

# **– It's Time to Talk! – Children's Views on Children's Work**

**Working children  
working for their rights –  
Reflections on  
child participation**



**TIME TO  
TALK!**

#talkaboutchildwork

### Special thanks

goes to all children and partner organisation who supported the internal and external evaluation and reflection processes.

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*Lessons Learned II – Supporting collaborative and child-led advocacy by working children*  
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**Kindernothilfe** is a German children’s rights organisation that supports vulnerable and marginalized children and youth to develop their full potentials. We partner with local non-governmental organisations in 33 countries and empower children to lead independent, self-fulfilled lives.

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**Terre des Hommes**  
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# I. Introduction

„It's Time to Talk! – Children's Views on Children's Work“ (hereafter referred to as Time to Talk! or T2T) was launched in 2016 by German non-governmental organisations Kindernothilfe and terre des hommes<sup>1</sup>. The project aspired to pave the way for meaningful participation of working children in local, national and global policy debates and processes.

From 2016 to 2018, a global consultation of working children was conducted to collect the views, concerns and messages of 1822 working children from 36 countries. The results were compiled in a report, which the Steering Committee presented at a side event and a press conference during the Global Conference on the Sustained Eradication of Child Labour in 2017, held by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the Argentinean Government.

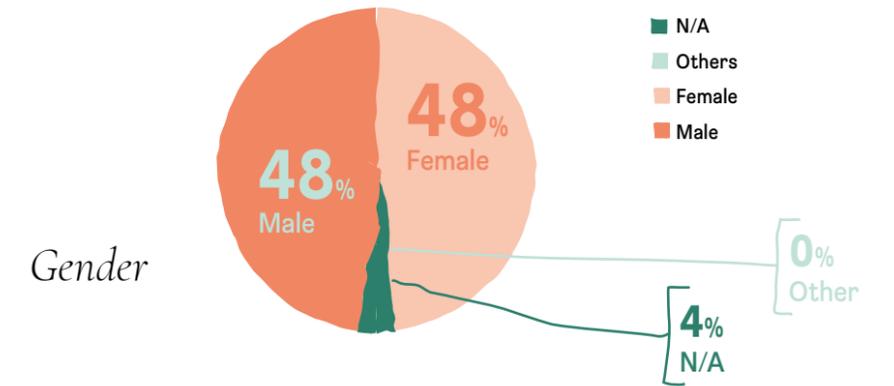
In 2019 the focus shifted from merely consulting working children to supporting them in the development and implementation of independent advocacy actions. Form, content and target of these actions was discussed and chosen by groups of children themselves. Thus, Time to Talk! supported 29 Children's Advisory Committees (CACs) in building the capacity to analyse the child rights violations they were facing in their everyday life as working children; to prioritise issues that most urgently needed solving; to identify the relevant actors capable to promote such solutions and to address them in an appropriate manner.

The CACs included working children from diverse backgrounds, so that the advocacy actions mirror the variety of challenges and realities working children around the world are confronted with everyday.

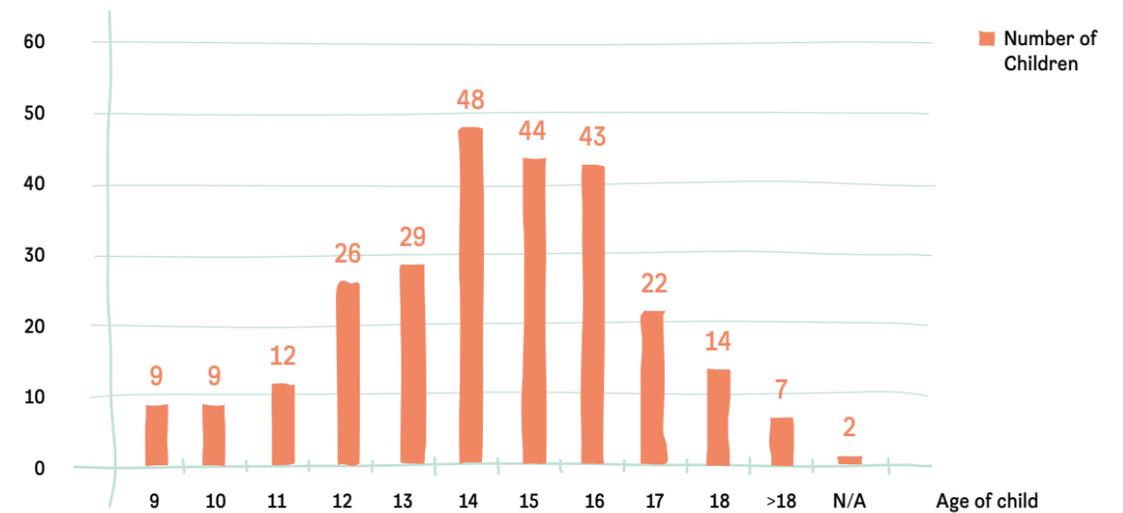
To assess what lessons could be learned for the future promotion of working children's right to participation, an internal lessons learned process was undertaken (2019-2020). Additionally, an external evaluation was conducted (2020).<sup>2</sup> This publication summarizes the findings of both the external evaluation and an internal lessons learned process.

