

**Institutionalized Children's Participation in Decision-making Processes:
A case in SOS Children's Villages International-Ethiopia.**

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Abstract

The goal of this study was to get knowledge about institutionalized children's experience in decision-making processes that affect their lives. Thus, the study has sought to answer questions relating to; the way both children and adults perceived children's participation in decision-making; whether children are involved in such processes or not; and the progresses, challenges and ways of improvement in relation to children's participation in decision-making processes.

The study was conducted in a branch village of SOS Children's Villages International in Ethiopia. The research design adopted was qualitative research method. In selecting the methodology and theoretical framework which adopted in this study, research questions and participants of the study was considered. Institutionalized children, SOS mothers, social workers and management representative were the research participants. Tools of data collection such as naming method, life mapping method, semi-structure interview and informal dialogue, focus group discussion, unstructured observation, and sentence completion as a protection tool have been implemented. The collected data have been analyzed and discussed in line with the theories of childhood studies, child right discourses and related literatures.

Accordingly, the results reveal that both child and adult participants have heterogeneous perspectives towards children's participation in decision-making processes that affect their lives. The adult participants' perspectival variation leveled from totally opposing child participation to allowing children to be consulted and have a say in issues that concern their lives. Likewise, even though the child participants have varies standpoints, they all agreed on three points: 1) The need of final decisions to be decided by their elders. 2) A wish to participate in decision-making processes. 3) The importance of their participation, even if they describe it in different ways. Although child participants are interested to participate, they are not participating in most of decision-making processes, especially in issues they consider as important for their lives. However the study reveals that there are some progress that encourages children participation, though it is still slow, and challenged for different reasons. The top-down rigid institutional policy, rules and regulation have identified as the center of all challenges. Thus the study have concluded that to improve the children's participation right, it is necessary to revise policies in the way that could involve all stakeholders including children in designing, developing and adopting the rules and regulations of their institution.

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Lists of Acronyms

ACRWC – African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child

AU – African Union

CRC – Conventions on the Right of the Child

CRDA – Christian Relief and Development Association,

CSA – Central Statistics Authority

ECCE– Early Childhood Care and Education

FDRE – Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia

FGD – Focus Group Discussion

GDP –Gross Domestic Product

GTP – Growth and Transformation Plan

NGO – Non Governmental Organization

INGO – International Non-Governmental Organization

OAU – Organization of African Unity

OVC – Orphans and Vulnerable children

SNNPR – Southern Nations Nationalities and Peoples Region

UN – United Nation

UNAIDS – Joint United Nations Program on HIV/AIDS

UNCRCU – United Nations Conventions on the Right of the Child

UNDP – United Nations Development Program

UNICEF – United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund.

SOS – “Send Out Succor” or “Save Our Souls”

Chapter One

1. Introduction

This introductory chapter briefly presents about orphaned and vulnerable children in Ethiopia, the role of SOS Children's Villages International as one of the care alternatives, and the 'revolution' of participation rights as background of this research study. Sub-topics like the rationale to choose this topic, objectives and research questions, significance of the research study and structure of the research study are also included.

1.1. Background

The problem of being orphaned is one of the quickly growing socio-economic challenges of many developing countries. Particularly in sub-Saharan African countries, the number of orphans from all causes has risen by more than 50 percent since 1990, where an estimated 12 million children out of the total 48.3 million have lost one or both parents to AIDS (UNICEF, 2006). According to the UNICEF report *"by 2010, an estimated 15.7 million children – 30 per cent of the 53 million anticipated orphans from all causes in sub-Saharan Africa – will have lost at least one parent due to AIDS"* (UNICEF, 2006:3). Different reports have suggested that HIV/AIDS is the leading cause of orphan-hood in these sub-Saharan African countries (e.g. see UNICEF&UNAIDS, 2004; UNICEF, 2006).

In Ethiopia too, Crivello & Chuta (2012) suggested that HIV/AIDS is the leading cause of orphan-hood. However, it does not mean that large-scale orphan-hood is a new phenomenon, and because of HIV/AIDS only (Abebe & Aase, 2007; Camfield, 2011). For instance, approximately 20 percent of a total five million Ethiopian orphans are believed to have lost parents as a result of HIV/AIDS (EMOH, 2007; UNAIDS, 2008). This implies that the rest 80% are orphaned and vulnerable because of other factors. This includes Poverty in general and more specifically drought and famine; civil and border wars; migration; epidemic diseases like malaria, and maternal mortalities (Camfield, 2011). As suggested by Camfield (2011) and Crivello & Chuta (2012), high rates of Ethiopian adult mortality coincides with the widespread poverty in general.

Since the 1960s and 1970s, Ethiopia has faced frequently drought and catastrophic famines in different parts of the country. Long lasting civil war endured throughout the country for 17 years since the early 1970s. Moreover in 1977/8 the country faced a border war with Somalia. On top of

this at the end of 1990s the epidemics of HIV/ AIDS have become an escalator of the orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) (DPCDHE, 2005).

So in trying to improve the harsh situation and capacities of OVC for these different reasons, policies and strategies have revised in the way that encourage various care interventions (DPCDHE, 2005, Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2013). Even though it is reckoned as the last option, child care institutions have their own role in caring and protecting the OVC in Ethiopia (Abebe, 2009; Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2013). Currently, throughout the country, there are about 149 local and international child care institutions which provide care for 11,920 OVC (Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2013). SOS Children Villages International-Ethiopia is one of the INGOs that cares for OVC in an institution care which formed in family like environment (see chapter 2 for detail).

According to SOS KDI (2004) and SOS Ethiopia (2009), all policies and activities of the SOS Children's Villages International is in the spirit of the United Nations Convention on the Right of the Child (UNCRC), which was ratified in 1991 by Ethiopia. In fact, the UNCRC is serving as guideling principle for most of the signatory states on what and how to integrate important elements of their socio-economic policies typically in relation to children's rights and wellbeing. In doing this children are encouraged to be active, and serve as partners of policy makers and implementers (O'Kane, 2003). Here the idea of encouraging children's to be a partner of policy makers and implementer in issues that affect their life may indicate that; for one thing it supports to the idea that children are 'active social agents' which is proposed by the sociology of childhood. Second point is the 'participation right', one of the three broader rights which are protection, provision and participation (Franklin, 1995; Alderson, 2000), which well promoted and illustrated after the adoption of the UNCRC (Ensor & Reinke, 2014). It stated under article 12 of the convention as follows;

1. States parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express these views freely in all matters affecting the child, the view of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.
2. For this purpose, the child shall in particular be provided the opportunity to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting the child, either directly or through a

representative or an appropriate body in a manner consistent with the procedural rule of the national law.

Comparing to the earlier declarations on children's right which were marked by a belief that children were passive, incompetent, vulnerable and dependent of adults (mainly linked to protection and provision rights), the children's right to self-determination and participation have been interpreted by many as "*revolutionary*" (Kjorholt, 2004:104). This is because it recognizes child autonomy and the importance of children's views (ibid). In line with this some research studies have highlighted the importance of children's participation in decision-making processes that affects their lives, especially for children who are in 'out of home care' (Munro, 2001; Bessell, 2011; Bijleveld et al, 2013). For instance, participation in decision-making about their lives helps children feel attached and dedicated to the decisions that are taking place (Woolfsen et al., 2010 cited in Bijleveld et al, 2013). It may also lead to an increase and developing in self-worth of the children (Leeson, 2007; Vis et al. 2011), and with an increased sense of 'mastery and control' (Munro, 2001 & Leeson, 2007). Furthermore, to take children's feeling, views, wishes and expectations into consideration, may help to develop more responsive and effective interventions (Sinclair, 2004; Bessell, 2011). Despite of the good starts in encouraging children to have the right to be heard and its advantage in their life, the way and progress it is applying in the ground needs response from the children themselves, which is the aim of this research study.

1.2. The Rational to Choose the Topic

During my period as an undergraduate student of Mekelle University in the department of psychology, I spent six months in apprenticeship out of the university. My apprenticeship was at one of the SOS Children's Villages International in Ethiopia, based on the random assignation of my department. For the purpose of this apprenticeship I was just like any other member of the village for six months. Thus, I got the chance to observe everyday activities of the village and its rules and regulations in general, and the routine activities of the children, and the way the SOS mothers, social workers, educator, counselor and other concerned bodies treat the children in particular. What I observed during my apprenticeship was that the children often were considered as vulnerable, ignorant, and almost everything they want to do was based on the will and approval of their care givers. This did not surprise me at that time, probably because I grew up in an

Ethiopian community where our families and neighborhoods did consider us vulnerable, immature and less capable.

However, after having studied Childhood Studies and learnt about child rights, my apprenticeship memory initiated me to ponder about whether the children of SOS Children's Villages International-Ethiopia have experienced any changes in their everyday experience in terms of participation right or continue the way I observed five years ago. Moreover, as far as I search, it is less known about the perspectives and experiences of Ethiopian children in general, and the institutionalized children in particular, in relation to their participation in decision-making processes that affect their life from their own point of view, which is the main concern of this study.

1.3. Objective of the Study

The main objective of the study was to get knowledge about experiences of institutionalized children who live in SOS Children's villages International-Ethiopia, relating to decision-making processes that affect their life. The perception of both children and adults who live and work in the institution (care givers/SOS mothers, social workers and manger) was included. In addition to this, progresses, challenges and way of improvement of children participation in decision making process that affect their lives within their village was explored.

The study has addressed the following specific objectives;

- To explore how children's participation in the SOS family decision-making processes is perceived both from children's and adults (care givers/SOS mothers, social worker and the manager) point of view.
- To know whether children participate or not in decision-making processes that affect their lives within their SOS family in particular and in their village in general.
- To identify whether there are progresses or not, in relation to the children's participation in decision-making processes within their family in particular and within their villages in general
- To understand the barriers of improvements on children's participation in decision- making processes that affect their life within their SOS family in particular and in their village in general.

1.4. Research Questions

The study have answered the following questions;

- How does children and adults in a SOS Children's Villages International-Ethiopia understand children's participation in family decision-making processes in particular and in their village in general?
- Do children participate in decision-making processes that affect their lives in the SOS family in particular and in their village in general?
- Are there any progresses or not, in relation to children's participation in decision-making processes within their family in particular and within their village in general?
- What are the challenges, and ways of improvements relating to children participation in decision-making processes that affects their life within their SOS family in particular and in their village in general?

1.5. Significance of the Study

Until the end of 1970s the dominant trend within childhood research was to view children and young people as objects to study, and not as competent and reliable subjects of their own lives (James and Prout, 1990). Children's lives have traditionally been explored through the views of the child's gate keeper or adult caretakers (Cook & Hess, 2007). In contrast of this, involving children and young people in research is a relatively new phenomenon (Masson, 2004), linked to the paradigm shift from the developmental approach to the sociology of childhood (Woodhead, 2013). The emergency of the sociology of childhood comes with the notion of viewing children and young people as competent and active social actors (James & Prout, 1990).

According to Punch (2002), considering children as knowledgeable, having their own agency and being able to be active participants during research activities can help adult researchers to understand children from their own point of view. In line with this, James (2007) also suggested that listening to what children say about their everyday lives and experiences can allow us both to theorize and act on their understandings in relation to larger issues of social and political changes. Hence I argue that we adults, particularly those who are involved in making decisions on behalf of children must gain enough knowledge as children themselves could produce knowledge about their own life experience. It is mandatory to learn more about children reality from their own points of view, if we want to create good services for children.

Thus this research study will be significant in revealing children's experience and perspectives towards participation in decision-making processes from their own point of view, perceiving children as active producers of knowledge about their life experience. It also provides valuable information for policy makers who work on child welfare services at narrowing down the gap between the theories they have already in hand and its practice at ground.

1.6. Structure of the Thesis

The thesis is organized into seven chapters with sub-sections. The first and current chapter contains the introduction of the study. It provides brief description about orphan and vulnerable children's in Ethiopia, the role of SOS Children's Villages International as one of the care alternative, and the 'revolution' of participation right as back ground of this research study. The chapter also includes the rational to choose this topic, objectives of the study, basic research questions and significance of the study.

The second chapter contains the background of the study, relevant information about the study area and brief descriptions of the NGOs in Ethiopia in general and SOS Children's Villages International in particular. In the third chapter major theoretical framework of the study and related literatures will be presented. In the fourth chapter, research methodology such as research design, research participant and recruitment technique, method of data collection, ethical issues, and data transcription and analysis are explained. The fifth and sixth chapters present the results and discussions of the study, and finally the seventh chapter presents a brief summary, conclusion and recommendation. Reference and appendixes also included at the end.

Chapter Two

2. Background of the Study

2.1. Introduction

Under this chapter, background of the research study is presented. The chapter is categorized into four sub-sections. The first part presents the country profile where the research study took place, which is Ethiopia. The demographic, socio-economic and political statuses of the country are presented briefly. Secondly, since the specific research context was in SOS Children's Villages International, which is an International Non-governmental organization (INGO), brief presentation about NGOs in Ethiopia in general is provided. The history, progress and possible challenges of NGOs in Ethiopia are discussed under this sub section. Thirdly I present about SOS Children's Villages International in general. This part briefly explains about the historical development, basic principles and structure of administration of the institution. Finally I make a brief presentation about the research context, which is SOS Children Villages International in Ethiopia. Historical establishment of the institution, its current states and main contribution in relation to children's life is discussed under this sub-topic.

2.2. Country Profile

Ethiopia is one of the top 10 largest country in Africa covering 1,138,512 square kilometers, and shares an international boundary with; Sudan and south Sudan in the west, Somalia in the east, Kenya in the south, Eritrea in the north, and Djibouti in the north-east. Ethiopia is a much diversified country with more than 80 ethnic groups, all which have their own specific customs, culture, language, and way of life.

According to the 2007 national population and housing census of Ethiopia, the total population was approximately 74 million (CSA, 2007)¹. The population is almost gender balanced, and almost half of the population (45 percent) were children below age 15, and approximately 50 percent were working groups aged from 15-64, and the rest were the aged group, above age 65 (ibid). According to the census, about 84 percent of the total population in the country reside in rural areas, while

¹ National Population and Housing Census of Ethiopia is conducted once per ten year and it will updated in this year. That's why the study cited CSA, 2007.

the remaining lived in urban areas (CSA, 2007). The livelihood of the population is mainly determined by the location they live.

The majority of the population's (84 percent) livelihood depend on subsistence agriculture, and the agriculture sector accounts for 43 percent of the gross domestic product, GDP (Ethiopia Demographic and Health Survey, 2012). Since the agriculture cultivated based on the less productive traditional practices and because of the frequent drought, many farmers are under poverty and famine. However recent joint efforts by the government and donors have strengthened agricultural resilience, and contributing at the reduction in the number of Ethiopians threatened with drought and famine (ibid). Moreover, the government is now finally pushing to diversify income-generating strategies into manufacturing, textiles, and energy generation (UNDP, 2014).

In general, it seems Ethiopia is at the track of fast economic development. According World Bank (2016), Ethiopia's fast economic growth brought positive trends in poverty reduction, in both urban and rural areas. While 55.3 percent of Ethiopians lived in extreme poverty in 2000, by 2011, this number was reduced to 33.5 percent as measured by the international poverty line, of less than \$1.90 per day (ibid).

Over the past two decades, there has also been significant progress in key human development indicators such as; primary school enrollments have maximized, child mortality has been highly decreased, and the access to clean water has more than doubled (World Bank, 2016).

The country is currently implementing the second phase of its Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP II). GTP II, which will be applied from 2015/16 to 2019/20, aims to continue improvements in physical infrastructure through public investment projects and transform the country into a manufacturing center (World Bank, 2016).

In the case of political system, Ethiopia is a multi-party federal democracy with legislative authority resting with the government headed by an executive prime minister and the elected House of Representatives (547 members) and the House of Federation (110 members). The Prime Minister is chosen by the party in power following multi-party democratic national and federal state elections which are held every five years, and the president is elected by the members of the House of People's Representatives. The Federation is composed of Nine States (*killil*): Tigray, Afar, Amhara, Oromia, Somali, Benishangul-Gumuz, Southern Nations Nationalities and People

Region (SNNPR), Gambella and Harari Regional States; and two city administrations which are Addis Ababa and Dire Dawa.

In relation to the human and democratic rights, some reports reveal that as Ethiopia is showing a positive progress, especially concerning women and children's right (Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2013; UNICEF, 2015). Yet, the government is still criticized, especially for the violence of rights of participation in civil society and politics such as freedom of association, and the right to assemble (Tronvoll, 2008; AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL, 2015).

However, the post-1991 Ethiopia has experienced a significant political institution building and an emerging public ethos of democracy (Abbink, 2006). During the imperial and military dictatorship administration regimes Ethiopia have passed through a severe Inter conflicts, civil war and natural disasters (Poluha, 2004). The consecutive civil war, the 1977/78 border war with Somalia (Kendie, 2007), and the early 1970s and early 1980s severe famine and drought (Webb et al., 1992) are the main examples among the others. Consequently, many people of the country died, migrated and suffered and many children have remained out of responsible care giver in particular (Webb et al., 1992). That's why both the imperial and military regimes were the time I/NGOs introduced to the country in alleviating the humanitarian crises (Rahmato, 2002).

2.3. Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in Ethiopia

Non-governmental organizations may be local or international organizations that involves in relief projects, development projects or both. It mainly works on providing services, channel funding, carry out development projects or advocacy activities (Rahmato, 2002; Miller et al, 2002).

In Ethiopia the introduction of civil societies in general and NGOs in particular occurred during the imperial regime in 1960s (Clark, 2000; Poluha, 2004). According to Clark (2000), one of the reasons for the presence of NGOs in Ethiopia was the imperial regimes awareness that its government was failing to provide the peoples need for advancement and development. As a result, the regime allowed some NGOs to fill its gap.

In addition to this, the catastrophic famine of the 1973-74 in the north part of the country, which was beyond the ability of the state to control, forced the imperial regime to open its doors to NGOs (Rahmato, 2002; Dupuy et al., 2015). During that tragedy, various NGO groups engaged in relief operations under the organization known as Christian Relief and Development Association

(CRDA), the first NGO umbrella organization in Ethiopia (Clark, 2000). According to Clark (2000) CRDA was organized by the alliance of Catholic charities, other religious associates, and a few other secular NGOs. The number of NGOs during the imperial regime were 20 to 25 throughout the country, which operates on relief and rehabilitation only (Clark, 2000; Rahmato, 2002). Similarly, although the Derg regime was hesitant with the Westerns INGOs because of its ideology, there was no option in tackling the mid-1980s famine crisis, and a large number of Western NGOs were allowed entry into the country (Clark, 2000; Rahmato, 2002). As a result, the number of NGOs was doubled (Rahmato, 2002). However, the NGOs were highly controlled and restricted in their operation on relief and rehabilitations (Rahmato, 2002; Miller et al., 2002).

Unlike the imperial and the Derg regime, rapid growth in numbers of NGOs has taken place after the change of regime in 1991. According to Dupuy et al., (2015: 425), the number of active, Ethiopia-based NGOs grew rapidly, from 70 in 1994 to 368 in 2000, and to 2275 in 2009.

The post 1991 regime was able to create an environment where the NGOs can take part in society, based on their area of interests like on human rights, governance and advocacy programs, voter education, environmental advocacy, and public policy investigation and monitoring activities, instead of restricting on relief and rehabilitation operations only (Haggstrom, 2003; Dupuy et al., 2015).

Despite of its progresses, the current regime is still influenced by the previous regimes in all aspects of the society, including NGO programs (Miller et al., 2002; Haggstrom, 2003; Dupuy et al., 2015). Moreover, the current Ethiopian government is suspicious, especially against local NGOs, because of skepticism, fearing ties to hidden local political agendas. This is linked to the incident of some NGOs which have been created by members of the former regime who opposes the current regime ideology (Miller et al, 2002). According to Dupuy et al., (2015), after the election of 2005 the Ethiopian government have increased its suspicion against civil society in general and human rights-related NGOs in particular. This is rooted in a belief that civil society had a role in the protests and crackdown of the 2005 election (ibid). This is the reason why, according to Dupuy et al., (2015), the Ethiopian government have deliberately proclaimed a new legislation on Charities and Societies, Proclamation No. 621/2009 which was publicized in February 13, 2009, to restrict the work of NGOs.

2.3.1. The New Ethiopian Proclamation on Civic Society Organizations

In 2009, the Ethiopian government ratified a proclamation which contains ten sections and 112 articles to define areas of deeds for Civil Society Organizations. As clearly indicated in the preamble of the proclamation, the main purpose of the law is to ensure the realization of citizens' right to association enshrined in the federal democratic republic of Ethiopia's (FDRE) Constitution; and aiding and facilitating the role of Charities and Societies in the overall development of Ethiopian peoples.

The law defines different entities based on their formation and sources of funding. According to the law, Ethiopian Charities/Societies are "*civil society formed under Ethiopian law that consist exclusively of Ethiopians and receive no more than ten percent of their funding from foreign sources*" (Art.2(2)); Ethiopian Resident Charities/Societies are "*civil societies that formed under the law of Ethiopian that receive more than ten percent of their funds from foreign sources*" (Art.2(3)); and "*Foreign charities are charities formed under the laws of foreign countries or which consist of members who are foreign nationals or are controlled by foreign nationals or receive fund from foreign sources*" (Art.2(4)).

