), academic sources (on children's clubs and other child-led safeguarding initiatives in schools or processes to reduce/redress violence in schools) and case studies. Case studies were provided by the CSO Forum, CSO listerv, and other child centred local and global organizations. Through this analysis, we examined and interpreted data to elicit meaning, gain understanding, and develop key themes for analysis on children's clubs' role in child safeguarding (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

As part of the children's consultations, attempts were made to develop an online global child advisory committee which included members from different children's clubs to act as a wing of the Secretariat to advise us on the review the Children's Club themes as they emerge, provide feedback on the report and recommendations, and help shape the child-friendly summary report. Instead, children's consultations were done through arts and creative participatory workshops across multiple countries where children were asked to share their ideas about the findings and about their experiences within children's clubs. We explored creative online interactive forms (e.g., music, games, greetings) to foster relationships, incorporate





fun activities, and actively engage advisory members in research project decisions. This approach is valuable for research conducted with vulnerable groups and can support relationships between children, youth, and adults, as well as support research participants to critically analyze, reflect, co-construct meaning, and identify actions and solutions (Christensen & James 2000; Christensen & Prout, 2002; Clark, 2010; Currie & Heykoop, 2011; Lee, 2015).

## Key Data Sources and Sampling

Much of this project is desk-based, however, children's perspectives informed the project, while involving all key stakeholders in their environment, including family and community members and leaders, policy-makers, government and law enforcement representatives and key partners from Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children. The project case studies and consultation with children introduce a variety of creative approaches including social media, mobile phones, online portals, complaint boxes, local community groups, and Child Protection, Disability Support and Gender or Ethnic Focal Points within their communities.

Given the nature of the research, the qualitative case studies method lends itself to non-probabilistic sampling. In particular, the case studies draw on purposeful sampling, bringing in cases covering a range of characteristics as highlighted in the criteria listed above (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Creswell, 2008). To ensure triangulation, data was drawn from a range of sources, including stakeholder interviews. The stakeholder interviews focused on gleaning the interviewees perspectives on the macro role of school clubs in relation to concepts of child safeguarding and child's participation. The three key informants were chosen by the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children Secretariat based on their expertise in the areas of child participation and child safeguarding.

## Ethical Considerations

The researchers used stringent ethical processes that followed the Canadian Tri-Council Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS2, 2018). A Research Ethics Review Board at Royal Roads University, in Canada, reviewed and approved the research methodology. The consent, assent forms, and letters of invitation are provided in appendices 2 - 6.

In addition to the University's Ethical Guidelines, as well as the policies of UNICEF and IICRD, the research ensured that children's perspectives were drawn on, and the benefits to this were clearly laid out and any potential risks were mitigated. The research relied on the premise outlined in Article 12 of the UNCRC that ensures that children's perspectives be taken into consideration in issues and programs pertaining to them. Therefore, this research takes to heart the idea that children's voices, perspectives, and actions are paramount to good programming and to safeguarding and protecting children.

An informed consent form was developed to provide detailed information for children and young people and their parents or guardians, as well as adult participants, about the research and how any information collected might be used. Organizations coordinated the communication and outreach to children and young people and their parents and guardians, and informed consent was received for all participating children and young people.





## Research Limitations

The following are key limitations of the research project:

- Case study respondents were self-selected from a wider group of organizations working in partnership with End Violence Against Children and Youth. We can infer that organizations who submitted case studies and participated in children's consultations have relatively strong children's clubs and do not reflect settings where children's clubs may be less challenging and/or less successful.
- Due to the small size of this study, findings cannot be generalized regionally or globally.
- Similarly, due to the small sample size, it is difficult to have a clear picture of how children's age, gender, and ability impact their participation in and experience of children's clubs.
- Due to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic it was not possible to observe children's clubs in operation nor to have an intensive period of engagement with children's clubs to learn in more detail about their experiences working on safeguarding issues. Further to this, in adherence with ethical standards related to research on violence against children online, questions around children's club activities in safeguarding were kept general so as not to raise issues that potentially put children at risk from violence or abuse within their homes. Each consultation also included adult allies that could offer support should any challenging information or material be raised.



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## Impacts of COVID-19

This research began prior to the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak and it was stalled because of the restrictions that followed. According to the young people who participated in the children's consultations, children's clubs were significantly impacted by the physical distancing restrictions, school closures, and the move to remote learning (in some locations), as well as the broader socioeconomic and health implications of the global crisis. Without exception, the children's clubs had experienced disruption, but the impact varied, and most reported that some work continued in all clubs consulted. At the time of the children's consultations (November 2020), the young participants were still experiencing a range of impacts, but this was felt unevenly by individual children and young people. Some of the schools associated with the children's consultation were still closed and others were meeting with physical distancing, mask wearing, and hand sanitizer protocols in place. Purportedly, a number of children had dropped out of the children's clubs and the schools as a result of the pandemic. Some others suggested some children and young people struggled with learning and participating in the clubs at home without resources.

There was a significant digital divide between those children and young people who had access to the internet and mobile phone (allowing them to attend school and stay connected to the children's clubs) and those that did not. Those who had access, were dependent on viable and consistent internet connectivity.

Children's club meetings were not happening as frequently as a result of COVID-19. In some cases, where it was not possible to meet in person or where members did not have masks or internet access, they were able call each other or meet online.

Looking at the broader community impacts, the young participants noted a rise in child rights violations and violence against children during the pandemic, at home, and online. There were also indications that teen pregnancy and gambling had increased during this time. For those who were able to move online, the rates of online bullying had increased, raising new issues for the clubs to address.

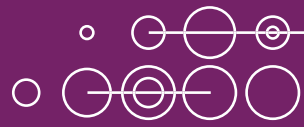
We haven't thought of innovative ways to bring them to the digital space. This is where most of the violence is happening- where the children are playing, learning, and socialising, Bullying, online child sexual exploitation, is happening on the internet (Adult Advocate, Kenya).

More intrusively, the young participants, particularly in Africa, noted an apparent increase in the levels of poverty, which meant more children were sent to work and fewer had access to food or soap and water. It also meant that some children could not afford the requisite face masks or hand sanitizer needed to attend school or clubs. Some families had previously relied on the food programs that the schools offered prior to the pandemic, but school closures made them more vulnerable. This in turn had exacerbated the lack of funding for the projects undertaken by the children's clubs. Summarising the predicament, one adult participant suggested:

The right to education has been curtailed. Not everyone has access to the internet... Cases of teenage pregnancy have gone high; children are at home doing nothing; abuse is on the rise where children are being defiled. Mass trend on gambling, children are betting. It's addictive (Adult Advocate, Kenya).

Despite this, there was some optimism. The young participants noted that they were well supported by NGOs who were cognizant of the impact the pandemic had on their schools, families, communities, and clubs. They also suggested that in some places teachers took initiative to follow up with the children and to reach them by phone. Nevertheless, the pandemic has created a challenge for safeguarding and protection from violence against children at school, in online learning environments, as well as at their homes, that needs to be addressed.





# Literature Review

## Phase 1

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## Overview

The purpose of the literature review was to scan the current publicly available grey and academic literature about children's clubs. In addition to information about the range, scope and spread of children's clubs, a review of the literature also sought to understand specific areas of interest including, how they can be and are used to safeguard children from violence, either directly or indirectly; and what mechanisms may exist within children's clubs for recognizing and reporting violence, especially in schools for children. These included both clubs formally and informally linked to schools. As this is specific and there are few available sources, the expanded literature review also looked at broader themes of child participation, child safeguarding and violence in schools, with a focus on special protections for certain genders, ethnicities, and abilities.

Overall, the literature review illustrated a dearth of academic literature focused on children's clubs at all, much less focused on children's clubs in school or involved in promoting child safeguarding activities. There was more material available in the grey literature, but it was more challenging to source. The literature that was available for review hinted at the promising benefits available as a result of children's clubs, with some sources pointing to specific recommendations for effective set up and functioning of children's clubs.

## Methods

The literature review drew on multiple databases, drawing on a broad array of social sciences, humanities, and science literature from 2000-2019, although some seminal work from an earlier period has also been included. Search terms included: 'children's club'; 'child club'; 'child participation'; 'child safeguarding'; 'violence' + 'schools'; 'violence of children in schools'. To search for grey literature, searches were done through Google Scholar, as well as Humanitarian Relief, Relief Web, Reach Resource Community, and specific organization resource repositories, including Save the Children, Right to Play, the International Red Cross, UNICEF, World Vision, Plan and United Nations databases.

## Children's Clubs Around the World

What constitutes childhood is not universally agreed. Similarly, what constitutes a children's club is not universally agreed or recognized. Using the United Nations' definition for a child, this report assumes a child is someone 18 year of age or younger, recognizing that there is some variation in different parts of the world. However, a children's club is more loosely defined. Children's clubs are found all around the world. They come in a range of sizes, with different purposes, and are made up of a range of ages and different cohesion factors drawing particular children together. They also exist in a variety of settings, including development and humanitarian settings and have differing origins. For instance, Sri Lanka, Uganda, Nepal, Sudan use children's clubs to support children in armed conflict (GCPEA, 2018). Some are organized by children themselves, and others are fostered by organizations, schools, governments, or trusted adults. Given this variation, it is unsurprising that there are examples of children's clubs in all parts of the world. It should be noted that despite their ubiquitous nature, there is a perception that they may hold a more pivotal social justice role in parts of the world with fewer material resources (as noted in a variety of children's organizations websites (e.g....)).

It is increasingly common for children's clubs to be supported by international organizations who have a focus on child rights. In particular, large international children's organizations that profess child participation mandates, like Save the Children and World Vision, support children's clubs. Viva (n.d.) provided a resource kit for non-formal education activities, such as children's clubs, life skills, psychosocial activities. They highlighted factors to take into consideration in formulating children's clubs. Children's organizations hold great hope in the potential outcomes of children's clubs. Davis and McCaffery (2012, p.36) suggested children's clubs "are all local structures that are state-approved and could have the potential to greatly bridge the gap between informal and formal Child Protection systems". A retrospective evaluation of the





impact of children's club on children, now adults, in Nepal, suggested that "there is a growing sense that children have started to be regarded as part of a broader societal transformation" as a result of children's club activities (Johnson, 2010, p.1079). He highlighted how "women, former child club members, discussed how their confidence had increased as a result of participation" And that "positive changes for children have therefore arisen when there is increased dialogue between adults and children and the capacity to respond to perspectives expressed by children" (p.1081).

Many children's clubs are affiliated with schools. Given that they are both related to schools and to children's rights, they have the potential to be the catalyst for safeguarding children around schools. Despite the range and number of children's clubs, little has been formally written about them. Fewer still have identified the activities that children's clubs have undertaken to address violence in schools.

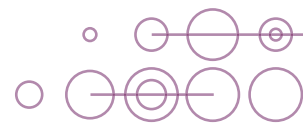
Looking at the varied needs for organized children clubs, Carroll and colleagues (2018) argued that child friendly spaces are marginalized and decreasing with the privatization of public spaces, yet children have a right to these spaces as much as other citizens. Children also are more likely to thrive when connected to others who care about them. Boyden and Mann (2005) suggested that "not only do supportive relationships with family and nonparental adults help to protect children from the negative effects of stressful situations, there is considerable evidence that social support from peers can greatly enhance children's resilience" (p.9).

Like other forms of collective power, children's clubs can draw on the organizing principles of collective action. Given that many children's clubs are established by international and local NGOs, UN bodies, and civil society organizations, it is unsurprising that many more formalized children's clubs have a leaning towards rights-based activities and activities that serve a social or environmental purpose. Blakemore and colleagues (2018) argue that "children's clubs in communities enable children to be part of their own protection. 'Children in clubs help younger children, they explain what things are wrong and what to do if someone exploits them'" (p.742).

The structure of children's clubs varies across clubs and contexts. Some children's clubs are informal, and some are more formal. Little material was available that outlined the difference, but Zhaoa, and colleagues (2017) noted what would be entailed in providing a more enhanced children's club in rural China, including:

- (1)** Provision of a physical space and other necessary resources for out-of-school activities, **(2)** selection of Club volunteers to manage club activities, **(3)** workshop training of these volunteers to recognize and support the needs of children, **(4)** setting-up of the club where children participate in a range of age-appropriate activities: play, reading, and other learning and entertainment activities under the guidance or supervision of volunteers, and **(5)** development of a local community support network that provides the Clubs with sustainable funding and other resources (p.240).





## Child Participation

Child participation was a right affirmed in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN, 1989) in Article 12, as well as through Articles 13 to 17 on civil rights and freedoms. Child participation was defined by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child as an “ongoing processes, which include information-sharing and dialogue between children and adults based on mutual respect, and in which children can learn how their views and those of adults are taken into account and shape the outcome of such processes” (UNCRC, 2009, p. 5). Sculpting appropriate, meaningful, and ethically sound mechanisms for participation require some forethought. Two dominant interrelated foundational approaches to understanding child participation are Hart’s and Lundy’s. Hart (1992) conceptualized the ladder of participation and it is an oft cited mechanism for understanding the continuum of participation approaches from harmful and thoughtless, through to integrated and meaningful. At the bottom of the ladder is manipulation, and as it ascends it moves through decoration, tokenism, assigned but informed, consulted and informed, adult-initiated, shared decisions with children, child-initiated and directed and on the top rung of the ladder is child-initiated, shared decisions with adults. The Lundy model of child participation was based on her 2007 work that posited that meaningful participation requires four key elements: that children have space to participate, a voice and ability to express their views, are heard by adults, and have influence in decision-making processes.

Children below the age of 18 constitute almost one third of the world’s population (UN Global Compact, 2019). Myers & Bourdillon (2012) noted that children make up a significant proportion of those receiving social and health spending and they constitute the future. They are also agentic beings with rights, experiences, and expertise to participate in decisions that impact them (Collins & Wright, 2019; James et al, 1998). Corsaro (1997) emphasized children’s critical role in shaping society. As a result, he argued this makes them worthy of more than cursory attention. Yet children are often left out of conversations about matters that pertain to them (Byrne & Lundy, 2015). This omission has serious consequences and missed opportunities. Save the Children (2017) highlighted that a core element of programmatic problems emerges when children lack full participation. Despite this, children and young people continue to find new and innovative ways to participate and shape their societies and children’s clubs are one way they do this.

The one system that predominantly attends to children and young people is the education system. This is a system that can be supported by a rights and responsibility discourse to support children’s wellbeing and enhance communal and relational values (Manion & Jones, 2020). As these values are slowly being inculcated into public discourse, the concept of child participation becomes increasingly sophisticated. Carr and colleagues (2016) suggested that children and young people seek fresh approaches to shake up the status quo, redefining problems, and solutions to issues in their worlds. Therefore, Brady, and colleagues (2015) encouraged engagement with children on how to imbed their fresh ideas into traditional systems. Given young people’s capacity for innovation (Dougherty & Clarke, 2018), there is a growing number and recognition of child-adult and youth-adult co-created initiatives and child-led initiatives within children’s clubs. Fattore, and colleagues (2009) suggested, children’s wellbeing can be enhanced when they are engaged in decisions about their own lives. Even within humanitarian contexts, Hart (2004) argued that “children’s participation may be a crucial means by which protection is enhanced and the efforts to build peace pursued more effectively” (p.5). In looking at the importance of child participation over the lifecourse, Brostrom (2012) states:

From a very young age children have to understand that their voices and actions are important. They must get a feeling that it is ‘normal’ to participate in and to influence their work. Thus, it is a question of democracy. The big question is how best to raise future democratic human beings (p.267).

Hart (2004) noted that a way to keep participation meaningful even in harsh environments, requires activities such as engaging the community and families, engaging in on-the-ground analysis, keeping children at the centre, encouraging children to take responsibility, providing ongoing support and training to staff, and engaging local stakeholders.







## Child Safeguarding

At its core, child safeguarding is about processes and policies that ensure that children are safe within projects and programmes. Save the Children (2017) differentiated this from child protection, “child protection is making the world safe for children” (p.6) and child safeguarding ensures that program staff ensure children are safeguarded “to the maximum possible extent from deliberate or inadvertent actions and failings that place them at risk of neglect, physical or sexual abuse and exploitation, injury and any other harm” (p.5). Holland (2014) suggested a more broadly defined concept of child safeguarding, in that it can be seen “as the protection of children and the enhancement of their well-being” (p.384). Furthering a broader remit, Holland noted that she has an interest in exploring “everyday safeguarding at neighbourhood level, including how safeguarding is seen, experienced and carried out by residents, community leaders and professionals” (2014, p.385). Hood, and colleagues (2016) stated that the “term “safeguarding” therefore carries a dual sense of prevention and protection, with a balance of care and control functions” (p.493).

Save the Children’s (2017) Child Safe Programming highlighted the need for children’s programming to include child safeguarding policies in order to ensure safety for children. “We MUST protect children against any kind of condition that endangers their dignity or their physical or psychological integrity” (p.4). For this research, child safeguarding policies are critical in exploring the topic of children’s clubs. While larger organizations have safeguarding policies in place and have implementation plans, some smaller organizations do not. Given this is the case, the research team aimed to ensure that the research adhered to the safeguarding policy of both UNICEF and IICRD, and that the children’s interests were at the centre of any research that was done.

## Reducing Violence in Schools

It is critical to explore the literature on violence against children, including violence in schools on and between children. Looking at the literature provides us with some insight into how this plays out, but as Ansell (2016) suggested the lived experience of children often does not resemble the narratives portrayed in academic tomes. There are multiple and intersecting types of violence that can be perpetrated in schools, including between students and teachers and administration, between students, and even spilled over from the community and families.

Corporal punishment is still common in many parts of the world. For instance, while efforts have been introduced to tackle this, in Nepal violence in schools (e.g., physical punishment, mental torture, and mixed punishments) is seen as an effective measure to induce study habits and good exam results (Bhattarai, 2010). Aikman (2010) noted a link between addressing violence in schools and supporting participatory processes to build and empower youth to voice concern about violence. This sets the scene for what is needed in moving into the next stage of the research.

Schools in humanitarian contexts may experience even higher rates of violence. In looking at levels of violence in schools within one refugee camp in Uganda, Kiyingi (2019) stated that given the high number of children outside of school there is a call for innovative approaches for education across four schools in a refugee settlement. Survey results of 8-18-year-old children and teaching staff illustrated pervasive levels of violence in schools and enroute to and from school. Within the last term, 93% reported experiencing some form of school related gender-based violence; 88% reported an experience of emotional and verbal violence; 81% experienced corporal punishment; 68% had experienced trauma, and 33% experienced sexual violence victimization (largely perpetrated by other students) (Kiyingi, 2019). These statistics were stratified, with boys experiencing higher rates of corporal punishment, girls experiencing higher rates of sexual violence and children with disabilities experiencing higher rates of emotional abuse. Ideas to address incidences of violence included partnerships between schools, parents, and the community, campaigns to denounce violence normalization and support positive nonviolent discipline (at home and in schools); prioritize children with disabilities; establish school-based reporting and response mechanisms that builds on existing forums, like school anti-violence clubs, and specialized services.





FATDC (2015) noted the challenge states face in supporting safe and secure schools, including strong legislation and policy, gaps in teacher and administrator training, curricular and educational material gaps, gaps in infrastructure and physical environments, lack of school-based and community-based support mechanisms, low level of parental awareness, lack of teacher's organizations, and a lack of data on children's wellbeing (p.5). "Schools and educational systems are social organizations" (p.9) that have their own policies, practices, processes and norms that influence student, teacher and staff attitudes and set parameters on appropriate behaviour, including around gender norms, tolerance of violence, and discipline. As such they are also "uniquely placed to break the patterns of violence by giving children, their parents and communities the knowledge and skills to communicate, negotiate and resolve conflicts in more constructive ways" (p.9). The document went on to state that:

Addressing safety and security issues in schools requires creating an enabling policy environment and ensuring appropriate mechanisms are in place to eliminate all forms of harm (physical, sexual, and emotional abuse, exploitation, and neglect) that children and youth, especially girls, experience in school and on the way to and from school. It also entails the creation of a culture of inclusion and tolerance promoted through curriculums, through the application of participatory and child-centered approaches, and overall by an enhanced quality of educational services (FATDC, 2015, pp.1-2).

Save the Children noted the perceived role that children's clubs have on supporting normative change, in particular for women and children for instance in the Girl Power Program in Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Nepal where girl children were empowered to address violence in schools (Solotaro & Pande, 2014). Similarly, Cox and colleagues (2010) suggested that school is a location for reforming social norms that overtly or covertly support violence and therefore there is a role for schools to also reshape norms and overhaul violent masculinities in post-conflict spaces. In an effort to introduce more child-friendly schools in the Philippines, Aikman (2010) suggested the Oxfam's Partnership in Education for Community Empowerment illustrates that school was used to reform violence in communities and to protect against violence (and fear of violence) through educating and mentoring caring teachers. This project aimed to create child-friendly schools. In the Mindanao Project, in the Philippines, the government and not for profit sector noted that it was children who were building peaceful initiatives and acting as catalysts for peace to address violence in their community (p. 27).

While a dearth of academic literature existed on children's clubs, across a range of grey literature (such as organization news briefs, annual reports and programme summaries), there was a common discussion on the role of children's clubs to address issues for children of specific genders, sexualities, abilities or ethnicities, most commonly for girl children, but these were commonly brief and non-specific as they were not intended for research purposes.

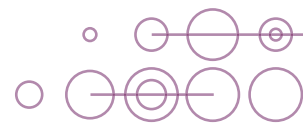
## Reporting Mechanisms

One of the sub-aims of this literature review was to identify the reporting mechanisms that children are designing, using and/or adapting that support reporting of incidents of violence, such as mobile phones, complaint boxes, or focus on specific members of the community. There is little in the literature that discusses this and where it is mentioned, it is done in passing.

In general, across multiple studies there is an assumption that children's clubs play an important role in reporting violence against children and initiating processes to prevent violence from occurring.

Abuse is a known issue, but many people are reluctant to report incidents. It was noted that children's peers tend to know of abuse, but that children often do not report those incidents to adults within their families or communities, and that there is a significant need to improve intergenerational reporting in order for those allegations then to be brought to the UN (Blakemore, et al, 2018, p.743).





For example, Save the Children (2017) noted that children involved in a children’s club have agreed that if they are not confident in telling an adult, they will instead inform each other of harm. According to a 2014 UNICEF Situation Report, youth clubs in Bambari, Central African Republic were a prime source of new child protection cases. These clubs also supported normative change by helping the community to accept child rights and violations against them. “While children can play a role in supporting other children, it is very important that children do not put themselves at risk, for instance by trying to investigate a crime themselves” (Cox, 2009, p.36).

A more unique approach in Nepal was reported by Bhattarai (2010) who noted that when an incidence of violence was reported the children’s club executive held a meeting with the teacher or parent and gave them a task to redress the issue. In an unusually punitive manner, if they failed to stop the violence their name was painted on a wall. This approach of punitive public shaming seems to require oversight and restraint for it to build respectful community. Another innovative approach was illustrated by Terre des hommes (2019) in Moldova, where a summer children’s club initiated a theatre-based approach to exploring issues of bullying, violence and gender norms and through this process children who had not had an opportunity to express their experiences previously were able to disclose experiences of violence.



