The Circle of Rights: Intentional Planning for Social Change

Overview

The **Circle of Rights: Intentional Planning for Social Change (formerly Triple A)** is a participatory child centred intentional planning and action research process supporting positive social change for children, families and communities. This reflective methodology, which starts from children's perspectives, helps community stakeholders, agencies and policymakers to develop integrated child rights policy, programming and monitoring systems that build from local strengths in meeting challenges facing children, their peers, families and communities. The Circle of Rights has four stages - Map, Engage, Plan and Create.

The **Circle of Rights** and all of the tools:

- Applies an innovative *child rights approach* to planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluation of children's rights
- Builds on strengths and empowers local communities to develop innovative, local solutions to self-identified challenges
- Supports children's survival, development, protection and participation within a community development and local planning context
- Puts the participation and agency of children and youth at the center
- Supports social innovation strengthening government and civil society action planning, monitoring, evaluation and budgeting for results for children, and
- Creates positive sustainable change for and with children and youth by linking local actions with ongoing advocacy, policy and legislation reform.

The **Circle of Rights** is a creation of the International Institute for Child Rights and Development (IICRD) at the Centre for Global Studies, University of Victoria, Canada. Its evolution began in 1994 where UNICEF's Triple "A" rapid assessment, analysis, action tool was adapted to incorporate a stronger focus on rights based systems change linking children, communities, and government. Since, the **Circle of Rights** has been applied around the world to help tackle complex child rights challenges including children affected by HIV/AIDS, natural disasters, extreme poverty, discrimination, violence and conflict, and has evolved into a robust process to help communities and governments develop contextualized systems of governance and accountability to support and protect children.

The **Circle of Rights** draws from a variety of rights based theories and practical research, planning and monitoring and evaluation tools. These include IICRD's Developmental Child Rights Approach, Outcome Mapping, Results Based Management, and many child centered approaches including Social Mapping, the Most Significant Change Technique, Guided Imagination, Narrative Techniques, Problem Tree Analysis and Focus Group Discussions. Tips on partnership development, budgeting, sustainability, and accountability further strengthen the application of the CRC in practice.

Yet, the magic of the **Circle of Rights** comes from the strength within communities, where the **Circle of Rights** helps facilitate a process with communities to tap into their inner potential and bring about positive growth and change in their lives. The image of the unfurling fern is applied to the **Circle of Rights** to capture this organic process of change that begins from within.

The Phases of the Circle of Rights Process

- **Development of a guiding question and metaphor**
- **Analysis of child rights environment including: mandate, mechanisms and children's daily lives**

- Baseline of children's lived experience
- In depth understanding of the risk factors and protective mechanisms from a child, family and community perspective

- Multi-sectoral review of the Circle of Rights process
- Creation of integrated multi-sector action plans focussing on partnership, capacity building, programming, policy and legal reform
- Creation of monitoring and evaluation frameworks and sustainability and accountability strategies including organizational change, rights reform and community engagement

- In depth analysis of strengths and challenges, gaps and opportunities
- Identification of root causes and strategies to address key challenges and gaps
- Creation of a collective vision for the future
- Development of child centred, culturally grounded, rights based, community action plans

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Phase One: MAP

Map, the first phase of the **Circle of Rights** process develops a common vision, metaphor, guiding question(s), and guiding principles for the entire **Circle of Rights** process, and maps the child rights situation at the level of mandate (laws and policies) and mechanism (programs, partners, and services) from the national level to the community that contribute to or hinder the child's well-being and the realization of his/her rights. Efforts are made to gather all existing child and community focused information.

Pilot Testing, Chiang Rai, Thailand October 2009

Tools include:
- Visioning
- Metaphor and Guiding Question
- Mandate & Mechanism Mapping
- Base-line community mapping
- Child Rights Assessment Tools
  - Spider gram

Phase Two: ENGAGE

Engage, the second phase of the **Circle of Rights** process, uses a variety of experiential, rights based, child centered tools to develop a baseline understanding of child-focused strengths, challenges, risk factors and protective mechanisms to support and protect children from a child, family and community perspective

Social Mapping Activity, Bangkok, March 2009

Tools include:
- Social Mapping
- Walking Tours/ Photo-framing
- The River Journey
- Focus Group Discussions
- Key Informant Interviews

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Phase Three: PLAN

Plan, the third phase of the **Circle of Rights**, uses a variety of participatory tools to bring together key stakeholders (children, families, community leaders, elders and child serving agencies, policy makers) to:

- analyze strengths, challenges, gaps and opportunities;
- identify key gaps and challenges;
- identify root causes and propose strategies;
- creating a collective vision for children in their community;
- develop child centred, culturally grounded, rights based, community action plans.