As it stated in this law under Art.14(2), charity/society organizations are expected to involve in one or more of the purposes identified as charitable which includes; the prevention or alleviation of poverty or disaster relief; the advancement of the economy and environmental protection or improvement; the advancement of animal welfare; the advancement of education; the advancement of health or the saving of lives; the advancement of the arts, culture, heritage or science; the advancement of amateur sport and the welfare of the youth; the relief of those in need by reason of age, disability, financial hardship or other disadvantage; or the advancement of capacity building on the basis of the country's long term development directions.

On the other hand article 14(5) of the law articulates, those who can take part in activities such as;

The advancement of human and democratic rights; the promotion of equality of nations, nationalities and peoples and that of gender and religion; the promotion of the rights of the disabled and children's rights; the promotion of conflict resolution or reconciliation; and the promotion of the efficiency of the justice and law enforcement services shall be only Ethiopian Charities and societies.

The law strictly prohibits any advocacy strategy focusing on voicing the rights of children, for both the foreign and Ethiopian civil society organizations which receive more than 10 percent of their fund from foreign country (Geset, 2009; Abdi, 2012; Dupuy et al., 2015). This includes influencing for the improvement or revision of laws and policies, awareness raising activities such as training law enforcement organs on the rights of children, public awareness through workshops, publications, promoting rights of children, and the likes.

Unfortunately most civil society organizations working on human rights in general and child rights in particular were those which are foreign charities or Ethiopian civil society organizations getting their funds from abroad (Geset, 2009 ; Abdi, 2012; Dupuy et al., 2015). Because of the enactment of this new law, many foreign and foreign funded charities were forced to modify their objectives and abandon their advocacy works (Geset, 2009; Dupuy et al., 2015). Moreover, the Ethiopian charities are facing financial limits, and are highly challenged in fund raising within the country; where donating for such charity organization is not well introduced and internalized, and economic development is still low (Geset, 2009). Thus the current legal framework have negative impact on the ongoing developments achieved in children's rights and children's lives, which was accomplished before this new proclamation enactment (ibid).

2.4. SOS Children's Villages International

The historical foundation of SOS Children's Villages International links to the consequence of the Second World War, where the enormous destruction of villages and cities accompanied with several children becoming homeless and orphaned (Lukas, 2014).

As a result, the first SOS Children's Villages International was established by Hermann Gmeiner in Imst in the Austrian federal state of Tyrol in 1949 (Lukas, 2014). Initially, the SOS Children's Villages International looked after children who lost their parents in the war. Then later it started to look after both children without an adequate parental care, and the orphaned ones (ibid). This implies that it expanded its service of protection and caring from war orphaned children to children who lost care, and children who are orphaned for any reason in general.

In the second half of the 20th century, the SOS Children's Villages International, as INGO spread all over European countries with the vision of providing loving, family-based care for children who already lost parental care by any reason, and helping and encouraging families so as to get care for children at risk of losing parental care from their family origin (SOS Ethiopia, 2009; SOS

KDI, 2011). Few years after the establishment of the umbrella organization SOS Children's Villages International in 1960, it spread out throughout the world (Lukas, 2014). The first SOS Children's Villages International in Asia were established in North Korea and India in 1963. Likewise in Africa it was started in 1970 in countries like the Republic of Ivory Coast, Kenya, Ghana and Sierra Leone. Moreover, in the United States of America, the first SOS Children's Villages was founded in 1991. Currently at a global level there are more than 500 SOS Children's Villages International, and 2310 additional SOS projects in 133 states on five continents (Lukas, 2014).

According to Lukas (2014: 47) SOS Children's Villages International *“provides the opportunity for children to build lasting family relationships and to live according to their religious and cultural beliefs. In addition, it helps them recognize and develop their individual abilities, interests and talents”*. Moreover, it aims to guarantee that children in obtaining formal education and skills needed to be contributor as a members of society (SOS KDI, 2004). Besides, every policies and activities of the SOS Children's Villages International is, in the spirit of the UNCRC, to assure every child's right (SOS KDI, 2004; SOS Ethiopia, 2009).

2.4.1. Basic Principles of SOS Children's Villages International

In ensuring its vision of providing loving, family-based care for vulnerable children, SOS Children's Villages International have four basic international principles which implemented in every village in the world (SOS KDI, 2004).

According to the SOS Children's Villages International-Manual for the SOS Children's Villages Organization (2004:5), the first principle is to provide every child with a caring parent, a SOS mother, who supposed to build a warm and loving relationship with an every entrusted child and provides love, security and stability. She has to be a professional and specially trained to work with children, live with the children, take care of their development and run household activities independently. Besides the mother should be able to fully accept the children's diversity, for instance their religion and previous backgrounds.

The second principle is that every child should grow up with siblings, where the child can develop family ties. Boys and girls of different ages and backgrounds live together in a family as brothers and sisters. If there are biological siblings, they should always stay within the same family. The

aim of this principle is to build warm emotional relationship for life long between the SOS mothers and institutionalized children just like the biological mother and child relationship.

The third principle is that, each family is allocated its own home. This is aimed, every SOS Family to have its own household with an irreplaceable humor, rhythm and routine (SOS KDI, 2004). Children are raised up together; they learn and share responsibilities, joys and sorrows of their day to day activities.

The fourth principle is that, an SOS Family is part of a community. The organization has the aim to provide the SOS Family households live in a village situation where children enjoy a safe and happy childhood. According to the organization, within the Village, family households share experiences and mutually help each other, and integrated in a local community being active participants according their culture, and this allow the children to learn how to be active participants within their SOS family household, village and community (SOS KDI, 2004).

2.4.2. Administration Structure of the SOS Children's Villages International

Every SOS Children's villages in the world have a universal administrative structure. Any village must have village director, professional SOS mothers, SOS aunts, SOS family assistance, SOS facilitator, and child development co-workers and administrative co-workers (SOS KDI, 2004). The following table illustrates the structure and respective responsibilities.

Table 2.1: Structure and Responsibilities of the SOS Children’s Villages International

Village Director	SOS Mothers and Youth Leaders	
	They ensure that the children feel at home in the SOS children’s villages and develop according to their abilities into independent and contributing members of society.	
	Leading Child Development Co-worker	<p style="text-align: center;">SOS AUNTS AND FAMILY ASSISTANTS</p> <p>They support and substitute the SOS mothers</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">CHILD DEVELOPMENT CO-WORKERS EDUCATORS, SOCIAL WORKERS AND PSYCHOLOGIST</p> <p>They support the SOS mothers and youth leaders by providing their professional assistance in the children development.</p>
Leading Administrative Co-worker	<p style="text-align: center;">ADMINISTRATIVE AND MAINTENANCE CO-WORKERS</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Administrator, bookkeeper, secretary, handyman, driver, gardener and cleaner</p> <p>They are responsible for maintaining administrative systems and village property.</p>	

Source: SOS Children's Villages International-Manual for the SOS Children's Villages International Organization (2004)

The SOS Children’s Villages International Director is responsible for both the overall children’s development, and financial and personnel activities (SOS KDI, 2004). They also have the obligation of directly communicating and cooperating with SOS mothers, SOS aunts, SOS family assistants and SOS youth facilitating leaders. The director also have the obligation of closely working with a senior child development and administrative coworker.

The SOS mothers look after their family household, in the way that enable children to feel the family as their biological parents. The SOS mothers are living with in the village, in the house of the family household together with the children, and have responsibilities like ensuring the

wellbeing of children through parenting style, performing household chores, guiding children to take responsibilities, leading and interacting their SOS family with and contribute to the community (SOS KDI, 2004). Every SOS mother is admitted after completing courses of parenting skills, and it is better to be equal or above 35 years old. In addition to the SOS mothers there are SOS aunts. SOS aunts also lives in the village and provide many kinds of general support to the SOS mothers.

While the SOS family household is led by the SOS mothers, and the family consists both boys and girls of different age levels less than or equal to age of 15, the children who are older than age 15 are living in the youth houses, which is led by the youth facility leaders. The main responsibility of the youth facility leaders is guiding the children towards how to plan their future lives and being able to become independent. Moreover the youth facility leader take care of and supports children upon the completion of their primary and secondary education. The youth facilitators are expected to live in or close to the youth community.

In addition to the SOS mothers and youth facility leaders Child Development Coworkers are responsible for the children's development in the SOS children's villages International. The child development co-workers consists of educators, social workers and psychologists. These development team are responsible for providing opportunities and program supporting each SOS mother and youth facilitating leaders in promoting their children's development. Moreover, the administrative team that includes the administrator and secretary have a role in maintaining the administrative system of the SOS village building financial responsibilities within every SOS family.

2.5. SOS Children's Villages International in Ethiopia

Like the other international non-governmental organizations, SOS Children's Villages International was introduced in Ethiopia at the beginning of 1970s, and currently there are seven SOS villages throughout the country.

Because of the 1974/75 catastrophic famine many Ethiopian children become orphaned and at risk of losing care and protections, particularly in the northern Ethiopia. As a result, SOS Children's Villages International Mekelle was established for the first time in that region in 1974. Ethiopia was faced border conflict with Somalia in 1977/78, in addition to the harsh droughts, continuous political instability and civil wars. Consequently, especially in the eastern region many children

had been orphaned and out of care. Thus six years later, the second SOS Children’s Villages International became operational in Harar. This was followed by the establishment of the third SOS children’s Villages International in Addis Ababa in 1981.

For similar reasons the SOS Children’s Villages International in Hawasa was founded in 1985 in the southern part of the country as a fourth village. Moreover between the years 2000- 2011, additional three SOS Children’s Villages were established in Bahir Dar, Gode, and Jimma consecutively.

In almost all the seven villages, SOS Children’s Villages Ethiopia is providing care, health and education services to needy orphan and vulnerable children (SOS Ethiopia, 2014). In addition to the family based care approach, the organization is also working to address the capacity needs and to advance the livelihood of disadvantaged families through its family strengthening program units (ibid).

Figure 1. The location Map of the SOS children’s villages in Ethiopia



Source: SOS Ethiopia (2014)

2.5.1. SOS Children's Villages International-Ethiopia Child Care Program

Child care programs are the prime purposes for the establishment of the SOS Children's Villages International- Ethiopia. Saving the life of orphaned and abandoned children and offering them with a permanent home in an environment of family household styles in the form of children's village and youth care facilities are the main operational standard of SOS Children's Villages International-Ethiopia, even though its role extends to activities like day care centers and child family re-unification and strengthen programs.

SOS Children's Villages International-Ethiopia offers a permanent home in its seven villages in a family style environment to children who have lost their parents or cannot longer live with their parent for different socio economic reasons. Each village is arranged in the form of family household, where each family lives in their own house. Each of the seven village have 10 to 19 family household where each family household may accommodate up to 12 children's in average. In all the seven villages of children there are 104 family household with a total of 899 children, and 13 Youth homes with a total of 566 youths (SOS Ethiopia, 2014).

Children are admitted to the SOS Children's Villages International if they are orphans who lost both their biological parents and they are totally helpless and no one is responsible to raise them. Even though priority for admission is given for biological orphans, these who are from parents who are highly economical deprived and could not care for their children, are also considered. The maximum age for admission is six, though older children may be admitted if they are siblings who could not be separated. During the selection of the most disadvantaged children, strict and careful admittance is considered, except for non-registered infants who are brought by police or other concerned bodies, found in streets, forests or elsewhere. According to the institution, children have a full right of re-unification with their extended families if they need. Moreover, as it is suggested in SOS Ethiopia (2014), SOS children's villages Ethiopia gives full right for children to have a say on issues that affect their life.

SOS Children's Villages International- Ethiopia have SOS-Day Care Centers. It gives a full day care service for children at the age of two to six years from the nearby community during the day time while their parents are away to make their daily income (SOS Ethiopia, 2014) . The purpose of the day care center is to give parents a free time to make their daily income without having their children at their work place.

All the daycare centers located in five program locations provide services to a total of 748 children who are at risk of losing the care of their parents (SOS Ethiopia, 2014). The day care centers providing the children with nutritious meals, basic medical treatment, and pre-school services, psychosocial support as well as play facilities (ibid).

Additionally SOS Children's Villages International-Ethiopia promotes long-term and all rounded development for children without parental care and children at significant risk of losing parental care (SOS Ethiopia, 2014: 4). This has been done through inclusive growth of children, effective partnerships with government and non-government agencies and also by mobilizing key development stakeholders including children and communities (ibid).

2.5.2. SOS Children's Villages International-Ethiopia Education Service

The SOS Children Villages International- Ethiopia believes that education and training program plays a crucial role in the development of both children and youth, thus education service is one of its focus area. Throughout all the villages, SOS Children's Villages International-Ethiopia have seven SOS kindergartens, seven SOS Hermann Gmeiner full elementary and secondary schools, two SOS vocational training colleges, and one international school based on Cambridge Curriculum for secondary School (SOS Ethiopia, 2014).

According to the SOS Ethiopia (2014), within its all kindergartens, SOS Children's Villages-Ethiopia gives a quality kindergarten education for more than 1000 children, of which 18 percent are from the SOS family households and the rest 82 percent are from the surrounding community. Moreover in all the seven SOS Herman Gmeiner full elementary and secondary schools, quality education has been given for more than 4283 students, of these children coming from the surrounding community, and including scholarship students and SOS families account for 82 percent and 18 percent respectively (SOS Ethiopia, 2014).

Even though its competition is high, the villages also give both an international and regional scholarships for these who are academically excellent orphaned children. On the other hand the students who come from the community offered for their school, and especially at the elementary and secondary schools the students' educational excellences are also considered. According to the SOS Children's Villages International-Ethiopia's co-workers during an informal dialogue suggested that school is one of the significant area for the orphaned children to interact and socialize with the society.

Furthermore the SOS Children's Villages-Ethiopia have its own technical and vocational college as well as nursing school colleges, for these who did not want or could not able to continue their preparatory and university programs. In addition to this, orphan youth get various forms of supports on the way to self-reliance and how to lead an independent lives in the form of counseling and life skill trainings.

2.5.3. SOS Children's Villages International-Ethiopia Health Care Service

The SOS Children's Villages International-Ethiopia have four standard Medical Centers in different corner of the country villages (SOS Ethiopia, 2014). Moreover each villages of SOS children in Ethiopia have their own local primary health care centers. Both the standard medical centers and the local primary health care centers provides primary health care service to the community, particularly for orphans, vulnerable children and women caregivers as well as those who could not afford to pay the expensive medical expenses of private health institutions (ibid). Staff member of the villages are also beneficiary of this service for free.

The health care service center of the SOS children's villages in Ethiopia highly cooperated with government health bureaus and other concerned bodies in the universal health promotion activities. the center also provided various service for its surrounding communities like medical treatment for children and adults, family planning, HIV voluntary counseling and testing, expanded program of vaccination and immunization for under age five children and female of reproductive age, antenatal and postnatal follow up, pediatrics consultation, adult consultation, laboratory investigation and other related health services (SOS Ethiopia, 2014). Furthermore the center also arranges periodic health related training programs that are essential in approving sustainable community health issues like environmental protections, nutrition and sanitations, and contagious disease including STD and HIV/AIDS.

Chapter Three

3. Basic Concepts, Theoretical Foundation and Related Literature

This chapter discusses the theoretical underpinning and related literature of the research study. Basic research question and objective of the research study have been considered in choosing and structuring the theories and literatures. Accordingly, the theoretical foundation is designed based on the ‘sociology of childhood’ and the perspective of children’s rights paradigm. The chapter is structured under three broad sub-topics. It starts with defining basic concept of the research study. The concepts of children and childhood, orphan and participation is presented with in this sub topic. Next, theoretical foundation of the research study is discussed from both the sociology of childhood, and children’s rights discourse paradigm, and lastly related literature is briefly presented.

3.1. Definitions of Basic Concepts

3.1.1. Children and Childhood

The term ‘children’ is a common term that is used across the globe to refer to a group of human beings of a certain age level. Still there is no single universal definition about who children are. The Definition and meaning of who is a child often vary over time and space within a particular contextual construction whether the focus is social, economic, political, or cultural (Skelton, 2007). Likewise, although childhood is recognized as a developmental stage of life course that every child pass through, the way that interpreted and understood varies across cultures, time and place (James and James, 2004). So it is possible to say that, there is no universal definition that adequately address who children are, and what a childhood is.

On the other hand, UNCRC, which almost all world states have ratified and adopted, have announced a universal definition for who a child is, and defined common features of childhood. According to Article 1 of the convention, a child is defined as any human being below eighteen year. But still there is no universal agreement on this definition because of the socio-cultural and geographical variability (Montgomery, 2003). For instance in Ethiopia, in a community where I grew up, level of responsibility and marriage are still used to categorize people into child or adult, regardless of their chronological age. Despite of this, after the ratification of the UNCRC and ACRWC, Ethiopia have adopted a legally universal definition for who is an Ethiopian child.

Accordingly an Ethiopian child is legally defined in the ‘Revised Family Code Proclamation of 2000’ as “.....*person of either sex who has not attained the full age of eighteen years*” (Federal Negarit Gazeta, 2000: Article 215). Therefore to minimize confusion, this research study adopted this legal definition.

3.1.2. Orphan Children

Different scholars and non-governmental organizations who works with orphans and vulnerable children defines the term ‘orphan’ in various ways. For example Ennew (2005) defined orphans as children who loses their parents, and consequently become socially and materially dependent on the society for the sake of survival (cited in Abebe, 2009). On the other hand UNICEF (2006:4) defined as “*an orphan is a child under 18 years of age whose mother, father or both parents have died from any cause*”. In relation to this Abebe (2009) argues that it is impossible to have a universal definition of Orphan, although the most usual global definition of orphan in international social work is a child with two deceased biological parents.

As stated by Abebe (2009), different societies have different conceptualizations and ways of understanding who is an orphaned. Like childhood, the notion of orphan-hood is a socially, culturally and economically constructed (ibid). For example in the Ethiopian cultural context a child is said to be an orphan if he/she could not get care, suffers with a severe poverty and is economically marginalized (Abebe and Aase,2007). Even though the term ‘orphan children’ may have several contextual meaning, for the purpose of this study the definition of the SOS children’s Villages International will be used: Children who lose parental care for any reason (SOS Children Village International, 2009), which is almost similar with the cultural definition of Ethiopia.

3.1.3. Children’s Participation

Similar to the terms ‘children’ and ‘childhood’ the term ‘children’s participation’ too have not universal definition. As suggested by Sinclair (2004), children’s participation is an imprecise and multidimensional concept. For instance, according to Montgomery et al. (2003), children’s participation is about children being consulted about matters that affects their lives, and being able to influence decisions on issues affecting their lives. For Hart participation is “*the process of sharing decisions which affect one’s life and the life of the community in which one lives*” (1992:5). Additionally, Hart et al., (2004) suggested that participation is a process that enables disadvantaged groups to question existing socio-cultural practices and takeover those that are the main reasons

for their social-cultural, economic and political exclusions. Even the UNCRC does not clearly set forth children's right to participate - except as a goal for children with disabilities (article 23), though there are 'cluster of participation articles' (article 5, 9, 12,13,14,15 &16) which indirectly highlights children's participation (UNICEF, 2003).

Conceptually most of the time, the term 'participation' is considered to have a positive implication (Liebel & Saadi, 2012). It is most commonly conceptualized as both a right (in line with the UNCRC) and as a means of realization of children's rights as a whole (Hart et al., 2004: 12). However, the fact is that participation could be active or passive; invited or uninvited; forced or voluntary; unplanned or used with manipulative aims; morally good, bad or neutral (UNICEF, 2003; Liebel & Saadi, 2012).

Accredited as a multifaceted phenomenon, children participation may include a wide range of activities that differ in form and style when children are at different ages: seeking information, expressing the desire to learn even at a very young age, forming views, expressing ideas; taking part in activities and processes; being informed and consulted in decision-making; initiating ideas, processes, proposals and projects; analyzing situations and making choices; respecting others and being treated with dignity (UNICEF, 2003: 4). As it is suggested by Liebel & Saadi (2012), the term participation can have a more specific meaning only through the targets intended at, and the conditions under which these targets are set also must be taken into consideration. In relation to this McNeish (1999) has suggested that it is necessary to consider not only the way in which children participate but the context in which participation occurs. Put into practice, participation involves adults listening to children – to all their multiple and varied ways of communicating, ensuring their freedom to express themselves and taking their views seriously when coming to decisions that affect them (UNICEF, 2003).

Although there is no fixed definition for children's participation, Vis and Thomas (2009:156), have suggested three key features of children's participation in decision-making processes that could come up in to agreement.

First, the child has information in order to understand what the content of the decision making is about and what the argument and options are. Second, the child has an opportunity to express her or his own wishes and views. Third, the child opinions are considered and have an impact on the decision being made.

However, still these features could be controversial, because the so called children's participation is contextually varied (Liebel & Saadi, 2012).

