CHILD RIGHTS IN PRACTICE: MEASURING AND IMPROVING OUR IMPACT

May 2009

A Model of Accountability to Children

A DRAFT Paper for discussion

Child Rights in Practice: Measuring and Improving our Impact

A MODEL OF ACCOUNTABILITY TO CHILDREN

Dr. Natasha Blanchet-Cohen, Dr. Stuart Hart and Dr. Philip Cook

International Institute for Child Rights and Development

May 2009

Acknowledgement for input and feedback:

Michele Cook, Vanessa Currie, Cheryl Heykoop, Elaina Mack, Elizabeth Morrison, Chris Yeomans, Suzanne Williams

International Institute for Child Rights and Development
Centre for Global Studies, University of Victoria
Suite 219, 3930 Shelbourne Street
Victoria, British Columbia, Canada V8P5P6
Visit our website www.iicrd.org and social networking sites: www.childrightsinpractice.org
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INTRODUCTION

As we celebrate the 20 year Anniversary of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the most widely ratified human rights treaty in the world, we need to be able to examine the impact of this important children’s framework on the day-to-day lives of children in Canada and around the world.

Child Rights in Practice: Measuring and Improving Our Impact aims to develop a better understanding of:

1) how individuals and agencies are measuring the impact of rights-based programming, engaging children and communities, putting programs in context, and affecting larger systemic change;

2) where gaps may lie and what governments, service agencies, communities and individuals can do to be more accountable to children.

This concept paper introduces the four key questions addressed in this conference:

- Why monitor and evaluate the impact of services on children?
- How are we accountable to children and their lived experiences?
- What tools exist for monitoring and evaluating children’s rights and well being?
- How can we incorporate monitoring and evaluation into our practices with children, their families and communities?

This paper does not attempt to be exhaustive or conclusive, as monitoring and evaluation is a constantly changing and growing field of study. Today, progress in conceptualizing child development, new understanding about the nature of social change and a renewed emphasis on child rights-based approaches and accountability have resulted in numerous innovative approaches to monitoring and evaluation for children.

To frame our discussion, we propose a ‘Child Rights in Practice Accountability Model’, described in section III. We believe this will serve as a valuable guide for programmers, service providers and decision-makers to define key questions; outline a range of possibilities; and further practice-based learning that meets the best interests of children.

1. WHY MONITOR AND EVALUATE THE IMPACT OF SERVICES ON CHILDREN?
“We don’t know how our services are influencing kids and we need to know. It’s about integrity and accountability”

- ICPRC

What’s at Stake?

No child rights initiative—or indeed any program or policy meant to serve children—should be deemed a success until it is shown to have tangibly improved the lives of children directly involved. Too often, however, we know little about the impact our interventions have on children’s lived realities, or we interpret their impact based on measures that are remote from children’s own experiences. What is the evidence that services and programs are really working for children?

Despite the near worldwide commitment to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and significant human and financial resources focused on children, inadequate services and the lack of proper feedback about existing services continue to affect child development and the quality of children’s lives. It is vitally important that we learn what works, what doesn’t work, and why. Monitoring and evaluation are central to the realization of children’s rights, and the universal principles and standards designed to assure the protection and promotion of each child’s human dignity set out in the UNCRC.

The four general principles of the UNCRC establish ethical imperatives for insuring a child’s well-being, development and holistic health. These principles include:

1. Non-discrimination (Art. 2): To assure that all the rights of the UNCRC are equally promoted and protected for each child regardless of the child, his or her parent or legal guardian’s race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status.

2. Best-interests of the Child (Art. 3): To assure that in all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration.

3. Survival and Development (Art. 6): To assure to the maximum extent possible the survival and development of the child.

4. Child Participation (Art. 12): To assure to the child the right to express his or her own views freely in all matters affecting the child, due weight being given in accordance with the age and the maturity of the child.

Furthering children’s rights requires translating these principles and all other UNCRC articles into measurable indicators, and incorporating them in tools and systems of accountability.

Key considerations include:

- How can we best measure children’s well-being and the impact of services aimed at furthering children’s well-being?

