Ammar Bahadur Singh

Child Clubs as the Defenders of Children's Rights in Nepalese Context
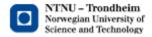

Trondheim, July 2012

Master's thesis,

MPhil in Childhood Studies

NTNU

Norwegian University of Science and Technology

Faculty of Social Science and Technology Management

Norwegian Centre for Child Research

Acknowledgements

Abstract

Children are seen as competent social actors in new social studies of childhood and proponents of which seek for children's participation in all matters that are of interest to children, and simultaneously and thereafter influence the decision making process that affect them in both explicit and implicit terms. Additionally, the UNCRC in articles 12 and 13 legally provisions for the participation of children to have a say on the issues of their concerns and their views should be taken into consideration. The community based child clubs seem to have emerged to meet this end.

My thesis aimed at exploring the lived experiences of children involved in the community based child clubs in order to gain knowledge on how the clubs have been good defenders of children's rights, particularly their right to participate and agency and what implications the clubs have in Nepalese society.

Qualitative questionnaires as a gateway to enter the issue, and (semi) interviews, focus groups discussions and ranking as primary qualitative methods were used to collect data. Nine children, five girls and four boys, and six adults were the informants, but children were the focus of the research. The empirical data were further analyzed and interpreted.

This research shows that the community based child clubs have been a good forum for children to get information on children's rights and other issues, and develop their personal and social skills. Children's participation in the social activities that are of direct interest to children has been the main focus of the clubs. Children lead, manage and implement the clubs activities and program themselves and hence children's agency has been recognized and promoted. These clubs have brought positive changes to children themselves, their families and societies. Furthermore, the clubs have got a strong space in the society and challenged the traditional beliefs and practices that discourage child participation. Thus, it is reasonable to say that the child clubs have turned into a real crusader for informing, promoting and protecting children's right to participate and hence develop their agency.

Contents

List of Abbreviations

3Ps.................Provision, Protection and Participation

CBS…………Central Bureau of Statistics in Nepal

CCRGs……...Community Child Rights Groups

COWCP…….Consortium of Organization Working for Child Participation

CPGB……......Child Participation Guide Book

CRC…………Convention on the Rights of the Child

CWIN………Child Workers in Nepal Concerned Center

DCRC………Delhi Children's Rights Club in Indian

DVC………..Village Development Committee

I/NGO………International/National non-Governmental Organization

NGOs……….Non-governmental Organizations

NOSEB……..Norsk Senter for Barneforskning (Norwegian Centre for Child Research

NPCA ………National Plan of Action for Children

SCN…….. …Save the Children Norway

SCUK……… Save the Children United Kingdom

SCUS………. Save the Children United States

SOWC……....State of World Children

SSRP………..School Sector Reform Plan

UNCRC……..United Nations Convention on the Right of the Child

UNICEF…….United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund

VDC………...Village Development Committee

NPAC……….National Plan of Action for Children

VDC………...Village Development Committee

CRP ………...Child Rights Programming

Chapter One

1. Introductory overview of the study

1.1. Introduction

Recently children's rights and issues have been the matters of wider discussions and debates around the globe. Additionally, children's right to participate has got an unprecedented focus in the democratically growing world. In order to promote children's rights, mainly the rights to participate, child clubs have come into being in the global South in particular. There are about fourteen thousands child clubs only in Nepal working for children's rights and their issues. The clubs are getting more and more popular in Nepalese society since the last decade. They have been very successful in promoting children's right to participation in social activities in particular and have raised the issues that are of direct concern to them. My thesis explores the experiences of children involved in community based child clubs in the Kathmandu city and how these clubs have promoted children's participation and agency. Furthermore, it aims at exploring the implications of the child clubs in Nepalese society. However, this chapter aims at introducing the child clubs with their genesis, various connotations, and child participation in them. It also explains the objectives and research questions, significance and outline of my thesis.

1.2. Introduction to child clubs

Child clubs have directly influenced both adult and child community, and been able to inform, promote and protect children rights across the country. These organizations are increasing in leaps and bounds as the promoters of children's rights and other issues, not only in Nepal, but also around the world particularly in the global South. Save the Children Norway has been one of the leading figures in supporting child-led organizations in order to protect children's rights through education and awareness. Child-led organizations, like child clubs, children's parliament, children's ombudsman, youth councils and youth forums, have been instrumental in disseminating children's rights provisioned in United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), 1989 and have given a platform to children to have their voices in the decision making process that affect them in many ways.

The clubs are quite recent in Nepal. They came into being around the early 1990s only after Nepal ratified the UNCRC in 1990 and since then they have developed in thousands across the

country. However, children's organizations are not new in Nepal. There have long been children's organizations. Most notably, children have involved in the clubs and scouts in many important ways since 1952. It seems that children have been included; not actively involved in the adult-led organizations. The child clubs came into existence in the initiation of the international and national organizations working with children and their issues in the beginning; however, the club types activities had existed prior to the inception of child led clubs (Hart and Khatiwada, 2003; Thakuri, 2010). These clubs have been forums of children's participation (Ebbing, 2010). Plan International, Action Aid, CWIN and other groups were the first to come to the front line in doing so. Currently, there are fourteen thousand child clubs in Nepal (State of the Children in Nepal, 2011). They started coming into beings in different ways. According to Rajbhandary et al. (1999), majority of the clubs evolved out of 'child-to-child training programs' offered by Save the Children Norway (SCN) in some districts. The 'child-to-child training programs' cover health, hygiene, injury prevention, care for younger children and children's rights. The 'child-to-child training program' conducted by SCN appears to have incited children to form a group to continue their work and some of the clubs were formed to this end. Some of the clubs were supported by Save the Children US and UK as well. The rest of them came into being freely because of the dissemination of the concept to the nearby villages. Some child clubs were established in response to a fictional child club that children heard in many of the stories told to them on child to child radio programs. While child-to-child groups were created around school settings, the child clubs were structured around a forum for meetings and activities (Rajbhandary et al., ibid.). The emergence of child clubs, as Theis and O'Kane (2005) claim, was driven by a growing acknowledgement of children's roles in society.

The child clubs are both for boys and girls. They provide a rare opportunity for children to mix with those who are outside of their social group, and to learn to respect a difference. They have been an important medium for children to air their voices for their rights enshrined in the UNCRC. The clubs have promoted children as active citizens and been important 'democratic training grounds (Ebbing, 2010) which result in the advancement of democracy and children's rights (Rajbhandary et al., ibid.). In addition, my research revealed that the clubs have succeeded in collecting children's voices from all corners of society and bringing them to the policy makers. Children have got a platform to act as competent social agents in their own organizations for their own development.

There are two kinds of child clubs in Nepal. They are (1) school based child clubs and (2) community based child clubs. The community based child clubs are the focus of my research as well. These two are the most common types of child clubs in terms of the regions of locations (Child Participation Guide book, 2007). Likewise, as the Guide Book further states, child clubs can be categorized in terms of a number of factors. In terms of the activities that children get involved, two kinds of child clubs exist; general child clubs, which have been established in order to promote child participation, do not limit to a particular subject of discussion and cover a number of subjects, and the community based child clubs situated in the rural areas are of this kind in nature; and subject focused child clubs, on the other hand, have been formed in order to discuss on a limited number of subjects of interests to children. There are some child clubs who focus only one of these themes like child labor, cleanliness, library development, etc. In terms of nature of structure, there are three types of child clubs. Single child clubs, the clubs which have been established as an organization in community or school. These clubs may or may not have relationships with other child clubs. Another one is, child clubs in the network, where a group of child clubs with a common goal work together, and each club in network influences the operation of the activities of other clubs in the network. And the third type is network of child clubs, which has been established as an organization of child clubs. Such network of child clubs is in local, district, regional, and national level. In the districts, where child clubs are working, there is a network of the clubs in district level and children themselves are leading those networks of the clubs. There is a Kathmandu Valley Network of child clubs which covers the child clubs of three districts of the valley. Four children of the network participated in my research as well. Similarly, in terms of the class of children involved in the clubs, there are mainly children from working class and a few are from rich class. In the child clubs of the city areas, there is an overwhelming number of children from working class and a very few children from other intellectual and rich classes. The main reason, as the Child Participation Guide Book(ibid.) claims, the organizations working in the sector of poverty alleviation, child labor elimination, or public health and cleanliness, have initiated these clubs and their programs might not have included and attracted the children from other classes. However, in the rural areas, children from all classes are in the clubs and the reason can be that children from all classes go to the same public school, as there are not expensive private schools particularly for rich class as they are in the city areas. Furthermore, the public space shared by all classes is almost the same in rural areas while that is not the case in the cities. There is no class discrimination in terms of participation in the clubs in rural areas.

The international and national NGOs working in the field of education have supported in establishing school based child clubs in order to help children learn and share their experiences and knowledge. These clubs are much more academic in nature. Teachers are the patrons and facilitators of these clubs. School Sector Reform Plan (SSRP 2009-2015) has brought forward the concept of a compulsory child club in all public schools in order to facilitate children in their learning in groups. Because of this policy of government, the public schools have formed child clubs in their own initiation. However, these clubs are only for the school going children, not for the out-of-school children. In addition, these clubs are only open when the schools are off. The community based child clubs, on the other hand, have been formed in order to include those children who are out of schools in particular to facilitate them in learning and in protecting their rights as well. These clubs have been supported by several NGOs in collaboration with local communities (Thakuri, 2010). Consortium of Organizations Working for Child Participation, the UNICEF, Save the Children Norway, Plan International, World Vision International, etc., in particular and other local non-governmental organizations have supported children's clubs, whose members range from 10 to 18 years of age. These clubs have appeared at the forefront in dealing with children's issues as per the situations of the communities they are located in.

Child clubs are participatory in nature and hence they resemble child participation (Thakuri, 2010). They have made children join the clubs, learn something and work for their rights in the communities where they are from. Participation as a fundamental right of every individual is the focal principle of operation of the clubs. It is through participation the voiceless groups of society get profited as they acquire knowledge, skills and get connected to networks of people to share their experiences. Thus, participation, as Hart (2008) describes, is "conceptualized as 'empowering' oriented towards the transformation of lives and societies" (p.207). Participation is a vital right of children which is promoted by child clubs. It opens all avenues for children to grow and transform themselves in all possible ways. That's why, highlighting its immense importance, Hart claims that "participation is not only a right in itself but also a vital means to the realization of children's other rights" (Hart, ibid. p.408).

According to Ebbing (2010), the child clubs intended for working children have been important agents of changes to the lives of children. The working children have developed both individual and collective agency through education and life skills trainings that they get from the clubs. My research has taken the community based child clubs as forums for children's participation and means of their empowerment. Furthermore, most importantly it has revealed how the clubs

promote child participation and hence develop children's agency in their everyday lives. It has also explored implications and discourses the clubs have brought in Nepalese society. I have discussed and explained these things in analysis and discussion chapters (see page…).

1.3. Research objectives and questions

The main aim of my research is to explore how child clubs have turned out to be the defenders and promoters of children's rights and their implications in Nepalese society. My research also aims to shed light on the social situations of children and their participation in community life through the child clubs. The objectives of my research are;

a. To understand the views of children and other people involved in child clubs on child clubs and the activities children are engaged in;

b. To explore how the clubs promote children's participation rights and agency; and

c. To explore the implications of the child clubs in societies.

In view of the above-mentioned objectives, I have formed three main research questions with their supportive questions of each.

a. What perspectives do children and adults have on children's involvement in the child clubs in terms of the following categories?
 ▪ Gender?
 ▪ Age?
 ▪ Ethnicity?
 ▪ Children with disabilities?
 ▪ Children's everyday lives?

b. How do the clubs promote child participation and children's agency in the context of child clubs?
 ▪ Aims of participation?
 ▪ Activities that children participate?
 ▪ How it enhances children's agency?

- Factors affecting child participation and agency?

c. What implications do child clubs have in the societies they are located in
  - Benefits
  - New discourse on childhood in Nepalese contexts?
  - Power relations with adults
  - Popularity of child clubs?

1.4. Significance of the study

Very few researches have been done with the child clubs. However, no research seems to have been done focusing on the community based child clubs. Furthermore, the meaning of the clubs varies in scholarly discussions. Because of the popularity child clubs are growing in their thousands Nepali across societies. My research will be crucial in revealing the real cause of why child clubs have been so popular and how they are working to deal with children's right issues. Moreover, it will clarify the various understandings of child clubs and child participation in the context. Similarly, it will also uncover various types of activities the members of the clubs go through in order to enrich their participation right and decision making power. It might also shed light on how conscious the children themselves and adults are about children's rights and what rights of children are prominent to them in the context.

In addition, this research will contribute to expose children's position in Nepalese socio-economic context and shed light on how children react to it and why. It will also explain how the existing conventional social structure is getting a challenge to children's rights and how children through the child clubs are dealing with that challenge. Furthermore, it will also shed light on how the children's rights and welfare organizations are helping children to promote and protect their rights within the framework of national and international child rights legal instruments. And the knowledge obtained through the empirical research will provide knowledge and direction about how to form more child-friendly policy and programs in order to enhance and protect child rights by creating a secure and just society for children and adults.

1.5. Outline of the thesis

There are three terms being used in relation to the organizations that children have initiated, led and managed. They are 'child clubs', 'children's clubs', and 'child-lead organizations'. I have used the term 'child clubs' in my research in order to maintain consistency in the use of

language. The child clubs in my research refer to community based child clubs that are existing in the Kathmandu Valley and the participants refer to primarily the children involved in the two clubs who provided me with information and the adults who are mainly working for children. Some of the adults are directly involved in the clubs and some are not.

I have organized this thesis into eight chapters. This first chapter introduces the topic with succinct reviews of genesis and various connotations of the child clubs. Chapter two deals with the socio-cultural and economic background in which I carried out my research. I present how children's rights, particularly the right to participate, are understood in socio-cultural and economic situations of Nepalese society. I also explain children's right situations and role of legal instruments to promote and protect the child rights. Furthermore, I have reviewed the child clubs in international perspectives, their structures and activities around the world, particularly in the global South along with the introduction and explanation of child participation in the context of the clubs. Similarly, in chapter three I present the theoretical perspectives providing theory and frameworks I have used in this research. Chapter four focuses on methodology of my research. It describes the methods I used in collecting data in the field, processes of reaching and collaborating with research participants for getting information, and ethical considerations I took into account while conducting the research. In the chapters five, six and seven respectively, I make analysis of the empirical data along with their interpretations and connect them with the theories I have described in chapter three. Chapter eight focuses on the discussion and concluding comments of the analyses and interpretations of the empirical data I have made in the immediate three preceding chapters with reference to the theories described in chapter three. I also present concluding comments along with summary, recommendations and directions further studies concerning child rights in the contexts of child clubs in chapter eight.

Chapter Two

2. Background to the study

2.1. Introduction

This chapter of my thesis is about the context in which I undertook the research. It describes the local contexts within which the experiences of my research participants unfold. It suffices enough information about the contexts which is crucial in understanding the research analysis and findings in qualitative research. In addition to the description of location/physical setting, demography, and socio-economic situations, this chapter describes the children's rights situations and legal instruments in effect to promote and protect children's rights in the context. The main purpose of this chapter is to let the readers know the socio-cultural and economic situations and accordingly envision the children's rights and their issues in the context where the research participants are situated. In addition, it also aims at reviewing the situations of child clubs, particularly in the South in order to draw a comparative reflection on how the clubs are working and what they have done to enhance children's participation and agency. I have reviewed the structures and activities of the child clubs in order to have a comparative reflection on the clubs. Furthermore, I have explained child participation with reference to the UNCRC in this chapter.

2.2. Location

Republic of Nepal, noted for its majestic Himalayas, is a landlocked country sandwiched between two giant Asian countries, China in the north and India in the south, east and west. It encompasses 1, 47,181 kilo meters (56,827 sq mile) of land roughly in rectangular shape. It extends to about 800km from east to west and about 90-230km from north to south. It lies between the latitudes of 26 degree 12'N to 30 degree 27' N and longitudes of 80 degree 4' E to 88 degree12' E. The elevation of Nepal starts at 70m from sea level and ends with Mt. Everest at 8,848m. It is the world's 93rd largest country by land mass and the 41st most populated country (Wikipedia, 2011).

Nepal is commonly divided into three broad physiographic areas: the mountain regions, the hill region and the tarai (plain land) region. All three parallel each other, from east to west, as continuous ecological belts, occasionally bisected by country's river systems. Half of the total population of the country lives in tarai belt (Census, 2011).

2.3. Socio-cultural and economic situations

Nepalese society has been dominated by the ideals of Hindu religion to a large extent along with Buddhism and other religions. The ideals of other religions such as Buddhism in particular have significant impact on Nepalese society too. Nepalese society is patriarchal in nature positioning women and children in minority in terms of participating in social activities and decision making. Women and children in particular are still in no position of decision making. By nature, Nepalese society does not promote child participation. In addition, children's rights have been mostly neglected in comparison with women's rights. Discrimination in terms of gender and age group is still prevalent. Nevertheless, the male-dominated society is changing to an egalitarian society in snail's pace by the influence of education and mass media. The child clubs are also playing significant role in challenging the conventional practices that hinder child participation.

The concept of equality and independence in Nepalese society is something different from the concept that many hold in western society. There is a hierarchy of relationships and accordingly the power to make decisions or influence decisions remain in individuals. The juniors should respect the seniors and they are supposed to follow what their seniors tell them to do. If they do so, then they are the perfect persons, otherwise still not. The males both in home and society have power to make decisions on their own, and the women do not have yet, let alone children. This hierarchical nature of relationships has made children a muted group in society. In order to change this kind of relationships, child clubs are working and have made their positions strong in terms of participation in community life.

Children are the most loved beings of their parents but the least powerful in society. It is parents and other seniors who determine the rights of children. Obedient, honest, studious and hardworking is what characterizes a normal child. It is parents who determine the best interests of children, not the children. Their best interests are of wider familial and societal concerns rather than their own concerns. Although the principle of 'best interest of child' provisioned in the UNCRC (1989) is still equivocal, every society has delimited the best interests for their children.

Nepalese society was not much known to the rights of children before the UNCRC came into being. There were a few discussions about children and their rights. On 14 the September, 1990 Nepal ratified the UNCRC and it was the first official move towards the recognition of children's rights in the country. In order to implement the basic principles of the UNCRC in

local context Nepal introduced 'The Children's Act', 1992; and 'Child Labor (Prohibition and Regulation) Act', 1999. These two Acts are crucial in order to recognize, promote and protect the rights of children in the wake of the UNCRC. Now hundreds of national and international organizations are working for spreading, enhancing and promoting the rights of children. It is notable that child clubs came into being after Nepal ratified the UNCRC and announced 'The Children's Act for promoting and protecting children's participation.

2.4. Demographic status

Nepal is the 41st most populous country in the world. Recently, according to the preliminary report of national population census 2011 made public by CBS, the total population of the country has reached 26.6 millions. Out of the total population 36.4% are 0-14 year age group, 61.1% are 15-54 year age group, and 4.4% above 65 year age group. People below 18 comprise about 50 percent of the total population. According to the census 2001, children (below 16 years of age) comprised of 39 percent of the total population. The number of male children (40.1%) was quite higher than female children (38.5%). According to Child Workers in Nepal Concerned Centre (CWIN, 2008) mortality rate below 5 years of age is 61 per 1000 birth. Likewise, the infant mortality rate of below a year of age is 48 per 1000 birth and the neo-natal mortality rate is 34 per 1000 birth. 87. 4 percent of children are admitted in primary level school and among the school going age children 48 percent are girls. The physically disabled children constitute about 8 percent of the total population. Similarly, out of all marriages, 34 percent are child marriages. Recently, there has been a significant decline in child marriages and child clubs are actively working against child marriages and they have succeeded in the campaign to some extent. Every year about 24,000 children die of diarrhea. More than 2.6 million children are economically active in the country and children have contributed about 6 percent of the country's total domestic production. More than 1088 children below 19 years of age are infected with HIV. Child trafficking has been a main challenge in the country. About 12 thousands girls are sold to Indian brothels and across every year. 40 percent of the total children are suffering from malnutrition and are affected by the diseases caused by it. Approximately, 40,309 people are drug addicts in the country and among them 21.6 percent are aged 15 to 19 years. This disappointing situation creates a real challenge to children's rights. In order to cope with the above mentioned issues like, child health hazards, child marriage, child labor, child trafficking, child drug addiction, there are about 14000 thousand child clubs. Majority of the community based child clubs have made either one or two, or all these issues as their focus of discussions. More than three hundred thousand child clubs are participating in the clubs. Because of the

awareness campaigns of the clubs there has been a decline in child marriage and other issues recently.

2.5. Children's right situation and legal provisions

Children's rights have been a wider topic of discussion in Nepalese societies after 1990 because of the global influence of the UNCRC. Save the Children Norway (SCN), UNICEF, Plan International, Consortium of Organizations working for Child Participation, Child Workers in Nepal Concerned Centre (CWIN) and other national and international organizations are working for promoting and protecting the rights of children. Similarly, in its working report produced in 2010 the International Institute for the Rights of the Child states that Consortium of 56 NGOs (which is known as Consortium of Organizations Working for Child Participation) and National Coalition for Children as Zones of Peace; altogether 72 organizations are actively working for children's rights. These all organizations seem committed to spreading all principles provisioned for children in the UNCRC. More than fourteen thousand children's clubs, both school based and community based, have been established by the support of international organizations, SCN, Save the Children US, Plan International, World Vision, Hatemalo Sanchar, etc. The SCN has alone supported about four thousand child clubs throughout the country.

Different States have different approaches to comply with their obligations to implement children's rights in their countries. Some have promulgated new constitutions or amended the existing ones in order to incorporate provisions of the UNCRC, while others have translated the UNCRC into their domestic law. Nepal has translated basic principles of the UNCRC into its domestic law and established Children's Act 1992 as well.

Till date six constitutions have been promulgated in Nepal. In the four constitutions announced before 1990, children's rights were not addressed. Children's rights were included in more general human rights. Children's issues were not of great concern and importance to Nepalese government till 1980s. Children as a development concern was only included for the first time in the seventh Plan (1985-90), but for the first time, the 1990 constitution (Article 20b) of the country officially states that the State shall make necessary arrangements to safeguard the rights and interests of children, ensure that they are not exploited and make gradual arrangements for free education.

In addition, 'The Children's Act, 1992' was promulgated on May 22 in order to protect the rights and interests of Nepalese children and to ensure their physical, mental, and intellectual development. It also contains a number of provisions on child labor, and it has been recently amended to make the Act more abuse-specific, especially in relation to sexual abuse. The Act defines a child as a person below the age of 16 years and states that a child who has not attained the age of 14 shall not be employed in any work as a laborer. In order to discourage and stop child labor, 'The Labor Act, 1992 and Labor Rules, 1993 were declared. These legislations contain specific provisions for the prohibition of employment of children below the age of 14 years and prohibit admission to hazardous work for minors. After the ratification of the 'ILO Minimum Age Convention (No. 138)' Government of Nepal promulgated 'The Child Labor (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1999 in order to implement the provisions made in the convention. The Act has also made some important amendments in the Labor Act 1992. The Act enlists specific occupations as hazardous works and prohibits the use of children below 16 years of age in such activities. Furthermore, the Act regulates hours of work for children aged 14 to 16 and states that no child shall be engaged to work during a period from 6p.m. to 6a.m. and prohibits the engagement of children below 14 in any kind of employment. Similarly, in exercise of the power conferred by section 58 of the 'Children's Act 1992, Government of Nepal has framed the 'The Children's Rules, 1995. These rules are complementary to Children's Act, 1992 and specify the duties of all stakeholders for the welfare and wellbeing of children.

Nepal ratified 'Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict' in 2007 and 'Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography' in 2006. Nepal has also ratified the 'SAARC Convention on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Women and Children for Prostitution in 2002; and protected children and enriched children's legislative capacity. Likewise, Government of Nepal has declared 'Juvenile Justice (Procedures) Rules, 2006, in order to strengthen the legal instrument in relation to children and their issues. In order to regulate and monitor adoption of Nepalese children out of the country, the government has declared 'Terms and Conditions for Inter-country Adoption of Nepali Children, 2008. Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare has introduced the '10-Year National Plan of Action for Children (2004/5- 20014/15)' and the government seems committed to implementing it at the moment. Besides the 10-Year National Plan of Action for Children, the government has also implemented the 'Three-Year Interim Development Plan (2007/8-2009/10), which encompasses separate sections addressing 'children', 'youth' and 'women' empowerment.

The current interim constitution of Nepal promulgated in 2007 includes one specific child rights article (article 22 of part 3, as a general clause covering children and article 35 (9) concerning the action of the State on behalf of children and other marginalized and minority groups. It has recognized children's right as fundamental human rights. This constitution is very positive and progressive development for the rights of children in Nepal than the other previous constitutions. However, Article 36 of the constitution mitigates the justifiability of children's rights as it reads: *Question not be Raised in Courts; (1) No question shall be raised in any court as to whether provisions contained in this Part are implemented or not.* This article of the interim constitution has made it much contradictory and many right organizations demand the deletion of this article. Article 22 of the constitution reads:

1. *Every child shall have the right to his/her own identity and name.*
2. *Every child shall have the right to get nurtured, basic health and social security.*
3. *Every child shall have the right against physical, mental or any other form of exploitation. Any such act of exploitation shall be punishable by law and the child so treated shall be compensated in a manner as determined by law.*
4. *Helpless, orphan, mentally retarded and conflict victims, displaced, vulnerable and street children shall have the right to get special privileges from the State to their secured future.*
5. *No minor shall be employed in factories, mines or in any other such hazardous work or shall be used in army, police or in conflicts.*

Interim constitution 2007 (p.9)

The Government, in consultations with other child rights related organizations, is currently in the process of developing 'National Protection Policy for Children' and 'National Framework for Child Participation'. These soon-to-come measures will significantly contribute to translating the principles of the UNCRC, the right to participation in particular and decision making. Recently Government of Nepal has announced 'National Child Policy' in 2012 and unfortunately it is more paternalistic in ideals which undermines children's competences and agency.

Under the aegis of the UNICEF the 'State of World Children (SOWC)' 2011 was launched by adolescents 10th March in Mangalsen, the district headquarters of a far-western district, Achham, Nepal. The issues that the SOWC will address include social and gender

discrimination, child marriage, lack of purchasing power, sexually transmitted diseases, substance abuse, and the inability to talk about their issues openly. The SOWC is primarily concerned with the issues of adolescents in society (UNICEF, 2011).

2.6. Child clubs in international perspectives

I concisely review child clubs in different parts of the world, particularly in the global South in order to draw comparative views on the ways child clubs are working for promoting children's overall well-being through the clubs. A child club is understood as an organization led and managed by children for themselves to deal with their issues in the community. It is a common platform and an effective medium for children to make their voices reach to the policy making level. Child clubs can be taken as local implementation of global initiatives. The UNCRC is the global initiative to fight for the rights of the children.

