

FOOTSTEPS

No.38 MARCH 1999

CHILD PARTICIPATION 

Vision for children

by Paul Stephenson

'IT WAS REALLY WONDERFUL. No-one has ever done it like that before. Now we know what the good and the bad things are in our community and we decided on what we can do to make it better.'

This could be the response of an adult who for the first time has been included in a process of identifying community needs. The voice is full of hope and desire to make a change. Yet the words belong to Sreevalli, a 14 year old girl living in rural India. She had just finished a full day of participatory activities with other members of the children's club in her village. The activities aimed to enable the children to identify and prioritise community needs and develop a plan of action to meet them. As a result of the process, the children developed ambitious plans to improve hygiene and waste disposal, to ask the authorities for more frequent and safer bus transport to school and to improve play facilities.

They also identified positive things in the community of which they were proud.

There are many millions of voices like Sreevalli's around the world. Voices of working children, children on the street, children at school, disabled children, children at risk of abuse and exploitation, and orphaned children who head households. Many children take huge responsibilities, face great risks and contribute considerably to family income and survival, but their voices are rarely heard by the communities and agencies who seek to help them.

How often do organisations working for the benefit of children seriously ask for children's opinions on the type of support that would most benefit them? Would enabling children's voices to



Photo: Paul Stephenson, Tearfund

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be heard when projects are planned increase their effectiveness? What other benefits could come out of involving children in the process of community development planning and action?

Many adults find it difficult to think of involving children in their work. In my discussions with people in different parts of the world, they share common fears about children's participation:

- Parental or adult authority and guidance may be weakened.
- Children already have too much 'power' or rights and are disrespectful of elders.
- Child participation goes against the culture of many countries.

'The child has the right to express an opinion and to have that opinion taken into account in any matter or procedure affecting the child'

UN Convention on the Rights of the Child: Article 12

FOOTSTEPS

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Footsteps is a quarterly paper, linking health and development workers worldwide. Tearfund, publisher of *Footsteps*, hopes that it will provide the stimulus of new ideas and enthusiasm. It is a way of encouraging Christians of all nations as they work together towards creating wholeness in our communities.

Footsteps is free of charge to individuals working to promote health and development. It is available in English, French, Portuguese and Spanish. Donations are welcomed.

Readers are invited to contribute views, articles, letters and photos.

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The Footsteps Office has moved...

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TEARFUND



CHRISTIAN ACTION WITH THE WORLD'S POOR

Sreevalli (pointing) with some of her friends. Where children have been allowed to participate, their role has proved very valuable.



Photo: Paul Stephenson, Tearfund

Listening to working children in Honduras

'In Honduras, in San Pedro Sula, we supported a programme for six years that provided a day centre for working children. It was situated in the market where the children work. We did an evaluation about a year ago. For the first time children were asked what they thought, and what they wanted. The programme staff were rather surprised to find that children didn't want to go to the centre, because it was in too dangerous a location. They felt it should be located somewhere nice so their parents wouldn't mind them going in the evening. I think that's a really good example of how important it is to ask children at the planning stage, or things may not work.'

SCF Desk Officer for Latin America

- Children's childhood should be protected – participation will turn them into 'little adults'.
- Children should be sheltered from adult responsibilities – already too many children work and carry burdens beyond their years.

The potential of children

Organisations commonly only consider what they and the community can do for children, rather than what children could do for their community. In community development projects, children are left out of any decision-making processes; mainly because adults feel that they know what is best for children; also because most programmes only provide help for adults. In addition children's contribution to development goes largely unrecognised. Children are seen as providing a silent and obedient labour force.

However we read in the Bible of examples that clearly show the ability of children to take on responsibility and leadership. For example, Josiah the boy king led his people back to God (2 Kings 22:1-2), and David took the stand for

Israel against Goliath (1 Samuel 17:29-33). Children's voices were also heard. Eli listened carefully to Samuel after God chose to speak directly to him. Above all, Jesus welcomed children in a way that surprised adults.

Children are characterised by their openness, enthusiasm, love, desire to learn and idealism. Recognising children's qualities will increase their potential to become change agents in their home, school and community environments. There are many examples (eg: in the Child to Child process) of children teaching their brothers and sisters simple health messages, and even teaching their own parents how to read and write. Children's movements in India and Peru have helped change government policy after children showed how strongly they felt about social issues and children's rights. Children now head households in many communities around the world due to a number of factors, including war, natural disasters, AIDS and family breakdown.

When children have participated in the planning, work and evaluation of projects their role has proved very valuable. It is important that ways for allowing children's voices to be heard are developed in negotiation with parents and the community. This process will also encourage children to learn through experience about the democratic process and their role as citizens.

What have we learned?

During the past two years, I have visited many different projects in which children play a key role in project activities. The example of Sreevalli points to some of the potential benefits:

- A concern for children can provide a catalyst for wider community action.

- Children may provide a unique insight into their community.
- Children can form associations, clubs and networks that encourage collective action, develop useful skills for life and build relationships.
- Children learn skills and responsibilities through effective participation.
- Action between children and adults in partnership builds trust and responsibility.
- Levels of corruption and discrimination against women and tribal groups are reduced in an activity when children are included.

Key principles

Encourage the full participation of children

Children can take part in projects at different levels and with various degrees of adult support. Their ages, abilities and cultural situations need to be considered. Participation needs to go beyond simply encouraging children to join in activities; they should take part in or initiate planning and decision making.

Establish their needs Include children's views from the beginning, rather than as an afterthought. Try to understand children's roles in the household and community, and what issues are relevant to them. Allow children to identify their own needs and interests, so development can begin with children's capabilities and build on their strengths, rather than focusing on their weaknesses.



Photo: Richard Hanson, Tearfund

Our village has good things, but some things need to change.

Plan and evaluate Use participatory methods to encourage children's input into planning, monitoring and evaluating projects or activities so that necessary information can be gathered. Methods such as drawing and role play may be more successful than discussions. Consider the abilities of the children, how to help them feel confident, and how to protect them when sharing painful or difficult information.

Ethical issues Encouraging children's participation in development is still a new idea. Many questions remain

unanswered. Involving children in development activities raises ethical issues. In many countries, parents must give their agreement before outsiders can work with children. Both children and parents should understand the reasons for and effects of such involvement. Participation should not result in anyone taking advantage of them or place them in any danger.