## I. Introduction

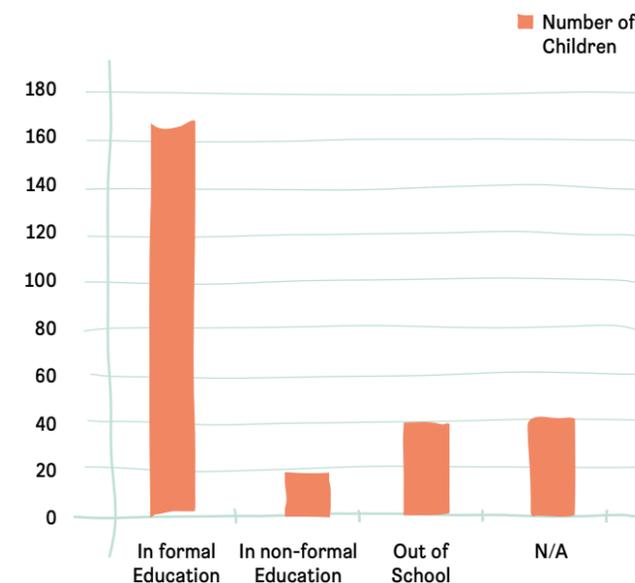
Including Data from 62% of all 24 Partner Organisations:



### Age



### Education



<sup>1</sup> Initially Save the Children Canada also supported the project, but had to revoke their participation in 2018  
<sup>2</sup> Both documents are available in full length on the project's website

# Project countries



# Methodology

## External Evaluation

The external evaluation was conducted using a participatory multi-methods evaluation approach, including the following key components:

1. A desk review of existing documents and documentations.
2. Visits to a sample of 14 CACs and respective partner organisations for interactive **focus group sessions** using child-friendly, visual and interactive tools based on semi-structured interviews with children, facilitators, partner management and key local stakeholders.
3. Where necessary, **Key Informant Interviews** (KIIs) were done for accessing additional information not shared in group meetings.

## Internal Lessons Learned Process

The lessons learned process used participatory qualitative methods and engaged key stakeholders including 19 CACs from 13 countries, NGO partner organisations, and the Time to Talk! Steering Committee. It incorporated the following key components:

1. **H-Assessments for CACs, Steering Committee and NGO partner organisations**
  - To share their views about the strengths, weaknesses, and lessons learned and to share their suggestions to improve future advocacy initiatives with and by working children.
2. **Stories of most significant changes and challenges (CACs only)**
  - To identify the most significant changes and challenges due to their participation, through the represents of a story of change that represent them as a group and the challenges they faced through their advocacy action.

# II. Learnings & Experiences

As Time to Talk! encompasses a number of different actors and objectives, the insights gained from the internal and external evaluation processes are outlined according to the impact level which they refer to.

**a. Individual Level**

Overall, the project's impact on CAC members was significant. Table 1 from the external evaluation lists the top 8 impacts of being a CAC member, according to the members' self-assessment.

*Table 1: Top eight impacts of CACs on members (identified by CAC members)*

Type of impact	Average relevance to members (1-3)	% of CAC members showing change
1. Improved relationships	2,4	89%
2. Knowledge of children's rights	2,5	87%
3. Doing awareness and advocacy activities	2,8	82%
4. Increased self-confidence	2,5	90%
5. Positive emotions	2,6	87%
6. Motivation to help other children (non-CAC members)	2,6	85%
7. Improved communication skills	2,7	75%
8. Increased awareness of importance of education	2,8	94%

Through the Time to Talk! processes working children's self-confidence and skills to express their views in public and private settings have increased.