Child clubs in Sierra Leone, as Cox (2009) contends, were formed by Save the Children as a means of protecting children and teaching them and their community about their rights. In the introduction of the booklet, she further notes that child clubs have been "a crucial means of bringing children together in a safe forum so that they can protect themselves and other children and to express themselves freely" (p.4). They help the children build up their confidence, acquire knowledge of their rights, and empower children to become role models for their own generation and those to come. In Sera Leone, a child club is understood as "a group of children who meet regularly together in their community to mix with each other, talk about their problems and their lives and to form friendships" (Cox, 2009, p. 4).

In Zambia, there are two kinds of child clubs; school-based and community-based child rights groups. They are led by children with a focus on generating evidence on child participation. Community Child Rights Groups (CCRGs) were initiated in 2005 by the African Network for the Prevention and Protection Against Child Abuse and Neglect. Children aged between 9 to 18 years old are participating in those clubs and children are represented at district and community child protection units. Furthermore, recently (from 2009), the CCRGs, where children of aged between 7 to 19 years of old get involved, are run by the Zambia Civic Education Association (ZCEA) for helping children gain knowledge and skills related to children's rights and enable children advocate for the promotion and fulfillment of their rights (Save the Children Sweden, 2010). There are, as Save the Children Sweden (ibid.) describes, school councils, initiated by the ZCEA in 2006 for the children of 7 to 16 years of age, which focus on encouraging children to

participate in decision making in schools as a ways of building critical thinkers and active citizens. School children run and manage these clubs themselves and adults only play the role of facilitators who provide guidance to executive councils. Another most interesting thing in Zambia is children's news agencies and media monitoring. The Media Network on Child Rights and Development (MNRCD) works with Media Monitoring Africa (MMA), the adult lead organization. The MNRCD project started in 2009, which is fully implemented by children aged between 12 to 16 years old, of whom there are equal number of girls and boys participating. The main aim of this project is "to provide children with media skills to write to the media houses and radio stations about the issues that affect them" (Save the Children Sweden, 2010, p.70).

According to the UNICEF (2009), there are 45,417 child clubs in India and about 800,000 children are participating in them. Bhima Sanga, the first working children's organization in South Asia which was established in 1990, has become an international model of child participation. Save the Children Sweden (2006) states that about 14,000 children of aged between 6 to 18 years old both from urban and rural areas are the members of the club. The club was formed in order to get the voices of working children heard and recognized providing them access to claiming their rights. It also aims at identifying solutions for the children's specific problems. Similarly, Delhi Child Rights Clubs (DCRC) came into being in 1998 in order to protect the rights of children in Delhi and to make the capital city safe and child friendly place for children. There are about 6000 child members in the DCRC. The clubs seek recognition as a forum that ought to be consulted in city policy or decision making process that affects children.

In Sri Lanka through the child clubs children are taking initiative to raise voice for their rights and have been able to do so to a large extend without the support of adults. O'Kane (2006) notes on how child clubs are working in the country;

> *Without adult facilitation children in the Child Clubs are taking initiative on issues concerning them...Children have a great voice and are united to address equality amongst children... Girls and boys are together. There is more in Government ventures, children and adults are working together for children's rights (p. 23).*

This review of literatures on child clubs particularly in the global South suggests that the chief purpose of child clubs is to gather children in order to inform them about their rights promote their rights and empower them through their own organizations. Children are no longer

incompetent and passive becomings, they are competent, active social actors who know far much better about their own issues and the way to deal with them as well. The child clubs in Nepal, as in other countries, have been a forum for children's participation in social activities through which they can show that they are able to do a lot for themselves and for the people in their societies if they get a chance and support from adults. Furthermore, the international child rights and welfare organizations, like SCN, SCUS, UK, UNICEF, Plan International, etc. have played the key role in the establishment of these clubs. I have further looked into the organizational structures and activities of those clubs as well.

2.7. Organizational structure of child clubs

In Sri Lanka, as Seneviratne (2008) describes, the orthodox adult structures are being imposed on children's groups such as child clubs and children are not provided with alternative structures that are more egalitarian, less hierarchical and are more empowering to all children within the clubs. There is still the domination of conventional adult model of organizational structure in the clubs. Nevertheless, the change is emerging in the organizational structure of the child clubs ranging from a structure of a single leadership, a hierarchical structure, a structure that reinforces collective leadership, and clusters of collective leadership. Children mostly preferred clusters of collective leadership, or collective leadership, which are different from traditional adult organizational structures and is more conducive to right-based child participation. Democratic leadership is of utmost emphasis in the clubs.

However, in Sierra Leone, as Cox (2008) stipulates, the child clubs have a quite different organizational structure. There are two chairpersons and vice-chairpersons; chairman and chairlady, and vice chairman and vice chairlady. The reason of having two chairpersons and vice chairpersons seems to ensure the representation of girls on the executive board since it is the girls who are often left behind in communities where children's rights are not protected. The boys and girls have given equal power and position on the executive board. Today, as Cox (ibid.) mentions, the girls make up 50% of the members in the Save the Children supported children's clubs. They have a secretary as all other child clubs have in different countries. Similarly, they have a public relations officer, adviser (elders, young adults and ex-Club members if the club has been functioning for a while) and child welfare committee members. In every 6 or 12 months election is held periodically for executive board, so that different children have a chance to experience running the clubs.

In order to disseminate the deals of the UNCRC and children's rights, Zambian Government commissioned 'Child Rights Clubs Formation and Dissemination of the Convention on the Rights of the Child' in 2003. Since the start of the project, 300 child right clubs have been established in 300 hundred primary basic, high and community schools in six of the Zambia's nine provinces. In these schools based child rights clubs, usually a civics teacher works as a facilitator and Zambian Civic Education Association (ZCEA) supports, manages and monitors child rights clubs. The facilitator and club executive consult the general membership on matter affecting the operation of the clubs (Chigunta, 2005).

In Indian context, the Delhi Child Rights Clubs (DCRC) has a core group, which has one child representative each from all DCRC member NGOs. The adult facilitators from each member have also formed another core group to assist children in the DCRC activities and programs without meddling in the children's right to participation. The DCRC members meet in the beginning of every year in order to chalk out their annual programs and once in a month to work out their activities and implement them properly. The DCRC leading group or Core Group meeting is held once in two months.

In the context of Nepal, the majority of the child clubs have the same structure as adult organizations have in their committees. There is an executive board of seven to nine persons, which includes a chairperson, vice-chairperson, secretary, treasurer, and sometimes a joint secretary. This structure, as described by Rajbhandary et al. (2001), was introduced to children during the training sessions provided by the SCN and SCUS to them and frequently repeated in the advice they got from visiting facilitators afterwards. This structure is based on 'leadership' model with much emphasis on the direction being given by a few talented children but little participation of majority of children in decision making process.

Although there is still the preponderance of leadership model in the organizational structure of the clubs, some interesting models have evolved in a number of clubs (Rajbhandary et al., 1999). Some children have added the (child) coordinators of the committees on their executive board in order to facilitate and coordinate the communication between the executive board and the members. However, there is, as Rajbhandary et al. (ibid.) argue, no great deal of variation in child clubs' organizational structure since children were only introduced to one kind of structure and they have not been encouraged to challenge it. I also did not find the different structure in the clubs of those children who participated in my research. They have the same conventional

adult type of organizational structure where only the smarter children get chances to have leading position. There are few girls in leading positions.

The organizational structure of the child clubs in Serra Leone is different than the structures in other countries I have mentioned above. Both girls and boys are in leading positions there. The parallel organizational structures of the boys and girls have provided equal opportunities for boys and girls to lead and manage the clubs. My research also found the conventional type of structure in the community based child clubs in Nepalese context. I also reflect upon children's views on this kind of structure in the analyses and interpretation chapters later.

The recommended age range for club membership is from 12 to 16. However, the majority of children aged 12 and older than 12 were found involved in the clubs. The children over the age of 12 are more actively involved in greater number in terms of decision makings, meetings and other activities. Most board members are over 13 years of age. However, the State of Children of Nepal (2011) mentions the children of 8 to 18 years old are in the clubs. There is a majority of older children in community based child clubs and are a very few younger children in the community based child clubs. These children have domination in the selection and planning of activities too. In addition, it is also older children who get the opportunity to participate in workshops and trainings (Rajbhadary et al., 1999). It seems clear that the younger children have not got chances yet to get involved in many activities. What the clubs have done in order to include younger children? Why have they not been included? My research shades light on this issue as well.

2.8. Child club activities

Researches show that children through the child clubs go through a number of similar activities in the global South. However, the activities vary as per the local situation of the children where the clubs are located. According to Cox (2008) the normal activities that children in Sierra Leone go through in the child clubs are as;

1. *Club meetings to discuss issues and build children's confidence.*
2. *Advocacy including radio broadcasts, dramas, Children's Assemblies linking with duty-bearers.*
3. *Creational activities including football and volleyball.*

4. *Trainings to develop children's skills and abilities and quizzes child rights and protection.*
5. *Life-skills coaching to help children handle their personal development.*
6. *Protective activities of Club members and peers to prevent and respond to abuse and exploitation.* (p.22)

In Zambian children's rights clubs, as Chigunta (2005) describes, the children discuss the issues and put forward their suggestions to the club facilitator and executive. In many community schools, it is the facilitators, not the children, who make decision on behalf of the children rights clubs members. Here the club-members seem to lack agency since the adult facilitators, in many cases, influence the decision making process which the children are supposed to make for themselves.

Child right clubs in India like Delhi Child Right club (DCRC) and Bhim Sanga also go through the similar kinds of activities that children perform in clubs in other countries. Through discussions, workshops, drama, songs and games, children in the DCRC share their experiences, plan and undertake actions like awareness campaigns, rallies and programs, which promote their rights. The DCRC members also conduct studies on issues concerning their lives and share it with decision-makers and media. This shows that children have been the researchers about their issues by themselves as well.

Meetings that usually take place monthly and bi-monthly form the core of the club activities in Nepal. The meeting time lasts for one to two hours. The meeting has normally two parts: formal meeting and informal meeting. In the formal meeting the committee involves taking attendance, collecting fees, sharing clubs' financial situation, going through the agenda and making decisions. According to Rajbhandary (et al., 2001), in the informal meeting, which commences shortly after formal meeting, children involve in discussions, singing songs, dancing, and playing. Almost all clubs engage in "dancing, singing, theatre, developmental work, play, recreation, sports, and national rallies like Children's Day" (Rajbhandary et al. ibid. p.26). In addition, children involve in making friends, sharing experiences and learning to make decisions in groups. They express their feelings and experiences culturally and artistically. Different clubs organize different activities as per the issues related to children in their localities. A number of clubs make protection of environment as the focus of their activities while others discrimination against girls (Theis and O'Kane, 2005).

20

In her study with working children's clubs in Kathmandu, Ebbing (2010) describes that child clubs arrange different activities for fun and learning. They organize awareness campaigns in order to inform the local community about children's rights and welfare of working children. Usually, the support an organization provides to child clubs is an adult facilitator in order to help children understand difficulties in society, train and organize club activities. Some of the child club facilitators are former child club members. All working children's clubs have been facilitated by the CONCERN, a local NGO and whether they are school based or community based does not make a much difference in terms of their activities. Drawing, social mapping, acting, and a variety of different participatory methods and exercises are used to deal with their issues of focus. The focus of the club activities depends on what the children find most important to them according to the situation of their localities

2.9. Child clubs, the UNCRC and children's participation

The article 15 (1) ensures children's right to form association and work for their own well beings. It makes clear that "*States Parties recognize the rights of the child to freedom of association and to freedom of peaceful assembly*". Making use of this right, it seems that children, along with the support of adults, have initiated their organization, the child club, in order to work for their rights. Child participation is the main focus of the child clubs as participation in social activities is a crucial right of every citizen in democratic society. Participation is a fundamental human right to be guaranteed and protected. Children's right to participate in the issues that affect them and influence the decision making process has been enshrined in the UNCRC. The UNCRC has recognized children as active social actors in the process of shaping their lives. "They have their own views on their best interests, a growing capacity to make decisions, the right to speak and the right to be heard" (Woodhead, 2010, p. xx, in Percy-Smith and Thomas, 2010). Thus, participation is better defined as an ongoing process of children's expression and active involvement in decision-making at different levels in all matter that are of direct interest to them. It requires information sharing and dialogue between children and adults, which is based on mutual respect and power sharing. Genuine participation gives children the power to shape both the process and outcome. When promoting children's participation, issues relating to children's own evolving capacity (as provisioned in Article 5 of the UNCRC), experience and interest play a key role in determining the nature of participation (Save the Children, 2005).

Child clubs, needless to say, have promoted child participation and made it the key feature of their operation. Children's right to participation to any matters affecting them has been guaranteed by the UNCRC. The children's right organizations and child clubs have promoted and protected this vital right of the children in the local level all over the globe. Many organizations, related to children and their well-being, have focused on listening to children, which is the core thrust of the UNCRC. "The participatory thrust of the UNCRC demands considerable, sometimes profound, change in socio-cultural attitudes towards children" (Lansdown, 2001, p. v). The UNCRC as the first international law formally and explicitly acknowledges the participatory rights of the children in a number of articles. Children are recognized as subjects of rights, rather than merely recipients of adult protection and care. The articles of the UNCRC, which recognize children as subjects of rights and guide child participation explicitly or implicitly, are briefly summed up here:

- Article 2- non discrimination on account of age, sex, disability, religion, custom, color, race, language, ethnicity, political opinion, social, origin, etc.;
- Article 3- best interests of the child as primary consideration;
- Article 5- parental provision of direction and guidance in accordance with respect for children's evolving capacity;
- Article 9- non-separation of children from families without the right to make their views known;
- Article 12- the right to be listened and taken seriously;
- Article 13- the right to freedom of expression;
- Article 14- the right to freedom of conscience, thought and religion;
- Article 15- the right to freedom of association;
- Article 16- the right to privacy;
- Article 17- the right to information;
- Article 23- the right of a child with disabilities to "active participation in the community";
- Article 29- the right to education that enhances respect for human rights and democracy
- Article 30- the right of minority or indigenous children to participate in the community of their own group as well as the larger society; and
- Article 31- to participate fully in cultural and artistic life.

Article 12 of the UNCRC is said to be a core and revolutionary one as it demands children's participation in all matters that affect them. Commenting on the article Lansdown (2001) describes that article 12 insists on the 'visibility' of children in their own right and its

implementation, alongside the other civil rights, involves a profound and radical consideration of the status of children in most societies and the nature of adult/child relationships. It requires that we need to listen to what children say, respect their views on matters that affect them and recognize the value of their experiences. Although this view is in conflict with the views many societies have towards children, child led organizations like child clubs seem to be committed to promoting this view of the convention. In the foreword of the book entitled 'A Handbook of Children and Young people's Participation: Perspectives from theory and practice' edited by Percy-Smith and Thomas (2010), Martin Woodhead ostensibly contends that participation isn't just about adults viewing 'allowing' children to offer their perspectives, according to adults' view of their 'evolving capacities', their 'age and maturity' or their 'best interests'. It can also involve young people confronting adult authority, challenging assumptions about their competence to speak and make decisions about issues that concern them (p. xxii).

Woodhead (2010) and Kjørholt et al. (2005) further argue that we need to go beyond 'listening' and 'giving children a say', and to put emphasis more directly on the meaning of participation in everyday life and how young people can live 'active citizenship'. This statement seems more radical and asserts that listening to children's voice is to recognize children as human beings who can have valid perspectives of their lives and make decisions accordingly on their own. Participation, as Hart (1992) defines, generally refers to

> *The process of sharing decisions which affect one's life and the life of the community in which one lives. It is the means by which democracy is built and it is a standard against which democracy should be measured. Participation is the fundamental right of citizenship (p.5).*

"The last 20 years have been a period of both advocacy to promote and legitimate the concept of participation, and exploration of strategies for translating them into practice" (Lansdown, 2010, p. 11). After two decades of the UNCRC, participation has been a main and the most debated agenda of discourses among scholars and researchers working with children. Children's rights, as Lansdown (ibid.) argues, have been synonyms with participation and the stronger focus is to embed "participation as a sustainable right for all children, in all areas of their lives" (p.11).

There is still no clear-cut definition on what participation is because of the diverse nature and outlook of society in viewing children. Participation, as Lansdown (ibid.) observes, is "widely used, at least in English-speaking world, to describe the forms of social engagement" and

children take part "in a conversation, in games, in cultural activities, in contributing to the economic security of the family" (p.11). He also calls it as 'part of belonging' in a family or community. However, participation, in general, means some sort of involvement of children in setting the matter that affect them. It refers to "processes of involvement, shared responsibility and active engagement in decisions which affect the quality of life" (Matthews et al., 1999, p.136). But in my research, the concept of participation will be analyzed in the context of the UNCRC with specific focus on Article 12 which reads as:

> *States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of children being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.*
>
> *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 in a manner consistent with the procedural rules of national law.*

The term participation has not been used in the UNCRC. It only states that children should be given opportunity to express their views in all matter affecting them and those views should be given due weight according to the age and maturity of the children. This seems to be conditional since children are able to express their views if only the adults give them a chance to do so, otherwise not. What happens if the adults deny doing so and turn a deaf ear to children's views? How can children get chance to practice this right in such a situation? This article contradicts with adult authority and demands adults' responsibility and sensitivity to children's views. The power imbalance still persists and remains dominant in policy documents. There is not any way out to resolve the power imbalance persistent in the UNCRC. In such an asymmetrical situation, how can we "integrate parents and other responsible persons, who are responsible for wellbeing and development of children, into the dynamics of growing influence of children on matters of concern to them?" (Krappmann, 2010, p. 505).

To bring child participation into reality government should fully be accountable for introducing the necessary legislation, policy and practice which ensures that children are enabled to claim their rights to participate and influence decision that affect them (Lansdown, ibid.). In my research I have given much focus on children's participation and agency in the child clubs, and the implications the child clubs have in Nepalese societies. Participation has been the main principle of operation of child clubs. I have attempted to view and analyze child participation in

accordance with the eight levels of participation of 'the ladder of participation' designed by Hart (1992). Moreover, children are still deemed to be the properties of their parents and a good child is he or she who obeys what their parents or caretakers dictate to him or her. Any child opposing the decision of his or her parents or caretakers is not a good child. In such societies, how child clubs have been able to dismantle the power imbalance between adults and children, what they have done to make the communities believe that children can be the agents of change for themselves and their communities. How the western kind of ideology, as reflected in the Article 12 of the UNCRC is working perfectly in conventionally adult dominated societies which seems diametrically opposite to the independence of child in decision making.

Chapter Three

3. Theoretical perspectives

3.1. Introduction

This chapter deals with the notions of children and childhood from theoretical lens. Particularly, it aims to have insights into the pre-sociological and sociological views on children and childhood. It also describes and discusses (new) sociology of childhood, child participation, and children's agency in order to contextualize and connect the analyses, interpretations and discussions based on my empirical data to the theoretical underpinnings. In addition, I have attempted to draw an overview of Nepalese childhood and how it differs from the global model of childhood as envisioned in the UNCRC.

3.2. Social theories of childhood

It was Aries (1962) who argued that there was no awareness of the particular nature of childhood that distinguishes the child from the adults. 'Centuries of Childhood' by Aries (ibid.) was first seminal work to historicize childhood, to plant the idea that childhood was not 'natural', or 'universal' phenomenon, and its variations were understood and experienced according to time and space. It provides grounds for the analysis of childhood in a particular social context (James et al., 1998). However, refering to De Mause Heywood (2010) contends that the ideas about children and childhood have existed at all times in varied forms, even before the 17th century. The ideas about children and children are changing. They are not fixed, they are dynamic which are constructed and deconstructed both socially and historically.

In the dominat social theories, children were marginalized and their voices were muted (James and Prout, 1990). The negative images of children and childhood were depicted, in which many still prevail throughout the world today (Boyden, 1990). The social ideas about children and childhood that are prevelant in the South and in the North are not the same. The majority of children live in the South and the ideas about those children in their context are deviant ideas or 'pre-sociological' ideas from the perspectives on children and childhood in the North. The theories and discourses devolped in the North have turned out to be the dominat concepts in viewing children and childhood around the globe. Children are viewed as competent social actors (James and Prout, ibid. ; James et al. , 1998, Corsaro, 1992) and childhood forms a permanet social category (Qvortup, 1994, 2002). This universalization of Northen ideas on

children and childhood has widened the discourses on the children and childhood in the South. Before having insights into major theoretical concepts '(new) sociology of childhood I will mention the concepts of 'pre-sociolocial' and sociological child (James et al. , 1998).

3.2.1. The 'pre-sociological' child

The concept of 'pre-sociological' childhood was set forth by James et al. (ibid.) which falls in the realm of developmental psychology and classical philosophy. The 'pre-sociological' child is formed out of social contexts within which the child lives in. The adults view that they know better about children, their lives and their views rather than the child. James et al. (ibid.) have discussed five main dicourses on 'pre-sociological' childhood which I have concisely mentioned below.

The 'discourses on 'evil child' view the child as evil and corrupt which poses problems to social order and hence needs to be shaped by the exercise of discipline and punishment. It locates 'the child' "in contemporary criminology, public moralizing and current pedagogic practice" (James et al. ibid., p. 10) and in a metaphor extrapolated by Foucault (1977) that the correct training to evil children will make docile adults, who are good citizens and pliant members of the social order (James et al. ibid.). The power of parents remains absoulte and stands over and above the children, who have no rights or power, and without parental control, the life of children become chaotic. The padagogic discoures have also maintained this kind of view of child and emphasized the strict disciplinary measures in the schooling of children even today in some parts of the world. The' innocent child', on the other hand, is set against the model of evil child, which represents modern, Western childhood. Children are imaged as pure in heart, angelic and uncorrupted by the world they have entered. Jean Jacques Rousseau's ideas on education in 18th and 19th centuries have influenced in shaping the innocent child. "Children have a natural goodness and a clarity of vision" (James et al. ibid., p. 13) and they have been the subjects of concern to everybody (James et al., ibid.). The 'immanent child' grew out of Rousseau's 'innocent child' and the blueprint of which was initially established by John Locke in the 17th century. The 'immanent child' is innately equipped with reason which will develop in the appropate environment. Education plays an important role in making the child , not only a rational being, but aslo a contracting member of society who exercises self-control, and hence will not threaten the socal order (James et al., ibid.). The notions 'naturally developing child' draw on theories of developmental and cognitive psychology which assume that childhood is a natural and universal phenomenon (James et al., ibid.). Jean Piaget has been the most influential

figure in the construction this naturally developing child. The child goes through a series of predetermined stages of development which results in the eventual achievement of logical competence. These stages of children depict the twin assumptions of the naturalness and unversality of childhood. And the notions of the 'unconscious child' draw on Freudian ideas on psychoanalysis. Freudian theory positions the child in the state of unfinished business or becomings and childhood is dispossessed of intentionality and agency. In this model of pre-sociological childhood, childhood is seen in retrospection which keeps account of human maturation and development (James et al., ibid.)

3.2.2. The sociological child

The concept of the sociological childhood as aslo set forth by James et al. (ibid.), which has been the locus of concern lately. This model of childhood focuses on th social context of the child which represents an epistemological break between pre-sociological concepts of child and the sociological approaches to the child (James et al. ibid.). Although socialization remains dominant in sociological approaches to childhood, the sociological child goes beyond the conventional model of socialization which emphasizes the internalizations of social values and norms through education. The sociological child is constructed and deconstructed within the contemporary social, political and economic contexts. James et al. (ibid.) have discussed four ways of how a child is constituted sociologically, which I have briefly mentioned below.

The concept of 'the socially constructed child' suggests that there is no taken-for-granted meaning of childhood. "Childhood does not esixt in finite and definable form" (p.27) and thereore, there is no essential, universal child that remains the same in all social contexts (James et al. ibid.). The social constructionists believe that there is no such a structure that makes the childhood as an identifiable form and agrue that ideas about child and childhood are constructed in a particular social contexts by children through their interactions and negotiations with the adults. Social, political and economic variables determine the concepts of childhood which keep changing as per the changes in these varibles. So the concepts of the socially constructed childhood stress diversities of childhoods that are contextualized in socio-cultral settings of everyday life (Kjørholt, 2004). However, on the other hand, the discoures on 'the tribal child' see children as autonomous and not affected by the affairs of adult worlds, but "artfully insulated from the worlds of adults" (James et al., ibid., p. 29). Children are seen as autonomous community, which has competences and agency. Children's worlds are unique and different from the worlds of adults. Children's social places are the real place and the meanings they have

about their social places are the real meanings. Nevertheless, the tribal child seems detached from the adult worlds and children are seen as 'others'. James et al. (ibid.) call the 'tribal child' "empirical and potentially politicized version of the 'socially constructed' child" (p. 214) which exercises self-determinacy. Similarly, the 'minority child' is just as the tribal child which is also the politicized version of socially constructed child. Within this model, as described by James et al. (ibid.), childhood is seen as "universal category in relation to its rights, qualities of personhood and status identity" (p.210) and "children are structurally differntiated within societies" (p.211) because of assymetrical power exercises and diffferneces institutionalized in social structures. The minority children are marginalized and exploited because of the power imbalance bewteen children and adults in the exisiting social structures. Children remain "essentially indistinguishable from adults" (James et al., ibid., p. 31). The minority child remains a global, universal and exploited whose demands and rights have to be heard and fulfilled (Kjørholt, 2004). And the 'social structural child' model views childhood as a "constant and recognizable component of all social structures, across time and space" (James et al., p. 208). Childhood forms a permanent social category through which everyone should pass once in a life time (Qvrotrup, 2002). Childhood remains integral to social system and hence childhood is a "generalizable category, an enduring (though changing) feature of social structure of any society and one which is universal, global and in possession of recognizable identity" (James et al., ibid., p. 210). This category may differ from society to society, but within each particular society it is uniform (Qvrotrup, 1994) and thus this model emaphasizes the global conception of the child, rather than localized one (James et al., ibid.)

3.2.3. New social studies of childhood

Although the psychological and sociological researches on children and childhood have made a lot of contributions to the comtemporary understanding of childhood, they have failed to recognize children as competent human beings who have their own valid perspective on the matters that are of direct concern to them. Prior to the emegernce of 'new paradigm' or 'new sociology of childhood' the structural theory of socialization developed by Emile Durkheim and Talcott Parsons and theory of developemental psychology pioneered by Jean Piaget were dominant in conceptualizing children and childhood. The conventional sociological knowedge on children and childhood was negligent, even discriminative and repressive. These theories typically treated children as 'dependent variables' of various categories of adults, professionals and institutions who are responsible for organizing children's lives in all ways possible (Alanen, 2004). The theories of socialization demand behavioral totality in children so that they can fit a

particular social order. The social orders and systems are made in terms of rational adutls' experiences, not of children. In the early twentienth century, as Woodhead (2003) describes, developmental psychology was established as the dominant paradigm for studying childhood. Childhood is considered as a stage of transition to adulthood in the framework of development psychology. It is seen as an apprenticeship for adulthood that can be charted through stages relating to age, physical development and competence. In general, the individual child is the focus of psychological research, while children as a social group is the focus of sociological research. Furthermore, sociological approaches center around the ways of exploring how children learn to become the members of society they live in following the norms of adult social systems. That's why the mainstream research on children is called '(adult)ethnocentric' (Jenks, 1982), 'adult ideological view point' (Spier, 1976), 'elitist perepective' (Alanen, 1988), and future oriented.

