CHILD PARTICIPATION: TOGETHER WE DECIDE

Background

As part of a series of conferences that serve as platforms for social policy and child rights, the Egypt National Child Rights Observatory, (ENCRO), established in January 2009 under the umbrella of the State Ministry of Family and Population in collaboration with UNICEF, IDSC and the support of the Italian Cooperation is organizing a conference entitled “Child Participation: Together We Decide”.

Children’s rights to participation are addressed in several provisions throughout the UN Convention on the rights of the Child (CRC), which is the most universally embraced human rights treaty in history and contains a comprehensive set of international legal standards for the protection and well-being of children. Although there have been other international treaties and agreements concerned with children’s rights, this Convention is unique in that:

- it is comprehensive, ensuring children their civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights;
- it is universal, applying to all children in all situations in virtually the entire community of nations;
- it is unconditional, calling on even those governments with scarce resources to take action to protect children’s rights;
- It is holistic, asserting that all rights are essential, indivisible, interdependent, and equal.

The CRC specifies that children are entitled to enjoy the right to freedom of expression (Article 12, 13), freedom of thought, conscience and religion (Article 14), and freedom of association (Article 15). In addition, children should have access to information (Article 17), especially when it is aimed at the promotion of their well being and health, as it is a necessary foundation for informed participation in decision-making. Article 12 (The right to be heard) of the Convention states that children have the right to express their views in all matters affecting them and requires that those views be heard and given due weight in accordance with the child's age and maturity. It recognizes the potential of children to enrich decision-making processes, to share perspectives and to participate as citizens and actors of change.

The practical meaning of children's right to participation must be considered in each and every matter concerning children. This article backed by those cited above indicates that children need to be involved in the process of realizing their rights. Their involvement according to the General comment No 12 (on CRC Article 12) of the General Committee on the Rights of the Child in June 2009, “should not only be a momentary act, but the starting point for an intense exchange between children and adults on the development of policies, programmes and measures in all relevant contexts of children’s lives”.
As a fundamental right of the child, the right to participation stands on its own; it requires a clear commitment and effective actions to become a living reality and therefore is much more than a simple strategy. Therefore, participation is one of the guiding principles of the Convention, as well as one of its basic challenges.

The conference will bring together policy experts, practitioners and representatives of institutions with child-participatory initiatives/programs and activities with academic researchers from Middle Eastern, North African and Mediterranean countries. These participants will exchange successful experiences, case-studies and evidence-based research on child participation. The exchanged and discussed proposals will also address the ways in which advocating for duty bearers to embrace child participation as essential are made possible and could reflect on Egypt. International experts and practitioners will also be invited as key note speakers presenting child participation policy position papers.

Call for Papers

International, regional and local researchers and policy experts are invited to submit proposals in the following formats:

1) Individual research and policy papers, which should:
   • Address child participation in one or more categories of human rights (social, economic, cultural, political and civil).
   • Address child participation in any of the following institutional levels (national, community, school, work, household, individual, etc).
   • Discuss implications for public policies that enhance and advance the role of children’s participation in all areas of social life.

2) Poster and audio/visual presentations (i.e. short documentaries or news reports), which should:
   • Display information or report using a mixture of graphic and text.
   • Contain the same categories of text in the same order as other papers or printed reports.

All abstracts for papers will be selected according to:

1. Clarity of topic, problem statement or hypotheses
2. A sound and a coherent presentation, including consistency hypotheses/conclusions
3. Added value/originality of the findings/conclusions
4. Relevance of problem to the Egyptian context
5. Operational recommendations with policy implications
6. A solid and appropriate methodological approach, be it quantitative or qualitative
7. Proof of a strong empirical evidence-base supporting findings
Submitted papers and audio/visual presentations could address one or more of the following themes:

1. **The Role of the State in Encouraging and Promoting Child Participation**
   This could entail but is not limited to:
   - National policies and/or action plans that target the enhancement of child civil, social, cultural, economic and political participation
   - Case studies of child participation in policy formulation and implementation

2. **Child Participation in Non-State Organisations**
   This could entail but is not limited to:
   - Child participation in family life and decision making at home.
   - Child participation in their learning at school
   - Child participation in the workplace.
   - Child volunteerism and participation in civil society
   - Child participation in the media and their role in promoting children’s rights
   - Inventive projects, creative interactive tools and useful technologies which enhance child civic, social, cultural and political expression

3. **Cultural, Legal, Economic, Social and Physical Challenges to Child Participation**
   This could entail but is not limited to:
   - Different beliefs and values which hinder child participation at different institutional levels (i.e. governmental, community, school and family)
   - Legal constraints in legislating and implementing child participation policies
   - Economic constraints in implementing child participation
   - Social constraints to implementing child participation
   - Constraints related to child’s skill and cognitive under development.

4. **Impact of Child Participation on Development**
   This could entail but is not limited to:
   - Impact of positive child participation on child wellbeing and society
   - Impact of negative child participation on child wellbeing and society
Language

Abstracts, audio/visual products and papers of can be submitted and presented in Arabic, English or French.

Important Dates and Requirements

**August 30th, 2010** – Deadline for abstracts: Please submit a one-page abstract on papers and poster presentations of no more than 300 words. Submitted audio/Visual summaries should not exceed 100 words. Please attach your Curriculum Vitae with the documents. All documents are to be sent by email to: conference2010@encro.org

**September 30th, 2010** – Selection of papers, poster presentations and Audio/visual products: Selection will be done by a review board composed of renowned Egyptian scholars and experts based on specified selection criteria.

**November 15th, 2010** – Deadline for final poster, audio/visual or papers: All papers should be submitted in .pdf or .doc format. Papers can be in a provisional version, but must contain a clear presentation of the results obtained and a complete reference list in order to be considered by the review board. The first page of the paper should include: i) submission title and affiliation; ii) author(s)' name(s); iii) abstract and keywords; and iv) contact information (name, surname, e-mail address, biography) of the author. (vii) The papers should be between 20-25 pages long with 1.5 line spacing. Poster presentations should not exceed seven slides. Audio visual presentations should not exceed seven minutes. They can either be presented by an individual or a group. Each individual or group should not be limited to one submission. All audio/visual products should be free from copyright materials and should be sent in a DVD format.

**December 15th, 2010** – Conference: There is no registration fee and both English, Arabic and French simultaneous interpretation will be available.

Contacts

For additional enquiries from Egypt National Child Rights Observatory, please contact our research team at: conference2010@encro.org

For more details please check [www.encro.org](http://www.encro.org)