



A TIGER BY THE TAIL: The contribution of Child to Child to the Right of Children to participate and take an active role in their development and that of their communities

Summary Paper

Susan Durston and Gerison Lansdown with Celine Woznica and Helen Walker

“People may think that Child to Child is pink and fluffy, but really you’ve got a tiger by the tail.” *(Hugh Hawes, one of the founders)*

Child to Child is a means of empowering children to develop their capacities and to effect change in their communities.

Child to Child is a pioneer of children’s participation. For 40 years it has partnered with and trained the world’s leading agencies to equip children with the skills to stay safe, stay healthy and achieve their potential, no matter what challenges they face in their lives.

Child to Child’s Vision is of a world where children are empowered to realise their rights. Its Mission is to create spaces where children and young people are listened to and taken seriously in the exercise of their rights

Child to Child was established in the 1970s as an approach to give expression to, and mobilise, children’s potential as communicators and educators (initially for health messages), to contribute positively within their communities, and to be recognised as agents with the potential to influence and inform. It was rooted in a fundamental recognition of children’s capacities and strengths. Its value lay in its simplicity, effectiveness and potential for sustainability. It achieved positive changes within communities and also transformed perceptions of children’s potential as active citizens within those communities where it was applied.

The inclusion in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1989, of Article 12, the right to express views and be taken seriously, was significantly influenced and underpinned by the theoretical and practical groundwork that Child to Child had established.

Over the past 42 years, Child to Child has involved children in, for example:

Examples of programmes:

- Health Action in Schools in Pakistan
- Malaria prevention in Cambodia
- Health and social response to HIV/AIDS in East Africa
- Ebola in Sierra Leone
- Integration of Newcomers in the UK

Range of themes:

- Land Mine Awareness
- Peer Mentoring
- Health education
- Inclusive education
- Child protection
- Peace-building
- Early years
- Post conflict rehabilitation
- Environment
- Water and sanitation
- and now, COVID-19

Children have huge potential as agents of change which, when respected and facilitated, inspires them with motivation and enthusiasm to contribute towards tackling social injustice and building better societies. The flame of child participation will continue to burn because it acknowledges and speaks to the fundamental humanity of children and their potential.

The Tiger Reproduces: how has Child to Child spread?

- Child to Child has always been an **organic movement** rather than a top-down organisation
- It works with **partners**, in countries of all income levels
- The founders and subsequent individuals have shared the idea with people who could then see that the idea worked
- **Professional expertise** has been freely shared
- **Materials are uniquely simple, useable**, and jargon free. They are **low cost, copyright-free**, and people are encouraged to copy and share them
- Materials and methods draw on **years of professional experience** and are based on the best current knowledge yet they are **simple** enough for non-specialists (like children) to understand and use.
- **A network of enthusiasts.** People who try out the approach get excited when they see how much children can do, and how it benefits them and their communities. Many have gone on to train as facilitators, and then to train others locally.
- **International Links.** UNICEF and the World Health Organisation were represented at the launch. They saw its potential and helped spread the idea. It has been picked up by people working in international organisations, and participants in training courses, who have then trained local groups in its methods.

The Tiger Grows...: What is the reach of Child to Child?

According to current research, as yet incomplete:

- **Child to Child has been implemented in over 80 countries** around the world
- **The early materials, especially the Activity Sheets and storybooks, were translated into 33 languages**
- **Actual numbers of children** who have benefitted are hard to calculate, but if, according to one assumption 1.5million children are reached each year¹, **Child to Child could have reached 60 million children over 40 years.**

The Tiger's footprint: How large is the impact of Child to Child ?

The fact that a teacher, or youth leader could pick an activity sheet, with all they needed to know about an issue, and find participatory activities alongside, was a huge success. Some examples of impact:

- Child clubs in Kenya, Nepal and other countries mobilised children: one club took the issue of child marriage to the community and reduced its incidence
- Children in Ethiopia received Early childhood education through GETTING READY for SCHOOL
- Young Facilitators everywhere increase in confidence, school performance and agency
- The participation of disabled children in school increased in Zambia and Uganda
- Teaching their peers has helped street children heal from trauma in the Philippines

"There are many occasions where Child-to-Child ideas and approaches have been absorbed into national programmes and materials. These are the 'invisible earnings' of Child-to-Child and may well prove to be its biggest impact"
(Somerset1987/8 p.xxi)

The Danger of Extinction: the ongoing need for Child to Child

In this time of COVID-19, the approach of Child to Child, which builds the capabilities of children to take action in their own communities, is never more needed. 20 million children and young people have been unable to connect online during the pandemic.

The Tiger's Habitat: What is needed for Child Participation to thrive?

The new online forum for exchange of experience; analysis of the evidence base; use of that to advocate for child rights and participation; thematic printed (and other) materials for child participation where needed.

Our Call for Action to Governments and donors

Embrace and support local NGOs, CSOs and community workers to bring the benefits of a Child to Child approach to remote and disadvantaged communities, especially in this time of the COVID-19 pandemic.

For example, health workers visiting families could bring Child to Child COVID-19 and other materials to them, and educators can support the GETTING READY FOR SCHOOL approach, which is implemented through older children.

With your help we can contribute to the future of children worldwide:

- Download our **resources** and methods, from the [Child to Child Resource Centre](#) free of charge. Use and improve them.
- Share **your own materials and experiences** in the Child to Child Forum [LinkedIn \[IN2\]](#)
- [Email info@childtochild.org.uk](mailto:info@childtochild.org.uk) if you would like to **join the forum**
- Deploy our [Covid response resources](#) and **use the Child to Child approach to prevent COVID-19** and address its effects. Help us improve them.
- Use and disseminate our new version of [Getting Ready for School](#) to **give children a fair start, especially the disadvantaged.**
- Contribute to the development of **new resources** with a focus on child participation
- Talk to us about **online training** at info@childtochild.org.uk
- **Support us with your skills.** We need IT, fundraising and more
- **Help us fundraise** for specific pieces of work. Commit to planned giving, join Amazon Smile at no cost to yourself and nominate Child to Child

Every little helps!