Research by Children
“Are we there yet?”

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‘Just call me a child. Not a child with HIV or a child with AIDS. I am just a child. I am no different from other children. I play, work and do everything just like other children. When I get sick, I visit a doctor... Then I get better... I’m not living with a deadly disease as people like to think, but rather living in a deadly world with people who don’t understand and are unwelcoming.” 15-year-old girl, Thailand (Schenk and Williamson, 2008).

Who are you?
Children as innocent

planting a seed

modelling clay

romanticised childhoods
Growing up too fast...

Parents are under more pressure than ever to schedule their children and have them engage in organised sports and other activities that may be age inappropriate.

Unhappily, the overtesting of children in public schools has become more extensive than it was a decade ago. Some communities even kindergartners are given standardised tests.

Media pressures to turn children into consumers have also grown exponentially - David Alkind (2001) *The Hurried Child*

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**global terror**

individualisation of risk

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From this..... to this

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Percent of children taken to school by car for cities in Germany, England and Australasia (Tranter, 1996)
child’s view of the world

Over parenting?????

“I let Sarah ride to school on her bike but I follow close behind to make sure she gets there safely” Helen, Mother of Sarah, age 12

bubble-wrap generation

working child

war child

Over parenting?????

“I brought Kate a mobile phone because she pestered me and well all her friends had them. Even though I was worried about not knowing who she was talking to, the fact she could call me or I could call her at anytime meant I didn’t have to worry that she might get stranded if I was running late to pick up her up after school or when she was at friends houses. Really I brought it more for my peace of mind than for her.” Mother of Kate, age 10
The State of World’s Children 2005 makes clear, for nearly half the two billion children in the real world, childhood is starkly and brutally different from the ideal we all aspire to. Poverty denies children their dignity, endangers their lives and limits their potential. Conflict and violence rob them of a secure family life; betray their trust and their hope. HIV/AIDS kills their parents, their teachers, their doctors and nurses. It also kills them. With childhood of so many under threat, our collective future is compromised. Only as we move closer to realizing the rights of all children will countries move closer to their goals of development and peace. (Kofi Anan, Secretary General of the United Nations, UNICEF 2005).

What do you know? Children as knowledge brokers

“Even in the middle of all this chaos, I don’t need you”
A convergence of forces in modern life – including such factors as television, the Internet and changing child rearing patterns – has resulted in the erosion of the wall of enforced ignorance that has surrounded childhood in Western society for the past several hundred years. (McDonnell 2005: 190)
Much research, notably within psychological paradigms, has been carried out on children, based on the assumption that children, compared to adults, are incompetent, unreliable and developmentally incomplete (Myall 2000: 121)
This investigation is based upon the assumption that the original nature of the child is so subject to environmental influences that the only way to arrive at any conception of original nature is to study it as modified by different environmental conditions. The repetition of such observations will in time give us far better basis of generalisation than can be obtained by the observations of individuals within the confining walls of one type of social environment (Mead, 1963).

research with children

"We, the children, are experts on being 8, 12, or 17 years old in the societies of today.... To consult us would make your work more effective and give better results for children. My proposal is that you make us part of your team." Girl, age 17, Norway (Schenk and Williamson, 2005).

a message to the planners

from a panel of experts

UNESCO

Growing Up in Cities Project

is an international action
research initiative to create
better cities with children and
youth. It engages children, youth
and adults as co-researchers in
evaluating local environments to
plan and implement change.
GUIC Goals

- **Enable** young people to voice their perspectives and opinions about where they live.
- **Understand** how young people perceive and use their environments.
- **Create** opportunities for child and youth participation and leadership.
- **Value** young people’s creative insights and capacities.
- **Connect** young people and adults to advocate for change.
- **Educate** policy makers, practitioners and the public about research outcomes and processes.
- **Transform** local environments to make them more supportive places.

GUIC principles

**Young people’s voices and participation**
1. Be inclusive of all young people.
2. Facilitate different types of meaningful participation that enable young people to make choices.
3. Provide tools and spaces for children and youth to voice their perspectives and ideas.
4. Invest ownership of the project in young people; ensure transparency in all aspects of the project.
5. Act ethically; protect the interests and rights of children and youth.