Don't be afraid! Adults may find it hard to begin working with children. Creating a relaxed situation, building good relationships, learning new ways of communicating with children and allowing children to make mistakes as part of the learning process – these can all present real challenges. But the results may enable children to develop vital skills which will provide the foundation for sustainable change in communities and wider society.

*Paul Stephenson is Child Development Consultant at Tearfund with experience in Central America, East Africa, Eastern Europe and India.
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Orphans in Uganda

The AIDS epidemic in Uganda has left many children without parents. If a man dies, traditionally the house and land are inherited by the father's family. This can leave the children and widow without land or a home. Often the extended family cannot afford to care for them. Fear and misunderstanding of AIDS can also lead to families blaming the widow for the death of the husband.

Fourteen year-old Alfred leads a household of his three younger brothers and sisters. 'UWCM (Uganda Women's Concern Ministries) found us when we were very badly off. We were just walking and moving around. There were four of us. Our father died during the millet harvest, and our mother just died. Our brother is mentally ill. We live on our own in a hut in the community. The community do not help us at all. In fact, they want to take things from us – even our relatives.'

Child-headed households are now common in many villages. Older children provide for the younger ones by working on the local plantations and cultivating their own vegetable and maize plots. UWCM listens to the children's stories, and respects the special needs that they have: 'They gave us a hoe to dig with,' says Alfred, 'and now we prepare food like millet, sweet potatoes and other things.'



Sharing the lessons of conflict management

I FOUND ISSUE 37 of *Footsteps* so interesting and appreciated the way you approached the topic of conflict management.

I was the Youth Ambassador representing Uganda in 1998 as part of World Vision's annual programme which brings together about 50 young people from 50 different countries for three months. The main aim of this programme is to try and solve the many conflicts in the world today.

This year our theme was 'Justice and Reconciliation' and 53 youths from 53 different countries took part. The training was held in California, USA, where we spent five weeks. All of us had skills in

Church-based community development course

This is a course developed by a *Footsteps* reader, Willem Klaassen. It consists of about 24 lessons and, following considerable interest from *Footsteps* readers, he is offering to make the course available free of charge to those with e-mail access. Please e-mail with details of your name, organisation, postal address and how and when you intend to use the course. In return he asks for a brief evaluation (with possible recommendations for improvement) once the course has been finished. The lessons are written only in English in MS-Works 4.0 and will be sent as an e-mail attachment file. Any readers able to translate the course into Spanish, French or Portuguese should also make contact.

E-mail: ruralmin@realnet.co.sz

Rural Ministries / Umnotto Farmers Assoc,
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the performing arts and we developed these to use in sharing what we learnt. Following training, we visited various countries including Taiwan, Switzerland, Germany, Austria and South Africa. We performed both to ordinary people and to Government officials, and the press often helped spread our message. We would like everyone to hear our message of peace, justice and reconciliation.

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A new understanding of the Kingdom of God

A CHANGE has taken place on the city rubbish tips. Before, they were only picked over by buzzards, but now the poorest people in Pucallpa are earning their living off the rubbish too. What has happened?

There are so many problems facing the people here that I don't know how to pray. The church restricts itself to teaching the Word and preaching the Kingdom of God in heaven, with no commitment to this world. Government leaders are only concerned with finding enough to eat and copying the lifestyle of the US and Europe. We need a different understanding of the Kingdom of God and pray that God will give us the spiritual strength to reach our goal.

Demosthenes Valera
Av 9 de Octubre E153
Camino al IPSS
Pucallpa 1
Ucayali
Peru

Training in fish farming

MEMBERS of our farming group have recently returned from a fish farming course in Babati, Tanzania, which we first heard about in *Footsteps*. The course was very impressive and we learned a lot. Now we are sharing with our other members and the

community all that we learned. At present we have 14 old fish ponds, but now we plan to build more and expand our present ones so we can try out the new ideas we have learned.

David Simiyu Walukesi
Yembe/Nasusi Organic Farming
Organisation
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Kimilili
Kenya

Natural fallow

THE PLANT AND ANIMAL DEBRIS which falls onto the soil during the fallow period is a source of organic material which, when broken down, releases elements that fertilise the soil. This contributes to improving cultivated crop yields. Because it covers the soil, natural vegetation significantly limits erosion and plays an important role in restructuring the soil.

In rural tropical African societies, natural fallow allows poor farmers to save both the money and manual labour that would be needed to buy and apply chemical fertilisers.



Photo: Tearfund

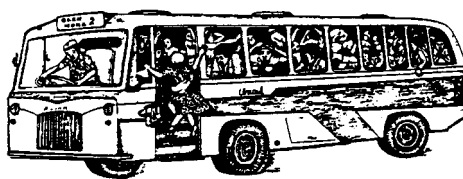
Natural fallow is rare in densely populated regions owing to the shortage of farming land. Here farmers are more likely to use chemical fertilisers to restore soil fertility. By contrast, in areas of low population natural fallow is practised without problems. In these forested regions, natural fallow has a great future in village soil practices as long as the village people are made aware of it and encouraged in its practice.

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Long distance drivers

RECENTLY I have been looking into the working conditions of long distance bus and lorry drivers. These men stay away from their families for a long time. They often travel into remote areas where they lack proper accommodation. Sometimes they sleep in their buses because they need to leave early. This may result in problems



for female passengers. Also mosquitoes can freely enter the buses spreading malaria.

Drivers often use prostitutes and run the risk of catching or spreading disease and AIDS. Sometimes they wash in rivers where they are exposed to waterborne diseases. To prevent accidents, these drivers need to have rules about how long they can drive and proper accommodation where they can rest. All of us put our lives in their hands when we travel.

Macmillan Njekeya
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FROM THE EDITOR

*If children live with criticism
they learn to condemn*

*If children live with hostility
they learn to fight*

*If children live with ridicule
they learn to be shy*

*If children live with shame
they learn to feel guilty*

*If children live with tolerance
they learn to be patient*

*If children live with encouragement
they learn confidence*

*If children live with praise
they learn to appreciate*

*If children live with fairness
they learn justice*

*If children live with security
they learn to have faith*

*If children live with approval
they learn to like themselves*

*If children live with acceptance and friendship
they learn to find love in the world*

ONE IN EVERY THREE PEOPLE in the world is a child. In Third World countries this rises to nearly one in every two people. This issue provides an important reminder of how often the potential of young people is ignored – to our cost. In many countries, children may be used as cheap labour, often exploited and working in poor conditions for low pay, damaging both their health and self-esteem. Young people who feel that they have no role in society and see others living well, can easily turn to crime, taking what they want by violence.