3.2. Theoretical Foundation

Theoretical concepts could have a great role in providing insights and comprehensions in to the empirical experiences (Nilsen, 2005). It is also important as interpretative guides to reality and generating ideas for the study. Moreover theories are used in further explanation throughout a study (Pryke et al., 2003). Having this in mind, this research study underpinned on the theories of sociology of childhood and child right discourses.

3.2.1. The Sociology of Childhood

Various societies across different periods have understood children and childhood in different ways. According to Aries (1982), the notion of childhood did not exist in the medieval society, and children were considered as 'miniature adults' in the western medieval societies. The notion that children and childhood as different human position than the adults and adulthood emerged in Europe after the medieval period (ibid). Consequently, various discourses come up with depicting the image of children and childhood. Since the 19th century, with the discovery of the 'wild boy of Aveyron' in French, the classical developmental psychology begin to influence the views on children and childhood by putting childhood as the state of natural phenomenon (Woodhead, 2013). Developmental psychology views children as incompetent, immature or in the progress of development from childhood to adulthood (ibid). Whatever children perform an activity that could leveled them as competent, for classical developmental psychology and theories of socializations, it is the indicator of how much children are leading to the stage of adulthood or competent being (Lee, 2001).

In contrast of this over the past 25 years, there has been a shift in sociology of childhood from the developmental paradigm to the sociology of childhood paradigm, which considers children and childhood in a different way. This paradigm considers children as active in the construction and determination of their own social lives, and the society in which they live (James & Prout, 1990). The paradigm also acknowledges childhood as a social construction, which is neither dependent on a natural nor a universal feature of human groups, but rather a cultural component in many societies (ibid). Generally speaking, this paradigm is divided into three sub-approaches; (De) constructive sociology of children and childhood, structural sociology of childhood and sociology

of children (see Alanen, 2001). For the (de)constructivist approach, children and childhood are viewed as not universal facts and they are constructed and reconstructed in a specific time and context. The structural sociology of childhood views children at a macro level within the wider social structure, and childhood as a structural segment that does not change in itself (Qvortrup, 2002). In contrast to this, the sociology of children views children at a micro level within their immediate social environment (James et al., 1998).

The sociology of childhood paradigm has its own key features. In their work *“the Emerging feature of the sociology of child-hood”*, James and Prout (1990: 8-9) pointed out key features of this paradigm. Firstly they suggest that *“childhood is a socially construction”*. This means that childhood has never been a natural phenomenon or universal feature, instead it is a cultural and structural phenomenon of various societies that is socially constructed and understood contextually. In relation to this Franklin (1995) suggested that being a child is variable and reflects differences such as gender, class, ethnicity and historical background. This way of conceptualizing children and childhood transgresses ‘taken for granted’ views and rejects the ‘universal’ and ‘natural’ concepts ascribed to children and childhood in the dominant developmental approaches (James & Prout, 1990). The reason for this argument is that children are not the same across time and place (Montgomery, 2003). As time changes the way children are treated and conceptualized also changes (Aries, 1962).

Secondly James and Prout (1990) argued that children’s cultures and social relations are worthy of study in their own right, independent of adults’ concerns and perspective. In relation to this the contested point ‘human being’ versus ‘human becoming’ (Qvortrup, 1994) can be raised. The dominant held conception from developmental psychology, culture and personality, school of anthropology and theory of socialization viewed children as future ‘be-comings’ rather than as present ‘beings’. This has influenced the various aspects of societies’ image towards children and childhood (James, 2009). Lee (2001) also points out that ‘human being’ is seen as complete, competent, stable, self-possessed and controlled, and in contrast to this ‘human becoming’ is seen as incompetent, in the process of changing, incomplete, lacking self-possession and control. He also argues that this assumption of children as ‘human becoming’ has led to adults gaining power and responsibility over children’s lives. Due to the fact that children are considered to be ‘human be-comings’, they cannot be properly allowed to speak for themselves and only ‘human beings’ are capable of speaking for themselves (Lee, 2001). Moreover, James & Prout (1990) also

emphasize children's agency as a third point. In this view children are active rather than passive recipient of adults' action (James, 2009). Children are capable of playing a role in their own life, other's lives around them and in the community they live in (James & Prout, 2009). In general viewing children in such way indicates that as children have certain power over their own life (James & James, 2008).

3.2.2. Agency and Social Structure

To understand children's experience in relation to their participation within their family or society in general, it is important to highlight the arguments on agency and structure. Scholars have debated on the issue of structure and agency for a long period of time. For instance, Durkheim and Marx emphasized the importance of social factors and the structures for shaping individuals behavior while Max Weber argued that individuals possess ability to plan, define and organize actions and that society is a result of individuals creativity, reasonableness and autonomy (cited in Elder-Vass, 2010). For Durkheim and Marx, collective moral ideas and social institutions determine people's actions, while for Max Weber agency is a stronger motivator for behavior than social structures in society.

In contrast of these, Anthony Giddens suggested that as the dichotomy between structure and agency is wrong, and that both agency and social structure presupposes each other (cited in James & James, 2004). As pointed out by Holt- Jensen (1999), Giddens also argued that individuals are born into society that captured them with in social structures, which both challenge and enable their action. Structures in this regard could be considered as rules and resources for action, and individuals' agency could refer to people's capability and their related activities (Holt- Jensen, 1999).

Activists of the sociology of childhood also engaged in this debate, advocating and re-emphasizing the need for children to be recognized as active and competent social agents (James & Prout, 1990; James, 2009) and childhood to be considered as a social structure (Qvortrup, 2002).

3.2.3. Children's Right Discourses

For a long period of time, people have been discriminated and mistreated for their color, age, sex, economic status etc. Of the most oppressed groups in this regard were blacks, women and children (Connolly, 1998). According to Ansell (2005), children- particularly African children's were

considered as asocial and primitive beings. Since the early 19th centuries there was different efforts in developing an international declarations on human rights in general. The 1924, League of Nations Declaration on the Rights of the Child and the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights started a new era in relation to human rights in general and child rights in particular. Especially, the issue of children's rights become more apparent in the 1960s onwards, with the two major debating approaches; 'children's liberationist thesis' and 'Child protectionist thesis' (Fortin, 2009) developed in the academia. These approaches are extreme opposites, where the first advocates for children's ability of self-determinism, and the last advocates for children's immaturity, vulnerability and need for care and protection until they become mature adults. Thus, it may be because of the extreme stances of these perspective, as a mediator the third perspective, which is 'liberal-parental- view' have developed (see Moosa –Mitha, 2005). The view of these three perspectives are briefly described as follows.

3.2.3.1. The Liberationist Approach

Since the late 1960s, domestic debates over child rights in Western Europe, and the vigorous movements in the US shifted towards the empowerment of children in the political, civil and social contexts (Fottrell, 2000). Children liberationist were among the group who initiated this movement (Fortin, 2009). Daniel Farson and John Holt, in particular were the forefront radicals about this perspective (ibid). According to Archard (1993:46-47),

The basic claims of the children's liberationist are that the modern separation of children's and adults world is an unwarranted and oppressive discrimination; that this suggestion is accompanied and reinforced by false ideology of 'childishness'; and that children are entitled to all the rights and privileges possessed by adults.

The liberationists argue that, protecting children is not children's right, rather it is repressing their freedom. For this perspective, family, particularly nuclear family is the most repressive institution of children as it was the case of women (Fortin, 2009). The repression may be executed through the cover 'protection right' and vicious treatment, or denying them from decision-making processes that affect their lives. The liberationists claim that, regardless of their age, children should be given equal rights like the adults.

For liberationists, children have the capacity of self-determinism and there is no reason to exclude them from the freedoms granted to adults (Archard, 1993; Fortin, 2009). They argued against the

age based criteria that is used in assessing the competency and experience of children to make a rational decisions. This perspective argued that, children's age is wrongly correlated with some relevant competence (Archard, 1993). According to John Holt, any child at any age like any adults, without any discrimination should have the right to vote, work for money, to own and sell properties, to be paid a minimum guaranteed state income, to be legally responsible for ones act, to use drugs and control their sexual lives, and to do everything what adults allowed to do (cited in Fortin, 2009).

For the liberationists, since children are human beings they should be able to fully participate in social, political, economic and other related life aspects (Moosa –Mitha, 2005). For instance, since political decisions affect children's life, they should not limited from direct participation and decision because of age as age is perceived as an arbitrary criteria (Archard, 1993). Some liberationists did not allow any parental interventions in regulating the children's life (ibid).

Even though the liberationists work produced the acknowledgement of children's capability of autonomy to make their own decisions and encouraged adults to let children to be self-directed, it could not be free of criticism (Fortin, 2009). As Fortin indicated, to modern scholars the claims of liberationists for children to enjoy all adults rights looks like not only 'unrealistic but reckless'. The liberationists have been strongly criticized for at least two main points (Fortin, 2009). One is that there are obvious dangers in ignoring the slow rate of children's physical and mental development by giving them all rights and responsibilities which adults could exercise. For instance, it is undeniable that babies, infants and even young children will need the help of their parents or related care givers in exercising their rights on behalf of them, where such issue have no room for the liberationists' perspective. The second is that the danger of abolishing the child-parent relationship, which ultimately damages family unit as a whole (ibid).

3.2.3.2. The Protectionist Approach

In contrast of liberationist perspective, the child protectionist perspective considers children as vitally different from adults and define the rights of children in terms of their status as 'not yet adults' (Moosa –Mitha, 2005). For this perspective, children are future be-comings who needs to be protected, guided and trained the way they should act. According to this perspective giving children the same rights like adults is dangerous for the children themselves (ibid). This

perspective argued that, children are physically and cognitively immature and not ready to exercise all right that adults can engaged (Archard, 1993).

For this perspective, it is one of the ways children's right could assured, if they could get appropriate adult protection and help (Montgomery et al., 2003), and children are considered as incompetent and could not able to decide on their own life and needs adults to decide on behalf of them. Since this perspective totally disregarded the concept of children's agency, which most sociologist of childhood argue for, it could not escape from criticism.

3.2.3.3. The Liberal-Parental- Approach

As it discussed before, for the liberalists perspective children are with full capacity of self-determinism, who can decide independently all about their life. In contrast, the protectionist perspective considers children as both physically and cognitively immature to decide about their life and in need of adult care and protection till they reach adulthood. The extreme stances of these perspectives perhaps led to the development of third perspective by Freeman, which is 'liberal parental view' (see Moosa –Mitha, 2005). The liberal-paternalist view tries to mediate the contradiction between the views of the child liberationist and child protectionists (Moosa –Mitha, 2005). This perspective acknowledges the difference between children and adults but not defined with-in fixed categories. According to this perspective children's difference should be seen on the basis of 'case-by- case' especially in the case of older children (ibid). Thus it is mandatory for children to have protection rights on the one hand, and accepting their participation rights and competencies on the other hand. This perspective gives recognition for maturity and experience, that older children could made a rational decision than those who are very young children. In line to this perspective Freeman (1992) suggest that to take children's right seriously needs to take seriously both protection of children and recognition of their autonomy. Freeman also claim that in looking for a children's rights program, it is necessary to recognize the dangers of liberalists perspective as we recognize the limitations of protectionists approach. What he indicates is that it is better to find a balance between the protectionist and liberationist approaches.

3.2.4. Tools of Child Right Implementation

Since the early 20th century different efforts have been made in developing an international legal instruments on children's right. The 1924, League of Nations Declaration on the Rights of the Child and the modified 1959 Declaration of the Child Right could deemed as an examples. Even

the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights try to say a lot about the protection and promoting of children's right (Burr and Montgomery, 2003). However, these declarations were non-binding and hence had limited influence on the practice of the states as well as the international organizations (Fottrell, 2000). The 1970s, domestic debates over child rights in Western Europe, and the vigorous movements in the US shifted towards the empowerment of children in the political, civil and social contexts has brought a hot discussion on children's rights (Ibid).

It is possible to say the 1970s became a turning point in the development of child rights because of milestones that continued to the existing (Fottrell, 2000:2); First, there have been a paradigm shift in the theoretical foundation in relation to child rights from "*welfare oriented-paternalism approach to the radical liberal oriented approach*", its fundamental belief is recognition of children's autonomy as opposed to the comprehension of children as vulnerable. Second, the movements instigated in the US to conventional children's rights as human rights have prompted international awareness that children's rights were inadequately solved in the existing international human rights instruments and national policies, and therefore a situation for improvements was awaiting for the world states.

According to Franklin (1995), at the end of 1970s a radical change occurred. In the international year of the child in 1979, a Polish government delegation proposed a formal drafting of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the child (UNCRC) to the UN commission on human rights (Fottrell, 2000). This was the cornerstone of the founding an international binding set of rights for the children, and consecutively within the next decade, the proposal had undertaken plentiful redrafting (ibid), and finally ratified in 1989 and entered into force in September 1990. Likewise, one year later, the African charter on the rights and welfare of the child (ACRWC) was drafted and adopted in Africa as a regional instrument to correct and fill any gaps left by the UNCRC with respect to the rights of African children (Ensor & Reinke, 2014).

As it suggested by Ensor & Reinke (2014), UNCRC and ACRWC are two of the main legal instruments establishing the principles of children's right to protection and participation. Thus it would be relevant for this research study to describe briefly about these instruments and their influence in Ethiopian children's right.

3.2.4.1. The Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

The “*UNCRC was adopted and opened for signature, ratification and accession by General Assembly resolution 44/25 of 20 November 1989, and entered into force 2 September 1990, in accordance with article 49*” (UNCRC, Preamble). Since then, it has become one of the forefront instrument in promotion of children’s rights throughout the globe (Ensor & Reinke, 2014). The adoption of this convention is considered as the beginning of a period of advocacy to promote and legitimize children’s participation, in addition to their more traditional protection and provision rights (ibid). It constitutes a valuable instrument for individuals and child-focused organizations working to promote a view of children as “*independent, thinking subjects capable and deserving of a greater degree of participation*” (Hart, 1997, 11).

Four articles of the convention have been identified as main principles. As it is pointed out in Fortin (2009: 40), “*although the committee has stressed that the articles of the convention are interrelated and should be considered together, it has itself elevated article 2, 3,6, and 12 of the status of general principles*”. Article 2 stipulates that all the rights accorded children should be implemented without any discrimination, regardless of the child, his/her parent’s or legal guardian’s race, sex, color, language, ethnic, religion, political or social opinion, national birth or other status. The second main principle is article 3; ‘the best inters of the child’. It is considered as the most important article (Bierwirth, 2005; Fortin, 2009). According to Fortin (2009) the best interest of the child is used as ‘a guiding principle’ when interpreting all convention provisions, that is all children’s right must be interpreted based on their best interest. I agree with the idea that children’s life related actions and decisions should be based on their best interest. But the dilemma is how we could be sure whether a specific action or decision is based on the child’s best interest or not? Sometimes it may fail what adults think an action or decision is in the best interest of the child. As suggested by Holt, if a child could access and understand all relevant information, in important decisions no one can know better than the child him/herself (cited in Freeman, 1992). Yet, this is debatable, because it is difficult in identifying the child’s wishes and best interest (Thomas, 2000; Burr & Montgomery, 2003).

The third main principle is ‘the right to life, survival and development’, which stated under article 6. The right to life and survival is a fundamental human right that is guaranteed to any human

being without any discrimination. This principle promotes the implementation of policies and programs in the way that confirm the survival and development of children.

The ‘participation right’ is the fourth main principle of the convention. Like the ‘best interest of the child’, participation right too is considered as more contributing to the realization of children’s rights as a whole (Hart et al., 2004). This principle acknowledges children’s capacity of making a decisions in matters that affect their life.

In general, as it suggested by Marta Santos Pais (cited in Ensor & Reinke, 2014 :74), UNCRC brings together the traditional view of the child as an immature, passive and vulnerable human being that requires care and assistance from adults, with the modern perspective “*that a child is a subject of rights who is able to form and express feelings, to participate in decision making processes and influence solutions, to intervene as a partner in the process of social change and in the building up of democracy*”.

3.2.4.2. The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC)

The UNCRC was followed by the ACRWC. ACRWC was adopted in 1990 by the Organization of African Unity (OAU), which currently known as the African Union (AU). It entered into force on 29 November 1999, becoming the first regional treaty to address children’s rights in Africa. Similar to the UNCRC, the ACRWC establishes a wide range of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, and acknowledges that child participation is often an effective strategy for children to achieve their provision and protection rights (Ensor & Reinke, 2014). Both ACRWC and UNCRC share the same main principles; (1) nondiscrimination (Article 2 of the CRC and Article 3 of the ACRWC); (2) the best interest of the child (Article 3 of the CRC and Article 4 of the ACRWC); (3) the right to life, survival and development (Article 6 of the CRC and Article 5 of the ACRWC); and (4) the principle of participation (Article 12 of the CRC and Article 4(2) of the ACRWC).

According to Viljoen (2000 cited in Ensor & Reinke, 2014), the African Charter was established as a response to the perception that African countries had been under-represented in the drafting process of the UNCRC, leading to the belief that a regional treaty would help to better address the particular realities of children in Africa. Though most of the ACRWC articles are in consistence with the UNCRC, some articles are designed in accordance with the African context. This implies

that ACRWC is not only shaped by views of the rights of children universally, but also seeks to detail the rights and responsibilities of African children more in detail (Ensor & Reinke, 2014).

For instance, article 11 of the ACRWC, promotes the provision of an education model which endeavors for the “*preservation and strengthening of positive African morals, traditional values and cultures*” (2(c)), as well as the “*promotion and achievements of African Unity and Solidarity*” (2(f)).

Moreover the ACRWC stipulates the responsibilities that children have to their families, communities, countries or the world in general, where nothing is said by UNCRC about this. Article 31 of ACRWC stated that “*every child shall have responsibilities towards his family and society, and other recognized communities and international communities*”. The responsibilities of children, including conserving and strengthening cultural values, respecting parents, elders, and superiors, and working for a cohesive family, among others (Article 31). Especially article 31(b) claims that, a child has the duty “*to serve his national community by placing his physical and intellectual abilities at its service*”. This article seems as it acknowledges the children’s active role and their productiveness with in their society than considering them as separate beings who depends on the adults’ protection and provisions. This implies, as it is suggested by Abebe (2007), how the children in the global south are viewed differently from the children of global north, whose maximum responsibility is going to school and play. Furthermore, the UNCRC allows military recruitment of children’s above 15 years old (Article 38), and have no clear stance on child marriage, whereas the ACRWC absolutely prohibits both the military recruitment (Article 22(2)), and child marriage (Articles 21(2)).

3.2.4.3. The Influence of UNCRC and ACRWC on Ethiopia

The current constitution of Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopian (FDRE) was published in 1995, after the country adopted many important international instruments of human and democratic right. UNCRC is among the basic international instruments that Ethiopia ratified without any reservation (Lemessa and Kjorholt, 2013). In general the human right part of the constitution of the country seems as highly influenced by the international human rights instruments. For example if we see article 9(4) of the constitution states that “*all international agreements ratified by Ethiopia are an integral part of the law of the land*”, and article 13(2) states that “*the fundamental rights and freedoms specified in this chapter shall be interpreted in a*

manner conforming to the principles of the universal declaration of human rights and international instruments adopted by Ethiopia’. This implies, the constitution of the federal democratic republic of Ethiopia allows the international treaties like the UNCRC, to have equal status with the constitution of the country (Yohannes & Assefa, 2007).

According to Yohannes & Assefa (2007) the UNCRC is not only part of the domestic law of Ethiopia, but also the trustworthy guideline for the interpretation of the rights of children that confirmed by the constitution. For instance article 36 of the constitution identifies that every child have the right to life, care and protection. Moreover this article gives focus to ‘the best interest of the child’ (article 36(b)), which is identified as the most important of the main principle of the UNCRC. Since Ethiopia is consented to enhance the wellbeing of children based on the ACRWC, the charter too have the same value as UNCRC (Yohannes & Assefa, 2007).

However, Ethiopia still have lack of legal national frameworks and effective translation of the international child right instruments into the local contexts of the country, and this affects the implementation of those declarations (Lemessa and Kjørholt, 2013).

Although there still is a gap of a systematic legislative review in order to bring domestic laws in accordance with the Conventions, substantial efforts have been made to adopt and implement the Convention into different domestic laws and national policies (Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2013).

For instance after 2005 the country has developed a draft Comprehensive National Child Policy in line to the principles of the UNCRC and ACRWC to guide the work of various actors dealing with children as well as to promote the rights of children (Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2013). Moreover National Criminal justice policy which was issued in 2011 has come with several reforms in order to solve the gaps observed in the criminal justice system as well as to be in accordance with the endowment of the UNCRC and ACRWC (Ibid).

Furthermore the National Policy Framework for Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) was developed in 2010 to make sure the provision of good quality services to all children including those with special needs and marginalized, from birth to the age of seven (Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2013). Besides, the constitution of the FDRE in accordance to the UNCRC, states that everyone has the right to freedom of expression (Article 27(1)), and currently there are several new initiatives to promote the participation of children and to have their views heard, which is

mainly initiated by the institute of Ombudsman and Ethiopian human right commission. The establishment of children's parliaments is an example of the initiative, where children are elected from schools and form a city level parliament to exercise democratic processes for a limited term (ibid). In relation to this Lemessa & Kjørholt (2013) found that the establishment of child parliament in Konso (a district in Ethiopia) was playing a role in introducing the language and practice of rights, and opening some new opportunities for children such as; minimizing school dropout, fighting and reporting children violence, introducing the concept of justice and the likes. This all may show the influence of UNCRC and ACRWC on Ethiopian children's right movements.

