

Young Citizens at Crossroads
Voices from Latin America and Africa



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CONTENTS

1. Purpose of the study.....	3
2. Research design: a participatory approach.....	4
3. Scope of the study and data material.....	6
4. Citizenship from below.....	7
<i>Daily lives</i>	
<i>Recognition</i>	
<i>Solidarity</i>	
<i>Justice</i>	
<i>Alternative and creative spaces</i>	
5. Perceptions of citizenship.....	25
<i>Rights, obligations and belonging</i>	
<i>To have a name – and an ID card</i>	
<i>Morality: good citizens and bad citizens</i>	
<i>Future visions</i>	
6. Generating citizenship through visual images.....	28
<i>Seeing ‘real life’</i>	
<i>The camera as a tool for self-reflection</i>	
<i>Ownership, responsibility and affecting change</i>	
<i>Creating comradeship, respect and tolerance</i>	
<i>Shortcomings and challenges</i>	
<i>Facilitators’ reflections</i>	
7. Lessons learned and recommendations.....	33
<i>Provide mechanisms for strengthening solidarity</i>	
<i>Support inter-generational dialogue and formal participation</i>	
<i>Provide support for new modes of youth organisation</i>	
<i>Build on creative potentials and alternative avenues</i>	
<i>Provide a platform for cross-country experience sharing</i>	
<i>Strengthen the cooperation between Danish NGOs and their partners</i>	
<i>Develop participatory and explorative approaches</i>	
<i>Suggestions for follow-up activities</i>	
Appendix: Guidelines for data collection.....	39

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Young citizens are at the crossroads. Since they find themselves in a state of transition between childhood and adulthood, they experience a number of obstacles and opportunities that shape the ways in which they seek to become active recognised citizens. While being unable to obtain the respect, status, influence and social responsibilities associated with adulthood, they are simultaneously at the forefront in driving social and political change.

The purpose of this study and learning process is to generate new knowledge about how children and youth in the South articulate and practice citizenship. The study sets out to explore how citizenship is practiced 'from below' by focusing on children and youth's concrete experiences, concerns and aspirations; on how they practice citizenship in their day-to-day interactions, and on the possibilities and obstacles they face in becoming fully recognised and active citizens.

The working hypothesis of the study is that new ways of practising citizenship are being invented by the young generation. Increasingly, children and youth employ alternative avenues to affect social and political change. The use of social media as a basis for political mobilisation, the production of music and poems to inspire demands for justice and recognition, and the organisation of public happenings to stimulate experiences of solidarity, are just some of the ways in which they practice citizenship in creative - and often unexpected - ways. These new practices reflect a marginalisation or alienation from decision-making in the formal sphere. While children and youth may be granted formal citizenship, it does not always translate into substantive citizenship. In order to encompass the fact the civil and political rights are unequally distributed, the study privileges a focus on how children and youth make claims to citizenship in their daily lives: in schools, in clubs, on street corners, at the football field, through media, and in other social and political spaces they navigate on a daily basis. This focus moves from the abstract to the concrete, and direct attention towards the ways in which children and youth seek to carve out space for substantive citizenship.

The overall aim of the study and learning process is to enable NGOs to better understand how citizenship is practiced 'from below' in particular social and political worlds, and thus to identify examples and ways forward in regard to supporting children and youth in becoming active and fully recognised citizens.

RESEARCH DESIGN: A PARTICIPATORY APPROACH

In order to generate knowledge on how citizenship is practiced 'from below', this study and learning process has been informed by a participatory approach. This approach encourages the participants to become active co-researchers, and opens up for explorations of children and youth's own perspectives on what citizenship implies.

For children and youth to become active, recognised citizens they must be supported in making their own voices heard. Simultaneously, their voices must be taken seriously. The decision to employ a participatory approach builds on the belief that children and youth have the capacity to play an active role in shaping the research, and that it is by way of seeing through their eyes that we gain a nuanced understanding of how citizenship is practiced. While research that builds on pre-defined questionnaires and surveys tend to position children and youth as *objects* of the study, the participatory approach positions them as *subjects* who can actively influence and shape the outcomes of the research process.

To engage the participants in the study a combination of methodological tools have been used: visual methods and focus group discussions. Combined, these tools serve to stimulate an inventive and imaginary process that leaves room for unexpected perspectives on how citizenship is articulated and practiced.

The *visual methods* have centred on the work with digital and disposable cameras. The participants have been equipped with cameras and encouraged to take pictures that in different ways illustrate their experiences of citizenship (see appendix).

The work with the cameras enable the participants to decide on what scenarios and situations *they* think best capture their experiences. Furthermore, the work with the cameras encourages the participants to engage with their social surroundings in new ways. To take a picture of people demands interaction and a process of negotiation, which in turn might produce new perspectives on otherwise well-known social realities.

Focus group discussions have been carried out with point of departure in the pictures taken by the participants, and have centred on how the pictures relate to some of the possibilities and challenges they face in becoming active and recognised citizens (see appendix).

While focus group discussions are usually carried out with point of departure in pre-defined questions posed by a facilitator, thus creating an unequal power relationship between the facilitator and the participants, the discussions around the pictures enable the participants' to influence the agenda. It is the participants who choose what pictures to present, and who decide on what experiences they want to share when presenting their pictures. Moreover, since pictures are interpreted in multiple ways and generate diverse reactions, the discussions around the pictures stimulate processes of reflection and negotiation among the participants.

Experiences of citizenship are generated in actual encounters between people and through negotiations. In this regard, a central reason for employing the participatory

approach has been to enable children and youth to generate new experiences of citizenship, and to support them in making their voices heard. Rather than working as an isolated tool to generate data, the methodological approach is thus regarded as part of a process of knowledge production in which recommendations and suggestions for ways forward reflect children and young people's specific concerns and ideas.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY AND DATA MATERIAL

This study and learning process is based on the participation of six Danish NGOs and their partner organisations in six African and Latin American countries:

Rwanda

- SOS Children's Villages

Uganda

- Save the Children

Togo

- BØRNEfonden

Guatemala

- IBIS

Nicaragua

- IBIS
- International Børnesolidaritet & Tuktan Sirpi

Bolivia

- IBIS
- International Børnesolidaritet & Inti Phajsi
- AC International Child Support & Sociedad Católica San José (SCSJ)

The study has been carried out in both urban and rural areas, and has targeted a mixed group of participants in the age group 9-28 years. These participants include school children as well as university students, most of whom live in surroundings affected by long-term conflict and rapid social and political change.

While having targeted a quite heterogeneous group of participants in diverse settings across two continents, all participants have been given the same exercises (see appendix). Here, some organisations have collaborated with groups of up to 65 participants, while others have focused their work on smaller groups of around 15 participants.

Due to the relatively limited number of participants, and because data collection has been limited to 4-6 days, the study provides no basis for quantitative comparisons. Yet, the pictures and the transcriptions of the participant's discussions constitute a rich and nuanced data material that provides a significant point of departure for understanding what is at stake for young citizens who find themselves at the crossroads.

CITIZENSHIP FROM BELOW

Citizenship is an abstract and highly contested concept that is often difficult to connect to people's concrete experiences. Moreover, it is a concept that is ascribed different meanings in different social worlds and political contexts. This study, however, is based on the presumption that certain fundamental values relating to what it means to be a citizen connect people across different social and political worlds, and across continents. These fundamental values include recognition, solidarity and justice. Based on this presumption the participants of this study have been asked to take pictures of people, places, things and certain situations, which in different ways relate to these values. Combined with questions of how they make their voices heard in their daily lives, and of what alternative and creative avenues they make use of, this study has set out to explore citizenship from below.

