

Children and Work Research Series: Session 5

“Dialogue Works - Anchoring working children’s participation in societal and political processes”

Claire O’Kane, Antje Ruhmann

[breakout rooms reports below]

Abstract

The global campaign “**Dialogue Works - Anchoring working children’s participation in societal and political processes**” (Dialogue Works, 2020-2024) is initiated by the two child-rights organizations Kindernothilfe and Terre des Hommes International Federation (TDHIF) and co-funded by the German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development. It aims to open spaces for working children to participate in local to global political debates to express their individual experiences, perspectives on their life situations and recommendations to political and societal stakeholders. Throughout this project, working children are organized in Children Advisory Committees in 15 countries¹ to realize their right to be heard (Art. 12 UNCRC) in important policy events from local to global level.

This project builds on the success and outcomes of the predecessor, the global campaign and research project “**It’s Time to Talk – Children’s Views on Children’s Work**” (Time to Talk, 2016-2019) funded by the German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). The aim was to realise working children’s right to be heard in local to global policy dialogues. For this purpose, more than 1.800 working children have been consulted in 36 countries across the globe using a participatory and rights-based approach.

This research session will portray the participatory and rights-based research process applied in the course of the Time to Talk! Project as well as research elements of the current Dialogue Works project.

Presenter Bios

Claire O’Kane is a child rights practitioner and researcher. She is a qualified social worker with a Masters in Applied Social Studies, and a post-graduate diploma in social research and evaluation from UK universities. Claire learned about children’s rights and participation from organised working children in India in the 1990s and she has more than 25 years of international experience supporting child rights and participation work in diverse contexts. Claire has been one of the main consultants supporting the Dialogue Works and Time to Talk participatory research and advocacy initiatives since 2015.

Antje Ruhmann is a practitioner and researcher with a focus on children’s rights, particularly children and work and participatory research. She holds a master’s degree in International Relations (M.A., Technical University Dresden) and is in the fourth year of her PhD at Queen’s University Belfast (main supervisor: Laura Lundy, working title: “Applying a participatory

¹ These are Ethiopia, Kenya, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Philippines, Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Bolivia, Peru, Guatemala, Lebanon, Rwanda, Tanzania und Indonesia.

approach to research at a global scale”). At the same time, she is Child Rights Officer with a focus on children and work at terre des hommes Germany. Antje Ruhmann has initiated the Time to Talk! project together with Olivia LeCoulfe in 2013 and is still leading the implementation of the follow up project Dialogue Works jointly with colleagues from Terre des Hommes and Kindernothilfe.

Supporting Documents

Children’s Rights-Based Approach to Research

Lundy, L., & McEvoy (Emerson), L. (2012a). ‘Childhood, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and Research: what constitutes a rights-based approach’ in M. Freeman (ed.) Law and childhood. Oxford: Oxford University Press. pp75-91; 2)

Lundy, L.,& McEvoy (Emerson), L. (2012b). Children’s rights and research processes: assisting children to (in)formed views, Childhood 19 (1) pp.116-129.

Time to Talk! / Dialogue Works publications

Toolkits

O’Kane, Claire; Barros, Ornella (2016) Research Toolkit - Facilitator’s Guide for organising consultations with children in support of the International Campaign “It’s Time to Talk – Children’s Views on Children’s Work”, Kindernothilfe/ Terre des Hommes, Link: <https://www.time-to-talk.info/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Toolkit-Time-to-Talk- en.pdf> - available in EN, ES, FR

O’Kane, Claire; Barros Ornella (2019) Time to Talk! – Children’s Views on Children’s Work, Toolkit II: supporting collaborative and child-led advocacy, Kindernothilfe/ Terre des Hommes, Link: <https://www.time-to-talk.info/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Toolkit-II-FINAL.pdf> - available in EN, ES

Main Report

O’Kane, Claire; Barros, Ornella (2017) It’s Time to Talk! – Children’s Views on Children’s Work, Kindernothilfe/ Terre des Hommes, Link: <https://www.time-to-talk.info/en/publications/main-report/> -

Child-friendly Documents

Kindernothilfe/ Terre des Hommes (2017) It’s Time to Talk! - Child friendly Main Report, Link: https://www.time-to-talk.info/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/CF-Report_EN.pdf.pdf - available in English, German, Spanish, French, Кыргыз/Кыргызча, Thai, Nepali, Hindi, Swahili

Kindernothilfe/ Terre des Hommes (2017) “Simply Explained” – the results of the Global Conference of The Sustained Eradication of Child Labour explained child friendly language, Link: <https://www.time-to-talk.info/en/publications/child-friendly-report/> - available in German, English, Spanish and French

Evaluations

O’Kane, Claire; Barros, Ornella (2019) It’s Time to Talk! – Children’s Views on Children’s Views – Lessons Learned from a global participatory research project, Kindernoithilfe/ Terre des Hommes, Link: <https://www.time-to-talk.info/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Lessons-Learned-FINAL-1.pdf> - available in EN, ES - internal

O’Kane, Claire; Barros, Ornella (2020) It’s Time to Talk! – Children’s Views on Children’s Views - Supporting collaborative and child-led advocacy by working children, Kindernoithilfe/ Terre des Hommes, Link: https://www.time-to-talk.info/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/201023_knh-t2t_LessonsLearnedII_EN_digital.pdf - internal