- What indicators best measure the implementation of children’s rights? How can universal constructs apply to recognizing the role children play and the local cultural context of policies and programs?
• How can monitoring and evaluating help track progress and the realization of children’s rights, given the complex and interconnected social, economic and political systems affecting children?

**Purpose and Rationale**

Shifts in scope and intent of monitoring and evaluation amongst development agencies and other organizations promoting children’s rights over the last decade can make a more intentional contribution to supporting the survival, well-being, full and healthy development, and protection of children. In the past, program monitoring and evaluation largely centered on measuring the process of project implementation; the focus was on assessing outputs against predetermined inputs, as determined by a logical framework. It was all about the product, and not necessarily about the people directly affected.

Today, while serving the overall goal of accountability, the function of evaluation is being broadened, with greater emphasis on evaluation as a way to improve individual and organizational understanding and learning. Monitoring and evaluation has become a continuous cycle that actively and continually gathers and applies information to improve services, strategies and actions, as well as outcomes.

Child rights oriented monitoring and evaluation has several objectives:

(1) To determine whether our interventions respect and target children’s rights, well-being, health and development.

(2) To determine whether our interventions are making a discernable improvement to children’s rights, well-being, health and development.

(3) To explore the process of implementing programs and policies for children, and to better understand children’s own experiences of these programs and policies.

(4) To provide information about how to adjust programs, services, activities, and strategies to better meet children’s needs and fulfill their potential.

(5) To identify and share with others what we have learned.
2. STATE OF KNOWLEDGE AND PRACTICE IN PERSPECTIVE

- Shifting from survival to child-focused indicators
- Role of indicators, monitoring and evaluation
- A range of initiatives and areas of child-focused developmental indicators

Paradigm Shift: From Child Survival, to Rights, Well-being, Health and Development

Until the early 1990s, evaluation focused largely on statistical analysis of numerical indicators. To monitor progress towards the realization of children’s rights, the emphasis was on providing disaggregated data that was statistically sound and internationally comparable. Thus, UNICEF State of the World’s Children gathered data on health, education and child protection, using indicators such as: birth registration, years of school completed, early learning opportunities, access to health care, malaria rates, and rate of breastfeeding.

While the need to disaggregate data and the availability of sound data remains an issue in many parts of the world, there are also shifts in perspective about the type of data being gathered. To reflect a more holistic approach to child development and children’s lived realities, consideration is increasingly given to more child-focused indicators. Emerging trends include:

1. Indicators that are driven by the universal acceptance of the CRC.
2. Indicators that go beyond children’s immediate survival to their access to, or experience of, supports and opportunities that assess and improve their well-being, and to emerging indicators and spheres well-being (i.e. a focus on children’s life or capacity for civic engagement).
3. A new emphasis on understanding both negative and positive aspects of children’s lives, and how these aspects interact.
4. An emerging emphasis on the whole child as unit of observation, including the child’s own subjective perception of their quality of life.
5. A growing shift towards policy-oriented criteria, and to indicators that are useful to community workers and policymakers.
An inherent challenge in measuring the impact of services on children is clarifying the terms we use in monitoring and evaluation.

**Box 1. Defining key terms**

- An indicator is a measure of a project input, output, result or outcome which provides a basis for determining whether or not objectives and goals are being accomplished.

- Monitoring refers to the ongoing process of keeping track of progress, allowing for adjustments during the intervention.

- Evaluation refers to the selective assessment of progress towards and the achievement of an outcome. It provides one or more snapshots to clarify trends toward desired goals, and monitoring assesses progress in implementation of ongoing programs.

**Box 2. In Practice: Distinguishing between key terms**

**Case example**: To prevent child trafficking, a program produces and disseminates information leaflets about awareness-raising classes in schools.

**Monitoring**: Were the leaflets produced? Were they distributed? Did the awareness-raising classes take place? How many children attended?

**Evaluating**: Did the children attending the classes actually learn anything? Did their behavior change as a result?

**Output vs. Results Indicators**: Output indicators help determine whether the project is on schedule, and whether it is producing expected results. Results indicators measure what change has actually been brought about by project activities.