Due to being more vocal about their feelings and needs, conflicts were prevented or solved more easily. These social skills combined with the increased knowledge of their rights has motivated children to become active themselves. Whether by speaking out for themselves, by helping non-CAC members, sharing information with children outside their group or engaging in group-led campaigns, children are more proactively shaping their environment.



Story from the internal lessons learned report

**I would like to tell my story because I believe that this space has made me change my way of thinking and acting: I want to start by telling you that I am a very shy person, I have a hard time talking to other people and sometimes I preferred not to be in places with many people. That attitude led me to be a very lonely person. Now I am not the same as when I started, I am still nervous, and I am very embarrassed, but I know that one day I will be able to speak without fear or shame.**

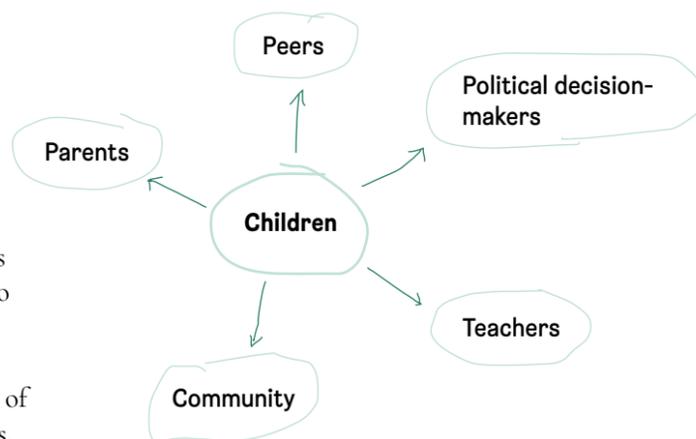
CAC member from Guatemala, 14 years old

Story from the internal lessons learned report

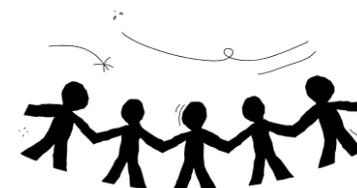
**I participated in the Time to Talk! program, in the advocacy action and attended some meetings every month to change my life and my friends' lives. We wanted to pass messages about our lives to the government.**

CAC member from Indonesia, 16 years old

Children's regular participation in groups, interactions with other children, use of participatory analysis and action planning tools, as well as encouragement and support from NGO facilitators increased the confidence of many CAC members to speak up in public settings to express their views, experiences and advocacy messages. Thereby their participation also contributed to the improvement of children's relationships to their peers, their families, their teachers and their community.



In general, CAC members have established a strong identification with the CAC and its objectives; it has become part of their identity. In most CACs, ties have become extremely close among group members as well as with the facilitators.



Story from the external evaluation report

**We now feel rather being relatives than friends.**

CAC member from Tanzania

b. Collective Level

While each individual member of the CACs benefitted from the confidence and skills gained during their active participation; the groups as a whole aimed to tackle children's rights violations identified among themselves and their peers. CACs decided independently which rights violation they wanted to address and how they wanted to do it. Across the different contexts, five common priority demands could be identified:

1. *Protect us from labour exploitation, harsh conditions and risks, and allow children to do suitable dignified work!*
2. *Prevent and protect working children from violence and discrimination!*
3. *Address poverty; provide decent jobs for our parents; and ensure that our basic needs are met!*
4. *Take our education seriously and provide quality education and skill training!*
5. *Listen to us, understand us, and implement laws that respect our rights!*

Advocacy actions in local and national contexts targeted diverse key stakeholders including parents and caregivers; teachers and school authorities; local government officials; children; community members; employers; market associations; local civil society organisations; police; and media. The advocacy actions included meetings with key duty bearers, awareness raising campaigns, discussions and outreach activities with children, local research and assessment, and case reporting.

A selection of four of the excellent examples is presented on the following pages, each targeting a different audience and showcasing a different form of activity. More examples can be found on [www.time-to-talk.info](http://www.time-to-talk.info)

## Advocacy Action 1

**Country:**  
Nepal

**Partner Organisation:**  
CWISH

**Target audience:**  
Children

**Key message:**  
Child Labour and discrimination are violations of your rights!

**Activity:**  
Advocacy Workshops in Schools

**Description:**  
On behalf of the Child Labour Orientation Day on the 30th of July 2019, the CAC CWISH carried out advocacy workshops in various schools. Their objective was to educate children on child labour, child rights, child protection and policies and laws related to child labour. Most of the sessions were facilitated by the CAC members themselves, while the supporting adults (teachers and CWISH staff) provided more insight into the subject matter when required. All of the children participating in the workshop were given the opportunity to share their ideas and help to develop important key messages:

- There should not be any case based discrimination.
- Ensure strict implementation of laws against child labour and ensure strict punishment to perpetrators.
- The family members should be made aware regarding child labour and its adverse effect on children.