3.2.5. Hart's Ladder of Participation Model

Roger Hart's (1992) designed a model of stages of participation which he called the 'ladder of participation' to enable the discussion of degrees of children participation. Hart's initial concern was children's participation in environmental development projects, but the ladder metaphor has also been applied more widely in other study areas (Kirby, 2003) and become the most influential model in the field (Sheil, 2001; Wyness, 2013). The rung of the ladder includes a number of different forms of participation hierarchical levels; forms of 'non-participation' numbered from 1 to 3 and forms of 'genuine participation' from 4 to 8 (see Hart, 1992). The top rung of the ladder represents the most advanced level of participation, and from rungs 4 until 7 there is a progressive move away from adults setting the agenda to children taking control, which implies that adults progressively recede into the background as we move up the hierarchy (Wyness, 2013). For further description the different stages of the Ladder have illustrated as follows (see Hart, 1992:8-16).

1. *Manipulation*: this is the lowest rung of the ladder, where children are served for adult as an object of performing their mission. In this case children have no understanding about the issue and their actions which they are manipulated by. According to Hart, even situations where children are consulted but not given any feedback at all is an example of manipulation.
2. *Decoration*: this is one rung above the manipulative, where children are deceived for refreshment, or some interesting performance by adults for an accomplishment of other main cause. For instance children are given T-shirt related to some aim, and may sing or dance at an event in such dress with little idea what it is all about and no say in the organization of the event (Hart, 1992). The

reason this rung is one step up from ‘manipulation’ is that adults do not pretend that the cause is inspired by children (ibid).

3. *Tokenism*: is the third rung in the ladder that used to describe those instances in which children are apparently given a voice, but in the ground have little or no choice about the subject or the style of communicating it, and little or no opportunity to formulate their own opinion (Hart, 1992).
4. *Assigned, but informed*: ‘genuine participation’ starts in this phase (Hart, 1992). In this rung decisions are made by adults, but adults respect the children’s views and children feel fully informed (Kirby, 2003). Hart (1992) have identified four requirements for this phase, to be entitled a ‘genuine participation’. First, children should understand the initiation of the assignment; second, they should know who made the decisions concerning their involvement and why; third, they should have meaningful role; and fourthly they should be volunteer for the assignment after the assignment was mad clear to them.
5. *Consulted and informed*: In this phase assignments are run and designed by adults, but children understand the processes, works as consultant, and their opinions are treated seriously. At a minimum in this phase, children should be informed about all parts of the process, asked to volunteer and to be fully informed of the results (Hart, 1997).
6. *Adult-initiated, shared decisions with children*: At this phase, adults have the initial idea, but children and young people are involved in every decision of the stages in planning and implementation process (Kirby, 2003). According to Hart (1992), this rung is the phase of real participation, though assignments are initiated by adults, children have a shared power in the process of decision-making. Hart (1997) argued that, in order to reach this phase, children need to be involved in the entire process of the assignment.
7. *Child-initiated and child-directed*: In this phase children and young people have the initial idea and decide how the assignment is carried out. Adults are available, but it is the children responsibility to manage at all (Kirby, 2003). These types of initiatives are particularly difficult to find, except for in children’s play (Hart, 1992).
8. *Child-initiated, shared decisions with adults*: In this phase children design and directly influence the issues in the way they are interested (Hart, 1997). However, they can also involve adults, but since the assignment is directed and managed by children, in choosing to involve adults is based on the permission of the children (ibid).

As it is pointed out by Kirby (2003), one might be tempted to judge projects according to how high up they are on the ladder, as if the higher stages are more desirable than the lower ones. This may be contradict to the fact that in some contexts it may be more appropriate for adults to actually take the lead (ibid). Moreover children's participation is a multi-dimensional concept and it may be difficult to put easily in such a linear scale (Kirby, 2003). So these could account as some of the limitations for this model.

3.3. Related Literature Reviews

The purpose of this section is to present previous research findings that relates to the objective and basic research questions of this study. As far as my awareness, though it is less known about the perspective and experience of both children and adults of the global south towards children participation in decision making process, many research have done in the global north in relation to this area (see e.g. Morrow, 1999; Thomas, 2000; Munro, 2001; Cashmore, 2002; Butler et al., 2005; Leeson, 2007; Bessell, 2011). Thus previous research findings of children in general and children of 'out-of- home care' in particular, in relation to their perspective and experience towards their participation in decision-making processes that affect their life is presented in the following sub-sections. Research findings in relation to adults' perspectives towards children's participation in decision-making processes are also included.

3.3.1. Children's Perspective

Research findings indicate that children vary in the degree to which they regard themselves as competent decision makers (Morrow, 1999; Butler et al., 2005). Regardless of this variation many children would like to have a say and to be heard in the process of decision-making processes that affect their life, but not necessarily make the final decisions on their own or have ultimate control over the decision-making processes (see, Morrow, 1999; Thomas; 2000). Moreover children would like to be given a choice as to how and how much they participate in a decision-making processes, and to have a clear understanding of the processes (Thomas, 2000). Many children believe that the involvement in a decision-making processes that affect their life should depend on the nature and complexity of the decision (Morrow, 1999; Butler et al., 2005; Coyne & Harder, 2011). For instance in his work "*Children, Family and State: Decision Making and Child Participation*", Thomas (2000) has explored the views and experience of UK children 'looked after' by local authority towards their participation in decision-making processes that affect their

lives. Besides some of his child participants classifies decision-making processes in to ‘big’ and ‘little’, and they believe as they want to take part and have a say on the ‘little’ decisions, and prefer adults to make for them on the ‘big’ and difficult decisions (ibid).

Furthermore research findings show that, children consider themselves as they are in the process of learning how to make a better decision making (Butler et al., 2005), and believe that their competency to decision-making increase with their age increment (Morrow, 1999; Thomas; 2000). According to Morrow (1999), children identify that as they get older, they need to make more decisions, but still they need to have some help in doing so. This may imply as the children are expressing their awareness on the limits of their autonomy, and are clear that decision-making is dependent upon what the decision is about (Morrow, 1999; Coyne & Harder, 2011).

Even though children vary in the degree to which they regard themselves as competent decision makers, research studies show that as majority of children agree on the importance of their participation in issues that affect their life. They reflected that as they felt comfortable about themselves when they got the chance to be consulted and taken their views seriously (Leeson, 2007; Bessell, 2011). In contrast of this children felt powerless when issues that affects their lives are decided via adults or their concerns were not addressed (Munro, 2001).

3.3.2. Children’s Experience in Participation

Many research studies (see e.g. Morrow, 1999; Munro, 2001; Bell, 2002; Cashmore, 2002; Leeson, 2007; Bessell, 2011) found that children had the feeling that they had limited or not opportunities to participate in decision-making processes that affect their lives. As cited in Bessell’s (2011), research studies (Mason, Urquhart & Bolzan, 2003; Tregeagle & Mason, 2008) show that specially ‘out of home care’ children are excluded from participating in decisions-making processes that affect their lives.

‘Out of home care’ children in different research contexts reported that they were not well informed about what was happening, why they were in care, what they could expect, and the changes that were happening in relation to their lives (see example Cashmore , 2002; Leeson, 2007; Bessell, 2011). In contrast, research finding suggests that some children in ‘out of home care’ were reported as they consulted, but it is still in minor decisions and not in decisions they considered as important, e.g. where they lived, contact with parents, siblings and friends, and choice of school (Munro, 2001; Cashmore, 2002; Leeson, 2007; Bessell, 2011). In relation to this,

Munro (1999) suggested that social workers in UK were only motivated to listen a child story if it complies with their own interest, and suspected, discounted or totally rejected the children's view if it did not fitted with their interest. Moreover, Munro (2001) stated that most of the child participants in her research study were dissatisfied with the amount of contact they were allowed to have with parents and relatives.

Research findings show that the impacts of children's not participating in issues that affect their live. According to Leeson (2007) if children do not participate, it might create a sense of being ignored or overlooked, leading to a decrease in self-esteem and self-worth. Likewise Winter (2010) also found that for children aged four–seven years, lack of consultation led to feelings of guilt, sadness, irritation and uneasiness.

3.3.3. Adults' Perspective

In worldwide level, different legislation, policies, conventions and research findings encourage children to have say in decision about their life, and suggests as participation of children in decisions about their lives have multi advantages for every children in general and children of 'out of home care' in particular (Bessell, 2011; Bijleveled et al., 2015). Indeed many professionals acknowledge this idea (Bijleveled et al., 2015). Yet, several research studies found that involving children in decision-making processes is still doubtable for many adults including professionals because of their perceptual differences (see e.g. Shemmings 2000; Thomas, 2000; Leeson, 2007; Bessell, 2009). Bessell (2009) have found that professionals like policy makers and service delivers in the Philippines have heterogeneous, diverse and complex perspectives towards the involvement of children in decision-making that affect their lives. Likewise, Shemmings (2000) found similar results.

The difference in interpretation of participation is one of the main reason for adults' perceptual disagreement (Bijleveled et al., 2015). As suggested by Archard & Skivenes (2009), some case managers describe participation as giving the children a chance to express their views, and others consider that it is only a matter of informing to the children about what is decided or what is going to happen. Likewise Vis & Thomas (2009) found that, some social workers describe participation as consulting the children, though it does not imply children have an influence on the decision-making.

In addition to the difference in interpretation of participation, there is also a disagreement in the age of children that should be involved in decision-making processes (Shemmings, 2000; Thomas; 2000). For instance Shemmings (2000) have asked 88 sample participants of both social worker and non-social workers about their perception, which age group of children should be involved in a decision-making processes that affect their life. The finding show that as the participant perception classified in to two groups. One of the groups believe that children should be involved in decision making process since their early age, and the other group believe that children should be involved in decisions during their 16 to 18 years old.

Moreover research findings show that as there is also adults' perceptual disagreement in the weight given to the child's views in the decision-making processes when they are taken into account (Thomas, 2000; Bijleveled et al., 2015). As suggested by Bijleveled et al.(2015) there is no clear evidence that shows the real influence of children's view on decision-making process of their lives. For instance Thomas (2000) found that some adults point out that children's voice cannot always be taken at face value and that they don't always know what is best for them, and many adults believe that as adults focused on long term and children on more immediate issues of the child life. Likewise Shemmings (2000), found that a significant number of professionals are reluctant to engage meaningfully with children of any age on decisions related to their lives or to allow them to participate in meetings to discuss and decide their futures.

Chapter Four

4. Methodology

In this chapter detailed description and discussion about the methodological process and field work experience of the study is going to be presented. The chapter is structured along seven sub topics. Firstly, the research design which applied in this study is presented. Next, gaining access for the field work is briefly explained. Thirdly the research participants and the method of recruiting is explained. Fourth, methods of data collection used in this study is discussed. Then, ethical consideration that applied in the field work is presented, and finally the process of data transcription and analysis is explained.

4.1. Research Design

Qualitative research design have been used in this research study. In choosing the research design, I have at least put two things in to consideration; the objective of the research study and the research participants.

Key participant of this research study were children, and it is recommended as qualitative research design is suitable to conduct research with children (Greig et al., 2007), though some researcher argues both qualitative and quantitative are suitable (Qvortrup, 2002). In relation to this Barker et al., (2003) suggest that qualitative research design is more effective in enabling children to communicate in their own words.

Furthermore, unlike quantitative research design which generally assumes that reality is universal and quantifiable, qualitative research design shoulders that individuals' perspectives and experiences are socially constructed (Greig et al., 2007). According to Limb & Dawyer (2001) qualitative research design is more successful at exploring experience, perspectives and feelings of individuals, and at the same time enables researcher to gain in-depth information and detail understanding about a phenomenon. Since the objective of this research study is to get knowledge about the experience and perception of children towards their participation in decision-making processes that affect their life, qualitative research design have been found as most suitable.

4.2. Gaining Access of the Fieldwork

Getting access for field work is often one of the challenging part of a research study. More specifically, negotiating access at various levels with adult gatekeepers that have the power to

control the appropriate place for conducting research with children is particularly challenging when in doing research with children (Abebe, 2008; Punch, 2002). Moreover Sime (2008) also argues that the process of getting access to spend time with children makes field work activities multifaceted due to the legal and the general societal views of children. Fortunately in my case gaining access to the field was less challenging.

The data for my research study was collected from an institutional child care center a SOS Children's Villages International and involved orphan children who lives in family households (aged 10 to 14), and adults (SOS mothers, social workers, and one representative from management office) who works or live at the institution. To do this, I needed permission from the institution. In getting access for the children, it was not enough with institutional permission. It was also necessary to get permission from both the family household and program coordinator of the institution. This was ensured by showing my introductory letter from my university, clarifying my topic, objective and purpose of the study and other identification materials to the institution gatekeepers and other concerned bodies at the institution.

Even though the gate keeper allowed me to enter directly after I introduced myself, unfortunately all the higher officials including the manager were at meeting for two days. After two days I found the manager of the institution and I introduced myself in detail, including my background and my research study purpose. Without any response he directed me to the program coordinator of the institution who is responsible for such duties.

Again I introduced myself and my research purpose in detail for the program coordinator of the institution. At the beginning he had some suspicion and asked to see both my research question and my interview guide. The following day he allowed me to conduct my research study at the village after having asked me to fill and sign an agreement form which state that the research is for academic purpose only and as the research study will not have any psychological or physical harm for the children. The agreement also includes that it is strictly prohibited to take any photos, videos or other related in the village. According to the program coordinator, taking photos, videos and the likes from the village is prohibited. Fortunately after high negotiation he allowed me to record audio only. Within two weeks I finished process needed to get full permission. I started my fieldwork with introducing myself to the social workers of the institution, as I needed their cooperation and they were happy to voluntarily help me in every issues that needs their help.

4.3. Research Participant and Recruitment Technique

The area of study for this research was an institutional child care, which is SOS Children's Villages International found in Ethiopia. It was planned that the participant of this study would be children's aged from 10 to 17, but unfortunately those who are above 15 years old are living in the youth home facilities and they were at trip for one month out of the village. Hence the participants of this study were children aged up to 14.

The rationale behind choosing the profile of the child participants for this research study was considering the time I had for the field work and the methods of data collection I used. I thought that, when young children's are participating in research study it might be needed to combine child friendly methods to equipoise possible barriers such as language limitations and giving detail answers for methods such as interviews and focus group discussions (Ennew et al, 2009). Because of the limited time I had, I could not implement the child friendly methods. Thus I decide, the participants should be around age 10 and above.

The village where the field work took place has 19 family household which have an average of 10 family members in each, each family have similar characteristics with almost the same context. Since I did not have any criteria that enable me to choose one family house hold over other family household, using a lottery method was my best alternative in choosing the sample family households (even though lottery method is used with quantitative research design). Using a lottery method, I chose the first five family household out of the total. This was done at one of the social worker's office and afterward the social worker went with me to the five selected family households and introduced me. For each family household I explained about myself, my research and field work purpose in detail. Fortunately the season was good for me, most of the children had finalized their schooling for the year.

After I explained for each family about the research study and the aim of the field work as well as the reason that I need their volunteer participation, I told them I need two volunteering children from each family. Afterwards I invited two children from the selected families, the invitation considered gender equality. Based on this procedure I got 10 volunteering children from the five selected family household, six boys and four girls. The reason for the slight difference on gender is that one family had not a girl above 10 years old.

The study also includes adult participants (SOS mothers, social workers and one from the management office). I randomly selected 2 volunteer SOS mothers, 2 volunteer social workers and the program coordinator from the management office. In total in this research study there were 15 participants, 10 children and 5 adults.

Table 4.1. Total participants of the research study

Children	Age	10	11	12	13	14
	Female	1	1	-	1	1
	Male	-	1	2	2	1
Adults			Profession	Social workers	<i>Mothers</i>	Management
			Female	1	2	-
			Male	1	-	1

4.4. Methods of Data Collection

According to Desai & Potter (2006), the nature of participants, research questions, reliability and credibility of information that is being researched, resources and time availabilities for field work must be consider in choosing a research method . Furthermore Ennew et al. (2009) recommended that research methods should be designed in the way that enables the researchers and participants in the research to communicate with each other.

Ennew et al. (2009) also suggest that good research requires to use at least three research tools, which is very important in cross checking the reliabilities of the data that will be collected. In relation to this Abebe (2009) also argues that using multi method of data collection is very important in triangulating and offsetting one method’s weakness by the strength of another method. Based on these considerations methods of data collections in this research study were; Naming method, life mapping method, semi-structure interview and informal dialogue, focus

group discussion, unstructured observation, and sentence completion as a protection tool. These will be discussed respectively.

4.4.1. Naming Method

Due to there was a shortage of time to build a rapport, I needed to have something that helps me as an icebreaker and catalyst in developing rapport as soon as possible with the time I had. Naming and life map activities help me in doing this (Ennew et al., 2009).

After I ensured the informed consent of the research participant (discussed later), I started with naming activities. In this activity, I first checked one common suitable day for the 10 children who gave me their consent to participate in my research study. Since there was no schooling at that time, finding a day was easy. They all agreed that we can meet after two days in a room of the common area which was arranged by the social worker. Based on our appointment we meet at the room where the social worker prepared for us. Afterwards we started the naming activity. The activity have guide questions like; name, the meaning behind your name, what is the play you most love, what do you want to be in the future, and fieldwork name. The children seemed as enjoy it quite a lot.

This activity was very important as ice breaker, warming up and introducing with my child participants and building rapport. Secondly, one of the activity guide question was about choosing a fieldwork name (pseudonyms) and this was important to ensure participants' anonymity.

4.4.2. Life Map Method

After the naming activity, in the next day I also applied the 'life-map' method activity. Life mapping tool is a tool where participants can tell about the "*fateful moments*" in their lives, which may be "*as moment of diversity*" or "*period of reskilling empowerment, where individuals can actively shape their future*" (Worth, 2011:406). Life map is situated in the form of participatory diagramming tradition and it is especially useful when there is a situation where participants may face a difficulty to explain their opinion verbally very well (ibid). Despite of its importance, this tool has its own weakness when it used as a main tool of data collection (Worth, 2011). However in this research study, life map tool was used simply as a means of introducing and building rapport between researcher and research informants. First I drew all my own important life events (good and bad) from birth till now on A4 paper. Then I presented it for my child participants, including

personal details in the way that make senses and relaxed the participants. Then I prepared A4 papers and a pen for each participant, and I encouraged them to draw and present their life maps. I was aware that, since I was working with orphan children, it may be distressful for some participants. So in doing this activities after I presented my own drawing, I first checked if the participants are relaxed and interested in doing their own in a similar way. Fortunately all the participants was interested in doing this activity and was interesting.

Like the naming activities, the life-mapping activity was also important in opening way for my field work in building rapports, empowering and sharing ideas freely between me and the child participants. Moreover, even though the prime goal of the life map method was to serve as a means of icebreaker and rapport building, indirectly it also help me to get knowledge about my participant that strengthen the knowledge I found via other tools.

After these activities, other tools that helped me to get detailed knowledge about the basic research questions of the study were implemented. Recall method was planned as one method of data collection. However, unfortunately this method could not be applied because of time limitation. Considering all my methods of data collection, I had planned 9 weeks of fieldwork. However, the children were allowed to leave for family visit for 2 weeks in August. Thus I had only 8 weeks for my fieldwork, so I minimized the total number of methods. Comparing to the methods of semi-structured interview and focus group discussion, the recall method was less important. Because unlike the semi-structured interview and focus group discussion which answers three and two of the basic research questions respectively, the recall method was targeting only one research question. Hence I decide to leave out the recall method, and use the semi-structured interview and informal dialogues, focus group discussion and unstructured observation.

4.4.3. Semi-structured Interview

Interview is a tool where knowledge is produced via the interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). According to Ennew et al. (2009) semi-structured interview is relatively informal, where the researcher only uses an interview guide which contains a list of theme questions, and it enables a researcher to paraphrase and ask in a comfortable way. Likewise semi-structured interview also enables participants to have high control over the issues of discussions and help them to express their concerns in detail (ibid). In relation to this Willis (2006) also argues that semi-structured interviews enables researcher to cover what he/she thinks

are important areas, and at the same time gives an opportunity of empowering the interviewee to voiced his/her own concern.

However, since interview will have high similarities with the everyday conversation, deception may occur (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). If there is no well preparation and reflection from the researcher, unstructured and semi-structured interviews may lead to the reproduction of common opinion and biased information (ibid). Moreover semi-structure interviews may include sensitive questions that may pose emotional distress, and if a researcher is not aware and cannot divert such feeling of the participants it will be harmful (Alderson & Morrow, 2011). Thus, taking into consideration the advantages, and being aware and flexible on the weakness and challenges, I choose semi-structure interview as one of my tools of data collection. The semi- structure interview was structured on the form of an interview guide, and the themes of interview guide was developed based on the research question of the study (see appendix: 6).