In addtion, James and Prout (1990) contend that the conventional theories of childhood have failed to account the world of children and their agency. They propose that "the immaturity of children is a bioloical fact of life but the ways in which it is understood and made meaningful is a fact of culture…childhood is both constructed and reconstrcuted both for and by children" (p.7,). They suggest that there is a growing body of research that identifies an 'emergent paradigm' for the study of childhood. The key features of the paradigm, as outlined by James and Prout (1990), are:

- childhood is understood as a social construction;
- childhood is a variable of social analysis;
- children's relationships and cultures are worthy of study in their own right;
- children should be seen as active social agents;
- ethnography is a useful method for the study of childhood; and
- studying childhood involves an engagement with the process of reconstructing childhood in society.

Far much change has taken place in the way children are viewed. Children have been stronlgy perceived as indepdendent human beings who have valid views about their world. They are no longer innocent, incompetent and bestial. They are social actors and subject of utmost concern rather than the mere object of entertainment as taken in the past. There are three complementary branches of sociology of childhood;

(de)construcive sociology of children and childhood

structural sociology of childhood

sociology of children

3.2.3.1. (De)constructive sociology of children and childhood

Ideas about children and childhood are not facts and they are constructed and reconstruced in a specific time and context. It is not a universal and natural phenomenon. "The idea of childhood is not natural but social construct" (Jenks, 1996, p. 29). This idea in social science emerged around post positivist ("socio-constructionist") methodologies and their implications for how social world of children should be understood and researched (Alanen, 2004). The views of good or bad childhood, as Nilsen (2011) describes, are being produced and reproduced in ongoing cultural processes at all levels of society. Thus, there can be multiple childhoods. It draws on post-structural ideas pioneered by Michel Foulcault in the 1960s which stress the significant role of language, power, knowledge, space, social discourses and social catergories in constructing and deconstrucing the ideas. Discourses deal with thematic clusters of ideas and values in and across socio-cultural contexts and they "produce distictions between what can and what cannot be said about an object [e.g. children and childhood] (Cavallaro, 2006, p. 90)". The notions of children and childhood are made through semiotic and discoursive formations and communication. That's why, as Alanen (ibid.) contends, it can be called discursive sociology of children and childhood.

3.2.3.2. Structural sociology of childhood

Accroding to structural approach to childhood, childhood is viewed as a social phenomenon and it constitutes a particular structural form which is an integrated part of society like adulthood. Qvortrup (2002) opines that "childhood constitutes a particular structural form, which is defined neither by individual characteristics of the child nor by age…is conceptually comparable to the concept of class…" (p.47). It is taken relatively a permanent element is society through which children make transition to adult life. Childhood is "not a transient phase; it is a permanent social category". "Childhood persists: it continues- as a social class does- to exist as a structural form, irrespective of how many of its "members enter and how many leave it" (Qvortrup, ibid., p. 50). Qvortrup (1994), Alanen and Mayall (2001) see childhood as a permanent generational phenomenon which is both structured and being structured. Generation is defined as a system of relationships among social positions. Both children and adults hold specific social position which is defined in relation to each other within a specific social structures. Thus, structural

approach introduces childhood as being in constant interplay with class and gender and other social strucutres which are being constructed and reconstructed within their interplay. Moreover, generation as a micro-social structure distinguishes and separates children from other social groups and constitutes them as social cateogory through which particular work of relations of disivison, difference and ineqality between the categories is constructed. Thus, within a generational structures childhood and adulthood are constanlty produced, reproduced and lived. This generational and structural concept, as Alanent and Mayall (ibid.) contend, helps one understading that children are not merely social actors-

> *people who do the things, who enact, who have perspectives on their lives. They are also to be understood as agents whose powers, or lack of powers to influence and organize events-to engage with structures which shape their lives-are to be studied (p.3)*

3.2.3.3. Sociologies of children

This branch sociology of childhood has grown out of criticizing earlier theoretical assumptions on children and childhood which tended to see children as passive becomings and adult-in-waiting. It stronlgy gives emphasis on studying children's everyday lives, experiences and knowledges. James and Prout (1990) term it "emergent paradigm" who pioneered in the codification of sociology of chilhdood. Sociologies of children stronlgy believe that children have valid perspectives and acknowledge children on their own terms and value childhood on its own right. Children are active and competent human beings rather than passive and incompetent becomings as assumed in mainstream reasearch. The focus is laid on what children do in everyday lives in different social contexts. Children's agency is the main focus of sociologies children. The notion of agency sees children as active doers and competent thinkers. Robson et al.(2007) explain agency

> *as an individual's own capacities, competencies, and activities through which they navigate the contexts and positions of their lifeworld, fulfilling many economic, social and cultural expectations, while simultaneoulsy charting individual/collective choices of possibilities for their daily and future lives (p.135).*

'Agency' encompasses children's capacity to understand and act upon their world, thus demonstrating competence from birth (James et al., 1998; Mayall, 2002; Wyness (2000). In addition, agency is also not a universal feature, it differs according to time and context as children live in diverse circumstances and that's why Robson et al. (2007) contend for siutated

agency. It is very contextualized according to everyday lives and experiences of children and the lives of children are shaped and being shaped in a constant interaction and negotiation with adult authority in society. From this perspecitve, childen are active social agents who construct their own cultures (Corsaro, 2005) through their own activities, space and time (Qvortrup et al., 1994). They are actively participating in their own childhood in accordance with Malaguzzi's (1993) concept of 'rich child'- the child who is 'rich in potential, strong, powerful and competent (p.10).

Jenks (1986) opines that childhood cannot properly be understoood as a nautral phenomenon as conventional socio-psychological theories see it in terms of biological and cognitive development through the concept of maturation which glosses over the social experiences of childhood and children, which have, as Speier (1976) argues, neglected the "interactional foundation to human group life" (p.170). And Speier (ibid.) further states the traditional perspectives have overemphasized the description of how a child grows into an adult at the expense of the direct consideration of what the events of everyday life look like in childhood. Thus, it needs, as Jenks (ibid.) contends, to be understood as a social construct with reference to a social status created by the boundaries of social structure and bound by certain foms of conduct in a particular cultural setting. Furthermore, childhood as a social construction has another implication. It pays attention not only to the cultural genesis of childhood, but also to the curtural destinations of particular constructions of childhood. The western discourses on childhood have now been the globalized standards for judging other people's childhoods (Boyden, 1990; and Burman, 1996, as cited in Woodhead, 2009)

3.3. Childhood in Nepalese context
In Nepalese context, children are thought to be very innocent, dependent and need a lot parenting until they finish their schooling and even hold an economic career. The responsibility of parents and people in loco parentis is to ensure that their children are out of trouble, happy and safe. This is the conventionally held view of children and childhood. Nonetheless, in Nepalese context, Baker and Panter-Brick (2000) distinguish between "tradtional childhood currently experienced by the majority of the poor and a largely urban middle-class childhood that tends towards the dominant western model" (p. 161). The middle-class model idealizes the childhood as "golden age before the responsibility of adult life-free from work, economics, politics and sexuality" (Ennew, 1994, p. 412) while the dominant model that characterizes poor and working class childhood assumes children " early on a range of work-related responsibilities

34

within and outside home" (Baker and Panter-Brick, ibid. , p. 161). The urban middle class childhood sets children away from adults within social hierarchy while the traditional childhood sees children more like adults who assume their responsibilities as early as they can.

Child labor is rampant in Nepalese society and more than 2.6 million children aged 10 to 16 years of age are involved in child labor. According to UNICEF (2008), 31 percent of Nepalese children bewteen 5-14 years were involved in child labor bewteen 1999 and 2006. The issues of child labor, growing influence of the UNCRC and western views have resulted in two different dominant views of childhood. One sees childhood as period to be nurtured by others, free for learning and liesure, and protected from work as typified in the Western world; and other sees childhood as continuous with the adult world since children move into the activities of adults as their competences develop and opportunities arise (Bourdillon, 2006). The latter view is a dominat view of childhood while the former is increasingly influencing Nepalese society, and the international child rights and welfare organizations are in an attempt to singularize the diverse concepts of children and childhood existing in Nepalse society. However, conventional views on childhood is closer to the former view which is also the reflection of Hindu ideology. Children should be protected and kept in the close surveilane of their caretakers. But the conventional view denies children's competences, limits their participation, and sees them as innocent becomings, and their caretakers need to prepare them for adult life both through familial preaching and schooling.

The singularity versus plurality distiction is the ongoing debates and discussions in the field of childhood studies. Refering to Judith Ennew's view, James (2010) states that " by focusing on plurality of childhoods, we put at risk the children's rights project, which seeks to establish basic levels of provision, protection and rights for all children and particularly in the majority south (p. 489)" and crude cultural relativism rooted in plurality thesis will deminish the political power of the category childhood for the anaysis of children's position vis-à-vis adults. Maybe because of this understanding the international child right and development organizations seem to be attempting to have a singular view of childhood that children are "social actors shaping as well as being shaped by their circumstances" (James at el., 1998, p.6). The increased emphasis on children's participation in social activities can be both acceptance and recognition that children are "co-constructors of their childhood and active social agents in establishing relationships with adults, as well as with other children" (Kjørholt, 2007, p .30).

In Nepal, Children'a Act (1992) defines a child as an individual who is below sixteen of age. This is also a traditional Hindu view which is accepted by many people and organizations (Johnson et al., 1995, as cited in Ebbing, 2010). In South Asian regions, for years children's development has, as Save the Children (1995) describes, been seen as biologically rather than socially and culturally determined. In Nepalese context, an 18 years old individual is not child while he or she is a child as stated in the UNCRC. This kind of dualistic definition has created dilemmas regarding who should be considered child either an indivual below 16 or 18 years of age. Children are seen as beneficiaries rather than social agents who produce and reproduce cultural realites in their everyday lives on par with adults.

It is very difficult to say that there is singular childhood in Nepalese context as conceived in West. There is no sinlge childhood and there can be various childhoods. "The meaning of childhood and processes of children's development are understood and constructed differently by different groups" (Arnold et al., 2000, p. 31) in Nepal since there are more than hundred ethnic groups with their own cultural specialties in relation to children and their perception. Many Nepalese see children as their properties. They see children as "future hope", "fortune carrier" or even a "form of god" and this notion of children denies their ability in the present to act as responsible citizens (Bhattarai, 2006, as cited in Ebbing, 2010). Chillldren in the global South form an intergral part of both their families and communities (Abebe, 2008) who should be obedient and often not getting interested in adult affairs. Children are seen as becomings, not beings. The notion of childen as 'becomings' suggests that children are changeable, incompetent and lacking independence of thought that merits respect, as opposed to as 'beings' who are stable, compentent and have independent thought and action (Lee, 2001). When one regards children as 'becomings' then the caretakers are more likely to have much control on children at home, schools and other places. The forms of control, as James et al. (1998) explain, "involve the transmissions of common values and a fixed order in closed model, whereas openness requires personlized control, an appeal to individuals and a diminution of ritual orders" (p. 58). Nepalese society is shifting to more open society and childhood is morely likely to be viewed as an important peried of being- a time when children make sense of their world through active interaction with adults (Corsaro, 1997).

3.4. Children's participation
United Nations Convention on the Right of the Child (UNCRC, 1989) is the groundbreaking international treaty for promoting and protecting children's right to participation in all activities

that concern children. It has recognized children as citizens now and future. The Articles of the Convention are grouped into three 'P's; provision, protection and participation (Alderson, 2000; Kjørholt, 2008) and these three rights have been the most challenging aspect of implementation of the convention (Alderson, ibid.). The Articles of 12 (respect for the views of the child), 13 (freedom of expression, 14 (freedom of thought, conscience and religion), and 15 (freedom of association) in particular ensure the children's right "to participate actively in society and to take part in decision- making in the family, the school and the community (Kjørholt, ibid. p. 15).). While in African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC), the children's right to participation are enshrined in the Articles 7 (freedom expression), 8 (freedom of association), and 9 (freedom of thought, conscience and religion). The special feature of the Charter is the clear description of the responsibility of child (Article 31) for claiming participation and rights. In the global South children's responsibilities and rights are interdependent. The realizations of these rights are subject to interpretations by the society, culture and tradition that children belong to; and space areas and limitation of children's participation are "deeply embedded in cultural notions of generational relations and what it means to be a child" (Kjørholt, 2004, p. 3).

However, children's right to participate couched in conditional terms in the Convention does not open new ways to include children's voices as it bows to conventional notion of wisdom that depends on maturity. Children's participation rights have not been the result of children's own mobilization discourses and debates on the ordeals they face; it has been result of adults' discourses and debates on children's life, thus do not enhance clear understanding from children's point of views (Castro, 2012). Despite that the fact that the UNCRC has unclearly stated the children's participation right, children and young people are entitled to "express their views freely" in all matters affecting them (UNCRC, Article, 12), and to express their views freely children need to take part in the matters that are of their concern. Thus, as Lansdown (2001) and William (2004) suggest recognizing participation as a means to an end as well as an end itself since right to participate is the right to claim other rights.

Participation is a fundamental human right (Hart, 1997; Ennew et at., 2009; Kjørholt, 2004; Lansdown, 2010) by which all citizens involve in democratic process. Children's participation is crucial in discussion of those issues that are of direct interests. It forms the base for accepting children as citizens. Clarifying the notion of participation Lansdown (2010) explains;

It recognizes children as citizens entitled and- with differing degrees of capacity according to their environment, age and circumstances-able to contribute towards decisions that affect them, as individuals, as specific groups of children such girls or working children, and as a constituency (p. 13).

Because of the wide influences of the UNCRC and discourses of children's rights, virtually every society has recognized children's participation as a basic human right. The excessive focus on children's right to participate demands the increased fulfillment of other rights of children and recognizes them as active social actors who have their own perspectives, and the context, perceptions of childhoods, children's evolving capacity, experiences and interest determines the nature of participation (O'Kane, 2006; Kjørholt, 2004). However, recognition of children as active participants is intertwined with cultural peculiarities of every society and hence social constructions of childhood (Kjørholt, ibid.). How a society views children directly affects the ways children participate in social activities and decision-making process. Children in the global South are more likely to be taken as human 'becomings' rather than 'beings', as they are in North, where, as James and Prout (1990) mention, children and young people are seen as active participants in the construction and determination of their own social lives, other people's lives and the societies they live in. Nevertheless, children participation in out-of-school-social and economic activities is much higher in global south (Lansdown, 2004). Children are getting more and more opportunities to take part in social activities. "Opportunities for active participation are essential for the development of children's capacities" (p. 20) and growing recognition of children's capacity to participate in social world is vital for realizing children's rights (Lansdown, ibid.). The concepts of children and childhood and hence child participation are changing in South. Child participation is as;

an ongoing process of children's expression and active involvement in decision making (at different levels) in matters that concern them. It requires information sharing and dialogue between children and adults, which is based on mutual respect and power sharing. Genuine participation requires children and adult to shape both the process and outcome. Participation is proactive (O'Kane, ibid. p. 28).

Participation is related to children's agency which is subject to the ways adult and children share power regarding children's participation in decision making process. Power sharing is a big issue and it can, in my opinion, be only shared among two parties of equal authority, otherwise it is often given to the powerless by the powerful at will. However, it depends on how power is

understood. Foucault opines that every society provisions differently in handing over the power. So power is diverse and dispersed (as cited in Gallagher, 2008). Childhood researchers understand Foucault as a scholar who has theorized power as a form of social control (James et al., 1998; Gallagher, ibid.). "Power is something exercised, not possessed" (Gallagher, 2008, p.3.). It is not a disposition or a capacity, nor is it a resource or a commodity and it does not exist in the abstract, but it exists when one performs action (Foucault, 2003, as cited in Gallagher, ibid. p. 3). However, power is still viewed as a commodity to adults which is given to children at their will only and children are always powerless if the adults fail to share the power. And power that is exercised though the whole range of techniques in the interactions between individuals help in effective participation of children in decision making processes, but "society is structurely defined to confer on children minority status in this way constrains their power and agency" (Boyden and Mann, 2005, p. 19) by limiting their participation both in familial and communal activities. I also argue that how resilent the children become in demanding power through active interaction and dialogue with adults enhances their authentic participation and balances the power imbalance existing bewteen adults and children. Children in the child clubs in Nepal seem to have been successful in balancing power to a larger extent since their voices have been given due weight, their participation in local projects and activities is demanded and they themselves are leading, managing and implementing child clubs programs. Thus, participation, as Hart (2008) contends, is conceptualized here in my research "as empowering, oriented towards transformation of lives and societies" (p. 407) since as children can make "a difference to an entire relationship, or a decision to the workings of a set of social assumptions or contrains" (Mayall, 2002, p. 21). It is a vital way to enhance and enrich the concept of 'agentic child' (Sorin, 2005) which challenges the notion of innocent, powerless child, as children are considered social actors who participate in their education and lives (James et al. 1998) and conconstruct childhood with adults (Corsaro, 1997). The agentic child as capable and competent agent who replicates and appropriates aspects of his culture through his talk and interaction with others thereby actively participates in the constructing of their own social situation (Danby and Galloway, 2004). I have further discussed children's agency in the following section in order to have clear insights in it.

3.5. Children's agency

Child clubs around the globe have been able to disseminate, promote and protect children's rights significantly. Most notably, children have been empowered to influence the decision making bodies and make decision on their behalf on the issues that affect them. Children in the

child clubs in the global South, as O'Kane (2006) contends, have been able to run child clubs without the help of adult organizations and have voices on the issues that are of their concern and interests. This is a very clear instance of children's agency. The term 'agency' has many connotations in social science discourses. In relation to children and childhood, agency refers to;

> *The fact that children are much more self-determining actors than we generally think. They measure issues against their own interests and values, they make up their own minds, they take action as a function of their own wills-that is, if the more powerful class, the adults, allows them to do so (Pufall and Unsworth, 2004, p.9).*

Children's agency has long gone unnoticed and adults still seem reluctant to recognize it and empower children. Child clubs have given a platform to children to raise their voices for their rights and 'voice is an expression of agency' (Pufall and Unsworth, ibid., p 9). Thousands of children have been able to raise their voices and influence the authority that has long been making decision on behalf of children. Agency and voice serve complementary to each other since giving more and more chance to children to raise their voice and make decision on their behalf is to enhance and enrich their agency. Above all, 'in its all varieties, agency means that children's action affect their worlds and especially their social worlds' and it stresses 'children's quest to make sense of their world and to construct a good fit with it (Pufall and Unsworth, ibid.).

Child clubs have been providing different trainings and skills to their members depending upon specific socio-cultural situations. The working children's clubs have been able to educate the member children and enhance their confidence to manage not only their lives but also the lives of their family members. Thus, the clubs develop and promote children's agency which, as Pufall and Unsworth (2004) contend, "puts focus on children's commitment to make known their ability to act on their behalf, whether to ensure their own interests or to modify the world that surround them" (p.9). Children's participation has tremendously increased in social activities through child clubs in Nepalese contexts and which in turn results in increased access to information, and "access to information will lead to increased social power" (Ebbing, 2010, p.74).

Nijnatten (2010) analyzes the term 'agency' into three ways; individual agency, institutional or organizational agency and professional agency. Individual agency refers to "the power of individuals to manage their lives, to maintain their authenticity and autonomously make a living" and it also refers to "socio-cultural mediation: people can get things done through the efforts of intermediaries" (Nijnatten, ibid., p.7). Professional agency is related to public organizations or institutions. "If a family's, parents' or child's agency is at risk, professional agency is needed to make up this deficit" and professional agency is concerned with "an organization's capacity to arrange and manage" (Nijnatten, ibid., p.7). He further states that both children and adults who have not developed a minimal level of individual agency need institutional agency in order to survive. The idea of autonomy is closely connected to that of agency and both terms have different meanings in different cultural contexts. "In Western cultures, agency is an individualized concept, whereas in more traditional societies greater emphasis is placed on collective agencies" and it belongs to "individuals, social powers and institutions". Thus, as Nijnatten (ibid.) contends, agency needs to be analyzed as "a capacity that is developed in a dialogical context" (p.7).

For years children have been oppressed simply being powerless in terms physical strength and adult-centric notion of competence. The powerful have dominated the powerless. Children as social agents have recently been accepted and entered into discourses of sociology of childhood. "As social beings, children are inherently agentive and they voice their views in order to be heard, to persuade, to move others to action" (Pufall and Unsworth, 2004, p. 9) and child clubs have been able to recognize and highlight this fact and promote children's both individual and collective agency.

However, the terms 'agency', 'empowerment', and 'voice' have been of utmost concern in research with children but loosely explained and most contested in contemporary social studies of childhood. Kabeer (1999) contends that the idea of 'power' is central to the idea of empowerment which entails the process of change. In one way, power refers to "ability to make choices" (p. 2) and opposite of which is disempowerment that implies the denial of choices (Kabeer, ibid.). She distinguishes two dimensions of power; recourses and agency which together, as Sen (1985, as cited in Kabeer, ibid., p. 2) describes, constitute capabilities; the potential that people have to the lives of their choices, of achieving valued way of 'being' and 'doing'. Kabeer defines agency "as the ability to define one's goal and act upon them" and can take the "form of bargaining and negotiation, deception and manipulation, subversion and

resistance as well as more intangible, cognitive processes of reflection and analysis" (p.3). Castree et al. (2004) also see agency as the capacity of taking action for one's own self-interest and the interest of others (as cited in Ebbing, 2010, p. 14).

It sounds the need to work for self and others and maintain a balance between these two in order to develop agency. Valentine (2011) argues that the available literature on agency only gives accounts of the previlaged children and not of the marginalized and disadvantaged children. She proposes a critical social perspective model of agency in order to incorporate marginalized and disadvantaged children, and account the differences between children, and between children and adults too. My research aslo reflects on whether the chid clubs have been able to include both previlaged and marginalized children or not. In addition, how the clubs have been able to develop the children's agency and what factors create a challenge to developing and promoting their agency.

In my research I have taken the terms participation and agency as inexlicably interwoven and complementary to each other. It seems to me that child participation is the key factor to developing and promoting children's agency. Participation lets children have their voices which is an exression of children's agency. Furhtemore, the increased agency of children ensures their increased participation in the matters that are of direct interest to them all levels; from individual to national level. The more children particiapte, the more they develop their competence and agency which turns out to be crucial to challenge the asymmetrical power relationships that children have with adults in terms of decision making.

Chapter Four

4. Methodology

4.1. Introduction

This chapter aims to describe and explain the process of my research. Keeping in mind that there is no single proven path to collect the qualitative data, I triangulated several methods to tap the lived experiences of the children on their involvement and activities in the child clubs, and link them to the notions of childhood. The context in which I carried out my research determined the selection of multiple related methods and techniques. This triangulation technique helped me in, as Ennew and Boyden (1997) contend, "cross-checking information on the same issues or topics obtained through different methods, perhaps from different sources" (p. 157). In addition, it takes into account of data "deriving from different phases of field work, different points in the temporal cycles occurring in the settings, or the accounts of different participants" (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007, p. 183). I will discuss the methods and techniques in greater depth in this chapter. Moreover, I have also described the field site where I carried out the research, the role of researcher and gatekeepers, the frameworks of analyses and interpretations of data, and ethical considerations applied to protect the participants before, while and after the collection of the data.

My research is primarily a qualitative one and makes use of qualitative participatory methodologies that help meet the objectives of my research. Qualitative research is defined as "a particular tradition in social science that fundamentally depends on watching people in their own territory and interacting with them in their own language, on their own terms" (Kirk and Miller, 1986, p. 9). They label qualitative research as being 'naturalistic,' 'ethnographic,' and 'participatory.' And these three are the vital qualities of qualitave research. It generates rich data and explores real life behaviors, enabling research participants to speak for themselves. The in-depth account of participants is generated by talking to them, wacthing their behaviors and analyzing their artifacts (such as diaries, meeting minutes, photographs, drawings), taking into accounts different contexts in which they are based (Kuper et al., 2008). Interacitve relationship between the researcher and participants through collaborative process for the construction of meaning in a particular context is the core of qualitative research which I tried to maintain while colleting the data.

4.2. Main focus

Children involved in the community based child clubs in Kathmandu valley are the main focus of my research. I view them as compentent social actors. They have valid perspectives about the matters that are of direct interests to them. Keeping these views in mind, I have mainly concentrated on developing methodological strategies to bring the children in my research as dominant meaning makers in the active meaning making process between the researcher and the participants.

There are four ways of taking children in research; children as object, children as subject, children as social actors, and a nascent approach seeing children as participants and co-researchers (Alderson, 2000; Woodhead and Faulkner, 2000, and Christensen and Prout, 2002). The second and third positions, children as subjects and social actors respectively along with children as meaning making participants, are the core to my research.

The children of the child clubs, approximately between 12 to 18 years old of age, were the informants of my research. Nine children in total, both girls and boys, participated. In addition, six adults, four working with the clubs, one critically reviewing the clubs as a teacher trainer, and one a commoner residing nearby the club area were also the participants. All the child participants in groups were interviewed individually in person, but the adults were interviewed individually in person. The main aim to include adults was to get much more critical views on the child clubs and activities of the children involved in them.

The views, perceptions, motivations, reflections, etc., of children in particular and adults of the child clubs remain the primary sources of data in the research. Furthermore, various reports, journal articles, newspaper articles, books, previous researches, etc, written on the topic have been reviewed in order to have a reflection on the issues related to child clubs.

4.3. Field site

The community based child clubs were the field sites of my research. I used judgmental sampling in the selection of the sites. I selected a newly merged child clubs of five different clubs in Lalitpur district which is situated in the south-east of the Kathmandu City. The club was situated in ethnic Newar community. Another place was in the office of Consortium of Organizations Working for Child Participation (COWCP) where children from Kathmandu valley child clubs network came to attend the meeting. My main aim of selecting these two

places was to reach and talk to children from different communities rather than a single one. The child club in Lalitpur district was a newly merged club of more five different clubs in the locality where children from different clubs shared their different views. Similarly, another place that I chose was the office of the COWCP because children from different clubs of entire valley frequently meet there. These children from different backgrounds had long experiences of involving in child clubs. Making use of a regular meeting of children from the Kathmandu valley child network, I managed to tap the lived experiences of children different places and backgrounds.

4.4. Gate keepers

It is very important to deal with the gatekeepers since they have a control over key sources of the data and making the avenues of opportunity available both to the researchers and the participants (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). Before I met my research participants, I had to talk to the gatekeepers. The main gatekeepers of my research were the adults involved in the child clubs in order to facilitate the children in their discussion with a number of issues that matter them. I did not have problem in approaching the gatekeepers in the field since I had already talked to them online and established a rapport with them. I just had to produce my letter of introduction provided by the NOSEB to the gate keepers. Furthermore, the adult gate keepers were also the participants of my research which helped me clarify why I was carrying out the research. Nevertheless, it was quite difficult to me to get the materials published from the international child right organizations related to child clubs. I had to talk to them quite much in order to convince them.