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## Children's Clubs Case Examples - Benefits and Challenges

In general, where literature, both grey and academic, mentioned children's clubs, they highlighted the potential or perceived benefits of clubs as including peer support, the social justice activities children were involved in, building democratic citizenship (Johnson, 2010), supporting skills building (e.g., communication, policy making, advocacy, governance), in socializing children's rights, in tackling specific localized issues (including violence and discipline in schools), in identifying local issues, in tackling bespoke support for marginalized children, or in providing a central communication for consulting with children. A specific example of a role children's clubs have played was provided by FATDC (2015) who suggested that children and youth clubs can be used to strengthen schools as agents of protection when they are informed of child rights, gender equality, and child protection issues. As an example of an articulated outcome, Rajhandary, and colleagues' (1999) evaluation of Nepalese suggested child clubs resulted in supporting children to have a voice and make change.

### *Benefits*

Across a range of media releases, World Vision highlighted some of the perceived benefits from a variety of children's clubs in various parts of the world. Between 2018 and 2019, some of the key highlights included stories that noted that children's clubs: had increased the ability to break down social barriers and have a positive impact on school enrolment (World Vision, 2018b); had provided space to build social skills and confidence (World Vision, 2018a); had supported children to find a place and a voice in a club (World Vision, 2018c); and had supported former child soldiers to feel like kids again and connect and work towards peace by joining a peace club (World Vision, 2019).

### *Supporting Success*

The factors that support a children's club include strong community support, active and engaged children, organizational structure. Zhaoa, and colleagues (2017) noted a correlation between good outcomes of the children's clubs and strong socio-economic development. This helped with program operations.

The physical space for clubs to meet was also considered important. Shahhosseini and Saghafi (2018) explored what physical spaces can spark creativity for children by designing a space for a children's club (here defined as places to stimulate intellectual development). They posited that it should include access to the natural environment, private space, social or relational space, playful spaces and flexible spaces and stimulating environments.

### *Challenges and Pitfalls*

The literature also pointed out some of the potential pitfalls or challenges inherent in children's clubs. Theis and O'Kane (2005) suggested that one issue is that adults can de-prioritize children's clubs for instance when funding is at risk. They also suggested that adults can feel threatened by children's perceived power and control gained in children's clubs. Concern that this is too much of a burden on children, and too much power that can tarnish reputations unjustly (Bhattarai, 2010). Zhaoa, and colleagues (2017) noted weak volunteer engagement was another barrier.

### *Redressing Violence*

In turning to the role that children's clubs can play in preventing, illuminating, and addressing violence, it is useful to reiterate the prevalence of violence perpetrated against children. Research notes that violence against children is perpetrated in all regions and all communities around the world. In keeping with Safe to Learn and Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children, this research aimed to find ways to limit violence and build protective measures including through children's clubs. Contextual factors may increase the likelihood or the systemic impact of violence against children. In searching the literature, there was a focus on looking for ways that children's clubs have influenced how violence is interrupted, redressed, reported, or refocused. The review focused particularly on the perspective of children, as children are uniquely qualified to provide their perspectives on violence in their lives, as well as particular interventions





focused on gender, ethnicity, and ability. However, little material was found across these domains. Some examples of children's clubs are summarized below. The case examples are drawn from literature that had variable details and this is reflected in these summaries.

### *Case Examples*

#### **Ghana**

- In Ghana, the Child Rights Clubs, initiated by Right to Play (FATDC, 2015), included both children in and out of schools. These clubs have been used as a mechanism to support children against violence.
- In Ghana, a children's rights research club trained child researchers and they opted to create a child rights club that tackled local issues within the school, e.g., making sure all children in school had access to food (Lolochen, 2019).
- In Ghana, a children's broadcasting club started in 1995, with children 8-17 years old, broadcasting a 30-minute live radio program with their own programming, usually focused on children's policies, e.g., education, HIV/Aids, street children, poverty. This increased children's voice in the country and has influenced policy and policy makers in listening to and acting on children's input (Manful, 2010).

#### **China**

- In China, Zhaoa, and colleagues (2017) explored the expansion of existing children's clubs (targeting ages 5-15 years old) to offer a relevant community intervention to support emotional and behavioural wellbeing of children left behind by migrant workers in rural areas. These clubs offered play and educational activities designed to address what children needed in these specific circumstances. This enhanced club targeted specific children but was open to all children and as such was a community asset. In 2013, of the 800 children involved, there were approximately 40 children per club, with between 1-5 volunteers involved across programs (typically elder, educated, and retired village members or teachers) and the attendance rate was 75%. Of the children interviewed, they "unanimously expressed that they enjoyed coming to the children's clubs. Children simply appreciated having a place to go and be with friends, rather than being "stuck at home", often with elderly grandparents" (p.243). Family members were also supportive of the program as it provided safe, secure out-of-school activities and supported interpersonal development and provided psychosocial support for those experiencing parental absence.

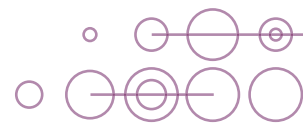
#### **West and Central Africa**

- In West and Central Africa, UNICEF (2009) released a report entitled Promoting Synergies Between Child Protection and Social Protection West and Central Africa that highlighted that social protection (as inclusive of social assistance, social services, social insurance, and social equity measures) was an important poverty reduction strategy and in particular that there was a concern for redressing risk and vulnerability. They noted that children's clubs played a role in offering a means for children and young people to have stakeholder involvement that included a child-sensitive approach, where voicelessness added to deprivation and vulnerability. This report noted that children's safety and vulnerability evolved in life cycles. Both their safety and vulnerability were multidimensional, sensitive to life course changes, and relational in nature. The authors stated that the major drivers of protection violations included economic poverty (leading to CSES, trafficking, child labour); rapid urbanization and globalization); discriminatory socio-cultural attitudes about age (compounded by gender, ethnicity, indigenous or ethnic minority status, disability, sexuality); harmful religious or cultural practices and attitudes; and armed conflict and institutional weakness. Of importance to this study, the report discussed the importance of clubs identifying the most vulnerable, as defined as those without circles of protection, and/or with specific vulnerabilities like HIV.

#### **Nigeria**

- In Nigeria, Safe Space for Girls provided a peer mentoring, community engagement, and support for school fees for girls to safely complete their education (Jere, 2018).





## Sri Lanka

- In Sri Lanka, Save the Children Norway discussed the role played by children's clubs throughout the conflict-stricken areas in Eastern Sri Lanka. Hart (2002) noted that with local partners, despite the stressful conflict, children were engaged in programme development and delivery and several youth-led initiatives emerged from 12-18-year olds to support "safe and secure schools". They provided the following definition, a "safe and secure school offers a positive and welcoming school climate for all students without discrimination... [and it] equips girls, boys, youth, parents, educators, administrators, and community members to become active agents in demanding violence-free school" (p.2).
- In Sri Lanka, in 2014, the Red Cross and Plan initiated a violence in schools prevention program entitled Be Safe! This community outreach program was introduced into a number of children's clubs across the country "to support girls and boys to develop communication, leadership, and life-skills, and to learn protection tactics" (Canadian Red Cross, 2017, p.20).

## Nepal

- In Nepal, children's clubs cropped up in the 1980s alongside NGOs in Nepal, largely focused on environmental issues, but influenced by the growth of child rights frameworks. These have been fostered with the resource support of international actors like Save the Children (Bhattarai, 2010).
- In Nepal, Theis and O'Kane (2005) suggested there were around 3000 clubs that focused on leadership, life skills, child development, awareness of rights, forums for discussion, improving schools and violence prevention. They also include door to door programmes discussing abuse, exploitation, and trafficking. Children's clubs often emerged from children whose parents are active community members, most commonly in their early teen years. Generally, there is a committee with approximately 7-11 diverse members who meet about once a month. The clubs themselves were often more democratic than adults' organizations. Many had tangible outputs like cleaning the neighbourhood, but children's clubs often listed child rights as a central tenet. Two examples of clubs that had a focus on violence prevention included the Everest Children's Club, Thimi, Bhaktapu which focused on general child development, and Naram Bal Bikas Children's Club, Nawalparasi - where children were automatically members until the age of 18. The latter has a few thousand members. The club campaigned against violence (including corporal punishment). If an incident of violence was reported, the club ensured the child was provided counselling and corrective measures were ordered (e.g., cleaning a classroom). Members of the committee arranged a meeting with the parent or teacher involved. Parents who did not heed the advice of the committee had their names published on a wall once a fortnight. Theis and O'Kane (2005) suggested that as a result of the children's clubs, there were perceived outcomes that included teachers suggesting children were more responsible and required less physical punishment, children felt they could speak out, teachers also did not use violence as they did not wish to lose face.
- In Nepal, Nikku, and Pokhrel (2013), discussed the Child-friendly Cities initiative by UNICEF and UN human settlement program which illustrates a children's club that supports mainstreaming child rights and participatory approaches in budgets and policies. As an example, Biratnagar Working Children's Club had 22 working children's clubs with more than 2000 members. They focused on child rights, in particular the right to protection from harmful and exploitative work, the right to education, and the right to be heard. They also campaigned on children's issues including child abuse and child marriage. The club members were able to advocate for a role of children in policy, budgeting, and advocacy.

## India

- In India, Williams (2004) found the Delhi Children's Rights Club had better success in influencing local policies and less influence over regional and national policies.

## Bangladesh

- In Bangladesh, Wise and Ali (2008) highlighted a case of a children's clubs started by a corporation in Bangladesh to support children's creative education (and support the corporate social responsibility).





## Moldova

- In Moldova, Terre des hommes (2019) initiated a summer project focused on preventing violence in schools and communities through month long training initiatives across 30 communities. Engaging 150 12-17-year olds (and 60 teachers), they focused on peer-to-peer and arts-based processes to discuss bullying, tolerance, diversity, gender equality, resilience, emotion management, self-awareness, stress management, and conflict resolution. Given bullying is harmful, endemic, and accepted as normal, the facilitators' focused on tackling this (through theatre arts). Participants reported that this provided young people who did not feel they previously had adult support or protection, a pathway to disclose violence. The children were asked to use simulations, allowing various real-life experiences of harsh violence they experienced in their lives to emerge, as well as providing some ability to get past a feeling of helplessness. In one community, graduated participants returned home and intended to begin initiative groups with the children through their children's club (ALEG clubs) so they could be agents of change to identify and reduce violence in schools by engaging others through social theatre, peer-to-peer education and youth-led community initiatives.

## Malawi

- In Malawi, Kasambara (2018) explored a children's club focused on socio-economic rights for orphaned and vulnerable children in Blantyre, Malawi. The club was formed in 1998 with broad goals including relationship building, education, family/community tracing, health, child rights and advocacy, family empowerment, and income generating activities. Kasambara (2018) examined the allied role of social workers and found that social workers working alongside the children's clubs initiated several activities that directly or indirectly supported the socialization and acceptance of children's socio-economic rights through their direct protection work, supported re-registering children in school and increased their community outreach, awareness raising, and advocacy work on how children can be safe.

## Canada

- In Canada, DeRiviere (2005) found that children who participated in children's clubs showed some protection from sexual exploitation and some diversion from recruitment into prostitution in Winnipeg, Canada.

## Ethiopia

- In Ethiopia, Dybdal and colleagues (2012, p.33) suggested that strong clubs have had a significant influence on combatting gender issues including early marriage, female genital mutilation, and other harmful practices.

## Sierra Leone

- In Sierra Leone, Cox (2009) noted that Child Welfare Committees had been established in every village across the country after the Child Rights Act in 2007 came into being. Their mandate was to promote child rights awareness, prevent domestic and gender-based violence, advise communities on the best interests of the child, consider child welfare concerns, monitor education for girls, and instruct on maintenance, fostering and child misdemeanours (p.10). Child mobilizers provided gender and violence training including on how to refer cases to service providers and informing about the referral pathways to fast-track cases involving gender-based violence and child abuse. Cox (2009) highlighted that "through all the previous activities, children play an active role in helping their peers to avoid trouble and risky situations. They also have a role to play when serious cases of violence, abuse, or exploitation happen to children in the family or community" (p.36). Cox (2009) noted that children's clubs "play a part in assisting children to report cases and helping them to cope with a traumatic event. To deal with sexual and gender-based violence" (p.36). Each community had adult focal people (usually one female and one male) that children could go to if they suffered abuse.







## Uganda

- In Refugee settlements in Uganda, Kiyingi (2019) reported the existence of anti-violence clubs within schools situated within a refugee camp in Uganda. The context of the refugee camp and the levels of violence experienced by children was notable, as was the importance of it as an outlet such as this.



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# Key Informant Interviews Phase 2

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## Overview

Three key informants provided a range of information pertaining to the roles they saw children's clubs playing within communities, nations, and at a global level, the role they played in children's lives and for supporting meaningful participation, the roles adults needed to take to facilitate children and enacting their agency and the barriers and risks that needed to be traversed.

## Methods

The key informant interviews took place via phone and video conferencing in Fall 2019. They lasted between 60 and 90 minutes. Informants were specifically selected for their expertise in child safeguarding, child participation, and children's clubs. An interview guide was created and used to conduct the interviews. In each case, one research team member conducted the interview and took research notes. All interviews took place over video conferencing. The interview notes were coded inductively in NVivo Pro 12.

## Findings

### Children's Clubs

At the broad level, according to informants, children's clubs play a role in protecting children from violence and providing unique ways to protect children on their way to school, in school, and on their way home from school. The clubs provide backup for children, because "every child is a watchdog" (Key Informant), and they can stand up to defend one another. Children's clubs offer strength in numbers and enable young people to voice their concerns and work on key issues that they would be unable to do as individuals. The strength of children's clubs lies in collective action. The core benefit of clubs is that they provide children with a space to feel safe and build relationships, and "bigger voices to engage stakeholders" (Key Informant) and be heard.

### Size, Shape, Location and Focus of Clubs

One informant enumerated the thousands of clubs that they work with, which may suggest that their popularity has resulted in their widespread existence. There are multiple variations of club purpose, size, and scope, working with different age ranges and lived experiences, and they do not adhere to a singular design. Clubs evolve over time. Informants highlighted that clubs take many different forms. Some, for instance, teach life skills, such as social emotional competencies, child protection, or specific health areas, such as reproductive rights.

Key informants also highlighted children's clubs in various locations, particularly highlighting their existence in the regions of Africa, Latin America, the Middle East and Eastern Europe, but they also highlighted clubs in a few specific states, including Peru, Albania, Uganda, Nepal, Cambodia, and Romania. Exemplary children's clubs were recognized around the world by informants.

Children clubs, as mentioned above, range in size, structure, process, and focus. In Peru and Albania, informants highlighted the role of the facilitator, trust, and children's strong presence. Latin America was recognized for having several excelling children's clubs. The club structure is organized formally at local, national, and regional level in a network structure. This supports clubs to interconnect on ideas and experiences and link together for national and regional dialogue. One organization spoke of strong clubs in Middle East and Eastern Europe with more intentional structures in place that were thematically driven. Middle Eastern clubs visited by one informant were noted to have strong life skills curricula in place. In Asia, Nepal and Cambodia were both mentioned as strong hubs for innovative children's clubs. Nepal's child friendly spaces supported club structures. In Cambodia, an informant spoke of over 400 clubs, with many being child led with their own processes. The same informant highlighted different values that permeate child run clubs. The informant also noted that more could be brought on when specific structures (with adults) are not needed and where children's clubs intersect with the child safe initiatives in schools.





## Clubs in Schools

While children's clubs in schools can be integrated into school plans and can have a mandate to affect change regarding violence against children, an informant suggested that their organization (and those they work with) do not have evidence to determine what impact clubs have on violence against children in schools. Although one informant went on to note that clubs provide insight into what is happening at home for some of the children who might be at risk.

Clubs are facing major societal issues, such as overturning traditional educational processes that are hierarchical in nature. Education being the most common institutional system children are regularly exposed to, it is a natural place for children's clubs to exist and for children to have the opportunity to impact the system itself.

## Clubs in Community

Children's clubs provide a unique function that is fundamentally "rooted in community structures" (Key Informant). One informant suggested that their focus and mandate is often built from "a root cause analysis" (Key Informant) process. As an overarching benefit for communities, one informant suggested that clubs provide opportunities to have centralized research and to "bring in new ideas for new things to change in a limited context" (Key Informant).

## Forming a Successful Club

While the efficacy of design was not discussed in the interviews, one informant did note that for a Children's Club to be successful and effective it had "to be relevant; and the timing has to be right" (Key Informant). Having a supportive teacher or adult mentor was also a key component of success, one who can provide training and oversight, and encourage new members as active members age out.

## Intersecting Purposes

Informants expressed some excitement to find the intersection between the interests of the communities, organizations, and the children. Yet some concern was raised on the potential this raised to co-opt children's clubs for organizational goals. One informant asked, "to what degree do we instrumentalize clubs for our own purposes that put children at risk" (Key Informant)? Adults in organizations need to walk a fine line in supporting the development of clubs, nurturing them, while leaving children to be the leaders of their own process.

## Child Safeguarding

For all three informants, child safeguarding policies were embedded into their organizations and the sense of protecting children from harm from staff, consultants, volunteers etc. was a clear mandate. Safeguarding went alongside their preventative work in redressing violence including corporal punishment in schools. As one informant suggested, "in the context of safeguarding we have various processes and protocols that ensure when children [are] participating in activities or engaging in process(es)" (Key Informant) they are safe and supported. Safeguarding covered all aspects of work where children were involved with a program, including travel. Overall, there seemed to be a sense of wanting to ensure they could extend this to children's clubs "to create safer more robust structures" (Key Informant) within the clubs.

Looking at the safeguarding policies and processes across organizations, one informant noted that "agencies are all using different methods and they are not harmonized" (Key Informant). So, while there was support and investment in child safeguarding, the informant encouraged organizations to continue to streamline and harmonize safeguarding policies into the future.

## Systems

Looking at the interlocking systems that have influence over children's clubs and approaches that aim to mitigate violence in schools, informants noted that the competitive nature of funding erodes what might





otherwise lead to effective cross pollination of ideas, processes and people. One informant noted that an innovation could be to cross-pollinate ideas across agencies and to simplify and share methods across agencies.

## Risks and Barriers

Looking more broadly, the risks facing children in children's clubs, cited by informants, included corporal punishment, sexual violence, bullying, violence in schools, at home and from social media. While most of these concerns have a long history, given the relatively new experience of social media, how to keep children safe on social media was identified as a pressing concern.

Informants highlighted some of the barriers to fully participating in the clubs or in undermining the full efficacy of clubs. For instance, one informant noted that some children are impeded from participating in the clubs because of poverty, demands of the family, including helping at home, the demands of survival, conflicting demands from school. Another comment was that there is a "feminization of clubs" (Key Informant), whereby there are more girls involved in clubs as they grow older and they take more leadership while adolescent boys drop out.

An overarching concern with the role of clubs in addressing violence is that in some instances it is inappropriate for children to work against violence. The challenges involved in redressing traditional cultural behaviours and attitudes may be too risky in certain communities. One informant noted that a barrier can emerge when parents are concerned that children will become involved in activities perceived to be unsafe, like tackling violence. Conversely, the clubs can be seen as places that provide safety and protection, including space to talk about unsafe issues. This was one reason given for ensuring adult facilitators are present who are concerned about what the children are doing and are protecting their wellbeing.

Another challenge for children's clubs is their sustainability. As active members grow up, clubs can have a difficult time continuing in their mandate. Informants highlighted the importance of adult support people being involved in assisting the continuity and evolution of clubs.

Other elements important for the systemic functioning of groups of clubs to ensure and measure the promotion of child safeguarding, included tracking violations.

## Tracking Violations of Children's Rights

One of the secondary aims of this research is to understand the different ways children's clubs are supporting reporting of violence against children (VAC) and follow-up mechanisms. One informant noted that violence against children was still common in parts of Africa and there was a dearth of child-friendly reporting mechanisms. This informant called for a national database to monitor violence across different locations, as well as effective interventions in schools to support students to do this. All three informants noted that disclosures of child protection and violence against children incidents were brought forward through children's clubs, Children's Courts, and Children's Councils. This also created space to track and support incident requests as children felt safe to disclose incidents. This could also provide an appropriate avenue to identify and obtain the right services or supports to redress the violations against children, with sufficient support from the government and organizations. Overall, the clubs provide a mechanism to report discomfort or violations.

As an example, one project was identified as using SMS text messaging through mobile phones to allow children to report violence at school to a child focused international non-governmental organization and the Ministry of Education. This process ensured the Head Teacher followed up and followed through on reported incidents, with support from the affiliated INGO. However, this did not proceed beyond the pilot phase as better mechanisms were deemed necessary for reporting and for ensuring teachers abided by their respective Code of Conduct.





## Supporting Clubs - Role of Adults

### Adult Support

Opportunities and challenges for engaging adults in supporting children's clubs and managing those tensions were explored by informants. One informant noted that the risk of bringing an adult in was that it threatened the children's agency and leadership and there were concerns that they would take over and take power away from children. However, another informant suggested, moving forward, supporting children with their clubs will require innovative and appropriate facilitation and sharing of knowledge that goes beyond sharing PowerPoint presentations. Focused training, support and ongoing mentorship go far to support children's leadership. Informants asserted that adults also need to receive training on how to support children's meaningful participation.

Adults have a role to play in supporting children by providing effective structures and agendas, and to identify what support is needed, but this should be secondary to the leading, organizing and managing of clubs, which is done by children. Informants noted several specific facilitator roles that adults could play, including supporting, coaching, and acting as mentors. Facilitation could not be prescribed by a step-by-step model but instead required facilitators acquiring knowledge and skills to shift attitudes and behaviors to step back and be able to step in if needed. It was also noted that adults can support children to raise problems and solutions, as well as to understand the potential consequences of their decisions. Children can and have capacity, can learn, and be trained to do something that needs to be done. Then adults need to create the environment for children to experiment and just guide and moderate and reward them through thank you's or by giving another challenging task (Key Informant).

Critically, it needs to be child-led and not adult-driven. One informant questioned to what degree adults unconsciously directed some clubs. According to one informant, children are clear they do not want adult managers, they want facilitators (either child or adult).

### Skills and Qualities Needed to Support

Informants also noted some skills and expertise that adult facilitators needed, for instance sensitivity to financial, social, and emotional needs and to be able to foster space for children to take leadership and empower themselves. They also need to build trust and know how to build relationships and support children to traverse difficult times. These are qualities, as well as skills. This is a reciprocal process, whereby facilitators learn how to work meaningfully with children. Informants suggest training needs to be responsive, agile, and appropriate, as no standard curriculum works, but driven by values and overall expectations.







