

Children as active citizens



Participation, engagement and partnership



Harry Shier
CESESMA, San Ramón, Nicaragua

...and the Centre for Children's Rights, Queen's University Belfast



Overview

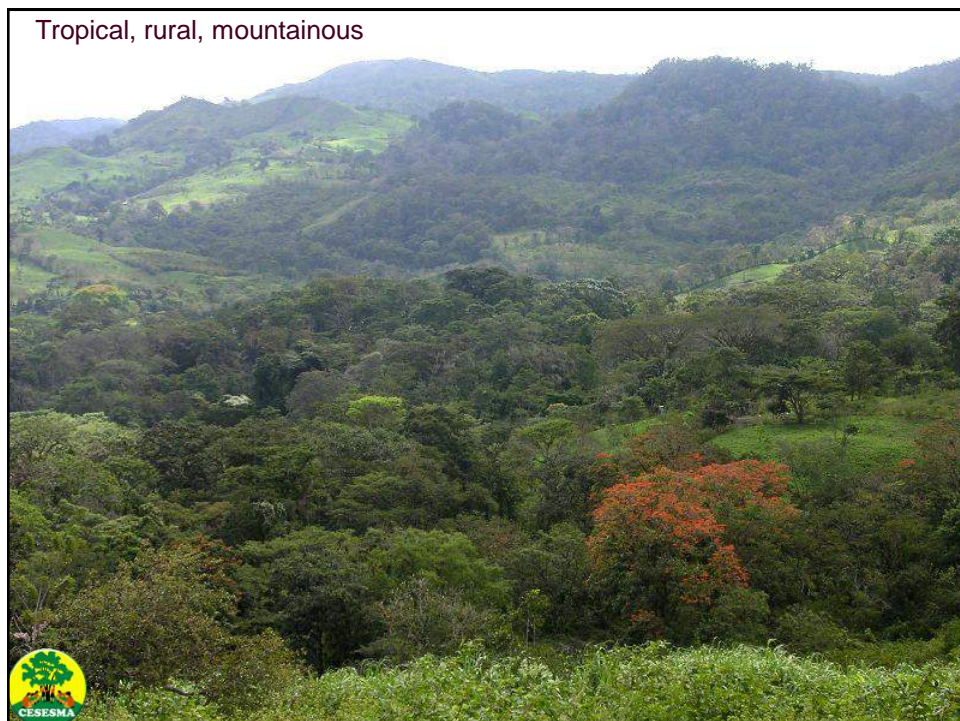
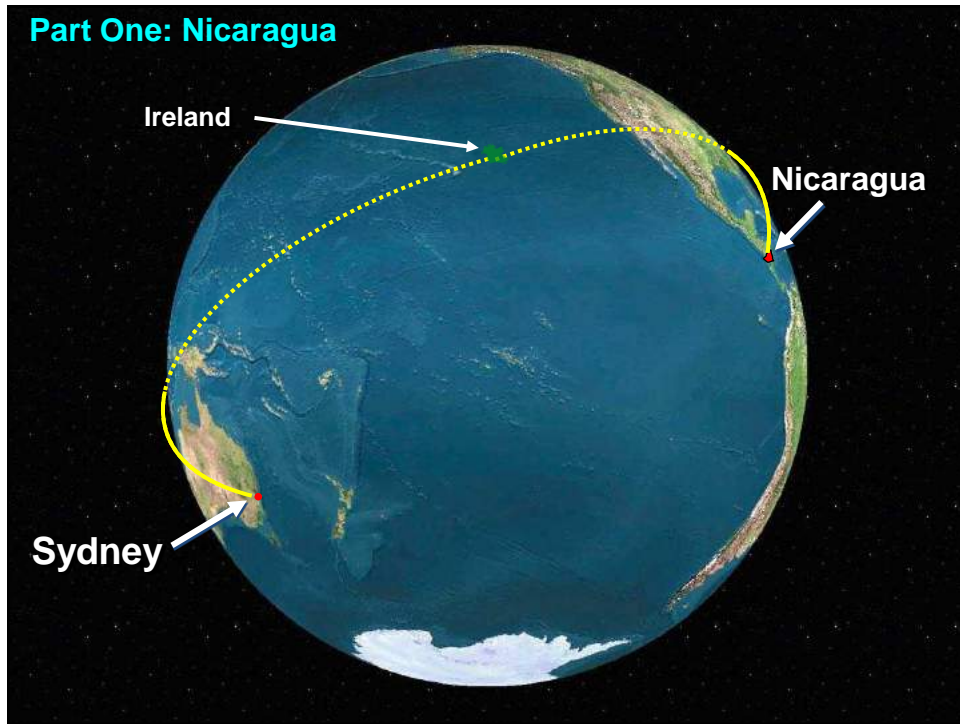