The participants of this study have taken numerous pictures illustrating how citizenship is practiced from below – pictures that have served as a point of departure for nuanced and reflexive discussions. Combined, these pictures and discussions offer a portrait of what it means to be a citizen among children and youth, and of how citizenship is enacted among them. This portrait offers us a better sense of how children and youth experience well-known realities – of poverty, insecurity and injustice – but it also offers a number of surprises and unexpected findings. It offers a sense of the obstacles children and youth face in becoming recognised citizens, and of the emerging possibilities – both when it comes to intimate family and community relations, and relations to the senior authorities, politicians and to the state. Simultaneously, the pictures and discussions reveal some of the local and regional differences relating to how children and youth experience citizenship, as well of the experiences that bind them together.

Daily lives

How do you make your voices heard in your daily lives? For the participants of this study, this question triggered a number of significant reflections relating both to some of the challenges they face, and to the ways in which they actively seek to influence decision-making.

“A challenge for us is that we don't meet respect in our daily lives”, a participant from Guatemala explained during a group discussion around the pictures they had taken. The statement resonates with how the participants from other countries in both Africa and Latin America explained not to be taken seriously, especially by adults and senior authorities. As expressed also by a participant from Bolivia:

The adults see us as 'little persons'...because sometimes when you go the major's office and you ask for an appointment to speak to the major, there are many obstacles – while it is easy for adults to get an appointment. That is why many girls and boys do not participate.

Getting an appointment with the major was not the only challenge the young participants faced in making their voices heard. It was a challenge that dominated also their encounters with other adults whom they felt refused to take their ideas and demands seriously. In Uganda, for instance, the participants explained how they often attended community meetings without being able to express themselves due to their junior positions. The experience of not being considered by the older generation had several effects. Perhaps most significantly, it caused that some participants felt that there was no point in trying to make their voices heard. A young student from Bolivia explained how this played out at school:

The students and the young people from the schools are like sheep; they say yes to everything, and do not even ask or know what the teachers are talking about. So few students participate in the activities when there are discussions on topics that might benefit or hurt them. And it's because they don't care, or because it's always the same thing. So there's no point in talking because it will be the adults who define things for them; like at school, having to wear a uniform, the school's rules are made by the teachers and parents, and the young people do not actively participate.

Apart from preventing them from participating, the experience of not being considered gave rise to a disrespect of adults. As a student from Guatemala explained:

You can say that I don't show respect for other people because they just regard me as a student... So I think that the challenge I face is to respect others.

While some participants similarly reflected on how the lack of respect they experienced influenced on their perception of others, yet other participants argued that they would still continue to show respect for adults. In this regard, meeting daily obligations such as helping their parents with domestic work was regarded as a sign of respect. In Uganda, for instance, the participants took pictures of children collecting firewood in order to illustrate how they would work in respect of their family members. The significance of respecting elders was also reflected in the discussions the participants from Togo had around their pictures. One of their pictures portrays a woman returning from the field late at night. This picture, they pointed out, illustrates the woman's determination to meet her family's needs at all costs. In order to be a good citizen, they explained, one must work for the development of the local community in daily activities and interactions. In fact, individuals are defined by the work they do for their community, and for the ways in which they seek to protect local customs, they argued. And in different ways, they analysed the pictures they had taken as examples of how they personally strive to be recognised as respected community members.

Taking part in community work and domestic activities were not the only avenues the participants employed to gain respect and make their voices heard. In Uganda, the participants took pictures illustrating how children and youth make use of music and gospel preaching. They explained how they composed songs about some of the problems they faced in their daily lives, and would sing these songs for instance during ceremonies and gatherings in their villages. Moreover, they would make use of gospel

preaching as an instrument of awareness raising, and thus as an instrument of bringing about behavioural change in their daily lives. In Togo, the participants also took pictures illustrating how children employ music as an instrument to make their voices heard, as illustrated in the picture below:



In contrast to the participants from Uganda and Togo, the Latin American participants were not so preoccupied with singing and gospel preaching. Among them, graffiti was a favoured subject in their discussions on how they could make their voices heard in their daily lives. As explained by a participant from Guatemala who had taken pictures of graffiti:

I think graffiti is an expression some people use to get their voice heard. Because sometimes the state – and people in high positions – do not listen to the people.



What is important to note in this regard is that the participants from Guatemala were more concerned with how they could affect change also at a national level, rather than simply at community level. Here, the making of graffiti was regarded as a creative avenue even to address ‘the state’ and senior authorities who would otherwise not listen to the voices of ‘the people’. Similarly, discussions of how they would act as responsible citizens in their daily lives were centred on how they contributed to the development of the nation. “*Everybody must do an effort to develop the nation*”, they argued when debating on how they could act collectively to influence change in their daily activities.

In Bolivia, the participants emphasised the significance of dialogue. “*Dialogue is important in our day-to-day life because this is how we can communicate, negotiate and make ourselves heard*” a student explained. In the discussion that followed another student posed a question to the other participants: “*When do we want our voice to be heard, where and how?*” In this regard, the participants pointed out that radio communication was a particularly useful medium for making their voices heard. However, they also pointed out that not all people could access this medium, as only few broadcasters would allow them to engage in dialogue through radio communication.

Among other participants in Bolivia, discussions of citizenship in relation to daily lives were influenced by a perhaps more surprising issue: traffic. A large number of the pictures they had taken showed public transport, traffic jam and flooded streets. The urban disorder, they explained, was not simply preventing them from moving around the city, but was regarded as a symbol of failed municipal management and governance.



The picture above is taken by one of the participants in Bolivia who regards the flooded street as a symbol of the public authorities’ mismanagement and neglect of the citizens. In their daily lives, this mismanagement and neglect causes chaos and stress, the participants explained. Yet, in further discussions the participants also pointed out how they too would sometimes contribute to the urban disorder, because they navigated the

city without respecting the urban organisation. As such, the urban disorder affecting their daily experiences of citizenship was not simply something that could be blamed on public authorities – it was an outcome of a mutual practice.

Recognition

What does it mean to be a recognised citizen? For participants both in Latin America and Africa, this was a central question running through their discussions of citizenship. Both in relation to their families, communities, public authorities and politicians it was, indeed, an essential matter for them to be recognised as worthy human beings. In this study, however, few participants spoke of themselves as fully recognised citizens. In most cases, recognition was something they linked to the future – to what they aimed at becoming – and to other people.

In general, the participants perceived of recognition as being granted as a result of certain personal qualities such as being a good listener, being democratic, able to act in solidarity with others, and support the most vulnerable people in the community. In this regard, the participants took pictures of people in their local communities whom they perceived of as being good examples to others. In Togo, the children took a picture of a woman selling a popular local dish. This woman, they pointed out, was a role model especially for the young girls because she was highly regarded by the villagers, and even by people from the neighbouring villages. The linkage between recognition and role models was also a subject discussed by the participants in Bolivia. Here, examples of role models included the doorman at school (because he supports people and corrects their mistakes), the storekeeper (because she has a space that is useful to all the neighbours), the teacher (because he is part of the education system), and the bricklayer (because he is doing hard work and deliver services). What is important to note in this regard is that role models are most commonly associated with ‘common’ people performing ordinary activities of benefit to the community.