Ten children and five adults (two SOS mothers, two social workers and one from administration) was interviewed in this study. All the interview with the child participants were conducted within the village. The first, two interviews with children were held at the TV room of their family home. The first interview was successful, fortunately no one come in to the TV room. However my second interview was challenging, as it was highly disturbed by the family members because the TV room was a common area. Sometimes the children and even sometimes the SOS mother intervened at the middle of the formal interview. So at my third interview I decided to consult the SOS mother of the family to access a room free of interruptions. Then she recommend that I can use a guest room of the family, which was a room no one enter there except guests who come to visit the family. This was an appropriate place for my interview and I finish all the reset interviews with children with in the guest room of their family.

The interview with adults took place at different place based on their choses. The interview with the SOS mothers was held at their own guest room, in a similar place where most of the children were interviewed. One of the social worker was interviewed in his office and the second social worker was interviewed in his home. Likewise the representative from the management office was the program coordinator of the institution, and I interviewed him in his home.

Because the social workers and the program coordinator of the institution were very busy, arranging the time for interview was challenging for me. I postponed my interview schedule for

them several times. They appointed me and when I arrived there, sometimes they were at meetings or out of the village for other works. Hence it took me three week to interview these three individuals.

All the interviews were conducted through the local language, and tape recorded. The duration of the interviews varied with individual interviewee, being between 51 minutes and 82 minutes for children, and 56 minutes and 70 minute was for adults.

During the interview I applied Nesbitt's (2000) suggestion which claims that opening question of an interview should be formulated in the way that relax the interviewee, empowering and build confidence, and questions that may cause any anxiety should be asked at the end. So my interview started with general questions that did not make stress on the interviewee, and then after I continued to the more specific and detail questions.

Throughout the interview I was an active listener and asked for detailed information that I thought relevant for my research study from my participants. Both the child and the adult participants were interested throughout the interviews, and they were confident in answering all the questions and asking to clarify questions that were not clear. This in depth interview enabled detailed and concrete information for all the main questions raised in my research study.

4.4.4. Focus Group Discussion

Focus group discussion is a tool of data collection in which a researcher comes in to direct contact of conversation and discussion with participants that takes one to three hours in a form of group six to eight members in a group, in order to get in depth information (Lloyd-Evan, 2006). Focus group discussion has a great role in exploring what people think, how they think and why, about the issues of discussions based on their own freewill, without pushing them to make a decision or to reach an agreement (Liamputtong, 2011). In relation to this Ennew et al. (2009:5.29) also argued that focus group discussion is important in "*identifying the knowledge, ideas, values, beliefs and attitudes of a group*". Moreover when time for field work is short, focus group discussion is relatively more inexpensive, fast, and efficient to obtain adequate amount of data from multiple participants within alike time (Crang and Cook, 2007). Considering all those advantages I choose to use this method as one of my data collection tool.

In using the focus group discussion method, I was highly aware about all its weaknesses and challenges. For instance participants' needs and abilities to freely participating can be highly influenced by power and socio-economic status (Lloyd-Evans, 2006). Even with similar participants it may occur the problems of peer pressure, and that some voice might be dominant and some may be inactive (ibid).

In this research study it was planned to have two focus group discussions, one group of children and one group of adults. Unfortunately it was hard to get a common time gap that is convenient for the adults group. When one of social worker have a free time, the second social worker and the representative from the administration are busy, and vice versa. I tried to arrange and postpone my schedule, but I could not. Especially one of the social worker and the program coordinator were very busy, and even the individual interview with these two individuals was in their home at evening after their work time.

So the focus group discussion of this study was forced to be only with the children's group. This group had five members. A place for the focus group discussion was arranged by the social worker; a meeting venue of the institution. The duration for the focus group discussion was one hour and half. Within the group discussions I had the mediation role via facilitating the group discussion process. As suggested by Ennew et al. (2009), I was prepared in advance of being a good facilitator during the focus group discussion. Since the focus group discussion was conducted after the naming and life mapping activities, and the individual semi-structured interview, I knew my participants well which facilitated an arrangement of an interesting group dynamic.

At the beginning of the discussion, I introduced basic discussion rules like not to interrupt while some one is talking, speaking should be turn by turn, and respecting group members' opinion. The discussion was arranged in the form of more informal and participatory just to increase the active participation of all the participants. As suggested in Lloyd-Evans (2006), I have tried my best in making every participant to have an equal chance of forwarding their opinions.

The aim of the focus group discussion was to explore their perception towards children participation in decision making process that affect their lives, especially with in their families. Challenges and possible solution to improve children participation in decision-making processes that affect their lives was also explored using this tool. Like the interviews, the focus group discussion also has its own guiding questions for the discussion (see appendix: 6).

4.4.5. Unstructured Observation

“Watching (observation) is a researcher centered method that is a continuous accompaniment to all other methods”, and it is a source of valuable information throughout any research (Ennew et al., 2009:5.7). Unstructured observation *“record peoples, surroundings, sounds and speech, events, overheard comments, noises, smells, behaviors and body language”* that can be very important in research process (Ennew et al., 2009:5.9).

Even though Ennew et al. (2009) suggested that unstructured observation is particularly important at the early stage of research in order to develop research questions that will be explored later via other research tools, in this research study unstructured observation was not used only for this purpose. Rather it was useful throughout the research in collecting relevant data that helped in answering the research questions that already raised in this research study. It was very important in observing and understanding the experience of daily activities of children within their family, particularly in relation to their participation. The observation was intentionally conducted with in the selected five family households in particular and the whole village in general from the beginning of the field work till the final leaving from the institution. Unstructured observation was preceding and complimenting the other methods I used throughout the period.

During my observation, the objective and basic research question of the study were set in my mind as a guideline. All things that I believe which is relevant to answer my research question was registered as soon as possible. This was done via writing of short summery of my day to day activities of my field work note. I was taking notes of everything that I observed including gestures and feelings as it would be relevant to my research study. As suggested by Lloyd-Evans (2006), writing notes when it is fresh in mind makes it easier to remember. Therefore, most of the time I was trying to write as soon as possible what I observed, if it is comfortable to write. In doing this I was using every time and space I got, even when I am on bus.

4.4.6. Protection Tool

As it suggested in Ennew et al. (2009), at the end of data collection and their leaving session from the fieldwork, researchers should check that their participants are out of painful memories and negative feelings about the fieldwork. Likewise rights-based research suggest that there should be a final ethical tool used at the end of data collection with all children participants in order to

encourage positive thoughts (ibid). So in order to have an exciting and enjoyable ending of the data collection process I have design a protection tool, which is sentence completion task.

As stated in Ennew et al (2009), I was thinking to draw a picture of something which is very common and likeable at the place and time of my field work by the children. I have tried to collect information about what most of the children like. One of our question in the naming activity was what is the play you most love? This was a good opportunity to get to know what my participants love to play. More over via informal dialogues I have asked various children. Accordingly I found that most of the children like and eager to ride bike. The reason is that biking is only allowed in the village only two months (June and July). At the end of my field work I drew a bike on A4 paper and attach different part of the image of the bike with typical incomplete sentences like “I am best at.....; the person who loves me most....; I feel safe.....; my happiest memory.....if I was a prime minster; I like.....; I wish” to elaborate by the child participants.

At the beginning when I distributed the images I drew on the A4 paper all the children was confused how to fill the incomplete sentences, they asked me to clarify to them what kind of answer I want. I described that it is not an exam, but that they could fill it freely with the first thing that come to their mind. It was an exciting activity, even though some answers of the children were affected by the previous interview and focus group discussion questions. This was my final activities with the child participants and they seemed to enjoy it. After that I thanked them for their participation and said good bye. A summery for all the method used in this study have attached in the appendix (see appendix: 7).

4.5. Ethical Considerations and Possible Dilemmas

It is mandatory to consider ethical issues before, during and after a research. As it is suggested in Fraser (2004), ethical considerations in research is useful for guiding researcher against any form of abuse of rights of the participants as well as to protect research subjects. Though it is useful to consider, ethical issues during conducting a research with children is full of complexity (e.g. Abebe, 2009; Ennew et al., 2009).

For instance Desai & Potter (2006: 57) suggested that “*The ethics of undertaking social research are complex but are particularly so when working with children*”. That’s why there is no unique ethical scheme that all researchers should follow, and it depends upon the researcher to be conscious and discovery his or her own way to build his or her ethical frameworks and resolve

ethical issues raised from his or her research (Ennew et al., 2009). Having this consideration, in this research study research ethics was considered before, during and after my fieldwork. From the beginning when I arrived at one of the SOS children's villages international in Ethiopia, where the study was conducted, I explain myself about how the extracted information from the study is going to be treated and how people's anonymity is going to be protected. Main ethical issues that were central to this study includes; access and informed consent; power differential; confidentiality and privacy; and reciprocity.

4.5.1 Informed Consent

After I ensured the permission from the institution, my next assignment was getting participants informed consent. Informed consent means that assuring a participant has agreed to participate in a research after being fully informed and understood the research topics, research aim and having full right to withdraw at any time he/she wishes (Ennew et al., 2009).

As stated by Cree et al. (2002), children and parents are more likely to give consent to participate in a study if they are requested by trusted professional like childcare workers or other respected individuals. I therefore asked one of the social worker from the institution officials to introduce me to the selected families and their children. He introduced me as a researcher and explained that I got permission from the institution for fieldwork in the village, and that I now needed to get their informed consent. Then, I explained about myself, my research study topic and its purpose, the methods that I want to apply and as I need their informed consent to take part in my research study.

As it is suggested by Ennew et al. (2009), children must be informed and asked for their consent as an individual and researchers must not rely on parents or other gatekeepers to say that consent is granted fully. I hence, also described the research project and sought consent from the children themselves.

The children were aware that they could say no at the beginning if they didn't want to participate, and had the right to terminate at any time they wish. As it is recommended by Alderson & Morrow (2011), participants should be given time to be able to decide on their participation. In line with this, the participants of this study was given one day to decide whether they will participate or not. First I collected all the children of the selected family households and I told them that I wished to invite two volunteer children from each of the family households who could participate in my

research study. The day after I asked them again, and I invited two volunteer children from each family.

The informed consent for both child and adult participants was assured both by verbal and written form. Three types of written informed consent form were provided; one for parent/guardian, second for children participant and third for adult participant (See appendix: 2, 3&4). The informed consent were prepared (translated) in the local language of the participant. I told all my participants as they should have to read very well the written informed consent forms before they signed on it. All the written informed consent forms were prepared double, one for the participant and the other one for me.

As suggested by Abebe (2009), ensuring written consent can be challenging because of participants inability to read and write or suspicions associated to signing documents, fortunately this was not a challenge with my informants.

4.5.2 Power Differential

There exist unequal power relation between researcher and participants in any research, but it is magnified when it is between child participants and adult researcher (Punch, 2002; Abebe, 2009). Children faces adult power dominance constantly in their daily lives and this have a negative influence on the reliabilities and validities of data collections. It may further force them to lie, or to give answers that they think satisfy the adults question/need, but not the true one (Punch, 2002). That's why negotiating power imbalance is a central aspect of research ethics (Abebe, 2009).

In negotiating the power imbalance different researcher suggests their own strategies. For example Corsaro (1996) suggested that acting as "*atypical adult*" is a good strategy in balancing the power difference and understanding the real world of the children. On the other hand Mandell (1991) argued that it is possible to minimize such power imbalance using the strategy of acting as a "*least adult*", using techniques like changing the speaking style, appearance and wearing styles similar to the children (cited in James, 2007).

Abebe (2009) suggested that power imbalance can be minimized by developing "*friendly-role*" and good relationship, which was implemented in this research study. Accordingly since my first entrance to the field I tried to develop a good relationship both with the children and adults. I was treating the children friendly, I was appreciating, respecting and giving value to their ideas and I

acted as one of their friend, and I tried to assure that they are competent and capable to produce knowledge.

I think both the naming and life mapping activities helped us in developing good relationship. In the first two weeks till we start the naming activities the children was perceiving me, as a teacher, and they were calling “teacher”. But this adult-child or teacher – student relationship was highly minimized after the naming and life mapping activities. I also joined them when they were biking and play table football.

I also shared different informal dialogues about football news, the team they support, players they admire etc. During the naming activities my fieldwork name was Weldie, and eventually they stopped calling me teacher, rather calling me by my fieldwork name. After I did the naming and life mapping activities I spent two weeks getting to know the children and adults in order to strengthen my friendship. This was successful in developing my relationship and getting trust from the children, and the power difference was highly minimized.

4.5.3. Confidentiality and Privacy

Both confidentiality and Privacy are targeted at protecting participants taking part in a research study. Research confidentiality incorporates taking considerable care not to pass or reveal any information that related with the participant and disclose information only in ways that secure the identity of these who providing it (Fraser, 2004). Ennew et.al. (2009) suggest that a researcher must protect the participants by changing their names, or not collecting any names at all. This does not mean that a researcher could not have to collect relevant information’s to the research such as age and gender (ibid).

In this research study any information related to the participants was carefully protected. Anything that could reveal their personal information was not be used during writing of the thesis. In the case of child participant every data is registered via the pseudo name which was created during the naming activities. For the adult participants no name was collected. Instead all data are collected via their profession. For example the SOS mothers’ participants were registered as mother No.1 and mother No.2. Similarly for the social workers and the representative of the management office.

My personal pc is already locked with personal password and no one can use it except me. Likewise the case of my note books, there is no information that disclose my research participants' personal data, and I was also careful in hiding it from other persons.

I was careful not to interfere with the private matters of the participants. I was trying to divert and avoid asking questions which will intrude on the privacy of the participants. In relation to this Eder & Corsaro (1999) noted that, the high likelihood of participants revealing various private experiences to the researcher is one of the advantages for applying a qualitative research design. However participants may reveal beyond the researcher's desire.

In my case especially many of the children were eager to tell me personal and intimate details which are beyond the objective of the interview. I understand the children's feelings, but I also have to remember my role as a researcher. Having this in mind, I listened to the children who disclose sensitive information carefully, and I recommended that they should talk to those who can come with some solution (Thomas & O'kane, 1998). Then after I systematically divert our topic of discussion.

Participant were also given full power in choosing place for interviews, focus group discussion and other fieldwork related activities in relation to their privacy. In general my participants were informed that the information gathered from them will be held in a confidential way, and the data will not be used for other purposes than the study purpose and no one could access it except me. As it is suggested in Alderson & Morrow (2011) I promised to all my participants that all personal data will be deleted when the research study writing is ended.

4.5.4. Reciprocity

There is no clear guideline concerning the issue of research reciprocity (Mikkelsen, 2005). Many scholars (e.g Abebe, 2009; Lloyd-Evans, 2006; Ennew et al., 2009; Sime, 2008; Alderson & Morrow, 2011) have debated on the issue of reciprocity. Some researchers (e.g Abebe, 2009; Lloyd-Evans, 2006; Alderson & Morrow, 2011) argues that research participants should be compensated for their time or participation by offering an incentive. In contrast of this some researchers such as Aptekar & Heinonen, (2003) , and Ennew & Plateau (2004) argue that as research participants should not be compensating for their time, because as a researcher compensate for informants time of participation, the researcher is buying the information and this

would have a role in collecting a biased data (cited in Abebe,2009). On the other hand some researchers like Sime (2008) argues that reciprocity should be contextual.

Even though whether to compensate research participants for their time or not is very debatable issue, I support the idea that reciprocity should be contextual. It may be thanking and giving some gifts that the researcher believes that would be appropriate for the participants at the end of data collection or giving money considering the time value the participants spent their time on the research study. For example if the participants are working children who have no income without that work, at least it must be compensated their minimum income they can get at that time, since it would be a source of their survival.

In my case, the child participants were living in SOS children's villages who fully sponsored by the institution for everything, and the adult participants work at the village and have salary from the institution. During the time I asked their informed consent, I announced every participant that the participation is voluntarily and for free.

At the end of my data collection, I thanked the adults for their kind cooperation throughout the field work process. For the children I thanked and gave one pen and one Exercise book for each as a sign that I appreciated that they offered their time to participate in my study after the final activity which was sentence completion as protection tool.

4.6. Data Analysis and Interpretation

Data analysis and interpretation is the most important and ongoing process throughout the research study. In this study the process of data analysis started during fieldwork. First I transcribed the audio recorded interviews, which was conducted by the local language into a direct written form. Then I translated them into English. As it is suggested by Kvale and Brinkman (2009), a researcher who takes the time to do his/her own transcriptions could benefit from the research process and also is reminded of the social and emotional aspects surrounding the interview. Then I read the translated data again and again, cross-checking the transcribed data and my fieldwork notes to improve the translation. Next I categorized the data based on my interview guide and research questions. Then I identified major themes and organized the data under each theme based on their similarity. I continued analysis and interpretation by integrating all the data into the themes.

Chapter Five

5. Children and Adults' Perspective

Since the general objective of this research study is to get knowledge about the experience of institutionalized children in relation to their participation in decision-making processes that affect their lives, it is first important to explore the participants' general opinion towards children's participation in decision-making processes. As it is presented in the methodology chapter in detail, both children and adults participated in this research study, and the perspectives of these participants have been collected via interview and focus group discussion. The child participants are those who institutionalized in SOS Children's Villages International- Ethiopia, and the adult participants include the SOS mothers, social workers and management representative. Thus, the aim of this chapter is to present the results and discussion of these participants perception. Accordingly the chapter have two sub-section, children's and adults' perspective respectively.

5.1. Children's Perception about their Participation in Decision-making Processes

In collecting the data of the children's perspective in relation to their participation in decision-making processes, basic guiding questions have implemented both during the individual interview and the focus group discussion (see appendix: 6, A&B). The way they describe participation in decision making process, the status they considered as a child is participated or not, and whether they believe to have a say or not in decision-making processes that affect their lives, are some of the main points raised in exploring the children's perspective. Accordingly the collected information reveal that child participants have diverse perspectives. Based on their similarity, the children's perspective have presented under three main themes; 'being informed and conditionally consulting', 'being consulted and have a say', and 'It is the process of getting experience and training'.

Table 5.1: The child participants' perspectival standpoint and their respective numbers.

Children's perspectival standpoint	No. of child participants
'Being informed and conditionally consulted'	Five [one girl and four boys]
'Being consulted and have a say'	Two [one girl and one boy]

‘It is the process of getting experience and training’	Three [two girls and one boy]
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5.1.1. ‘Being Informed, and Conditionally Consulted’

As it is illustrated in the above table, half of the total child participants (five children) of this study conceives children’s participation in decision-making processes as getting the likelihood to be informed about and understand all the process of decisions regarding their lives, and being consulted depending on the issue that is decided. For instance Kb (11 year old boy), one of these five children, stated that children’s participation in decision-making processes that affect their lives is;

The processes of necessarily informing about and making clear for the children what is going on in their everyday lives. It is also giving the children a chance to be consulted, though it depends on the matter that is going to be decided.

For these children being informed in every issues that concern their lives is considered as mandatory, and whether to be consulted or not depends on the matter that needs decision. That’s why they believe the consultation could be ‘conditionally’. According to these children’s description, decision-making processes in relation to their lives are categorized in-to two: A decision that need children’s voice as input for a final decision, and a decision that needs to be decided by adults only. For instance Medi (10 year old girl), Alex (12 year old boy) and Efi (13 year old boy) claim that children should be consulted about their ‘study and homework time’, ‘TV program’, ‘time to go to bed’, ‘where to learn’, ‘what and when to eat’, ‘what to play and when’, and ‘when to visit family’. On the other hand Abe (14 year old boy) said that;

For instance it is meaningless to consult a child about which hospital he/she wishes to be treated, because a child knows nothing about the quality and price of hospitals. Instead it is Mama or other concerned bodies who know. But I don’t mean that children knows nothing about all issues that matters their lives.

The above examples illustrate that children want to and believe that they can contribute in many decision-making processes that affect their lives (Butler et al., 2005) if they get the chance to be consulted while some decisions are beyond their capacity and they expect the adults to decide (Thomas, 2000). This conforms to the parental liberationist perspective. The parental liberationist perspective believes as it is mandatory to accept children’s protection right on the one hand, and

their participation rights and competencies on the other hand (Moosa –Mitha, 2005). Hence, extracts from interviews of these five children reveals that the status to say a child is participating or not in issues that concern its life, is a ‘multi-dimensional’ (Kirby, 2003) and it depends on the issue that is going to be decided. In line to this 12 year old boy Alex claim that;

It is difficult to say in a general, children are participating or not, because it depends on the issue that is going to be decided. However I can say that children are participating if they are informed and understand the process of all decisions about their everyday lives, and join in and reflect their ideas in most of discussions and decision processes, no matter what the feed backs are, or whether their idea influences the discussion and decisions or not. And children are not participating if children are totally neglected when it comes to being informed and consulted for all discussions and decisions that affect their lives.