**Impact Assessment**: Impact assessment measures the achievement of program objectives. Did the activity actually help prevent anyone from being trafficked?
## Evolving Indicators of Child Well-Being

International organizations and research centers are proposing numerous new indicators. The table below identifies a range of ongoing initiatives focused on developing indicators that reflect a holistic approach to child development.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Initiative</th>
<th>Sample indicators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chapin Hall State Indicators</td>
<td>Key indicators used include: drug use, school readiness, avoidance of illegal or troublesome behavior, child satisfaction with care level in home and community, and participation in community and school-based recreation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.chapinhall.org/category_editor.aspx?L2=65">http://www.chapinhall.org/category_editor.aspx?L2=65</a></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Childwatch Indicators</td>
<td>Key indicators used by Childwatch include: child-centered statistics; deconstructing data desegregation practices; investigating broader social and economic indicators and re-grouping sections of rights in the CRC to better reflect cultural priorities of a particular group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.childwatch.uio.no/projects/thematic-groups/indicators-children%27s-well-being/">http://www.childwatch.uio.no/projects/thematic-groups/indicators-children%27s-well-being/</a></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Well-Being Index</td>
<td>Key indicators used include: material well-being, health, safety, achievement, participation in community, social relationship, and emotional well-being.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.soc.duke.edu/~cwi/">http://www.soc.duke.edu/~cwi/</a></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The South African Children’s Institute</td>
<td>Key indicators used include: reading ability; immunization status; whether a child has been a victim of abuse; access to services such as electric light, sanitation, and potable water; and structural variables such as whether the household is headed by a child, or whether the children are cared for by an elderly person or a single mother.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.ci.org.za/">http://www.ci.org.za/</a></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Search Institute</td>
<td>Key indicators used include: 40 common sense, positive indicators: experiences and qualities that help influence choices young people make and help them become caring, responsible adults.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.search-institute.org/">http://www.search-institute.org/</a></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Nations Statistical Development Indicator Sets</td>
<td>Key indicators used include: birth and death rates, in collaboration with dimensions of health, safety, education, peer and family relationships, behaviors, risks, and subjective sense of self.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(UNICEF Progress for Children Reports; UNICEF Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys; UN Millennium Development Goals; UNESCO Institute for Statistics; INNOCENTI Research Center)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young Lives Indicators</td>
<td>Key indicators used include: emotional development, patterns of work, migration, classroom participation, and overall civic engagement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.younglives.org.in/research1.htm">http://www.younglives.org.in/research1.htm</a></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Emerging Indicators for Specific Child Rights Issues

Another emerging trend is the creation of ‘developmental’ indicators for specific child rights issues. For instance:

- **Early Childhood.** To reflect the ‘in process’ nature of many early childhood indicators, state parties have begun to develop a framework to support the implementation of child rights in early development, including:
  1. structure (indication of commitment)
  2. process (efforts made and action taken)
  3. outcome (resultant and measurable change)

- **Violence.** To provide a more comprehensive and useful approach to monitoring violence, two types of indicators are being considered:
  1. incidence and prevalence indicators (i.e. How many children are victimized?)
  2. protective environment indicators (i.e. Level of government commitment to child rights? What are children’s life skills? What are children’s attitudes towards violence?).

Indicators are also being further refined into environment-specific contexts (i.e. home, school etc).

- **Child-Friendly Community Self-Assessment.** This is designed to provide information in ways that are highly participatory, collected at the community level, and usable both at the community and city level. The self-assessment scale covers eight domains (including community safety, community play and recreation, social relations etc.) across three generations, grandparents, parents and children.

- **Child participation.** To measure the participation of children and adolescents in programming, two levels of indicators have been suggested:
  1. Indicators to measure the creation of participatory and respectful environments (i.e. legal entitlement to participate, access to information etc.)
  2. Indicators to measure the scope, quality and impact of child participation programmes (i.e. ethical approach, inclusive environment, impact on children themselves)

The International Institute for Child Rights and Development (IICRD) has built on these innovative initiatives to build monitoring and evaluation systems that reflect an ecological understanding of development. We propose an accountability model to monitor our own work, and to guide programming, service design and delivery with children’s best interests in mind. It will also frame our collective practice as an organization and allow us to measure our impact and make improvements.