Children are the future for us all. The Bible reminds us of how God views their potential. We should all work to ensure not only that young people are well cared for, supported and encouraged to reach their full potential, but also that they are allowed to share their views. The poem here has been on my kitchen wall for many years to remind me how to treat my own children.

As you may have noted in the last issue, the *Footsteps* office has moved and has a new address and telephone number. Please do not use the previous address. We look forward to hearing of the different ways in which *Footsteps* has been of use to readers, to share in our special anniversary issue later this year.

Isabel Carter

Smoking November

THE ENVIRONMENT is nature's precious gift to all of us. What happens to it affects everyone.

As we all know, pollution is a growing problem. Here in Ethiopia the main causes of pollution are poor sanitation, trash and litter on the alleyways and the dumping of chemical waste from factories into rivers.

On the 22 November we observe *Hidar Sitatten* or 'Smoking November'. Every year on this day, people get up early and sweep up all the litter and burn it. The practice began during the reign of Emperor Menelik and has been carried out every year since.

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Amhara NR State
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A voice for working children

by Bhima Sangha and CWC with Paul Stephenson

THE STORY OF THE BHIMA SANGHA CHILDREN, a union of working children in Karnataka, is a fascinating one of how children are organising themselves to make changes to improve their situations. The development of this union has been facilitated by the organisation 'Concerned for Working Children' (CWC).

Founder members of CWC

Damodara 'Damu' Acharya, one of the founding members of CWC, came from a priestly background. While at university, Damu became very involved as an activist, calling for decentralised government. Once in employment, he became active in the Workers' Union and met with Nandana Reddy who already had plenty of experience as a trade unionist working for better conditions and rights for workers.

As they met and talked with workers in Bangalore, together with Lakshapathi, the other founder member, they became aware of the many children working in hotels and businesses. The children would ask, 'Why don't you do the same for us as you're doing with the adults? We work in the same conditions as them.' They realised the children were

making a good point. Legally most were too young to work and so were denied any workers' rights, often suffering at the hands of their employers. Other union members laughed at their concerns, saying, 'The problems are big enough for the adults without starting on the children. They are not important.'

However, they continued to gather information on children's working conditions and began to lobby the government to look at the problem. Their work began to have some effect in improving children's working conditions in the cities. Together they formally registered CWC in 1985.

The working children, who in many ways were more militant than adults, were deeply disappointed when all their efforts made no difference as the law still did not recognise them as workers. Since

they could not change the reasons why they had to work, they wanted the law to recognise them as workers and protect them as children. Together with union members they began an exercise to draft alternative legislation for working children. In 1985 this was converted into an official Bill by the Central Labour Ministry and presented to the Central Cabinet for approval. Though not all their requests were met, the Bill was finally approved in 1986, after causing much debate on the issue of working children.

However, more and more children were moving into the cities from rural areas. CWC felt it was not enough just to work in the cities. They wanted to try and improve situations in the rural areas, preventing the flow of young people to the cities and their likely exploitation.

One child's story

The CWC activists worked to bring groups of children together, listening to their stories and gaining their confidence. Nagaraja Kolkere's story is typical of many. He left school at eleven and looked after his disabled younger brother before leaving his village to work in small hotels, in shops, as a houseboy and on farms for varying pay and conditions. Sometimes he would receive only food and shelter in return for his work. His employers rarely told him how much he would earn, leaving Nagaraja at their mercy.

As the groups grew stronger and more confident, the children decided they should form a working children's union which they called Bhima Sangha in Kundapur, Bangalore District. Nagaraja was one of the founder members.

Looking back on how Bhima Sangha developed, the children listed a number of key points:

- Children were aware of their problems before Bhima Sangha began, but felt unable to do anything about them.
- Parents did not listen to their children; they had their own problems. Fathers would listen to older boys but never to their daughters.



Children who have to work want the law to recognise them as workers and protect them as children.



Photo: Paul Stephenson, Tearfund

Children do the same work, under the same conditions, as adults.

- Parents and adults felt that it was a waste of time for their children to attend the centres run by Bhima Sangha and would sometimes prevent children attending meetings.
- As Bhima Sangha members began action programmes such as tree planting in their communities, many adults became convinced of their sincerity and purpose.

Appropriate education

Research by CWC found the formal education system had various problems which made it more likely for children to drop out or fail. The subjects taught were often not relevant to their lives; there were too few teachers so that classes were very large; and children from low castes were humiliated and often treated badly. So education naturally became a priority area.

An appropriate education system was piloted by CWC. It took into account children's ideas of what a 'dream school' should be like. Timetables and subjects should reflect the reality of children's lives. The approach adopted by CWC allows children to work in mixed age and ability groups and sometimes on their own. The activities are centred around the children – they choose an activity and work through it, only asking the teacher or an older child for help if they don't understand something.

Kanasina Shale (a pilot Dream School) was built by one community in 13 days. Children and community members helped in the building work. It has 80 children between five and eight years

old. In contrast to most Indian schools, the atmosphere in the class is calm and relaxed. Children sit in a circle on colourful mats, quietly working on their own activities. The teacher does not raise his voice, carry a stick or lecture the children. He walks around, watching and giving help when needed or asking questions.

This new approach is very different to his previous 20 years of teaching work. 'Although getting the children organised and used to the new system was difficult,' he explained, 'they can now work without direction from me. It's a much better system. They learn very quickly and enjoy the activities.' He continued, 'I have a good relationship with the children. They speak to me and share personal things. That wouldn't have happened before.'

Appropriate Education has been recognised as a pilot project by the state education department and CWC has agreed to provide training and follow-up support for teachers. CWC are planning to introduce the system for older children.

Makkala panchayats (children's councils)

At first CWC began working through the *panchayats*, bodies responsible for local governing. They selected five *panchayats* within the region with very different situations, from isolated rural villages to tribal, fishing or semi-urban villages. Bhima Sangha members asked to participate in the task forces, which included government ministers and officials together with community, NGO and Bhima Sangha representatives.