Part One: Nicaragua

- The coffee plantations
- CESESMA
- Children and adolescents as active citizens

Part Two: Australia

- Person-centred care and human rights
- Pathways to participation for all
- Empowerment
- Transformation
- Leadership



Coffee is grown in the forests, protected by the partial shade of the forest canopy



Much of it is still produced on large feudally-run plantations like this one, Santa Martha





Harvesting coffee is highly labour-intensive. During the harvest period (November to February) many thousands of children work all day every day picking coffee ...



...and sorting the red and green coffee berries.









Contents of the sacks are measured at the end of each day, and registered workers are paid according to the quantity picked.

Children are not registered and not paid.

The first stage of processing, de-pulping the berries to extract the seeds, is generally done on the plantation.

The beans are then taken off to a processing plant for cleaning, drying and sorting.





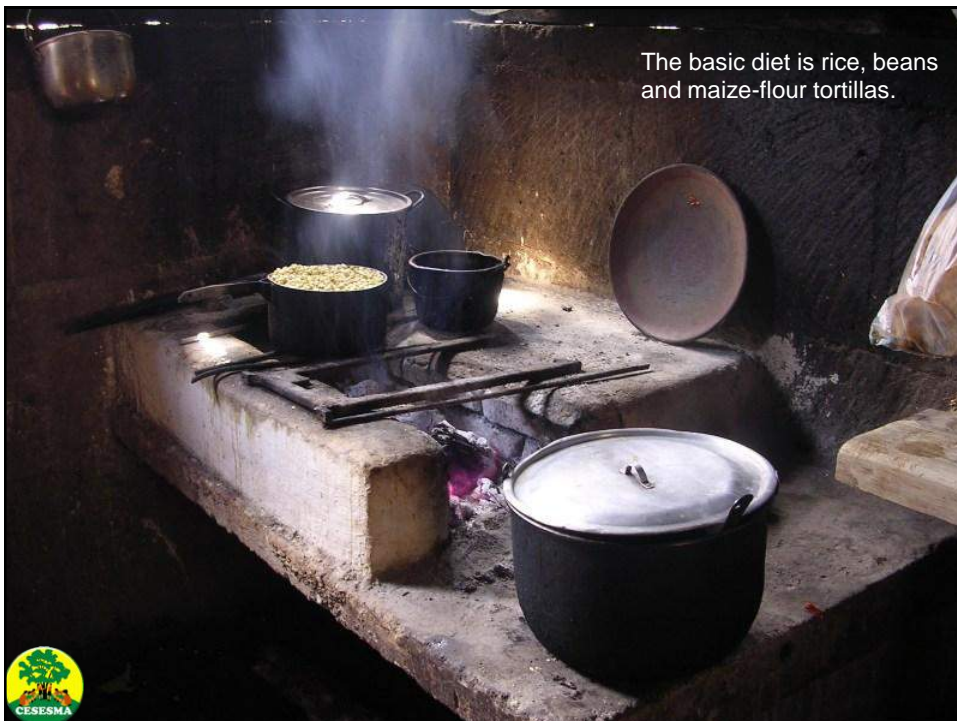
They are then exported for roasting and packing.