Examples of citizens who were recognised in their local communities included men as well as women, yet issues of gender played an important role in discussions of recognition. Especially in Bolivia, the participants were eager to critically engage in discussion of whether women were being recognised to the same extent as men.





The pictures above are from a demonstration in the Bolivian city El Alto. Addressing these pictures, the participants had the following conversation about recognition and gender:

- *In the community, the people who are highly recognised are the ones who make the decisions – and the majority of them are men.*
- *Although this picture shows are woman guiding a demonstration...*
- *It is true that the woman is in front, but you also have to observe more generally; there is no gender equality – there are more men than women [at the demonstration].*
- *More than the issue of gender, it seems to me that men are elected because they have more time [than women]. And sometimes the women are not elected because they are afraid to hold a position. Once I was at a meeting and I listened to a woman rejecting a position of power...*
- *I feel that in society, women have less time than men; they have to be at home washing, ironing, looking after the children and other things that take up their time. They have more duties than rights.*

Having more duties than rights is not the only challenge women are faced with, the Bolivian participants pointed out. Women's recognition is closely tied to physical appearance and dress, and this, they discussed, was clearly at stake during public parades:

- *There are people who arrive early and they don't get put at the front of the parade; and the people who arrive late, get put in front because they are wearing a suit.*

Esthetics is very much at play here. For example, in civic parades, it is the prettiest, best-dressed girls, the guaripoleras¹, who go in front, and the rest go behind.

- *It is a game of hierarchy; the ones in suits, the ones who have a pretty good dress, and those who don't have anything nice about their dress, it's a way of classifying people.*
- *Women wearing good traditional skirts (chola bourgeoisie) are highly recognized in this society; they are seen at parties, events, parades, when women wear their best clothes to be recognized by the community, a little prestige and class.*



While gender featured as an important subject in discussions of recognition, class related issues were equally important to the participants of this study. Especially so for the participants in Bolivia who were at the forefront in pointing out that “*some people enjoy more recognition than others*”. When being questioned by the facilitator who enjoys more recognition, they replied; “*the wealthy enjoy more recognition because they have money*”, and “*because they have a lot of material things*”. This observation led them to conclude that the one to enjoy most recognition in Bolivia is the President, Evo Morales. While agreeing on this conclusion, the participants did, however, have different views on why the President is the most recognised citizen in their country. For some, it was a matter of solidarity – because “*he helps the people*” – while others more cynically concluded; “*because he is always on television*”.

¹ Term referring to a type of parade “cheerleader”. Typically well-dressed girls in sometimes scant costumes.



In similar ways, other Bolivian participants argued that recognition is a matter of class and status. “*Recognition costs money*”, they emphasised. “*We are supposed to be equal – but it is not like that – because on the streets, in the neighbourhoods and in the banks you prefer some to others*”. “*We should have been fat with big bellies and bold heads and have a lot of money before they will consider us*”.

When recognition becomes a matter of status and material wealth, young people are faced with significant challenges. In this regard, the participants discussed how recognition was something the young people were engaged in a constant struggle to be seen, heard and recognised, and how this sometimes turned into a competition between them:

- *People are doing everything to be seen, heard... They feel excluded...*
- *In a way, we are fighting with our own people just to be recognized...*
- *It's a big investment, as Foucault calls it: biopower. Now the State is more of a jerk (they are the people who take advantage of the people's ignorance and who use more individualistic and aggressive strategies), they don't need the army to repress people anymore. Rather they impose a feeling of filthy competition, always trying to step on others.*
- *And do young people get involved in that?*
- *A lot, with fashion for sure.*
- *Young people are easier to manipulate, they think we are idiots and then go to elections.*
- *And that is when people lose their level of will...*

Solidarity

What does solidarity mean to you, and in what social spaces do you experience to act in unity with others? These questions made the participants engage in diverse discussions

of instances when they had observed people acting in solidarity with others. Most significantly, however, the questions triggered intense discussions of the limits to solidarity. In this regard, it was generally the participants from Africa who selected positive stories illustrating how solidarity is enacted, whereas the Latin American participants were concerned about the lack of solidarity in their social environments.

“If there is enough for one, there is enough for two”, stated the participants from Togo when they commented on a picture they had taken of voodoo practitioners eating from the same plate. According to them, the willingness to share a meal with others was an expression of solidarity. Also in other pictures the participants from Togo illustrated the solidarity shaping social relations in their community. For instance, they took a picture of a young man helping a blind woman on her way to a meeting. Helping the disabled, such as the blind and people with paralysis is considered a blessing to the community, they pointed out. At the picture below, yet another example of solidarity is given. Here the participants capture how community members show solidarity when someone dies. The photo shows how everyone volunteers to help carrying a coffin with a dead body into a car. People show solidarity when a member of the community passes away, and provide material and financial support, and they spend time with the grieving family, they explained.



In Rwanda, the participants also took pictures of their daily encounters with acts of solidarity targeted towards community member, especially those living under vulnerable conditions. Helping each other is necessary for the welfare of the people, they emphasised, as they explained about a picture they had taken of people supporting poor students by giving them schoolbooks. At another picture, they documented how people would sometimes volunteer to build a house for a vulnerable family in their community. Such acts of solidarity within their communities were also illustrated in the picture below that portrays a man offering a cow to his neighbour.



Like the participants from Rwanda and Togo who chose to illustrate how community members enacted solidarity, the participants from Bolivia, Guatemala and Nicaragua took pictures of their encounters with solidarity. In Bolivia, a participant took a picture of two young women selling potatoes in front of the Supreme Court. When presenting her picture, she explained:

At some point during the day – whether we are hungry or not – we will buy something from these women. The day I took the pictures I bought three potatoes in order to show solidarity.



Other Bolivian participants suggested that solidarity is a matter of “*helping your fellow beings without benefit*”, and “*giving someone a hand without asking for anything in exchange*” - “*a spontaneous action*”. Such spontaneous actions, they pointed out, can lead to voluntary organisations that benefit the community. As explained by one of the participants:

In the midst of this harsh reality we can find collective actions like the work of a group of children who organise the cleaning of the spaces where they keep time – it is an activity that benefits everyone.

As another illustration of acts of solidarity, a participant from Bolivia took a picture of a young man carrying a woman through a flooded street. “*This picture is from my neighbourhood where it is common that the streets get flooded*”, he explained, and added that this was an act of solidarity. When the other participants began to comment on his picture, however, it was questioned to what extent the young man was really acting in solidarity with the woman. Was he really carrying her because of mercy, or was he doing it for selfish purposes, the other participants questioned. Such questions triggered an intense debate about solidarity and most significantly, of the limits to solidarity, as illustrated in the conversation below:

- *You say, ‘today for you and tomorrow for me’ – I think that is why people help each other. That’s how my mother says when she is giving something to others, she is always thinking: ‘as you sow, so you shall reap’. That is how I think it is.*
- *But the society does not inspire us to help others, because who knows whether it is a blind person that asks for help to cross the street? Who knows? And who guarantees me that the person is really blind? Due to mistrust I don’t help older people – because it makes me insecure.*

Insecurity and mistrust erode social cohesion and solidarity, the participant explained. In similar ways other participants explained how they would hesitate to help others due to lack of trust. In order to demonstrate why he was hesitant to help others, a young man told a story of how he once tried to help an old man to get out of a bus. But the man pretended to fall down, and while he was helping him to get up again, he was robbed. “*I had my things stolen from trying to be nice and help an old man*”, the participant said. And for that reason, he is now reluctant to help others. This reluctance even to help old people was something the Guatemalan participants were also concerned about, when they discussed how they often saw old people cross the streets on their own without offering them help.