Children and facilitators at one of the Advocacy Workshops in Nepal  
© Kindernothilfe / CWISH

## Advocacy Action 2

**Country:**  
Zambia

**Partner Organisation:**  
JCM

**Target audience:**  
Parents

**Key message:**  
Acknowledge that work must not be our primary occupation

**Activity:**  
Advocacy Meeting with Representatives of the Church, the Community and the Government

**Description:**  
In efforts to convince their parents to take their messages seriously CAC members first organised a stakeholder meeting with representatives from the Church, Department of Education, Department of Labour, members of the District Child Protection Committee, and the Market association. They asked representatives of these agencies/ associations to help them communicate their 5 key messages in the parent advocacy meeting that they were organising the next day.

- Please have kind hearts
- Please give me work for my age
- Take our education seriously
- Send us to sell at the right time and in the right places
- Give me time to rest, play, go to school and study.

In the meeting with stakeholders the CAC members introduced and explained each of the five key messages. They presented a drama to show the problems working children experience missing school if their parents do not prioritise their education. They presented a gallery of their CAC journey explaining how each of these tools (Body Mapping, Timeline, Flowers of Support, Problem Tree) had helped them to develop their advocacy action plan (the Hot Air Balloon). The CAC members also presented a song, poem and rap on the importance of their education. A similar format was used during the Parents Advocacy Meeting, and the stakeholders emphasised the importance of the CAC messages.



Children in Zambia performing for their parents and teachers  
© Kindernothilfe / JCM

### Advocacy Action 3

**Country:**  
Lebanon

**Partner Organisation:**  
Nabaa

**Target audience:**  
Local authorities

**Key message:**  
Protect children from abuse and exploitation!

**Activity:**  
Collaboration with the Protection Committee in Ein el-Hilweh

**Description:**  
The Protection Committee in Ein el-Hilweh Camp was established in 2009 with the aim of forming a framework of civil and local society associations, popular committees, Islamic parties and UNRWA . It works on the protection of children from different forms of abuse and exploitation, such as harassment, sexual abuse, child recruitment, and labour exploitation. With support from the NGO Nabaa, the CAC members collaborated with the Protection Committee to help establish and implement a Code of Conduct to protect working children from abuse and exploitation in Lebanon. The rules and protective measures for working children were considered a good and important basis for all those who deal with working children, especially the parents, employers and the protection committee in the Ein el-Hilweh camp



Children and facilitators Meeting in Lebanon  
© Kindernothilfe / Ahmad Abo Salah

### Advocacy Action 4

**Country:**  
Bolivia

**Partner Organisation:**  
PASOCAP

**Target audience:**  
General Public

**Key message:**  
Without abuse we have a better life!

**Activity:**  
Protest March

**Description:**  
In Bolivia the Children Advisory Committee Members joined the local Carnival Festival and spread their messages about ending violence against children. To achieve this purpose, meetings have been held to prepare on how to carry out the group called "Comparsa de Huellas de Ternura", the objective of which was to sensitize the general population about the need to live and practice attitudes of respect, good treatment, respect for human rights and making a call to live without violence. The context is difficult and it is necessary to work on violence prevention issues at these carnival festivals, especially as there is excessive consumption of alcoholic beverages that promote negative and violent attitudes. With the activity the CAC wanted to show the entire population that it can change and people can have fun in a healthy way without violence. More than 1,200 girls, boys, adolescents and teachers carried messages on banners, balloons and masks.



One of the CAC Members at the Carnival Festival  
© Kindernothilfe / PASOCAP

**c. Organisational Level**

The project further aimed to trigger a process of change in partner organisations, which would amplify children's voices within their day-to-day work and foster meaningful participation in all stages of the project cycle.

The methods and tools included in the T2T capacity building workshops (2016, 2019) and toolkits do not strictly relate to working children only, but are also applicable to any other children's rights context.

Furthermore they hold significant potential for transforming the way in which organisations approach their work with and for children. Again, the impact of Time to Talk! is visible on two levels: It influences the individual facilitator and the organisation as a whole.