However, children were still not allowed equal opportunities within these task forces. So they decided to form their own *makkala panchayats* in five *panchayats* in Kundapur Taluk. Just as with adults, the children seeking election had to campaign, be elected through the use of ballot papers and then represent children from their area. Some places were reserved for girls, children from tribal or low caste groups and disabled children. Representatives from the elected *makkala panchayat* would pass on the children's views and observations to the official *panchayat*.

Some became very appreciative of the children's support and observations,

leading to a change in attitude among *panchayat* members. There have been four noticeable changes:

- Recognition and respect for the work of children.
- Needs and projects for children can now be better planned.
- The children have helped to bring people closer to the *panchayat*. If anything happens, the children immediately bring it to the attention of the *panchayat* members. The children's confidence has helped others to speak out and share their views.
- There has been an increase in people's participation in public work such as building footbridges, schools and nurseries.

There is no doubt that, by setting up their own *makkala panchayats*, the children have gained confidence and learned a great deal about the process of holding elections which will help them to participate well in the functioning of local government when they grow up.

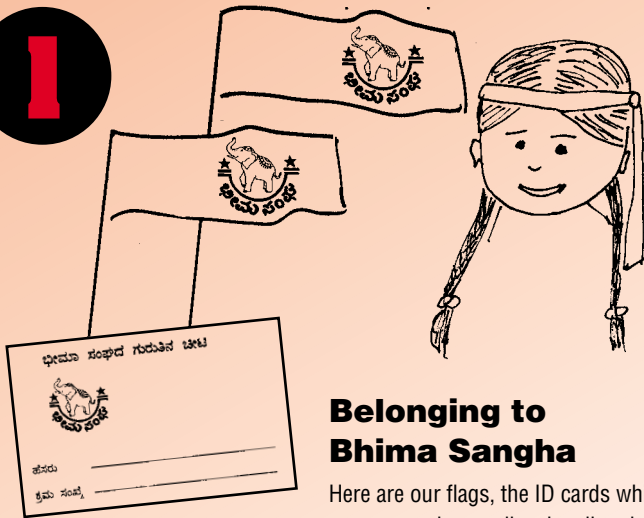
This article was adapted from Paul Stephenson's reports on the work of CWC and Bhima Sangha. This began in Bangalore and Kundapur in 1990. Colleagues at CWC also contributed to the article: Nandana, Lakshmi, Kavita and Madhu. Their address is: The Concerned for Working Children, 303/2 L B Shastri Nagar, Veemanapura Post, Bangalore 560 017, India. They have a web page...

<http://www.workingchild.org>



Recording o

1



Belonging to Bhima Sangha

Here are our flags, the ID cards which we wear and our yellow headband.



2

Walkathon

This took place in April 1990 when hundreds of children walked for 8km to bring various problems to the attention of government officials. The problems included the lack of drinking water, access to schools, lack of crèches, disappearance of forests, lack of street lights and hospital facilities.



AT FIRST WE TRIED

to remember the history of Bhima Sangha by discussing together. At times we forgot things or got confused. But it was useful to look back and identify both the good things and times when things went wrong.

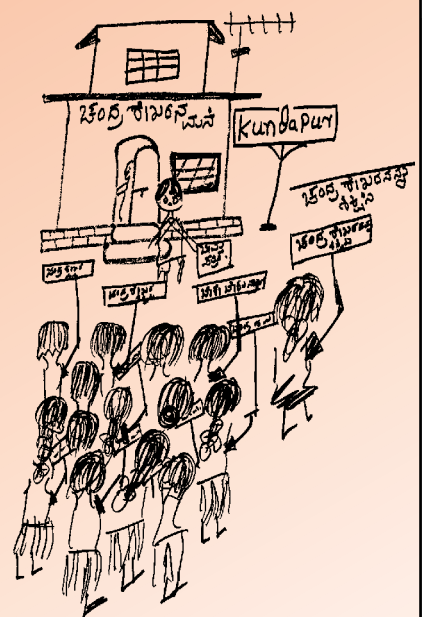
Some of Bhima Sangha's objectives...

- To identify and organise working children
- To provide a forum for sharing our needs and hopes
- To ask for fair wages
- To end the various kinds of exploitation we suffer
- To shape our own future, rather than letting elders do this for us
- To be represented in all decision making processes concerning us, from village to international level

3

Ayodhya Hotel incident

In 1992 one of the waiters working in the Hotel Ayodhya in Bangalore revealed the bad treatment given to children working there. CWC and Bhima Sangha rescued the children. Some were reunited with their families and others were given training. Children from Bhima Sangha protested outside the hotel owner's house.



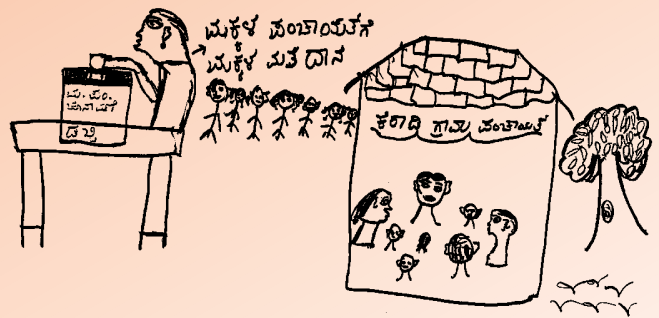
our history

by Saraswathi,
Gangadhara, Vanaja,
Manju, Chandrawathi,
Praveena and Pramoda

6

Makkala Panchayats (children's councils)

Bhima Sangha children were involved in planning, conducting and monitoring elections to children's councils in April 1997. These were held in five panchayats in Kundapur Taluk. Children filled in ballot papers.



The suggestion of recording our history using drawings came from Mr Paul. The drawing was quite difficult. We really had to use our brains and work hard. But we all enjoyed it. It took a week to complete.

When somebody sees these drawings, they will believe that Bhima Sangha has achieved all this. In a report all you can say is that somebody 'participated'. But through a drawing you can use your imagination to show how and where a person stood, how they spoke etc. That is definitely an advantage.

Through this exercise we have come to know how Bhima Sangha was, where we are now, what we are

doing and where we hope to go in the future. It gives us a clear picture. We will draw these pictures on the walls as well. It is easy to show to people who want to know about Bhima Sangha. We have plans to paint it on cloth too, so that it can be folded and carried wherever we go.