In Bolivia, the discussions of the limits to solidarity were triggered by a number of pictures the participants had taken of homeless people. With point of departure in the picture below, the participants discussed why they were reluctant to help homeless people. “*We don’t help them – and why is that so? It is because of the way they look, they make us scared?*” Addressing this questions the other participants argued that homeless people constitute a danger to society, and that they personally feared them because they would attack students simply in order to get hold on their notebooks. For that reason, they explained, they were reluctant to help them.



“Today our people are not surprised, they are not moved by the suffering of others and do nothing to support, although they see that a person is asking for support”, stated a participant from Bolivia. Confirming such lack of solidarity, the participants from Nicaragua pointed out that solidarity is a value they hardly ever hear or learn about. The lack of solidarity, they explained, had important consequences. Among other issues, it resulted in an absence of acts of solidarity in their communities. For the participants this was a sad reality. Solidarity, they argued, is very important. In fact, it should be an obligation, they suggested. If all members of society were working in solidarity with others, then it would be a step towards successfully defending children and young people’s rights, they agreed.

Justice

What does justice mean to you, and how does it relate to your rights and responsibilities as a member of your community? When the participants of this study addressed this question, they touched on a number of significant issues relating both to experiences of justice and *injustice*, and to more general perceptions of what justice implies.

“Justice is for all. Justice is about the right to be human. But not all members of society knows what justice means”. So said a participant from Nicaragua. The statement captures how the experience of being treated with justice is a significant matter to all human beings, but also that justice and *injustice* often co-exist. While justice is supposed to be for all, not all human beings have access to justice. For the participants of this study, the obstacles to accessing justice were, however, not so much a matter of being ignorant of what justice means, or of how justice relates to rights and responsibilities. On the contrary, they expressed a strong awareness of what justice and *injustice* implies.

At a family level, the participants primarily expressed concern about different forms of forced labour such as being responsible for younger siblings at an early age and being forced to carry heavy loads.



Moreover, a central theme running through discussions of acts of injustice at the family level was physical punishment. In Togo, the children took pictures illustrating how parents would beat very young children to punish them. Such forms of punishment, the participants from Uganda illustrated in other pictures, also took place at school where teachers would expose them to physical punishment, even though they had not committed any crime.



At the community level, acts of injustice also included violence and forced labour. In Togo, for instance, the participants took a picture portraying how school children worked at their teacher's cassava farm. These children, they explained, were being exploited by the teacher, and at the same time denied access to schooling. The violation of the right to education also featured as an important subject to the participants from Rwanda.



The picture above shows a student from a poor family who has no school uniform. The teacher expels the boy from school because he has no uniform. According to the participants from Rwanda the picture exhibits social injustice because poor people are not respected as the rich people are, resulting here in limited access to schooling.

In Rwanda and Togo, discussions of justice related also to how they could access justice in their local communities. Here, pictures were taken to illustrate that justice is not only something lawyers can offer, but something that can be accessed also through local authorities and at traditional hearings. In a photo taken by the Togolese participants, it is illustrated how villagers make use of traditional hearings when seeking to resolve conflicts and disputes within the community.

While examples of how they could successfully access justice were given, limited access to justice was a central concern shared by the participants. In Rwanda, corruption was an important topic in this regard. As illustrated in their pictures, corruption posed a major obstacle for justice to be done, for instance when seeking employment. One of their pictures shows two people who are applying for a job. One of them arrives with his documents to the office and the other has brought cash to bribe the officer in charge.

According to the participants, many people take bribes. They are corrupted because they take bribes such as money, sex and property, they explained.

“The lawyers don’t work without money and that is why justice often ceases to exist in this country”. This statement was made by a law student from Bolivia who reflected on how corruption affected the justice system. The student had taken two pictures; one of the Supreme Court and one of the roman goddess of justice (*Justitia*). Commenting on the pictures, he explained: *“I don’t think that the gods exist, nor that justice exists – they are just symbols”*. In similar ways the other participants in his group pointed out that justice was not being done. *“Justice is something you see from the outside, but you don’t know how it actually works within”*, they argued. As a consequence, they associated justice – and the law – with a disguising mask.

Alternative and creative spaces

What are some of the alternative and creative spaces you navigate to influence decision-making? When addressing this question, the participants were preoccupied mainly with the absence of creative spaces, and the lack of alternative avenues for making their voices heard. Despite this, most of the pictures they took portrayed children at playgrounds. This presents a paradox, which is poetically reflected in the statements below made by two young participants from Bolivia:

- *Today we are no longer playing with peg tops – but with baubles.*
- *On the road of bitterness...*

Playing with baubles rather than peg tops is an expression that connotes a deep sense of nostalgia, directed perhaps towards the past; a lost childhood, or towards the future; of better times to come. Such nostalgia was also reflected in some of the pictures the participants took. While on the one hand portraying idyllic surroundings and happy faces, yet other pictures revealed how daily lives were marked by poverty, risk and insecurity. The picture of children searching through trash by night in Bolivia is just one out of several examples this.



The contrasts between happy life at playgrounds and more negative images showing children playing at mudded roads and at street corners were particularly obvious in the pictures taken by the participants from Nicaragua.



While the picture of the two boys at the playground in Nicaragua may indicate that children have good environments for play, the participants pointed out that there are few alternative or creative spaces for children in their local communities due to limited infrastructure and poverty. When playing at street corners, children are exposed to dangers such as being assaulted, the participants explained.

In Bolivia, the participants were also preoccupied with risk and danger when they took pictures addressing issues relating to creative and alternative spaces. In this regard, graffiti once again featured as a significant topic.



Graffiti, the participants pointed out, is associated with gangs and organised violence. Gang members use graffiti to demarcate their territory. The picture of the two young boys walking next to a wall painted with graffiti illustrates how children are exposed to gang recruitment, one of the Bolivian participants explained. Gangs often employ the public spaces around the schools to make their existence known to others, and this

constitutes a danger for children and youth. In this regard, the Bolivian participants debated whether graffiti could also be used as a more positive medium. While associated with uncertainty and risk, graffiti also presents talent and creative skills, and could be employed as an avenue for advocacy and for making voices heard, one of the participants suggested. But this, other participants added, would demand that some sort of cultural space was allocated for this purpose.

In Nicaragua, the participants also had visions for how cultural and creative spaces could be allocated for children and youth to make their voices heard. Here, they mentioned how several spaces in their communities such as empty buildings and deserted areas could be turned into creative spaces. While being concerned about the lack of creative spaces for children and young people to express themselves, they pointed out that the church was an important social and creative space. The church, they explained, enabled children and youth to express themselves freely, to develop artistic skills, and to take decisions in their local communities. As such, it is a space that enhances and strengthens experiences of citizenship. Moreover, the church is an organisation that supports children and youth in staying out of violence and organised crime.



Creative and alternative spaces for making voices heard can be established through imagination, the participants from Togo said, as they explained how they could make use of awareness-raising campaigns, sit-ins, strikes and protest marches to influence decision-making. In one of the pictures they had taken, they illustrated how some children protested in front of their school because they refused to work in their teacher's field. Such forms of protest, they pointed out, were important means of making their voice heard.

Another issue that was brought up by the participants who engaged in the exercise on alternative and creative spaces was three-planting campaigns. Both in Togo and Bolivia, the participants explained how they regarded three-planting campaigns as an important

means of participation. Planting threes together would make the children aware of environmental issues, and simultaneously serve as a channel for recognition. Planting a three is associated with sustainability and protection of the environment. And the person who plants the tree will not let his name die, as long as the three lives, the participants from Togo explained.