4.5. Methods for collecting data

Methods are systematic techniques for gathering data about the research participants (Ennew, at el., 2009) through their participation in the collaborative process of meaning making with researchers. Child-friendly participatory methods or techniques are needed to get insights of children's experiences and opinions. The participatory research techniques, such as interviews, focus group discussion, drawing, etc., enable participants to create "inclusive accounts using their own words and frameworks of understanding" (Pain and Francs, 2003, as cited in Fargas-Malet, 2010, p. 184). This research is a participatory research in character since participatory techniques, as Thomas and O'Kane (1998) suggest, can overcome many ethical problems in working with children. Gallacher and Gallacher (2008) also contend that participatory techniques help children produce data through practical activities. Moreover, the participatory

research methods or techniques, as O'Kane (2000) notes, have much power of 'active communication' (doing and moving) rather than 'passive communication' (just talking) of ideas of children and young people. Thus, I made use of participatory research in order to produce, as Grover (2004) contends, more 'authentic' knowledge about children's subjective realities. In my research I extensively used interview and focus group discussions as the prime methods of getting data along with questionnaires as a gateway to enter into the issues, and ranking to understand what the children think are the most prominent rights to them in the context. I have used qualitative data through the use of

- qualitative questionnaires with children,
- interviews with children and adults,
- focus group discussions with children, and
- ranking with children.

These methods or techniques and their use in my research are explained in details below.

4.5.1. Qualitative questionnaires

Although less popular among child researchers, questionnaires can be used with children and young people using a more child friendly format in order to obtain their input on key issues or ideas (Fargas-Malet, et al., 2010). Questionnaires in qualitative research need to be open and should not close down the debate by limiting to a predetermined set of responses. Furthermore, they need to "offer the participants the opportunity to include whatever information they feel is relevant in their attempts to explain their answers to the question" (O'Hara et al., 2011, p. 188). I used the questionnaires as a gateway to enter into the issues which helped me get inside the issues of the research participants and accordingly designed the strategies to deal with the participants through active communication in order to make meanings out of what the participants conveyed. The responses of the questions revealed information about participants' feelings toward the areas being researched.

I used this tool in order to collect ideas and experiences of children involved in the child clubs. The questionnaires were open-ended so that the participants could express their views on the child clubs and reflected upon key issues freely. One of the main purposes of using this technique was to collect ideas for generating issues on the phenomenon which came to be a better base for interviewing the participants later. Moreover, this technique helped me to know

and sort out the prominent issues that concerned children and other parties in regard to child clubs, their participation and the activities they engaged in and accordingly set the guides for interview and focus group discussions. Before distributing the questions, I took the written consent from the participants in order to ensure that confidentiality and privacy of their statements would be maintained and kept the participants safe from the possible harassments. I distributed questionnaires to the participants in person in a group. I explained the meaning of the questions to the participants in group. They were constructed both in Nepali and English language so that the participants could clearly get the intended meanings of the questionnaires. I remained with the participants during the time they penned down their responses so that I could make the confusions clear about the questions. After the children finished completing the questionnaires, I discussed with what they meant by a particular statement they made. It made the task much easier and simpler to me to understand children's opinions.

4.5.2. Interviews

In technical terms, it is a research tool for transforming conversation into scientific nature. As Gudmundsdottir (1996) contends, cultural aspects of interviews need to be stripped away to make conversation more scientific. "It is an activity steeped in our cultural codes and mode of intuitive and spontaneous interpretations" (Gudmundsdottir, ibid., p. 294). It is one of the commonly and widely used techniques of data collection in social science research. To Mishler (1986), interview is no longer a tool only for 'information gathering', it is a site where partners meet and converse, and through their conversations they 'jointly construct meaning' (as cited in Gudmundsdottir, 1996, p. 295). And a good interview is that where there is rapport between the interviewees and interviewers which enormously help develop a shared meaning through the dialogues. A qualitative interview seeks to cover both a factual and a meaning, though it is usually more difficult to interview on meaning level (Kvale, 1996). However, this view does not incorporate the interviews which are carried out online in this age of technology. Broadly speaking, interview covers both modes, face to face and online, of reaching the informants to get the meaning through dialogues.

Sociologist Charles Briggs (1986) contends that 90 per cent social science investigations use interviews in one way or another (as cited in Holstein and Gubrium, 1997, p. 113). Sociologists, psychologists, antropologists, psychiatrists, clinicians, administrators, politicians and pollsters regard interviews as their 'windows on the world' (Hyman et at., 1975, as cited in Holstrein and Gubrium, 1997). Qualitative social science researches maximally make use of interview to

explore the true meaning of concepts, categories and events through friendly conversations or talks. The interview, as Gudmundsdottir (1996) argues, is more important in ethnographic and phenomenological research in particular since the researchers do not see the interview situation as one where they ask questions to lift out the informants' answers and describe complete chunks of their world. Instead, the interview situation, as Marton (1981) contends, is increasingly deemed as an interactive and structured context where information and and interpreation flow both ways (as cited in Gudmundsdottir, ibid., p. 294).

Thus, interview is a form of interpretive practice situation where the interviewees and interviewers articulate ongoing structures, resources and orientations with what Garfinkel (1967) calls 'practical reasoning' (as cited in Holstrein and Gubrium, 1997, p. 121). It is a two-way flow of ideas and interpretations of those ideas to get a meaning in a particular soci-cultural setting. It is not what interviewer decides on his or her own. The main task of interviewing is to understand what the interviewees say (Kvale, 1996). Meaning construction, as Garfinkel (1967) and Sacks at el. (1974) contend, is 'unavoidably collaborative' process.

Ennew at el.(2009) define interview as "a method of data collection involving a researcher asking questions of a research participant" (p. 10). They further state that "interview methods include informal, unstructured discussions on undefined topics, semi-structured interactions about pre-defined topics, and a variety of questions, which can be responded to by talking or writing"(ibid., pp. 34-35). Interview was conducted only after I collected the responses of questionnaires. The interview was semi-structured since it was desinged on the basis of the statements made by the participants to the questions, the issues were sorted sorted out and analyzed in light of objectives and research questions.

Individual interviews were conducted in two groups of the participants in my research since almost all child participants were older children and the individual interviews and self-completed instrument, Mauthner (1997, as cited in Kellet and Ding, 2004) contends, are more suited to older children and small group discussions to be more appropriate for younger children.

Whats of interview

Interview is an active meaning making process between a researcher and participants. Meaning is made when combination of *whats* and *hows* aspects of interview is maintained.

"Understanding how the meaning-making process unfolds in the interview is as critical as apprehending *what* is substantively asked and conveyed" (Holstrein and Gubrium, 1997, p. 114). *Whats* aspect is primarily concerned with what is asked and responded during the interviewing. In my research, the questions and issues singled out in questionnaire responses and discussions regarding child clubs and their contributions for the dissemination, promotion and protection of children's rights were the *whats* of the interviews. Likewise, the contents of the interview were what I obtained after the discussions with children of the responses that children gave to questions. The questionnaires that I used to enter the issues turned out to be an excellent guide for formulating the semi-structured interview. Holstrein and Gubrium (ibid.) further mention that "the *whats* pertain to the issues guiding the interview, the content of the questions, and the substantive information communicated by the respondent" (p.114). Finding the *whats* of interview was a collaborative process in my research. I gave the qualitative questionnaires to the child participants and on the basis of their responses to the open ended questions, I along with the child participants sorted out them. The child participants also explained to me the responses which I did not clearly understand what they meant. In addition, the interview questions were semi-structured ones. However, the much of the *whats* of interview with the adults was the same. But I tried to get their perspectives on the same issues. I only conducted interviews with the adults after I finished with the child participants. I did not use a different questionnaire method since I had already got insights into the issues through the responses that children gave to the questions. They were about children's experiences of getting involved in the clubs, child participation, children's agency and implications of the child clubs in society.

Hows of interview

Hows is a vital aspect of interview. It is primarily related to "the interactional, narrative procedures of knowledge production, not merely to interview techniques" (Holstrein and Gubrium (ibid. p. 114). It deals with how a researcher share the interview questions with the respondents and how he or she maintains interaction that can help understand each other better. The *whats* aspect of interview is enormously influenced by the *hows* aspect of interview and vice-versa since the way of presenting the content may determines what a researcher asks. It is the process of asking the questions to get the required information. It's a kind of harvesting the interview content through interactions. However, excessive focus on *hows* aspect of interview risks the *whats* aspect of interview, which is, as Holstrein and Gubrium (ibid.) contend, "the relevant grounds for asking and answering questions" (p.115). Thus, it's important to keep track

of *what* is being asked and responded in interviews while focusing on the process. That's why active interview is the dynamic interrelatedness of the *whats* and the *hows*. I used questionnaires, interviews, and focus group discussions as the ways of giving and taking the contents of my research with the participants.

I along with the child participants sat in an oval circle in a child club and in an office of the COWCP. I carried out face-to-face interview. I asked the questions that I had set in the semi-structured interview guide to the child participants individually. There was one of my friends who helped me note down the issues that children raised and I had not included in my interview guide. The semi-structured guide helped me tap the significant issues that emerged during the interaction. While talking to a child participant, the rest of them also got prepared to answer the questions that I asked. Conducting individual interview in a group tremendously helped me to make the issues much clearer to all the participants and I did not have to repeatedly talk to the same thing to the participants. However, I conducted interview individually with the adults. In this way I carried out the *hows* the interview.

Whys of interviews

Meaning making is a dual process through meaningful interactions between a researcher and participants in research. I used the interview to generate the meanings out of what the children responded to my questions. Since interpretation is a process of meaning making, I interpreted the issues and questions that children raised while interviewing them individually in a group in collaboration with the participants. The unconscious interpretation what is asked and conveyed takes place during the interview, and it is what Palmer (1969, cited in Gudmundsdottir, 1996, p. 301) calls 'a form of silent dialogue'. This silent dialogue is only be made 'heard dialogue' through the interaction that takes place during the interview. I also interviewed the adults to make the issues much clearer and their perspectives on the matter that are of concern of both children and adults. Moreover, in qualitative research communication with the participants about their views and experiences on the matter that is of utmost concern to them is indispensable. In my research the interview was conducted in order to make the real interpretation of the responses made by the participants in questionnaires and generated during the interviews about child clubs.

Interviews and focus group discussions were the cardinal tools of getting in depth data and making meanings out of them. I conducted them only after the collection of data from questionnaires. The issues were singled out from the responses of questionnaires and accordingly both children and adults involved in child clubs were invited for interviews and group discussions. The interview was semi-structured so that the important issues emerged while interviewing the participants in groups could be discussed and well construed. The interview was conducted in two separate groups of the child participants since they could not be reachable in a single group even if I made many attempts to bring them together. However, the adults were interviewed individually. Similarly, interviewing and involving the participants in this way helped me tremendously go to the depth of issues and be clear about what the participants wanted to mean by the particular responses to the particular questions. Moreover, it helped me develop the critical views on the issues generated through the responses of questions.

4.5.3. Focus group discussion

It's one of the important methods of collecting data in qualitative research. Krueger (1994, as cited in Gibson, 2007) and Ennew et al. (2009) define it as a carefully planned discussion among small group led by a trained facilitator (or 'moderator'), designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, non-threatening environment (Krueger, ibid.). It's a form of interview with group interaction as a distinguishing feature (Krueger, ibid.) for reaching in-depth of the issues and constructing meanings. Focus group discussion is used keeping in mind that attitudes and perceptions do not develop in isolation but they develop in group discussion in which the members of groups share and discuss what they have experienced. The main aim of a focus group discussion is not to develop consensus but to produce qualitative data that opens richer insight into the attitudes, opinions, perceptions, motivations and concerns, by generating a collective consciousness (Gibson, ibid.).

Inteviewing technique with discussion is employed in focus groups under the guidance of a moderator, who faciliates discussion in non-directive, and unbiased way, using a pre-determined questions (Kingry et al., ibid., as cited in Gibson, 2007). After the completion of interviews both with children and adults, I made use of this technique to generate collective consciousness among the children towards their attitudes, opinions, motivations and perceptions of child clubs in their societies. The contents both for focus group discussion and interviews were almost the same but I included some of those issues which I found relevant during the focus group discussion. I conducted group discussion in two groups after interviewing the

participants in order to produce some sort of collective views of the participants about child clubs and their effects on children's everyday lives. The child club and the COWCP were the locations of conducting focus group discussion. Both male and female child pariticipants took part in group discussion. Although I conducted focus group discussion in two separate groups, I found many things similar at the end.

4.5.4. Ranking

Ranking is one of the important research techniques that make 'participants to place things, ideas, or people of importance, or value according to their degree of priority to the participants. It is "ordering things from 'more' to 'less' importance or from 'low' to 'high' priority" (Ennew et al., 2009, p. 16). This method was only used with child participants in the research. The main aim of using this was to know what is more prominent and what is less to children from their own perspectives in the context. If the things of prominence differed between adults who are helping children in the clubs in designing programs and other things, and children who are participating in order to exercise their agency; then what impact could have on children's everyday lives? Will children be empowered or de-empowered in such a situation? The things of priority to adults were sorted out from the interviews with them and the reports and books published on child clubs.

The ranking technique was used only after collecting data using the rest of the methods mentioned as the key issues had been sorted out by then. The participants were invited in group and gave them some sheets of papers and told them to write down the children's rights they had known. After the listing of rights I told them to order them according to the degree of prominence to them in their contexts. The participants did so and handed over them to me. According to the listing, the right to basics is still of the utmost priority to all of them. I have made detailed explanation about it in chapter seven.

The methods and techniques I used in collecting data turned out to be complementary to each other. I used many of the questionnaires I designed to enter into the issues through open opinions survey in interview guides. Likewise, the questions that I used and emerged while interviewing were also discussed and debated in focus group discussions with children in two separate groups. The questions and issues I discussed with children about their rights were used in ranking technique in order to know the most significant right and issue to children in the context.

4.6. Data analysis and interpretation

Data analysis and interpretation is the most important and ongoing processes throughout the research. This is a qualitative research and I will make use of, as Kvale (1996) describes, qualitative approach to analyze and interpret every experiences and social practices of specific local contexts. It is reading and making meaning of data. As Mason (2002) mentions, I have literally, interpretatively and reflexively read data in order to make meaning in the context with reference to the frameworks of sociologies of childhoods (see chapter 3). In addition, "doing qualitative research is a dynamic process in itself" (Nilsen, 2005, p. 130) which keeps on generating new concepts out of the empirical data. Children are competent social actors who determine their lives and lives of people in their surroundings though active participation in activities both at home and outside by 'active communication' (O'Kane, ibid.) which helps them resist adult power and enhances their agency.

I have categorized the empirical data in many themes with qualitative interpretations and explanations. I have given utmost emphasis on children's views and opinions. I have emphasized children's social actions which demands "analysis of the socially shared means whereby people construct their social worlds through engagement in connected social activities"…and… "situated meanings" (Hammersley &Atkinson, 2007, p. 168). In the analytical process, "the relationships between the theory and empirical data is of utmost importance"… for generating 'we-ness' (Nilsen, 2005, p. 122). Nilsen (ibid.) further describes that "analysis is a dialectical process" where one "is working back and forth between empirical data and theory" (p. 129). I have analyzed and interpreted the data within the frameworks of sociology of childhoods which stresses that children are competent social actors. Furthermore, I have cited statements, which seem to be significant to the topics of discussions, that children made in interviews and focus group discussions in the analyses and interpretations. The statements children made in the interviews will show the individual understandings and perspectives on a subject in question while the statements children made in focus group discussions will show the collective views of children which can have generalization values in the context.

4.7. Researcher's role

How the researcher presents himself or herself influences the ways the participants share information with the researcher. Keeping this fact in mind, during the research, I assumed different roles to ensure that the informants freely and comfortably could participate in the

research process. The children in clubs enjoy much freedom since they have joined the clubs at their own will. They value freedom in the participation of different activities and programs. They have joined the clubs to ensure and protect their rights. Taking these things into account, I assumed a non-authoritarian role to ensure that I respect the freedom of children in participation and sharing their views. I did not teach them what is right and what is wrong; I just listened and questioned what they freely said in order to have clear understandings of their views. I practiced 'a least adult role' as emphasized by Clark (2011) in order to befriend to children and make them feel that I am their friend, not the powerful adults preaching them all the time. Furthermore, this role helped reduce the power imbalance that exists between the researcher and the participants because of the conventional role of the researcher. The role I assumed with children was much more of a good communicator for producing meaning out of what children conveyed. And with the adults my role was also of a good communicator as well.

4.8. Ethical considerations

Ethics in research with children states that children need to be protected and they should not be harmed in any way. Although people agree with this notion, ethics has been a subject of extensive discussions and debates in research with children and young people. Ethical issues do not seem to be universal. Ethics of research with children differs from culture to culture. Socio-cultural factors of a particular community need to be kept in mind to safeguard children both physically and psychologically while getting required information. Alderson (2004) highlights the three main ethical frameworks of a 'good' research; the principles of respects and justice; protecting and ensuring 3Ps; and best outcomes based ethics which is concerned with avoiding harms and costs and promoting benefits. I took these ethical frameworks into account while conducting research.

Christensen and Prout (2002) contend that "the perspective on children that the researcher works with has important implications for his or her research practice" (p.6) since it influences the methods, researcher's role, analysis and interpretation of the data, and ethical practice as well. In this research I have taken children as social actors who should have a dominant position and participation in the research and this position supports the spirit of the UNCRC too. Children are competent, have valid perspectives about their own issues and are the major participants in interpreting and creating meaning. This position helps maintain ethical symmetrical relation with children.

Ethical questions are not a fixed set of recipe. They may emerge any time throughout the research process. So, these questions, as Ennew et al. (2009) argue "need to be dealt with throughout the research process" (p.5) from choosing a topic to disseminating the reports. Socio-cultural factors of a particular society pose ethical challenges for a researcher. Before undertaking researcher, he or she should be well-informed and attuned to the social cultural beliefs and practices on how children are viewed and treated. Accordingly, ethical questions should be set to deal with during the research process. During my research I paid much attention to ethical considerations in order to safeguard the interests and welfares of participants. The common ethical challenges related to the research with children are briefly mentioned here along with the ways I coped with them in my research.

4.8.1. Access

Gaining an access to child participants became a difficult job to me since I had a little knowledge on child clubs and the nature of the society where I undertook the research is quite close. I had to talk to many people in order to have an easy access to the child clubs. That's why Alderson (2004) calls it "one of the hardest stages of research with children" and "their many gatekeepers (parents/guardians, teachers, doctors, social workers who work and care for them) can both protect children but also silence and exclude them" (p.105). However, I met some of my friends online before I visited the field site, who knew about child clubs, and people and organizations working with children in the child clubs. I built up a good rapport and communication, and keep updated about the child clubs through them. After I went to the field site, I met those people and they took me to the areas where the child clubs are located. Since the child clubs have come into being freely from children's own initiation and leaderships, there is no any visible authority having control on them and I directly met the members of a child club gathered in a meeting of a village council. So I did not have to talk to any adult authority concerning gaining access to children. Nonetheless, I had to explain to the child club motivators, who were adults, what and why I was talking to the children. Instead, they became quite interested and joined me while conducting interviews the children after the children agreed and accepted their presence. I took both oral consent and written consent with the children. Similarly, my close friends who were closely and critically looking at child clubs made my access to children much easier. The socio-cultural background also easily let me access the children since I am from the similar kind of society as well.

On the other hand, it was quite difficult to me to gain access to the adults partly because of their hectic schedule and partly, maybe, because of their reluctance to share the information. In my context, there is still a kind of feudalistic thinking in many educated people that they only know better and what they know should remain with them so that they can keep hold of knowledge power. However, after a lot communication on what and why I was going to do they agreed to share their views and provide some materials they had related to child clubs.

4.8.2. Information and consent

"Consent is a key issue in research with children and raises hard, often unresolved, questions" (Alderson, ibid., p. 106). It is hard to get to children without the consent of both "professional gatekeepers" (Cree et al., 2002, p. 4) and children themselves. The concept of consent has many debates. Some argue that children are not able or authorized to give consent while other argue that they can give consent about the research that involve them and their views which can affect them in long term. Sometimes gatekeepers may refuge to give consent to include their children, sometimes children may refuse to do so even if the gatekeepers allow a consent.

It was very important to inform both adults and children and take consent from them about what, why and how long I was going to do with children. Furthermore, I needed to well inform them why I was going to undertake this research and what might the participants get both in short term and long term. Alderson (2004) suggests of writing an information leaflet in the native language of the researched as it helps children to know and decide about the research and the researcher to think very clearly about the nature and purpose of the work. The individuals need some understanding of what is involved and what they are going to consenting to before giving consent to researchers (Kellet, 2010). I made it clear to both children and adults before I started collecting the data. This is what Kellet (ibid.) calls 'informed consent'. It can improve the standard of research and make it easier to explain to children and adults. However, the issue of informed consent concerning the participation of children is very complex as children hold minority status in society. The interest that children and adults showed in my research made me quite easier to inform the children and adults participants and gain both written and oral consent. I took both written and oral consent from the children, but the oral consent was enough with the adults. I did not have to face any problem regarding taking consent of children to talk and discuss them since the clubs are in children's leaderships and they should not ask anyone for permission.

4.8.3. Confidentiality and anonymity

Another ethical duty researchers have is to protect children from public scrutiny. Researchers assure participants that the data they collect will be treated confidentially and their anonymity preserved whenever possible. Children possess the same rights as adults have with regard to the issue of confidentiality and anonymity (Kellet, 2010). The gatekeepers often remain curious and nosey about what their children have been asked and what they have replied to. They might put stress on child (Masson, 2004) and on the researchers (Bushin, 2007) as well to know the contents the interview (as cited in Fargas-Malet, 2010). Furthermore, "children might reveal that they are seriously harmed or ill-treated and the researcher might identify a medical condition or learning difficulty which the parents could take action about" (Fargas-Malet, ibid., p. 180).

Researchers, as William et al. (2005) contend, should inform the participants about the limitations of confidentiality before participating in the research in order to enable them to give fully informed consent. However, confidentiality and anonymity should only be maintained in terms of the contents of the research, but not in terms of abuse and exploitation that children experience during the research. It is a common practice that if children disclose abuse, researchers will encourage the child to talk to adults who could help or else to agree that the researcher should talk to them (Alderson and Morrow, 2004, as cited Fargas Malet, ibid.). If the researchers need to disclose sensitive information given by the children, then the consent should be sought from children, otherwise confidentiality could be breached and children might be harmed.

I remained alert and took all possible measures into account to maintain confidentiality and anonymity in my research. However, the nature of society where I carried out my research is much nosier and the gatekeepers are always curious to know what the researcher is going to ask children about their gatekeepers and what they have responded to. Thus, as Kellet (ibid.) argues, total anonymity cannot be guaranteed and the researchers need to honestly inform the participants about his fact. Fortunately, the children I interviewed were very straightforward and open to speak of their minds and share what they had. The boy children did not seem to be afraid of anybody in comparison with girl children. The girl children sometimes remained taciturn in answering many questions. In such case, boy children came forward and said directly. Meanwhile, I explained to them in details again that whatever they said would be only used for research purpose. To the contrary, the adults to whom I talked tried to polish their views by explaining to me more than what the reality is. I have nicknamed all the participants and have

not name the clubs they were involved in order to protect children from the possible harms after the research is made public.

4.8.4. Behavior protocol

"A behavior protocol is basically a signed promise to adhere to specified standards of behaviors" between researchers and children and their gatekeepers in order to "ensure that everything reasonably possibly is done to reduce the risk to children in research from any form of abuse, including sexual abuse"(Ennew et al., ibid., p. 24). Ennew et al. also mention that a behavior protocol sets out the necessary standards of appropriate behavior for adults to adopt when working with children. Children have a right to be protected and treated with humanity and respect which is provisioned in the Articles 3.3 and 3 of 37 of the UNCRC. It is also intended to protect the researchers as well from false accusations of inappropriate behavior or abuse. I did not make any specific behavioral protocol but I used the letter of confidentiality as a behavioral protocol. People of the community where I went to collect data seemed quite suspected on what I was going to do with the children. I and my colleague clearly explained to them that we were researchers and would talk to children for some time. We would not do any harm to children. Instead we would help them to know and learn something about children's rights and other issues instead. We made a kind of oral behavior protocol. Furthermore, I was with my friend which would also mean that nothing wrong would happen to the children if there involved many people.

Chapter Five

5. Children's perspectives on the meaning of the child clubs

5.1. Introduction

This chapter particularly aims to make the critical analysis of the data and their interpretations with direct reference to my first research objective and question. I have explored children's experiences and reflections on various connotations of child clubs and inclusiveness of clubs in terms of gender, age, ethnicity, class and disabilities. My main purpose of presenting and analyzing these categories is to get insights of the backgrounds of the child clubs which can help thoroughly contextualize my research. I have made use of both empirical data; the data that obtained through my research methods (see chapter 4) and the secondary data; the books, reports and articles on child clubs in the context. As the nature of my research, I have given much emphasis on children's views in particular on different categories along with the views of adults on the same topics for the sake of comparison and critical analyses. In addition, I have also reflected the rights (or issues) of prominent concerns to children in the context in this chapter. I will make use of the important views that children and adults made in interviews to understand the individual perspectives and the views children concluded in focus group discussions for a more generalized view of children on different variables. Furthermore, I will relate the analysis and interpretation of the data to theories and theoretical underpinnings; however, I will present main discussions in chapter eight.

5.2. Connotations of child clubs

It seems that the clubs were primarily established as a place for children to meet, share and discuss their issues. However, as children started taking part in different social activities and programs, many terms and understandings have emerged to refer to a child club. 'An organization', 'a forum', 'a place', and 'a group' are the common terms existing in the context. Mahesh, a person working for coordinating child clubs in Save the Children in Nepal, calls it *"a group of children gathering, enjoying and discussing the issues of their concern"*. Hari, a local resident calls it *"an organization of children for learning and discussions"*. These statements show that people have different understandings of the child clubs. Children have also used the same terms that are commonly found in documents and adults' discourses related to child and child clubs. According to the focus group discussion, the common understandings children had about the clubs are;

> *Satya: The organization where children gather to discuss the rights of children is called a child club (17 year old boy)*

> *Mina: Child club is a place where small children get organized in order to obtain information on child rights and other issues of children and entertain when they are free (15 year old girl).*

> *Sila: A child club is forum for children to get organized, discuss children's rights and the issues like child health, HIV/AIDS, child marriage, share experiences with each other and enjoy free times with friends by playing games, writing poems, organizing quiz contests, and so on (a 16 year old girl).*

Some children regarded the clubs as a place where they can meet, share and enjoy when they are free while other regarded it a forum which seriously deals with children's right issues and other social problems that directly influence children. Whatever terms are being used to refer to a child club, all children that participated in my research took the club as a means of change in their lives and a means of learning through group discussions and participation in various activities and programs. In addition, in children's opinions, the clubs have been a good place for meeting with new friends, sharing experiences, having fun and enjoyment through a number of games, learning a number of social issues related to children, and enriching their potentialities. As mentioned by children, the child clubs are best known as a means of child participation in social activities and programs. Furthermore, the community based child clubs are particularly intended to work children's rights and issues, and learning as well. Santosh, who joined the clubs in 1995 as a child member and now he is a program coordinator of the COWCP claimed that "*Nepal has, I believe, the best models of child clubs across the world working for promoting children's rights, particularly the right to participate, and other issues*".