**Research and Action**
6. Focus on the local environment as a starting point for young people’s exploration of community issues.
7. Use engaging methods for participatory research and problem solving.
8. Work toward long term goals; ensure that participants see short term outcomes and successes.
9. Create child and youth friendly policies and improve how institutions and communities function.

Growing Up in Cities, around the world

Interviews and surveys
Observations and behaviour mapping

Children’s drawings and spatial maps

Children guided neighbourhood tours

Photography
time schedules

Interviewing community adults

Workshops and focus groups

Story maps

Virtual interactions
www.earth4kids.typepad.com/guic

analysing data
designing solutions

Reporting to Community

taking action

Papua New Guinea
Hanabada Village, Port Moresby

- Urban Village on ocean
- Indigenous village, Port Moresby
- Built 1950
- Population 50,000
- Pollution, poverty, resources, health, development

Hanubada Village

Drawings

cognitive maps

time schedules

Tour Guides

participants-tour guides
play environments

home environments

significant sites

Siremi Village, Popendetta

cognitive maps

drawings
Betty’s map/drawing

Guided Tours

Time Schedules

Home environment

Guided Tours

Significant places

Betty’s house
places of concern

GUIC Braybook 1972-1997

streetspace

roamers

groupies
workers (carers)

homebodies

players

Children’s designs

adventure play park

community and children’s centre

research in action

community garden
GUIC Outcomes

- New Global Baseline Data
- Indicators of ‘Life Quality’
- Lessons of Partnerships with Practitioners, Government Officials and Academics
- Local Participatory Research with Children
- Model and Methods Tool Kit of Children’s Participation and Evaluation for UNICEF CFC

Indicators of Local Environmental Quality - from a child’s perspective

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive Physical Qualities</th>
<th>Negative Physical Qualities</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Healthy Green areas</td>
<td>Provision of basic services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freedom from physical danger</td>
<td>Freedom of movement</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sense of political powerlessness</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Insecure tenure</td>
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<tr>
<td>Racial tensions</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Fear of harassment and crime</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Freedom, social exclusion and stigma</td>
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**ethics of participation**
- manipulation
- decoration
- tokenism
- assigned but informed
- consulted and informed
- adult-initiated shared decision
- child-initiated and directed
- child-initiated and shared decision adults

**types of participation**
- assigned
- prescribed
- invited
- negotiated
- graduated
- collaborative
- self-initiated

**research by children**

**taking participation seriously**

“Usually when we children talk about participation and making our views heard, most adults see it as a passport to disrespect. The adults have forgotten that the world is dynamic and things we know now they didn’t at our age and might still not know. We have to move from the stage where children are to be seen and not heard to a stage where children should have a voice in decision making in matters that affect him or her.” Girl, age 14, Ghana (Schenk and Williamson, 2005).
choices of types of participation and research role

choices: when
where
how
who
GUIC regional Victoria

shared methods workshop
interview community
surveyed young people
plan and design research project
Interactive feedback weblog
conduct individual research
analyse, document, report and act
feedback to youth, community policy makers
make changes

model of research

shared methods workshop

collecting data
reporting back
I live in Condah. It is half way between Hamilton and Heywood. I live on a farm, it is very dry. I travel to Hamilton each Saturday to play hockey and each Sunday I travel to Heywood to play football. I am in a family of six. I am the second oldest. I love to work on the farm and to feed the calves. I also love to ride my motorbike, I have a track with some good jumps. I have a cow, her name is Biddy, she had a heifer calf called Biddy Junior. - Josh age 13

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**Research by Children: Are We There Yet?**

- **Negotiation**: relationships and roles
- **Scaffolding**: moving towards child-centred
- **Ethics**: formal and informal
- **Methods**: for and of authentic engagement
- **Analysis**: process and purposes
- **Action**: expectations and realities

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**Penny’s Research**

... and then I formed my conclusion, which basically stated that more lighting was needed on the Tyrendarra netball courts. Solar lighting appeared to be the best option as it’s harmless to environment and inexpensive. I presented the project to the football and netball club and my opinion was taken into consideration. Earlier this season word came through that more lighting was on its way ready for the new season.

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**Key References**