## Participation and Agency

Informants raised an assumption, that children's clubs provide space for children to participate in matters they deem important and to make informed decisions on interventions that impact them. In a sense, children's clubs are core participation spaces that provide specific space for their "sphere of influence" (Key Informant). "This is a transfer of power to children" (Key Informant). Not only do children have a space to form clubs, but also have the opportunity to feed into the evolution of their clubs. Conversely, having children's clubs allows service providers to seek children's input and advice as from a ready group of engaged children. This overturns the assumption that "children are recipients" of services (Key Informant). Sometimes in programming and policy development, "we think we know what they want, and we can speak for them, even when a child doesn't agree" (Key Informant). One informant articulated that failing to seek children's input on what they need, what issues exist, what gaps persist, means we fail to respond to real needs and fail to design and offer effective and relevant programming and policy. The informant further suggested "children have very simple ways of resolving complex problems and they know the problem better (than we do)" (Key Informant). The informant suggested that children understand who plays what roles in the systems around them and understand how they can work with them, recognizing that "(children) are more efficient at solving problems" (Key Informant). One issue that was highlighted, is that not all voices emerging from children's clubs are representative and efforts need to be put in place to ensure that clubs are not co-opted by the minority or prevailing voice. Informants suggested that this can be supported by building awareness and capacity, and by highlighting examples of children's participatory processes that promote awareness of means to address violence and securing protection.

Informants emphasized that children's clubs are ripe for innovation. In one example, an informant noted "we look at what... children want to learn, and how we can help them learn it and connect with adults and family members. Once they have enough information and they can move forward, they will tell us what they have found. And what support they need from adults to do this. And once they have support, they can take action" (Key Informant).

### Figure 1 - Case Example: School-based Children's Court in Uganda.

One key informant provided a case example of a children's court in Uganda that was allied with children's clubs that illustrated the creative and effective reasoning children have in approaching issues they identify as problematic and in need of redress. The key informant noted that issues of violence against children were pervasive in schools in Uganda, and both NGOs and governments were actively working on the issue without making any significant headway. When children in schools were asked what they thought could help address the challenge, they decided on a peer mediation approach, and the children's court was developed. Each Child Club or Court has a judge, a court judge, a court clerk, witnesses, advocates or mentors for the accused and the victim. Children report abuses to the children's court. Those involved then sit at a table and listen to the case and they determine what has happened, and what actions need to be taken to rectify the problem.

Children listen and try to resolve issues and if they cannot resolve it, they refer it to a head teacher. This approach is now in 108 schools and has been running since 2015. As a result, according to the key informant, most schools have reported zero corporal punishment. In the pilot, children were asked to identify what main issues they were facing and what challenges they would face in bringing a court to life in their schools. Children wanted to address violence in schools, including bullying and corporal punishment. They also raised concerns that adults/teachers would not take their reports or their authority seriously, so they embedded accountability into the pilots by having the head teachers brief everyone including teachers, pupils, parents about the process. The head teacher was given responsibility for mediating problems with other adults. As a result of the pilot, the organization determined that many teachers who were initially resistant to children's leadership and the loss of control, benefited from the extra time they found from not handling as many day-to-day issues, enabling them to focus more on education, which was positive for them.





To illustrate how the court has worked, the key informant shared three examples of issues brought to the court in one school.

First, a child stole a friend's chapati [bread], and a teacher wanted to beat the child. The children stopped this and sent the children to court to explore the issue. Through the court proceedings, they realized the girl was hungry and was stealing because she needed something to eat. The Court then talked to the parents and the teachers to find a solution for this student, and rather than punishing her, her needs were met. In a second example, the Children's Court was able to address issues of sexual harassment by working with local community government and teachers to engage local businesspeople who were causing challenges for students, particularly girl students. Not only was the Court successful, but the local businesspeople actually began to support them in their efforts to protect girl students. In a third example, Children's Courts were able to reach out to children and parents of children with disabilities to address stigma and encourage cooperative efforts to raise money for medical needs for these children. The Court operated as an outreach and advocacy unit and successfully supported the NGO to reach many more families, especially families of more vulnerable children.

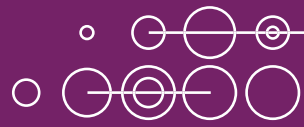
## Key Highlights from Key Informant Interviews

The key informant interviews focused on exploring a global perspective on child safeguarding and child participation within and across children's clubs. The three informants provided a critical insight into the breadth of children's clubs around the world and the kinds of roles they play in protecting children from violence in schools. They highlighted the diversity of size, function, location and organization of children's clubs, but they also provided useful insight into the risks and barriers that clubs face, as well as the skills, qualities and approaches adult facilitators can (and should) take to support children in their clubs, including ensuring that their agency is protected and that children maintain the leadership and management roles in their clubs. The informants also confirmed that children's clubs, in all of their diversity, provide mechanisms for children to report violence where it happens, including in schools, but also to provide the power of collective voice to stand against violence and attempt to redress it with the support of relevant stakeholders.

Informants also highlighted a few areas for further exploration and for collective advocacy, for instance in exploring ways to produce and disseminate child-friendly versions of models for training adult facilitators/supporters and for children in strengthening their processes. In addition, Informants spoke of loftier goals of tackling ways to share child safeguarding policies and practices across agencies and for finding ways to move beyond the competitive financing models for those NGOs and INGOs that support children's clubs and processes that seek to eliminate violence against children in schools.

These three interviews act as triangulation for the children's clubs case studies and the remaining informant interviews. These interviews supported the identification of the strengths, challenges, and areas for growth in the current children's club process for safeguarding in schools.





# Case Studies

## Phase 3

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## Overview

The main source of data for the research was intended to be the 15 case studies. The case studies were hoped to be a good source of information about if and how children's clubs were involved in promoting children's safeguarding activities. Overall, they successfully uncovered this. The 15 clubs involved in this research were all involved in multiple approaches, including child-led approaches that support children's safety in schools and beyond. While the case studies focused on one club, they also included questions on clubs within the writers' purview. In total, according to participants, this included over 2000 children's clubs with over 20,000 children and young people.

## Methods

### Case Study Sampling

The original sampling for the children's clubs case study was purposive and was to be arranged by the Global Partnership to End Violence against Children. The sample was to be drawn from organizations who were invited to participate if they had been working with children's clubs who were demonstrating approaches to tackling violence against children in schools and who had safeguarding policies in place. Invitations to participate were sent out via email to key members and more broadly by the newsletter for the Global Partnership to End Violence against Children. Several rounds of requests for participation occurred between October 2019 and August 2019 and the sampling frame was extended to additional networks through IICRD in late Spring 2020.

The initial data was compiled through the completion of a case study template by each participating organization. Participants were invited to submit case studies illustrating child-led children's clubs by completing a case study form and policies related to child safeguarding. The template included an outline of the context of the children's club, how the club was formed, who is a member, what activities it includes, when children participate, as well as information about who decides the programming. Specific questions explored the successes and challenges the clubs have experienced and any specific lessons they have learned. While the research questions centred on processes for safeguarding children through children's clubs, the participants provided broader context that went beyond to encompass interconnected pieces of child protection. The template (see Appendix 4) asked how children participate or lead activities in the club and what role adults take. The template also asked what assumed outcomes the clubs had on the children and on the community and for specific examples. As part of the case study, we encouraged participants to include children's voices and perspectives in their submissions. This was triangulated with children's consultations. Participants were given the option to complete the form (see Appendix 4) in writing, with the option to include audio or video or to participate in a guided interview. All participants completed a written form and two asked for an additional video call.

In March 2020, minor adjustments were made to the case study form to recognize and expand the children's clubs' realities as a result of COVID-19 physical distancing protocols and disruption to in-person schooling. In total seven cases studies included information about the impacts of COVID-19.

Fifteen case studies were collected, covering a range of types of children's clubs, geographical regions, and size of supporting organizations, as illustrated in the following sections. Cases were coded inductively using NVivo Pro 12. Themes and subthemes were coded and collapsed to provide the following narrative overview. Where possible direct quotes are used in this section. All case studies were translated into English using Google Translate and, in some cases, minor typographical edits have been made for clarity.

### Data Analysis

Cases were summarized individually, and cross-case analysis was conducted to highlight key learning and further aspects of how children's clubs may support the elimination of violence against children. The





case studies were coded and analyzed with the help of NVivo Pro 12 software. Initial nodes were coded, reviewed, and collapsed into a smaller range of themes.

Key informant interviews and textual data drawn from the case studies were analyzed using NVivo software. Initial themes were coded and then tested for incongruencies (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Cresswell, 2008) with further coding providing final codes for the thematic analysis for the report.

## Findings

### Defining Children's Clubs

Case study participants provided a few definitions of children's clubs. One participant defined children's clubs as "a space for children to express their ideas, discuss their problems or concerns in order to improve their living conditions". Another participant stated:

A children's club is a group or an association of girls and boys bound together by common interest in a primary/secondary school setting empowered to promote the ethos and values of their establishment and in this case the clubs in the schools are purposed to promote child protection and safeguarding (Participant).

This provides a useful start for exploring the rich data they provided.

### Type of Projects/Clubs

The participants identified a range of children's clubs across a variety of contexts. While the participants highlighted 15 specific children's clubs, they also covered 2,058 clubs across various countries with over 20,000 children as members. These were spread across urban and rural areas. The regions represented included two in South America and the Caribbean, five in Africa, one in Europe and five in Asia Pacific.

*Members* - The ages of members varied. All were 18 or younger, with the majority being in secondary school between the ages of 10-17. All but one club included mixed genders, although there were generally more female members than males. One club was solely female. Few identified specific members with children or youth with disability. A mix of ethnicities was present across clubs. The case studies included more Schools from low socioeconomic status areas.

The clubs also represented a range of foci representing different kinds of children's clubs, including ones that focused on the following:

- child led research,
- child protection/safeguarding clubs (e.g., focused on Ending Violence Against Children, or commercial sexual exploitation),
- peer-to-peer learning/role modelling,
- children's rights club,
- child advocacy,
- school committees (e.g., focused on safety, health, or good schools),
- children's book clubs,
- participation and leadership, and
- awareness raising, advocacy, and prevention.







## Establishing Clubs

Most clubs were child led, but some included child-adult partnerships. Most of the clubs met within schools. Meetings were most commonly held for thirty minutes to one hour, once a month, but some were as often as once per week. There were a few clubs that occasionally met in community locations. During physical distancing policies and the closure of schools because of COVID-19, many of the clubs were suspended. Some had made some alternative arrangements, as outlined later in this document.

The majority of children's clubs were initiated by non-governmental or civil society organizations, sometimes with the school principal or community partners. The clubs all had larger organizations that supported them, including both local or national NGOs or international NGOs. Most participants did not share information about the period in which they were initiated, but those that did confirmed that the sample included a variety of established and new clubs. The oldest club within the 15 cases was established in the early 1990s and the newest one had been established within the year.

## Structure of Clubs

Most of the 15 children's clubs had specific structures with established roles for members. The size of the membership varied from three members to as large as 50 members. These most commonly included a Chairperson or Leader, a Deputy Chairperson or Vice Leader, a Secretary, a Treasurer, and members. Some had sub-committees or members with specific program roles, for example art, sports, education, health, safety, literacy, and others had specific class representatives. One variation included multiple committees across the school, each with three members.

The process for bringing on new members also varied. The majority of cases had some version of a democratic process or election for members, but some were selected because of their membership to other committees (e.g., by virtue of being students in a class or being members of a school council). Some were nominated on a first-come first-serve basis and one had members selected by teachers and principals. Recruitment was similarly broad, but the most commonly mentioned method was through word of mouth.

All participants had some focus on child safeguarding. Most had current specific safeguarding policies in place, and all had safeguarding principals at play.

## Context for Clubs

The context in which these children's clubs were situated varied greatly, but they all shared situations that were challenging for individual children, as well as the children as a whole. These challenges manifested within and around the school environment. Although this research focused on safeguarding in schools, participants shared their insights and observations more broadly, including other child protection issues. Stories ranged from children experiencing violence and bullying in schools, to individual children experiencing loss and tragedy, sometimes within humanitarian contexts. As noted above, many clubs were within low to middle socio-economic areas.

Additionally, the myriad of issues raised by children and addressed by their clubs included:

- Issues related to education or the school environment (e.g., sanitation, access to menstrual hygiene products, disaster preparedness, barriers to education, school attendance, or safety of the physical environment, including temperature/environment).
- Issues related to violence in schools or educational environments (e.g., bullying, online abuse, safety at night walking home, or corporal punishment).
- Broader social issues in the community (e.g., child labour, early marriage, sexual exploitation, violence against children, health issues, or other social justice issues related to local context).
- Advocacy and education about children's rights (knowledge of UNCRC, shifting attitudes about children's rights, participation, and children's agency).





## The Workings of Children's Clubs

### Purpose of Individual Clubs

The purpose of individual clubs is perhaps best represented through the projects they engage in. The case studies were drawn together with a shared vision of supporting children's agency, protection, and sense of belonging. This ranged from providing space for child-led research on issues impacting children in their environment, to advocacy challenging preconceived and damaging normative barriers to safe education, to tackling environmental and physical safety in and around their schools. Attesting to the diversity, one case example shared the story of a one male member advocating for initiatives to ensure barriers to female school attendance due to menstruation were challenged and dismantled.

The stated purposes of the different clubs covered a range of areas, but most commonly participants noted children's clubs had the objective of promoting awareness, preventing violence against children and/or supporting safety, and addressing child rights issues. At a high level, one participant said a children's club "enables children to exercise their active citizenship". Additional purposes included increasing leadership skills, both individual and collective, and self-esteem; promoting child participation, advocacy, protection and safeguarding; raising awareness of the obstacles to report child maltreatment; empowering children and youth and raising their collective voice; and increasing awareness on child rights and child participation - in school, in community and beyond.

### Impact of COVID-19

The devastating impact of the COVID-19 pandemic struck in the midst of this research. The unprecedented impact on global education had significant impacts on schools and clubs in all countries and regions represented in this research. As a research team, we adjusted the methodology to capture stories of what children's clubs were doing in these situations. The case study participants identified their concern for the impacts of COVID-19 on children, including social isolation, increased risks of violence in the home, disrupted education and increased risk of experiencing online abuse, cyber bullying, and cybercrime. Some participants noted that the clubs were an important mechanism for reporting child maltreatment (as noted below) and that without this vehicle concerns were that maltreatment was going unreported.

While many clubs were suspended while their affiliated schools were closed or moved online, some had introduced new and innovative approaches to maintain support and connection to members, including with virtual meetings. It was noted that even where virtual meetings had been occurring, the efficacy of this method was limited, and other activities have been curtailed. However, participants noted that advocacy and awareness raising campaigns were continuing through the use of mobile phones and social media, but also local media, including community radio, print media, and social media. Clubs that were located in urban areas appeared to have better access to tools and resources needed to move to a virtual club format. In rural areas, some clubs attempted to have fewer in-person meetings. Where in-person meetings were happening, ensuring these were adhering to physical distancing requirements meant fewer activities could be conducted.

Re-engaging clubs virtually has uncovered multiple barriers to participation, including the requirement to have parental/guardian involvement when parents/guardians have multiple priorities, lack of reliable connectivity or resources (e.g., smartphones, computers, tablets) to engage online, or lack of privacy in the home. Some participants noted that they had hoped children, with parental/guardian support, were engaging with one another to maintain the social connection and peer support as a protection method against violence. Without the continued connection provided by the clubs, children are vulnerable to falling through the cracks. However, one noted that COVID-19 had not diminished the level of peer support members were giving or receiving.

One participant noted that at least one organization supporting the children's club had quickly developed an online training manual on psychosocial support that included games and activities that could be played at home and remotely to support children in their new contexts.





Some clubs maintained or increased their activities to redress violence against children. As an example, one participant noted that COVID-19 had led to the intensification of activities to raise awareness via the media (e.g., radio, videoconferencing) of the risks and dangers of violence faced by children during physical distancing policies and disrupted education as well as the need for maintaining safety within the COVID-19 context. This led one participant to note that the pandemic highlighted the need for more training of children to mobilize awareness raising campaigns and activities across traditional and social media platforms.

Where restrictions were beginning to lift, at the time of the research, plans were being made for resuming club activities in person. One participant shared that, as a result of prolonged curtailment of regular activities, a new raft of social and economic issues has merged that are likely to impact the functioning and focus of the club's activities.

One participant relayed an anecdote that emerged in COVID-19, as follows:

[The children's club] mobilized community volunteers and youth to conduct household awareness on child labour and effects of COVID-19. This drive was motivated by an incident of 3 vulnerable children who were terrified by effects of COVID-19 but could not afford the face mask... 'when I was walking home from the shop I saw 3 children all under 10 years old covering their mouth with their hands walking towards the road. They caught my attention since I have been involved in child right activities at school. When I inquired why they were covering their mouth, they told me that they have been sent to the shop by their ailing mother to buy Panadol tablets but were worried of effects of COVID-19 but since they could not afford face masks, they decided to protect themselves using their hands. I happened to have [money] and suggested if I could give them the money to buy face masks, they resoundingly said no to the money and advised that I buy for them instead of giving them the cash. I did not buy them as suggested but reported to members of [local group] used the opportunity to convene household awareness among community members [and gain support from the local] chief who contributed more face masks to be distributed to children coupled with awareness on effects of child labour and COVID-19 disease targeting children with a hope that the information will reach the parents (Participant).

## Children's Club Activities

In keeping with the purpose of the various children's clubs, the activities that the children undertook focused on increasing participation, advocacy, and campaigning. As one participant noted they "continuously raise awareness of the community, school management and children and build local and national engagement to protect education from the detrimental effects of military conflict." Specific activities children undertook, often with adult support and mentors included the following:

- Campaigns and awareness raising (on children's rights, on violence against children (including sexual exploitation of children, bullying, internal and external trafficking, corporal punishment, violence in the home, forced migration, online abuse and cyber bullying, early marriage), COVID-19, environmental issues, access to menstrual hygiene products in schools, sanitation, hygiene and hand washing protocols, abuse reporting processes, etc.) in school and community, which included a range of other specific activities:
  - Speech and debate competitions,
  - Creating videos and radio messages,
  - Quizzes and games,
  - Drama, including street drama,
  - Holding rallies and protests,
  - Door-to-door campaigning, and
  - Drawing, art, comic creations.





- Reading buddy program with children in lower grades.
- Advocacy with local communities, school personnel, policy makers, including advocating for environmental stewardship, for resources for the school (e.g., water points and latrines). This included activities in one club like “making press statements and writing memoranda on various topics”.
- Risk mapping, risk mitigation planning, resource mapping, and identifying issues of concern for children in schools and communities, as well as redress.
- Research and investigation into violence in schools (e.g., bullying).
- Peer-to-peer learning activities and support, sensitization activities, information dissemination activities, dialogue on child rights and protection.
- Training e.g., children’s rights, legal instruments, child protection and safeguarding.
- Event planning and fundraising for activities.
- Local activities, such as visiting homes of the elderly and orphans.
- Activities for the school, e.g., cleaning of school, planting trees for environmental benefit, planting hedges to create safe barriers to school property, supporting healthy initiatives in schools.
- Activities for club members and its purpose, e.g., arts and craft on thematic areas of the UNCRC, games, dialogue, and life skills building.
- Creating action plans and leading and executing resulting actions with peers, sometimes aligned with specific school or community committees or plans.
- Club activities and extracurricular activities, such as attending meetings, drafting Code of Conduct, reporting, orientation activities, forming sub-committees, creating child-friendly versions of school policies, and recruiting members.
- Reporting child maltreatment and abuse.

## Children’s Roles in Clubs

The roles children took varied. Most had formal structures, as noted above. From a child’s perspective their roles and mandates in the above listed activities included:

In demonstrating a child led initiative, children illustrated their leadership in designing and implementing projects and action plans, leading risk, and resource mapping, conducting advocacy activities. In the day-to-day activities they showed this by assigning themselves leadership roles, identifying critical tasks and allocating them, carrying out roles, listening, raising concerns, talking about how to talk to policy makers, building relationships, setting meetings, inviting members, writing minutes and reports, and disseminating information.

## Adult Support

The adults that supported the children’s clubs were often teachers, school leaders (e.g., principals/ Head Teachers) and other staff in schools, but they sometimes included staff from NGOs or community members and parents. The roles adults took, or were given, varied across the case studies, but they followed similar patterns. In general, they had a role in “strengthening children’s knowledge, skills and abilities for the respect of their rights”. Adults also had a role in promoting trusting relationships. In some child-led clubs the allocation of tasks for adults was structured and specific, in others it appeared to be more organic. Some clubs were child-adult partnerships with specific assigned tasks for each member. Adults saw their role as mentors, coaches, guides, confidants, and advocates. One participant described them as ‘patrons/ matrons’. They sometimes waited to be asked for support and in other cases they supported the children by





overseeing activities, in particular in supporting awareness raising and advocacy strategies. One participant stated that an adult's role is to share "experience and expertise when appropriate". Some also provide ideas for activities and promote sound financial club decisions.

### Figure 2- Tips for successful children's clubs

- respecting self and others,
- promoting good discipline,
- leading and being a good example,
- sensitizing other children on their rights and responsibilities,
- helping others who are in need,
- promoting child participation through the school forums,
- reporting cases of child abuse to relevant authority and ensuring a referral system is in place,
- advocating for the implementation of the laws protecting children at their local level,
- identifying the rights-based problems that children face on a day-to-day basis and actions to address these issues,
- reminding peers of the need to end violence against children and disseminating information,
- participating in activities for the children's club, including action planning, and
- building a love for learning.

The degree of support varied from participant to participant. One participant provided an example "harmonising clubs and school action plans [as] a critical role of adults-referred to as teacher protagonists." In some cases, adults provided specific technical knowledge and expertise such as leading a session on gender or providing training. Training included specific areas like the UNCRC, child safeguarding, but also more orientation to the club, roles, and processes. One participant suggested adults were "mostly facilitators of learning...[that] offer technical support as well as ensure conformity to the UNCRC principles". Similarly, another suggested:

Adult (teacher) supports the children in identifying health problems related to hygiene and sanitation in the school and in the living environment. Support children in planning actions. It helps children in the preparation of activity reports (Participant).

According to a participant, in supporting the functioning of the club, adults can help provide child friendly policies and encourage and animate active participation. One participant also suggested they can intervene in conflicts between group members. In some cases, as students moved out of roles and schools, adults remained as the connecting fabric between years.

Adults also can provide the resources needed to hold the club, for instance the space, the training, as well as "notice board, tin box and stationery materials". In summation, one participant described the adult role as this:

Child Club facilitator (teacher) is an integral part of the child club and assists both the officers and the members in the shaping of the club by encouraging and motivating the organization and introducing new ideas and perspectives to help the club continue to grow and expand. The Child







Club facilitator serves as the guiding hand that nurtures the child club's enthusiasm and initiative while balancing it with wider knowledge of the realities in the community. The child club facilitator and members have a relationship of mutual trust and respect. Children trust the facilitator to guide and support their decisions at the same time respecting the facilitators' advice. On the other hand, the facilitator respects that children are able to come up with ideas that allows them to express themselves (Participant).



Another participant suggested “children in the clubs are always accompanied by the adults in the different activities thanks to a mentoring led by the community coaches. The adults therefore feel like a stakeholder in the different activities implemented by the children's clubs”.

In the spirit of fostering spaces for child participants, adults also have a role in providing moral support. One participant said that the main support various adults could give to the children in the clubs is:

Appreciating and supporting the activities they are engaged in. Attending their meetings and functions to just listen and give guidance is key to clubs' success. The relationship between adults and club members is always good and adults also get to learn something from the children too (Participant).

As one participant suggested, “school committees are one of very few examples where boys and girls are able to participate together with adults in school management on even terms”.