“…evaluation requires the development of indicators related to all rights guaranteed by the Convention… in many cases only children themselves are in a position to indicate whether their rights are being fully recognized and realized.”

General Comment No 5 (UNCRC/GC/2003/5 para 48 and 50)
3. CHILD RIGHTS IN PRACTICE: A PROPOSED ACCOUNTABILITY MODEL

- A child rights-based approach to monitoring and evaluation
- Four premises for ‘success’ that are grounded in respect for: social ecology, systems approaches, culture, and strengths
- A Child Rights in Practice Accountability Model

A Child Rights-Based Approach to Monitoring and Evaluation

Now that the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child is approaching universal ratification, governments and agencies that provide programs for children have begun to develop new ways to assess program and policy impacts that take a child rights based approach to monitoring and evaluation. Unlike a needs-based approach, a rights-based approach is grounded in society’s legal and moral accountability as duty-bearers towards children as rights-holders. Applying a child-rights approach to monitoring and evaluation therefore requires a focus on:

- **Putting children at the center.** This means advancing the best interests of children as rights-holders and social actors in their own right, by providing children with relevant and age appropriate information, listening to their views, and taking due consideration of their opinions.

- **Understanding root causes:** It is important to define the structural causes of non-realization of rights, to identify rights gaps and analyzing who bears the responsibility to uphold the specific rights.

- **Accountability:** Effectiveness in promoting, protecting and fulfilling children’s rights across a range of duty-bearers from the primary duty bearer - the state (e.g. local and central government) - to all those deserving state guidance and support in the private sector, the media, child-care professionals, families, communities, and other individuals or groups with direct contact with children.

- **Inclusion:** A commitment to non-discrimination and to assuring all children, including the most marginalized children and children challenged on such grounds as gender, class, ethnicity, (dis)ability, etc.

- **Partnerships:** An emphasis on building partnerships and alliances for the promotion, protection and fulfillment of children’s rights.

By addressing the underlying causes of rights violations, and successful protection and promotion of rights (with policy and practice changes), a rights-based approach offers the potential to increase the impact of services for children, and to make a sustained difference to their lives, both now, and in the future.
Premises for ‘Success’

Along with our developmental child rights-based approach, the IICRD uses four key premises for social systems change to monitor and evaluate the impact of services on children.xx

1) **Social ecological approach:** We recognize that children’s rights are influenced by many social, political, economic and cultural systems that affect their lives. Children’s holistic development from birth to young adulthood is influenced by the nature and quality of the interaction they have with their social, physical and cultural environment, with all these factors playing an active role in their well-being.xxi While the strongest direct influence on children is through their family, friends and neighbours (the microsystem), they are also impacted by (and act upon) more distant systems, including the mesosystem (school, home), exosystem (parental workplace, local government) and macrosystem (societal beliefs and ideologies).xxii Children’s development is enhanced by increasing opportunities for them to interact across all levels, and by reducing or mitigating risks and enhancing protective mechanisms in all these systems.

2) **Systems-approach:** We appreciate that enhancing synergies between the “bottom up” systems in children’s lives (including children’s lived realities within their family, with peers and in their community) and “top down” systems (including government, legal, and policy systems as well as cultural and national values and beliefs about childhood) will provide opportunities for building regional, national and local capacity to provide for children’s human rights.xxiii

3) **Culturally-grounded approach:** We recognize that child rights must be understood within the context of their culture, capitalizing on local community insights, values, and practices that shape childhood and lifelong human development.xxiv Sustainability of programs depends on the ability of local communities to monitor, critically review and refine their own initiatives, given their culture’s child development and childrearing traditions and practices.xxv

4) **Strength-based approach:** We appreciate that change begins with the available individual and collective assets and resources of children and their communities, rather than beginning with the problems children face.