The photo shows how large the finished history was. We don't have room to fit it all in but on this page are just a few of the drawings...

4



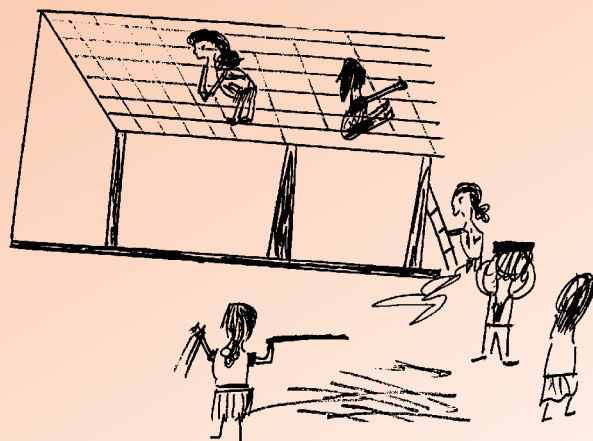
1996 regional consultation

The first regional consultation of working children for the whole of Asia was held in April 1996. There were many workshops and activities. About 5,000 working children came, some from Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Thailand.

5

Building programme

Children and community members worked together to build the Extension School at Belve, Kundapur Taluk. The sight of girls nailing the roof provided a powerful illustration of their desire to have equal opportunities.





Changing attitudes

REACHING PARENTS AND COMMUNITY

Child researchers from Bhima Sangha visited parents of members and asked them their views about their children's involvement...



Change for one boy

Ullur Manju had received training from Bhima Sangha and had travelled to the Oslo conference on Child Labour in October 1997. His father talked about the changes he had seen in Manju. As a child, his family had made him grow his hair long as an offering to a god. He was teased a lot at school because of this. He had no interest in studying at school because 'we were taught with thrashing sticks'. He found work first as a farm worker, then on the railway.

Later he joined Bhima Sangha and his confidence grew. Through them he received vocational training in leather work and is now self employed with hopes to train others and create jobs. As a young child he would never say a word and hid whenever he was asked a question. Now he has given speeches and presentations to NGOs and

children's groups in India as well as in Oslo. His father said, 'Manju is a much more confident boy. He has opportunities. He has seen things that I could never imagine seeing in my lifetime. My support for him is strong. It is a very good thing.'

Change for one girl

Vanaja also went to the conference in Oslo and is now a trained builder. Her mother has an injury that prevents her from working. Her father is mostly absent and spends most of his time drinking and gambling. In his absence Vanaja's older brother makes the decisions for the family.

Vanaja's mother commented, 'The children can decide what they want to do. It is their decision. I support Vanaja's work. I was surprised at first, but now I can see that it makes her happy.' It was

difficult for her to imagine that these opportunities would be available to her daughter. 'The relatives are still not convinced, but her brother agrees that she can continue.'

Members were asked if their respect for their parents had become less as they grew in confidence and experience. In fact they felt that instead of growing less, their respect had increased. The more children understand about the social and political reasons for their families' poverty, the more they respect their parents for their dignity and ability to cope. Children at the training centre receive the same food as they would at home and are not ashamed of their parents when they arrive at the centre in the traditional clothes of the lower castes. These are symbols of their culture and traditions of which they are proud.

Changing traditional roles

Generally, girls are not allowed to go outside their homes – their role is to fetch fuel and water and attend to domestic chores. Girls and boys are supposed to do different tasks. The intentions of parents are good but they are influenced by the society around them and find it difficult to make changes.

Bhima Sangha believes there should be equality among boys and girls in every area, including the work place. But it is difficult for children alone to create awareness. Parents and community members need to be convinced about the need for such a change. Working children's, women's and youth movements should all take up the responsibility of creating such an awareness among the public.



Photo: Richard Hanson, Tearfund

Community attitudes

A Bhima Sangha member comments, 'Initially, in our village, the community did not have faith in Bhima Sangha. But Bhima Sangha and Makkala Panchayat campaigned for a foot bridge to be built which has been of great value for people who need to cross the river and for children to go to school. We have also applied for a postman to be based in our village. Now, community people are convinced about the good intentions of Makkala Panchayat and Bhima Sangha. Now they believe us!'

Children's attitudes

Manju comments, 'I have learnt to be self-reliant. I am now aware that we children have our rights. I get furious if I see anybody beating children. I am also deeply concerned about our environment.'

'I know that through our own Sangha we can fight together if there are problems for children. I have learnt how to participate actively in processes and to encourage others to do the same. If there are more collectives and unions it is

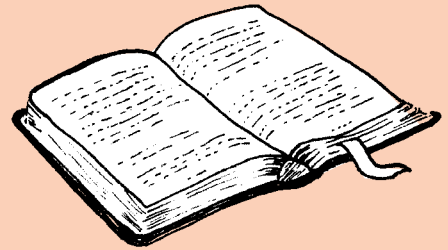
possible to bring a lot of pressure on the government to make changes for the better.'

Six representatives of Bhima Sangha contributed to this exercise and shared their comments. They are Saraswathi, Nagaraja, Vanaja, Manju, Chandrawathi and Gangadhara. All are (or have been) leaders in Bhima Sangha and worked together to produce their visual history along with other members of Bhima Sangha. Their address is c/o CWC (page 7).

BIBLE STUDY

Jesus and children

by Stephen Rand



THE STORIES of Jesus's relationship with children show his positive attitude towards them. He refused to accept the attitudes of his society towards children, which regarded them as insignificant and unimportant. Just as he was willing to touch the leper and the unclean woman, so he was willing to pick up a child to teach the disciples a lesson and to gather children around him as being important in themselves.

Read Matthew 18:1-10

Here Jesus turns a discussion between proud adults arguing about who was the greatest into a lesson – to show that the Kingdom of God places the greatest value on the least. Jesus identifies himself with the child. 'Whoever welcomes a little child like this in my name, welcomes me.'

Read Matthew 19:13-15

Just a few verses later, the same disciples are trying to prevent children from seeing Jesus. Once again he confirms their importance to him by saying, 'The Kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.'