Most of the added value goes with them. Most of the profit is taken in wealthy northern countries such as the USA and UK.

Meanwhile on the plantation ...

Living conditions are very basic





Primary schools exist in most communities, but are under-resourced, poorly staffed, and often in bad repair



There are few secondary schools in rural areas

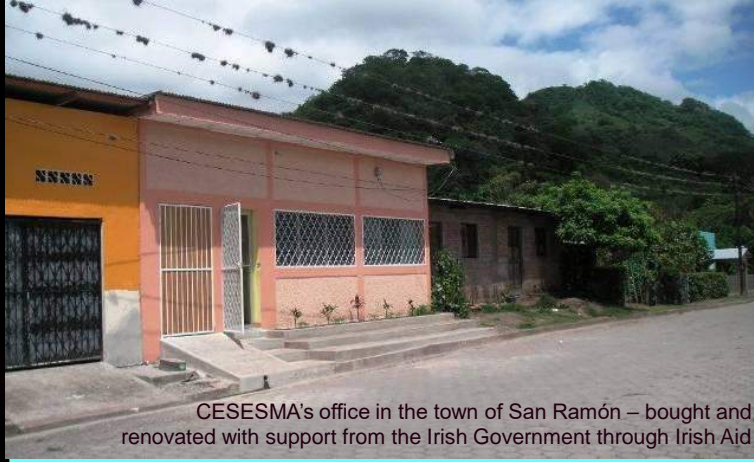




CESESMA

CESESMA, the Centre for Education in Health and Environment, is a local voluntary organisation based in San Ramón.

CESESMA started in 1992 as a teachers' action group to improve environmental and health education in rural primary schools. It was incorporated as a non-profit voluntary association in 1998.



CESESMA's office in the town of San Ramón – bought and renovated with support from the Irish Government through Irish Aid.



CESESMA's current team is made up of 23 people, all Nicaraguan, mainly local people (I'm still an associate and adviser, but no longer on the payroll).



Our Mission

Contribute to the promotion and defense children and adolescents' rights through processes of learning and empowerment in rural schools and communities, in partnership with children and young people and other members of the community.



Our vision

Children and adolescents with their families living in secure environments, with equality, equity and respect; with opportunities for an integrated education; capable of organising themselves and influencing those around them to promote and defend their rights and contribute to the development of their communities.



Our central strategy: Training , development and support for young community education activists (promotores and promotoras). Typically aged 12-18, these are young people trained to run out-of-school learning groups with younger children in their communities.

This gives them a leadership role and a platform for active organisation and engagement in community development activities and direct action in defence of children's rights, through which they influence political processes at different levels.



Examples of CESESMA's programmes...



Children's radio project, "Children and Young People's Voices Heard"







"New Masculinities" programme
with young men



The Dragon of Violence, San Ramón, August 2008



Children's Festival, San Ramón, August 2008



"If your rights have been violated – don't keep quiet"