**Accountability Model: Three Dynamic Domains**

Considering the rights-based approach and our four premises for social change, we suggest that child rights accountability lies within and across three interconnected domains: the child, mechanisms, and mandate, all based on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child as the most comprehensive and relevant document in outlining expectations. We call this the ‘Child Rights in Practice Accountability Model’ (Figure 1).

**The Child.** The first domain, broadly conceived, is the child’s well-being, giving specific attention to the child’s own experience as a rights-bearing person and the status and trends of development in physical, psychological, social, moral, and spiritual areas. The child is in the centre of the diagram in Fig. 1 to reflect the reality that child-rights accountability must begin with the child, and that all outer systems are ultimately accountable to the child.

**The Mechanisms.** The second domain refers to strategies and interventions applied by duty-bearing systems, programs, and people in government, professions, non-governmental organizations, agencies, community services, churches, and other groups who protect and promote the rights, well-being, health and development of children. The duty-bearers and their interventions are represented in the middle circle along with tools and reflective ‘spirals of
learning’, which are considered critical in supporting the best interests of the child. Mechanisms are represented in the second ring of Fig. 1.

**The Mandate.** The third domain refers to legislation, policies, standards and regulations, ethical and moral obligations that establish requirements and expectations for children’s rights, well-being, health and development at the international, regional, national and locals levels. Each national, provincial and local government and community will have its own set of laws and regulations that apply to specific issues. These are represented in the outer ring of Fig. 1.

**Figure 1. Child Right in Practice Accountability Model**

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**Implications**

- *Central accountability to the child.* The principles and intentions of the Mandate and Mechanism domains are ultimately all accountable for advancing the child’s best interests.

- *Importance of intervention-related indicators.* According to the Accountability Model, success is determined by intervention-related indicators, including: adequacy of principles guiding intervention in the Mandate Domain; intervention strategies, tools and processes in the Mechanism Domain; child conditions targeted for intervention effects, experienced rights, well-being, health and development in the Child Domain. Success depends on an appreciation of these different indicators so that applications can benefit from discrimination, coordination and synergy.
For example, to measure child participation programs, we have identified three types of indicators:

1. Scope: What is being done? At what stage in the program cycle — planning, design, implementation, evaluation — and to what degree are children influencing the program through consultation, collaboration or sharing?

2. Quality: How is the program being implemented? Is the environment child-friendly, inclusive, and safe? Is there a trained and committed staff?

3. Impact: What difference is the program making in children’s lives? What is the tangible evidence of impact for children as individuals (are they developing skills, self-awareness or self-efficacy?). How is it affecting the different players that impact a child’s life — parents, staff, institutions (are there changes in organizational culture towards greater respect for children’s rights, or changes in the program that reflect children’s concerns and priorities)?

As well, this approach recognizes the following key concepts:

- Interconnection. Full accountability depends on interconnection between all domains, the child, mechanisms and mandate. The mandate provides the overarching principles, the mechanisms (including actors/interventions) deals with implementation; and the child domain actualizes the principles and intentions of both Mandate and Mechanism domains by advances in child rights, well-being, health and development.

- Complexity. In an interconnected system, with high uncertainty, there may be no clear indication of what will lead to what, or how synergies across the domains will be strengthened. In all interventions, significant opportunities must be provided for emergence, innovation and development.

**Sample Matrix of Impact Indicators**

We have provided examples of the type of indicators that could be used for monitoring across each domain, based on selected IICRD projects.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initiative</th>
<th>Mandate</th>
<th>Mechanism</th>
<th>Child</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Child Protection Partnership</td>
<td>Do laws protect children from information technology-enabled child sexual exploitation?</td>
<td>Do police officers provide information to prevent and address information technology-enabled sexual exploitation?</td>
<td>Do children have the information and knowledge they need to protect themselves from information technology-enabled sexual exploitation?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A unique multi-sector collaboration comprised of organizations committed to protecting children and their rights from exploitation, enabled by worldwide use of information technology.</td>
<td>Do police officers provide information to prevent and address information technology-enabled sexual exploitation?</td>
<td>Do children have the information and knowledge they need to protect themselves from information technology-enabled sexual exploitation?</td>
<td>Do children have the information and knowledge they need to protect themselves from information technology-enabled sexual exploitation?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Rights Education for Professionals</td>
<td>Does the national government require child rights education for a professional for initial and/or continued education?</td>
<td>Is child rights education required and provided by the higher education preparatory academic institution?</td>
<td>Does the professional serving the child feel comfortable giving his/her views to the professional providing service?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An international initiative to develop sustainable educational programmes on the human rights of children for professionals working with and for children.</td>
<td>Does the professional serving the child feel comfortable giving his/her views to the professional providing service?</td>
<td>Does the professional serving the child feel comfortable giving his/her views to the professional providing service?</td>
<td>Does the child think his/her views are considered when</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Hear the Child
A project that focuses on ways to support children and their participation in family justice processes.