Read Matthew 21:15-16

The religious authorities disapprove of the children's behaviour as they shout 'Hosanna to the Son of David!' in the temple. Jesus is quick to take the side of the children and recognises their ability to understand and share spiritual truth.

Jesus' actions reinforced these same priorities. Two of the three people he raised from the dead were children: Jairus' daughter (Mark 5:21-43) and the widow's son (Luke 7:11-17). He used a small boy whose willingness to share his lunch revealed the doubt of the disciples and, as a result, five thousand people were fed. Jesus himself provides a perfect example of child development: 'The child grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom and the grace of God was upon him.' (Luke 2:40) Surely these simple words should guide us in caring for and supporting all children, made in the image of God.

For discussion

- What does Jesus teach us about our attitude towards children?
- How should we use the experience of children in our churches in the light of this teaching?
- Is Matthew 18:6-10 relevant to the exploitation of children's labour? How can we improve this in our own community?
- What are the barriers to child development in our own community?

Stephen Rand is the Prayer and Campaigns Director of Tearfund.



Photo: Richard Hanson, Tearfund



Photo: Richard Hanson, Tearfund

Understanding the Views of Children

by Glenn Miles

IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT, listening to people is seen to be an essential part of the process. However, even when participatory methods mean that the views of women, farmers, the elderly and the disabled, as well as community leaders, are heard, children are seldom consulted.

Why are children left out?

- It is felt that they do not have anything to contribute.
- They hold no power in their communities and do not have a voice.

Why listen to children?

- If a programme is focused on children they have a right to be involved in what may affect them.
- If children are likely to benefit from a programme, they will understand the issues more clearly from a child's point of view than an adult could.
- Adults will have their own agendas, which may differ from those of children.
- If there are misunderstandings then these can be made clear and discussed.
- Children are often enthusiastic and keen to take part and be heard.

- Children who participate will understand the issues better and will then be better able to make informed decisions in the future.
- Children are not inferior, nor are they ignorant of the issues.

How can we listen?

A simple survey or list of questions can be prepared so that the views of many children can be heard. There are a number of ways of doing this:

Individual surveys These are better for sensitive issues and for discovering how common are different kinds of health-damaging behaviour. Individual surveys take a lot of time. They can be written questionnaires or personal questions.

Focus groups Discovering children's opinions, experiences or abilities may be easier in small groups. Children help to

encourage new ideas from each other and more children's views can be heard in a shorter time.

The type of questions asked must take into account:

- the age and understanding of children
- whether children are able to read and write. Drawings or drama could be used with children who are not literate, to avoid direct questions.
- how easy it is to have access to different groups of children. For example, school children are easier to interview but the views of street children may be equally important.

Questionnaire surveys Questionnaires have been criticised for being clumsy compared to other methods but they are a relatively quick and easy way to do a survey with children. They are also a good way to learn about doing research with children and can be done in a classroom setting.

Who should listen?

Research with children can be done by health workers, teachers or youth leaders who are good at communicating with children. This means that as well as being good listeners they also need to be understandable in the way they communicate. You will know adults who children find it easy to talk to. Where sensitive subjects are being raised or children have been traumatised in some way, then the person doing the research should first receive training in communicating with children from a qualified person.



Concerns and considerations

Some questions that need to be considered before listening to children's views...

- Will better understanding benefit children in the long term?
- Do the benefits of using surveys or questionnaires outweigh the difficulties and discomfort for children?
- Have the questions first been tested on a small group of children?
- What are the risks or costs if the research is or is not carried out?
- Will children be given the opportunity to refuse or withdraw if they choose to?
- Will children's answers remain confidential? How can children be sure of this?
- Will parents, as well as children, be asked for permission for their child to participate?
- Will children and parents be invited to comment on the overall results?
- What will be the consequences if children's views are then ignored in the final outcome?
- How will the information be made available to those in a position to make changes?

Glenn Miles has experience in Cambodia with Urban Community Health and at present works as a child development consultant for Tearfund. He can be contacted c/o Asia Team, Tearfund, 100 Church Road, Teddington, TW11 8QE, UK.

E-mail: gmmiles@compuserve.com



Case study

A survey of children in Sri Lanka

Project aims

The LEADS groups in Sri Lanka used a written survey with school children. A random sample of children was selected from several different schools by choosing every fifth child in the school registers. This was in an area known to be at high risk from sexual abuse. Parents were informed about the survey and children could choose not to complete the survey if they felt uncomfortable. They were told that the individual results would be confidential from teachers and parents, and the way the overall results would be used was explained.

After asking a number of questions that gave a picture of their socio-economic background, children were asked questions about what they understood about sexual issues, HIV/AIDS, and what they wanted to know more about. They were also asked whether they had done sexual things with children their age, with adults and with adults for money. They were then asked what would help children not to be involved in sexual behaviour with adults and what would help children once they were already involved.

Findings

10% of children (aged between 13 and 17) said that they had taken part in sexual activities. Most felt it was OK to be involved with people their own age but wrong to be involved in sexual activities with adults and gave many reasons for this. When asked why children took part in sexual activities with adults, 19% said for fun, 38% for money, 30% to earn money for their families and 34% because they were forced to. Further explanations mentioned force, poverty, lack of parents or adults to care for them and the influence of TV, films and tabloid papers.

When asked how they learnt about sex, 46% said they learnt from magazines and videos, 32% from friends and only 10% from parents and 12% from teachers. 80% had heard about AIDS but less than half knew how AIDS was passed on. Only 23% had received education about pregnancy and only 12% had received advice on contraception. Most children wanted to learn more about these issues.

Results

The results provided both a clearer understanding of the level of child sexual exploitation in the area and an awareness for teachers on what subjects needed to be included in the sex education lessons. It gave children a rare opportunity to voice their opinions and these were then made available to the decision makers – teachers, health workers, social workers and police.

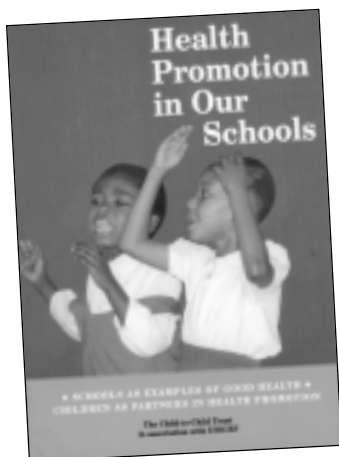
Consequences

- Teachers were trained about what they should include in sex education and in understanding the needs of child protection.
- A larger study was done with older children.
- The results and clearer understanding of the size of this problem was shared with police and decision makers.