PERCEPTIONS OF CITIZENSHIP

There is no single definition of what it means to be a citizen. This is the most evident conclusion from this study process. While citizenship is associated with legal status, and closely linked to rights and responsibilities, this study process had documented that citizenship has fluid meanings and definitions relating to practices of inclusion as well as exclusion. Not all people are equal, the participants have pointed out, and as a consequence, citizenship is defined also by its limits.

“*All people are citizens*”, stated a young man from Bolivia. In this study, he has been the only participant to spell that out. Yet, there is no doubt that becoming citizens who enjoy formal as well as substantive citizenship is an urgent matter for the participants of this study. In this regard the most significant issues the participants have been concerned with relate to dignity, recognition, respect, self-determination, solidarity, justice, participation and advocacy.

Based on the facilitators’ follow-up discussion with the participants, a number of additional perceptions of what defines citizenship will be presented below.



Rights, obligations and belonging

For the participants in both Africa and Latin America, rights, obligations and belonging have been perceived of as the core defining features of citizenship. This is evident from the selected statements below:

To be a citizen is to be able to archive certain rights: the rights to life, a name, an education... and those responsibilities we have. When we demand to have rights then we are also obligated. But the obligations are relative. For instance does a child have the same rights as an adult, but not the same obligations (participant from Santa Cruz, Bolivia).

To be a citizen is to have the right to study, to have a good time, to look to the future. It is our obligation to respect adults, particularly our mother, father, and families. It also means that we have rights: to live a life with dignity, to have a decent house, and to be respected. For all human beings, being a citizen means that you are aware that you and the others have obligations and rights (participant from El Alto, Bolivia).

To be a citizen is to be someone who is proud of belonging to a country (participant from Togo).

Citizenship is about belonging to a place, and when you belong to a place you also have rights and obligations (participant from Santa Cruz, Bolivia).

To be a citizen is to be part of the city and to be seen as being from the city (El Alto, Bolivia).

To be a citizen is to belong to a community and enjoy recognition. It means that you as a person is taken into account in a certain place, that you are part of a place and can relate to others (participant from El Alto, Bolivia).

To have a name - and an ID card

Formal citizenship does not always translate into substantive citizenship. For the participants of this study, however, formal citizenship is regarded as a platform for substantive citizenship. Without having a name and an ID card, they will not be considered, they pointed out:

The adults teach us that citizenship is simply about having an ID-card, so when you are allowed to vote they will contact you...(participant from Nicaragua).

I am recognised as citizen by the state – through my ID card (participant from Santa Cruz, Bolivia).

To be a citizen is to be registered in the Civil Register – otherwise it is as if you don't exist (participant from El Alto, Bolivia).

Morality: good citizens and bad citizens

Morality was another central issue implicated in the discussions that the participants had. This was particular evident from the ways in which they distinguished between 'good citizens and 'bad citizens'.

In Togo, for instance, the participants pointed out that there exist two kinds of citizens: the good ones and the bad ones. A good citizen, they suggested, is willing to die for his country and for the welfare of the people in his community, and he is recognised by the community for his participation. A bad citizen, on the other hand, lies and steals to survive, dislikes his work, and does not care about the development of his community.

A similar distinction was made by the participants from Nicaragua who added that a good citizen should be respectful, democratic, and able to affect change.

Future visions

Citizenship is not simply linked to present practices – it is closely connected to the future. And especially so for children and youth who find themselves in a transitional state. As discussed above, this transition results in lack of recognition and in limited acceptance by the older generation – in an absence of substantive citizenship. Despite this, the participants of this study have not given up on making their voices heard. On the contrary, they have future visions and ambitions of affecting change, both locally in their communities and nationally.

“They future is in our hands”, the participants from Togo said, as they explained how they intended to contribute to preserving peace and avoiding violence by sensitising their friends to adopt a responsible behaviour and to participate in activities organised in their village.

In similar ways, the participants from Guatemala were concerned with how they could affect change in the future. But rather than simply waiting for the future to come, they stressed that it was through their present practices that they could serve as drivers of social change in the future. As explained by one of the participants, one must begin by being a good example to others when wanting to affect change:

If I want to be a good example then I can participate in affecting change in our country so we can develop as Guatemalans – rather than just waiting to become important persons. If I want to be part of the change, then I need to be a good example.

Moreover, the participants from Guatemala emphasised that the basis for affecting future change depended on solidarity and unity:

We rarely see people helping or doing something good for others... but I believe that we as young expect that we unite and develop as a country... and there is a word in John Lennon’s music that I like, and that is ‘imagine’ – with this song he tells that he wants a united world [...] This song is very important in order to make Guatemala react and realise that if we don’t do something for our country, then it has a price, and ultimately we will kill our country and that is the biggest mistake a citizen can do. We believe that everything is possible if we work together.

GENERATING CITIZENSHIP THROUGH VISUAL IMAGES



A good citizen is someone who think about his country, and one who believes he can change it. Even if it is you against the world, then you can affect change, and if you show yourself as a good example, then you can make other people join you... to me the pictures are a good way of affecting change (participant from Guatemala).

Affecting change through pictures is one among several positive experiences the participants of this study gained through the participatory approach employed. As will be discussed in further details below, the participants were generally very positive when giving feedback on this approach, both when they evaluated the work they had done with the cameras and the discussions around their pictures.² In different ways, they expressed how their experiences of citizenship were generated through the visual images.

Seeing 'real life'

"To me [this process] has been a way to learn how real life is. You got to see things that you would not see otherwise, and we have got a perspective on reality, so that we in the future – when we are to make our own projects – then this has given us motivation to change things". This was how one of the participants from Guatemala evaluated the exercises of this study. Getting a new perspective on reality and seeing 'real life' was an experience shared by other participants. As explained in the statements below, venturing

² It is, however, important to note that not all organisations evaluated the participatory approach with the participants. As a result, some intended findings of this study and learning process is missing out.

out to take pictures served as an eye opener in the sense that it created a new awareness of lived life in their social surroundings:

During these days we have learned to look more closely at things, more closely at our surroundings rather than just walking by (participant from Santa Cruz, Bolivia).

I liked the assignment because we have had the possibility to better understand the place where we live (participant from Santa Cruz, Bolivia).

It has been a great experience because I learned a lot. We notice the efforts people make – an effort which is invisible to many – and that was a good experience (participant from Guatemala).

I really liked this work, because when I took the pictures I realised how hard people work, and I could see their stories and then I became more conscious about the people's efforts, the unity and the friendship – I have learned to value the experience of doing something and the sense of unity (participant from Guatemala).

I liked taking pictures because when doing this you can learn both about the good and the bad things – and you can learn how you become a better citizens in this country (participant from Guatemala).

The camera as a tool for self-reflection

Making otherwise invisible realities visible, and portraying the struggles other people engage in on daily basis generates an increased consciousness not only of others, but also of one self. As expressed by a participant from Bolivia, the exercise served to “*open critical eyes*” when seeing others, but simultaneously when reflecting on their own positions and practices. Because citizenship is an experience generated in actual encounters with others, their work around the pictures gave them a knowledge that strengthened them as citizens, a participant from Guatemala explained. In this regard the participants pointed out that the visual images served as a significant medium for strengthening their consciousness both of what is at stake in their local environments, and of how they could be more responsible in their daily interactions with others.