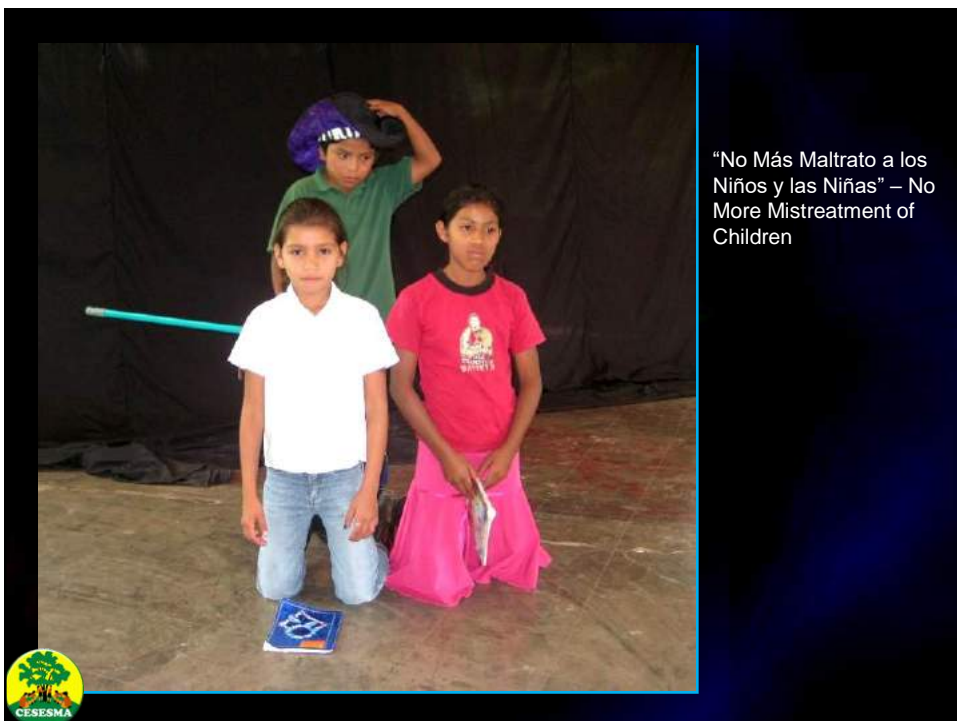


Raising awareness of difficult social issues through youth theatre





"Blows to the Soul" , a play about domestic violence



"No Más Maltrato a los Niños y las Niñas" – No More Mistreatment of Children

"The Hidden Face of Coffee" performed in the National Theatre, Managua



"Los Colibrís" (the Hummingbirds) children's theatre group from La Lima, performing "*Blows to the Soul*" at the fourth National Festival against Violence Towards Children, La Dalia, October 2010



Children become consultants and researchers

2007: National conference on violence against children. The organisers needed an expert to do the keynote speech. Who should they ask? Someone from UNICEF, or from Save the Children?



We said, "Why shouldn't children do the keynote speech? They are experts on the topic of violence against children".

And so a team of child coffee workers from Santa Martha coffee plantation became the first child consultants in Nicaragua

43

Preparation



44

Field research



Data analysis



Drawing up recommendations



Preparing a final report



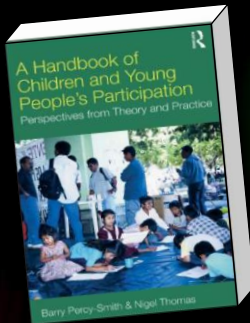
Rehearsing the formal presentation

47

Journey to the national conference in the capital city, Managua



The following year the children retold their experience in words and pictures in "A Handbook of Children and Young People's Participation".



49

2009: "Children and Young People Defending our Right to Play" campaign



Action-research teams carry out an appraisal of play opportunities and limitations in their communities.



They present their findings and recommendations in both the local communities and the Municipal Children and Youth Committees.



Community festival in Samulá



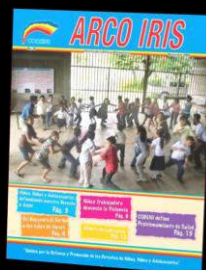
Municipal Children and Youth Committee, San Ramón

Campaign banners



"Children and young people defending our right to play, For health, learning, development, happiness and a life without violence."

These children's research has had recognition nationally in Nicaragua:



Article by the children's research team in Nicaragua's children's rights magazine "Arco Iris" (November 2009)

National newspaper feature drawing on the children's findings.
Title: "What are we playing at?"