Additionally, the clubs seem to represent child community and children's voices on the issues that are of their concerns. According to children, the clubs have emerged as some sort of networked organization to fight for children's rights in society through a number of activities and awareness campaigns. They have dealt with adolescent health hazards, child marriage, child labor and community cleanliness. Furthermore, children's direct involvement in communal activities through child clubs has drawn adults' attention. "*Whenever, there is the meeting and gathering of the community and village development committee, the adults ask for the participation of child club members in their community*" (Sila, a 16 year old girl). I myself met

the children of the clubs whom I interviewed later gathering at a meeting of the Village Council. In my opinion, this shows that children have been understood as important members of the community who can contribute to the development through their perspectives on the issues. Children have been able to establish the clubs as a dynamic crusader for their rights and other issues that affect in the realizations of them. Through the child clubs children have proved that they are social actors, who participate in the process of sharing decisions which affect their lives and lives of people in around them (Hart, 1992).

It seems to me that both children and adults have similar understandings of a community based child club. I have briefly presented the common connotations that exist in adults' discourses and documents. A Hand Book on Book Participation (2007) published by Save the Children defines a child club,

> *Normally, a group of children from 10 to 18 years of age who get organized with an aim to promote their rights and rights of their peers is a child group or child club (p.1).*

> *A forum of children from 7 to 16 years of age involved in different activities enhancing children's social, physical, mental, and education development is a child club (Santosh).*

> *In our context, child clubs are some kind of platform for the students and children to talk about their issues, to discuss them, and get some kind of solution to them from their levels and to get engaged in their own activities that they enjoy and they think are beneficial to them. This is a kind a platform for extracurricular activities in schools as well (Karn).*

These understandings of the adults about child clubs make it explicit that the clubs have been a good place for obtaining information of child rights and personality development skills, as they are in other parts of the global South. In addition, they have been a good means of learning and enhancing their individual and social cum their academic skills. Through discussions and interactions in the clubs, children also attempt to find solutions to their problems. It shows that the clubs have not only been as agent of changes in their individual, familial and social lives ((Ebbing, 2010), but also means of their empowerment through their collective participation in social activities. Furthermore, the meaning of the clubs in Nepalese context is not different from that of other clubs in the global south.

5.3. Children's experiences on inclusiveness of child clubs

More than 3, 39,446 children from different class, caste, and ethnicity (State of the Children of Nepal, 2011) are actively taking part in the clubs to get information on child rights and learn life skills. I have reflected here children's experiences on inclusiveness of the child clubs based on own empirical data and previous researches in order to have a bird's eye point of views on everyday lives of children.

5.3.1. Gender

Gender dichotomy is the most contentious and criticized in societies. Conventionally every society is gendered society in that the roles of both boys and girls differ and accordingly they are taught both at home and in society in order to fit them in existing social templates. The boys are supposed to handle the out of home affairs while the girls the affairs inside the home. This traditional notion of gender is still more dominant in the South than it is the North. The socio-cultural values and norms that play a crucial role in the constructions of gender adversely affect the roles of both boys and girls in the societies. In the child clubs I found the changing trend of involvement of club members in terms of gender. The nine children that I interviewed shared that "*In the beginning there were more boys and fewer girls in my clubs, but now more girls and fewer boys*". However, the gender variation is changing now and more and more girls are getting involved in social activities outside home. The State of Children of Nepal (2011) report also proves this fact. The report notes that there are 1, 58,653 (46.74%) boys and 1, 80,793 (53.26%) girls in the child clubs existing in 52 districts out of 75. It is obvious that the number of girls is slightly higher than the number of boys in the clubs. Many girls seem to be motivated to join the clubs compared with the boys.

There can be several reasons behind greater number of girl participants in the clubs. One, in my opinion, can be the result of more and more women's participation in social activities for the last decade. There is an increased awareness and advocacy campaign to include women in all sectors of social activities and state apparatuses throughout the country. Similarly, the traditional belief that women should be limited within domestic periphery is changing. "*Now people have started believing that their daughters can excel their sons if they got a chance*" (a 15 year old girl). Furthermore, there can be a change in traditional view parents maintain that girls are more vulnerable to abuse and attack in public space (Valentine, 2004). The girls can believe that they can resist the abuse and attack likely to be meted out on them out of home. These kinds of things can have inspired girls to join the clubs. However, regarding the less participation of boys, there

can be many reasons. One is those who join the community based child clubs are mainly 12 to 18 years of children and when they reach at the age of 16 they are no longer children and they are more adults in Nepalese context. They might be busy in performing the adult related activities.

Likewise, there is slightly more participation of boys than girls in club meeting and activities. In the leading positions of the clubs, fewer than 2% of the total numbers of girls served as chairpersons, while the percentage for boys is 5%. Girls are proportionally represented in the post of treasurer only (Rajbhandary et al. 1999). This is also the impact of gendered culture. "Boys stress the position and hierarchy, whereas girls emphasize intimacy and connection" (Thorne, 1993, as cited in James et al., 1998, p. 85). Children say girls are more trustworthy than boys with money (Rajbhandary et al., ibid.). Although this figure has slightly changed now, the number of boys in leading position is still higher than girls. This was also received through interviews, e.g. as one girl, Mina (a 15 old girl) stated *Girls are still reluctant and shy in coming forward to have their say while boys not to large extent*". In addition, the conventional practices still do not allow the free movement of girl children out of home. Sima (a girl child) made it clear. *"Being a girl we have a lot of problems... we cannot go out whenever we want like boys do"*. Furthermore, in my opinion, the conventional ideas that boys are better than girls might have influenced the leading enterprise of the clubs. Women should play 'silent' supportive role to their male counterparts at home, not the leading one. In a majority of social gathering, the number of male still outnumbers the women. The socio-cultural assignment of gender roles can be acting as a discouraging factor for girls in taking leadership positions. However, the more and more girls are taking leaderships in the clubs, but the structure of the clubs is the same as the traditional adult type in which only the extrovert and smart people get chances in the leading positions than those who are not so. This does not promote equal participation of all children in leading position and only the children who are smart and outspoken are taking the leading positions. It makes it clear that the existing conventional structure of the clubs seems to be changed in order to give equal opportunities to all participants in leading position. The structure that the child clubs in Serra Leone have can help to this end.

5.3.2. Age

Age is a social construction (James and Prout, 1990) and every society has a defined age for its groups of people. It disappears as an individual grows up but childhood remains a permanent social category since one has to pass through it once in life (Qvortup, 2002). From sociology of

childhood perspectives children are competent social actors in their own terms and rights (James and Prout, 1990; Mayall, 2002; Corsaro, 2005; Alanen, 2001) and age does not limit one's potentiality to show up if provided an opportunity and congenial environment. However, the adult's view and interest-laden notion of competence accorded to children acts as a hindrance to practice their competences in their own terms and condition, which results in lesser participation of younger children in social activities than the older ones as it is assumed that the former are less competent and matured. Age has been a determining factor for children's involvement in the clubs. The children I interviewed were of 13 to 18 years old. According to the State of Children of Nepal (2011), the greater number of children involved in the clubs is of 13 to 15 years of age and fewer of 15 to 18 years of age. The recommended age range, as Rajbhandary et al. (1999) describe, for club membership is from eight to sixteen in the SCN supported clubs, but in some clubs the maximum age for memberships is up to 18 years of age based on the spirit of the UNCRC. However, there is a great deal of age variations between school based and community based child club memberships. *"Even primary school children are the members of the clubs in the school based children clubs but they are too young to join the community based child clubs"* (Santosh, an adult participant). In community based child clubs there are many older children than the younger children. *"There are mainly plus two and high school children in our clubs, not very younger children"* (Anita, a 16 year old girl). Thus, it is derived from the data that only the older children get involved in the community based child clubs. The reason behind fewer younger children in community based child clubs, in my view, can be that the parents might regard the clubs unsafe place for their children. Furthermore, the older children who are in majority in clubs think that they are only for them and individual of similar ages. There are majority of older children and if the children bring their younger young siblings they will not have their peers. In addition children contend that *"The younger children like moving and playing much rather than sitting and discussing an issue inside a room of the clubs"* (Raju, a 15 year boy). Likewise, in my opinion, they cannot find children of their ages in many clubs, the older children tend to be more issue focused rather than the motivating the younger children, and younger children might be a burden to older children since they need to take care of them. Explaining the reasons behind lesser participation of the younger children Rajbhandary et al. (1999) argue that older sisters or brother are barriers to the participation of younger children since they think the club is only the place for their peers and having their siblings do not let them escape from responsibility as well. Some clubs have initiated to include the younger children. "One club (a child-to-child group in Lamjung) has divided into two clubs, one a junior club for

those under 12 and the older a senior club for those 12 and above" (Rajbhandary et al., ibid., p.12).

5.3.3. Caste and class

Although these are two different categories, they are related in terms of children's participation in social activities in Nepalese context**.** Even though people from so-called upper castes are privileged to involving in social gathering and activities while people from so-called lower castes are marginalized and restricted from taking part in such activities, reports show that children from upper castes and rich class do not seem to be actively involved in the clubs. The State of Children of Nepal (2011) mention that there are more children from working class and middle class of all castes in the clubs across the country. However, the socio-cultural values and norms in the context do not encourage the upper castes and rich class people let their children move freely wherever they want to go. And the reverse is true in case of people from lower castes, working and middle classes.

There is a great deal of variation in terms of ethnicity or caste in club memberships. However, this variation seems to be caused by location, not by social practices in the clubs. In Kathmandu valley network of child clubs, the president of the network, Sila, (a 16 year old girl) opined,

> *There are children in the clubs from all communities, there is no exclusion based on ethnicity in club memberships. I have visited many clubs and found children from all communities around the periphery of the clubs, but it depends upon the location of the club, if the club is in Newar community there can be majority of children from Newar community.*

According to the figures presented in the State of Children of Nepal 2011 report, there is a majority of children in clubs from indigenous community and the reason behind is that the participation of indigenous communities in status apparatuses has recently been on focus in Nepalese society. However, children's involvement from the so-called lower castes (the Dalit community) is still lower than the others. The public spaces for children from this community are very restricted and their involvement with the children from other higher castes is not entertained yet, particularly in rural areas. These children are still termed as 'untouchables' which poses the main challenges to the children from this community for participating is social activities with the children from the upper castes. Even if the children I interviewed did not experience discrimination in terms of castes, they stressed that casteism has a lot of impact in

children's everyday lives. The children from lower castes often feel themselves alienated and treated differently which discourage them in joining the children from upper castes.

Likewise, the majority of children I interviewed were from working and middle classes, none from rich class. Sharing his experiences Manish, an adult participant said,

> *In city areas there are mainly children in the clubs from middle and working classes and fewer children only from rich class, but in rural area there are children from rich class, middle class and working class as well.*

Balgopalan's (2002) division of the Third Worlds Childhoods into urban middle class childhood and childhood of the poor seems relevant here. She further describes that the urban middle class childhoods are influenced by ideals of western childhoods whereas the childhoods of the poor remain unaffected by the western material and cultural markers. In my opinion too the urban middle childhoods seem to be affected by the western model of childhood disseminated through the UNCRC since there are a few children from the rich middle class people in the child clubs. The children from working class are supposed to take the responsibilities as early as they can and so their participation in the clubs is higher because they want to learn some life skills to cope with their everyday lives. In addition, the public space shared by all classes in rural areas is almost the same but in city areas that is not the case. The rich have their own social space and the other classes have their own. Furthermore, the children who come to clubs mainly learn life skills development and other skills free of cost but the rich can afford better than that outside. The CPGB (2010) states that the reason behind the participation of children from both working class and other class in the rural areas is that they all go to the same public school. And there are a very few specific social institutions like the expensive private schools and very cheap public schools in city areas which especially create class discrimination in urban areas. Children from all classes share the same public spaces there while that is not the case in cities. The public spaces both for 'haves' and 'have-nots' are different. However, there is no research done in terms of class variations in clubs memberships.

5.3.4. Children with special needs

The Article 23 of the UNCRC has guaranteed the participation and protection of children with disabilities in social institutions. However, Children's Act (1992) in Nepal has not clearly mentioned about the rights and participation right of those children. No article of the Act deals

with the rights of the children with disabilities. Prior to the existence of the Act, Government of Nepal announced 'The Disabled Persons Protection and Welfare Act (1982)' for protecting disabled children, but it is more welfare oriented rather than right oriented. I did not see any disabled children in the clubs. Concerning this issue, children had varied opinions. Manju, (a 15 years old girl) said, *"There is no disabled child in my community"*. Satya, a boy child accepted that they were not able to make the disabled children participate in the clubs. And all child participants stressed that the clubs are not disabled children friendly and have not taken the issues seriously as well. It implies that children are ready to include the disabled children in the clubs if they find them around their localities and this issue has not been the focus of the clubs yet. I also had a talk with the adults and they shared the same view and told that they are making plan and policy on inclusiveness of the child clubs. *"We have no policy to exclude them; we encourage their participation; however their participation is almost nil because the clubs do not have facilities to make them adjust"* (Manish, an adult participant). In their study with 22 child clubs, Rajbhandary et al. (1999) also did not find any child with disabilities in the clubs.

Both children and adults argued that *"there is no facility for children with disabilities"*. This is not only the case of the clubs; there are thousands of schools and social institutions which have no special facilities made available for people with disabilities, let alone the child clubs. However, the child club members are helping the children with disabilities. An adult participant shared, *"In rural areas, the children of the clubs are carrying the disabled children to schools and back home"*. It seems to be that the existing social services are the main challenges to participation in the clubs to children with disabilities and absence of these facilities shows that the disabled children still remain neglected and muted groups whose voices and views are not heard yet.

5.4. Priorities of children's rights

I used ranking technique in order to know the rights in priority to children involved in the clubs. According to the analysis of the data obtained through this technique, children's right to basics is still the most prominent right of children in Nepal since half of its population is living under poverty line and about 2.6 million children (Census, 2001) are working as laborers throughout the country. The children of the clubs also put this right at the top of their priority. Similarly, children stressed the right to participate and have their voice after their right to basics in second priority. The right the children put in third in priority is the right to education and health services without discrimination in terms of gender, ethnicity and geography. However, the rights that

children put in priority after these rights vary. Some emphasized children right to be protected against abuse and attack and some right to play and entertainment. The most prominent rights that children thought were essential to them have been summarized below according their degree of priority.

1. *Right to basics (provisional rights)*
2. *Right to participation (participation)*
3. *Right to education and health services without discrimination*
4. *Right to be protected against abuse and exploitation (protection)*
5. *Right to play and entertainment*

This ordering of children's rights from more prominent to less prominent suggests that children are still striving to meet the basics of life in the context. The prevailing poverty has tangible effects on the lives of children as well even if the article 27 (1) of the UNCRC states the role of States Parties in ensuring "the right of every child to a standard of living adequate for the child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development". Furthermore, this gives me a solid ground to claim that the majority of children in the clubs, as stated in many documents, are from working class in the community based child clubs who have given much emphasis on learning life skills in the clubs in order to cope with their everyday lives of work. By participating in the clubs activities, as mentioned by children, they gained knowledge, skills and confidence which helped many of their friends to grab a better job opportunity after they leave the clubs.

Chapter Six

6. Children's participation and agency in the child clubs

6.1. Introduction

This chapter aims at making analysis of how the child clubs have been able to promote the crucial rights of the children, the right to participate and hence to enhance children's agency. I have made the analyses and interpretations of empirical data with direct reference to my second research objective and research questions which seeks for the explanations of how the child clubs promote child participation and what kinds of situations they have faced in terms of their participation and decision making power on those matters that are of direct interest to them. Furthermore, I have interpreted data with reference to the sociology of childhood which views children as competent and active social actors who have valid perspectives about their worlds. Children are no longer passive and incompetent becomings and they are the social actors who determine their lives and the lives of people living around them (James and Prout, 1990) with constant interactions and negotiations with the adult structures. I have also explored the nature of children's participation and its role in conceptualizing and materializing children's capacities to manage their lives and lives of people in their surroundings, which is called children's agency here. I have categorized my empirical data in into several sub-categories in order to be specific in seeing children participation from various angles. I have further analyzed and explained child participation and agency as inextricably interrelated and complementary to each other in my research.

According to the spirit of the UNCRC, child participation means having an opportunity for children to express their views, influence the decision-making process and to achieve change. The principles that directly stress child participation have been derived from Article 2, non-discrimination; Article 3, best interests of the child; Article 6, survival and development; Article 12, respect for the views of the child; Article 13, freedom of expression; and Article 15, freedom of association of the UNCRC (1989). Children are not supposed to take part in developmental activities since it is, as stated in Articles 32 and 36 (protection from work and exploitation respectively), violation of children's rights. However, in Nepalese context children's participation in all activities of development are expected and welcomed. About more than 2.6 million children are still child laborers (Census, 2001). Because of the social expectations some child clubs seem to have engaged in developmental activities too. Moreover, according to

Children's Act 1992, a person below the age 16 is a child and a person above the age of 14 can work. When an individual is 14 years old, then he or she is expected to get involved in social activities and income generating activities. This situation is not in line with the global standard of childhood and child participation which emphasizes on work-free and responsibility-free childhood and detachment from adult worlds and may thus make challenges, dilemmas and contradictions. However, children's participation in social activities through the child clubs have increased, which results in increased capacities of children in dealing with and managing their own issues with direct contact and negotiation with the adult authority. I have made an analysis and interpretation of this situation in the following sections.

6.2. Children's aims of joining the clubs

Some of the aims of both school based and community based child clubs seem similar. They both aim at teaching children some learning cum social skills. Nevertheless, it seems that the school based clubs are more academic in nature and the community based child clubs are much more empowerment oriented. The community based child clubs go beyond the academic enterprise of children and emphasize greater autonomy of children's everyday lives. They have been able to significantly influence both child community and adult community. Therefore, it is important to study what the children state that the club goers, as both child and adult participants stressed, started being outspoken, much more social and improved a lot in school and college performance as well. The changes children have shown in their everyday lives after joining the clubs have prompted rise of the clubs in quantity across the country, as Sima (13 year old girl) commented, *"I joined a club with an aim to improve my personality since I saw my senior child club member improve a lot in his study and other social skills as well"*. The aims of children that I have derived from my empirical data for joining the child clubs are mentioned here.

- *To develop our personality*
- *To develop positive thinking*
- *To gain new skills and trainings*
- *To obtain information on child rights and child clubs*
- *To promote child rights in our localities*
- *To learn social and mental development skills*
- *To show that we are also important members for society*
- *To meet new friends and share with the issues of children*
- *To enjoy in groups*

- *To do something remarkable for children and youths*
- *To go forward for the development of society*
- *To keep updated to social happenings, particularly related to children and their issues*

The above listing of the aims of children for joining the community based child clubs seems that they have a number of various aims and expectations. Almost all my child participants mentioned that they came to the clubs in order to know about children's rights and develop their personality skills. But some just came because of the influence of their friends. As Anil (16 year old boy) mentioned, *"in the beginning I did not know but later, I got information on child rights and I thought that I should do something for children rights"* (Anil, a 16 year old boy). It seems vivid that some children came to the clubs with aims to learn and develop their personality and some just came without any specific aim in mind but they later determined their aims. More or less the children I interviewed have the same sorts of aims of joining the clubs. Nonetheless, some of the aims of children are quite ambitious in the sense that they seem eager to do what the adults are supposed to do. They aim at 'doing something remarkable for the children and youth in their community and promoting children's rights'. In addition, the child clubs have been a media as well since children keep abreast of social events and other happenings related to children through the child clubs as Satya (a 17 year old boy) mentioned, *"I have come to the club to know what other social happenings affect us and how we can deal with them effectively in collaboration with adult authority"*. Children have been able to get updated to social happenings like child marriage, child drug addiction, adolescent health hazards, etc., through the child clubs. These aims of children obviously suggest that regard themselves competent and active social agents who are attempting to show up their competencies through child clubs.

Along with changes in social situations, children's issues and problems are also getting more complex and difficult. As per the situation of majority of children in the community where the child clubs are situated, the aims of children also vary. Some communities have the problems of child marriage and the members of the clubs of those communities aim at dealing with such a problem. In regard with clubs' changing aims, Sila, (a 16 year old girl) opined that *"Now our aim has been to fight with these issues by launching awareness programs in community in order to discourage child marriage, drug addiction and adult health hazards, but we lack sponsors"*. Because of financial crunch, children have not able to fulfill their aims. This results in decreased memberships in the clubs since they have not been able to implement their programs. In the

beginning there were many children in the community based child clubs but later only few members are at the clubs.

> *We had a lot programs like sport competition, quiz context, wall magazine writing but later we could not do them since World Vision stopped supporting us. Now even president and secretary of the clubs do not come. We are only few children here (Sima, 13 year old girl).*

It seems that children have many aims of coming to join the community based child clubs. They aim at understanding children's rights and issues, and learning and developing life skills in order to cope with their everyday life situations. However, all children I interviewed stressed that they have particularly focused on learning life skills and personality development. I have made a discussion on this issue in chapter seven.

6.3. Children's activities in the clubs

It is, needless to say, the activities that children go through play a crucial role in their meaningful participation and empowerment. Since the clubs are actively child initiated, lead and managed, children design the activities themselves and they do not practice the activities that have already been created by someone else. As the aims of children, they engage in a number of activities in order to develop their physical, mental, social, and educational skills and practice their right to participation in the activities that are of direct concern to them. Furthermore, some children engage in social activities like making a trail, community cleanliness and so on. Rajbandary et al. (1999) list different types of activities that children of the clubs do. They are community awareness promotion, learning skill development, club management and networking, competitions, recreational activities, development work, national rallies and artistic or cultural activities. I have found the community based child clubs are much more personality development skills oriented rather than right oriented; however, they have been initiated with an aim to fulfill the call and spirit of the CRC while the school based child clubs are much more learning skills and academic improvement strategies oriented. But the community based child clubs are the focus of my research and I have only described the activities that children practice in them. Here are some pieces of interview I had with Mina, a 15 years old girl on the kind of activities the children of the clubs do.

> *Amar: What kind of activities do you do in the clubs?*

> *Mina: We only do such activities which develop our personality.*

Amar: For example?

Mina: Proposal and report writing, poems and quiz competition, wall magazines, street plays, rallies, and so on.

Amar: What about activities that give you information on child rights?

Mina: We have not done so far, but soon after we joined the club we got some training on child rights.

Amar: Well, Do you yourselves design the activities or you practice the activities made by the adults?

Mina: Yes, we make them ourselves. We design activities on monthly basis.

Children design the activities of the clubs themselves. This is an example of an expression children's competence that they are able to deal with the issues that concern them. Competence grows out of what is performed by the children and their maturation as well. Children's full control over planning, designing, and implementing the clubs activities is also an instance of their increased agency. Children have been able to manage the distribution and resources at their disposal for promoting their participation. Management of the available resources for their own benefits and benefits of the society is an exercise of agency (Kabeer, 1999). The common types of activities that children practice in the clubs are listed below;

- *Wall magazine writing*
- *Poems writing*
- *Quiz contests*
- *Dramas*
- *Street plays*
- *Sports competitions*
- *Taking part in local rallies*
- *Orientation classes on children's rights*
- *Discussing and debating children's issues like child marriage, child workers, etc.*
- *Cultural programs like dance competition*
- *Painting and drawing*

- *Inviting the adults of their community in their meeting in order to aware them about children's rights and issues*

Although the specific activities vary from clubs to clubs, according to the children and adults that I interviewed the above mentioned activities are the common activities that children practice in the child clubs. The children I interviewed had the experiences of all the above activities as they were from different locations. These activities suggest that children can take part in any activities of their interest in order to develop their potentialities and competences. The clubs seem to have taken in account that every individual is different and accordingly the activity one engages also obviously differs. In my opinion, focusing on diverse activities help promote their genuine participation, which the UNCRC also emphasizes, that creates a real situation to express children's views in accordance with growing competences, and their socio-cultural and economic situations. Furthermore, children have at their disposal a diverse means of communication of their problems and issues which is very crucial as all children do not /cannot communicate well through the same means.

6.4. Child participation through child clubs

Participation is one of the core rights of children enshrined in the UNCRC (others being provisional and protection rights). It has been used as "a tool and framework of reference for policy makers, NGOs and child researchers to assert that children are citizens or co-citizens" (Kjørholt, 2008, p. 16). Promoting child participation in social activities is to regard children as active social agents or citizens respecting their fundamental human rights and competencies. The UNCRC is based upon the respect of the person and his or her competences (Bosisio, 2012) and ensures the participation of a child according to his or her degree of maturity or competence; but the notion of maturity or competence it holds is based upon what the adults regards it should be, not from children's perspectives. And it has been criticized on this ground. Before further delving into the notion of child participation, I present here the concepts of it existing in Nepalese society with focus on what the child participants understood about it.

More than three hundred thousand children are participating in more than fourteen thousand the clubs. All child clubs were initiated primarily with aim to promote children's right to participation in all matters that are of direct interest to them. In part 2 of the CPGB published by Central Child Welfare Board in 2007, child participation has been defined as "the democratic access and practice of children in decision making and implementation of those issues that are

concerned with children" (p.19). However, there is not uniformity of understandings of it in the child clubs. The CPGB further states the ambivalences of child participations as;

> *There is no uniformity in child participation in child clubs…the organizations not directly linked to children have made child participation a project and accordingly mobilized children. In the name of child participation they have opened Saving Cooperative groups. In some districts, district level child networks have been formulated which gives much more focus on network management and coordination rather than child participation. The child clubs have made and conducted the non-governmental organization like projects in some cases too (pp. 5-6).*

It's clear that child clubs are not working within any defined framework of child participation. They have engaged freely in different activities ranging for personality development to social development. The increased participation of children in social activities through child clubs means the adults respect children's right to participation and their capacities to influence decisions, and recognize them as partners. This can be a strong reason for rapid increase of child clubs across the country. The following statements that children made show the various understandings of child participation in the context.

> *Saroj: To speak our mind freely through active participation and let our voices and decision get heard by authority.*

> *Sila: Participation or role of children in every activity of a family or community, for example, only parents make decision at home, if children get engaged in such activity with parents, it is child participation.*

> *Sima: Equal participation of the child in an activity or decision making process. We should   not forget our duties as well.*

> *Mina: Since I joined the club my participation in social activity has increased a lot. I have been able to take part in social gathering, rallies, and meeting with adults.*

> *Anil: It is our engagement in social activities to prove that children can do what the adults do.*

The above statements that children made according to their experiences of participation communicate many different things. First, as Saroj and Sila said above, children want to have a say on their matters freely both at home and communities. Second children's increasing participation, as Mina said above, means their voices are being heard and taken seriously. And third, participation, as suggested by Sima above, is a marker of equality that demands equal participation of every citizen from their levels regardless of age in social activities. In addition, the importance of participation, as mentioned by Lansdown (2011) and experienced by my child participants are manifold; it contributes to personal development of children, acknowledges children's fundamental right to be part of every decision that affects them, serves to protect children, strengthens their accountability, recognizes unique and valuable contribution that children can make to building a better society, and leads to their enhanced capacity for citizenship and democratic engagement. These rights of children have also been guaranteed in the Interim Constitution (2007) which notes that every citizen has the right to "freedom of opinion and expression" and "freedom to form unions and associations" (Articles 12.3(a), (d)). Having a voice is an expression of children's agency (Pufall and Unsworth, 2004). Children's increased participation in clubs activities have empowered them to have their voices and affect the decision making processes both at home and communities. To listen to children's voices is to accept and respect their competence by the adults (Kjørholt, et al., 2005). However children are still waiting for opportunities to have their voices since the child participants of my research concluded that the participation is *an opportunity available or given to them to take part in familial and social activities and have their voices on them"* and the adults have control over the opportunities that children make use of. So it is imperative to argue that children through the child clubs have been able to blast a hole in the traditional, repressive nature of society that limits children's opportunities to participate and share their views and influence the decision making processes on the issues that matter children. In patriarchal society like Nepal, getting a chance to speak up their mind is very important to children, which children have achieved. Furthermore, children seem to be very aware of their duties as well and they know very well that they can enjoy their rights if they fulfill their duties.