The responses to questions on how children could be helped enabled LEADS to appreciate that children may often have the answers to our problems if we are prepared to ask them.

*Information supplied by
Tony Senerewatne of LEADS.
E-mail: leads@panlanka.net*





Health Promotion in Our Schools

by H Hawes

Published by Child to Child, 1997

ISBN 0 946182 10 8

This useful book describes how to use the Child to Child approach in schools. It includes the use of surveys. The book costs £4.00 including surface postage and packing (£5.00 for airmail postage) from:

TALC
PO Box 49
St Albans
Herts
AL1 5TX
UK

PRA with street children in Nepal

by R Baker

This was a special issue (No 25) on children's participation, published in 1996 by IIED *PLA Notes* and looks at using drawings with children in the PRA technique. Available from:

IIED
3 Endsleigh St
London
WC1H 0DD
UK

Communicating with Children: Helping children in distress

by Naomi Richman

ISBN 1 870322 49 5

This is one of a series of Development Manuals published by Save the Children in 1993. The effects of conflict and emergencies on children can be devastating. This book aims to help those working in such situations to develop their listening and communication skills with children. It provides a number of case studies and details of how to run training workshops.

The manual is available from TALC and costs £4.00 including surface postage and packing (£5.00 for airmail postage). Address above.

Children's Participation

by Roger Hart

ISBN 1 85383 322 3

Roger Hart's book gives a very practical overview of the issues surrounding children's participation. The book looks mainly at involving children in community development and environmental care. It suggests effective methods and provides several case studies. It's well laid out, clearly written, and draws from the author's research and practice over the past ten years. Recommended as a source book for teachers, youth workers and community development workers.

Cost £22.55 including surface mail (£21.45 in UK) from:

Littlehampton Book Services
PO Box 53
Littlehampton
BN17 7BU
UK

Fax: +44 1903 828802

E-mail: orders@lbsltd.co.uk

Stepping Forward Children and young people's participation in the development process

Edited by Johnson, Ivan-Smith, Gordon, Pridmore and Scott

Published by Intermediate Technology

Young people have much to offer their communities, but they are often excluded in decisions and policies that affect their development. This book was written following an international workshop on children's participation. It includes many case studies from different countries. The main topics covered include ethical issues, methods of participation, use in crisis situations, implications for organisations and the key qualities needed for children's participation in development.

Available at £9.15 (including postage) from:

IT Publications
103-105 Southampton Row
London
WC1B 4HH
UK

Fax +44 171 436 2013

E-mail: orders@itpubs.org.uk

Five Friends of the Sun Longmans Child to Child Reader

by Hugh Hawes

When Tulio, a farmer, was killed by a land mine, his death was not ignored by the animals. This is an imaginative new story linking the lives of both those involved in the manufacture and use of land mines and those who suffer their deadly consequences. It encourages children to use their power to raise the awareness of those around them, to protect others and to protest against the deadly threat that landmines bring to the innocent.

Order from TALC (address above).

Child to Child Activity Sheets

These are a resource for teachers and health and community workers. They are designed to help children understand how to improve health in other children, their families and communities. There are many different sheets available on a wide variety of subjects. 35 activity sheets have been bound into one book called the *Child to Child Resource Book: Part 2*. This costs £5.30, including surface postage. Sheet 8.5 on Land Mine Awareness is a new sheet and not included in the book. All are available from TALC (address above).

Various activity sheets have been translated into a number of different languages. Further information and a newsletter is available from:

Child to Child
Institute of Education
University of London
20 Bedford Way
London
WC1H 0AA
UK



It's the Young Trees that Make a Thick Forest

by Redd Barna

A report on learning experiences with participatory rural appraisal involving both adults and children in Kyakatebe, Uganda. The ideas and activities described can be adapted to many different situations by development workers.

Available from IIED (address above).

Children's Participation in Action Research

This is a report by ENDA on a Training Course for Trainers held in Johannesburg in 1993. It describes a training programme for doing action research with children.

For more details write to:

ENDA-Zimbabwe

PO Box 3492

Harare

Zimbabwe

A Very Special Place

Macmillan Readers:

Living Health Level 4

by Agi Kiss

Wambui's grandmother knows how to use the plants in the forest to heal people. Now she has begun to teach Wambui as well. Wambui's school teacher supports her dreams of becoming a doctor but doesn't understand Wambui's desire to learn about both methods. This is a delightful story, written for older children, of the relationship between traditional and western medicine. It has an accompanying fact file looking at the differences in both methods of healing and how both are important to the health of people throughout the world.

This is one of a series of readers published by Macmillan. They cost £4.00 including



Tearfund reports

Our Voice

by Paul Stephenson and Bhima Sangha

This new report documents a participatory action research project conducted by the author with children from the working children's union, Bhima Sangha, in India. It describes how the project was developed with the children; what they did and what was learned.



Experiments with Child Participation: Nurturing citizenship and civil society in village India

by Paul Stephenson

This report details the work of The Concerned for Working Children, Bangalore, India, and is a useful accompaniment to *Our Voice*. It gives the background to the evolution and work of Bhima Sangha.

Child Development Study Pack

by Glenn Miles and Paul Stephenson

This new pack describes good practice for project leaders and evaluators who work with children. It includes case studies, resources and a sample questionnaire to use in evaluation. It is available free of charge from Tearfund.

For all three of these reports write to:

Paul Stephenson, Tearfund, 100 Church Rd, Teddington, TW11 8QE, UK

postage and packing from TALC (address above).

Enfants en recherche et action

Published by ENDA

This book presents the experiences of many African urban animators and describes the activities they have set up with child-partners. Rather than claiming easy 'success stories' for children in difficult situations, this book is based on considerable thought and practical experiences gained over ten years. It explores their relationships with these children and the methodology they are using in their work. The book is only available in French and costs US \$20.

Payment must be in advance by cheque or banker's order to:

ENDA

La Documentation Centrale

BP 3370

Dakar

Senegal

W Africa

Fax: +221 8235157 / 8222695

Stratégies pour l'Espoir

The two latest books in this series look at efforts in AIDS education among young people and are highly recommended. They are called *Un Idéal Commun* and *Les Jeunes entre Eux*. Though featured in *Footsteps* 36, we didn't mention that they

were available in French. Free copies are available for organisations in sub-saharan Africa. Otherwise they cost £3.25 including postage and packing from TALC (address as above).