> Tools include:
> - Rights Summary Circles
> - Identification of Most Important Challenges
> - Collective Vision for the Future
> - Strategy Trees
> - Action Plan Development

Child Protection Planning, Timor Leste, November 2009

Phase Four: CREATE

Create, the last phase of the Circle of Rights, is the process of creating integrated multi-section action plans focused on partnership, capacity building, programming and policy and legal reform. It also involves the creation of monitoring and evaluation frameworks and strategies to foster sustainability and accountability including organizational change, rights reform and local engagement of rights holders and duty bearers.

> Tools include:
> - M&E Strategies
> - Budgeting
> - Organizational change strategies
> - Rights based monitoring & evaluating
> - Multi-sector planning and programming circles

Creation of Community Gardens, South Africa

How is the Circle of Rights Different?

The **Circle of Rights** process differs from other child rights approaches in two ways. The first is in its orientation to rights. Rather than starting from a legal approach to children's rights, the Circle of Rights builds from a developmental foundation. This implies starting from inherent human strengths or assets at the level of the child and his or her family, community and culture in meeting the challenges of survival, protection, development and participation. The second unique aspect of the **Circle of Rights** is its generative methodology that links local strengths and programs targeting rights gaps with the best of international norms and standards enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and national child rights laws and policies. The process is " circular" as opposed to "linear" in its application of tried and tested tools that encourage "intentional integrated planning" through and ongoing programming and monitoring cycle from mapping to engaging to planning to creating that results in tangible benefits for children at the level of the child, the family and community, programs for children, policies and laws. Integration is promoted at every stage by beginning with the lived experience of children and their communities.

Why Apply the Circle of Rights?

The **Circle of Rights** helps to:
- Understand how actions and interventions are influencing the lives of children (+/-);
- Examine the scope, quality and influence of actions;
- Uphold responsibilities in accordance with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child;
- Track progress;
- Foster learning, collaboration and innovation; and
- Adjust actions and interventions to better support and protect the rights and well-being of children.

What are the Outcomes of the Circle of Rights?

The **Circle of Rights**: Intentional Planning for Social Change Outcomes include:
- Development of collaborative multi-sectoral planning, monitoring and evaluation processes;
- A clear understanding of the risk factors and protective mechanisms to support effective planning, budgeting and programming for children's survival, development, protection and participation;
- An engaged and informed group of children and community members actively working together;
- Multi-sectoral planning and programming groups implementing and monitoring children's rights;
- Local sustainable action plans in place and civil society and government working together to solve problems they have identified;
- Integration of community and cultural realities into programming, services, and policies for children;
- Bridging of rights gaps through strengthened strategic partnership building;
- Development of a service delivery system with built-in community-based accountability structures to ensure ongoing success and sustainability, and
- Other more specific outcomes identified in the work.

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Summary

Children, women, youth, elders, local and international NGOs, professionals, service providers, community leaders and government officials are engaged in every stage of the IICRD's **CIRCLE of RIGHTS: Intentional Planning for Social Change**. As a result, community actions tend to address the primary needs of the children that build on existing strengths and utilize culturally appropriate methodologies. The process also creates linkages between child and community actions to the local government that has the potential to influence policies and practices on a much larger scale. While it is important to note that this process is intensive and requires a long term commitment, the empowerment of the young people and their communities and the sustainability of results are unparalleled.

Ultimately, the **CIRCLE of RIGHTS** process assists in breathing life into children's rights by equipping individuals and institutions with practical planning, programming and monitoring tools that have proven effective in sustainable systems change.

Contact Information

For more information on the **CIRCLE of RIGHTS** process or to receive specific information on reports or other IICRD material please contact: Philip Cook, Michele Cook, Cheryl Heykoop, or Micheal Montgomery.

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