...and in the international literature:



2009: The Santa Martha coffee plantation Young Consultants' team reforms to research the relationship between business and human rights on the plantation



Field research



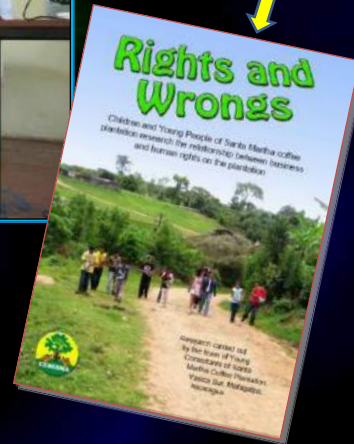
Preparing the report and recommendations



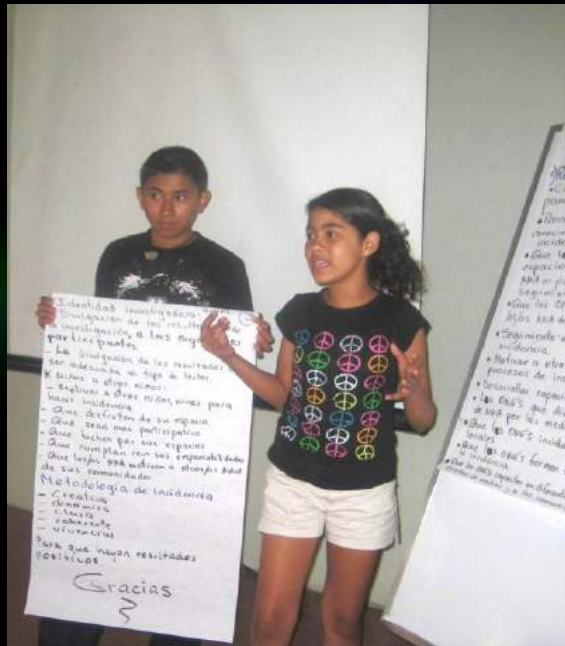


Presentation of the findings and recommendations at a regional conference in Matagalpa

Report published by CESESMA.



2010 Research project "Children and young people influencing policy-makers in Nicaragua" in partnership with the University of the North of Nicaragua





National forum to present the final report, Managua 2010



Child protection guidelines developed through participation



2011: Four teams of young researchers carry out their own self-chosen research projects

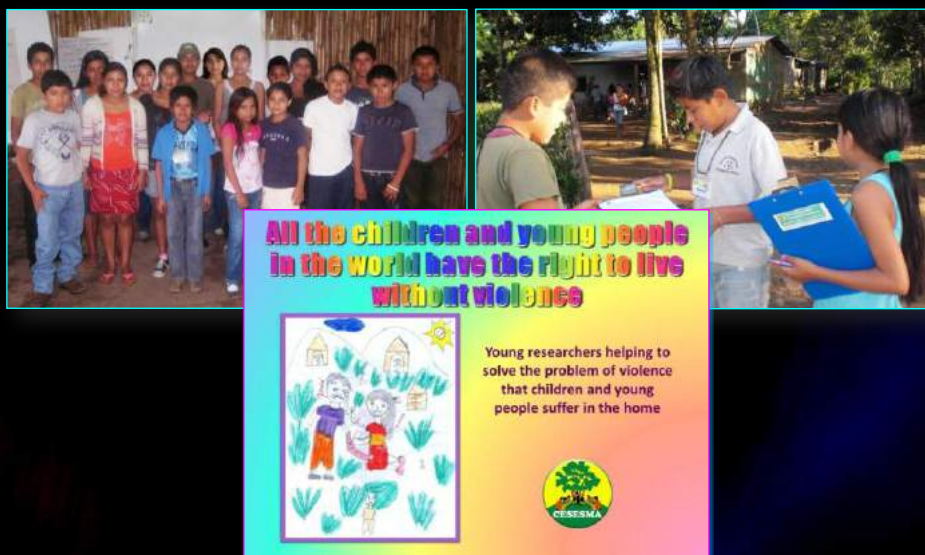
El Plomo-La Garita-Siares team

Research topic: Respect in the community, and how lack of respect leads to violence.