Facilitators who participated in the external evaluation described how their skills and their attitudes were shaped by T2T:

Table 2: T2T's impact on facilitators

T2T's impact on facilitators (body mapping tool)	Frequency
Increased awareness of child labour and knowledge of child right abuses	26
Improved teaching skills	23
Informing others about and advocating for child rights	17
Positive relations – with children	13
Improved communication skills	12
Making connections outside their organisation	12
Access to toolkits	11
Increased motivation to help working children	10
Expanding work and focus of organisation projects	9
Positive emotions	8
Involving children in decision making	6
Other	11

Facilitators across all partner organisations valued that the training and the T2T toolkits allowed them to work in a very different way with children, enabling them to listen and learn much deeper about the situation of working children. Consequently, their projects and activities have become more effective to support these.

The impact T2T had on partner organisations is shown in table 3 from the external evaluation report. Several partners have transferred the lessons learned from their involvement in Time to Talk! into their regular program work.

Table 3: T2T's impact on partner's different branches (programs) and core functions

Name of Partner	Total number of branches (programmes)	In how many branches has T2T been included?	% of branches T2T had an impact on	How many core functions did T2T have an impact on?
AfCIC	5	5	100%	3
AMURT	3	2	67%	2
CEIPA	3	3	100%	3
CESIP	4	4	100%	1
CSID	13	5	38%	5
CWISH	4	3	75%	2
FC	3	3	100%	2
Kaugmaon	5	5	100%	3
Nabaa	6	4	67%	3
Tawlae	9	4	44%	4
Balkan Sunflowers	3	2	67%	0
WCY	6	6	100%	2
		<b>Average</b>	<b>80%</b>	<b>2.5</b>

**d. Global Level**

As outlined in the introduction the project's overarching objective was to open the doors for meaningful participation of working children in local, national and global policy processes and debates. While advocacy on the local and national efforts was primarily in the hands of CACs and the facilitating partner organisations, advocacy at the global level was coordinated by the Steering Committee based in Germany.

The main project goal was to achieve the participation of working children at the IV. Global Conference on the Sustained Eradication of Child Labour in 2017. In spite of diligent preparations and numerous meetings with the International Labour Organisation (ILO), representatives of the hosting government of Argentina and representatives of additional influential member states, this goal could not be achieved. The Steering Committee then mobilised a significant number of decisionmakers, mostly representing governments (e.g. Netherlands, Sweden, Brazil, Argentina, Canada). As a result, the Steering Committee successfully presented the report compiling working children's experiences and perspectives at a side event and a press conference during the Global Conference in 2017. The established linkages contributed to additional major opportunities for advocating for the rights of working children and for their political participation. In April 2018, two CAC representatives from Indonesia were invited to present their situation and messages as working children at the Global Child Forum with business leaders and child rights agencies in Stockholm.

**Global Child Forum with business leaders and child rights agencies in Stockholm**  
© Kindernothilfe



Furthermore, two CAC members from the Philippines and Peru were invited to talk about children's work at the celebration on occasion of the 30 year anniversary of the CRC by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development. The project's key goal for the future is to achieve the participation of working children at the V Global Conference on Child Labour, which is scheduled to take place in 2022.

Aside from the participation in high-level political events, the voices of the Children's Advisory Committees were further included in several international publications, such as the regular newsletter of the Alliance 8.7<sup>3</sup> and a report by the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary General on Violence against children, entitled "When children take the lead"<sup>4</sup>.



**30 Years anniversary celebrations German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development**  
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**IV. Global Conference on the Sustained Eradication of Child Labour Buenos Aires, Argentina 2017**  
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<sup>3</sup> Alliance 8.7 is a global partnership committed to the achievement of target 8.7 of the 2030 sustainable development goals (<https://www.alliance87.org/the-alliance/>).  
<sup>4</sup> <https://violenceagainstchildren.un.org/news/when-children-take-lead-10-child-participation-approaches-tackle-violence>

# III. What's next?

Chapter II has summarized the positive impact that T2T was able to achieve on different levels, from the individual to the collective level, from local to global. Evidently, there have also been short-comings and learnings which will influence any future work in pursuit of the realisation of working children's right to participation. This chapter will feature the three most prominent lessons learned from the internal and external evaluation processes.

The aspects highlighted have significantly influenced the draft for a follow-up project that is scheduled to start in October 2020.

## a. Child Protection

To start your own advocacy action as a group of children can be empowering and confidence boosting, but it may also expose you to unknown risks. Hence, Time to Talk! has put a strong emphasis on using the nine basic requirements of ethical child participation as a planning tool.