Ownership, responsibility and affecting change

“*Analysing these photos has been a great experience because we have become conscious that we should be good examples to others in order to change the problems in our society*”, explained a participant from Guatemala. Similarly, the participants from Bolivia pointed out that the exercise had encouraged them to affect change:

We have learned that we are part of it [the world we live in] and that we have to take the first step in order to affect change. If we change then we are able to generate change at so many levels.

Also in Nicaragua the participants explained that the work with the visual images had improved their sense of social responsibility with regards to working for improvements and change. In this regard, the participatory approach had given them a sense of ownership, which made them feel useful, productive and creative – a fundamental point of departure for inspiring change. Through the pictures, they explained, they were able to express themselves freely, and that was not something they usually experienced, they added. Moreover, the work with the visual images made them come up with alternative and creative solutions to affect change in their local communities.

In Bolivia, the exercise also inspired discussions of creative solutions and alternative avenues for affecting change. Among other issues they envisioned how they could use the pictures they had taken as a medium of public protest:

This opens many doors because these photos cannot just be used for the study, but we can also post them on facebook – not just to post nice photos, but also photos of real life, and then begin to protest through these photos, and suggest new solutions and openings...

Creating comradeship, respect and tolerance

Apart from inspiring suggestions for social and political change, the exercises served to create a stronger sense of comradeship, respect and tolerance among the participants. As a Bolivian participant phrased it:

The most important thing for me has been the respect. Because you say your opinion and other people listen to you – they can be critical but they accept your opinion and that is the essence of good comradeship. [...] We have learned about tolerance and different ways of experiencing things.



Yet other participants from Bolivia noted that it was much easier to express their opinions and make other people listen to them when taking their point of departure of the scenarios illustrated in the pictures. Through the pictures, they concluded, they had learned how other people experience their role as citizens and learned to tolerate and respect these experiences.

Shortcomings and challenges

While the participants were generally very positive about the work with the cameras and the discussions they had around the visual images, they were also faced with a number of challenges. Especially in Togo, the participants faced a number of challenges summarised below:

- Geographical difficulties: The study took place during the rainy season when villagers leave very early to the fields and only come back at night. This situation prevented the participants from taking some of the photos they intended to.
- Time-related difficulties: The time allocated for the study was insufficient – especially since 80 percent of the participants had never used a camera, and because the processing of photos taken with digital cameras took a long time.
- The political context: Togo is in the midst of an election campaign. Among other issues this caused that some people refused to have their photos taken because they feared that it might be used for political purposes. For instance, some of the people the participants met believed that their photos would be used to issue voters cards, which would be used to vote on their behalf during the elections. Yet other people refused to have their photos taken because they claimed that BØRNEfonden would use the photos for commercial purposes.
- Difficulties related to the availability of participants: The study took place at the same time as end of year exams and tests. This situation made it difficult to mobilise young people to take part in the study.

People's reluctance to become part of the exercise was also a challenge for the participants from Nicaragua. According to them, however, the reluctance was related to a more general unwillingness to take part in action-oriented community projects. "*They live from day to day and they don't think about the future in our community*", the explained.

Facilitators' reflections

The facilitators have played a significant role in making the participants engage with the exercises. In Bolivia, Nicaragua and Togo, the facilitators reflected on what they had personally gained from participating in the study process, and on what they regarded as the strengths of the participatory approach. In Bolivia the facilitator told the participants that she too had learned to see 'real life' with new eyes through the pictures:

I have really learned a lot. And I want to tell you that all the things you have taken pictures of could also have been in my neighbourhood [...] It is also something I see in my neighbourhood, and I think it is important, but I don't

really see it... but you have shown me these pictures that most people don't notice. I will encourage you to continue that work.

In Nicaragua, the facilitator similarly pointed out that the participatory approach had made the participants reflect on daily activities and encounters in novel ways. The work around the pictures had enabled them to analyse social problems and inspired them to express themselves more clearly about particular challenges. As such, the method had produced a platform for advocacy, the facilitator concluded.

In Togo, the facilitator also argued that the study had enabled the participants to open their eyes with regards to their participation in the life and development of their community and country. Simultaneously, the participants had learned to better negotiate with people in the field to overcome difficulties during the process of taking the pictures. Another strength was that the exercise had enabled them – and even the research team – to better define citizenship. Against this background, the facilitators concluded:

If used, the findings of the study can provide the basis for drafting promising projects aimed at improving the knowledge, capacity and practices of young people in the field of citizenship with a view to making them more responsible and more involved in the community.

LESSONS LEARNED AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The overall objective of this study and learning process has been to identify examples and ways forwards in regard to supporting children and young people in their endeavour to become recognised citizens, and thus to improve interventions focusing on children and young people's citizenship.

The field studies informing this study and learning process have been conducted within a limited timeframe. As a result, the data material offers no basis for solid comparative conclusions on children and young people's citizenship practices. It does, however, offer us a better sense of what children and young people understand by citizenship, of how citizenship is enacted among them, and just as importantly; of some of the challenges they face in becoming fully recognised citizens. Based on their visual images, their stories and discussions we have got the opportunity to see what citizenship – and the limits to citizenship – looks like through *their* eyes, and this can serve as a significant point of departure for enhancing future programming.

In order to enhance future programming we should not simply have a better knowledge on how citizenship is practiced by children and youth in particular social and political worlds. We must also critically reflect on how organisations can best support children and youth in making their voices heard, and thus in providing a platform for carving out space for substantive citizenship. This study and learning process has offered important insight into the organisational capacities of the Danish NGOs and their partner organisations in the participating countries. It tells of some of the strengths, but also of some of the challenges NGOs face in 'seeing' like a young citizen.

Based on the lessons learned from this process a number of recommendations will be presented below. Some of these recommendations are formulated in accordance with how the participants themselves proposed that NGOs could best support them in becoming active citizens.³ The hope is that these recommendations can serve as an eye-opener for what is at stake for young citizens, and simultaneously support NGOs in improving the sustainability of future interventions. Rather than as a checklist, these recommendations should be read as inspirations and suggestions for new practices and way forwards.

What is important to note from the suggestions below is that a perhaps expected recommendation is missing out: to enhance children and young people's knowledge of what citizenship implies. With few exceptions, the participants of this study demonstrated a clear and nuanced understanding of citizenship. Consequently, it is not recommended that the Danish NGOs and their partner organisations limit their

³ The participants did propose a number of recommendations relating much more to issues of poverty than to citizenship. In Rwanda for instance, the participants recommended the NGOs to support them to become active citizens by way of building schools, paying school fees, providing scholarships, building roads, giving credit to poor people, teaching modern agriculture methods, etc. Such recommendations have not been included in this report.

interventions to more standardised and formalised citizenship education. This study and learning process has documented that there are far more urgent issues to address.

Provide mechanisms for strengthening solidarity

One of the most urgent issues that were brought up during this study process is the lack of solidarity that shape social relations. As indicated by some of the participants, the lack of solidarity is perhaps first and foremost an outcome of poverty. While bringing an end to poverty is no easy task for NGOs, it is worth carefully considering how solidarity can otherwise be strengthened. As the findings of this study suggest, there is a particular need for strengthening solidarity between community members and between generations. Additionally, the studies in the Latin American countries document a need for strengthening solidarity across the divides of social classes.

When seeking to provide mechanisms for strengthening solidarity, the following issues should be considered:

- How can NGOs best support an understanding of how personal well-being and development is closely linked to the collective?
- What social activities generate experiences and acts of solidarity?
- How can children and youth become better equipped to promote solidarity in their communities?