The main aim of child clubs seems to promote children's participation in social activities that affect them either directly or indirectly. It is, as Lansdown (2004) contends, "through participation that children are empowered to take greater the exercise of their own rights as they get confidence and competence to make informed choices" (p.3) and child clubs have been able to promote children's participation to this end. Children seem to be very conscious about their

rights and duties too. The most important change in children is that they think they should participate in all social gatherings and programs since they are affected in both tangible and intangible terms as Sila stated, "*Whatever happens in our locality affect us in many ways and therefore we should have access and get chance to have our voices all activities and programs that take place*". In addition, children's awareness towards their rights has increased. They are not only taking part in the activities or programs they are supposed to do, they are also engaged in adult like activities too. In this regard, an adult participant said, "*Children are not doing the activities are supposed to do, they are making trails, doing community cleanliness, plantation; however these things affect them too*". To me, it is the autonomy of children in the choices of the activities and decision making. It is toward the end of children's liberation (Archard, 1993). Additionally, the freedom that children have in participating social activities ensures their self-determination rights in the choices of what they think are important in their context. This forms a strong base for children's agency, the capacities to manage their lives and lives of people living around them.

According to Hart (1992), "children are undoubtedly the most photographed and the least listened to members of society". He further contends that the adults tend to underestimate children's competence and "while at the same time use them in events to influence some cause; the effect is patronizing" (p.11). Drawing on Arnstein's (1969) Ladder of Citizens Participation, Roger Hart has developed a ladder of participation for children with eight different forms of it. The first three forms of participation; manipulation, decoration and tokenism are said to be the forms of non-participation since children they don't know why they are participating and they are only taking part because someone has made them to do. These are a kind of pretence. Children I have interviewed go beyond these forms of participation and they also know that these are not the actual forms of participation, but just some sort of control on children as child participants concluded; "*we want to participate freely without any force from adults, we know what things affect us and accordingly we want to present ourselves in social activities*" The real form of participation includes the "assigned and informed" stage in which children are given specific roles, and the "consultation and informed" stage in which children give advice and suggestions on adult-run programs with a clear understanding on how their voices affect the outcome. The most advanced stages are "adult initiated participation" in which adults share a decision making process with children, and "child initiated and directed participation" in which children share a decision making process with children and adult appear only in supportive and advisory roles. Although majority of the clubs have been initiated and lead my children

themselves, there are adults "invisibly" guiding children in many cases on the ground that they want to show children independent social actors, while they are not in reality. Child participation begins from guided participation to independent participation. Community based child clubs are to large extent autonomous in the sense that children are themselves designing programs and implementing them with the support and advice of adults. However, they are subject to adults will because it's very difficult to the children to run their programs and activities if the adults stop supporting them. This is what is happening right how. The clubs were established in the internationally increased whim of promoting child participation and many I /NGOs supported children to do so as well but now many of them have stopped their both financial and logistics supports. So it is equally important to adults as well to be conscious and sensitive to child participation; "it is essential not only to enable children to include their voices and get involved in decision-making, but also to work with key duty bearers to act on children's agenda" (Save the Children and UNICEF, 2006, P. 20).

The child clubs have come into being with an active initiation of children rather than the adults, but they have been supported and funded by the adult organizations such as Save the Children, Plan International, Action Aid, World Vision, CWIN, Hatemalo Sanchar etc. These organizations have played a supportive and advisory role in establishing the clubs. According to the ladder of participation developed by Hart (1992), this is the advanced form of participation. "*Save the Children gave us only trainings and orientations on child rights and some processes of opening a child club, but we ourselves initiated all the processes and asked them for some supports*", Satya, (a 17 years old boy) expressed his views on the role of adults and adult organizations in the participation of formation of child clubs. Furthermore, the children themselves make planning of clubs programs and activities and they only invite the adult facilitators when they need some advice while designing the programs, as Sila claimed, "*We plan everything in the clubs ourselves. The facilitators also encourage us to do so. We ask for their participation whenever we have problems like finance and others*".

Thus, it clearly shows that children have themselves initiated and directed participation in the clubs and the organizations that support the clubs also encourage child initiated and lead participation. In one sense this is a highest form of child participation as children have autonomy over the club, its management, program development and implementation. The clubs empowered them enabling their increased access to learn from adult's life experiences and expertise. The COWCP's policy also focuses for enhancing child initiated and lead participation

in social activities throughout the clubs. However, the financial problems the child clubs are having at the moment are limiting children's space and participation and which is, as a result, working as a discouraging factor to child participation.

6.5. Factors affecting children's participation

Majority of the children I interviewed were from Newar community, the dominant local community of the city. The children referred to the traditional social values and norms that their families and communities profess and practice as the obstacles to their participation and exercise of decision making. Nepalese society has not transformed completely in viewing a child a human being. It has still different views and practices according to gender, age, caste and class. The males from upper classes and castes are dominant in all spheres of social lives in general than others. Children are in third rank in terms of participation and decision making process and are in close surveillance of their parents and other people in loco parentis. Children always remain as becomings, not beings even if they pass over the period of childhood in the context to the caretakers. The main problems to children's participation in social activities, as pinpointed in interviews and sorted out in focus group discussion with children are;

- *Lack of awareness about children's rights in community*
- *Cultural values, norms and practices*
- *Financial burden on children*

6.5.1. Lack of awareness about children's rights in community

In children's opinion, a great majority of adults and children in their community do not have any idea of child rights. Those who have got some information on child rights are through schools and child clubs. In schools, as children opined, they learn children's rights mainly for passing the exams rather than practicing them in their everyday lives. Commenting on it further, Anil (16 year old boy) said, "*Even teachers who teach us about the rights are not aware about children's rights and their issues, how come other people?*" It shows that many people are not informed about children's rights. Without the help of other people children alone cannot promote and protect their rights and their caretakers are also the main people to do so and help children realize their rights. Little knowledge and low consciousness of adults about children's rights pose a challenge and threat to children's right to participation in the affairs that matter them. Both children and adults participants of my research realized an urgent need of awareness programs among people in order to inform them about children's rights. Children also opined

that they would take initiations through the clubs in the near future to spread awareness programs among people about children rights. Article 42 of the UNCRC states the prime responsibly of the State Parties "to make the principles and provisions of the convention widely known, by appropriate and active means, to adults and children alike"

There can be more reasons behind the lack of awareness about children in communities. First, in my opinion, there are a few organizations that work only for children's rights and issues in Nepalese society. Children's rights are still not their major focus of concern. There are also few media programs that inform and make people aware about children's rights. And in school and college text books, there is little information about children's rights.

6.5.2. Cultural values, norms and practices

As mentioned by children, culture is a main obstacle to practicing their rights. In almost all cases, the best interests of adults determine best interest of children. The conventional social values and customs do not promote children's participation and hence overlook children's views. Childhood is seen a period of apprenticeship to adulthood and children are the becomings waiting-to-be matured and competent adult beings. These kinds of perspectives resist children's right to participate. However, as Sila claimed, "*much change has happened now and we are getting attention and respect from adults and our participation and views are getting focus of adults*". People have started respecting children's views which results in children's increased participation in social activities through child clubs. The clubs are playing a significant role in shaping this view of children. Both adult and children give credit to child clubs about this change. The clubs have been very successful at least in imparting information in community that children have the rights as adults have and in creating awareness that children's rights should be respected and children have a respectable position in society. O'Kane (2003) also sees the changing attitudes of adults from lack of awareness and resistance to child participation to acceptance, recognition of children as competent social agents and partners in south Asian contexts.

Children, as Punch (2002), and Kjørholt and Abebe (2009) argue, children hold interdependent rather than independent social relations and Nepalese children experience virtually interdependent social relations. They are mostly dependent on their care takers in terms of their participation and choices. But the child clubs have challenged this trend and brought changes both in their lives and in the lives of others. They have turned out to be effective agents of

behavior changes in peers, families and communities and can therefore become social entrepreneurs who can foster positive influences for the good of their society (Gov. of Nepal, 2006); however their participation in domestic and social affairs is still limited and subject to adult will and permission as well in Nepalese context. Their participation is simply rejected on the ground that they are not matured and competent. Children still remain as becomings to the adults and they are valued mainly, as Brembeck et al. (2004) contend, "on the basis of what they will be in tomorrow after being developed, socialized and educated" (p. 18). This adult-ethnocentric view of childhood leads to the naturalization of adult hegemony and power exercise over children (Qvortrup, 1997; James and Prout, 1990; Alanen, 1992). Here are some of the examples of children experiences on the kinds of views their society has towards them and how they are affecting them.

> *Anil: Many people think that we are not matured to do…you are a child and you don't need to concern with this matter.*

> *Sima: Being a girl we have a lot of problems…we cannot go out whenever we want like the boys do.*

> *Mina: People say that our duty is to read and learn a lot, not involved in social activity.*

> *Saroj: My parents have started listening to my views and opinions after I came to the club but they often do not care them while making a decision.*

> *Sila: There are a few people who strongly demand child participation and respect the views of children…but some people are getting conscious of child rights.*

These views of children can be easily generalized in Nepalese context to the majority childhood. Children are assumed to be immature and incompetent to take part in activities that are also of interest of children. In Nepalese and other south Asian context adults mostly see children as passive, vulnerable and helpless. Explaining how children and childhood is viewed in Nepalese context, UNICEF and Save the Children (2006) stipulate;

> *Adults mostly see children as passive, vulnerable and helpless. Rather than understanding that children have the right to holistic development and duty bearer are accountable for upholding those rights, adult tend to have a charitable or welfare approach towards children. Moreover,*

adults view childhood as a period of transition to adulthood. Childhood as a stage of development is often not recognized. Adults also assume that they know 'best' for a child (p.23).

It is adults who think know the best of the best of children. Children need care and attention of parents rather. Adults hold caretaker's thesis (Archard, 1993) in viewing children which states that "children should not seen as self-determining agents (p.50)" while the reverse view is emphasized by child liberationists. What rules the adult mindset, as UNICEF and Save the Children cite (2006), is 'trickle down theory' which suggests that children automatically benefits from the benefits of adults and families. Furthermore, the patriarchal values put the adults in superstructure of powers. Most often male adults' decisions are of utmost concern to others rather the decisions of women and children.

6.5.3. Financial burden on children

About half of the population of the country is living below poverty line in Nepal. The children of poor families are bearing the brunt of this situation since they should get involved in economic worlds as early as they can. These families view "childhood as a phase of life in which the work should be contributed to household" (Kjørholt and Abebe, 2009, p. 180). Children are expected to help their parents both in work and in earning money and children in turn get better food and clothing. Children are giving up their childhood and deprived of play and even study as well. Children's lives are characterized by their "attempts to balance study and work" (O'Kane, 2003, p. 25). Furthermore, schooling is a waste of time pass to these families since it does not feed them a two square meal. So they are having an economic burden which is against the right of the children. In order to educate and empower the children from working class, there are also many child clubs in Nepal. These children through their participation in the clubs are bringing positive changes for themselves, their family, their community and their nation, they have become responsible citizens demonstrating that they are able to decide what is important to them in the situation (Ebbing, 2010).

6.6. Children's agency in the context of child clubs

Children's agency has been the focus of many scholars recently. They view children as competent social actors (James and Prout, 1997) and children's social relation is conceptualized in terms of the notion of agency. "Certain abilities and competencies are attributed to children in such a way that they are recognized as influential participants within a variety of social contexts" (Wyness, 1999, p. 2). Participation is not only a means by which children can affect

change but also provides an opportunity for developing a sense of autonomy, independence, heightened social competence and resilience (Lansdown, 2004). Thus participation is a key to empowering children. Here are some of the important statements that children concluded in the focus group discussions regarding their capacity to manage their lives and decision making power.

> *Saroj: We children can do what the adults do, but people think that we are not able to do so.*

> *Mina: On many issues we can make a decision on our own, but on some we need to consult with the child club facilitators.*

> *Sila: In the clubs we ourselves make decisions and we are able to do so, but when we submit our decision to the authority, people do not pay attention to it and never implement it.*

> *Satya: You are children and you are not matured. Making decision is not your job. You should study and be a good child...*

> *Manju: Many people do not bother to listen to our voices yet...but we are also the important part of society now and in the future.*

These statements reveal that children regard themselves as competent social actors. They can make changes in their lives and lives of people in the community they live in if they are given chances to exercise their competences. These statements further highlight circumstances that children's agency come into play in social action; "the life worlds of childhoods, the daily lived experiences of children, their experiences and understandings, their interactions with each other and with adults in various kinds, their strategies and tactics of actions" (James et al., 1998, p. 138). At the same time, these uncover that how their practice of agency is subject to adult's responses to their everyday life actions. Their competence is not recognized and respected and the adults think that they are only competent and matured to make decision which is completely an 'adult ideological viewpoint' (Speier, 1976). Their views are not listened to seriously. Competence is not fixed and static (Kjørholt, 2004); and not only the commodity of adults as perceived conventionally. Both children and adults can be competent and incompetent; "children and adult can be moved in and out of competence, in and out of maturity" (Lee, 1998, p. 474). That's why competence, as Kjørholt at el. (2005) argue, "can be seen as dynamic and relational, constituted by enlarging in specific social practices, including a culture of listening, within a

complex web of relationships to others" (p. 178). They are also important part of society and they can contribute to social development if people listen to their voices. Voice is an expression of agency and voice and agency serve complementary to each other (Pufall and Unsworth, 2004) since giving more and more chance to children to raise their voice to make decision on their behalf is to enrich their agency which in turn ensures their voices in decision making process. Child clubs seem to have empowered the children to have their voices in decision making process. They organize all club activities and programs, decide on, and go to the adult decision making body in order to ensure their voices properly heard in the decision. The most significant change is that the adults bodies working in the localities themselves invite the children to their programs and let them have their voices. A 15 years old girl shared her view on the influence of child clubs.

> *Clubs never go unnoticed and unheard if there take place any programs in our community, but the problem is with decision making process since we do not have access to that body and our views often go twisted or discarded (Sima).*

The most notable achievement that children shared with me that child clubs are getting stronger space in society since people accept their existence and voices. The adults who I interviewed also agreed what children said and argued that children have really been empowered through child clubs. Here are some pieces of interviews I had with adults,

> *Santosh: Children have really been empowered since they have not only been able to instill awareness among people against child marriage, but also to stop child marriage with the help of security personnel and adults.*

> *Mahesh: Children's decision making power depends upon the capacity of children. If they are given intensive training on capacity building, leadership, life skill development, management, they can easily make decision on their own. But in cases of small children, they cannot do. Majority of clubs make decision on their own, but they need some sort of facilitation.*

The children I interviewed accepted that to a large extent they have been empowered as they can make their decision on their own in many cases both at home and in the community. They do not need to ask their parents and other all the time. They have got power to manage their lives themselves through the mediation of parents at home and facilitators in the clubs. This power of children is what Nijnatten (2010) calls an 'individual agency'. Similarly, through the child clubs

children have got organized, influenced the child community and adult authority of their locality. This is what Nijnatten (ibid.) calls institutional or organizational agency. Children's organizational agency is emerging as a strong and unchallengeable as thousands of child clubs are holding an independent space in societies for promoting children's rights.

There are many child workers in child clubs as well. There are working children's clubs too. The child I interviewed also informed that some of their fellow members are job holders. In the clubs they learned like skills like good ways of communication, report writing, essay writing etc. Such trainings helped some children to have jobs too. Although clubs discourage child labor, children have been skilled to have a job and hence manage their economic lives too. Children have brought positive changes for themselves, their family, community and the nation. They have both developed their both individual agency and collective agency through their active participation in the child club activities (Ebbing, 2010).

The idea of autonomy is closely connected to that of agency and both terms have different meanings in different cultural contexts. "In western cultures, agency is an individualized concept, whereas in more traditional societies greater emphasis is placed on collective agencies" and it belongs to "individuals, social powers and institutions", thus, agency needs to be analyzed as "a capacity that is developed in a dialogical context" (Nijnatten, ibid., p.7). In Nepalese context, the idea of agency belongs to collective agencies since children are in direct influence of adults and social institutions. They alone are not in position to have their voices and influence decision making process since children are still believed to be not competent. In such situations they need strong support of social organizations and child clubs are getting strong support from the internationally renowned and powerful organizations in the field of child rights like Save the Children, Plan International, World Vision, etc. These organizations are strongly supporting full participation of children both in development and governance domains that concern with children. On the contrary, what will happen if these organizations stop supporting children? What will happen to child participation and children's agency? In this regards, here are some pieces of interviews I had with children.

> *Manju: World Vision stopped supporting our club and we are running out everything. I think because of this many club members are not coming nowadays.*

> *Raju: We have not been able to do any activity or program because of the lack of fund. It's been a kind of time pass here for those who come here.*

What I can decipher from these statements is that children involved in the clubs want to do something like adults. They want to organize nice programs in order to show their influence and capacity that they can do what people think they cannot. In the beginning, as Mina, (a 15 year old girl) told, *"There was a crowd of children in the clubs"* but slowly the members are getting lower and lower in the community based child clubs. There were lots of activities and competition programs with prizes for the winners but now there is nothing of such kind. Because of the lack of fund children have been unable to implement their programs as Mina further told, *"We have planned many programs but not able to do because of low membership in the clubs and we do not have fund too. VDC allocates some fund for child clubs but we have never got it".* It seems that despite developing a good level of competence in order to discuss a program, invite the adult facilitators if needed for the further discuss, make decision over it and execute their decision by conducting the program, the lack of funds have disappointed children and have not motivated to create activities now.

There can be two interpretations of why the lack of fund discouraged the child in not coming to the clubs. First, children are not clear about the limit of child participation and second, the organizations that supported the clubs in the establishment might have motivated children by some sort of tangible benefits. The international organizations have given utmost emphasis on children's participation in developmental works and child governance. In many parts of the country, the child clubs, as the UNICEF claims, have been key development partners.

6.7. Factors affecting children's agency

As social participants children produce and reproduce culture in everyday lives on par with adults and they are constructors of their childhoods through the establishing relationships with adults (Kjørholt, 2004). This is only possible when children have a capacity to deal with their everyday life circumstances on their own, which refers to their agency. Agency involves children capacity to understand and upon their world, thus demonstrating competence from birth (James et al., 1998; Wyness, 2000; Mayall, 2002). However, children's competence in society has almost been ignored. It has not been recognized fully yet in majority of the worlds. There is a tendency to ignore children's experiences and understanding of world in both everyday life and academic research (Wasker, 1986) and children's potentiality has been suppressed. "The

adult world does not recognize children's praxis, because competence is defined merely in relation to adults' praxis" (Wasker, ibid., p.4). In this way, "modern childhood constructs children out of society, mutes their voices, denies their personhood, and limits their potential" (Ennew, 1994).

In Nepalese society, as mentioned, there is also a strong trend to see children, dependent, incompetent and vulnerable rather than to see them independent, competent and strong social agent. This long held-idea regarding children's capacity creates challenges to children's agency and put them in vulnerable situations. Children are a competent and independent right holder is not the concept that Nepalese society holds, it is an imported concept through I/NGO from western world concept and has been imposed upon. This creates conceptual and ideological conflicts with what people believe what a child and childhood is in their everyday life situations. Furthermore, only limited number of people has the concept that "children are competent social agents and independent right holders". They have not been able to strongly advocate this idea either. Neither have they been able to create their own ideas in accordance with their socio-economic and political ideas. They are completely ambivalent; as Anil straightforwardly told "*Cultures and adults' unwillingness to accept children capacity*" is a main challenge to children and their agency. Traditional values and norms see children completely vulnerable who need step to step guidance and care for making them mature adults. Children are very innocent who need to be introduced with their surroundings by their care takers and rather than letting themselves explore their surroundings. Seeing children dependable, incompetent and vulnerable is to disregard their competence. However, children's competence, and dependability and vulnerability are interdependent and fluid, not opposite and irreconcilable (Kjørholt and Abebe, 2009) since viewing children as competent is to accept their resilience and resistance to dependability and vulnerability, and vice versa. Because of socio-economic situations children's activities and achievements are noted and accounted only in terms of their academic improvements and economic benefits, rather than children's social networking. Because of this kind of focus from caretakers, children are compelled to either improve academically or involve in making money. *"No one sends children here if we only focus on children's right…that's why we have opened a tuition center in our club"* (Sushila, an adult child club facilitator). Furthermore, as Kabeer (1999) argues, agency is "often exercised in unequal relationships where dominant members use their privileged access to authoritative or allocative resources, or resort to outright coercion, or override dissent or resistance" (p.4). Children in Nepalese society have subordinate position which also means the people who have super-ordinate positions have

control over the lives of those in subordinate. The existing super and subordination of relationships has hindered children in their practice of agency in their everyday lives.

Chapter Seven

7. Implications of the child clubs

7.1. Introduction

This chapter aims to explore the various implications of the community based child clubs in Nepalese societies, primarily on the basis of the analyses of my empirical data and the other documents related to the child clubs in general. Here implications refer to the results or consequences such as benefits, discourses that child clubs have in children's everyday lives and in their society. This chapter is also directly related to uncover the meanings of my third research objective and question. The child clubs around the country are mushrooming and children are taking initiations to establish the child club in close coordination with the adults. I will seek for the reasons behind this trend in the context in this chapter. On the basis of my empirical data, I will discuss the benefits child clubs, the new discourses on children's right versus personality development and prominence of children's rights with priority of children's perspectives.

7.2. Benefits of getting involved in the clubs

The child clubs are increasingly becoming popular, not only in Nepal, but also other countries in the South. Children and young people with raised awareness on their rights can work to challenge injustices and transforming society (O'Kane, 2003). The children gave all the credits to the clubs for the positive changes they have in themselves, their family and community. They have got both individual and social benefits after they joined the clubs. In the individual level, they have learned about children's rights and issues, built up self-confidence, and improved their school and college performance. In the social level, people have started recognizing, respecting, promoting and protecting children's rights. Furthermore, child clubs have got a wider recognition and stronger social places. Whenever the social programs and activities take place people strongly demand the participation of children from the clubs to have their say, not only on the matter of their direct concern, but also on the matter that are of wider social concern. Nationally, they have been able to influence the policy making bodies with reference to children's rights. Because of the active participation in wider discussion on child rights and children's issues, interaction and negotiation with adult authority, children have been able to influence the policy making processes. The child clubs are also being "active from central to community level especially in awareness raising, raising voices on violence against sexual

exploitation, child marriage, etc" (NPAC, 2004, p. 92). Government of Nepal has recently announced National Child Policy (2012), which, unfortunately, sees the children as the future citizens, denies their competence, and do not regard them as human beings of today. In its background, the Policy notes, "Children of today are the policy makers of future of the nation…in fact children are immature who depends upon others…they cannot think about their welfare" (p.2). The impact of this policy on children and their rights seems not to be positive and as it denies the children as human beings at the present. However, the following pieces of interview that I had with children show the benefits that children have got after they joined the clubs.

Amar: What have you got after you joined the club?

Sila: A lot…, I have been able to talk to you candidly.

Amar: Anything else?

Saroj: Yes, of course. I have learned managerial skills, proposal and report writing skills, and so on.

Satya: Beside these, we have learned wall magazine writing, skills of communication, mixing with a group. We have been confident and bold enough to voice our problems to the adults. The adult authorities have started paying attention to child clubs and our participation in ongoing local programs...

From the views of children it seems that child clubs have empowered children socially, mentally and educationally. They think they are no longer voiceless and muted group in their locality. They have got various means of airing their voices and competences. They publish wall magazines, often monthly, collecting the views of children from different backgrounds on different topics of their concern. Likewise, they perform street plays on various social issues like child marriage, dowry system, discrimination against girl children, children's rights in order to create awareness and sensitivity among people about children's role, rights and issues. They have developed interpersonal communication skills and writing skills through their practice of report writing, proposal writing, essay, story, and poem writings. In addition, the village development committee and other local organizations have been very aware of the participation of child clubs in their projects and programs. Anita, (a 15 years old girl) vehemently opined;

The Village Council, Village Development Committee, and other organization active in the development work of the locality have started inviting child clubs members in their meetings and programs. They talk to us and ask for our views too. The Village Development Committee has allocated fund for child clubs. We have got a small building for our clubs.

It seems to me that people have been aware of the fact the children can contribute to social development as well. Sometimes children call people of their locality to their clubs for discussion and advice in organizing an event like football competition, dance competition, etc. Moreover, children have been able to express their views candidly in their family. Their parents and in-laws have started hearing their voices as well. They have been able to make decision on their own. Some of the children's experiences a minimum level of interferences from the adult caretakers with their decision making process. In this regard, Satya, (a 17 year boy) shared his view as;

My parents always pay attention to my views and they have not interfered with my decision on the issue that is of my direct interest. I have chosen the college myself. And I always share my decision with my parents and other family in-laws. Such changes have come to my family members after I joined the clubs.

As my empirical data communicate it is reasonable to argue that much change have happened to him after he joined the club. Children's agency has been enhanced since the club goers have been able to manage their lives by themselves to a larger extent effectively. They have been able to make their decision on many issues that are of their concerns. They gather at the clubs, discuss the issues, if needed invite the adult facilitator for helping them analyze the issues and make a decision. They themselves go to the VDC themselves to submit their decisions. However, children stressed that the adults have not given due attention to their views. Their views often get unheard. With much displeasure Raju, a 15 year old boy commented on this issue. "*After we make a decision we give it either the adult facilitator to take it to the authority or we ourselves go to submit it for implementing, but unfortunately, we don't know whether our decision has been heard.*"

It is also derived from the data that despite children's control over their activities and decision making process; their decisions have not been given much attention by the adult authority. To children, their issues are the least cared and focused by the adult bodies yet in the adult decision making level even if their resistance to accept the decision made by their family members on

their issues of interests. Adults' interests always overshadow children's interests and issues. Majority of people think that children cannot do a lot and their duty is to read and write being an obedient child. This 'adult chauvinism' (Alanen, 2004) have made children's view invisible in policy documents and the National Child Policy (2012) is an example of it since it sees children as incompetent and immature becoming and beings in the future only. However, children have continued their efforts to make their voices visible and competences known in the policy making level, where adults only get involved, is still strong. Through discussion and debates with adults children are realizing changes in their society.