Hart’s (1992) ‘ladder of participation model’ is one of the most influential model used to discuss the degree of children’s participation (Sheil, 2001; Wyness, 2013), with eight different stages of participation, mainly divided into phases of ‘genuine participation’ and ‘non-participation’ (Sheil, 2001). According to Hart (1992), even situations where children are consulted but not given any feedback at all is an example of “non- participation” which he specifically calls ‘manipulation’ (see chapter three). However, for Alex and the other four children, being informed and consulted no matter the feedback and the influence of their reflection is considered as participation. Moreover, these children did not agree with the fine line between ‘participating’ and ‘not-participating’. Similar to the argument of Kirby (2003), these children believes that participation is a ‘multi-dimensional concept’, and that some decisions may be beyond the capacity of children and need to be decided by the adults without consulting the children. Besides, for these children, depending on the issue that has to be decided, mere information about what is happening in their day to day lives could be considered as participation. This implies that, instead of comparing children participation with static standard of models for participation, it may be important to know the target group, the conditions under which these targets are set, and the meaning of participation for these target group before we say someone are ‘participating’ or ‘not participating’ (Liebel & Saadi, 2012).

Furthermore these five children have reflected similar viewpoint on the point that whether children have to have a say in decision-making processes that affect their lives or not. For example Medi (10 year old girl) claims that;

It is okay, whether to consider the children's voice or not, it depends on the importance of the ideas that reflected by the children in order to be considered by elders during their final decisions. The main thing that should be done is that, children should understand all the processes about what is going on in everyday lives, and should be listened to depending on the issue that needs decision. This is important for children to get experience on the one hand, and adult may get inputs for their final decisions on the other hand.

Medi's quotation illustrates that some children do not care whether their views are taken seriously or not. According to these children, deciding whether to consider the children's view or not is up to the elders. Their attention is primarily on the need to be made clear about everything that is happening concerning their lives, and being consulted and listened on issues that may be important their reflection for final decisions. The reason that these children need to be informed, and consulted based on its necessity is to get experience from their elders and build their confidence. This confirms with Leeson's (2007) suggestion, that the more children have the opportunities to practice in decision-making processes, the more they become confident in making decisions about their lives. Moreover Medi and the other four participants suggested that allowing children to be informed and conditionally consulted is important for adults to get inputs from the children in order to make good decisions.

In general these children are indicating that the final decision makers are elders and the children's opinion are inputs for the adults' decision. Besides, similar to Thomas (2000) findings, they claim that it is better to be consulted and take part in easy decision than difficult and complicated ones. The given reason for the children to give priority to adults in being the final decision makers, and to show an interest to be consulted and involved in simple rather than difficult and complex decision-making processes are different from participant to participant. For instance Efi and Medi claimed that;

Elders are more experienced to take good decisions for children. They will not decide something that hurt children (Efi 13 year old boy).

It is elders' responsibility to decide final decisions, particularly the difficult and complex decisions (Medi 10 year old girl).

Thus for some children resign from final decisions because they believe that adults know better and decide good decisions on behalf of them. For others, they perceive it as not their responsibility but the adults. This might be because of the socio-cultural constrictions of children and adults, and their responsibilities.

5.1.2. 'Being Consulted and Having a Say'

Though half of the child participants of this study conceives as children's participation in decision-making processes of issues that matters their lives is getting the chance of 'being informed and conditional consulted' as it is discussed so far, Sol (11 year old girl) and Kidu (13 year old boy) view it in a different way. For these two children, children's involvement in processes of decisions that concern their lives is letting the children to be consulted in every issues that concern their lives, and consider their view's seriously before a final decisions, which they calls 'being consulted and having a say'. The following conversation with Kidu illustrate the standpoint of these two children;

Welde (Researcher): How do you describe children's participation in decision-making processes that affect their lives within this village in general and within the SOS Family in particular?

Kidu: For me a real participation is when children could get the chance to understand and reflect their feelings and thoughts in every processes of decisions regarding their lives, and that their views were considered in the issues that are decided.

Welde: What do you mean by 'considering their views'?

Kidu: It means that when children are allowed to reflect their feelings and ideas, it should not be just a formality. Rather elders should give attention to the children's opinion. By the way I do not mean that elders should accept all the children's view, but they should be clear about the reason they accept or reject the children's view for the children.

Kidu's description of the children's taking part in decisions that affect their lives confirm with the fifth stage of Hart's (1992) ladder of participation model. In this stage though adults are still controlling, children have the chance to understand the process, are consulted and their views are

taken seriously (Hart, 1997). Moreover in this stage children have a meaningful rather than ‘decorative’ role (Hart, 1992), which is similar with what Kidu describes as ‘*real participation*’.

Furthermore, extracts from the interview reveal that Sol and Kidu strongly believe that children should have a say in issues that affect their lives. According to these children no one could know more than themselves about themselves, which confirms Holt’s suggestion that in important issues no one can know about the child than him/herself (cited in Freeman, 1992). In line to this Sol claims that;

Definitely, children should have the chance to take part and have a voice in almost all decision-making processes that affect their lives, no matter whether they influence or not the final decisionsyou are the only person that knows about your internal feelings and needs, thus it will be important for adults to hear what children are saying, in order to decide a right decision, that considers children real interest.

Research findings by for example Morrow (1999) and Thomas (2000) show that many of their child participants would like to be heard in decision-making processes, but not necessarily to make the final decisions on their own or have ultimate control over the decision-making processes. Similarly what Sol reflected in the above extract confirms with these research findings. Sol suggest that involving children in decision-making processes and considering their view is important for adults to consider the children’s need in their final decision instead of deciding only on the way they think right for themselves. Sol’s idea is indicating that children have their own positive contribution that could influence their lives (James, 2009), and that they could reveal important points that may not easily seen from the adults point of view. Like the protectionist’s perspective, many times we adults may think that we know what is best for children, but what we choose for them because it is interesting for us may be bad for them. Thus, Sol suggested that to ‘consider the children’s real interest’ it is mandatory to hear what the children are saying before final decisions are made.

5.1.3. ‘It is a Processes of Getting Experience and Training’

Unlike the standpoint of the children I presented in the sub-sections 5.1.1 and 5.1.2, three child participants of this research study perceives children’s participation in decision- making processes that concerns their live as mainly about giving a chance for children to get experiences and trainings from elders. According to these children, the maximum goal of children’s participation

is to get experience and training from their elders to become good decision-makers in their future lives, and they believe that their voice could not have a value in the process of decisions that matters their lives. For instance an extract conversation from Ase (12 year old boy) illustrates how these children conceive themselves in relation to whether they should take part and have a say or not in decision-making processes that concerns their lives.

Welde (Researcher): Do you think that children should have a say or not in decisions that affect their lives?

Ase: Decision making is not easy, you should have to be both experienced and old enough to decide a right decisions. So personally I believe that it is better that adults decide on behalf of us. However I don't mean that children should not get the chance to participate and reflect their ideas throughout the processes, though decisions should be decided by elders.

Welde: What do you mean by 'to get the chance to participate and reflect their ideas throughout the processes'?

Ase: Emm... it is sure that elders have the capacity to decide more correct decisions than children, but they should allow us to see and learn how they make the decisions, it is a good opportunity for us to get experience and trainings from our elders, in order to become good decision makers in our future lives.

In his work “*Children, family and the state: Decision making and child participation*” Thomas (2000) found that many children believe age is a factor in decision-making and their competency in decision-making processes increases with their age increments. Likewise Butler et al. (2005) found in UK that even though children varied in the degree to which they regarded themselves as competent decision-makers, most of the children consider themselves as in the process of learning how to make good decisions. Ase’s perspective seems to coincide with these research findings. Ase considers himself as not competent enough to decide on all issues that relate to his life for the reason of not being experienced and old enough, and believe that adults have best capacity in deciding about children’s live.

In the child right discourse, the protectionist perspective considers children as different from adults and define the rights of children in terms of their status as ‘not yet adults’ (Moosa –Mitha, 2005).

For this perspective, children are future be-comings who need to be protected, guided and trained the way they should act. The view of these three child participants confirm with this approach, and contradicts with the liberationists perspective that considers children as having full capacity of self-determinism, who can decide independently all about their lives.

To sum-up, as it is presented in the above sub-sections so far, though the perception of the child participants on their participation is varied, they have shown a common standpoint on three points. First, the need of final decisions to be decided by adults. Second, that all wishes to participate in decision-making processes that matters their lives, and the third, that all agreed on the importance of their participation though they describe the reason in different ways.

The perception of showing the interest of final decisions to be decided by adults may be linked to the influence of the general socio-cultural practices in Ethiopia whereby adults exercise much supervision and control over children (Poluha, 2004). Children from infancy are socialized to believe that adults are more mature and competent to do the right thing for them. Children in general and institutionalized children in particular are usually deemed as passive and vulnerable who need absolute protection and control by adults. Considering the children as subordinate, and socializing them in a way that they obey and respect their elders is common in Ethiopia (ibid). Obeying, respecting, and being controlled and supervised by elders is considered as a positive social norm for Ethiopian children (Poluha, 2004). Hence it is not surprising that children from such settings conceive adult as the best final decision makers on their behalf.

On the other hand, the children's perception in relation to showing the interest to participate in decision-making processes, and their agreement on the importance of their participation may link to the influence of child right promotions throughout the country. In promoting children's right to participation, the UNCRC have played a dominant role throughout the globe, though it faced some socio-cultural challenges because of its universality and more western-cultures based (Boyden, 1990; Ensor & Reinke, 2014). Ethiopia is one of the states that ratified this convention in 1991, and struggling to promote and implement the children's right in general and the right to participate in issues that concerns their lives in particular throughout the country (Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2013). Thus, the shifts in interests and attitudes in relation to children's participation might be the result of such movements and promotions (see chapter 6, 6.2 for detail).

5.2. Adults Perception towards Children's Participation in Decision-making Processes

Research findings including the result of this study show that many children show the interest to participate in decision-making processes that concern their lives (see Morrow, 1999; Thomas; 2000), yet most of the time the extent to which they involved depends on adults' assumptions and perceptions about their ability to participate or not (Leeson, 2007). Thus in assuring children's interest to be active social actors in general and participating in decision-making processes that affect their lives in particular, it is important to understand and include adults view too, although there has been an overemphasis on children's views only within the sociology of childhood (Wyness, 2013). In the sociology of childhood, children are seen as beings rather than becoming'. It is nice to be seen children as creative human beings from the beginning of life with the right to be respected and heard (Kjorholt, 2004). However as suggested by Kjorholt, it is essential to abstain from putting children into dichotomous construction of subjectivity, as either dependent or independent; mature or immature; vulnerable or competent'; equal or different etc., compared to adults. Instead of comparing and contrasting, it is better to see the adult-child relations as interdependent, where this interdependence allows for children to be heard and work alongside adults (Wyness, 2013). Unless we tease out both the children's and adults perspective, children's participation cannot be fully understood in all its complexities (ibid). This will be more important for policy interventions, because strategic campaign programs could target adults to increase awareness on the necessity to involve children in decision-making.

Thus, similar to the child participants, adult participants' perspectives towards children participation in decision-making process that affect their lives were explored through in-depth interviews and informal dialogues. The data reveal that adults have various perspectives towards children's participation. These perspectival variations are presented under two themes, the way that adults interpreted children's participation in decision-making processes, and the believe that adults have to wards the weight that should be given to children's view.

5.2.1. Adults Interpretation towards Children's Participation in Decision-making Process

Data from the in-depth interviews reveal that adults interpreted children's participation in decision-making processes that affect their lives in different ways. For instance the following interview extract from Mother No.2 illustrates the different dimensions of interpreting children's participation in the institution;

In this village there are two definitions of children's participation in decision making process that affect their lives. The ideal that we hear from professionals, and the real one that we are trying to apply with our children. In various trainings and meetings, various trainers and other concerned bodies try to convince us that children should get the chance to participate in every decision that concerns their lives, and their views should be taken seriously. This is the ideal one that I understand as no more than rhetoric. But the one that I do with my children as an institutional obligation is not more than informing them about the process and out-come of the decision-making.

According to Mother No.2, with in their institution, especially since 2001 there are repeated promotions, training and workshops in relation to children's participation rights in particular and children's rights in general. However, the ways that the theories promoted are being practiced and applied is different, according to Mother No.2. For instance as it illustrated in the above extract about the 'ideal', all workers of the institution are persuaded to allow children to take part in decision-making processes that concern their lives and take their views seriously. However in practice, her children did not take part in decision-making processes, rather they are only informed about what was happening and the final outcomes. She even reckons that informing the children about what was already happened is meaningless. However she does it because it is an institutional obligation. She clearly stands against the notion of children participation right. This coincides with Hanson & Nieuwenhuys (2013) suggestion that especially in the developing world there is a contradiction between the global discourses of child right principles and the living practices. The reason is that these global discourses of children right principles are disseminated throughout the globe as a universal truth in the form of 'top-down' distribution, and challenged by the 'living right' of the children (ibid), which may vary because of socio-economic and cultural differences. The way Mother No.2 illustrated in the above quotation, which she defines as 'the ideal' and 'the real' one may be taken as example for the contradiction between the 'global discourses of children right' and 'living right' of the children (Hanson & Nieuwenhuys, 2013). Thus, as suggested by Hanson & Nieuwenhuys, in minimizing such contradictions it may be important to adopt the "interdisciplinary approach, which would help open spaces for children's production of knowledge about their right" (2013:5). This approach have a role in negotiating the inconsistencies between the 'top-down' which is the paternalistic implementation, and the 'bottom-up' which is

empowering children and local communities to have their own say in relation to children's right, by considering their complexity, circularity and interrelationships (ibid).

Even though Mother No. 2 is one of the senior care giver as mother, and served for more than 25 years in the SOS Children's Villages International-Ethiopia where all of its activities and policies are based on the notion of UNCRC (SOS KDI, 2004; SOS Ethiopia, 2009), she did not support the children's participatory right. She exemplifies children by 'eucalyptus seedling' and suggested that *"there is no doubt, you will have crooked eucalyptus if you didn't care and protect to being straight since its early seedling, and the same is working for children"*. This illustrates a view of children as in the process of growing and in need of adult caring, training and supervision to become good future adults. This confirms with the 'dominant framework', which considers children as incompetent, immature or in the progress of development from childhood to adulthood (Woodhead, 2013). Likewise Mother No.2's view coincides with the child protectionist perspective which considers children as physically and cognitively immature and not ready to exercise all right that adults can engaged (Archard, 1993). For this perspective giving children the same right like adults is dangerous for the children themselves (Moosa-Mitha, 2005), hence they need to be protected, guided and taught the way they should act till they become matured.

However, other adult participants, like Social worker No.1 and Mother No.1 interpreted children's participation in decision-making as both informing and consulting the children about the issue, but without the children influencing the final decision. Rather they emphasized that final decisions should be decided by elders. An extract of an interview from Mother No.1 may clarify this interpretation furthermore;

Children's participation in decision-making process is giving the children a chance to know about what is going to be decided and consulting them about how they think these issues should be resolved. But I don't mean that the final decisions should be based on the children's choice, rather it is essential for adults to get inputs in order to make a good decisions.

The extract illustrates children's participation as both informing and consulting children about every decision that concern their lives. However, still children are not acknowledged as having the capacity to decide final decisions. Instead the aim of informing and consulting the children is to get inputs that may be considered during the adults' final decision on behalf of them. This

interpretation coincided with the fourth stage of Hart's (1992) ladder of participation, which is regarded as the beginning of 'genuine participation'. According to Hart (1992), in this stage adults are decision makers, but adults respect the children's views.

Besides, there is yet another way of interpreting the children's participation in decision-making processes, namely, according to Social worker No.2 and Management representative; as

...giving a chance to the children to be informed and consulted, and taking their say seriously, though factors such as age, the type of issue that is going to be decided and other related issues should be considered.

The extract reveals that adults should acknowledge children and let them have a say and their opinions should be taken seriously, but still it depends on the chronological age of the children and the type of issue concerned, which confirms with notion of article 12 (1) of the UNCRC. The article claims that all children who have the capability to reflect their views should have guaranteed the right to express their views freely in all issues that concern their lives, and their voice should be considered according to their *age* and *maturity*.

As illustrated so far, the adult participants - even those who work in the same profession-have different interpretations towards the meaning of children's participation in decision-making that affect their lives. For instance Mother No.1 and Mother No.2 are both mothers in the SOS Children's Village, working and living in the same environment, administrated by one set of institutional rules and regulations, with an identical principle in relation to children's participation right based on the spirits of UNCRC. Yet these mothers have different standpoints in interpreting the children's participation in decision-making. The same applied to Social worker No.1 and Social worker No.2, who revealed two different interpretations. This confirms previous research studies, for instance data collected by Archard & Skivenes (2009) from Norwegian and English social workers revealing that some case managers describe participation in decision-making as giving the children a chance to express their views, while others consider it as only a matter of informing the children about what is decided or what is going to happen. Moreover in their work "*Beyond talking—children's participation in Norwegian care and protection cases*", Vis & Thomas (2009) found that some social workers interpret participation as consulting the children, but not implying that children should have an influence on the decision-making.

5.2.2. 'The Weight that should be given to Children's View'

In addition to the interpretational variations, data from the interviews reveals that the adult participants' have reflected on various perspectives in relation to the weight that should be given to the children's view in decision-making processes. For example an extract from Social worker No.2 illustrates one of these viewpoints;

The way you involve and give weight or not to the children's view during decision-making is not as simple as white or black. It is very contextual. What I mean is you should have to consider issues like age and maturity of the child, the clash between the best interest versus the wish of the child, the complexity and difficulties of the issues that needs decisions and the like. For instance we face a challenge with the children aged around six to seven.....they might decide not to go schooling but instead wants to play the whole day. You cannot accept this, but you may try to convince them.

As suggested by Fortin (2009), the best interest of the child is used as 'a guiding principle' when interpreting all convention provisions in the UNCRC, that is all children's right must be interpreted based on their best interest. It is a good idea that children's everyday life decisions should be based on their best interest. However, the problem is how we could be sure whether a specific action or decision is based on the child's best interest or not? Sometimes it may miscarry what adults think an action or decision is in the best interest of the child. As illustrated in the above quotation, for Social worker No.2, identifying 'the best *interest* of the child' from its *wish* is a prerequisite, whether to take seriously the children's view during decision-making processes or not. For instance in the example he problematized that children might choose playing over schooling, believing that children are more focused on temporary enjoyment (play) than long term advantage that could get from education. Similar to this, in his interview with social workers, parents and care givers, Thomas (2000) found that some adults point out that children's voice cannot always be taken at face value and that children don't always know what is best for them. Moreover, many adults believe that as adults focused on long term and children on more immediate issues of the children lives (ibid). This indicates that some adults (including Social worker No.2) feels that they know what is best and not for the children, and children are less competent in deciding what is important in their lives. However, in contrast of this Holt suggested that, in important decisions no one can know better than the child him/herself (cited in Freeman, 1992), if he/she could access

and understand all relevant information. Thus, who knows best for the children is debatable, because it is difficult to identify the child's *wishes* and best *interest* (Thomas, 2000; Burr and Montgomery, 2003).

Moreover Social worker No.2 argued that age and maturity of the children matters whether to give weight the children's opinion or not. For social worker No.2, children's competence in reflecting valuable ideas in relation to their lives increases with the increment of their chronological age. Similar to Social worker No.2 different professionals and non-professionals disputed on the issue of which age a child could participate in decision-making processes that affect their lives. For instance in his work "*Professionals' attitudes to children's participation in decision-making: dichotomous accounts and doctrinal contests*", Shemmings (2000) asked both social worker and non-social workers about their perception on which age group of children should be involved in a decision making process that affect their life. His result reveal that the participants viewpoints were classified in-to two groups; one group believe that children should be involved in decision-making processes since early age, and another group believe that children should be involve in decisions when they are 16 to 18 years old.

Yet other adult participants like Mother No.2 and Social worker No.1, confirmed that they believe that children's view are most of the time irrelevant to the decision of their lives. Consequently they are reluctant in taking seriously the children's view of any age group in any decision making, and strongly believe that '*it is undeniable that adults know the best for the children and decisions should be based on the adults view*', as stated by Mother No.2.

In her study on Philippines's government officials and non-government representatives engaged in promoting children's participation, Bessell (2009) found that, professionals like policy makers and service delivers have heterogeneous, diverse and complex perspectives towards the involvement of children in decision-making that affect their lives (see also Shemmings , 2000). Similar to these findings the adults who participated in this research study have reflected various perspectives in the way they interpret child participation in decision making , and the weight they conceive that should be given to the children's view in decision making that affect their lives.