Support inter-generational dialogue and formal participation

Being regarded as “little persons”, the participants of this study experience not to be fully recognised by the older generation. This prevents them from influencing decision-making, but in the long run it can also negatively affect their self-understanding. This study process suggests that it is very important to encourage children and youth to make their voices heard. This cannot be done without targeting also the older generation.

Both in formal and informal settings there is an urgent need for supporting inter-generational dialogue and respect. With the purposes of making children and youth more confident in expressing their needs and concerns to adult authorities, and making the adults take their voices into account, NGOs should consider planning interventions that involve inter-generational activities. In this regard, the pictures the participants have taken can serve as a significant departure point for inter-generational dialogue.

Based on the findings of this study follows two concrete ideas that can serve to support inter-generational dialogue through visual images:

- Facilitate a workshop in which the participants present the pictures they have taken to an adult audience including various local authorities. In this workshop, the participants should be encouraged to explain why they have taken the pictures, and how the pictures relate to their experiences of citizenship. Simultaneously, the adults should be encouraged to explain how they perceive of the pictures, and to offer their responses to the participant’s experiences.

- Facilitate a meeting between the participants and relevant adult authorities and ask them to take five pictures each that in different ways tell a story of inter-generational relationships in their local community. When the pictures have been processed, the participants and the adult authorities should present to each other the pictures they have taken. These pictures could eventually be exhibited and made available to a broader audience in the community.

Provide support for new modes of youth organisation

Other factors that prevent children and youth from influencing decision-making relate to organisational structures. To begin with, some of the participants pointed out that children and youth are not so organised in the urban areas. The lack of organisation makes it difficult for them to raise concern and make their voices heard. In this regard, the participants from Bolivia noted that the strongest urban youth-based organisations are the gangs. While gang members should not be regarded as role models, it is worth considering why they are successful in providing a basis for strong youth-driven organisations. In this regard NGOs are encouraged to study the organisation of gangs with the purpose of considering whether certain structures and practices can be transferred to non-violent modes of organisation.

Another issue is that the structures of the existing organisations exclude children and youth from participating in decision-making. In Nicaragua, for instance, the participants explained that it was a major challenge that they were not allowed to take part in decisions regarding the development of their local communities. In this regard NGOs should consider supporting the development of new community organisations in which both children, youth and adults will be allowed to influence decisions. Another suggestion is to make children and youth identify certain areas they want to engage with in their local communities, and support them in getting the older generations' support of their planned activities. For instance, a number of participants explained that they would like to work with the prevention of violence and gang recruitment. In order for them to be successful in this endeavour, they need help and support both from their local communities and from outside authorities.

Finally, if NGOs wish to support children and youth in becoming agents of change, they too must take youth-based attempts to organise seriously. In this regard, the participants indicated that NGO representatives sometimes treated them like children. This prevented them from seeking support and directing their concerns to NGOs. Moreover, some participants felt that NGOs were not keen on supporting their own ideas and initiatives.

Build on creative potentials and alternative avenues

One way for NGOs to support children and young people's own initiatives is to build on their creative potentials and support the alternative avenues they sometimes make use of. Some of the initiatives the participants suggested in this regard included:

- Happenings on public roads and in front of parliaments
- Photo and art exhibitions

- Dance theatre
- Graffiti projects
- Recycling activities

Such activities, they pointed out, could address issues relating to citizenship, and could be employed also in order to hold authorities to account. Here, NGOs should note that while digital and social media are becoming increasingly important channels for children and youth, there are a number of alternative promising spaces they aspire to make use in order to affect social and political change. When planning future interventions, NGOs can therefore consider in what ways they can best build on and help to develop children and youth's creative skills and potentials.

Provide a platform for cross-country experience sharing

While the participants of this study demonstrated a nuanced understanding of what citizenship implies, they questioned a possibility for sharing their experiences of citizenship with children and youth in other countries. By way of providing a platform for cross-country experience sharing, NGOs can enable children and youth to exchange ideas as to how they can better make their voices heard in alternative and creative ways. Simultaneously, such a platform can help to stimulate an increased sense of global connectedness and belonging, which in turn, will strengthen solidarity.

A platform for cross-country experience sharing will be of benefit also to the Danish NGOs and their partner organisations. As evident from this study and learning process, the participating organisations work in very diverse ways; each guided by their own organisational strengths and weaknesses. When seeking to support children and youth in becoming active, recognised citizens NGOs would benefit from openly discussing the challenges they face, and help each other to identify ways forward.

Strengthen the cooperation between Danish NGOs and their partners

In order to improve the sustainability of interventions, the Danish NGOs should consider also how to strengthen the cooperation with their partner organisations. From this study and learning process it has been documented that partner organisations are sometimes uncertain about what expectations they are to meet when collaborating with the Danish NGOs. As a result, a number of the participating organisations have spent far more time than demanded in order to produce comprehensive reports, rather than simply forwarding the pictures and notes from the focus group discussions. While these reports provide significant details on children and youth's citizenship practices, they fail to account for some of the nuances in how the participants experience especially the limits to substantive citizenship. They do so because they are written in a rather standardised 'NGO language' that covers the ways in which the participants themselves express their experiences. Moreover, the reports document a tendency to smooth over possible disjunctures in the attitudes and experiences of the participants. For instance, some participants have first stated that they have an important saying in decision-making, and then explained that they have no influence – without being questioned about this discrepancy. Such discrepancies, it should be noted, are important sources to knowledge about what is at stake for young citizens.

Against this ground, the following recommendations should be taken into consideration when planning new interventions in cooperation with partner organisations:

- Make sure the partner organisations know exactly what expectations to meet from the Danish NGOs (and vice versa).
- Develop mechanisms and procedures for evaluating interventions in collaboration with the partner organisations.
- Initiate a dialogue about the nature of standardised ‘NGO language’ that addresses also what consequences this language has for the production of new knowledge and unexpected findings.
- Develop a better understanding of why it is significant not to smooth over discrepancies during data collection and in the process of writing up reports.

Develop participatory and explorative approaches

Questionnaires and surveys are important methodological tools. However, this study and learning process has documented the significance of employing participatory and more explorative approaches to data collection. Apart from strengthening the participants in their experience of agency, these approaches leave room for new perspectives and unexpected findings.

When planning future programming, NGOs are therefore encouraged to build on this experience and further develop the use of participatory and explorative approaches. Such approaches can easily be combined with more ‘traditional’ methodological tools, and be used as part of more comprehensive studies.

Suggestions for follow-up activities

This study and learning process has proven that children and youth are capable of taking active part in the research process. In general, the participants have been highly dedicated in their work with the cameras, and they have exposed a number of significant and sometimes very intimate experiences during their discussions. By taking these experiences into account, NGOs can improve the sustainability of future interventions. Also for this reason, NGOs have an important reason to consider whether they are obligated to give something back to the participants, and if so, by what means.

Apart from making sure that the participants’ voices are being taken into account when planning future programming, NGOs are recommended to consider the following suggestions for follow-up activities:

- Facilitate a meeting with the participants in order to thank them for their time and efforts, and to explain them how their experiences will be used to inform future interventions.
- Encourage the participants to continue their work with the pictures. For instance, NGOs could support them in making an exhibition of their pictures.
- Encourage the participants to continue making use of creative and alternative avenues for making their voices heard – also when they experience to be met by a number of challenges in this regard.