Another participant noted that adults have had more of a role during COVID-19, where they are taking the lead. This is an important trend to watch out for and ensure children continue to have space to lead their clubs.





# Children's Club Successes and Challenges

## Processes for Successful Children's Clubs

Participants highlighted some factors and processes that supported the functioning of clubs. These included the following:

- Start members with small tasks, provide guidance and grow activities members are leading them.
- Hold regular meetings, with fun and engaging activities, including warm up and cool down activities and incorporate play-based activities.
- Designate specific roles to members. The more clarity in the mandate of the club and the roles of its members, the better it functions.
- Ensure space for children to be able to allocate themselves tasks and to have equal decision making without adult interference.
- Use role plays with the aid of coaches/mentors to support training.
- Encourage democratic processes and an “open space for children to have a voice and hear one another”. Similarly, support club members to have a voice on school committees.
- Ensure a process for reporting issues and that children are aware of how to access them.
- Support emergent designs where pertinent issues can arise. This can be supported by resource mapping to identify resources and activities most needed and support child research to understand issues and potential solutions. This is further helped with implementable action plans.
- Advocate for policy reform to support children's clubs and child participation at a local and national level.
- Make room for social support within the clubs to “tackle loneliness, avoid unsafe places- practical advice and support”.
- Advocate for creative messaging, using for instance “theater, song, dance and games”.
- Train members on leadership and management of the club (including roles and responsibilities), but also children's rights and protection.
- Support collaboration between children and adults, including teachers, parents, school staff, and community members.
- Leverage opportunistic moments to support the work.
- Work towards “shifting attitudes about children's rights, participation and agency”.

## Safeguarding and Protection

Safeguarding and protection were core elements of the cases chosen for this study. Many of the 15 case study children's clubs were involved in providing training in children's rights, child protection and safeguarding, and ways to report violations. One participant highlighted that children's clubs create a space for “children and adults to discuss rights violations, safety issues and co-solve issues with child-parent-teachers”.

More broadly speaking, one participant suggested that children's clubs increase key elements of resilience, for example “improved level of confidence, esteem, voice, and sense of school connectedness” and promote school attendance. One participant noted that these elements are interconnected and collectively lend themselves to redressing violence against children by building the resilience and self-esteem of members. Participants also suggested that clubs increased awareness about children's safety and the role







that everyone can play towards keeping children safe”. Children’s increased confidence provides them more safety, as noted by one participant,” children have become confident and they can reach out to their teachers and share their concerns without fear, they look out for one another and this has strengthened peer relationships among themselves”.

Specifically, some clubs articulated that they were engaged in risk mapping and mitigation to identify specific ways to redress risks to children. While many processes were disrupted during COVID-19 restrictions, one participant noted that club members were reaching out to peers to educate them on violence and provide support to those who may be experiencing violence. This support ranged from “encouraging them to speak to a trusted adult or escorting them to report a case of violence to the local authorities”. Children also were involved in direct advocacy, either “demand[ing] for the right to have safer classrooms” or directly supporting other children experiencing or at risk of experiencing violence.

Protecting children, included advocating against violence against children, but it also more broadly included ensuring a clean safe physical environment and safety measures in schools, in addressing online abuse and cyberbullying. Protecting children also included finding ways to alter local social norms that impede children’s clubs (as discussed in more detail later in this report).



## Reporting Mechanisms

Participants noted that the children’s club filled an important role in providing a safe and reliable way to support children to report incidents of abuse and rights violations, for example bullying, harassment from students and teachers, and violence experienced elsewhere. As noted earlier, concern was raised that this option has been severed during COVID-19 and fears existed that children were experiencing abuse and maltreatment without the same processes for reporting.

Examples of reporting mechanisms varied. These included informal check- ins with club members and setting up processes led by the school for reporting child abuse to the appropriate authorities along with





relevant referrals to support services. One participant noted that within their club, the children kept a log of incidences in an 'occurrence book'. Another noted that the awareness raising that resulted from training on children's rights and protection resulted in more call for reporting, "After training, [leaders] feel more empowered to report such issues to their coach and discuss measures how they could prevent such issues (some have come up with solutions to walk in groups etc.)." Similarly, a participant stated, "they are then sensitized and confident enough to report any such issues." As another participant suggested, to do this, training must be clear and "mechanisms of child abuse reports... [must be] supported by adults through a child-to-child approach."

Given that children's clubs were noticing, logging, and reporting incidences of violence against children, one participant noted it had the effect of having "communities taking responsibility for safeguarding seriously". However, there is a risk in the reporting process that it promises to remedy an issue, but if it does not or if it is delayed it can cause further harm. One participant stated:

One challenge the club faced was that they felt children were not getting instant justice once abused or when their rights were violated (justice delayed). The club reported many cases in their occurrence book forwarded them to the club patron and the head teacher who then reported to the police. But the process took so long while children were suffering (Participant).

There are limitations to reporting mechanisms as well as risks to those logging them, including harassment. One participant stated:

The reporting and referral mechanisms are still weak. Most often the victims do not even attempt to report cases to their immediate leadership in the community for fear of being blamed for causing an arrest of the perpetrator or she gets intimidated not to risk her life to report such a case (Participant).

The participants did not discuss what processes were put in place to mitigate these risks.

## Training and Capacity Building

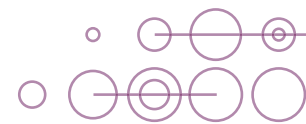
As has been noted, training is an important component of a functioning children's club, but also an important aspect of building skills and developing self-esteem, confidence, leadership, and self-advocacy skills of members. This came up in almost every case study. Discussions on training varied, but it generally included training on processes and structures of the children's clubs, and on child rights, child protection and safeguarding. Training of gender issues, ending violence against children and other harmful practices that affect children, and hygiene and sanitation were also raised as useful. One participant noted that training should be regular and include ideas on how to conduct advocacy and to maximize communication and awareness raising strategies, in addition to training on child protection. Other suggestions included capacity building, campaigning, leadership, and communication. Participants also noted that training needed to be engaging and draw on experiential participatory, play and creative-based learning. Examples raised by participants included using drama, art, role plays, and games. Importantly, one participant emphasized the need to have training alongside "continuous guidance, coaching and mentoring."

One participant articulated how training fit in with other children's clubs' activities.

Following their training on children's rights and their roles and responsibilities, the clubs develop an action plan in relation to the rights issues that arise in their locality. These actions are essentially awareness raising, advocacy and denouncing cases of violation of rights. The activities of the action plans are implemented with the support of the club's master tutor and project supervisor (Participant).







Several areas for future training were also raised. For instance, as previously noted there is an increasing need to support social media training and training of online safety while children are experiencing disrupted and virtual education.

## Training Adults

Training for children was not the only training need that was raised in the case studies. The role of ensuring appropriate training for adult supports was also promoted, both formally and informally. In some children's club adult supporters, facilitators, or mentors undertook specific training to support the children, for instance in play-based learning, in health, sanitation and hygiene, in children's rights and child protection and in participatory methods, as well as more structural training on children's club management and facilitation. In exploring processes that support adults to make space for child participation, one participant stated that establishing clubs must be participative, but this also required that the 'school's actors (parents, communities)' are well prepared and able to "facilitate and support the clubs".

In a more informal way, several participants noted the learning adults gained in children's capacity to understand social and environmental issues facing them and to create action plans and implement them to redress these issues. Adults have gained knowledge and awareness of child safeguarding issues and rights of children. Adults, including parents and community members were also provided information that better supported their understanding of the implications of and prevalence of violence against children in their communities. One participant relayed the following statement from a community member "now, I know that there are things that children can teach adults". This provided leverage to ensure adults understood that "they have a stake in ensuring the child is protected against any form of abuse. They have a stake in providing basic needs for proper growth of the child, protection and support education".



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## Awareness Raising and Communication

Awareness raising was one of the core activities highlighted by participants. This took on a variety of formats, but included some innovative approaches within the school setting, but also more broadly. Within the school setting this included one club using a comic strip to produce a child-friendly version of their school's Child Protection Policy to raise awareness. Another participant noted school wide awareness raising included "booklet discussions, co-facilitation of school assemblies between children and teachers, drama shows, etc."

Beyond the school setting, several strategies seemed to emerge across multiple traditional and social media platforms, as well as door-to-door advocacy. In one case, a participant noted that they had "recorded children that have been aired on different radio stations and also engaged them through other platforms like Zoom." Another one noted that they had been involved in "raising awareness against COVID-19 on the various social platforms set up for this purpose by the project (WhatsApp group, Facebook and communication on partner radios)." As an example, this has been done to "share graphic illustrations and brief instructions of Covid-prevention games".

Not all child members had access to digital media through computers or mobile phones, particularly in some rural areas. In these cases, mainstream media and radio messaging had been helpful. One participant noted that the effectiveness of these approaches was harder to measure. Awareness raising and club activities had been more challenging in these areas during COVID-19, but some examples of success were noted in home visits to families to raise awareness.

### The Strengths of Children's Clubs Identified.

Participants highlighted a range of strengths of the children's club as a model for supporting child participation, child rights, and child protection and safeguarding.

One key strength articulated by several participants was the training the children received as part of being a club member. Participants noted this led to better knowledge of issues, clearer understanding of roles and processes, but also increased leadership skills, self-confidence, self-esteem, and self-advocacy. One participant noted that members in the club had advocated for more psychosocial support for students to deal with the trauma they were surfacing within their schools. Another had suggested that "child clubs have become a place for those who are in mental distress and need support". Surprisingly, this was not raised in more case studies, as the literature review and the key informant interviews raised this as key. It is also linked to the development of self-esteem, self-confidence, and fellowship noted elsewhere by participants.

Other participants noted the ripple effect the clubs had not only on the members, but also on other children, through modelling. This was more evident particularly when they were invited to participate in club events and activities. One participant expressed that they had witnessed that they had been "changing the mindset of other pupils who are not members of the club in the school. The level of discipline and good performance in the entire school for the year was attributed to the good example of the club members. The peer-to-peer awareness raising, as well as the child-parent awareness raising was also listed as a strength of the model, as noted by one participant "using children as the main actor in awareness-raising activities ensures that parent's awareness is quickly raised". This needs to be carefully contextualized to ensure that 'using children' is not exploitative, but rather provides them a platform to share their insights and be taken seriously.

The structure of the clubs was highlighted as a strength. This included those that were child-led or child-adult partnership models. Further, one participant stated that having child rights organizations present in the clubs and in the communities had a beneficial impact. Another participant also noted that there were gender-based benefits to the clubs as more girls were able to participate, as many clubs have more female members.

As highlighted previously, children's clubs influenced training adults about the importance and value of child participation. One participant noted that by coaching children in the club they were better able to





understand children's experiences and behaviours, and therefore better able to effectively work with children. The strong relationships children and adults in the schools had fostered also meant that they created a conduit to share perspectives on the students experiences in the school and work together to create safer learning environments, as indicated by one participant, "success stories are linked to improvement of the safety in school".

The role children's clubs have played in creating more inclusive school spaces that imbibe participatory processes has been recognized in those schools that have won accolades as a result of children's clubs. Similarly, members have won prizes and scholarships as a result of their participation in their clubs.

Given that children's clubs had a unique role in raising awareness in schools and communities, where they were able to continue during COVID-19 based school closures, they had a valuable role to play in promoting safety during the pandemic. As one participant noted the clubs allowed them access to audiences to share COVID-19 safety tips.

In conclusion, one participant summed up the strengths of the clubs thusly:

I have witnessed many successes in the clubs in the way they have changed the members for better. I have realised that children have a way of solving the challenges they come across if given a conducive platform to air their views with support of the adults (Participant).

## The Challenges of Children's Clubs Identified

Participants noted a number of contextual and process challenges as part of children's clubs. Findings highlight challenges regarding funding, social and organizational norms that perpetuate violence against children, harm to children who report abuse, lack of access to technology, insufficient knowledge about rights and safeguarding, and equal access to participation within clubs. This included the need to find sufficient resources, space, and time for the development and running of clubs and for appropriate training and recreational activities.

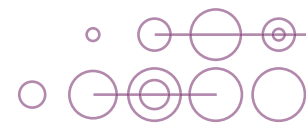
One participant highlighted that one of the key challenges faced by children's clubs in ensuring child protection and safeguarding:

Was their own lack of awareness about their rights and how to demand them from duty bearers [e.g., school staff] ... Similarly, teachers and [school staff] did not know their roles in creating safe and child-friendly learning environments for children in the school (Participant).

Another participant noted that there were some normative issues that emerged in setting up the clubs, where teachers feared that the clubs would undermine their authority and would lead to accusations of abuse. "When we approached most teachers with the aim of starting clubs, at first, they were very hesitant and negative about the clubs. They felt that the club was to monitor the violence they [exact] on children". One participant noted that socialization was needed to have adults understand and accept the role of a supporter rather than leader of the clubs and to encourage them to make space for children to have a role in making decisions that affect them.

Several risks also emerged. Participants were exposed to risks when they reported abuse or where they encouraged others to report it. As members identify perpetrators within the school for issues like littering and bullying, they can sometimes "become subjects of harassment and abuse from their peers". In particular, one participant stated, "there are challenges that arise like when they report defilers and drug peddlers, they can be targets from the culprits". Another risk is that reports go uninvestigated. A participant highlighted inherent risks to child abuse reporting:





There have been some challenges on reporting child abuse. Sometimes there is laxity by the community leaders to report cases of child abuse either they get compromised or they lacked knowledge on child protection, violence, and child abuse. Some cases that reach them were either neglected/ mismanaged or the perpetrators of abuse and violence connive to negotiate with the parents of the girls. This is not uncommon when it comes to defilement and sexual harassment and exploitation of the girl child (Participant).

While children's clubs promote child participation and voice, this can sometimes go wrong. A participant raised a concern that club members occasionally "may let the authority get to their heads, and they may use it as an excuse to their advantage at times". Children are still developing, and they need the opportunity to learn what good leadership means, as well as the weight of the responsibility it provides them with to make good decisions. This can be fostered with the support of caring adults. However, this was prefaced as a rare occurrence. Another challenge that sometimes arose was that only outspoken children were able to fully participate in activities and events. Other children may have minor roles but are given little recognition.

The other challenge is that children's clubs in rural areas in majority world countries have their activities limited to mostly physical interactions due to lack of mobile phones and access to online platforms. This implies that during schools' holidays or the current COVID-19 lockdown they may not have much contact with their peers and reporting mechanisms.



## The Purported Impact of Children's Clubs

A multitude of beneficial impacts were listed by participants. While these focused on schools, they also extended beyond the immediate children's club members and their schools. For ease of reading, these have been organized within Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological layers, in this case by children, families, schools, communities and society. The breadth of topics covered attest to the interrelationship between multiple factors within a child's environment that support or hinder their safety and wellbeing.

### Individual Children

Participants noted that individual children, as well as children across the children's clubs, had experienced positive impacts as a result of being part of children's clubs. One participant noted that the "children are





happy to participate as members of the clubs. They consider themselves lucky because they feel that they are the proxies of all the other children”. They are able to act as mentors to others, inspiring themselves to be their best selves. One concrete impact was the ability to gain new skills and knowledge and participate in various training sessions, gain an increased knowledge of children’s rights, child protection and knowledge of the referral pathways, as well as gain experience in leading and implementing action plans and events, awareness raising campaigns, and advocacy. In general, children “become leaders”. They were also exposed to new information about child protection and they were introduced to other members that shared the same ideas as they did.

Most commonly participants noted that children were positively impacted by participating in the clubs gaining improved levels of self-confidence, self-esteem, voice, empowerment, and a sense of school connectedness. They were also impacted by developing life skills, leadership experience, organizational and problem-solving skills, and improved communication. There was pride and excitement in participation and benefit from helping others. This in turn inspired other students in some schools, as noted by several participants. One participant also noted that students tended to improve academically after being members, as noted “due to their increase in confidence and self-belief, they work hard to improve their grades as well, and get more attention from teachers”. Another participant noted that this supported a preponderance to lifelong learning. This was aided by training and activities that were stimulating and by being in processes where they were valued and listened to. By being able to be listened to, in schools and at home, a participant noted it led to a sense of having influence. Some participants shared stories of specific children and highlighted that they had also gained friendships and a sense of belonging, and in turn were more likely to enjoy attending school. A more nuanced impact was the excitement and commitment children expressed in being part of their clubs. One story about a young female member highlighted that, as a result of being a member, she was “no longer a timid girl but a role model”.

Children’s clubs increased spaces for children to use their voice and exercise their agency. As one participant noted, “Children are learning that they can take charge of issues that concern them, they have learnt that they can influence how their school is run and that they can make constructive contributions to their school administrations and they are listened to.” Importantly, members were able to self-define what was important to them and to make plans to redress these issues. As one participant stated, “when children are empowered, they can take action/control over their own situation by acting on issues that they define as important”. Another participant added “children became critical in analyzing issues that affect them and come up with creative ideas to solve them”.

As a tangible impact, children can build processes that “protect themselves against violence”. This included having access to reporting and referral processes. In one telling anecdote, through child led research on bullying in their school, the child researchers were able to self-reflect and understand the ways in which they were complicit in bullying and able to change their behaviour. Other participants noted that members were able to encourage their peers to stop bullying and other violent activities, as well as to encourage reporting of cases of abuse.

Some specific benefits of being a part of the children’s clubs included individuals being able to permanently leave the adult entertainment sector, being ‘saved’ from a forced early marriage, and gaining scholarships for further study or other prizes and gifts for participating. One participant tangibly learned how to make reusable sanitary napkins. Another noted that the direct advocacy of children had led to “preventing young ones from being exploited through various awareness programs”. In two other case studies, members were able to advocate for safer, more secure school environments. On a smaller scale, but equally important, children’s club members were able to organize an informal safe walk program where children walk in groups or earlier in the evening to avoid walking home alone at night.

Participants reported that they are sometimes offered opportunities to travel and join the national dialogue on a range of pertinent issues. They gain experience and networking “opportunities to meet with senior people in government and organizations whom they open up to and who in turn support their innovative ideas”. They also gain opportunities for lobbying and public speaking and are asked to “represent the school and fellow children to big conventions and meetings”.







## Families

While children's clubs generally focus on school contexts, participants made several comments that referred to families and the role that they play in promoting child safeguarding and ensuring child protection at schools and at home. Several participants noted that children's clubs were effective in spreading messages to parents/caregivers and families. In some cases, this pertained to picking up good sanitation practices learned at school, in other cases club members were able to challenge normative expectations. In one case, a participant noted that parents had a better understanding of the negative consequences of child marriage as a result of members' intervention and awareness raising. In one case study, a participant suggested that the children in the clubs had convinced their parents to leave their hazardous work. Another participant shared the following anecdote:

Parents who saw their children act during street dramas realized that their children could impart impactful messages and encourage their children to join the child club. There was a realization also about their role as duty bearers and sent their children regularly to school (Participant).

Conversely, one participant suggested "parents' involvement in children's learning increased". In a similar vein, through membership in the clubs, one participant hinted that children were confident enough "to talk to their peers' parents to encourage them to send their children regularly to school".



## Schools

### School Staff

Participants noted a range of impacts on school staff, teachers, and principals. Overall, staff's understanding of children's clubs and child safeguarding increased. It also led to a better perception of the role of child participation and children's rights, and an appreciation for and trust in what children can accomplish. As mentors, they appeared to gain experience and fulfillment as role models able to pass on their knowledge. Concerningly, a participant said, "after setting up the complaint response mechanism, teachers and students became more conscious about their actions because they knew that children could report against them." In a more positive vein, a participant expressed the change in attitude that teachers experienced:







Before, teachers thought that children just needed to follow what they wanted them to do. After seeing the activities of the child club and members started to gain confidence in speaking to adults, teachers and the [leadership] realized that they needed to support the child club in their interests so that they could help improve the school (Participant).

Another participant shared the changes they had noted among teachers as a result of the clubs.

There has been change, most teachers are now adhering to the UNCRC, [they] have more understanding of the various laws protecting children i.e., policy on corporal punishment. They are more patient and tolerant with children and give children opportunity to air their views and take up leadership roles. Children are taught to respect adults and the authority, community leaders have been sensitized on child rights and how to recognize abuse and report cases while protecting evidence (Participant).

## The School

Given that the children's clubs were located in schools, it is unsurprising that many of the impacts noted by participants referred to schools. The noticeable impacts included increased awareness of child safety, child safeguarding, increased school attendance, an improved safe school environment and an increased awareness of children's agency in promoting safety.

Participants highlighted benefits for schools that have resulted from the activities of children's clubs, including a general improvement in the school environment and in some cases, infrastructure improvement. In one instance, a participant noted that the members advocated for the municipality to resource a building to provide a safe place for students to study. One participant stated, "children were more secure and... the community was happy since their children are safe when in school and accounted for".

Some of these changes provided positive change within the school, as this participant intimated. "the school itself became more visible and recognized in the community as the center of the activities useful for the whole community." Another participant voiced this "for the school, it has promoted social cohesion, inclusion, safeguarding, and social wellbeing which boosted a positive learning environment in schools. The school has to provide safe learning space, practice social distancing and provide guidance on all referral mechanisms, reporting and responding to any abuse appropriately".

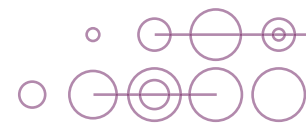
One of the most common articulations of the impact within the school setting was a reduction in the use of corporal punishment. As one participant noted, corporal punishment had been banned yet was still practiced in some schools, but club activities had influenced a move to more positive behaviour reinforcement strategies and a more beneficial school environment. "Corporal punishment reduced by a bigger percentage and alternatives to corporal punishment [were] embraced".

Some participants suggested that the activities of the children's clubs had been responsible, at least in part, for changes in attitude towards violence against children. One participant stated that club activities led to dialogue on school events where members "denounce attitudes contrary to the protection of children".

In practicing positive reinforcement and supporting child safeguarding in schools, one participant recommended that clubs "can conduct awareness campaigns on the code of conduct for students, teachers, and visitors to make sure that everyone is aware and abide[s] by it".

Several participants noted that the schools had initiated child abuse reporting mechanisms with the help of, or led by, children's clubs. One participant took this further and suggested that the children's club could become "the watchdog in the implementation of the child protection policy and complaint response mechanism" in order to share findings with relevant bodies that could implement action to respond to infractions. Another participant reported an "increased awareness about children's safety and the role that everyone can play towards keeping children safe."





As positive role models, a participant said children “mobilise their peers to work for their own well-being in schools”. Another said “they went a long way in changing the mindset of other pupils who are not members of the club in the school. The level of discipline and good performance in the entire school for the year was attributed to the good example of the club members.” Children demonstrated peer support and advocated for one another. A few participants also noted the improved relationship and understanding between children and adults in the schools. One participant went further and said, “schools began to register more children and increased relationships with community members e.g., parents’ involvement in children’s learning increased”. In one case study the children worked with adults to design action plans and the children allocated tasks to the adults, shifting the traditional power structures. As the participant recognized, “by this process, the adults felt fully involved and left the clubs to develop in accordance with the action plans established.”