Sayhoun, Karim (2020) It’s Time to Talk! – Children’s Views on Children’s Views – Global Evaluation of outcomes of the International Campaign and Research, Kindernoithilfe/ Terre des Hommes, Link: https://www.time-to-talk.info/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/201023_knh-t2t_FinalReport_EN_digital.pdf - external

Policy Briefing Paper

Morrow, Virginia; Jacob, Anne; Ruhmann, Antje; O’Kane, Claire; Barros, Ornella (2019) Incorporating working children’s views in policy interventions, Policy Briefing Paper, Time to Talk!/ Young Lives, Link: <https://www.time-to-talk.info/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Policy-Briefing-Paper.pdf>

O’Kane, Claire; Barros, Ornella (2021 – coming soon!) Briefing Paper on children’s participation, protection and resilience, Kindernoithilfe/ Terre des Hommes,

Breakout Rooms Reports

Room 1:

Children and Work Research Series – September 29th, 2021

Dialogue Works - Anchoring working children’s participation in societal and political processes

Breakout Group Notes:

The Dialogue Works campaign is trying to help working children and working children’s organizations attend and take part in the upcoming V Global Conference on Child Labour in Durban, South Africa (June, 2022) ... see references below:

https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---relconf/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_757092.pdf

https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---relconf/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_774955.pdf

It will be important to mobilize and support efforts to ensure that:

- Working children and working children's organizations are able to attend and take part in the conference
- Source of funding are identified and made available to cover the costs of representatives of working children and working children's organizations are able to attend the workshop;
- Efforts are made to provide safe conditions for children who do attend including the funding of chaperones

The Dialogue Works Campaign is well placed to identify working children / working children's organizations and is looking for funds to cover the costs involved. It would be helpful if UNICEF (and other agencies) provided support and funds as well.

The Dialogue Works Campaign is conducting local consultations with working children and the results of these consultations will (hopefully) be presented to the Conference by working children themselves.

As part of this process the Dialogue Work Campaign is trying to arrange for country to country discussions among different groups of working children (the Webex platform might be of interest to support these efforts)

In conducting consultations / discussions with children, Dialogue Works has become increasingly aware of the strong influence adults can have on the views expressed by children. During the previous Time to Talk Campaign some of the adult partners were directly themselves opposed to children working and/or were part of institutions that were opposed to children working. These adult biases had effects on the way children describe their work and the types of support they requested.

While the Dialogue Works Campaign is interested in working directly with children in practical terms it is necessary to work with and through local (adult run) partner agencies and their adult staff.

Dialogue Works has been encourage the partner agencies they work with to reflect on their own adult view and to try to avoid imposing these on the children they are working with and supporting. This involves helping adults become aware of their own opinions and then recognized that these should not be promoted through the facilitation process with children. Instead it is important for the adults to step back, listen to what children and saying and collectively learn from this process. This is challenging work and the efforts are not always successful.

Adults can be a source of knowledge, experience, history and skills in supporting children but it is important that adults not dominate or control the discussions.

When trying to change the status quo (existing social attitudes and structures) it is necessary to work with those structures but then be aware of whether there is an agreement to work towards positive change or whether the work is trying to avoid change and maintain the status quo.

Room 2:

We had a rich discussion on different tactics children and children's movements might take up in relation to the next ILO conference. It was noted that the last one was not a success and that the protest outside the 1998 conference in Geneva had some traction in the media, got attention as children were protesting outside with tape on their mouths, emphasizing how they

were silenced. But, the question was raised if this really was a successful way of engaging the ILO or improving the situation since the media attention did not necessarily change how they portrayed children afterward and relationships with stakeholders (ILO, iNGOs, working children themselves) were damaged.

We talked about trying to look at all the actors, identify potential allies, and then building possibilities for children's direct representation via those allies. Who are key players and can we target particular member governments who might be open to including working children in their delegations? We felt it might be useful to seek a variety of alternative entry points to the event, rather than focusing only on the ILO.

We also had an extensive conversation about media and the need to bring media on board, to prepare them to engage with the issue and exchange with children in a meaningful way. We talked about how individual journalists may be supportive when you talk one-on-one, understanding the nuances of the issue, but their stories often revert back to the "child labor is bad" simple trope despite this. We talked about why this might be the case, about the power of images of exploited and "tragic" children, about the role of editors in this and the desire for more readership based on selling these images, and about how the most exploitative situations are the ones that attract attention. We talked about what researchers can/should do to make sure our research is reaching these journalists, and about the possibility of putting journalists themselves in the spotlight, doing a podcast with working kids asking them questions, seeking to get commitments from them about how they will portray them, etc.

We also discussed the challenge of both wanting to truly support children's participation and direct representation in all its diversity and having an advocacy perspective, which often requires a more unified and coherent message. It would be unfortunate if the diversity of working children's voices was then used by decision-makers to dismiss or ignore them (they don't even agree, they don't know what they want, you can't trust them, etc.).

We discussed the difference between the movements' claim about the right to work in dignity and how this is sometimes (mis?)understood as simply "the right to work."