Guide My Steps

compiled by Steve Bishop

Tearfund

Copies are still available of this useful compilation of 40 Bible studies from *Footsteps*. It is available in English, French, Spanish and Portuguese. *Footsteps* readers are able to request one free copy. Larger orders cost £2.50 each. Please write, explaining how you would use a copy, to:

Footsteps

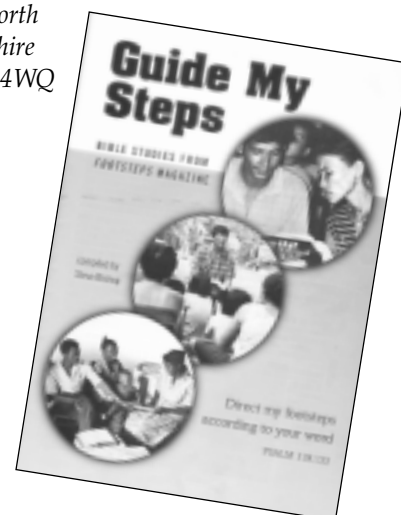
PO Box 200

Bridgnorth

Shropshire

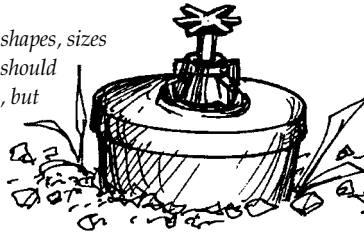
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UK



Land mine awareness

Mines come in all shapes, sizes and colours. They should never be picked up, but only destroyed by mine clearance teams.



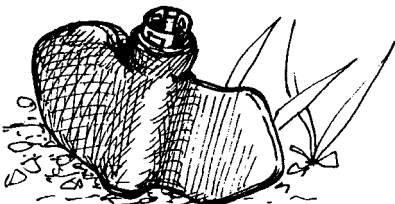
THOUSANDS OF CHILDREN all over the world are in danger of death or injury from land mines and unexploded bombs. An estimated 100 million land mines lie buried in many different countries. They are used by soldiers and terrorists and are easily available and cheap to buy.

Land mines must be removed to prevent children and adults being killed and maimed – but this is difficult, slow and expensive as few areas are mapped to show where mines have been laid. Children can learn to be alert to the dangers in areas where mines and other unexploded weapons are known to exist, learn how to avoid them and encourage others to do the same.

Land mines come in many different sizes, shapes and colours. They are usually painted to make them hard to see: green in forest areas and brown or black for farming areas. Whatever the design of a land mine, it can never tell the difference between war and peace, or the difference between the steps of a child or a soldier.

Effects on children's lives

- Children are in danger as they often collect firewood or water, look after cattle or play in areas which may be mined.
- Children suffer when family and friends are killed or injured by mines.
- Children injured by mines who need artificial limbs are unlikely to have their needs met as a growing child requires a new limb every six months.
- Children with permanent injuries may give up all hope for the future.
- Children go hungry because activities such as farming, fishing, grazing cattle or gathering roots cannot continue in areas which have been mined.



- Children become fearful because everyday activities like walking to school, visiting friends or going to market can be dangerous.

Encouraging awareness

Teachers can train children to recognise what mines look like. They can help them learn the warning signs (sticks, coloured tape, notices) used to show that a mine is nearby. They may be able to invite mine clearance teams to talk at the school or invite children injured by mines to share their stories.

Most importantly, teachers can help children learn what to do if they see a

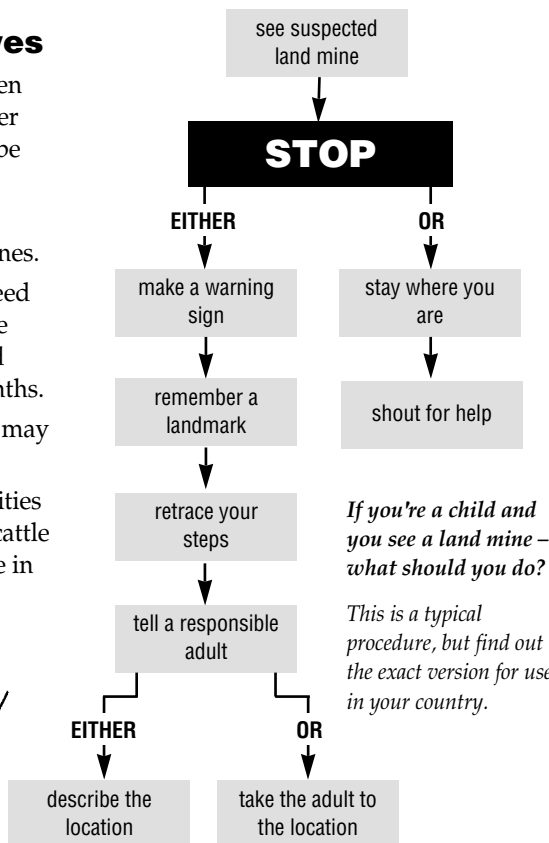
Some ideas for role plays

- A group of children have taken the goats to graze. Maria wanders off on her own. She sees a sign with a picture of an explosion and realises she has walked into a mined area. She is very frightened and calls out to her friends. What do they do? How do they help her? What advice can they give?
- Phuong and Hai are walking to school after a heavy rain storm when they see a suspicious object near the path. What will they do? Who will they tell? How will they remember where they saw the object?
- Quy and his brother had been digging for worms for the family ducks when a land mine exploded. The mine killed his brother, took off Quy's right hand and leg and left him blind in one eye. When he came out of hospital he did not want to go back to school. How did his friends help him?

suspected land mine. Local authorities may use variations in different countries, so always follow the local procedure when available. See the example of a procedure below.

Children could draw posters to explain the correct procedures. They could make up role plays, games, songs or poems to help them learn and remember the correct steps. Children should never be encouraged to go looking for mines.

This information is adapted from an activity sheet on land mines prepared by Child to Child, 20 Bedford Way, London, WC1H 0AL. Details of how to obtain more information are on page 15.



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