Yasica Sur team


Research topic: The violence that children and young people suffer in the home.




Samulali team
Research topic: Parents who hit their children. Why do they do it and what are the alternatives?

Girls and boys preventing violence in the home



Young researchers helping to solve the problem of parents who hit their children: Their attitudes, beliefs and knowledge of alternatives.



Yúcul team
Research topic: Alcohol and violence in the community.

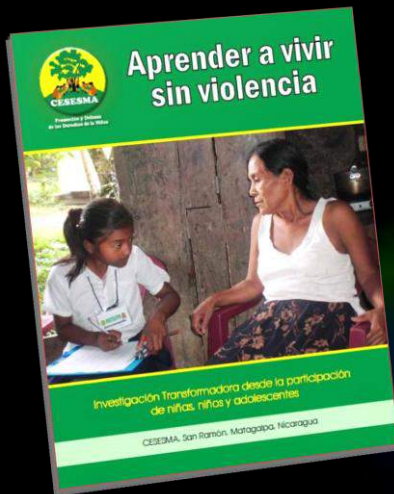



We want to live without violence!

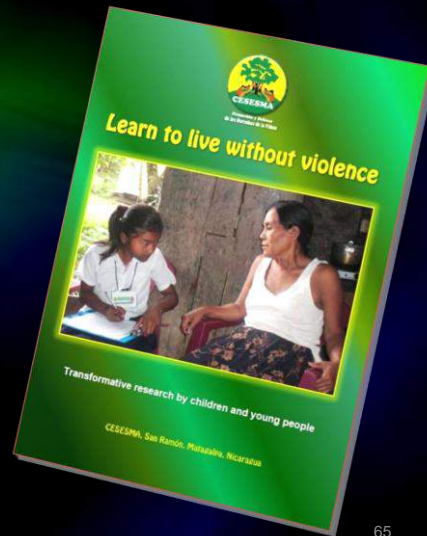


Young researchers helping to find a solution to the problem of alcohol as a factor that causes violence in our communities





The four research reports were published in book form by CESESMA in Nicaragua in March 2012.



An English translation produced jointly by CESESMA and the University of Central Lancashire launched in September 2012.

65

From Nicaragua to New South Wales

Although at first sight it's a different world, many of the things that matter are the same here:

- ✓ Same human rights;
- ✓ Same inherent human dignity of each person, from birth throughout their life;
- ✓ Existence of poverty, discrimination and disadvantage – though they manifest themselves in diverse forms;
- ✓ Same capacities in children to assume citizenship and exercise it in action for change;
- ✓ Same energy and commitment in adults who work with them.



Reflection 1: A Human-Rights-based approach?

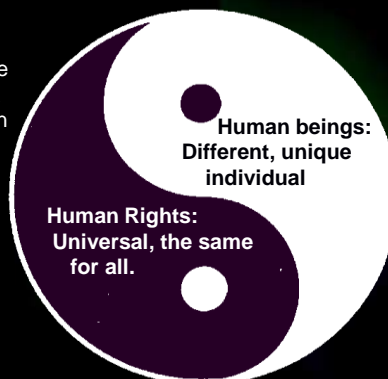
So far, I've been presenting a human-rights-based approach in action.

Is there a contradiction here?



Instead of a tension or contradiction...

We can learn to understand how both are part of a more complex reality, and how they can be integrated.



Embracing a Human-Rights-based approach creates three duties:

- To **respect** rights;
- to **protect** rights;
- and to **fulfil** rights.

Respecting Human Rights is respecting the dignity of the person.

Protecting human rights is safeguarding the person.

Fulfilling human rights is ensuring freedom and wellbeing.

In human rights terms, Uniting and its people can be both **duty-bearers**, in so far as we work in partnership with government to provide services...

...and also **rights advocates** and **rights defenders** on behalf of, and in support of, those we serve.