Since the adoption of the UNCRC in 1991, in Ethiopia in general and NGOs like SOS Children's Villages in particular, there is a continuous promotion of children's participation right in line with article 12 of the convention (Committee on the Right of the Child, 2013). Especially in the SOS

Children's Villages International, all of its policies and activities of the Villages are developed in the spirit of the UNCRC (SOS KDI, 2004; SOS Ethiopia, 2009). However, this study shows that the perspectives of institutionalized children, their care givers (mothers), social workers and management representative towards children's participation in decision-making that affect their lives are diverse, and sometimes also contradictory. As seen in the above sub-sections, some of the children and adults believe that children should be informed and consulted in all issues that concerns their lives (Hart, 1992), and their views taken seriously depending on the issues at stake. Other children and adults believe that children are 'future be-comings' who need care and training (Qvortrup, 1994), and conceive children's participation as a means of getting experience from their elders for their future lives. In general, except two children who conceives children should be informed, consulted, and have a say in all matters that affect their lives, all of the children and adult participants believe that adults know more and are better in deciding in the children's lives. This may indicate that the theories and strategies about participation right are not fully internalized in to the communities and practices of SOS Children's Villages. The reason for this may be, as mentioned, that the global discourse of child right principles are simply loaded from the global institutions to the nation (Ethiopia), from the nation to different institutions like SOS children's Villages, and from the village into the staff of the village in a form of 'top-down' distribution procedure (Hanson & Nieuwenhuys, 2013), without considering the socio-economic and cultural variations.

Thus, questions like how are decision made, what are the progresses and challenges, and ways of improvements within a community that has such a varied standpoint towards the children's participation will answered in the next chapter.

Chapter Six

6. Children's Experience in Decision-making Processes

This chapter presents the results and discussions of the children's experience in decision-making processes that affect their lives, with in their SOS family and their village. Furthermore the progresses, challenges and ways of improvements in relation to the children's participation are also included in this chapter. The chapter have four sub-sections. The first sub-section presents about children's involvement in decision-making processes within their SOS family and the village. Then, the second sub-section explores the progress of children participation in decision-making processes in their everyday lives. The third sub-section discusses the barriers for children's participation in decision-making processes, and finally, the fourth sub-section deals with ways of improvement for children participation.

6.1. Children's Involvement in Decision-making Processes

In exploring the children's experience in decision-making processes that concerns their lives, points like how decisions are made in the SOS family households and within the village, who influences the decision making processes, who are the final decision makers within their families, and related issues have been raised.

Extracts from the child participants' interview show that most of the SOS family households decision-making processes are conducted in the form of family meeting, which are held once per week. The 'once per week family meeting' is a meeting in which every family member is invited to be present in the meeting. According to the child participants, during the meeting every routine activities of the last week of the family is evaluated, and all next week routine activities are planned, discussed and decided. The following conversation with Helu's (14 year old girl) illustrates how decisions are made in the SOS families and what are the main decisions that are decided in a family household level.

Welde (researcher): How are decisions made with in your family?

Helu: We have once per week family meeting, in which all family members participated, and almost all discussions and decisions in relation to our family's activities are discussed, planned and decided in this meeting.

Welde: Could you tell me some example of the points of you discuss, plan and decide?

Helu: It is most of the time related to our household chores like, washing dishes, sweeping floors, throwing trash, personal hygiene, doing homework and the like.

Welde: Do you have any other decisions that you decide on a family level?

Helu: No. It is possible to say the family households' power to decide is almost household chores only.

Welde: So who is the decision maker in your family meeting?

Helu: It is obvious, final decision is decided by Mama. But, before she decide any decision, every family member have the chance to reflect his/her feeling about all the discussions and decision-making processes that are raised during the meeting.

Welde: So if every family member have the chance to reflect his/her view, may all the members have similar chance in influencing the decision-making processes?

Helu: Emm...most of the time next to Mama, our Bokri Geza (the elder child of a family) influences the decision-making processes, but this does not mean that he/she could decide final decisions.

Welde: Have you ever suggested anything?

Helu: Sure

Welde: Can you tell me one example?

Helu: In our village taking shower at least once per week is must. So one day in our family meeting mama asked us when should be the day that we should take shower in a week. My elder sister recommend every Monday, others say every Wednesday, and other say every Saturday. Then I said, what if everybody could do it the day that he /she choose? And finally mama agree with my suggestion.

Helu's quotation clearly point out that all children have the chance to take part and say their opinion within their family household decision making processes, which most of the time held during the 'once per week family meeting'. Similar to Helu's reflection, all the children participants reported that as they have the chance to join in, and reflect their outlooks in all discussions and decision making process of their family household, and some of their suggestions are considered seriously. They also confirmed that final decisions in the family household is

decided by their Mama's, and Bokri Geza (elder child of the family) have better chance in influencing the process than the rest of their sisters and brothers. As it is discussed in chapter five (see 5.1), most of the children who participated in this study suggested that they should to be informed and consulted in decision-making processes, and final decisions to be decided by elders. Thus, in the family level all the child participants feel that they are participating in the way they want, and they consider it as fair that the mothers are being a final decision makers. This manner of participation may confirms with the fifth phase of Harts ladder of participation model, which he calls '*Consulted and informed*' (Hart, 1992): In this phase the discussion and decision-making processes are led by adult, but children understand the processes, and their opinions are treated seriously (Hart, 1997).

However, even though the children who participated in this research study agree with the manners of decision-makings in the family households level, all the children participants indicated that, the authority of the SOS family households in deciding issues that relate to the children's lives is very restricted to specific house hold chores. Most of their role is executing what is already planned and decided by the institution, about the children's lives related issues, instead of having their own contributions in planning and deciding (Abe, 14 year old boy). In line to this, Efi (13 year old boy) stated that "*in addition to the family households we have also a child parliament in an institution level, which created to execute the institution's plans and decisions in the way that the institution wishes to be done about our lives*". Every SOS family have two representatives in the child parliament of the institution. The parliament is considered as representative of the children's voice in the village, but in reality it have not any power in influencing the decision making processes that concerns the children's lives, according to Alex (12 year old boy). According to the child participants, most of the SOS child parliament duties are speeding up what the adults have already arranged and need to implement in the institution. For instance, it has the responsibility to work on activities such as 'sport and entertainment', 'art and min-media', 'environmental health' and the likes. But, all those activities are designed by adults, and every movement of the child parliament is upon the instruction and supervision of adults in the way they want it to be performed, according to Ase, 12 year old boy; Edu, 13 year old girl; and Medi, 10 year old girl. Such experiences of the SOS child parliament may remind us about the third stage of Harts ladder of participation model, called '*tokenism*'. In this stage, children might seem to have a voice, but in

fact have little choice about the subject or style and little time to formulate their own opinions (Hart, 1997).

In his work “*Asylums: Essays on the social situation of mental patients and other inmates*”, Goffman (1968:6) point out three basic feature of institutions. First, all aspects of life in institutions are conducted in the same place and under the same single authority. Second each phase of the member’s daily activity is carried on in the immediate company of a large batch of others, all of whom are treated alike and required to do the same thing together. Third all phases of the every day’s activities in institutions are tightly scheduled with one activity leading at a prearranged time in to the next, the whole sequence of activities being imposed from above by a system of explicit formal rulings and a body of officials. These characteristics were observed in the SOS Children’s Villages International-Ethiopia. Though there are more than 19 family households in the village, their everyday activities are the same and routine, based on their institutional schedules. No family household, or a family member in a family household have the chance to experience something different as an individual, or as a family household. Hence, there is less room for the families and individuals diversities and changes. Hence, the once per week family meeting and the child parliament in influencing the decisions about the children’s lives are highly affected by these institutionalization cultures.

In general, the extracts from the interviews show that the child participants classified issues of decision-making process concerning their lives in to ‘*less important issues*’ and ‘*important issues*’. Their ‘*less important issues*’ are issues such as dish washing, sweeping floors, throwing trash, personal hygiene and other related household chores, which are more or less planned, discussed and decided by the family household with informing and consulting every family member. On the other hand their ‘*important issues*’ are subjects such as type of playing and playing time, studying time, and family visiting time, which are planned and decided by the institution and announced to the family households to implement as a rule and regulation. For instance, Kidu (13 year old boy) claimed that;

Most of our involvement and discussion in our family household is not to decide on issues that affect our lives. Instead it is to discuss whether we as a family are implementing correctly or not the decisions and schedules of the institution concerning our lives. Our day today meal program [what to eat at what time], schooling and studying time, what to

play at which season, when to visit our families, when to watch TV program etc. are already scheduled as a rule and regulation by the institution and every family households is strictly obligated to follow these schedules, no one could change it.

Similar to the quotation from Kidu, all the children who participated in this research study reported that most of the issues they considered as important in their lives are decided and introduced by the institution without consulting any of them. For instance during schooling time ‘18:00- 20:00 is a permanent schedule of study time’ for all those who are above grade four children in the SOS family households, which the institution scheduled without consulting the children whether it is a comfortable time for study or not, as pointed out by Sol (11 year old girl). Likewise the child participants raised the issue of ‘school choice’, as SOS children cannot study in other schools than the Herman full elementary and secondary school. Moreover, extracts from the interviews reveal that children have very short time for family visit, which is ‘two weeks per year at the end of summer’ decided by the institution.

Furthermore as Kidu claimed, children’s play is scheduled based on what the institution considers as appropriate with children’s situational status. For instance it is forbidden to play football, biking and the like during the school time seasons, because the institution believe that such kind of play make children too tired, to attend their schooling effectively, as stated by Efi (13 year old boy). A social worker confirmed this; “we primarily focused on the children’s educational achievement, issues like play, leisure and family visit are arranged in the way that could not influence the children’s educational performance” (Social worker No.2). This have an implication that the children’s in the institution are yet conceived as they have not the competency in deciding what is important and not important in relation to their everyday lives, and adults are deciding on their behalf.

Research findings (see e.g. Cashmore, 2002; Leeson, 2007; Bessell, 2011) reveal that ‘out of home care’ children reported that they were not well informed about what was happening, why they were in care, what they could expect, and the changes that were happening in relation to their lives. Yet, these studies also revealed that some children in ‘out of home care’ felt they were consulted and allowed to have a say in minor decisions, and in contrast of that, professionals did not allow them to be consulted and have a say in decisions that considered by the children as crucial, for instance; where they lived, contact with biological parents, siblings and friends, and choice of school.

Besides, in her work *“Empowering looked-after children”* in England, Munro (2001) found that most children were dissatisfied with the amount of contact they were allowed to have with biological parents and relatives. All these findings confirm with the finding of this research study. As illustrated so far the SOS children have the chance to be consulted and have a say in the issues they consider as less important which are the household chores. In contrast of this it is up to the institution to plan and decide on issues like the day to day meal program, schooling and studying time, what to play at which season, when to visit their biological families, when to watch TV programs etc, which are considered as important issues of their lives for the children.

6.2. The Progress of Children’s Participation in Decision-making Processes

It is possible to say that, the promotion of children’s participation right comes with the adoption of the UNCRC, which highly influenced the whole world, though it criticized for its imposing the western ideals to the other part of the globe (Ensor & Reinke, 2014). As part of the signatory world states, Ethiopia is one of the countries highly influenced by the convention, giving the convention equal status with its national constitution (Yohannes & Assefa, 2007). The convention is not only part of the domestic law of the country, but also the trustworthy guideline for the interpretation of the rights of children which confirmed by the national constitution (ibid). Though the country still lack legal national frameworks and effective translation of the international child right instruments into the local contexts of the country (Lemessa & Kjørholt, 2013), government reports show that the country is in the progress of assuring children’s right in general and children’s participation right in particular (see e.g. Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2005; 2013). For instance, the constitution of the FDRE in accordance to the UNCRC and ACRWC, says that every human being has the right to freedom of expression (Article 27(1)), and currently there are several new initiatives to promote the participation of children and to have their views to be heard, which is mainly initiated by the institute of Ombudsman and Ethiopian human right commission (Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2013).

Likewise, NGOs which works on Ethiopian children’s care and support programs too are influenced by this convention, and administrated in accordance to the constitution of the FDRE (Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2005). SOS Children’s Villages International-Ethiopia is one of these NGOs, which all of its policies, strategies and activities are developed in line to the principles of the UNCRC (SOS KDI, 2004; SOS Ethiopia, 2009). However, the finding of this

research study reveal that most of child participants feel that they are not participating in important decision-making processes that concerns their lives (see 6.1 of this chapter), which is guaranteed as one of the basic principle of the UNCRC which mainly stated under article 12. Though the children participant of this study have such feelings, both child and adult participants conceive that there are some progresses in encouraging children's participation rights. For instance a management representative of SOS Children's Villages International-Ethiopia claim that;

I have worked here for 18 years. Fortunately the time I was employed our institution started a campaign and trainings about children right to participation in accordance the UNCRC and ACRWC. So when I compared the time before 15 year and nowadays, it is totally different. To tell you frankly before 10 years most of the community of this village including myself, was considering the institutionalized children as vulnerable who needs special treatment and that could not have any active role, and the campaign about engaging them in decision activities was considered a joke. Conversely, currently the attitude of most of the community is changing. We are learning lessons from the engagement of children's in various activities and seeing that they can have good contributions in every activities that concern their lives. Though still we have some employees who challenge this practice and wants to run their previous attitude. Thus, in general we are in good progress, though it is yet at its early stage.

Besides Kidu (13 year old boy) stated that;

I have lived in this village since I was six year old, and it is undeniable that currently there are positive progresses in relation to our participation in issues that concern our lives. Let me tell you one simple example about the issue of 'family meeting' and 'child parliament'. Four years ago, both were something we introduced in theory but not in practice. But, especially since the last two years we have a permanent once per week family meeting in which all family members have the chance to participate and reflect his/her ideas. Likewise in the case of the child parliament every family household is represented by two children, and the parliament participated in different activities with in the village. However, if you ask me about the degree of the progresses, it is slow.

Both the management representative's and Kidu's extracts illustrate that there are relative advancements in encouraging children's participation in their village. Specially, according to the

management representative there are progresses in attitudinal change of the community members who work with the children, changing from considering children as dependent, immature and passive recipients of elders care and supervision (Lee, 2001) to individuals who have their own contribution on issues that matter their lives (James & Prout, 1990; James, 2009). It is nice to see such a progresses of adults' attitudinal change in Ethiopia, where children are considered as subordinate group for long period of time (Pualh, 2004). This may indicate that the influence of the foreign instruments such as the UNCRC and ACRWC on child rights. As stated by the management representative, continued promotions and trainings about how to assure children's participation right have been going on for more than 18 years in the SOS Children's Villages International-Ethiopia. However, the progresses of turning the theoretical rhetoric in to practice is very slow, according to Kidu (13 year old boy) and the management representative. This have an implication of challenges in implementing the children's participation in issues that affects their lives, which is further discussed in the following sub-topic.

6.3. Barriers for Children's Participation in Decision-making Processes

Data from an interviews and focus group discussions of both child and adult participants reveal that children's participation in issues that concern their lives is challenged for different reasons. The static institutional policies, rules and regulations and the adult's perceptual variation are the most repetitively described challenges by the research participants.

6.3.1. Rigid Institutional Policies, Rules and Regulations

SOS Children's Villages International is a top-down administered INGO. Thus, SOS Children's Villages International- Ethiopia too have the same policies, rules and regulations that distributed from the headquarter which is in Addis Ababa to the branch villages, which no village could edit, improve or change. Likewise participants of this research study reveals as the rules and regulations of their village are something restrict and that could not modified. As Sol (11 year old girl) complained;

If you ask something that is not usual, our mothers, social workers, psychologists and other concerned bodies responds as the rules and regulation did not allow. For instance last year I asked mam as I wanted to buy a bike instead of clothes, because my clothes were almost new. However she told me that it is impossible. The rules and regulations are considered as a holy book, something you cannot change or revise.

Sol's extract is an example that illustrate the children's expression in relation to the rigidity and tightness of the rules and regulation of their institution. Thus, according to most of the child participants and some adult participants, this fixed policy, rules and regulations of the villages is identified as the forefront challenge for the enhancement of child participation in decision-making processes that affect their lives. During a focus group discussion, child participants have raised two interrelated reasons why the rules and regulations of the village is considered an obstacle for their participation: First, since it is designed and developed by top officials, neither the community of the village nor the children have the chance to say anything during this process. Secondly, since rules and routines of the children's everyday lives are already decided and scheduled, children are made to implement these decisions only. Thus, children become the *executer of* rather than *participants in* decisions.

The child participants were also aware that hindrances of their participation were systematic, not blaming individuals working in their village. For instance Abe (14 year old boy) claimed that;

The social worker, counselors, mothers or other employees who works in this village are just doing their work. I mean no one could be accountable for the poor progress in involving children's in decision-making processes that affect their lives, the problem is with the system that we are administered.

Both the data from the individual interviews and the focus group discussion illustrate that both children and adults felt that rigid schedules based on policies, rules and regulations curb the leeway of both children and most of the adults who work in the village. Which may have an implication that, children are aware as their community member in general and children in particular can have their own contribution in designing and developing the policies, rules and regulations of their village in the way that could minimize the challenges of their participation. This assures the notion that considers children as active in the construction of their own lives, not just passive subjects of the social processes (James & Prout, 1990, James, 2009), if they can got the chance to be involved.

6.3.2. Adults Perspectival Variation

As it is illustrated in chapter five, adult participants of this study have different standpoints on the issue of children's participation in decision-making processes that affect their lives (see chapter five, 5.2). This perspectival variation might be an obstacle for the progress of children participation in decision-making processes. For instance Social worker No.2 stated that;

For your surprise, although we are conducting many campaigns for a long period of time about children's rights in general and children's participation right in particular via trainings, workshops and seminars, yet we have several employees who opposes the idea of allowing children to have a say on issues that affect their lives. This is one of the reason that the village lags behind in transferring the theories of children's right to participation in to practice.

During my interview, I have found one mother (Mother No.2) who strongly disagree with the idea of children's participation right. For her the idea of allowing children to have a say and deciding on issues that affect their lives is introduced via the UNCRC. She further more feels that the CRC is the hidden cultural colonization of the western countries over the developing countries (Boyden, 1997; Ensor & Reinke, 2014). According to this mother, allowing children to have a say and decide on issues that concern their live is not something that could be changed into practice, because she perceives children as not matured enough to decide what is right or wrong (see chapter 5, 5.2). Instead they need care, training and supervision of adults. Thus, for Mother No.2, the concept of children's right to participation is a new phenomenon which intentionally imposed by the UNCRC to eclipsed the Ethiopian's way of shaping children's through good ethics such as respecting and obeying for their elders. Accordingly, Mother No.2's viewpoint proofs the Social worker No. 2's complain on the above extract.

As discussed in chapter five, it is not surprising to find adults attitude similar to Mother No.2, who are from the social-cultural background where children are considered as subordinate and dependent to their elders, and respecting and obeying to elders are conceived as a positive socio-cultural norms for many children's and adults (Poluha, 2004). What I also understand from Mother No.2's perspective is that, she is not well aware about children right to participation and the goal of the UNCRC. It is true that the UNCRC is criticized for its universality and western cultures based, but we can't deny that it opens a way for children to be considered as active human beings that can have their own contribution in their lives (James, 2009). Moreover, Mother No.2's suspicions with the UNCRC that, it is distributed to the developing countries to erode their cultural ethics like respecting and obeying elders, is emphasized in the ACRWC. For instance Article 31 of ACRWC stated that *"every child shall have responsibilities towards his family and society, and other recognized communities and international communities"*. The responsibilities of children,

includes conserving and strengthening cultural values, respecting parents, elders, and superiors, and working for a cohesive family, among others (Article 31).

Thus, the confusions of child care and support workers like Mother No.2, and being an obstacle for the implementation of children's participation right may be from the misguided campaigns and less awareness about the importance of involving children in issues that concerns their lives, and the goal of child right instruments. Trainings, workshops and seminars are designed and developed by the headquarter in the way that they believe it is right, and distributed to their subordinates who are in branch village (Management representative), and branch villages try to present it word by word to their employees in the form of 'top down' distribution. This may not easily understood for the community members, and exaggerating confusions.

6.4. Ways of Improvement for Children's Participation in Decision-making Processes

Both child and adult participants were asked to suggest the possible actions to improve children's participation in decision making that affect their lives. Almost all participants in one way or the other describe that the key for improvement of children's participation is in the hand of the policies, rules and regulations of the institution. Especially the child participants clearly described that the institution should revise its rules and regulation in the way that it could involve children and get information from the children themselves before rules and regulations are adopted and implemented in to practice. For instance, Alex (12 year old boy) claimed that;

We have good progress of participating in our family household decision-making processes, though it is restricted on the household chores only. Thus, I think if the institution revises its rules and regulations in the way that invite children to take part in all issues that concern their lives, then children participation will enhanced.

Likewise adult participants suggested that as the policy of 'top down' distribution of rules and regulations of the institution in a national level should be revised in the way that it opens up for listening to the view of all branch villages in addition to the children who live in these villages, in order to improve the children's participation. According to the adult participants, it would be better, to make all stakeholders starting from children and mothers in the village to the higher officers who are in the head office to take part equally in designing and developing trainings, workshops, seminars and policies, rules and regulations in general, in the way that networked and reconciling of the 'bottom up' and 'top down' points of views distributions. This will be further

important in creating an environment where adults can discuss, learn and become aware about the importance of children's participation, thus the challenge of adults attitudinal variation would narrow down as suggested by Management representative and Social worker No.1.

Chapter Seven

7. Summary, Conclusion and Recommendation

The aim of this study was to explore the institutionalized children's experiences in decision-making processes that affect their lives. Both child and adult participants' perspective towards children's participation have been assessed. Moreover the progresses, challenges, and ways to improve the children's participation in decision-making processes. Thus, this chapter is categorized into three sections. The first section summarizes some of the main findings of the study in accordance to the basic research questions listed in chapter one. The second section presents a brief conclusion of the study. Lastly, the third section point out some possible recommendations based on the research findings.