Several participants noted the beneficial improvements to the schools in terms of hygiene and sanitation. While this is not typically considered child safeguarding, child safeguarding was explored more holistically by the case studies recognizing the role health can play in safety. Some clubs support cleaning schools as a way of building school pride and a sense of security. In another previously mentioned case, one school began producing and distributing sanitary napkins to students because of work by the children’s club. Attesting to other changes, a participant shared this:

One success is changing the school environment to a child friendly environment by planting grass, trees, and painting of inner school walls in child friendly colours in their school and also lobbying for fencing of the school compound with a perimeter wall. The children felt secure inside the school and spent more time playing and studying even after school hours (Participant).

In summation, one participant proclaimed that there had been “some tremendous change of behaviours in addressing barriers to education, child protection/safeguarding.” Another revealed, “the school recognizes that the child club can provide ideas to improve the quality of education and protection of children in the school. The children are listened to and discussions about children’s issues [are heard]”.





## Communities

The ripple impacts of the children's clubs were expressed by several participants, highlighting the impact on the surrounding communities. In general, the impacts included increased space for children's voice and participation, increased awareness of the impacts and prevalence of violence against children and more focus and resources provided to support children's initiatives. Through children's clubs, some initiatives included mapping community risks and designing plans to redress them. "Beyond school, there is increased awareness about children's safety and the role everyone in the community ought to play towards keeping children safe." Similarly, another participant expressed "today we are seeing more cases of violence, exploitation and neglect being denounced than ever before in the project communities. This is a reality thanks to the work the clubs do under the mentorship of adults".

Children in clubs had also been involved in raising awareness of child protection, but also safety precautions during COVID-19 physical distancing policies were in effect. For instance, one participant stated that children had been responsible for "more face masks to be distributed to children coupled with awareness on effects of child labour and COVID-19 disease targeting children with a hope that the information will reach the parents."

As a result of children's clubs, one participant highlighted the creation of a fund at the village level to support child protection initiatives, while another reported the introduction of a community children's right committee, that includes children's club members to represent children's voices. Other changes included mechanisms to report violations of children's rights outside the schools in some case study locations.

In a more general way, one participant shared the following change:

The changes seen in the communities after these child-led initiatives are the recognition of the important role that children play in the life of the communities, more protection for children from COVID-19 and the parents' follow-up with the children in relation to the TV and radio lessons (Participant).

Another participant indicated their concepts of the changes that had occurred, "leaders at the community structures have increasingly started to pay attention to the safety and welfare of children...police among others have a special designated office charged with the duty of ensuring children's safety".

## Society

Some of the impacts noted by participants of the children's clubs represented in the case study had more general societal impacts. As a general impact, one participant noted that "clubs helped to support child-led movement", "elevating the agency of children". In some case studies, participants noted that club activities had included feeding into legislative and other policy dialogue, which had led to some changes in areas of school safety zones in humanitarian contexts, input into corporal punishment, early marriage, and child trafficking policies, which goes beyond safeguarding in schools to safeguarding at a societal level. As one participant noted "youth can be drivers of policy change & advocacy. Their voices were very influential in regional and national forums". Another participant shared that as a result of children's clubs initiatives, "concerned authorities have developed and formed activities and laws addressing the issues of the children". Other awareness raising activities that children's clubs had been involved in included "peaceful demonstrations on the roads to capture the attention of the police and government". Two other participants noted that the children's clubs' initiatives, particularly some workshops, had gained popularity and were in demand in other schools and communities. The data analyzed shows larger societal impacts on safeguarding children and on changes in attitudes, behaviours, and institutional practices that may not be explicitly child safeguarding yet that have an effect on children's overall safety.





## Impact - Children's Voice

Children's clubs have the clear impact on providing spaces for children to enact their right to participate and have a voice in decision-making for issues pertaining to their safeguarding. The recognition and critical impact of children's participation runs through this report, but there were a few anecdotes that deserved specific mention. One participant suggested that children's clubs have carved out room to ensure voices are heard, "because the child club has created a space for children to feel safe and not be judged, younger members are now able to express themselves freely".

Several participants articulated a range of places that members were able to share their ideas and provide their input within and beyond their schools. As one participant said, "participating in national dialogue e.g., Age of sexual consent, age of criminal responsibility, debates of various community issues, environmental upgrading etc.". As one participant noted:

The main outcome of child participation in the club is meaningful and ethical participation in different arenas and to make their voices to be heard at decision making level. In addition, to ensure a child club is one of the institutional indicators for child friendly local governance (Participant).

## Impact - Social Norms

Across the case studies, it was clear that there were a number of social norms and behaviour changes happening at different levels and accredited in part to the children's clubs by participants. As one participant stated, there has been "gradual change in attitudes, beliefs and behaviours". Most tangibly, this was shown in the reduction of the use of corporal punishment in schools and in the increased use of positive discipline by teachers and "child centered pedagogy to espouse the development of the psychomotor, cognitive and affective domains of learning, thus creating an opportunity for the child to develop his full potential". A participant expressed that:

They are making effort towards use of positive discipline, alternatives to corporal punishment. We believe this is in part due to the enhanced agency and more equally distributed power relations between students as we have [randomized control trial] data confirming the impact of improved student-teacher relationships in reducing [violence against children in schools]. There has been increased awareness among the parents on their relationships with children but there is a slow shift in their beliefs around disciplining children. As a result of increased awareness, leaders at the community structures have increasingly started to pay attention to the safety and welfare of children, including local council offices at village level, probation offices, and police, among others (Participant).

Another participant said:

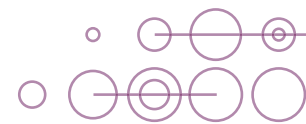
There has been some tremendous change of behaviours in addressing barriers to education, child protection/safeguarding. Sensitization and awareness on menstrual hygiene management has enabled some parents to take it upon themselves to support the girl child in that period to stay in school as opposed to seeing attainment of the first menstruation period as readiness for marriage (Participant).

A third participant noted an "increased awareness among the parents on their relationships with children, but there is a slow shift in their beliefs around disciplining children based on the underlying norms of our societies".

Attesting to the impact of the clubs, a participant suggested clubs had:







Created a culture of respecting child rights, and believing in participation and communication as a tool thanks to which children and responsible adults could deal with problems, better understand each other, and jointly work in the best interest of children in the first place (Participant).

As a normative change in and of itself, one participant argued that the clubs had to “break the initial ‘we know better what children need’ attitude”. The participant went on to say:

We are proud to say that we created a change in terms of not only how the parents and school personnel perceive child participation and the work of school committees, but we made a breakthrough in terms of perception of child participation among a number of high level officials (Participant).

As an overarching impact, one participant shared:

Frequent awareness activities of the child clubs at various sectors impacted deeply. Now, many schools have started conducting awareness sessions regarding violence and exploitation against minors. Program organized by the clubs is always fruitful and informative. Many schools request to conduct programs repeatedly so that students will be aware more and the risk level of students will be mitigated. Concerned authorities have developed and formed activities and laws addressing the issues of the children (Participant).



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## Case Studies - Stories

In looking at the stories directly from the participants, the following excerpts have been drawn to illustrate the breadth and depth of ways children, within their clubs, were making an impact and exercising their agency, to protect and safeguard children from violence in and around schools.

A small group of young people began a child-led research project. They chose to focus on bullying in school to explore its prevalence. Adults acted as supporters for child-led activities. In this case they not only found that bullying was widespread in their school, but they also learned that they were complicit in the acts, leading them to unique insights into the issue, its impact, but importantly to ways to redress it with the support of school staff. “Child researchers reported that during their data analysis, some of them realized that they themselves were bullies and had threatened other students without comprehending the nature of their actions”.

One example is from a children’s club that wanted to celebrate international youth day across schools. Without funding, they organized, found materials, and coordinated various activities to both celebrate the day, but also develop relevant actions for International Youth Day “where they engaged peers in making school improvement plans, encouraged them to prepare short role plays, speeches, etc. They even conducted a debate and discussion round” (Participant).

In one children’s club, child marriage had emerged as an issue in the local community and members found ways to protect a child at risk of early marriage.

The children who had been trained on violence and practices harmful to their protection understood the risk that the girl whose parents were going to marry was running. Together, they approached their supervisor to denounce the facts. This led the public services in charge of protection to take up the case, accompany the girl and then cancel the marriage project. Thanks to the action of the children, the parents became aware of the bad consequences of violence and abandoned any attempt to marry the girl. As a result, the community in general has learned a good lesson in the context of child protection (Participant).

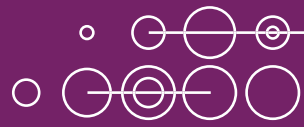
In another children’s club, with a child/adult partnership model, the club members were concerned that their school was geographically located in a dangerous place between two warring factions. To provide safety, they:

Organized communication and advocacy to raise awareness of the impact violent conflict of children and gained agreement from community leaders to apply protective status to the affected schools, and to further gain local, national and international attention allowing a safe schools status to be launched (Participant).

In one children’s club promoting child protection, wellbeing and safeguarding, the club found multiple approaches to broadly protecting the students.

Through action planning, they incorporate issues affecting them and reach out to school leadership for action, they disseminate information about violence and its dangers while imploring their peers to desist from using violence. As a result, some schools have taken initiatives such as planting hedges to protect children from external harm, solicited external support leading to construction of water sources in schools, etc. Schools began to register more children and increased relationships with community members e.g., parents’ involvement in children’s learning increased. What has made this a success is the distinct role of the children that is clearly stated within the [resource toolkit]. Because of this clarity and guidance children’s expectations and mandate is clear thus making their work easy. (Participant).





# Children's Consultations Phase 4

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## Methodology

The original methodology outlined a process whereby a children's consultation would take place in one country over the course of a week, to learn more about children's clubs in that specific context, and to understand from children and young people's perspectives the role that children's clubs play in safeguarding and protection. With the onset of COVID-19 pandemic this approach needed to be re-envisioned. The methodology for the children's consultation was then adapted to ensure the voices of children and young people could still be heard, despite new travel restrictions.

IICRD reached out to those organizations who had submitted case studies, to ask for the opportunity to conduct an art and play-based online session with a group of children and young people from a children's club. In total six organizations responded positively, and plans were set in place to conduct the research online, including the development of informed consent forms, the development of methods and tools, including art and play-based activities. IICRD confirmed with each organization in advance that a staff person or adult advocate could be present during the online consultations and that psychosocial support and follow-up could be provided to any child in need.

## Ethics and Informed Consent

As noted in the methodology section, the research adhered to a high level of ethical integrity and in keeping with research involving children. An informed consent form was developed to provide detailed information for children and young people and their parents or guardians about the research and how any information collected might be used. Organizations coordinated the communication and outreach to children and young people and their parents and guardians, and informed consent was received for all participating children and young people. Please see Appendix 5: Informed Consent Form.

To note, these forms were also translated into Spanish to accommodate the participation of a Spanish speaking organization, which due to a natural disaster in November 2020, was unable to participate.

## Process

In total, five consultations were conducted virtually with children and young people from various organizations during November 2020: two in Kenya, two in Uganda, and one in the Ukraine. One group in Latin America was keen to participate but a natural disaster in the community impeded their engagement. IICRD worked with host organizations to organize safe online consultations with children and young people from children's clubs in their area. Each organization was responsible to ensure child protection and safeguarding procedures were followed as well as COVID-19 safety precautions. This included children and young people gathering together outside wearing masks, children and young people in a private location in their own homes or community centre, and children and young people gathered together in a room, socially distanced and wearing masks.

The online sessions were facilitated by two IICRD facilitators and were supported by one or more local adult support workers (e.g teachers, NGO staff), for a total of nine. In total 27 children and young people participated in the online sessions. Sessions were generally 1.5 hours in length, though due to internet connectivity challenges, some sessions were held more than once. Please see Appendix 6: Participatory Activity Package for the Online Children's Consultation for a detailed overview of art and play-based activities conducted as part of these online sessions. Many children and young people also submitted artwork, poetry, stories, and videos to supplement the online sessions.

Once the sessions were completed, summary notes, transcriptions and audio files were analyzed. Themes were identified and verified by a third researcher. These findings helped to triangulate the research data gathered from other sources.





## Findings

### Summary

The children's consultations validated and extended the information provided in the other areas of the research. Children and young people were keen to share their thoughts, ideas, recommendations and want to have the opportunity to connect with other children's clubs. The overarching findings suggest that children's clubs have the potential to offer a myriad of benefits to child participants, inclusive of, and extending beyond, child safeguarding. The consultations illustrate that young people are highly engaged and mobilized in their clubs. The children's clubs seem to provide an incubator for child and youth leadership, offering training and other opportunities for young people to build their knowledge, skills, and capacities.

Of particular interest, the children and young people articulated that children have found themselves in the role of teaching and mentoring adults to take children and their ideas seriously. Some participants also articulated that although a child's right to participate is often taught, the reality is this is rarely realized, as noted by one young participant, "as much to tell you, [children] have power and speak out and participate [but] it is not being realized".

In terms of child safeguarding, the children's consultations, like the case studies, illustrated that the range of activities that the clubs undertake collectively build stronger systems that promote child safeguarding and child protection. Supporting a child's right to voice, alongside children's empowerment, are important corollaries of child safeguarding initiatives. The children and young people suggested enacting child rights makes children feel safe.

Overall, children and young people supported that notion that children's clubs are beneficial for a range of reasons, including core safeguarding activities, such as, awareness raising, training on children's rights and protection, supporting reporting, building self efficacy and empowerment. As such the children and young people recommended that children's clubs should be more prevalent and that they should include robust processes to ensure sustainability, longevity, and consistency. In a different vein, related to the protocols associated with COVID-19, moving forward, some participants noted that more work needs to be done to keep children safe online within the clubs and in online schooling.

### Children's Club Purpose

While the young participants were not specifically asked about the purpose of children's clubs, this was articulated in various discussions. The young participants' articulation supported the findings on the purpose of children's clubs found in other parts of this research. In general, they noted that they worked on a wide variety of children's rights issues, children's empowerment, safeguarding, prevention, and protection against violence and abuse, including knowledge of how to keep oneself safe. One went so far as to say that children's clubs 'change lives'. They suggested that clubs teach life skills, provide support through 'togetherness', ensure safety, and help foster leadership. The latter was particularly evident when children are able to participate in active roles, such as within the children's leadership group or in activities, like children's court. As one young participant said, children's clubs supplied a vehicle for children to be able to state and implement children's ideas and have them respected. This helped to show adults that their ideas were valid and appropriate. They noted that children are best placed to share what affects them and that some solutions lie with them. Several young participants suggested that clubs help fuel educational debates that are both interesting and teach children about their rights. In summary, one Ugandan pupil defined the roles and responsibilities of his club in this way, "the children's club is a group where children gather together to support and to do activities and get involved with problems that affect them".





## Safeguarding

In terms of promoting safeguarding, the young participants had a range of examples of how this was brought into their children's club activities. It is important to note that not many children and young people could distinguish 'child protection' from 'child safeguarding' and they often used children's rights, child protection and child safeguarding interchangeably. In this way, it may be assumed that they considered 'child safeguarding' to denote the ways that guard children's safety, including organizational efforts, but also individual efforts. More in line with the standard definition, some young participants noted that promoting child safeguarding was done by working with the school administration to ensure safety of the children, particularly when the children's club is working with someone outside the school, the children can know that they have been vetted by the school administration and are safe.

Examples of the ways children's clubs protected children's safety included training, awareness raising, encouraging reporting mechanism, and empowerment strategies. Most of the participants noted that they had training on child rights and violence against children and could identify abuse and who to contact in case of an incident, report, or suspicion of violence. For instance, a club in Kenya noted specific members of their club received training on how to identify and report on incidences of violence against children. They were provided with clear accessible information on how to report within their community. The children in clubs in turn also provide training to the wider school community on what abuse and violence is. In addition, participants noted that by being in the club, club members gained confidence to say 'no' and seek help when someone tries to abuse them.

One adult advocate who participated in the consultations suggested that empowerment of children was the key to promoting safety and therefore a core approach for promoting safeguarding. In her estimation, focusing on violence and abuse was not as effective as focusing on empowerment to ensure that children are better equipped to protect themselves and seek help when they need it. She felt that this kind of prevention was more effective than protection alone. Child participants also noted that teachers had a key role in safeguarding as they are in constant contact with children and are aware of relevant policies. Some noted that the training and knowledge of the teachers needed to match this, so that all teachers can support children's safeguarding.



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Some of the specific practices that the children noted to promote safeguarding are outlined in the following text box.

### Figure 3 - Activities that Promote Safeguarding

- Providing Clarity (e.g., of what abuse and violence are, who to contact in case of an incident, and what rights children have).
- Code of Conduct (to support a safe environment in schools and in the children's clubs which children agree to abide by).
- Mechanisms for Reporting Abuse (within the school and within the community).
- Running School Safety Committees (to identify risks and explore ways to redress them).
- Map Risks around Schools (to ensure everyone is aware of community risks children are exposed to enroute to school).
- Provide a Shield of Protection (this provides a tangible approach for identifying and articulating who children can trust with their concerns within their school).
- Celebrate Achievements with a Wall of Success (to highlight the good work of the children's club members).
- Initiate a Children's Court (where children are involved in tracking and redressing issues that occur within the school, such as bullying and stealing).
- Offer Peer Monitoring, Mentoring, and Counselling.
- Raise Awareness (through for instance workshops, dramas, sensitization activities, and posters).
- Activities to address specific concerns (e.g., redress nighttime road safety by adding reflective material to the road around the school).

## Activities

As children's clubs function in different ways, the activities that they undertake also vary. One core activity that the young participants noted was regular meetings. Others included: holding debates on children's rights, seeking input from all members of the school (including with younger children through art and play), supporting togetherness, trust, and empowerment building exercises, drama, awareness raising and connecting with other children's clubs, and children's centres. An example of an activity integrated into one school was a children's court that purportedly led to reduced incidents of bullying and stealing in school and increased confidence and competence in leadership in children.

When we get someone bullying, teasing or anything like that we call that person; we give him or her a simple punishment that will help them to report or change. When they do not change, we can report them to a teacher (Young person, Uganda).



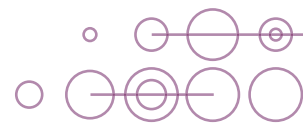


Table 1 outlines the range of activities highlighted by the young participants during the consultations.

**Table 1 - Children Clubs Activities**

<p>Training, Workshops, Debates</p>	<p>While not discussed in detail, all consultations included reference to activities related to educating the children’s clubs members, and the school, and sometimes parents and the wider community on issue regarding violence against children (e.g., ‘do’s and don’ts’), child abuse (e.g., how to identify and who to report to), children’s rights (e.g., what children are entitled to and what they need) and child protection (e.g., internet safety). The young participants encouraged open and honest discussions on sensitive topics. Specific issues were also included such as child labour, teen pregnancy, and sexually transmitted diseases. These came in various forms including training, lectures, seminars, workshops, debates, presentations, reports, reading books). Other skills-based training and opportunities for young people to build their knowledge, skills, and capacities, for instance speaking up for oneself, leadership, gender and equality, and career planning.</p>
<p>Awareness Raising and Sensitization</p>	<p>The young participants discussed a range of awareness raising and sensitization activities which included holding meetings within the clubs and debates within the school to discuss a variety of issues such as the consequences of bullying, and teen pregnancy, but also misbehaviour. They also had more creative endeavours including putting on plays and dramas for the wider community and making awareness raising posters. Posters included those differentiating good and bad touch and emphasizing “My body is mine’. Many of these activities occurred within the children’s clubs and within the schools but some were created to provide outreach to the communities for them to, for instance better understand children’s rights, the impacts of early marriage and teen pregnancy. This also extended to children’s centres and elementary schools. Other activities included risk mapping around the school to identify problem areas (e.g., hedges) and to find ways to address these issues. One group also mentioned their activities aimed at building the capacity of teachers to empower, educate and safeguard children while at schools and home. This included work to provide information about better alternatives for corporal punishment.</p> <p>Community outreach was also included:</p> <p>...we reached out since we joined the club and the more times we reached out to the community, the more trust and faith they had in us and the more proud of us [they became]. So, actually we did not stop trying to show them that as children we are capable (Young Person, Kenya).</p>
<p>Networking</p>	<p>Several young participants discussed the importance of reaching out to other clubs, children’s centres and schools. This was seen as a benefit of being a member of the club. Although not mentioned within the children’s consultations, this networking presumably offered a good way to share ideas and amplify awareness raising.</p>
<p>Empowerment</p>	<p>Activities that instilled empowerment in children and young people and supported them to be comfortable in sharing their opinions and perspectives was discussed by many participants. Importantly, this included dialogue between children, young people, and the adults within the school.</p>





Supporting School Environment (Physical or Psychosocial)	There were a few examples that were raised by the participants that related to supporting the school environment, either physically or psychosocially. Physically, children and young people were taking part in initiatives that promote hygiene and sanitation or planting trees and flowers on school property. Psychosocially, children and young people were involved in supporting a peaceful school environment, for instance by partaking in initiatives to reduce school bullying and absenteeism and increase in inclusion in decision making. One example was a child-led court.
Socialising	One of the core activities of the children's clubs included socializing, 'keeping busy', playing together, and sharing ideas. One participant highlighted they initially joined the club for the field trips and social time, and then became invested in children's rights and addressing violence in their school. This led to addressing local problems like bullying, stealing, and fighting.
Reporting	As has been noted, the participants mentioned some mechanism for reporting violence and abuse against children. One participant provided a specific example where they were able to identify and report a fairly serious case of abus <sup>2</sup> .
Guiding and counselling	While participants did not provide details, they suggested that many clubs provide peer-based guidance, mentoring and counselling. One participant noted that the club seeks to identify those children at risk or experiencing violence and provide them with 'extra care'.

## The Children in Children's Club

The young participants who took part in the children's consultations reaffirmed the kinds of qualities that stood out among the club participants. These included children and young people who had a desire to share their ideas, thoughts, and perspectives, were highly engaged and were able to mobilize their peers. The children and young people also had positive attitudes.

According to the young participants, the children were drawn to clubs for a range of reasons, but most commonly they wanted to interact with other children and share ideas. They wanted to know more about their rights and be able to speak for themselves and for others. One participant noted that it was their teacher and their friends who encouraged them to join. They also were drawn to the exposure and the hope that they could build leadership skills and work towards children's rights. One participant suggested that children in the club were the envy of other children.

Others noted that there were incentives that supported them joining, for instance food, t-shirts, books, pens, and trips to other children's centres. Some of the young participants talked about when they began being members in a club and learning about children's rights. For several participants this was at the age of 6. This illustrated the range of ages of those involved in the clubs. These particular clubs had focused on teaching children's rights. It was also suggested, at least in one children's club, that membership may elevate children's standing in a school and community, gaining respect from their peers, teachers, and parents.

The young participants suggested that before joining the club they felt unsafe and were scared and did not feel confident to share their ideas and speak out for themselves. They were excited to start a new journey.



<sup>2</sup> In line with ethical guidelines, the researchers followed up with this club to ensure all appropriate follow up was done with regards to this case.