APPENDIX: GUIDELINES FOR DATA COLLECTION

Methodology: a participatory approach

In order to explore how citizenship is practiced ‘from below’ data will be generated through a participatory approach. This approach encourages the participants to become active co-researchers, and opens up for explorations of children and youth’s own perspectives on what citizenship implies.

To actively engage participants in the study a combination of methodological tools will be used: visual methods and focus group discussions.

- The *visual methods* will centre on the work with cameras (digital or disposable). The participants will be equipped with cameras and encouraged to take pictures that in different ways illustrate their experiences of citizenship.
- *Focus group discussions* will be carried out with point of departure in the pictures taken by the participants, and centre on how the pictures relate to some of the possibilities and challenges they face in relation to becoming active and fully recognised citizens.

Data collection: time and scope

- 4-6 days should be allocated for the data collection.
- It is recommended that these days are divided into two periods: one period allocated for working with the visual methods (cameras), and one period allocated for conducting the focus group discussions and following up on the participants’ experiences of being involved in the study.
- Preferably, there should be less than two weeks in-between the two periods of data collection.
- The field research team should be composed of 2-4 persons who are familiar with the local context and trusted in the community where data is to be collected.
- Preferably, a team leader is selected to be responsible for the data collection and the returning of data.

Selection processes and criteria

- A minimum of 2 groups should be selected for the study.
- Each group should be composed of 6-8 participants.
- Preferably, the participants include both girls/women and boys/men.
- The age group is set to be 10 - 30 years.

In the process of selection, it should carefully be considered *how* the participants are selected and *who* are selected. In this regard, it is important that the groups are composed in a manner that inspires a productive process of working with the visual methods and of engaging in the focus group discussions. While some degree of homogeneity is an important point of departure for ensuring confidence and openness

within the group, it is simultaneously important to consider how different views and voices are best heard.

How: Participants can, for instance, be selected in one of the following ways:

- *Randomly:* If many people volunteer to participate, their names can be written down and drawn randomly.
- *Nomination:* Individuals (youth leaders, school teachers, NGO representatives, etc.) can be asked to nominate participants in accordance with who fit the criteria of selection.

Who: Participants can be selected against some of the following criteria:

- *Age*
- *Gender*
- *Level of internal proximity – or distance*
- *Minorities / majorities*
- *Power hierarchies*
- *‘Silent voices’ / ‘powerful voices’*

Initial meetings

When the participants have been selected, an initial meeting should be facilitated in order to further explain to them about the purpose and methodology of the study. If a team leader has been selected, he/she may be in charge of facilitating the meeting, but it is important that the whole research team is present from the outset.

When facilitating the meeting, the research team should stimulate openness by keeping the following things in mind:

- *Citizenship is an abstract and diffuse concept* – try to introduce the participants to the study by way of using locally and socially meaningful terms (rights, obligations, belonging, solidarity, recognition, dignity, respect, self-determination, justice, freedom etc.).
- *Citizenship is ascribed different meanings and expressed in multiple ways* – avoid giving the participants the impression that you have a clear-cut understanding of what citizenship implies.

Exercises with cameras (digital or disposable)

The work with the visual methods should begin with an introduction to how the participants are to work with the cameras. Following this introduction the participants are to choose a concrete exercise, they wish to engage with.

General considerations and proceedings

- Make sure all participants are confident with the technical aspects of using the camera.
- Divide the group into sub-groups of 2-4 participants.
- Each sub-group should take 10-15 pictures (preferably over 1-2 days).

- Choose whether research team members should follow some of the participants as they take the pictures, or whether the participants should explore on their own. While following the participants may encourage them to stick more closely to the concrete exercise, it may prevent them from capturing some of the more original and creative perspectives.

Concrete exercises

- Give each group 3-5 options for a concrete exercise they are to engage with (see below) – and let them choose one option. Preferably, the two groups should not be choosing the same exercise.
- Make sure all participants understand the exercise. If the exercise does *not* make sense to the participants you should help them to re-frame the question.

Exercise 1: ‘Recognition’

Question: What does it mean to be a recognised member of your community?

Mission: Take 10-15 pictures that in different ways portray what recognition – and *mis*recognition - means to you, and how you experience it in your daily life.

Exercise 2: ‘Justice’

Question: What does justice mean to you, and how does it relate to your rights and responsibilities as a member of your community?

Mission: Take 10-15 pictures that in different ways portray what justice – and *in*justice – means to you, and how you experience it in your daily life. Consider in what ways in/justice relates to how you attempt to exercise your rights and responsibilities.

Exercise 3: ‘Solidarity’

Question: What does solidarity mean to you, and when do you experience to act in unity with others?

Mission: Take 10-15 pictures that in different ways portray what solidarity means to you, and in what situations and surroundings you experience to act in unity with other people who make claims to justice and recognition.

Exercise 4: ‘Daily lives’

Question: How do you make your voice heard in your daily life?

Mission: Take 10-15 pictures that in different ways portray your positive experiences with making your voice heard in your daily social interactions – at home and in your community - and some of the challenges you may face.

Exercise 5: ‘Alternative and creative spaces’

Question: What are some of the creative means you make use of to influence decision-making and access justice in your daily life?

Mission: Take 10-15 pictures that in different ways portray some of the creative means you use to influence decision-making and access justice in your daily social interactions.

Focus group discussions – departure points and questions

Focus group discussions (with groups of 6-8 participants) are divided into two parts. The first part aims to explore the concrete experiences relating to the pictures, and the second part aims to make the participants discuss the pictures in a wider context of their experiences of citizenship.

Preferably there should be two moderators present – one who takes the lead in guiding the discussions, and an assistant moderator who takes notes and keep track on time.

As a moderator of the focus group discussion you should keep the following things in mind:

- Discussions should not exceed 90 minutes.
- Everyone should be heard in the discussion.
- Discussions should be free-flowing and participants should be encouraged to comment on and debate the content of each other's pictures.
- Make sure to ask questions that follow-up on the participants' statements and encourage them to elaborate on their reflections.

Part 1: Experiences relating to the pictures

- Describe the pictures you have taken.
- What is the central message of your pictures?
- Can you explain how these pictures relate to your daily experiences?
- Are there any other pictures you wish you could have taken?
- Do you think other people in your community would have taken similar pictures, if they were given the same exercise? Why / why not?
- How do you think other people in your community will understand your pictures?

Part 2: Experiences with citizenship in a wider context

- What does it mean to be a citizen, in your view?
Is it about:
 - Rights and responsibilities?
 - Recognition and respect?
 - Unity and a sense of belonging?
 - Local membership, national or global membership?
- In what ways do the pictures relate to your daily experiences of:
 - Being a recognised member of society and included in decision-making?
 - Being able to exercise your rights and responsibilities, and access justice?
 - Having some degree of self-determination and control over your own life?
- What are some of the most positive experiences you have with regards to being recognised as member of your community, and of being able to influence decision-making in your daily lives? And what are some of the challenges you face?
- In what ways would you encourage NGOs to support you in becoming active citizens in your community – and in a global world?

Final meetings

The research team is strongly encouraged to facilitate a final meeting with the participants in order to get their feedback on the process of working with the cameras and the focus group discussions. The following questions should be addressed to the participants:

- How did you experience working with the cameras? What were some of the positive experiences you had, and what were some of the constraints you experienced?
- How did you experience the focus group discussions? Were the questions meaningful to you? And what were some of the issues we failed to bring up?
- What are the most important things you have learned from the process?
- What are the most important things we can learn from the process?