> *We can do a lot and make decision on many issues of ours, but we have not got any support or encouragement both from family and community openly yet. As a girl, I have faced many problems and whenever I go out I should ask my parents, but much better improvement has happened now after I joined the clubs (Sima, 13 year old girl).*

The above statement that a girl participant made further communicates that there is still discrimination prevalent throughout the country between boy and girl child. Conventionally, boys are enjoying far much freedom than girls. But recently there are many girls now in the clubs than the boys. The main reason behind it can be the impact of national awareness and advocacy campaigns for making more and more women participate in social activities through social institutions. Furthermore, the clubs have stood stronger against gender discrimination. Both national and international child welfare organizations are also backing children in the clubs to campaign against it.

Because of their involvement in the clubs, children have been bold and confident enough in expressing their views and opinions both at home and in community as Sila stated, "*I have built up self-confidence and been able to speak up my mind without any fear, and my family members have started paying attention to my views*". They have been able to talk to their parents and other in-laws in regard to their issues and familial decision making processes. After the children joined the clubs, they saw huge differences on the way their family members as well as the people of their community used to look at them. The working children have got a chance to study and play in the clubs and have learned life skills to cope with their everyday circumstances (Ebbing, 2010; O'Kane, 2003). As Ebbing (ibid.) further contends, children have been empowered in social, psychological, and political terms. Psychological empowerment results in broadening the possibilities of other types of empowerments. "The solidarity, faith in each other,

sense of identity and belonging" that children develop in the clubs are "important social capabilities that lead to social empowerment" (Ebbing, ibid., p.108), which help them cope with challenging situations. Furthermore, children learn important social skills through interactions and debates with their fellow members and adults while designing and implementing the clubs programs. They also update to the appropriate information through this process. The interaction and debate that children engage both with children and adults in the clubs is a very crucial process in becoming 'responsible citizens'. Most importantly, children practice democratic principles in running and managing the clubs. They present their views; argue for and against the views and come to a conclusion. This is a process of children's political empowerment as well. Most remarkable benefit that children shared is they are being recognized as human beings who can contribute from their level in social development and democratic process, and their participation is often sought for in social activities that take place in their localities.

7.3. Children's rights vs. personality development

The child clubs have been initiated with an aim to materialize the call and spirit of the UNCRC in the 1990s. These clubs have been opened in an active initiation and leadership of children with patronage of parents and other caretakers particularly in order to ensure the children's rights enshrined in the Articles 12, 13, and 15, as whole to fulfill the call and spirit of UNCRC. Both local and international non-governmental organizations are facilitating in the formation and functioning of child clubs (The State of Children of Nepal, 2011). When the club-goers children were able to influence both adults and children in community, their number has quickly gone up. Children are the right bearers and they have the right to get right information on their rights. The kind of information children get from the clubs can help them develop their consciousness towards their rights and other issues.

Children's rights and personality development have been the focus of the child clubs. However, the intensive focus has been laid on children's personality development programs. The personality development is an urgent need in the context rather than children's rights. Since many people believe that childhood is period of learning rather than play, the clubs' focus is on children's skill development. It's in 'the best interests of children' of both children and the adults in the context. I relate the debates here to the Article 3.1 of the UNCRC (1989) which reads:

> *In all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration.*

The concept of 'best interests' entails the overall well-being of a child. "Such well-being is determined by a variety of individual circumstances, such as the age, the level of maturity of the child, the presence or absence of parents, the child's environment and experiences" (UNHCR, 2008, p. 14). Although the UNCRC does not offer a precise definition and common factors that come into play in determining the best interests of the child, children's individual, familial and social factors influence in shaping the best interests of the children involved in the clubs. Principally majority of the clubs have been established in order to inform, promote and protect the rights of the child enshrined in the UNCRC. However, their focus is much more on the children's personality development skill rather than skills as the children concluded in the focus group discussions. *"In the beginning we had orientation and training programs on children's rights, but later we got a few trainings and information on children's rights"*. Regarding this issue, Sushila, an adult child club field motivator argued;

> *The child clubs cannot sustain if they only focus on right issues because their parents' primary interest is their children's improvement in education rather than rights. So we have opened a tuition centre for children here in order to facilitate them in their learning. We have also started an early child care centre here in the club.*

Furthermore, to the social institutions like schools a learning child is a good child and is liked by everyone than the child who demands rights. There are still a lot of confusions and misconceptions about human rights in Nepalese society. Awarding rights to someone in a society like Nepal where there is a hierarchy of relationships on basis of gender and age in particular is often mistakenly taken as giving someone a chance to take over the power and resources that one is having. This kind of psychological fear of the dominant group is depriving the women and children from enjoying their rights.

Likewise, needs and rights cannot be seen and analyzed separately since they are inexplicably interwoven within broader socio-cultural and economic factors. Children's rights cannot be realized without fulfilling the needs of children in the context. Most of the children who often come to the clubs are from working class who need some personality skills in order to tackle

with the economic situations of their family. The wider familial and social needs have dominant impact on children's needs and rights. 'The best interests of the child', as stated in the Article 3 of the UNCRC, and extend of their realizations, are "dependent on how these are emphasized in different contexts and the extent to which they are consistent or come into conflict with other political interests or aims in any society" (Kjørholt, 2008, p. 15). Without managing children's familial needs, which are inseparably attached with individual needs, children's rights cannot be materialized as conceived in the international standards. The following statements that children made clearly show what they have learned in the clubs.

Satya: In the beginning we had some orientation classes on children's rights.

Mina: Our main focus in the clubs is children's rights and personality development skills.

Manju: It's about 5 years since I last joined the club, but I have not got much information child rights yet. But whatever I know is only after I joined the clubs...

Saroj: We focus on both children's rights and skills development...but our much focus on children's right to participation...

Anita: Before I came here I did not know much about children's rights. I have got detailed information on child rights from the clubs.

From the views of children child clubs are much more personality development oriented rather than rights. However the clubs have been a good place to get much information on children's rights after schools. One of the main motivations of the growth of the child clubs can be the positive changes in majority of children's personality. Those who go to the clubs regularly, are more outspoken, extrovert and have acquired good communication skills. They have learned good ways of learning and hence improved their academic performance as well. And this is what parents and other caretakers want to have and see. The adults whom I interviewed shared almost the same views as children do. Children's rights have been included in integration with personality development skills. The following statements clearly show the focus of the clubs from adults' perspectives.

Santosh: I think no child clubs have focus only on children's rights alone. They focus on both children's rights and life skills learning.

Sushila: World Vision focus on education and accordingly the clubs we support have given focus on personality development. However, we have given equal focus on child rights as well.

Mahesh: Save the Children have let the clubs go freely and we have not focused on anything special, but the entry point of the clubs we are supporting is the CRC.

The above perspectives of children and adults reveal that the child clubs put much more focus on personality development. Even though the clubs were initially formed in order to fulfill the call and spirit of the UNCRC, particularly the right to participate (art.12), the focus seems to be slowly moving towards life skills learning and improving children's educational achievement. To me, this is all due to socio-cultural, economic and educational expectations that people have from children. Both children and adults seem to have been affected by wider familial and social interests rather than their own interests. From the above perspectives of children and adults it seems like children's overall development through education and life skills development is what both children's care taker need. Even though the aims of national and international child welfare organizations is to materialize the call and spirit of spirit of the UNCRC to move from needs to rights, the clubs seem moving the opposite; from rights to needs**.** It can also suggest that children need some skills like art of communication rather than rights to deal with their everyday life situations while the focus of adults in principle lies in the rights of children, which is in light of international trend of shifting from needs based to right-based programs (MaCallin, 2008). What children do seems to be based on child rights programming (CRP). Save the Children (2005) defines the CRP as;

Child rights programming means using the principles of child rights to plan, implement and monitor programs with the overall goal of improving the position of children so that all boys and girls can fully enjoy their rights and can live in societies that acknowledge and respect children's rights (p.27)

Furthermore only focus on children's rights may not produce tangible positive impacts on children. Children need familial permission to join the clubs and which can be mainly granted to them provided they are able to show some changes in them which can help their parents or people in loco parentis believe that they are learning or doing something good in the clubs. Sushila, an adult participant shared the similar views here;

I think the clubs cannot exist only focusing on children's rights in the community…the parents and other family members want to see some changes in their children. That's why the clubs tend to focus more on personality development skills and like that.

Even though the main aim of establishing clubs is fulfilling the call and spirit of the UNCRC, as mentioned by children, they only have got some orientation classes at the time when they came to join the clubs and later the focus has turned into personality development skills. However, no clubs seem to have been established merely for children's rights. Children want to learn, improve and develop their study also. The parents who send their children to the clubs highly expect that their children should progress much in their study rather than in other activities. Furthermore, there are many organizations like Save the Children, World Vision, Plan International, Action Aid, etc. These organizations have their own kinds programs and focus, as Santosh, coordinator of the COWCP opines, *"Different organizations have different focus in their programs and the clubs which are supported by them have also the same kind of focus in their activities"*.

David Archard's notions of caretaker's thesis versus child liberation are relevant to the discussions and debates on children's rights versus personality development in my research. As focus of the clubs much more on personality development and learning of the children, it is much more the interests of parents and other caretakers who regard children as incompetent and vulnerable becomings in need of help, and this "ideological construct helps to support the denial of their rights" (Archard, 1993, p. 49). As opposed to caretaker's thesis that children are not capable of self- determination and they need to be nurtured, child liberationists view that children are competent beings and need to be bestowed with self-determination rights. Children can determine their choices and needs themselves. Thus, recognition and acceptance of children's self-determination right is the fundamental to all the rights to which children are entitled (Archard, ibid.). Awarding children with self-determination right seems very radical in Nepalese society since even women do not have this right in many cases, let alone the children. However, the international child organizations have opened up the discourse on this right of the children and they are promoting this right of the children through the child clubs. Child clubs are emerging as an autonomous child organization throughout the country. Despite this situation, children's activities and choices of the programs are coupled with the needs and interests of their family and society as well. Children's interests are sandwiched in between the paternalistic

ideals that children cannot be granted a full autonomy and imported ideals of child liberation that stress the full autonomy of children in terms of self-determination.

Chapter Eight

8. Concluding discussions and comments

8.1. Introduction

This chapter primarily aims at highlighting and discussing further some main points and arguments presented in the analysis. I will relate the discussions to research objectives and questions in order to establish the links between objectives, theoretical perspectives and analyses in order to discuss the discourses on child participation in the clubs, implications of child clubs in Nepalese society and their meanings in relation to the global discourses children and childhood. In addition, I will draw some conclusions, make some recommendations and show up some directions for further researches related to child clubs in this chapter

8.2. Children's everyday lives in the context of child clubs

It is derived from the my empirical data that community based child clubs have been an excellent places and means for children to assemble together, sort out the issues that are directly affecting them, design the strategies to deal with them, and implement them with their own initiations, efforts and resources at their disposal. The meetings of the children vary according to the types of the clubs. In community based child clubs children normally meet at every weekends in order to share their views and discuss the issues they think are important and matter of concern to them. As per their rule they at least meet every month. However, children assemble in the clubs whenever they find the free time since the clubs are located within the peripheries of children's own localities. Sometimes children call the adult child club facilitators if they need further discussions and debates in the issues of their concern. Furthermore, many clubs have established their own libraries after they got grants from VDC and support from their communities in order to build a small club building. They have collected books related to children, child rights and their course of studies as well. Whenever, they are free they indulge in reading as well which is the most wanted and appreciated by their parents and people in loco parentis. Sports and games are the stuff of much attraction for children's participation in the clubs. Children from the clubs always take part in local sports competitions such as football, volleyball basketball, etc. They do also not miss quiz, poems, story, and essay contests. Children themselves organize both intra clubs and inter clubs sports and quiz competitions. Furthermore, the clubs secretaries and presidents prepare the reports of their programs and submit to the organizations that have supported them logistically and financially if needed. In order to bring

out their potentialities, children of the clubs publish wall magazines in the clubs covering a number of ideas of opinions of their fellow members on different topics. These kinds of activities, as Thakuri (2010) contends, have promoted physical, social, and intellectual developments. The children involved in the clubs in the past have now become reporters, club program coordinators in the adult organization.

All the activities that children do in the clubs have tremendously enhanced child participation and children's abilities to work on their own on those issues that are of their direct interests. It is child participation that gives voice to children and getting chance to have voice is an expression of agency (Pufall and Unsworth, 2004). Through the everyday activities of the clubs children seem to be practicing uninterrupted and free participation in their own rights. The adults have only advisory roles in children's activities, not the domineering one as the children have started and lead the clubs, designed the programs and implemented them by themselves. From the participation ladder perspectives, as developed by Hart (1992), what I can claim is that children are the top rung of the ladder, "the child initiated, and shared decision with adults". This, as Hart (ibid.) claims, is the best form of child participation. To enable and support child lead initiatives and organizations are the driving forces of Save the Children as well in its strategies in Nepal and other countries in global South (Feinstein and O'Kane, 2005). Furthermore, through the means of clubs children have been able to be in close interaction and relations with adults and adult organizations which has enhanced meaningful partnerships between adults and child led processes to further the fulfillment of children's rights (Feinstein and O'Kane, ibid.).

However, the existing social structure does not empower and free children from adult hegemony despite our best efforts to recognize them competent social actors. First of all, the senior and junior hierarchy always put the juniors, either children or adults in lower positions who are believed to be less competent, less matured and less experienced than the seniors. Second one, people still believe that children are innocent and need intensive guidance and care and they will be only able to have adult kind of role only after they cross their teenage and have good education. However, the notion of competence varies among social classes and the further discussion on it will be in the next topic here in this chapter. And third one is the cultural values and norms see children as vulnerable and dependent rather than competent and independent which stress on keeping children in close surveillance of their parents and other care takers. Children need to be obedient to their seniors in both family and community.

8.3. Children's participation and children's agency in the context of child clubs

Although the notion of child participation disposed in the UNCRC has been criticized on the grounds in that "in order to participate and to be a legitimate opinion giver" (Castro, 2011, p. 3) children need to conform to conventional meaning of maturity and competence. As shown in the previous chapters, community based child clubs have enormously promoted child participation and enriched children's capacity to make decision on their own on the matters that affect them. Child clubs are fighting for the children's rights, particularly the right to participation. However, child participation is always sandwiched in "the challenging children's traditional roles in society" (O'Kane, 2003, p. i) and "transforming the relationships of power between adults and children" (O'Kane, ibid., p. iii). Child clubs have been an excellent means to transform the traditional roles of children and seek a compromise between asymmetrical power relations between children and adults through child initiated and lead campaign and advocacy for promoting and safeguarding their rights. They have influenced substantially both child community and adult community through their active participation in social activities like rallies, sports competitions, wall magazine publications, and so on. Since community based child clubs are exclusively child initiated and child lead with supports from adults, children are directly involved in decision making process on the matters that are of direct concern to them and children who get involved in decision making and are informed about their rights feel privileged to take on the responsibility of imparting information about their rights in their community (Miller, 2008). The community based child clubs are working on informing, enhancing and protecting four basic principles of child participation enshrined in the UNCRC; non discrimination (Article 2), the best interests of the child (Article 3), right to life, survival and development (Article, 27), and respect for the view of the child (Article 12). These rights of children to active participation have been described as revolutionary ones since they have helped put emphasis on recognizing children as political activists across the world (Kjørholt, 2007). These core rights of the children reflect in the vision of the NPAC (2004) which describes that "children enjoy their rights and realize full potentials in society, which is fit for them" (p.14). The NPAC primarily aims at protecting and promoting the rights of children with the focus of its programs designed to this end on improving legal institutional, administrative, coordination and monitoring measures to increase access of every child to all required services of good quality.

The increased participation of children in social activities through the child clubs is the growing recognition of 'children as resources' (Kjørholt, 2002) in community development and development of their rights as well. It can be interpreted as a respect to children's both innate

capacities and evolving capacities. The growing participation of children out of school activities in global South (including Nepal) has really enhanced children's agency; the socio-economic capacities to influence their lives and lives of people in their localities. However, children's participation out of school, mainly in the work and other social activities is very limited in global North. In western worlds, as Lansdown (2004) claims, children are expected to remain in full time education for a maximum of 10 years; they are socially and economically dependent on their parents during that time, and they are discouraged to work. In practice, children spend much of their childhood period in schools that they "are segregated and insulted from adult world, with only limited opportunities for active participation in the social and economic life of their community" (Lansdown, ibid., p.9) and the period of childhood is primarily devoted to play, and the acquisition of educational skills and knowledge which "precludes children from opportunities to take responsibility for themselves and others" (p. 9). Lansdwon further claims that, on the contrary, in developing worlds, children's participation in social and economic life in much higher. Despite major structural constrains limiting their choices, children are exercising their agency in deciding "whether to stay in school or to start work, whether to work within the local community or migrate to seek better financial possibilities, whether to opt for a rural or urban lifestyle" (Lansdown, ibid., p.10). In addition, "they exhibit a strong sense of family responsibilities and their choices are heavily influenced by the importance of balancing their own wishes with the need of the family" (Lansdown, ibid., pp.10-11). This shows that children are capable enough to make informed choices and decision depending upon the realistic assessments of the options available to them with different perspectives. This suggests a lot to the children involved in the child clubs as well since they are taking familial responsibilities and many of them are working children to.

Children are citizens from the birth, however, this fact is yet to be recognized by adults and adults have naturally more power than children in Nepalese context. The way adults exercise or share their power can enable or prevent children from fulfilling their potential as active citizens (Save the Children 2010). It's adults who are both promoting and preventing children's agency through the ways they treat and view children in society. Child clubs have been very instrumental in influencing the adult mindset in that the adults have started thinking seriously that children are human beings on their own terms and rights and need respects and protection of their rights. Most importantly, children involved in the clubs have been able to show off their potentialities and competences through a number of social activities such as rallying for children's rights, rallying against child marriage and dowry system, community cleanliness and

plantation campaigns. In addition, those who have been participating in the clubs have been able to improve their learning skills, interpersonal communication skills, reporting and writing skills etc. Despite some shortcomings like eloping, time pass and so on, the children actively involved in the clubs have been able to hold a good social position which have impressed people around their localities that children are competent social actors.

Children are competent social actors has lately been a dominant discourse in the field of child rights, particularly in the global South. The focus of children's as 'social actors' is to recognize children's competence which is "developed through participation in different forms of relationship and different social practices in particular social contexts" (Kjørholt, 2004, p. 249). It can be understood that children have agency; i.e. capacities to manage their personal and socio-cultural lives and hence are active in the construction and determination of their social lives and lives of those living around them (James and Prout, 1990). But there is great deal of ambivalences and dilemmas on in what ways children's agency need to be seen and explained. Wyness (1999) argues of identifying agency by positioning children in their own contexts and look at the micro-level of peer interactions since locating children within the macro social structures, as he contends, enhances the systematic denial of children's agency and reconciles the notion of agency with theories of power and social inequality. So he favors the tribal child. However, tribal child risks being separated from intergenerational relationships in forming cultural realities and loses political power in order to analyze its relations vis-à-vis adults (James et al., 1998). The social child, whom the child clubs are promoting, is seen "active in the construction and determination of their social lives, and the lives of those living around them and societies in which they live" (James and Prout, 1990, p. 8) and exercise self-determinacy in terms of priority of choices in their everyday lives (James et al., ibid.)

Some contend that children as social actors need to be seen in the same terms as adults. This is what structural approach strives to see agency as the full recognition of children which demands radical transformation of social structure (Wyness, 1999) while other tend to view children as competent social actors in their own terms and conditions. Relating children's agency to individual autonomy and self-determination that adults have is problematic in countries in the global South because "it represents a break with 'traditional practices and local notions of the human beings seen as a part of extended family and communities in complex ways" (Kjørholt, 2011, p. 39). These macro and micro viewing of children creates lots of confusions in defining and accepting children's agency. Children involved in the clubs saw the adults as a challenge to

their agency since the adults frequently, as children mentioned, denied their capacity to do a number of activities. Thus children's agency needs to be analyzed in relation to adults and children themselves. Robson et al. (2007) opine that children may practice their agency when they conform to adults expectations and resist the adult interferences. In the contrast, children' agency in relation to peers focuses on differences within generations "so that the groups of young people may have different degrees of agency vis-à-vis their parents, and other young people of different ages, ethnicity, class, birth order, gender, or other aspects of social differentiation" (Robson et al., ibid., p. 141). Children in the clubs are mainly from working classes and middle-classes and if we see agency in terms of class, then working class children start working from their early teens and manage their economic lives while children of middle class and rich do not work and they are strictly protected from work and we can argue that these children do not have agency. Likewise, if we define agency in terms of gender, then boys have much more agency than boys since their voices most often get heard and they are granted to make decisions on their own in many cases while girls' voices often get neglected in male dominated society like Nepal. Thus agency varies in terms of different social categories. Overall, children have been able to raise their voice and "voice is an expression of agency" (Pufall and Unsworth, 2004, p.9).

Moreover, the influence of 'dominant framework' in understanding children and childhood, and their everyday lives is much more in social science, which, as Lee (2001) contends, regarded children as inadequate, incomplete and dependent; and society should invest in the upbringing has challenged the notion of 'agentic child'. However, the 'emergent paradigm theorized by James and Prout (1990) has radically re-conceptualized the traditional notion of agency and created a much more space for agentic child in sociology of childhood.

However, the notion of participation of children in community development promoted by international organization, as Hart (2008) argues "is more likely to consist of activities and processes that run in parallel with those of adults rather than as an integrated part of local, let alone, national processes of governance" (p. 412). Children in the clubs have involved in developing projects and their implementation in local levels in many parts of the countries and this is, as one of the adult participants commented, "*because of the lack of clear policy on child clubs and ambivalences of child participation since both non right oriented and right oriented organizations have supported the child clubs*". As Hart (ibid.) argues, in order to narrow down the power differences, children's participation should be localized; which in turn helps in

increased recognition of children's rights and shades lights on politics that inextricably mediate the relationship between children's participation and development. But the choices one makes and the power relationship one holds come into play in realizing agency (Kabeer, 199), which includes a number of socio-cultural, economic and political factors. Thus, children agency and competences, as Kjørholt (2011) argues, are deprived from their "participation in social practices within a web of social relationships" (p.45).

8.4. Implication of child clubs and discourses on childhood (s) in Nepalese context

Nepalese society is culturally very diverse. There are more than hundred ethnic groups who speak more than hundred different languages across the country. These ethnic groups have their own cultural norms and values with reference to child rearing and development and "the meaning of childhood and processes of children's development are understood and constructed differently by different groups" (Arnold et al., 2000, p. 31). The early years, generally up to five or six, are seen as a special time, deserving particular care and indulgence, and relatively free of familial responsibility. By the time they reach six or seven, children, as in many societies are considered to have developed new capacities, and expectations change as per the situations of the family in which children are brought up. Children become more aware of both familial and communal values and norms and understand them and are able to take responsibilities to contribute to their families in dependable ways. After children become older than six or seven years, they are no longer children and are neither considered adults yet. However, there is a great deal of variations both within and between communities. There are also variations between classes as well. "Children are more likely to be expected to take responsibility, if they are oldest, or if the family is especially hard pressed" (Arnold et al., ibid. p. 31) and most often the working class children are expected to take responsibility as early as they can. But in middle class and rich class families and communities, children are expected to eat healthy foods, study and play unless the familial situations demand their responsibilities in family affairs.

There still exists, as James, Jenks & Prout (1998) conceptualize, a 'pre-sociological' discourse on children, and this discourse rules in developing countries in the global South (Boyden, 1990; Punch, 2002). "The adults continue to assume they know the best: that they have the wisdom, the experience, and the knowledge with which to act in children's best interests" (Lansdown, 2004, p. 20). This taken-for-granted view underestimates children's innate potentialities and evolving capacities and hence their agency is denied. However, children's participation out -of - schools -social activities through child clubs and media has challenged this view and proved that

they are capable enough to determine their lives and lives of people around their surroundings. They are no longer passive and innocent, they are active social actors.

A good childhood is, as assumed in almost all societies, a period of learning and playing which remains free of difficulties and in close surveillance and protection of parents and people in loco parentis until they cross the defined age of children in their contexts. However, this idea of childhood is dominant in West which, critiques claim, has been imposed on majority children of the minority world through international welfare agencies (Punch, 2002). Referring to Boyden, James and Prout (1990) state that the globalization of the ideas of western childhood, as a culture free and timeless concept, takes no account of the conditions of existence of children in poor communities where such concepts may be totally inappropriate and the new paradigm needs to take account of this aspect as well.

The growing number of community based child clubs around the country has challenged the conventional views that children are incompetent beings through the participation of social activities and opened up new discourses on children and childhood in the context. Furthermore, the clubs are initiated, lead and managed by the children by themselves with the support of people in their community. Children through clubs have got a space in community gatherings, development project and policy making levels in order to have their say on the matters that are of their concern. It can be interpreted as the exercise of self-determinacy as advocated by the child liberationists (Archard, 1993). This can be regarded also a form of agency since 'childhood as institution' (James and Prout, 1990) through the child club has tremendously impacted the policy making bodies which, as Qvortrup (2002) argues, "is interacting with other sectors and segments of society" (p. 58). While at the same time child clubs are giving much more focus on personality development of children rather than their rights and the main reason for that is, in my opinion, the majority of children in the clubs are from working class who need some knowledge and skills in order to cope with their world of work. Work for the children is not in best interests of children according to the western ideals of childhood that reflect in the UNCRC. The ideal model of childhood in some powerful western countries represents only minority childhood while, as Punch (2002) describes, "the majority of the world's children live in economically poor world regions of Latin America, Asia, and Africa" (p.2). However, the Third World childhoods tend to be considered as deviant when examined within the globalized model of childhood which is based on western ideals that children should play and study not work (Boyden, 1990). Nepalese childhood may be considered a deviant if looked from western point

of view, but actually that's not the case as there are many childhoods existing across the culturally diverse countries, and children and childhoods need to be viewed in a particular social, political and economic context (Punch, 2002; Kjørholt, 2004; James and Prout, 1997).

8.5. Conclusions

Community based child clubs seem to have been initiated by children themselves with the support of both national and international child rights and welfare related organizations in the early 1990s. They have been a good forum for children to get information on their rights, to promote and protect them through a number of activities that children perform. Both children and adults have the same understandings that the clubs have been the means of learning personality development skills, improving academic performance, updating about children's issues and campaigning for protecting children's rights. Children from different classes and ethnic groups are participating in the clubs. However, no children from rich classes are there in the clubs that exist in the city areas. There are mainly children from working and middle classes. Furthermore, the number of girls is higher than the number of boys in the clubs, and the reason behind the decreased participation of the boys is not clear. The clubs have also not been able to include the younger children and children with disabilities

The clubs have been initiated with an aim to promote the children's rights; particularly the right to participate enshrined in article 12 of the UNCRC. Participation has been both as a means and end in itself in the clubs. Most importantly it has been the main principle of operation of the clubs. By actively participating in social activities children have shown that they can initiate, lead and manage their organizations and programs themselves and hence manage their lives within their own terms and conditions provided they get supports from adult community. Furthermore, children involved in the clubs have been much more courageous, straightforward and assertive with regards to the discussions concerning the matters of their interests both at home and outside than they were before coming to the clubs. This is clearly an expression of children's agency. Since Nepalese society puts children in subordinate positions and denies their voices on the matters that affect them, child clubs have particularly focused on promoting children's participation rights through child led activities in community. Additionally, the adults have started to promote child clubs in their communities for ensuring children's participation in every social activity in particular and children's rights in general. It also shows the relationships the child participation through child clubs have to the visions encompassed in the "new paradigm" of childhood studies. Children in the 'sociology of childhood 'are seen as active and

competent social actors which the children of the clubs now experience that they have a say, and that their voices have been rightly heard and their competencies have been recognized. Although children see themselves competent social actors who have the real perspectives of their issues and make an informed decision on the issues that of their direct concerns, low awareness and consciousness about children's rights, and societal practices often undermine children participation and deny their agencies. However, children have developed a sort of collective agency to promote and protect their rights and issues as their participation in the activities that take place in their community is always sought for by the adults. The increased participation of children has enriched their decision making power, which in turn has enhanced their agency. Children now have been able to face the direct interaction and negotiation with adult structures in relation to decision making on the matters of their concerns through child clubs networking.