7.1. Summary

In summarizing the results of the study, the basic research questions need to be restated. The basic research questions that the study sought to answer were the following:

- ✓ How does children and adults (SOS mothers, social workers and the management representative) understand children's participation in the SOS family decision-making processes in particular and in their village in general?
- ✓ Do children participate in decision-making processes that affect their lives in the SOS family in particular and in their village in general?
- ✓ Are there any progresses or not, in relation to children's participation in decision-making processes within their family in particular and within their villages in general?
- ✓ What are the challenges, and ways of improvements relating to children participation in decision-making processes that affects their life within their SOS family in particular and in their village in general?

Based on these basic research questions, a brief summary of the result chapters (chapter five & six) have pointed out as follows.

7.1.1. Children and Adults Perspective

The research finding reveal that both child and adult participants have diverse perspectives in relation to the children's participation in decision-making processes that affect their lives. Most of the child participants conceive children's participation as getting the chance to be informed in all

issues that affect their lives and being consulted depending on the issue that is going to be decided. Some children also perceive that children taking part in decision-making processes that concern their lives is when they get the chance to be consulted and having a say in all matters that concerns their lives, no matter whether they could influence the final decision or not. Yet other believe that it is the processes of getting experience and training from adults to be a good decision-maker in their future lives.

Even though the perception of the child participants towards their participation in decision-making processes is heterogeneous, all have agreed on three points: 1) The need of final decisions to be decided by their elders. 2) A wish to participate in decision-making processes that matters their lives, albeit they have different reason for their interest to participate. 3) The importance of their participation, even if they describe it in different ways.

Similar to the child participants, the adult participants also have heterogeneous perspectives. Their perceptual difference leveled from totally opposing to children's participation in decision-making processes to allowing children to be informed, consulted and have a say in issues that concern their lives. Of the total adult participants (two SOS mothers, two social workers and one management representative) one mother clearly revealed that she totally opposes the children's participatory right in decision-making processes that affect their lives. Instead she believes that children are not matured enough to have a say and decide about their lives, and that adults should care, train, guide and decide on behalf of them.

Other two adult participants, a mother and social worker, conceive that children should be informed and consulted about all issues that concerns their lives and be respected for their feelings, but that they should not influence the final decisions. According to these participants the goal of the children's involvement in decision-making processes is to get inputs from the children that may be considered during the adults final decisions on behalf of the children. Whether to consider the children's view or not is in the hand of the adults, and children are not acknowledged as they could have the capacity to have a say and decide on issues that concern their lives.

Yet other two adult participants, a social worker and management representative, believe that children should be informed, consulted, have a say and their view should be taken seriously. For these participants, factors such as the children's age and the issues that is going to be decided are determinant in informing, consulting and giving weight for the children's view.

All in one, except two children who conceives children should be informed, consulted, and have a say in all matters that affect their lives, all of the child and adult participants believe that as adults know and better in deciding the final decisions in relation to the children lives than the children themselves.

7.1.2. Children's Experience in Decision-making Processes

Taking the general perspective of the research participants as initiation, the study have further sought to explore the children's experiences in decision-making processes that concerns their lives within their family and in their village. The child participants revealed that most of their family's decision-making process are conducted during their 'once per week family meeting', in which every family member have the chance to be informed, consulted and have a say. Likewise, in the institutional level, they suggested that they are represented through their child parliament, which involves two children from each family household of the village. However the child participants expressed that they were dissatisfied with the role of both the 'once per week family meeting' and the child parliament in influencing decision-making processes that concerns their lives. They suggested that both arrangements are almost passive executive for the institution in the way that it needs about the children's live.

According to the child participants issues of decision-making processes are classified into '*less important issues*' and '*important issues*'. The '*less important issues*' are issues such as dish washing, sweeping floors, throwing trash, personal hygiene and related household chores, which are more or less planned, discussed and decided by the family household through informing, consulting and taking seriously the views of every family members. On the other hand the '*important issues*' are subjects such as what and when to play, when and what to eat, when to sleep, when to study, and when to visit biological families and the like, which are planned and decided by the institution and announced to the family households to implement it as a rule and regulation. Thus all the child participants reckoned that they are yet not participating in deciding on issues that are considered as important in their lives.

Even though the child participants feel that they are not involved in decision-making processes, especially in a matters they consider as important in their lives, all child and adult participant's agreed that, there is relatively positive progresses in encouraging children to be involved in decision-making processes that concerns their lives within their village. The continuous campaigns

about children's right to participate in decision-making processes, the changes in implementing the 'once per week family meeting' and the child parliament movements are the main examples that described via the participants as indicators of positive progresses.

However, both the child and adult participants reported that the progresses in assuring the children's participation is yet slow. The rigid institutional policies, rules and regulations and the adults' perceptual variation have raised as the main barriers for the speeding up the progresses of the children's involvement in decision-making processes.

Additionally, both child and adult participants have suggest possible ways to improve children's participation. Almost all participants, in one way or on the other suggested that all alternatives for improvement are under the control of the policies, rules and regulations of the institution. Accordingly, for the participants of this study restructuring the policies of the institution in developing and adopting the rules and regulation in the way that could involve the community members including children is the key for all options of improving the children's participation in decision-making processes.

7.2 Conclusion

Since the early 1990s, Ethiopia have drafted and adopted its national constitution in accordance to regional and international human and democratic right instruments. ACRWC and UNCRC are the examples of child right instruments that adopted without any reservation (Lemessa & Kjørholt, 2013). Especially, the UNCRC is a part of the domestic law, and the trustworthy guideline for the interpretation of the rights of children that confirmed by the national constitution (Yohannes & Assefa, 2007). For instance article 36 of the FDRE constitution recognizes that every child have the right to life, to be cared and protected. Moreover this article gives focus to 'the best interest of the child' (article 36(b)), which is identified as the most important of the main principle of both the UNCRC and ACRWC.

Thus, even though Ethiopia still have a lack of legal national frameworks and effective translation of the international child right instruments into the local contexts of the country (Lemessa & Kjørholt, 2013), some reports suggest that there is children's right enhancements in accordance to the regional and international child right conventions like the UNCRC and the ACRWC (Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2005; 2013). For instance in relation to children's participation right, reports reveal that there are several new initiatives throughout the country to

assure the participation of children in decisions that concerns their lives, which is mainly initiated by the institute of Ombudsman and Ethiopian human right commission (Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2013). The same is implemented in both national and international NGOs who worked for children's well beings (ibid). For instance as one of the INGOs, the SOS Children's Villages International-Ethiopia, all of its policies, strategies and activities are in accordance to the principles of the UNCRC (SOS KDI , 2004; SOS Ethiopia, 2009).

Unlike the conventions, policies and strategies, empirical data's of this research study reveal that the institutionalized children, their care givers (SOS mothers), social workers and management representative of the village have divers standpoint towards children's participation in decision-making that affect their lives. Regardless of the perspectival variation, most of the child and adult participants believe that as adults know and better in deciding on the children's live than the children themselves. This have an implication that the theories and strategies about children's participation are not yet fully internalized in to the communities and practices of SOS Children's Villages International-Ethiopia.

Although the study reveal that numerous member of the village are changing their attitude from conceiving children as passive, immature and dependent on adults care and supervision (Lee, 2001) to considering children's as active and competent who have their own contribution on issues that concerns their lives (James & Prout, 1990; James, 2009), comparing to the time that campaigns have been started, the progresses in assuring the children's participation right is yet very slow and in its early stage. Children are still not participating, especially in issues that they considered as important in their lives such as the time of family visit, school choice, study time, type and time of play etc., though all child participants reveal that as they need to take part in decision-making processes that affect their lives. This is most probably because of the misguided implementation of the international policies, where the global discourse of child right principles are distributed throughout the globe as universal truth (Ensor & Reinke, 2014), without considering the influence of socio-economic and cultural variations. As suggested by Hanson & Nieuwenhuys (2013), if the gap between the children's and communities every day practices and the global discourses of child right ideologies are not seriously considered, it leads to fail campaigns about children's participation in decision-making processes that matters their lives.

Thus, to enhance the implementation of children's participation, it is important to revise policies, rules and regulations in the way that could mediate the everyday experiences of children and local communities in the ground, and the global discourses of child right principles (Hanson & Nieuwenhuys, 2013).

7.3. Recommendations

This study has implications for interventions, which can be made to improve the institutionalized children's participation in decision-making processes that affect their lives. It also suggests useful directions for future researchers who might be interested in the area of children's participation. Thus, based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made.

1. During my interviews with adult participants, I came across misconceptions around the idea of children's right to participation and the goal of the UNCRC. I recommend that the institution should work more on awareness in the way that all the members of the village could understand the idea of participatory rights, and the goals, weaknesses and strength of the child right instruments like the UNCRC and ACRWC.
2. The research finding of this study also reveal that the 'top down' and rigid institutional policies, rules and regulation are the bottleneck for the achievement of children's participation. Thus policymakers and other concerned bodies should revise institutional policies, rules and regulations in the way that could involve all stakeholders including children in designing, developing and adopting the policies, rules and regulations of their institution.
3. The research finding also reveal that in assuring the children's interest to be active social contributors in general and participating in decision- making processes that affect their lives in particular, it is important to understand adults' view as well, unlike some activists of sociology of childhood who emphasizes more on children's view only. Thus, more research is necessary to increase the knowledge on adults' perceptions on children's right in general and participation in particular. This will be more essential for policy interventions, because strategic campaign programs can target adults to increase awareness them on the necessity to involve children in decision-making process that affect their lives.

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Appendixes

Appendix 1: Information Sheet

Fieldwork for Master's thesis on the theme: Institutionalized children's participation in decision-making process. A case in SOS Children's Villages International-Ethiopia.

My name is -----, a student at the Master program in Childhood Studies at the Norwegian Centre for Child Research, NTNU.

I have chosen to do my master thesis on children participation in decision making process that affect their life. The aim of this research is to get knowledge Institutionalized children's experience in decision-making processes that concerns their lives. Both children's and adults' perspective will also include. In addition to this; progresses, challenges and way of improvement of children's participation in decision-making processes that affect their lives within their SOS family in particular and within their village in general will be explored. So I intends to use about 3 hours, 3-4 days a week for 9-10 weeks to collect data, and want to come at slightly different times of the day so as to help me in observing different activities of the children with in their family and the village. I wish then that together we can find out what days and times will be suitable. I want to have focus group discussion both with children and adults, as well as activities like naming, life mapping with children, and individual interviews both with children and adults. I want to use audio recorder in the interview and focus group discussion in order to easier to get with me what being said, and it's just only me is going to listen it. Every personal information will be preserved confidentially, and will be deleted after the thesis is written.

I will gladly send you further information about my research study if needed.

My contact address

My supervisors contact address

Phone:

Phone:

Email:

Email:

Appendix 2: Informed Consent Form for Parent / Guardian

Fieldwork for Master's thesis on the theme: Institutionalized Children's Participation in Decision-making Processes. A case in SOS Children's Villages International- Ethiopia.

Dear Parent / Guardian

My name is -----, and am taking the Master Program in Childhood Studies at the Norwegian Centre for Child Research at NTNU. I want to write a thesis on children's participation in decision-making processes that affect their lives. I'm going to be in this institution about 3 hours, 3-4 days per week for 9-10 weeks from 15 June to do my fieldwork. Accordingly, I wonder if I can get permission for your children participating in my research study.

The aim of the research is to get knowledge about Institutionalized children's experience in decision-making processes that affect their lives. Both children's and adults' perspective will also include. In addition to this progresses, challenges and way of improvement in relation to children's participation in decision-making process that affect their lives within their SOS family in particular and within their villages in general will be explored. I want to have naming and life mapping activities, individual interviews and focus group discussion with the children. I'm going to use audio recorder in the interview and focus group discussion with the children for an easier to get with me that being said, and it's just only me who is going to listen to this. Children name will not be used in the thesis. All personal information will be preserved confidentially.

It is voluntary to participate in the study, it will not affect whether the institution or the family households, if a child participating in the study or not. If you agree that your child attends, I will also ask them before each activity if they wish to participate. They can withdraw at any time in the study without giving a reason. If you parent / guardian or the child wants to withdraw from the study information about the child will not collected, and any information which collected voluntary will be deleted after the thesis is written.

If you have any questions, do not hesitate to ask the institutional administration or directly to me. It is also possible to see the interview guide, if you want.

If you agree that your children participating in the research, please sign the paper

I agree that my son / daughter (name) participating in this research study.

I agree that interview and focus group discussion with my son / daughter is recorded on audio recorder and that he / she says can be used in the thesis.

I understand that my son / daughter is going to be anonymous in this study, and that everything that being said is going to be confidential.

I understand that my son / daughter may withdraw from the research at any time.

Date and Place: -----

Signature: -----

My contact address

My supervisor's contact address

Phone:

Phone:

Email:

Email:

Appendix 3: Informed Consent Form for Children

My name is, I am a student at Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU).

I have come here because I would like to learn from you how do you participate in decision-making processes that concerns you. I would like also to know your perception and if there is any progresses, challenge to your participation. During the time I will learn from you, we will do some activities that will help me for learning, individual interviews and focus group discussions. I also need to have some recorded audios of our activities that will done in the field work, and no one could access this, except me.

I wish to promise you that everything that you will tell me, will remain a secret between you and me. You should not have to tell me anything you don't want me to know. In everything that will be done, there will be no wrong answers because you know better than I do. It is your right to terminate your participation at any time you wish, and your name did not written in the thesis, instead I will use a pseudo name if needed. Every information that you will give me will canceled when I finish my thesis writing.

During our field work, you can ask any question at any time. So if you agree to participate voluntary and for free please make a cross (X) on the box in front of Yes, and make a cross (X) on the box in front of No, if you don't want to participate.

YES NO

If you want to call me for any question, you can call [phone no].....

Appendix 4: Informed Consent Form for Adults

Fieldwork for Master's thesis on the theme: Institutionalized Children’s Participation in Decision-making Processes. A case in SOS Children’s Villages International- Ethiopia.

My name is-----, a student at the Master program in Childhood Studies at the Norwegian Centre for Child Research at NTNU.

I am here for doing master’s thesis research study that will take approximately 9 to 10 weeks starting from June 15, and the focus of the study will be on children participation in decision-making processes that affect their lives. The aim of the research is to get knowledge about institutionalized children's experience in decision-making processes within their family in particular and within their villages in general. Both children’s and adults’ perspective will also explored. In addition to this progresses, challenges and way of improvement of children participation in decision-making processes will explored. So here adult’s point of view will be mandatory for this research study. In doing this I will be having one-to one interviews and a focus group discussions with you. I also need an audio record of the interviews and the focus group discussion, and this will be only listened by me.

I guarantee your privacy and confidentiality in this study. Whatever will be discussed during interviews will remain confidential. No name or staff identity will be revealed in any publication resulting from this study to ensure that your right to privacy is respected. Only pseudo names will be used to represent the views of individuals. You have a full right to withdrawal from the study at any time. You have also the right not answer questions that you do not want to answer. After the writing of the thesis is ended all information’s will totally canceled.

Your Participation in this research study is voluntary. There is no personal or institutional negative consequence because of your participation or not. Please sign this form if you agree to participate in this research study. Date----- Signature -----

My contact address

My supervisor’s contact address

Phone:

Phone:

Email:

Email:

Appendix 5: Standard Observation Sheet (Developed from Ennew et al, 2009)

Researcher's name:

Date of session:

Time of session: from: _____ to: _____

Research tool used:

Participants during the session: Children _____ Adult _____

Place of data collection: _____

Number sequence of data collection: from: _____ to: _____

Factors that might have influenced the collection of data during the session

Researcher:

Children/Adults:

Other:

Characteristics of the place where data were gathered:

Weather conditions:

Interruptions/distractions:

Others:

Appendix 6: Guides for the Interview and Focus Group Discussion

I would like to thank you all for your willingly participation in this interview. I will promise you that the information will be preserved anonymously and protected from any other person and organization, and it will be only used for Academic purpose. No names and personal information of any participants will be disclosed. Your participation in this study is voluntary and you can withdraw at any time you wish.

A. Interview guide for children

➤ General questions

1. How is live in this village?
2. Could you tell me about your family, relatives and friends?
3. When I was a child I was highly egger to play with my friends in our rural village and we were playing the whole day, do you play in this village? How, where and with whom?
4. When I was a child my family was interested on me to learn in rural elementary school which is very near to our home, but I was interested to learn in our neighbor town elementary school which is a little far than the rural elementary school. What about you, do you attend school? Where? Do you like it or not?
5. When I was a child I was highly interested to invite my friends to our home and I was do it many times , what about you, do you like to invite each other with your friend to your home or not? If yes, how many times do you did it?

➤ Perception related question

1. How do you explain children's participation in decision-making processes within their SOS family and their village?
2. Do you think children should have a say on decision-making processes that concern them or it is best that adults decide for them? Why?
3. For what kinds of status do you assume that as children are participating or not participating in decision-making processes within their SOS families in particular and within the village in general?
4. Do you think that you are currently participating in decision-making process of your SOS family or your village, particularly concerning your life? How?
5. Some argues that children did not have the capacity to make a right decision about their lives and adults should decide on behalf of them, what do you think about this?

➤ **Experience related questions**

1. How are decisions made in this village in general and within your SOS family in particular?
Could you tell me some examples?
2. Who makes the decisions in your SOS family?
3. Who is the most influential in the decision-making processes of your SOS family?
4. Have you ever participated in any decision-making processes of your SOS family? If yes how? If no why?
5. Do you remember any decision made concerning your life in your SOS family? Did you influence any of these decisions?

➤ **Opportunities related questions**

1. Either any initiations in relation to encourage children participation in decision-making processes that affect their lives, particularly with in their family and in your institution in general? Could you tell me some examples?

➤ **Challenges and need for improvement**

1. Either any challenges for your participation in decision making process that affect your life within your SOS family? If yes, could you tell me some most common examples of the challenges?
2. What do you think the solution for such challenges?

B. Focus group discussion for child participants

1. What is children's participation in decision-making processes that affect their lives for you?
2. Do children should have a say on decision-making processes that concern them or it is best that adults should decide for them? Why?
3. For what kinds of status do you assume that as children are participating or not participating in decision-making processes within their SOS families in particular and in the village in general?
4. Do you think that you are currently participating in decision-making processes within your SOS family and the village, particularly concerning your life? How?
5. Some argues children have the capacity to decide and should totally decide on their live, and other said that children have not the capacity to decide about their lives and adult should decide

on behalf of them. On the other hand some argues that it should be balanced one, they should be both decide on some issues and helped by adults on some issues. What do you think about this idea?

6. Either any challenges for your participation in decision-making processes that affect your life within your SOS family? If yes? Could you explain some example and possible solution for such challenges?

C. Interview guide for adult participants (SOS mothers, social workers and management representative)

➤ **General questions**

1. I have an interest for the future to work with children related issues, particularly with those who are vulnerable one, how do you find it working with children related issues in practice?
2. It is almost one generation between us as adults and today's children, do you have observe any change?
3. The concept of child right for Ethiopia is almost a recent phenomenon, how do you see it?
4. Currently throughout the globe there is a debate between the protectionist approach, participatory approach and liberal paternalist approach, which do you think the right one, why?

➤ **Perception related questions**

1. How do you describe children participation in decision-making processes that affect their life?
2. There is a debate about whether children should have or not the right to participation in decisions that concerns their lives. Do you think that children should have this right? Why?
3. When do you think that a child is participated or not participated in decision-making that affect his/her life within his/her SOS family or in the village?
4. Do you think that the children who lives in your institution are participating in decisions that affects their lives, especially with in their SOS families? If yes, how? If no, why?
5. Some argues that children did not have the capacity to make a good decision about their lives and adults should decide on behalf of them, what do you think about this?

➤ **Opportunities related questions**

1. Do you have any specific strategies that encourages children participation in decision-making process that affect their lives, with in your village in general and in the family households in particularly?
2. Would you tell me if you have some example and how is its progress?

➤ **Challenges and needs for improvement**

1. Either any barriers in making the children to participate in decision-making processes that affect their life?
2. Could you tell me the main challenges you face in doing this?
3. What should be done to make the children to have the opportunity of participating and deciding on their own lives?

Appendix 7: Summary on Designs of the Research Methods

Methods	Participant	Purpose
1. Naming Activities	All child participants (10)	Icebreaker and to build rapport as soon as possible
2. life-mapping activities	All child participants	As Icebreaker and building Rapport, also help to get know participants well
3. Semi-structured interview	All child and adult(5) participants	To answer all the research questions (see research question)
4. Focus group discussion	One group, from the child participants	Mainly to answer research question no.1, 3&4, but not exclusive (see research question)
5. Unstructured observation	Not specified but mainly focused with the selected five family households	Mainly focused in getting answer for research question no.2, but it is not exclusive to the other questions.
6. Protection tool	All child participants	To make children participants feel good and ending the field work smoothly.