- Are there expectations set by law that provide for children’s participation?
- Are child-friendly court procedures provided for child victims and witnesses?
- Does the child say his/her perspectives are taken into consideration by the judge?

YouthScape
A program focused on engaging excluded or marginalized youth to create stronger more resilient communities and long-term, sustainable systems change.

- Are there laws in place for young people to be included in local and national government decisions and resource allocations?
- Do organizations have the capacity and know-how to involve young people in shared decision-making?
- Do young people feel they are influencing decision-making?

Nenan Dane_zaa Deh Zona Children and Family Services
An organization established to develop a new model of jurisdiction for governance, services and quality assurance.

- Do provincial and federal laws support the design and implementation of culturally appropriate child welfare services for Aboriginal children and families that contribute to their holistic well-being?
- Is training sufficient for social workers to implement culturally appropriate strength based services to Aboriginal children and families?
- Are young people involved in deciding what well-being means for them?

**Box 3. In Practice: Implementing the Accountability Model**

- Locate your intervention in the ‘Accountability’ model
- Identify opportunities for strengthening inter-linkages across domains
- Identify critical impact indicators
- Examine implications for practice
4. AVAILABLE APPROACHES/TOOLS

- A range of monitoring and evaluation approaches/tools are available to enhance the ‘Accountability Model’

- A review of monitoring and evaluation approaches and tools used by IICRD that support the model: developmental evaluation, outcome mapping, social analysis system, child youth participatory evaluation, most significant change technique

While conventional tools for monitoring and evaluation (such as pre and post questionnaires) have an important role to play, there are also a wide variety of child rights programs and interventions that deserve to be recognized and analyzed, although they may not lend themselves to conventional monitoring. Below, we list some monitoring and evaluation approaches and tools that the IICRD believes are critical to enhancing the ‘accountability model’, and strengthening the inter-linkages across the three domains.

**Developmental Evaluation**

Developmental evaluation is an alternative approach to summative and formative evaluation that can be used in innovative settings where goals are emerging and changing. Developmental evaluators, encourage generative group learning, interconnection, and decision making that is specific to the context at hand. Development evaluation draws both on conventional tools of evaluation such as surveys, interviews and observations and on less conventional tools such as network mapping, appreciative inquiry and visual language.

Developmental evaluation has proven effective in shifting the way organizations engage young people and children. For instance, leading duty-bearers to revisit their Mandate (board regulations or organizational policies) helps bring them in line with the needs of more ‘marginalized’ children.

**Outcome-Mapping**

Outcome mapping enlists program beneficiaries in mapping the Mechanism (intervention domain and strategy) providing a terminology and process to support changes in behavior, action or relationships. Key terms used in outcome mapping include:

- Boundary partners: Who is the program interacting with directly and who does the program hope to influence?
- Outcome challenge: What are the ideal changes the program intends to accomplish — what behavior relationships, activities, and/or actions of a boundary partner will change?
- Progress markers: What changes are we trying to achieve at different stages?
- Intentional design: How will the program help make the change a reality?