In addition, the clubs have positive impression in Nepalese society as the children involved in the clubs showed positive changes in themselves and brought their own rights and issues into limelight. Personality development has been the main focus of the community based child clubs for children in order to cope with their everyday life situations rather than children's rights. This is a new discourse emerged in Nepalese society with reference to children's rights and needs. Both children and adults shared it would be hard for the clubs to sustain if they only focus on children's rights. Very crucially, children, to a large extend, have been able to influence the existing socio-cultural values and practices related to children and their rights. As children stated, people in their community have started recognizing individuals below the age of 18 as children as defined in the UNCRC. My empirical data show that children's rights and child participation can be best conceived and obtained by changing some the traditionally practiced cultural values and customs prevailing in local community since they don't encourage child participation and force children to be a muted groups. The discourses on children and childhood initiated by the international child right organizations and spread in every nook and cranny of the country by child clubs have challenged the adult censored practices on children and empowered them. Adult community is also realizing the need to make changes in the traditional values and customs that discourage child participation and deny children as human beings at the present and their competencies

8.6. Recommendations

Although child clubs have done an excellent work for promoting and protecting child participation in particular and child rights in general, the child members in community based

child clubs are decreasing and children, to some extent, are losing their interests in club participation and activities because of the lack of new activities and fund to implement their programs. Furthermore, the international organizations have stopped supporting them both financially and logistically which has made children stop create activities and programs. These things have discouraged the children in taking part the club activities. As the adults working for child clubs stated, they left the child clubs to the community hoping that they could get support from there without taking into account the socio-cultural values and practices, and people's level of consciousness towards child rights.

Thus, in order to motivate more and more children in the clubs and let them have their say on the issues that affect them, children should be provided with a continued support. Children should be informed about their rights in detail since they said they did not get much information on child rights. In addition, there is no any clear policy on how child clubs should be run and what activities children should get involved in it. So a national policy related to child clubs seems to be needed in order to structure the child clubs and child participation. Children cannot enjoy their rights without the support of adults. Majority of the adults have not been informed and hence are not conscious about children's rights. So the adults need to be informed and aware about child rights and children's issues as well. Child clubs should do this activity as children know the best of their community's level of awareness and consciousness towards children and child rights.

8.7. Direction for further researches

I particularly focused on children's experiences and how child clubs have promoted children's participation and agency. I have just provided information on other interesting themes and topics related to child rights in the context of child clubs. I have got very limited information on class variation in child clubs memberships. Majority of children are from working class and a few of them are only middle and rich classes. This is very interesting and worth researching further on class variation on child clubs memberships. Why are there a few children from middle and rich classes? Do they think the clubs only for the working classes? Why the discourses on children and children's rights initiated by the international child rights organizations have not influenced those classes? Another interesting topic is gender variation in child clubs. Now the number of boys is getting lower and of girls is getting higher while the opposite was fact in the beginning. In addition, children of the clubs in other part of the country are said to be involved in network business and conducted adult-like community development projects. How these activities are

understood and interpreted within the frameworks of new sociology of childhood and the UNCRC? This can be another possible topic of research as a well.

References

Abebe, T. (2008). *Ethiopian childhood: A case study of the lives of orphans* (Doctoral dissertation, NTNU, Norwegian Centre for Child Research).

Abebe, T. (2009). Multiple childhoods, complex, dilemmas: negotiating socio-ethical spaces in participatory research with disadvantaged children. *Children's Geographies, 7* (4), 451-465

African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of Child. (1990). Retrieved from http://www.acerwc.org/acrwc-charter-full-text.

Alanen, L. (2004). *Theorizing children's welfare. A paper presented WELLCI Network Workshop1: New perspectives on childhood.* The Centre for Research on Family, Kinship and Childhood, University of Leeds (UK), 12-13 November, 2004.

Alanen, L. and Mayall, B. (Eds.). (2001). *Conceptualizing child-adult relations.* London: Routledge Falmer.

Alderson, P. (2000). Children as Researchers: The Effects of Participation Rights on Research Methodology. In P. Christensen & A. James (Eds.), *Research with Children: Perspectives and Practices.* London: Falmer Press.

Alderson, P. (2004). Ethics. In Fraser at el. (Eds.), *Doing research with children and young people.* London: Sage Publications.

Arnold, C., Hill, J., Barlett, S., Kathatiwada, C., &Sapkota, P. (2000). *Bringing up children in a changing world: Who's rights? Whose rights? Conversations with families in Nepal.* Kathmandu: Save the Children (Norway, US and UK) and UNICEF.

Awareness-raising on children's rights in Nepal: Dialogue about children's rights. (2010). International Institute for the Rights of the Child. Retrieved from http://www.childsrights.org/html/documents/wr/wrnepal2010.pdf

Baker, R. and Panter-Brick, C. (2000). A comparative perspectives on children's 'careers' and abandonment in Nepal. In Panter-Brick, C. & Smith, M. T. (Eds.), *Abandoned children*. Cambridge: CUP.

Balgopalan, S. (2002). Constructing indigenous childhoods: Colonialism, vocational education and the working child. *Childhoods 9*(1), 19-34

Bjerke, H. (2009). It's the way they do it': Expressions of Agency in Child-Adult Relations at Home and School. *Children and Society 25*, 93-103

Bourdlillon, M. (2006). Children and work: A review of current literature and debates. *Development and Changes 37* (6), 1201-1226.

Boyden, J. & Mann, G. (2005). Children's risk, resilience, and coping with extreme situations. In Ungar, M. (Eds.), *A handbook for working with children and youth: Pathways to resilience across cultures and contexts*: London: Sage Publications.

Boyden, J. (1990). Childhood and policymakers. In James, A. & Prout, A. (Eds.), *Constructing and reconstructing childhood: Contemporary issues in the sociological study of childhood (*pp.184-210). Basingstoke: The Falmer Press.

Castro, L. R. (2011). The 'good-enough society', the 'good-enough citizen' and the 'good-enough student': Where is children's participation agenda moving to in Brazil? *Childhood 3*, 1-17

Central Bureau of Statistics. (2011). *Preliminary Result of National Population Census 2011*. Kathmandu: Government of Nepal.

Chigunta, F. (2005). Report on the evaluation of the child rights clubs project. Zambia: UNICEF and   Save the Children

Child Participation Guide Book. (2006). Government of Nepal, Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare, Central Child Welfare Committee.

Children's Act. (1992). Government of Nepal.

Christensen, P. and Prout, A. (2002). Working with ethical symmetry in social science research with children. *Childhood, 9*(4), 477-97

Clark, A. (2011). *BARN3202 Mosaic approach: Course notes*. Trondheim: Norwegian Centre for Child Research, NTN.

Corsaro, W.A. (2005). *The sociology of childhood (2nd ed.).* Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press.

Cox, C. (2009). Playing and protecting: Learning from children's clubs in Sierra Leone. Sierra Leone: Save the Children UK and Sweden.

Cree , V., Kay, H., and Tisdall, K. (2002). Research with children: sharing the dilemmas. *Child and Family Social Work, 7*, 47-56

Delhi Child Rights Clubs. (2011). Retrieved from http://www.butterflieschildrights.org/rightsClub.php

Driskell, D. (2002).Creating better cities with young children and youth: A manual for participation. London: UNESCO Publishing/Earthscan Publications Ltd.

Ebbing, K. (2010). Children as agents of change: a case study of working children's clubs in Kathmandu (Master's thesis, University of Oslo).

Ennew et al. (2009). The right to be properly researched: How to do rights-based, scientific research with children. Thailand: Black on White Publications.

Ennew, J. (1994). Parentless friends: A cross-cultural examination of networks among street children and street youth. In Nestman, F .& Hurrelman, K. (Eds.), *Social networks and support in childhood and adolescence* (pp. 409-425). London: de Gruyter.

Ennew, J. and Boyden, J. (Eds.). (1997). *Children in Focus: A manual for participatory research with children* (pp.155-66). Stockholm; Redd Barnen.

Fontana, A. and Frey, J. H. (2000). From structured questions to negotiated texts. In Denzin, N.K. and Lincoln, Y.S. (Eds.), *Collecting and interpreting qualitative materials*. London: Sage Publications.

Fraser at el. (2004). *Doing research with children and young people*. London: SAGE Publications.

Gallacher, L. & Gallacher, M. (2008). Methodological immaturity in childhood research? Thinking through 'participatory methods'. *Childhood 15* (4), 499-517.

Gallacher, M. (2008). Foucault, power and participation. *International Journal of Children's Rights 16*, 395-406.

Gudmundsdottir, S. (1996). The teller, the tale and the one being told: The narrative nature of research interview. *Curriculum Inquiry 26*, 293-306.

Hammersley, M. & Atkinson, P. (2007). *Ethnography: Principles in practice (3rd ed.)*. London: Routledge.

Hart, J. (2004). *Children's participation in humanitarian action: Learning from zones of armed conflicts.* Retrieved from http://action.web.ca/home/cpcc/attach/Child%20participation-humanitarian%20action.pdf

Hart, J. (2008). Children's participation and international development: Attending to the political. *International Journal of Children's Rights 16*, 407-418.

Hart, R.A. (1992). Children's participation: from tokenism to citizenship. Florence: UNICEF.

Holstein J.A. and Gubrium, J. F. (1997). Active interviewing. In D. Silverman(Eds.), *Qualitative research: Theory, methods and practice* (pp. 113-129). London: Sage.

Interim Constitution of Nepal. (2007). Government of Nepal

James, A. (2009). Agency. In Qvortrup, J., Corsaro, W.A. & Honing, M.S. (Eds.), *The Palgrave Handbook of Childhood Studies* (pp.34-58). London: Palgrave.

James, A. and James, A. L. (2004). *Constructing childhood: theory, policy and social practice*. London: Palgrave MacMillan.

James, A. and Prout, A. (1990). *Constructing and reconstructing childhood*. London: The Falmer Press.

James, A., Jenks, C., and Prout, A. (1998). *Theorizing childhood*. Cambridge, Polity Press.

Kabeer, N. (1999). *The conditions and consequences of choices: Reflections on the measurement of women's empowerment*. Geneva: United Nations Institute for Social Development.

Kellet, M. (2005). *Children as active researchers: A new research paradigm for the 21st century. Center for Childhood, Development and Leaning*: the Open University, London. Retrieved from https://wiki.inf.ed.ac.uk/twiki/pub/ECHOES/Participatory/Kellet2006.pdf

Kellet, M. (2010). *Rethinking children and research*. London: Contiuum

Kellet, M. and Robinson, C. (2004). Power. In Fraser,S., Lewis, V., Ding, S., Kellet, M. & Robinson, C. (Eds.), *Doing research with children and young people* (pp. 81-96). London: Sage Publications.

Kellet, M., and Ding, S. (2004). Middle childhood. In Fraser,S., Lewis, V., Ding, S., Kellet, M. & Robinson, C. (Eds.), *Doing research with children and young people* (pp. 161-174). London: Sage Publications.

Kirk, J. and Miller, M. L. (1986). *Reliability and validity in qualitative research*. London: Sage Publications. Retrieved from https://wiki.inf.ed.ac.uk/twiki/pub/ECHOES/Participatory/Kellet2006.pdf

Kjørholt, A. T. (2007). Childhood as a symbolic space: Searching for authentic voices in the era of globalization. *Children's Geographies 5* (1), 29-42

Kjørholt, A. T. (2007). Childhood as a symbolic space: Searching for authentic voices in the era of globalization. *Children's Geographies 5* (1-2), 29-42.

Kjørholt, A. T. and Abebe, T. (2009). Social factors and victims of exploitation: Working children in the cash economy of Ethiopia's South. *Childhood 16* (2), 175-94

Kjørholt, A. T. (2004). Children as new citizens: In the best interests of the child? In James, A. & James, A. L. (Eds.), *European Childhoods: Cultures, politics and childhoods in the European Union* (pp. 14-37). London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Kjørholt, A. T., Moss, P. and Clark, A. (2005). Beyond listening: Future prospects. In Clark et al. (Eds.), *Beyond listening: Children's perspectives on early childhood services* (pp. 175-87). UK: Policy Press.

Kjørholt, A., T. (2001). 'A participating Child'- A vital pillar in this century? *Nordic Educational Research, 21* (2), 65-81

Kjørholt, A.T. (2002). Small is powerful: Discourses on 'children and participation' in Norway. *Childhood, 9* (1), 63-82.

Kjørholt, A. T. (2011). Rethinking young children's rights for participating diverse cultural contexts. In Kerna, M. & Singer, E. (Eds.), *Peer relationships in early childhood education and care* (pp.38-48). London and New York: Routledge.

Krappmann, L. (2010). The weight of the child's view (Article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child). *International Journal of Children's Rights, 18*, 501-513.

Kuper at el. (2008). An introduction to reading and appraising qualitative research. *BMJ, 337*, 404-409

Kvale, S. (1996). Interviews: An introduction to qualitative research interviewing. Thousands Oaks: Save Publications.

Kvale, S. and Brinkmann, S. (2009). Interviews: Learning the craft of qualitative research interviewing. USA: SAGE Publications.

Lansdown, G. (2011). *Every child's right to be heard: A resource guide on the UN Committee on the Right of the Child General Comment no. 12*. London: Save the Children UK

Lansdown, G. (2010). The realization of children's participation rights: Critical reflections. In Percy-Smith, B. and Thomas, N. (Eds.), *A handbook of children and young people's participation: Perspectives from theory and practice* (pp.11-23). London and New York: Routledge, Tylor & Francis Group.

Lansdown, G. (2004). *Evolving capacities and participation*. The Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), Child Protection Unit

Lansdown, G. (2001). *Promoting children's participation in democratic decision-making*. Italy: UNICEF, Innocent Research centre. Retrieved from http://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/insight6.pdf

Lee, N. (1998). Towards mature sociology. *Sociological Theory, 46* (3), 458-82.

Lee, N. (2001). Childhood and society: *Growing up in an age of uncertainty*. London: Open University Press.

Malaguzzi, L. (1993). For an education based on relationships. *Young Children, 11/93*, 9-13

Matthews at el. (1999). Young people's participation and representation in society. *GEOFROUM, 30*, 135-144.

Mayall, B. (2002). *Towards sociology for childhood*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

National Plan of Action for Children (2004/2005-2014/2015). (2004). Central Child Welfare Board, Government of Nepal.

Nijnatten, Carolus Van (2010). *Children's agency, children's welfare: a dialogical approach to child development, policy and practice.* London: The Policy Press.

Nilsen, R. D. (2011). *BARN3101 Questioning earlier conceptualizations and theories on 'the child' in psychology and sociology: Course notes.* Trondheim: Norwegian Centre for Child Research, NTNU.

O'Hara, M., Wainwright, J., Kay, J., Carter, C. & Dewis, P. (2011). *Successful dissertations: the complete guide for education and childhood studies students*. UK: Continuum International Publishing Group.

O'Kane (2000). The development of participatory techniques: Facilitating children's decisions which affect them. In Christensen, P. & James, A. (Eds.), *Research with children: Perspectives and practices* (pp.136-160). London: Falmer Press.

O'Kane, C. (2002). Marginalized Children as Social Actors for Social Justice in South Asia. *British Journal of Social Work, 32*, 697-710

O'Kane, T. (2nd Eds.). (2006). *Children and Young People as Citizens: Partners for social change*. Save the Children International

Percy-Smith, B. and Malone, K. (2001). Making children's participation in neighborhood settings relevant to the everyday lives of young people. *PLA Notes, 42*, 18-22.

Philippe, A. (1962). Century of childhood. In Beck, J., Jenks, C. Keddie, N. and Young, M. F. D. (1978) (Eds.), *Toward sociology of education*. UK: Macmilliam

Philippe, A. (1982). The discovery of childhood. In Jenks, C. (Eds.), *The sociology of childhood: essential readings*. London: Batsford Academic and Education Ltd.

Pufall, P. B. and Unsworth, R. P. (2004). The imperative and process for rethinking childhood. In Pufal, P.B. and Unsworth, R.P (Eds.), *Rethinking childhood*. Camden: Rutger University Press.

Rajbhandary, J. Hart, R. and Khatiwada, C. (2001). Extracts for the children's clubs of Nepal: a democratic experiment. *PLA Notes, 42,* 23–28. Retrieved from http://www.planotes.org/documents/plan_04205.pdf

Rajbhandary, J. Hart, R. and Khatiwada, C. (1999). *The children's clubs in Nepal: A democratic experiment*. Kathmandu: Save the Children Norway and United States.

Robson, at el. (2007). Conceptualizing agency in the lives and actions of rural young people. In Panelli, at el. (Eds.), *Global perspectives on rural childhood and youth: Young rural lives*. New York: Routledge.

Save the Children. (2007). *A hand book on child participation*. Kathmandu: Save the Children

Save the Children Sweden. (2010). *Regional study of children's participation in Southern Africa: South Africa, Swaziland and Zambia*. Save the Children Sweden.

Save the Children. (1995). Towards a Children's Agenda: New Challenges for Social Development.

Save the Children. (2010). *Children's participation in corporate social responsibility*. Retrieved on 15 March 2012 from http://www.crin.org/docs/Children_part_csr.pdf

School Sector Reform Plan. (2009-2015). Ministry of Education, Government of Nepal

Seneviratne, D. (2008). *Towards rights-based child participation in governance: organizational transition at Save the Children in Sri Lanka and emerging children's agency*. Save the Children Sri Lanka.

Sherington, G. (2010). From Aries to globalization in the history of childhood. *International Journal of History of Education, 46(1-2)*, 251-255

Sorin, R. (2005). Changing images of childhood: Re-conceptualizing early childhood practice. *International Journal of Childhood, 1*, 12-21

Thakuri, S. (2010). *Situation of Child participation in Child Clubs: A research study undertaken in Kathmandu valley*. Kathmandu: Hatimalo Sanchar.

The Disabled Persons Protection and Welfare Act. (1982). Government of Nepal. Retrieved from http://skills-ap.ilobkk.or.th/resources/the-disabled-persons-protection-and-welfare-act-2039-1982 April 19.

Thomas, N. and O'Kane, C. (1998). The ethics of participatory research with children. *Children and Society, 12*(5), 336-4.

UNHCR. (2008). *UNHCR guidelines on determining the best interests of the child*. UNHCR, Geneva.

UNICEF. (2008). *State of World Children: Child survival*. UNICEF.

United Nations' Convention on the Rights of the Child. (1989).

Valentine, G. (2004). *Public spaces and culture of childhood*. England: Ashgate Publishing Limited.

Valentine, K. (2011). Accounting for agency. *Children and Society, 25*, 347-358.

Waller, Tim. (Eds.). (2009). *An introduction to early childhood (2nd ed)*. London. Sage Publication

Wikipedia. (2011). Retrieved from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nepal on 22 May.

William, E. (2004). *Children's participation and policy change in South Asia*. CHIP, Childhood Poverty Research and Policy Centre. Retrieved from http://www.childhoodpoverty.org/index.php?action=publicationdetails&id=86

Woodhead, M. and Faulkner, D. (2000).Subjects, Objects or Participants? Dilemmas of Psychological Research with Children. In P. Christensen and A. James (Eds.), *Research with Children: Perspectives and Practices*. London: Falmer Press.

2.14 million-child laborers in Nepal. (Nepali Times, 13th June, 2011). Retrieved from http://www.nepalitimes.com/blogs/thebrief/2011/06/13/2-14-million-child-labourers-in-nepal/

Appendix I

A. Qualitative questionnaires

1. What is a child club?

2. What are the normal activities you get involved in?

3. Why do you take part in those activities?

4. What benefits have you got by practicing those activities?

5. Are they sufficient to you?

6. What do mean by child participation?

7. How do you make decision on the important issue that concerns you a lot?

8. Do you think your voices have been heard and given due weight by the concerned authority in terms of decision making on the issues that are of utmost concern to you?

9. Do you think you are independent enough to make decision on your own?

10. What have you learnt after you joined the club?

11. What kinds of issues of children do the clubs deal with?

12. What are child rights?

13. Who has informed you about child rights?

14. What have the child clubs done in regard to the participation of children with disabilities?

15. What do expect from the clubs?

Appendix II

B. Interview guide

What perspectives do children and adults have on children's involvement in the child clubs in terms of the gender, age, ethnicity, disabilities and children's everyday lives;

1. What do you mean by a child club?
2. Who are the participants in the clubs?
3. Why do you think the younger children are not taking part in the clubs?
4. How many girls and boys were there when you first joined the clubs?
5. How many girls and boys are now in the clubs?
6. Why do you think the number of girls is increasing in the clubs?
7. Why do you think the number of boys is getting lower in the clubs?
8. Do you think children from all ethnic groups are taking part in your clubs?
9. Are there any children with disabilities in your clubs
10. Why do you think they are not in the clubs?
11. How do you spend your time in the club?
12. Do you think the club is an independent kind of organization of the children?

How do the clubs promote child participation and children's agency in the context of child clubs?

1. Why did you join the club?
2. What is the main aim of the child club?
3. Do you think you have achieved your aims of joining the clubs now?
4. What kind of activities do you perform in the club
5. Why do you do such activities?
6. Who create clubs activities?
7. What is the role of club motivators in the clubs?
8. What have you understood by child participation?
9. Do you think you are really participating in the clubs activities?
10. In what kind of activities do you normally participate?

11. Who makes decision on the issues that are of direct interest to children in the club?

12. What is the role of children in decision-making?

13. What is the role of child clubs motivator in decision-making?

14. Do adult interfere with children's decision-making processes?

15. Do you think you are able to make decision on your own?

16. Do people believe that children can make decision on their own?

17. Who do you submit your decision to and why?

18. Do you think the adult authority have paid attend to your voices?

19. What factors create challenges to your participation?

20. What factors create challenges to your decision-making power?

21. How do you think you can overcome them?

What implications do child clubs have in the societies they are located?

1. What have got after you joined the child clubs?

2. Do you think you have learned something that is very important to you?

3. What is the focus of the child clubs?

4. How did you get information on child rights?

5. Who gave you such information?

6. Do you know about the UNCRC?

7. Why are child clubs focusing on personality development skills?

8. What do you expect from the clubs?

9. What do our parents expect from you after you join the clubs?

10. How do you deal with adults who are powerful in terms of implementing your decisions?

11. Why do you think people sometimes do not pay attention to your voices?

12. Why are child clubs getting popular in our society?

13. What have you done to make the clubs popular?

C. Focus group discussion guide

1. Child clubs and their roles in promoting children's rights

2. Children's participation

3. Kind of children's participation

4. Reason for children's participation

5. Children's involvement in decision making

6. Concerned authority's role in enabling children's decision making power

7. Children's agency (are children independent enough to make decision on their own?

8. Why children's voices are neglected?

9. Problems of child clubs

10. Obstacles to child rights

11. Children's expectation from child clubs

12. Familial and communal responses to child clubs and children's activities

D. Ranking

Will you please make a list of those rights or issues of children in the clubs in an order of importance and priority to you?

Norsk samfunnsvitenskapelig datatjeneste AS
NORWEGIAN SOCIAL SCIENCE DATA SERVICES

NSD

Gry Mette Dalseng Haugen
Norsk senter for barneforskning
NTNU
Loholt Allé 87, Pavillion C
7491 TRONDHEIM

Vår dato: 13.04.2012	Vår ref:30033 / 3 / IB	Deres dato:	Deres ref:

TILBAKEMELDING PÅ MELDING OM BEHANDLING AV PERSONOPPLYSNINGER

Vi viser til melding om behandling av personopplysninger, mottatt 29.02.2012. Meldingen gjelder prosjektet:

30033	*Child Clubs as the Defenders of Children's Rights in Nepal*
Behandlingsansvarlig	*NTNU, ved institusjonens øverste leder*
Daglig ansvarlig	*Gry Mette Dalseng Haugen*
Student	*Ammar Bahadur Singh*

Etter gjennomgang av opplysninger gitt i meldeskjemaet og øvrig dokumentasjon, finner vi at prosjektet ikke medfører meldeplikt eller konsesjonsplikt etter personopplysningslovens §§ 31 og 33.

Dersom prosjektopplegget endres i forhold til de opplysninger som ligger til grunn for vår vurdering, skal prosjektet meldes på nytt. Endringsmeldinger gis via et eget skjema,
http://www.nsd.uib.no/personvern/forsk_stud/skjema.html.

Vedlagt følger vår begrunnelse for hvorfor prosjektet ikke er meldepliktig.

Vennlig hilsen

Vigdis Namtvedt Kvalheim

Inga Brautaset

Kontaktperson: Inga Brautaset tlf: 55 58 26 35
Vedlegg: Prosjektvurdering
Kopi: Ammar Bahadur Singh, Herman Krags Vei 49-53, 7050 TRONDHEIM

Personvernombudet for forskning

Prosjektvurdering - Kommentar

Prosjektnr: 30033

Basert på de opplysninger vi har mottatt om gjennomføringen av prosjektet, kan personvernombudet ikke se at det behandles personopplysninger med elektroniske hjelpemidler, eller at det opprettes manuelt personregister som inneholder sensitive personopplysninger. Prosjektet vil dermed ikke omfattes av meldeplikten etter personopplysningsloven.

Utvalget består av ungdom over 16 år og voksne tilknyttet barneklubber i Nepal. Data innhentes ved spørreskjema og intervju.

Daglig ansvarlig presiserer pr telefon 13.04.12 at spørreskjema samles inn i papirform, og at intervjuer tas opp på manuelle lydopptak som senere transkriberes anonymt. Navn skal kun registreres på samtykkeerklæringen, og ikke kobles til datamaterialet. Opplysningene som behandles elektronisk vil ikke på noen måte kunne knyttes til enkeltpersoner, verken direkte via navn, indirekte via bakgrunnsopplysninger, eller via kode og koblingsnøkkel.

Appendix III

Letter of Informed consent

I, as a research participant, hereby give my consent to participate in the research with children. There won't be a problem in sharing my views and opinions with the researcher provided they are treated anonymously for the research purpose only.

Research participant

…………………………………………………….

Letter of confidentiality

I hereby promise that I will not reveal your names and the names of your clubs and your views and opinions will be kept confidential and only used for research purpose.

………………………………

Researcher

Appendix IV

Child participants answering the questions

Child participants ordering their rights of priority