## Adult Support

Adult support of the children's clubs was highlighted as important, including teachers, school administration and parents. It was evident that building a trusting relationship with adults took time and effort. One of the challenges that the young participants raised in the consultations was the resistance they met with from a variety of adults who may want to support the children's clubs but had little faith in the children's capacity to be effective and to make relevant change. The sentiment that 'you're just a child' was one often heard. However, as the participants stated, children are best placed to speak to what affects them. As a result, one of the roles the children took was in advocating for people to listen to them and illustrate that they had important things to say and could effectively support other children and other members of their community. This was an important aspect of creating more safety. It would appear that one of the outcomes of the work of the children's clubs was not increasing the level of trust in the role of children in their communities in their schools and in the role in promoting safeguarding.

Some young people noted that in the early phase of beginning their children's clubs, the adults did not trust their ability or value. In time, and with care, they were able to demonstrate that they had good ideas and could positively benefit their peers and their school, so they were able to build more trusting and respectful relationships where the adults were willing to listen to the children and young people. In the Ukraine this was clearly articulated, at least with older young people:

...some older children from the school, they have more respect, and you know there is more trust in what they are saying. So, it's a more engaging and more productive conversation...it is not only about implementation of ideas, it is about the respect to the ideas and the meaning of what children are saying (translated Young Person, Ukraine).

Another example was provided in Kenya where young people noted that parents and community members did not initially believe they could be effective or have relevant things to say, but as they showed them what they could do, they began to garner more trust:

Because some people are like, no, why, why should the kids have a say in this, as the parents, and the teachers, and the Board of Governors know what you are supposed to say in this. It is not the kids. The kids want so many things [but] it is us who know better than they know, you know. So sometimes, you know as much as they are telling you, you have the power to speak out and push the space (Young Person, Kenya).

Also, another thing is that whenever they saw the club or the members of the club going out to the community, talking to them and showing their confidence. I think that also gave them hope and assured them that they can actually speak up and nothing wrong will happen to them because nothing happened to us. And we went to the community, [and] talked to the parents who also attended some conferences, and we were still Okay, so that was a very good assurance to them (Young Person, Kenya).

Where there was trust, the relationship with school administration was critical to safeguarding. One important role that the young participants noted was for school administrators and teachers to support to ensure the protection of the children and the task that they were undertaking. They would ensure that the adults if they were working within the school and within the community were trustworthy and that the school had done their due diligence to ensure it was safe.





## Children's Clubs – Processes and Policies

During the course of the children's consultations, the young participants highlighted some of the ways that their clubs were functioning. A coherent structure was identified as a supportive feature of clubs' success, so creating a code of conduct with emphasis on rules for children was seen as critical, according to one participant. To make this child-friendly and engaging, in one group they built this around a field of flowers, where the flowers represented different groups of people. Having the support of NGO partners to offer training materials, workshops and mentoring also helped. In terms of composition, the children and young people highlighted similar roles as were identified in the case studies, e.g., a chairperson, treasurer, and secretary. One group also noted their process for setting out their annual work plan which identified how they would manage and run the club for the year by defining the children who have challenges and make follow up plans on how to support them, as well as setting out the core sensitization initiatives. This helped to ensure the adults could maximize their support through providing the right information.

Some discussion focused on recruitment of new members. As previously noted, some incentives, such as snacks, could help bring children out to find out more about the club. The recruitment process helped to deal with a potential issue some identified in the turnover of students, teachers, and NGO workers. Consistent recruitment could cushion these impacts.



## Success Factors

The young participants highlighted a range of factors that support the success of clubs. These are listed here and linked to the Challenges that are listed below

**Safety** – Unsurprisingly, safety featured as a success factor. The focus on keeping children safe 'kept everyone on their toes', but the young participants shared that as a result of being a member of the children's club they felt 'safe and protected'. "The club makes me feel safe because I can share my ideas" (Young Person, Uganda).







**Engagement, Encouragement, Empowerment** - The young participants highlighted a range of success factors that broadly spoke to bringing children into the children's clubs and activities, encouraging them, and building towards empowerment. Engagement began with interacting with other children, exchanging ideas on how to create awareness about child rights, reaching out to other children and inspiring them with the results of their work. As one young participant suggested, people come together when they work on a common problem when they can openly talk about it.

Encouragement came from the members' themselves, school administration or parents in recognizing they can do a lot and generate new ideas. This was important in the beginning, as young participants noted that some children and young people hesitate to speak out and fear the consequences of doing so. Some young participants noted the incentives that were offered to support children to participate and voice their opinions, for instance from simple encouragement through to small prizes like a pencil, pen, or book to encourage them and to inspire others to also participate. In general, one young participant encouraged clubs to not fear challenges, as he noted challenges can be solved.

Young participants emphasized the importance of activities that empowered children and young people to share their ideas and perspectives. This comes when they can see the great things that they can do and new ideas they can generate. "So, child rights are not only about trying to recognize the rights and not being abused, as much as we are fighting all that, we [are] also being empowered" (Young Person, Kenya).



**Ripple Effect** - The young participants accentuated the ripple effects or cyclical nature of the impact of the children's clubs. This included inviting children and young people to begin in children's clubs at a young age. One suggested that it was important to draw on this and ensure that those young people who were empowered should be encouraged to give back and support younger ones to also be empowered. As noted by these two young people: "this empowered me as a girl and as a leader. It also empowered me to empower other people"; "I was brought from nothing to something. And I want to help others".

Similarly, others noted that the clubs themselves have ripple effects in their communities, whereby, "...these kids will go and tell [people in] other projects and then a whole community will know, and they will all know about child protection. This is what I hope will happen" (Young Person, Kenya).

**Structure** - Having a good, consistent structure helped the children's clubs to function smoothly, and maintain sustainability as new members joined. Some young participants noted that this was helped with school administrative support.





**Attitude** - The attitude of the children and young people, and their adult support was seen as a success factor and was demonstrated by the young participants. One in particular emphasized the importance of focusing on one problem and solution at a time. With this approach, he emphasized that challenges would not be overwhelming.

**Teamwork and Collaboration** - Teamwork, solidarity, unity, and collaborative approaches were seen as a major success factor. One participant noted,

...we had different ideas; a spirit of sharing... [we] came together and came to a decision... [and we had] no conflict [and were] running smoothly. Even the school administration took part (Young Person, Kenya).

Highlighting their approval of teamwork, young participants used a number of team-based slogans, such as 'Our motto is team', 'you do not have to fight your battles alone', and 'together everyone achieves more'.

**Participation and Inclusion** – Alongside collaboration and engagement, inclusivity was noted as important. The young participants said that all children should be invited to participate, and no one should be left out. This included involving children and young people in decision making in schools.

Whenever a decision is made, or a decision is going to be made we are all involved, and we are all informed about it. We feel safe and protected when we are involved in the decision (Young Person, Uganda).

Being part of making decisions has made our club very strong (Young Person, Uganda).

To make sure all children can participate, art, play and engaging activities were recognized as valuable tools to support engagement. As one young participant noted, drawing it is easier for communication if someone is shy or afraid to talk about an issue. Similarly, 'anonymous idea boxes' allow more people to share their ideas and experiences in non-verbal forms.

**Time** - The young participants noted that being able to spend time together as members was a success factor. This helped them to understand each other and recognize that their opinion matters.

**Trust and Relationships between Children and Adults** - As noted earlier, there were some challenges in supporting adults to trust in the efficacy of children's clubs and in children voices and abilities. Once a trusting relationship was established, the young participants noted it made for more effective children's clubs, but also it strengthened their relationships with their teachers. Also, young participants appeared to get more respect for participating in clubs, from teachers, and other students. One participant noted that their teachers were now friendlier to them.

**Relationships with teachers and school administration** - Relatedly, having a good working relationship with teachers and administration helped the children's clubs to function and to promote safeguarding. One young person in Kenya described their relationship like this, "they [teachers] were always there for us; if there was anything new, we wanted to share or wanted to give out; all these things came from them".

**Follow Up** – Ensuring follow up with children was highlighted as important. This was an important element for the adults supporting the children's clubs.





## Challenges

As one young participant noted, the children's clubs have their 'ups and downs'.

**Safety** – When safety is provided children and the clubs are more successful. Sadly, a lack of safety is one of the main challenges that children face and one of the core reasons for needing the children's clubs' activities. The young participants articulated a range of types of abuse and violence that children and young people experience in their schools and communities, including bullying, abuse and violence at home, corporal punishment in schools, sexual exploitation, early marriage, and child labour. At a more systemic level, children were experiencing the impacts of poverty, including a lack of food. This has been exasperated during COVID-19 protocols. These issues sat alongside other issues experienced by children that made them more vulnerable to experiencing exploitation and challenging them to remain in school including teen pregnancy, depression, personal health issues, care responsibilities of family members, and absenteeism.

**Targeted children** – Some young participants raised concerns about specific children, for example those with disabilities, that are targeted for abuse and exploitation.

**Structural challenges** – The young participants shared other challenges that they needed to tackle, for instance the re-establishing club structures when new members began, dealing with poor management in children's clubs and challenges related to mobilization.

**Club Capacity** – One challenge that was highlighted by a few young participants pertained to the capacity of teachers to support the clubs, in particular to have sufficient knowledge and skills to work alongside children, but also to teach child rights. One adult advocate noted it was also a challenge to put concepts in age-appropriate language and make sure it was engaging.

**Recruitment** – Related to structural challenges, a few young participants stated that it is challenging to encourage new members to join due to a variety of factors, such as, uncertainty or fear about sharing their opinion, particularly in discussing child safeguarding; limited time; and/or lack of knowledge or initial interest in learning about children's rights.

**Funding and Resourcing** – Also related to structural challenges, young participants noted that the clubs were stretched for funding to run events, programs, and to purchase supplies for art, music, sport, and other activities. As one young participant in Kenya stated, it is "...a challenge to us is finding enough materials, [and] enough supports to make the clubs strong".

**Sustainability** – Several young participants said that a potential challenge arose in ensuring the sustainability of the clubs, particularly in light of the overturn of teachers and children.

**Getting Adults to Respect Children's Capacity** – As articulated previously, children and young people were met with a challenge in that adults did not trust children's capacity and capability. As one young Kenyan participant said, it "was also hard because not everyone was ready to help, not everyone actually believed in us, everyone thought that we would start but fade in the future, so starting was really hard and we are thankful that we are still strong 'til now". In light of this, fostering adult relationships takes time to navigate and can be challenging for children's clubs. There was an assumption that children cannot speak out themselves and it takes effort to convince them otherwise. Further, some young participants shared that they had to fight for the right to meet, as some parents and teachers felt it was a 'waste of time'. This required participants to have a certain level of confidence and perseverance. This could act as a deterrent for many new members fearful of advocating for their rights and/or being rejected.

**Misunderstanding** – The young participants underscored that some other children, parents, teachers, and community members had misconceptions about child rights, child participation, violence against children, and child safeguarding. There were also misconceptions about the objectives of the children's club.





**Time** – Young participants indicated that time was an issue. Some children found it difficult to meet the demands of their schoolwork, home responsibilities and club activities. The club sometimes also had challenges in finding times to meet during school hours.

**Pandemic** – Of course, the looming challenge for the children’s clubs was the COVID-19 pandemic and restrictions that had interrupted the clubs’ functioning. With schools cancelled during points of the pandemic, children did not have the regular safe space to meet, nor the proper protective gear such as masks and hand sanitizer and were not able to gather in groups in many spaces. Many young people did not have internet access, and others were facing increased poverty and abuse at home that restricted their engagement.

## Benefits and Outcomes

Through teaching children’s rights, it appears children’s clubs can teach or provide presentations about violence against children and suggest mechanisms for safeguarding children. In exploring what recommendations young participants had for other clubs, they offered a range of ideas, from specific to broad and from the individual to the collective.

...there was a lot of improvement with students themselves. I was able to read better because you were used to being given so many story books. Our knowledge, our thinking was expanded. Our school came to embrace that children should be protected in the community (Young Person, Kenya).

Broadly, the idea of supporting teaching child rights was identified as helpful. It can tangibly be used within the classroom to protect children, but also to promote respectful classroom environments. One participant shared her story of supporting a proposal for a new bigger school and after two years it was realized. Planting trees and beautification of the schools also came up in several discussions. While this may seem tangential, participants noted that this created an environment that felt safer. There was a real sense that the environment made a difference to a sense of safety and had a knock-on effect in terms of building safety, e.g., in planting trees and flowers, including building a fence to keep children safe on school grounds in one case.

In some cases, it also offered physical barriers. These offered a powerful reminder of what child rights and empowerment could offer.

Young participants highlighted the following benefits and outcomes of their children’s clubs:

- Enliven the right to participation and protect child rights.
- Learn and share information about child rights and safeguarding.
- Empower children to believe in themselves and to protect themselves.
- Uncover children’s value in their lives and help turn a child’s passion into something ‘they want to do or something that makes them stronger’.
- Create successful young leaders.
- Elevate children’s pride and standing in a school and community, gain respect from their peers, teachers, and parents.
- Promote experience of togetherness.
- Reduce absenteeism in schools.
- Generate benefits from older youth supporting younger ones.







- Create a physically safe environment in schools.
- Identify what abuse really is and report it.
- Experience gentler teachers, reduced corporal punishments, improved education, and expanded thinking on discipline.
- Nicer schools, with more trees, flowers, and pictures.
- Experience inclusion in decision making at school and know that everyone can be involved.
- Demonstrate to teachers and school administration it is worth respecting what children are saying.
- Empower siblings, parents, and the whole community.

The concept of feeling pride (both individually and collectively) and experiencing personal growth was raised by several young participants, as summarized here,

I am feeling so happy and fantastic and so proud and we all exercise our rights (Young Person, Uganda).

I am able to stand up and speak for myself and others as well (Young Person, Kenya).

Child rights club has brought me from nothing to something, I am serving with my whole heart (Young Person, Kenya).

[They are] more proud of us. We, as children, are capable. The more time we reached out to the community, the more faith and trust parents gained in us. Another thing is that parents saw that we were exposed to the community and the big organizations that were willing to help (Young Person, Kenya).

It helped me to be stronger (Young Person, Kenya).

## Hopes and Dreams

The young participants shared a range of hopes and dreams, at the school, local community, and national level. This was augmented by their hope that people would recognize the benefits of the clubs and the potential ripple effects they offered. The young participants also focused on the concept and benefits from unity that occurred within the clubs. As one stated, there is “a lot of potential in those clubs” that help inspire children to:

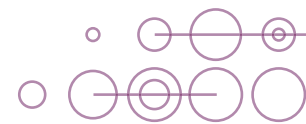
...know that they can be something beyond just being kids in their houses and watching cartoons. We can do something; we can learn something; we can grab something, because by the end of those years I was in child rights, I became a very outspoken leader. They empowered me to have a lot of leadership skills... (Young Person, Kenya).

It was also seen as a way to practice for the vocation they wished to have as adults. The young participants drew attention to the ways the club activities had helped to draw out their passions and talents. For instance, one young person wanted to study criminology and move into restorative justice, others were interested in the law. This benefit led several participants to suggest that they wished to see a ‘very good club’ in their schools and more broadly that children’s rights clubs are incorporated in schools across their respective countries and able to conduct more projects and build more skills. One participant hoped that in the future more focus would be placed on gender-based violence.

The participants noted directly and indirectly that they wanted to see adults take children and their ideas more seriously. One wish was to have more responsiveness from adults and acceptance that







children can do outreach, be advocates of peace and children’s rights in the various communities (Young Person, Uganda).

At a broader level, several participants said they wanted children to be empowered, safe, secure, to be well, with a ‘nice future’, become good citizens, and have a ‘lovely environment’. Ultimately, they wanted to see an end to violence against children at school. Within their schools, some participants stated they wanted to make sure children who were abused in their schools were able to be identified and to be protected. As one young participant quoted, “seeing my school have good teachers, a good learning environment, to see that children’s rights are not violated. To show teachers that caning is not the only way to punish students”. One suggested having a central big club that could support smaller clubs and several hoped that they would be able to do more outreach and more sharing between clubs in the future.

In looking to the future, the young participants looked to expanding the work of their clubs.

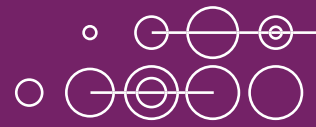
There was some discussion on the need to provide more training on safety online, as so many of the students had moved online and where they had internet access, were socializing, playing, schooling online. Children’s clubs also need to move online safely where children have access to do so.

They also wanted to continue to build capacity in child safeguarding and rights at community level and parent level.

The participants noted that their clubs lacked funding and that many of the children they served came from low-income areas and this reduced the funds that parents could provide for schooling and club activities.

Several young people were keen to have more information on what other children’s clubs were doing and what was working for them, as well as more training material.

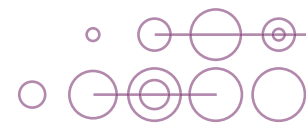




# Consolidated Discussion

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This research report sought to answer the core research question, what is the role of children's clubs in safeguarding children in schools and learning environments? It also included an exploration of what can support and facilitate children and adults who are members of children's clubs to safeguard children; what do children do to promote safeguarding for themselves and their peers; and what role do children's clubs play in supporting reporting mechanisms for violence against children?

Across the four phases of the research, the literature review, key informant interviews, case studies, and the children's consultations, it is clear that there is rich material to explore pertaining to children's club roles in child safeguarding in various contexts. We hope that this dialogue feeds into ways to address change in systems that seek to protect children and keep them safe in and around schools. It is also evident that there is a clear lack of information about children's clubs in the literature. In particular, there appears to be an assumption about the potential role children's clubs play in supporting children to redress violence in their lives, but little is written about how this occurs or the conditions that support it. The key informants also noted this absence and similarly indicated the range of benefits that they know of anecdotally. This research goes some way to fill this gap, but there is much more to explore in this area.

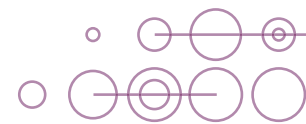
All four sources of data illustrated the tremendous diversity of children's clubs functioning in schools around the world, covering a range of topics, processes, and outcomes. These range in size, composition, and structure, but they share similar ethos of supporting child-led processes for valuable children's ideas, knowledge, and actions to promote child safeguarding. They also provide collective voice and action for children in their schools, communities, and nations. Although this research aimed to focus on the role children's clubs play in promoting safeguarding children in schools, the research inevitably drew on a wider context. While this is beyond the school space, this illustrates that violence in communities has an impact on the school space and children's ability to engage within the contexts where they are situated. This speaks to Gotts' (2007) concept of community resilience that explores a relational understanding of wellbeing within a social ecological framework of nested systems.

As an example of an area that deserves more recognition, the mechanisms for identifying, monitoring, and reporting violence by children is worth considering, as is the processes they have put in place for promoting safeguarding in schools, such as reporting mechanisms and child protection policies. These are not commonly discussed in the literature, but from the case studies it is clear there is significant work happening on the ground in this area. The introduction of safe, reliable reporting mechanisms has purportedly manifested in benefits to individual children, to club members, to their schools and in some cases to their communities and their nations. Further, there are important lessons in safeguarding younger children, as Blakemore and colleagues (2018), and research participants noted, children in children's clubs tend to look after younger members.

Similarly, the literature review noted a lack of research on the role of children's clubs in supporting UNCRC Article 12 rights to voice and participation, both as a general right and as a right to be able to feed into decisions that impact them in policies and practices. This lack of research is indicative of an undermining of children's agency and illustrates a lack of awareness of, or investment in supporting child-led or child-adult club co-creation that supports child safeguarding. Bissell, and colleagues (2012, p.24) supported the need to explore and amplify "examples of creative programs making use of cultural assets to promote children's rights and protection within the community". Byrne and Lundy further state, "recognition of the legitimacy and utility of children's rights by policy-makers is a crucial steppingstone to the development of an environment in which children's rights can be effectively realised" (2015, p.275). The key informant interviews, case studies and children's consultations demonstrated that there are rich processes of meaningful participation happening in children's clubs and members are staking their claim to this right within their schools. As such, more research on the efficacy and creativity of children's clubs to redress violence against children in schools, including for those of different genders, sexualities, abilities, and ethnicities is needed. This case studies research partially addressed this. The case studies represented diverse ethnicities and both female and male children. They did not well represent other diverse representations across abilities, genders, and sexualities. However, they did provide space for honoring children's voice and agency. This needs to be better known at the international level and better celebrated.







The case study research articulated a wide range of strengths and impacts. These were discussed in relation to an ecological model of children's realities (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), with the child at the centre of concentric rings of influence. The impacts ranged from supporting children's agency and developing children's self-confidence and leadership skills, to raising awareness of prevalence and incidents of violence against children and creating safer, more secure, and more engaging school settings and altering long held social norms on violence against children in schools and beyond. According to key informants, at a broader level, it appears that children's clubs provide mechanisms for holding community members accountable for ensuring child safeguarding.

The research illustrated that children's clubs can be actively engaged in processes and initiatives that promote child safeguarding in effective and tangible ways, including in supporting their peers in understanding these concepts and enacting these protections. Young participants also noted that there are misunderstandings about these concepts within their communities and families. They also noted that the gulf between what is promised with child rights and what is happening is tangible. One example of this is that corporal punishment was still in practice by some teachers in some schools. Beyond the school, raising awareness and conducting outreach was one activity many young participants were proud of and was something that supported their work and progress within the school. Participants demonstrated that this is stronger when done in consort with adult advocates and allies. However, young participants highlighted that building a trusting relationship with adults, where they respectfully listen to children and young people takes time. Further, it is critical to ensure that promoting the effective action of children within children's clubs does not increase their risk and does not exploit them. For this reason, one of the recommendations from this research is that alongside training children on child rights, protection and safeguarding, there should be allied training for adult supports on how to work with children, bolster their safety while also enlivening their right to participation. This was evidence in at least some cases where children promoted the idea in training that children should avoid going out at night, walking alone, accepting gifts from strangers, and avoiding teen pregnancy. This could give the impression that it is a child's responsibility to keep themselves safe from abuse of others and this could erroneously and unintentionally endorse victim-blaming.



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It is noteworthy that relatively few challenges were raised in the case studies, particularly when compared to the plethora of successes and beneficial impacts of children's clubs noted by participants, as highlighted throughout this report. This prompts pause and consideration. On the surface this is positive news for children's clubs. However, this may be due to the optimistic approaches of the participants submitting the cases and their unwavering support of the children's club model and herein lies one limitation of the study. It focused on targeted and self-selected participants who were likely to have examples of success stories and had a vested interest in promulgated positive stories of children's clubs. This does not undermine the value of the findings, but it does highlight the limitation of the study that focuses on findings from a small number of self-selected cases. The key informant interviews highlighted a range of areas to consider when supporting clubs, to ensure their efficacy, their efficiency, and their functioning. These included good training processes and child-friendly guidelines and policies. This was reiterated by all three data sets.



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As noted earlier in this report, adjustments were made in Spring 2020 to accommodate changes that had resulted within COVID-19 and school closures. This led to several case studies exploring what changes had occurred in this period. It was clear that all clubs had been impacted and their activities had been curtailed due to school closures, physical distancing policies, and resulting economic and social hardships. While some clubs had ceased all activities, others had found ways to leverage the children's clubs and its membership to continue to promote child safety measures, including encouraging community members to wear masks and frequently wash their hands. Participants in the case studies raised their concerns about the risks of increased levels of violence being experienced by children in their homes under COVID-19. Global research supports this with cautions against the increased risks to children experiencing violence in the home amassing (e.g., Bhatia, et al, 2020; UNICEF\_IRC, 2020). This research further illustrated that this is a real concern for these clubs.