Outcome mapping supports the Accountability model by emphasizing the role of changing behaviors (such as recognizing children as right-holders) to sustain children’s rights. For instance, in dealing with a complex issue like information technology-enabled sexual-exploitation, outcome mapping can help in delimiting partners and overall intentions to change the behavior of organizations for girls and boys to have better access to responsive legal procedures— laws at the Mandate level expressed in specific legal interventions at the Mechanism level.
Child-youth participatory evaluation involves children and youth directly in identifying and implementing evaluation procedures, recognizing that children are experts on their own lived reality. The IICRD has created and adapted a range of evaluation participatory tools for children. These include various social mapping activities, photo-voice, categorizing and ranking participation activities, social networking activities, and spidergrams. Studies show that children’s participation benefits young people, programming and communities.

Child-youth participatory evaluation supports the Accountability Model by engaging the child at the center to carry out interventions at the Mechanism level, and as a judge of impact and effects on the child’s own sense of empowerment, influence and respect. For instance, participatory evaluation activities with children can indicate that policies about hours of operation for a recreation center are not taking into consideration children’s views (as provided for by the Mandate) and that the child feels powerless and disrespected. Knowing this, appropriate duty-bearers (such as local municipalities) can modify their policies and enhance the child’s right to play.

Social Analysis System (SAS²)

The Social Analysis System provides a wide range of tools for collaborative inquiry and social engagement that involves stakeholders in defining, designing and implementation. It is a complex systems approach to applied research that resolves three problems that are common in the field: toolboxes that are scattered, planning and research methods that are linear and scattered, and guidelines that are sketchy (such as checklists of issues and concepts that all projects should try to address).

Social Analysis System tools support the Accountability model by providing tools that can help duty-bearers and children intentionally define, design and implement strategies that can support strengthening interconnections between the three domains. For instance, a wheel activity carried out with young people and youth-serving organizations indicated that there was a gap between the Mandate of the youth-serving organization, the practical commitments and interventions that they had implemented (the Mechanism) and children’s lived experience and sense of well-being – the Child Outcomes.

Monitoring and evaluation of child rights programming is a growing field, there are many more tools and approaches that various organizations are using to further children’s rights, ultimately the choice of tools and approaches will depend on the purpose of the research and the context of the children at the centre of the research.

Box 4. In Practice: Finding Tools that Work

- Identify the monitoring and evaluation tools you are using
- Determine how these tools measure impacts on children, children’s well being, and children’s rights?
- How do your tools measure accountability?
- How do these tools address the 3 levels of child, mechanism and mandate?
- Are children involved in this process, and if so how?
5. VISION FOR A MONITORING AND EVALUATION PRACTICE COMMUNITY

As suggested in this paper, we need a conceptual model for accountability to understand the effectiveness of child-rights programming, what is being accomplished, and where strengths, weaknesses and gaps may lie. Meaningful consideration of the current state of knowledge and how to plan, research and apply advances depends on a comprehensive framework that appreciates the associated complexities and relationships within and across accountability domains for furthering children’s best interests.

It is invigorating to imagine what change could occur if, in our own projects and interventions, we consider questions including:

- What is the lived experience of the children at the centre of our work?
- How is this shaped by risks and protective mechanisms in the child’s social ecology?
- Are there international or national mandates, principles, laws, and standards that the work/project is meant to apply to, magnify or transform? If there are, how can we best implement them?
- Do the goals, strategies, and/or processes of the work/project address or employ child rights? If they do, how are child rights incorporated and how can we best assess them?
- Does the work/project target improvements in child rights, well-being, health and/or development, either directly or indirectly? If so, how does it do this and what is the best way evaluate its effectiveness?

Consequently, an accountability model is essential in providing a common language, framework and reference points to hold governments and other service systems accountable to children and their families. For this model to reach success we must continue to find new ways of working with children and key persons in their lives to understand the complexity of the impact of services on children, and of children on services.

It is our hope that this paper will promote greater discussion and learning among those working to promote children’s rights, and that as a learning community, we can together refine and advance this vision.
REFERENCES


xiii Adapted from Ben-Arieh (2008).


xviii General Comment No 5 (UNCRC/GC/2003/5; 48 and 50)


xx See the website of IICRD for more information on our approach to child development. www.iicrd.org.


xxx For more information on IICRD projects and associated publications see: www.iicrd.org.