While planning advocacy initiatives working children identified likely risks and discussed ways to mitigate the risks. CACs in diverse contexts expressed fears that they would be scolded, threatened or insulted due to their advocacy activities, and children identified various strategies to reduce such risks, especially through information sharing, positive messaging, and collaboration with parents, teachers, local officials, and employers. Despite such efforts a few children and adults continued to raise ethical concerns about:

- **Risks of working children earning less money due to the time spent in advocacy activities**
- **Risks of losing their job if they speak up about poor working conditions, or if they are late to their job as a result of their participation in advocacy**
- **Risks of scolding, abuse or other forms of harm when they defend their own rights and/ or their rights of their peers – especially if they engage in advocacy activities that are seen as provocative in the socio-cultural political context.**

Furthermore, some CAC members felt burdened by their roles and responsibilities connected to being a CAC member. **Therefore it is recommended to further strengthen the ethical approach to identify and minimise risks.**

## Steps of the Advocacy Cycle



However, it has also been reported that children, as individuals or as part of their CAC, have spontaneously interfered when they witnessed what they perceived as a rights violation. Especially in these situations, that have not been vigorously planned, children have been feeling unprotected or insecure. **Therefore it is recommended to include the risks of spontaneous action in the CAC meetings.**

### b. Involvement of Parents/Caretakers

One aspect highlighted in the reflections about child protection and risk assessment was the involvement and support of parents or primary care takers. Throughout the external evaluation and in the internal lessons learned process, members from several CACs and partner organisations have emphasised the potential and need for increased involvement of parents and caregivers. These were identified as critical persons to ensure good risk management and as potential supporters of the working children and their advocacy activities.

Engagement and support from parents and caregivers have been essential to enhance children's participation in CAC meetings and activities. Parental support for girls' participation has been particularly important in more conservative contexts where social norms limit girls' mobility and freedom of expression. Awareness-raising with caregivers has resulted in improved communication within families, and improved efforts by parents to consider children's needs and feelings, for example, giving more priority to their school attendance.

As some of the partner organisations have already developed practices on how to include parents in their project work it is **recommended to collect these practices, adapt them to the T2T project context and share them with all partner organisations.**

These could include:

- **Sharing accurate information with children and parents/caregivers about the project, children's participation in the CAC meetings, and likely outcomes of their participation in ways that reassures parents and encourages children's engagement;**
- **Providing awareness raising materials for parents, caregivers, teachers, and community members on children's work and child participation including a user-friendly and explanatory information illustrating the valuable contribution of children;**
- **Seeking parents and caregivers informed consent for specific advocacy initiatives planned by children; and increasing collaboration with parents to support and engage in advocacy alongside children.**



### c. Upscaling & Sustainability

During the internal and external evaluation processes the advantages of potentially upscaling the Time to Talk! project activities have been highlighted. This recommendation is once more rooted in all impact levels affected by T2T.

On the **individual level**, children see the need to allow more of their friends and vulnerable children to be organised in CACs, to benefit from capacity building and the strength and confidence of belonging to a group.

On the **collective level** the CACs might gain more attention and acceptance and therefore raise their chances of achieving policy changes when they can join forces and plan advocacy actions together with another CAC from their region. Exchanging with other CACs further offers children the opportunity to get to know other perspectives and realities.

On the **organisational level** the tools and methods developed and shared by T2T have been widely accepted and appreciated by partner organisations and staff as an opportunity to improve their work for vulnerable children and to integrate their voices in project planning and implementation.

On the **global level** increasing the number of CACs means increasing the amount of data gathered and thereby strengthening the foundation of global advocacy efforts. If Time to Talk! manages to show the value of working children's input to the successful implementation of policies, this will support every future argument made in favour of children's participation.

**Thus it is recommended to explore ways in which more partner organisations and children can participate and benefit from Time to Talk.**

While Time to Talk! has been able to establish opportunities for participation of working children on several occasions and on several political levels, most of these opportunities so far have been singular and have not yet resulted in sustained participation. Usually, there was a specific, time-bound reason for the activity. In order to make a substantial difference in working children's lives that can be sustained even beyond the time frame of a specific project, the aim has to be the establishment of institutionalized forms of participation.

**It is therefore recommended to ensure that the positive impact created by T2T will outlive the project's funding phase. Furthermore, to enhance participation that is accountable to working children, there should be increased preparatory work with adult duty bearers to ensure that are prepared to create sustainable platforms for children's participation, and to listen seriously to and respond to children's suggestions.**



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