Another participant noted that adults have had more of a role during COVID-19, where they are taking the lead. This is an important trend to watch out for and ensure children continue to have space to lead their clubs.

Overall, the research provided strong indication of the benefits of children's clubs in promoting safeguarding in schools and for advancing children's rights, in particular the right to participation and a voice.







# Consolidated Lessons Learned

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The following indicates a range of key lessons and insights gathered from across the research project:

## Safeguarding from violence against children in schools

- **Open communication:** Open and clear communication is important between children's clubs and school administration. This becomes particularly important during challenging situations relating to safeguarding from violence. Establishing protocols, lines of communication and reporting help set children up for success, "it is essential for the school committees [aka children's clubs in certain contexts] to have an effective channel of communication with school administration to be able to deliver their messages in an open and honest way" (Key Informant).

## General activities of the children's clubs

- **Gender Inclusion:** It is important to have children from all genders represented in leadership positions within children's clubs. Teachers, school administrators and children within children's clubs need to be educated about the importance of an inclusive gender lens.
- **Intergenerational Partnerships:** "It is important to involve both children and adults in club activities" (key informant). There is a real opportunity to deepen partnerships between children and adults in children's clubs. Due to the design of children's clubs which places children at the centre of leadership and decision making, and adults in supportive roles, this switch in normal power structures offers rich context for learning and new ways of working between generations.
- **Leading with Children:** There seems to be a common pattern that children and clubs move through where they need to "prove" to adults (teachers/parents) about the validity of their 'competency', efforts and approach, but once they are able to get through this, relationships are reorganized, and things seem to run more smoothly.

Children's clubs are an excellent example of children's leadership in important issues that impact their daily lives. Working closely with children, it is possible to amplify their voices beyond the classroom or school to the regional, national, or international level. "Youth can be drivers of policy change and advocacy. Their voices were very influential in regional and national forums" (Key Informant).

- In conducting **community outreach**, children's clubs are advised to consider their particular target groups (e.g school administrators, children, parent/carer groups) when developing club programs and events. It is also useful to involve members in activities and implementing plans.
- Build in **succession planning**, so that students that are about to transition out of the school have opportunities to share their knowledge with younger members.
- **Developing clear roles, responsibilities, and mandates for children's clubs:** In order to support the development of well-functioning clubs, clarity of roles, responsibilities and mandates across generations is helpful. Supporting a process whereby children's expectations are identified and supported is important.
- **External support** - Clubs that have support from NGOs, government, and the local community who offer training and mentoring seem to do better, but it is important to note that these supports can be contingent on external factors and long-term sustainability of children's clubs can become precarious when dependent on NGOs.





## Potential pitfalls to avoid

There were a few areas that emerged in the research that could lead to problematic pitfalls, as outlined here:

- When children share their experiences it can engender empathy, particularly if they are sharing an emotive story. However, it is critical that children's clubs **do not take advantage and exploit children** for this. Listening to children because they have something important to share is important, but not when it exploits them. The difference may be subtle, but it is critical.
- Some participants noted that the children and young people that engage in activities that shed light and redress violence in schools can also become targets of victimization, bullying and harassment. Their **safety must be protected**.
- Within the literature review and the case studies, there were some indications that in some instances, members of children's clubs could use their influence to their own advantage. This could be prevented or limited with **clear roles and responsibility and the mentoring of caring adults**.

## Identified Future Needs

In the course of completing the case study form and taking part in children's consultations, participants noted a few areas that could be addressed in the future to support the efficacy of the children's clubs. These included the following.

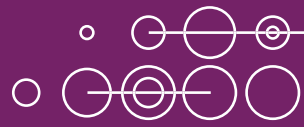
### Safeguarding from violence against children in schools

- Link different children's clubs together to share what they have learned around safeguarding against violence in schools and to increase advocacy.
- Provide more training on the incidence and impact of sexual and gender-based violence in schools for both adults, including teachers and school administrators as well as for children.
- Increase awareness raising processes and to introduce students to codes of conduct and initiatives to eradicate violence against children.
- Support children's clubs with training on how to manage difficult conversations or conflicts that may arise at home, in the community, or schools due to work that challenges existing social norms around violence against children. The young participants raised the notion that working through difficult or sensitive discussions has built trust.
- Provide training on advocacy and awareness raising through social media, as well as protection from online abuse and cyberbullying.

### General support for children's clubs

- Better resource children's clubs, for instance with space and play and art-based materials to support their work, or with opportunities to continue during physical distancing protocols and school closures are in place.
- Ensure sustainability of some smaller clubs with processes to support the next generation of members to benefit from the mentorship of older members.
- In reconsidering the framing of this research, within a social ecological model, alongside the participants emphasis on including arena and individuals outside the school to promote safety in school, one participant suggested "club members should involve their parents and the community in the activities they are doing to create/form strong lobbying platforms".





# Consolidated Recommendations

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This research project shone a light on important gaps and challenges related to children's clubs and their role in safeguarding children from violence in schools. This section includes consolidated recommendations that emerged from the literature review, key informant interviews, case studies and children's consultations. As one key informant noted, children's clubs are ripe for innovation and thus the following recommendation offer some ideas of ways forward.

## Safeguarding and Protection from Violence in Schools

- 1. Ensure safety from harassment and retaliation for children as they implement processes that challenge local social norms on violence against children, for instance reporting mechanisms.** For example, ensure that children's clubs understand who their adult allies are within schools and the levels of support and protection that can and cannot be provided. Include education of adults at the community and school level to strengthen knowledge and shift attitudes and behaviours for children's clubs to be better supported and listened to.
- 2. Provide training and capacity building activities for children on child rights, and specifically on child protection and safeguarding.** In particular, training on safety online arose as pressing concern. Involve children in determining the type of training they want to receive and how they should be structured. Also share with children information about appropriate channels and processes to affect positive change.
- 3. Provide opportunities to empower children to promote child safeguarding.** According to the findings from this research project, many children understand their rights as related to protecting themselves and their peers from violence in schools. The young participants also emphasized the need to "provide protection for people to not to take advantage of what we have and what we want to do" (Young Person, Kenya). They also clearly recommended 'defending children's rights'. Children's Rights are a strong part of the education that takes place in many clubs and this supports children's understanding of their right to say no to violence and seek support. The young participants encouraged children's clubs and adults supporting them to make the opportunities (including training, workshops, debates) engaging and inclusive. However, it is worth noting, this can be challenging when children's understanding of their rights conflicts with social norms in the school or community, and children need strong support from teachers or other adults who support the club to navigate these extremely challenging and nuanced situations. While they work to protect themselves and their peers, they fully rely on adult protection and organizational safeguarding. Further, some participants highlighted awareness raising initiatives that were undertaken that pronounced that children should avoid going out at night, walking alone, accepting gifts from strangers, and avoiding teen pregnancy. Without proper context, this could give the impression that it is a child's responsibility to keep themselves safe from abuse of others and this could erroneously and unintentionally endorse victim-blaming if they do not heed this advice. This can inadvertently take the responsibility for abuse and violence off the perpetrator.
- 4. Support school reporting mechanisms for clear lines of reporting abuse, referring to appropriate support and tracking child maltreatment.** Within schools, the children's clubs have promoted reporting mechanisms, and this should be further encouraged. Participants highlighted the importance of socializing clear lines of reporting to the appropriate authorities, starting with teachers, school administration and parents, but extending to police, counselling, and other social supports where appropriate. One young participant also noted the importance of seeing 'justice', where perpetrators of abuse could be held accountable for their actions. Further, there is benefit in considering a national reporting mechanism for tracking violence against children.
- 5. Work towards the elimination of corporal punishment in schools.** In most of the countries where the research took place corporal punishment had been banned, but it was still happening in many schools. As a testament to its effectiveness, the participants reported children's clubs had proven successful in encouraging teachers to use alternative forms of discipline.







## Supporting Children's Clubs to Thrive

As has been established in this report, the wider aims of children's clubs that build leaderships, confidence and competence in children and young people and support children's rights and protection, also work to support the broader aims of child safeguarding. Therefore, these suggestions more generally support the functioning and efficacy of children's clubs.

- 1. Provide material and financial support for the creation and functioning of clubs and their activities.**
- 2. Develop mechanisms for all schools to have the ability to establish and run children's clubs.** This could include supporting them to create their code of conduct, including elements such as respect for the opinion of others and freedom of expression. It is also important for members to have a direct channel of communication with school administration.
- 3. Provide support and encouragement for children's clubs across schools.** As one young person in Kenya suggested, "Every school should have a child rights club... it is a very essential part of schooling for me. I can, I can say that because it teaches you about skills, life skills, [to] teaches you about how to protect yourself" (Young Participant, Kenya).
- 4. Provide opportunities within children's clubs for children to voice their opinions on matters that impact them,** specifically around safeguarding from violence, and lead actions within schools to address needed changes. One young participant stated, "We know that there are barriers that children are afraid to cross, and certain things they are afraid to talk with adults, and somehow, they need to try to create a trusting atmosphere". Foster increased spaces for children within children's clubs to have a voice and exercise their agency in issues related to violence in schools and other learning environments. While this is often lauded as important, as one young participant noted, it is rarely realized.
- 5. Ensure that children in children's clubs are not overburdened by challenging tasks and that participation is a net benefit for them.** As some young participants noted, it can be challenging to find the time to participate in clubs with multiple demands on their time from school, home and elsewhere.
- 6. Ensure that in addition to meaningful activities that address challenges related to children's safety that there are also opportunities for activities to be fun, engaging, educative, creative, and meaningful.** Young participants highlighted the need for material resources to support this end, including sports equipment, books, art supplies and musical instruments.
- 7. Recognize children's interests and adapt activities to meet both their current needs and future goals.** Many young people spoke about being drawn to clubs because of the opportunities for travel, new experiences, and training. They also noted the importance of using the club activities to build competence and empower children to recognize their strengths and capacity to make change. One young participant highlighted the need to use this opportunity to, "Try to instill the fire in them".
- 8. Provide opportunities for exploring gender roles, while also promoting girls and boys to be leaders in children's clubs.** This adds to the importance of ensuring inclusivity of children's clubs. The case studies illustrated a range of ways that children had participated in girls' empowerment activities, such as promoting access to menstrual pads in schools.
- 9. Encourage regular club meetings and make space for all children's voices to be heard.** As one young participant stated, "Most children fear to speak out, we should encourage them to speak out". Further, Young participants emphasized this with decisions that needed to be made in the club, but also more widely within the school as a way to build capacity and confidence. Participants noted that this was important especially quieter children and children across diverse groups including age, gender, diversity, and disability. Ideas included using anonymous ideas or suggestion boxes, using arts and creative approaches to allow a wider array of participation, and including a large group so that everyone felt they could comfortably talk to at least one other member.





- 10. Build trusting relationships between children and adults.** The young participants stressed the critical importance of setting out and fostering a trusting relationship between children and adults. They underlined that this took effort and time, particularly in shifting adults' perspectives on their capacities.
- 11. Ensure effective and facilitative support from trusted adults** who are knowledgeable about children's rights and safeguarding, but who also know how to make space for fostering children to lead. While some support is needed, adults need to ensure they are not consciously or unconsciously leading. This should include effective mentoring and coaching, advocacy and awareness raising, and action planning strategies.
- 12. Support clear processes and mandates within children's clubs.** Across the case studies and children's consultation, participants highlighted the importance of building in sustainability and succession planning processes into clubs. This included ensuring older children supported and mentored younger children to take the lead, but it also included ensuring consistency when adult facilitators moved on.



- 13. Provide resources as well as ongoing support, guidance and follow up for schools** to support children's clubs and their activities, with space, financial resources, information about children's rights, lessons learned and good practice from other clubs, and moral support, as well as guidance on basic structures (that still allow children to self-manage and self-allocate roles and tasks). Several young participants were adamant in the need for adults supporting children's clubs (both in schools and from NGOs) to follow up on their projects and their participants.
- 14. Foster advocacy and community outreach**, where appropriate and safe to do so. The young participants were keen to ensure that they could reach out to their communities and progress children's rights and promote protection and child safeguarding.
- 15. Reach out to parents.** Young participants accentuated the benefits of reaching out to parents, to not only support the work of the clubs, but also to promote child protection and to strengthen parental and community understanding of child rights, child abuse and child protection.
- 16. Foster open spaces for children's clubs to network** and cross-pollinate ideas across schools, for instance with national children's conferences.
- 17. Support collaboration.** between children and adults, including teachers, parents, school staff, and community members. It is useful to keep in mind that creating space for children to advocate and take action can be harmful if other spheres of influence are also not engaged.
- 18. Be bold.** The young participants' recommendation to other clubs was to be bold in addressing challenges in their contexts and to recognize that if taken one by one, many challenges could be resolved. With this, one recommended narrowing the focus to one challenge at a time. As one noted, "Look forward. Don't give up".





## Further Research and Exploration related to Children's Clubs

Based on the limited literature and research available on children's clubs and their role in safeguarding children from violence, there is a critical need for further research with children and young people and adults on children's clubs. While this research can act as a foundation of evidence on children's roles in children's clubs in safeguarding in schools, greater investment in research is needed to further explore the innovative and powerful potential of these clubs to address challenges and support safeguarding and thriving of children and young people in schools.

While this research engaged with adults as key informant and case study writers who are active members of NGOs and/or adult support people in school clubs, further research could also include parent/caregivers, school administrators, government education representatives, and other members of communities where children's clubs operate to explore diverse perspectives on children's roles in clubs to promote child safeguarding. As young participants highlighted in children's consultations, parents/caregivers, teachers, and community members attitudes and behaviours can have both positive and negative implications for their ability to advocate for and support change in safeguarding in their schools, as such a greater understanding of the barriers and strengths of adults is important.

Research conducted in partnership with children and young people as co-researchers using creative art and play methodologies and/or participatory action research could support to enhance evidence building greater knowledge and understanding of the role of children's clubs, as well as contributing to children's own leadership, relationships, and wellbeing. Participatory online methodologies, such as an arts-based river journey to explore children's experience in clubs (from start, to middle, to their future), appeared to contribute to establishing a safe space for children and young people participants to critically reflect on their experiences and share recommendations. As such, this research shines light on the potential of longer and more engaged participatory research with children and young people to delve more deeply into the role of children's clubs.

While this research spanned the globe, more in-depth research in specific regions and countries would add further richness to the data and support the global evidence based on children's clubs. Further research could be conducted in partnership with the End Violence Lab, a collaboration between GPEVAC and the University of Edinburgh, aligned with their mission to improve the lives of children by harnessing, data evidence, and learning. This could have potential to contribute to children's clubs and national pathfinder countries' abilities to strengthen children's safeguarding at local school, systems, and policy level.

Furthermore, creating space for children to learn from and with each other across clubs, as recommended by a young person participant, would enhance cross pollination of ideas and the potential to across communities, while recognizing contextual diversity. As asserted throughout this report, the data highlights that it is vital to respect and recognize the value of children's perspectives alongside adults to learn more about the strengths, challenges, lessons learned, wise practices, and possibilities of children's clubs for safeguarding children. In addition to research on clubs in schools, greater research on children's participation more broadly in safe learning, could expand the concept of participation, with the potential as Nishiyama (2020) suggests making it more inclusive, democratic, and realistic across contexts.

### Concluding Reflections

In the past few decades, a growing body of practitioners, policy makers, and academics have sought to further explore children's meaningful participation in their own safeguarding. This research on children's clubs in safeguarding of children in schools, commissioned by Safe to Learn the Global Partnership to End Violence, has built on foundations of academic and grey literature exploring tensions between the right to participation and child safeguarding, and children's clubs more broadly. It has gone beyond existing literature to further explore children's club roles in child safeguarding, and in doing so adds a key contribution to the child safeguarding global sector. This research has important implications for practice, policy, and future research on ending violence in schools in partnership with children and young people.





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## Appendix 1: Interview Schedule

### KII Global Perspectives on Child Safeguarding and Child Protection

- 1. Roles** - What role do you play in supporting child safeguarding/child participation?
- 2. Definitions** - What does child participation or participation mean, from your perspective? What does child safeguarding mean, from your perspective?
- 3. Child Participation** - What role do you think child participation has in the global effort to safeguard children from various forms of violence? How do you think Child Clubs play a role in the larger movement to end violence against children?
- 4. Children's Clubs** - What role do you think Children's Clubs play in supporting child safeguarding from violence in schools?
- 5.** Do you have specific examples of when a Children's Club has protected a child from violence in schools? Or increased awareness about violence and protection in their community? If so, please explain.
- 6.** Are there particular areas of children's inclusion (ability, gender, sexuality, socio-economic status, race, culture, age, or other categories) that face greater discrimination and abuse than others in the communities where your Children's Clubs operate? If so, are the Children's Club's addressing particular issues? If yes, how? If no, what are the barriers to this/reasons they are not?
- 7.** How can Children's Clubs support meaningful child participation? How might this support their safeguarding?
- 8.** What roles do adults play in supporting child clubs? What are the strengths and challenges of adults' involvement? What would you most like to know about Children's Clubs and how they do or can support child safeguarding?
- 9.** Are there specific areas of innovation that you believe need to be further invested in?

## Appendix 2: Consent Form

### The Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children's Study on the Role of Children's Clubs in Safeguarding of Children in Schools

#### Informed Consent (Adult Key Informant Interviews)

**Purpose of the project:** In looking at ways that children can meaningfully enact leadership and self-determination and further their own safety and wellbeing, child-centred activities like Children's Clubs may play an important role. This research aims to draw on case studies to understand how participation in Children's Clubs can support safety in schools.

**Researcher:** My name is BLANK and I am [INSERT TWO SENTENCES FOR EACH RESEARCHER]

Example, my name is Vanessa Currie and I am the Executive Director of the International Institute for Child Rights and Development, and I am a Co-Investigator on the research Study on the Role of Children's Clubs in Safeguarding of Children in Schools.

My name is Laura Wright and I am a member of the Leadership Team of the International Institute for Child Rights and Development, and I am a Co-Investigator on the research Study on the Role of Children's Clubs in Safeguarding of Children in Schools.

For any questions or concerns you can contact me and/or a member of my team at:

- Vanessa Currie: [vanessa.currie@iicrd.org](mailto:vanessa.currie@iicrd.org)







- Laura Wright: [laura.wright@iicrd.org](mailto:laura.wright@iicrd.org)
- Kathleen Manion: [kathleen.manion@royalroads.ca](mailto:kathleen.manion@royalroads.ca)

You can verify this research and that it has ethical approval from Gina Armellino, Research Ethics Coordinator, Royal Roads University ([Gina.Armellino@RoyalRoads.ca](mailto:Gina.Armellino@RoyalRoads.ca)).

**Benefits of being a part of this project:** What we learn in this project from you and your peers will be used to support future similar programs for children and youth and to make recommendations for toolkits and resources for people who work with children and youth. We hope that the discussion will be interesting and engaging. In any experience there may be pieces you do not enjoy. If there are, you do not have to join in.

**Procedure:** Participation will include a 45 minutes- 1.5 hour key informant interview. Topics will include child participation, child safeguarding, and Children’s Clubs in supporting children’s safety. Sample Questions Include: What role do you play in supporting child safeguarding/child participation? Can you tell me about the young people in the schools you work in? What would you say are some of the things that support young people in your community? (Are there particular areas of children’s inclusion (ability, gender, sexuality, socio-economic status, race, culture, age, or other categories) that face greater discrimination and abuse than others in the communities where your Children’s Clubs operate?)

**All foreseeable risks and discomforts:** The study will ask questions involving your young people and Children’s Clubs and safety. Some interview questions may potentially cause some discomfort if you by chance reflect upon an unpleasant memory. If you feel uncomfortable at any point in time you may choose not to answer a research question, and/or discontinue your participation temporarily or permanently. You can also choose to request that all your previous answers are not used in the project.

**Confidentiality/Anonymity:** Your anonymity and confidentiality will be maintained, and your name will not be referred to in this research project if you do not want it to be. If you have any concerns after your participation, you can request to review the notes from our discussions. Your participation is voluntary. You have the right to withdraw at any time without any consequences. Your data will be confidential and anonymous (except if you explicitly express a wish for specific data to be identifiable.)

**Length of time involved:** You are asked to contribute 45 minutes to 1.5 hours for the discussion.

**Recording and Transcription:** Our discussion will be recorded and written out. If you wish, we can share our notes with you for your review.

Other than time, there is no additional cost to you associated with participation in this project. Reimbursement for your time will not be provided by this project.

**Signed Agreement:** Please sign this form for your consent.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Participant (please print)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Participant      Date

By signing above, I indicate my agreement to being audio-recorded during our discussion.

Would you like to review notes on our discussion?

YES                       NO

Please provide the email address where you would like to receive the notes:





## Appendix 3: FAQ Key Informant Interviews

### Title: Children's Clubs Case Study Request: Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children FAQ Key Informant Interviews

**Purpose of the research:** As children are rights-holders, this research seeks to explore the role of children's clubs have in safeguarding children in schools and learning environments. It also seeks to understand from children how they support their own, and their peers', safety.

#### Research Components:

- Desk review, including literature review,
- Review of 15 case studies, provided by Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children civil society organizations and drawn from broader networks,
- *Key informant interviews with Child Safeguarding, Participation, and Protection staff/focal points from Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children civil society organizations,*
- Children's consultations, led by civil society organizations many of whom will have completed case studies, and
- A field visit

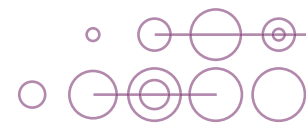
**You:** As a practitioner in a global child safeguarding, child protection, or child participation you have been identified as having a focal point role in from a Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children civil society partner organization that can speak to clubs across contexts where you work.



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**Procedures:** Participation will involve one 45-90-minute interview on your knowledge, experiences and perspectives on the role of children's clubs in safeguarding children. The interviews will seek to gain further insight on the strengths, challenges, and areas for growth in current children's clubs role for safeguarding. The interview will take place in person, online, or over the phone.





**Benefits of participating in the research:** You may benefit by contributing to the co-creation of new knowledge addressing current research gaps for research in children’s participation in relation to child clubs’ role in child safeguarding. You also may contribute to new creative methodologies and approaches to engaging with young people in research and practice. You may benefit from a space to engage in critical reflection on your experiences that can further inform your own work in the sector.

**All foreseeable risks and discomforts:** The study will ask questions involving professional perspectives and critical analysis of issues in the field. Some interview questions may potentially cause some discomfort if you by chance reflect upon a difficult memory of working with children and child clubs in child safeguarding situations. You may choose to not answer an interview question, and/or discontinue your participation temporarily or permanently. You can also choose to request that all your previous answers are not used in the study.

**Confidentiality:** Your confidentiality will be maintained, and your name and your organization name will not be referred to in this research project if you do not want it to be. You will only be referred to by your professional sector (i.e. non-governmental organization, academic, etc.). If you choose, your identity can also be shared, and your quotes/ideas can include your name. Your participation in this research project is voluntary. You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without giving any reason. All information you share will be kept private unless you share something about serious harm to yourself or others in which I will share resources with you and we will follow up in accordance with UNICEF, International Institute for Child Rights and Development (IICRD), and Royal Roads University (RRU) Child Safeguarding Policies and Ethical Procedures. If you share information about a child in immediate or recent serious harm, we will need to follow up and share it with someone who can support to keep them safe and respond effectively, including someone from the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children. Other than time, there is no additional cost to you associated with participation in this project. Reimbursement for your time will not be provided by this project.

**What will happen with the results of this study?** The results of this study will be included in a research report and a child friendly summary version and may also be summarised in published articles, presentations, learning materials and other forms of knowledge sharing. Quotes or key findings will always be made anonymous in any formal outputs unless we have your prior and explicit written permission to attribute them to you by name.

**Recording, Transcription, and Your Data:** The open-ended discussion will be audio recorded and notes will be taken throughout the interview. The recorded discussions and answers will be transcribed into word documents to be analyzed. All documents and data will be stored on a password protected site only accessible to the research team. Raw data will be destroyed two years after the completion of the project.

If you have questions regarding your rights as a human subject research participant in this study, you may contact Dr. Kathleen Manion at Royal Roads University (Kathleen.Manion@RoyalRoads.ca) or you can verify the research via the Royal Roads Research Ethics Board through Gina Armellino (Gina.Armellino@RoyalRoads.ca).





## Appendix 4: Case Study Form

### Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children Case Study Form

Thank you for agreeing to prepare a Case Study for the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children’s Study on the Role of Children’s Clubs in Safeguarding of Children in Schools, led by the International Institute for Child Rights and Development. By submitting this case study form to the research team, you are consenting to have this data included in the research project (as outlined in the informed consent form attached to the invitation letter). The information you provide in this form will be kept confidential, and your name and organization will not be associated with your answers. The only exception to this is Part 3: Question 1, which may be used for communication purposes, but not associated with the other data.

This form is intended to be answered by individuals working with organizations that support Children’s Clubs or other adult allies. The information provides us with general information about the nature and scope of children’s clubs. In keeping with safeguarding policies, and in particular upholding the principles of best interests of the child and do no harm, answers should not identify cases of violence against specific children in schools. Such disclosures should be reported to appropriate local agencies or schools. If individual disclosures are made here, we will work with the sender to ensure child safeguarding procedures are met.

This form has 3 parts, please fill in all 3 parts. Please direct any queries and submit the following form to Kathleen Manion at [Kathleen.manion@royalroads.ca](mailto:Kathleen.manion@royalroads.ca).

#### Part 1: Personal Information

Please note this information will be kept separately from your answers to Part 2 and 3.

Full Name	
Organization/Affiliation	
Contact Information (Email)	
Please tell us about yourself and your relationship with the Children’s Club	
Does your organization have a Child Safeguarding Policy in place? If yes, please attach. If no, do you have Child Safeguarding Principles, Standards, or Practices you adhere to? (e.g., best interests of the child, do no harm, supporting children’s agency).	





## Part 2: Short Answer Form

Please fill out the following form to the best of your knowledge. If you have any queries about the questions here please email us at [Kathleen.manion@royalroads.ca](mailto:Kathleen.manion@royalroads.ca).

### General

Please provide general information about Children's Clubs supported by your organization.

1.	Country(ies) where Child Clubs exist within your organization:	
2.	Region(s) where Child Clubs exist within your organization:	
3.	Number in Urban and number in rural settings:	
4.	Number of Clubs in total:	
5.	Who initiated the clubs (e.g., Government, CSO, INGO, children, community, other)	

### Specific

Please provide more information on 1 children's club. If necessary, estimates are fine.

6.	Location	
7.	Composition of Clubs:	
7.1.	Size/Number of members:	
7.2.	Age Range:	
7.3.	Genders (male, female, non-binary):	
7.4.	Ethnicities:	
7.5.	Different Abilities:	
7.6.	General Socioeconomic Status:	







7.7	Type of Club (e.g., Child Protection, Child Participation, Leadership, etc.)	
8.	Location of Club Meetings (School, Community, CBO, etc.)	
9.	Frequency and Duration of Meetings:	
10.	How are Club Members Recruited (e.g., Selected, Apply, Volunteer, Join freely, etc.):	
11.	How is the Club structured (e.g., president, vice president, leader, member, etc.)	
12.	What roles do the Club Members have?	
13.	What roles do Adults play (give specific examples)?	
14.	What are some Club Initiatives or Activities?	

### Part 3: Long Answer Form

We invite you to provide detailed and honest answers to the following questions. Your responses will help in the development of key recommendations for Children’s Clubs around the world. These questions are general and should not include stories from individual children. Please fill out this section via audio files or text, if text please use *paragraph or bullet point format*.

- 1. General Overview Description:** Please describe the Children’s Club and its activities in one paragraph. (Please note this paragraph, with your permission, may be used for Communication purposes, and will not be confidential.)
- 2. Children’s Club Strengths & Challenges:** Club Success Story(ies) (Share 1 to 3 success stories from a children’s club in school settings. What made this a success? What type of child protection/safeguarding change took place as a result of the children’s initiative? What impact did this have on the school and the greater community?):
- 3. Club Lessons Learned:** Please share a key challenge the club faced in children’s participation in child protection/safeguarding. How did the young people and adults respond to the challenge(s)? What key lesson(s) were learned? What recommendations do you have for other clubs as a result of this experience?) (*1 paragraph or bullet points*)





4. **Adult Roles:** What role do adults play in supporting the club? What is the relationship between adults and children in the club? Have you experienced any challenges or successes you would like to share?
5. **Children's Roles:** What role do children play in supporting or leading activities in the club? How do they draw on the support of their peers and adults?
6. **Safeguarding:** What role do you believe the club currently has in safeguarding the children within their schools? What role do you believe it could have in the future? What would need to be in place for this to happen?
7. **Voice of Children:** How do children feel about participating in the club? Are there any challenges that arise as a result of their participation? If so, what are these? Are there positive outcomes for children who participate? If so, what are these?
8. **Outcomes:** What outcomes do you believe have resulted from children's participation in the club (for the children, for the adults, for the school, beyond)?
9. **Changes in Attitudes, Beliefs and Behaviour:** Do you think there have been any changes in attitudes, beliefs and behaviour of parents, teachers, community members and leaders towards violence against children as a result of the Children's Clubs? (For example, have teachers stopped hitting children or changed the language that they use to respond to difficult situations? Do community leaders listen to you and support you to report abuse?) Can you tell us more about this?



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## Appendix 5: Informed Consent Forms

### Children's Clubs Informed Consent (Young People)

Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children, Safe to Learn, and International Institute for Child Rights and Development

For more information please contact:

Laura Wright, [laura.wright@iicrd.org](mailto:laura.wright@iicrd.org)

Vanessa Currie, [vanessa.currie@iicrd.org](mailto:vanessa.currie@iicrd.org)

#### CHILDREN AND YOUTH'S CONSENT LETTER

#### WELCOME TO THE CHILD CLUB PARTICIPATORY FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS ONLINE!

#### INTRODUCTION

We would like to share a project about how children's participation in Children's Clubs across all regions internationally can support child protection and child safeguarding in schools. This project involves some children and youth as advisors, as well as adults who support Children's Clubs.

#### WHO AM I?

Our names are Laura Wright and Vanessa Currie and we are leading this part of this project to work with you to learn more about how children and young people are helping to create safety in and around schools through Children's Clubs.

#### WHY ARE WE DOING THIS PROJECT?

We want to find out how children in Children's Clubs can support children to feel safe and be protected in schools. The research will give us information to share with other Children's Clubs and organizations across the world on how to involve children in processes that effectively respect and support meaningful participation and that build safety. We want to invite children to share their ideas and give feedback on what adults have shared about clubs to make sure that children's ideas and actions are recognized. We also want to create recommendations based on case studies shared by adults and your ideas to support organizations and child led movements globally.

#### WHAT DOES BEING IN THIS PROJECT INVOLVE?

If you decide to take part in this study, there are some different things we will ask you to join in. You will have the opportunity to decide if you do or do not want to participate. We will ask you and your peers to join in on an online arts-based activity that will take between one and one and a half hours of your time. This activity will be with your Adult Ally, members of your child club and 2 members of the IICRD team. During the activities we will ask different questions about Children's Clubs, decision-making, safety, and wellness and we will record your answers. We may also ask you to be involved as an advisory where we ask you if the research process or the research report is child-friendly and appropriate.

#### HOW MUCH TIME WILL THE ACTIVITY TAKE?

Our fun art activities will take up to one and a half hours. We will work with adults in your life to make sure they take place after school hours or on the weekend to not disrupt your studies. We will ask you what hours work best for you. We will also invite you to add some further information online after the session that may take up to 20 additional minutes.





## **ARE THERE GOOD THINGS AND BAD THINGS ABOUT BEING PART OF THE PROJECT?**

What we learn in this project from you and your peers will be used to support future similar programs for children and youth and to make recommendations for toolkits and resources for people who work with children and youth. We hope that the activities will also be fun and creative for you and your friends. In any experience there may be pieces you do not enjoy. If there are you do not have to join in.

## **IF I SAY YES TO BEING IN THE PROJECT DO I HAVE TO ANSWER ALL THE QUESTIONS?**

If I ask you questions that you do not want to answer, then please tell us you do not want to answer those questions or simply do not answer. If we ask you to do things you do not want to do, then tell us that you do not want to do them. You can say no and choose to not participate at any time. If you wish to have us remove your previous answers, we can also do this up until the time we have combined it with other people's information in a way that means we cannot separate yours from theirs.

## **WHO WILL KNOW I PLAYED IN THIS ACTIVITY?**

The things you say and any information we write about you will not have your name with it, so no one will know they are your answers or the things that you did. Any information we have from you will be kept in a password protected or locked space, only accessible to the researchers.

The researchers will not let anyone other than themselves see your answers or any other information about you. Your teachers, parents, community members will never see the answers you gave or the information we wrote about you.

If you would like to tell other people about being a part of the activity that is okay. It is your choice. For your safety though, we will not include your name in any research reports.

## **KEEPING SAFE ONLINE**

We will be online. We will use secure Zoom rooms to ensure only those who are meant to be in the room will be in the room. The adult supporting the workshop in [insert country] will make sure you the space is safe for you to participate. If there is any concern for your safety by being on the call (e.g., you are not safe to share information from your home/residence) we recommend to not participate and to seek out safe support with people you trust in your community. We will create a Community Agreement at the start of our activity to establish group rules that support everyone to feel safe and supported during the session, and understands who they can speak to and what they can do, should they feel uncomfortable at any time.

## **DO I HAVE TO SAY YES?**

NO! You do not have to be in the activity. No one will get angry or upset with you if you don't want to do this. And remember, if you decide to be in the project and later if you change your mind, then you can tell us you do not want to be in the study anymore.

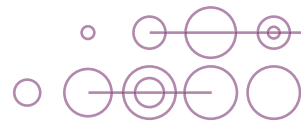
## **PARENTAL/GUARDIAN CONSENT**

To protect you, along with your consent, if you are under 18 years we will also ask one of your parents (or another person acting as a parent) who has your best interests in mind if you can participate in this research.

## **QUESTIONS?**

You can ask questions at any time. You can ask now or you can ask later. You can talk to us or you can talk to someone else at any time during the study. You can reach us by email at [laura.wright@iicrd.org](mailto:laura.wright@iicrd.org) or [vanessa.currie@iicrd.org](mailto:vanessa.currie@iicrd.org). If you want to speak to someone else involved in the project you can also contact Dr. Kathleen Manion, Associate Professor, Royal Roads University ([Kathleen.manion@royalroads.ca](mailto:Kathleen.manion@royalroads.ca)) or Gina Armellino, Research Ethics Coordinator, Royal Roads University ([Gina.Armellino@RoyalRoads.ca](mailto:Gina.Armellino@RoyalRoads.ca)).





Look forward to learning from you!

Best,

Laura Wright, Vanessa Currie and Kathleen Manion

*Please Note: All Consent forms will be reviewed in partnership with the Local Organization and contextually modified based on culturally appropriate content, levels of literacy, and language. Additionally, child protection and psychosocial referral charts/details should be shared by the local organization with participants prior to the activities. All local organizations will have support systems in place to respond to any child safeguarding concerns that may arise.*

**CHILD AND YOUTH CONSENT FORM**

- I understand what the activity is about
- I know what my part will be in the activity and I know how long it will take
- I have had the chance to ask questions about the activity
- I know that I can say I do not want to participate at any time and stop taking part
- I agree to having the zoom call (voice) recorded for confidential use by the researchers
- I agree to having the zoom call (video) recorded for confidential use by the researchers
- I agree to being a part of this project

If you want to be a part of this project please print and sign your name below and ask your parent or guardian to print and sign their name below too. You can still be a part of this study if you do not want your photo taken, voice recorded, or video taken.

Your name, printed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Your signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Your parent or guardian's name: \_\_\_\_\_

Your parent or guardian's signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Your parent or guardian's phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

Your parent or guardian's email: \_\_\_\_\_







# Appendix 6: Participatory Activity Package for the Online Children's Consultation

## Participatory Activity Package for Children and Youth

### Exploring Children's Clubs

Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children, Safe to Learn & International Institute for Child Rights and Development (IICRD)

#### Call Agenda:

1. Our introduction to project name, organization, who we are
2. Ethics (overview, record, any questions, verbal agreement to proceed)
3. Name intros (play intro activity)- Tell us about your club.
4. Community Agreement
5. Overview of the Project
6. River Journey
7. Closing Activity
8. Next Steps

**Welcome!** Thank you so much for joining us to support the work of understanding how Children's Clubs help to prevent and protect children from violence in schools!

#### What will I find in this package?

1. Definitions of some words we might use during our time together.
2. Information about the Child Clubs project.
3. An outline of the activities we will be doing on our call.
4. An invitation to do a follow-up activity and provide input into the final report.

#### What are the words or terms we will be talking about?

**Children's Clubs.** Groups where children gather to support one another, do activities and get involved with issues that matter to them. Clubs can be led by children, by adults or they can be co-led, with children and adults taking the lead. Some clubs take place at school or at an organization. Your club might have a different name, but during this conversation we might refer to it as a "children's club."

**Child Protection.** Preventing and responding to any violence, exploitation and abuse against children, this means trying to make sure children are safe everywhere they go.

**Child Safeguarding.** organizations have to make sure that their staff and programs do not harm children. That means that children are not at risk of harm or abuse by the organization, and any concerns they have are reported (Keeping Children Safe, 2014).

**Child Wellbeing.** Wellbeing includes all of the different parts of ourselves: physical, mental, emotional, spiritual and social health. Wellbeing includes things like being safe, having your basic needs met, being connected to caring people, and having the opportunity to share your thoughts and ideas, among other things (ACPHA, 2019).





## What is the goal of our project?

Not many people have tried to understand how children's clubs around the world work to keep children safe. With your support, we are trying to understand if and how children's clubs prevent or respond to violence against children in schools. We want to know if and how children are getting involved and taking leadership through children's clubs to contribute to keeping children safe in their schools.

## What are the goals of our work together?

- Gather information about the good things about being part of your club and also some of the challenges, related to preventing violence in schools.
- Explore the impact of COVID-19 on the work you are doing in your clubs to prevent violence in school.
- Hear your ideas and recommendations for other clubs or those thinking about starting clubs.



## What are some important things you can expect from working with us?

**Strength-based.** We want to build on the strengths you have in your own lives, in your communities and in your clubs. By looking at strengths and the things that are going well, this helps us address some of the challenges that might exist.

**Voice.** We want to learn from you. You are the experts on your club, and that is why we would like to speak with you to learn more about your experiences.

## What will happen with the information I share?

**Confidentiality.** Since you may be sharing personal stories, we encourage you to keep each other's information private. Any information collected in our conversations will not be attached to your names. Please know that if you share something that puts you or your peers at risk then we will need to follow up with someone who can support you to be safe.





**Ongoing Consent.** Each of you and your guardian, has signed a consent form. Please know that if you feel uncomfortable at any point during the activity, please let us know.

**You do NOT need to continue.** We want to make sure you feel good at all times, and you don't need to feel bad if you want to stop. If you do decide to stop, we will make sure to follow-up with you to support you afterwards.

### **What happened in the Child Clubs research project so far and what have we learned from adults?**

So far in the project we have read a lot of papers and documents related to Children's Clubs, interviewed 3 adults who do a lot of work with children's clubs, and looked into 15 different children's clubs from around the world. Here is a quick summary of what we have learned so far:

- Children's Clubs around the world are very different. They are different sizes, have children of different ages, have different goals and ways of organizing themselves. Some are led by children, while others are led by adults, and sometimes the leadership is shared. They are held in different places, like schools, community organizations, and online.
- Children's Clubs are an effective way to report violence against children in school (e.g., bullying, harassment from teachers or other students and violence experienced elsewhere), and that there is real power in children's collective voice to stand against violence and try to address it.
- People identified things they thought helped make Children's Clubs successful, such as: hold regular meetings; make sure everyone has a role and a voice; use creative ways to share messages with the community (art, theatre, dance); collaborate with others, like teachers, principles; strong role models; provide training for children and adults; provide an open space for children to get involved, and build on opportunities to address violence.
- Some groups reported challenges with some Children's Clubs, including: hard to find space, time and money to support clubs; lack of knowledge about children's rights and safeguarding; adults' fear of children's leadership around violence issues; and some negative impacts of reporting violence.
- Impacts of Children's Clubs include:
  - **Children:** Generally children feel positive about being involved and developed: self-confidence, self-esteem, voice, empowerment, a sense of school connectedness, life skills, leadership experience, organizational and problem-solving skills, and improved communication.
  - **Staff at School:** Better understanding of children's skills in leadership in the clubs and their concerns around safety and violence.
  - **School:** Increased awareness of child safety and protection, increased school attendance, an improved safe school environment and an increased awareness of children's ability to promote safety.
  - **Community:** Increased space for children's voice and participation, increased awareness of how common violence against children is and its impacts and more focus and resources provided to support children's initiatives.
- COVID-19 impacted the work of many clubs. Not everyone could work online or over the phone, so many activities stopped. Some clubs were able to move their projects and activities online, with support from organizations. There are great examples of Child Clubs mobilizing to support people to stay safe during the pandemic!





## What activities will we be doing together?

### 1. Ice Breaker

#### Welcome Playful Introductions

So far in the project we have read a lot of papers and documents related to Children's Clubs, interviewed 3 adults who do a lot of work with children's clubs, and looked into 15 different children's clubs from around the world. Here is a quick summary of what we have learned so far:

**Time:** 5 to 10 minutes

**Purpose:** To welcome all children and young people. To provide an opportunity for each person to introduce themselves.

**Process:**

1. Invite each person to share their first name and to act/draw their favourite activity to play.
2. Invite all other participants to guess as the person shares their picture/action.
3. Once it has been guessed, ask the actor/drawer to pass the turn on to another participant.
4. Continue until everyone has had a chance to share.

### 2. Community Agreement

**Time:** 5 to 10 minutes

**Purpose:** To support children to set the parameters of how they want to interact together.

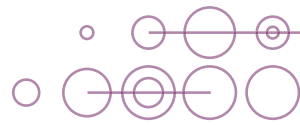
**Process:**

1. Invite children to share what are important agreements for the group to feel safe, supported, and able to engage during the session.
2. If children are struggling for ideas, share a few examples (see below).
3. Invite children to speak out loud or write in the chat box.
4. As a facilitator record their answers on the zoom white board.

Here is an a sample online agreement:

- We all have something valuable to share.
- Actively listen to one another
- Give everyone a chance to share their voice, you can speak it, type it or sing it.
- If you know another child whose perspective is not being shared, invite them to join (without putting them on the spot)
- Respect everyone's time, we all have many commitments
- Have Fun!





### 3. River Journey Activity

**Purpose:** To explore strengths, challenges, and recommendations for Child Clubs in safeguarding in schools based on experiences as club members.

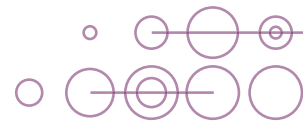
**Time required:** 40 minute. If in small groups, 25 minutes, with 10 minutes sharing back. If completed individually, each participant could expect to spend 15 minutes on their contribution and the whole group 25 minutes sharing back.

**Materials:** Paper, colours (e.g., crayons, paints), and pens.

Start	Now	Future







1. Ask children to envision a beautiful river, flowing from their past (when they first joined) to the middle (what was it like now?) and into their future (What do they envision for supporting child safeguarding in their clubs going forward?)
2. Ask children what their experience was in participating in keeping children safe in schools at the start of joining the club. What is it like now and what do they hope they might do in the future?
3. Ask children what some of the most important strengths they have seen in each phase, (start, now) or hope for in the future. What were any changes they saw (this can be at the school, in themselves, with their peers, in the larger community)? What were challenges along the way?
4. Invite each child to take their piece of paper and colours and draw a river across their page.
5. Invite each person to populate their own river with their reflections and stories of strengths and challenges.
6. Tell the children they can record their ideas in pictures and words.
7. Once complete, ask participants to draw, write or share any significant 'stories' that reflect the changes that they experienced as a result of their role in their child club.
8. Invite children to hold up their pictures to the screen and take turns sharing their rivers with their group (if they would like to share).
10. Ask children and/or their supporting adults to take a picture of their images and send them to [laura.wright@icrd.org](mailto:laura.wright@icrd.org).
11. Lead a discussion using the following questions as a guide:
  - What were the most significant strengths in your child club that were revealed in your River Journey? Why are these significant?
  - What were some of the greatest challenges? What made these so challenging?
  - What were some of the greatest changes you saw over time at your school? By your supporting adults? In your peers? In yourself? In your community?
  - How has COVID-19 impacted your club's role in supporting children to keep safe in your schools? What are strengths, challenges, and/or new innovations?
  - Is there one story (or more) that stands out to you as a group?
  - What have you learned that you would like to tell other children who are setting up clubs in order to set up a strong club?
  - If you were to provide recommendations for children around the world and adults working with them, what would be your top 5 to 10 recommendations? (Use Jamboard for all participants to write their ideas and then categorize them into their top ten)





#### 4. Closing Activity

**Time:** 5 minutes (note if time goes over this can also be done in writing)

**Purpose:** To close in community

**Process:**

1. Invite all children to share in one word one thing they are looking forward to going forward from today.
2. After each child speaks, invite them to pass the invisible ball to someone else in the circle to share.

#### 5. Next Steps: Would you like to continue to be involved in the Children's Club Research Project?

We would love you to stay involved with us, here are a few ways you can do this:

**Jamboard:** If you think of any other strengths, challenges, or recommendations you want to share you can via jamboard. We will send a link for you to add too.

**Feed into Final Report:** We will be developing a report to share everything we have learned with adults and children around the world, and we would love to include something special from you. If you would like to share a **drawing, poems, art pieces, story, or any other thoughts you have after our session together**, please send it to:

Vanessa Currie: [vanessa.currie@iicrd.org](mailto:vanessa.currie@iicrd.org) or Laura Wright: [laura.wright@iicrd.org](mailto:laura.wright@iicrd.org) by November 30, 2020.







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[SafetoLearn@end-violence.org](mailto:SafetoLearn@end-violence.org)

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