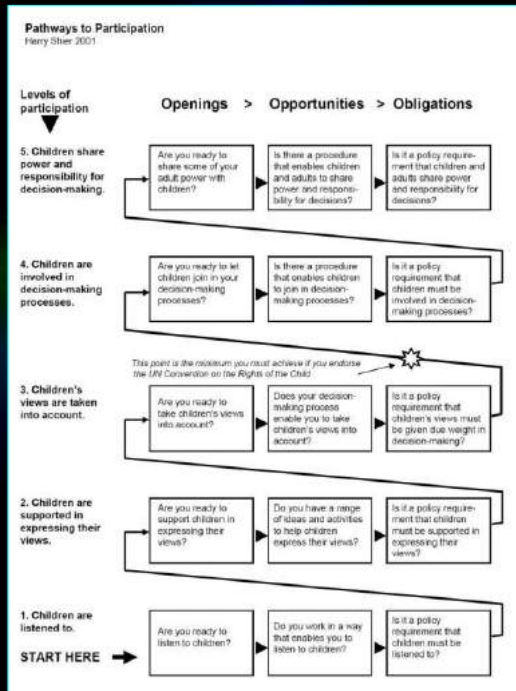
2. Pathways to Participation – for ALL citizens

The last time I was in Sydney, 15 years ago, I presented for the first time the “Pathways to Participation” diagram.

As I set off to make a new life in Nicaragua I wanted to leave something of value behind. The essence of all I had learnt in my 25 years’ work in the UK, was crystallised in this diagram.

It is exactly 15 years since it was published, and it has gone on to become known around the world as one of the most widely-used tools for analysing children’s participation.

It is the world’s most highly-cited journal article on the topic of child participation.



Though I drew on my experience working with children, others have seen how the diagram can be adapted as a tool to support empowerment with other groups who experience disadvantage, discrimination or oppression.

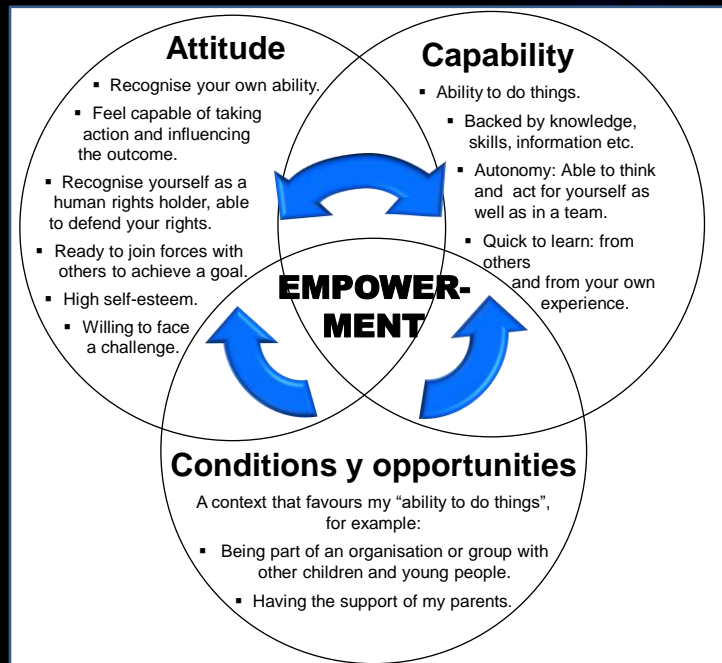
This version, developed by Susan Benbow, appeared in *International Psychogeriatrics*.

Table 1. Shier's model with modifications to make it applicable to an adult context (from Shier, 2001; 2006)

LEVEL OF PARTICIPATION	CHALLENGES	LEVEL OF COMMITMENT	OBSTACLES
5. Patients/ carers share power and responsibility for decision-making	Are workers/ organization ready to share power with patients/ carers?	Is there a procedure to enable patients/ carers to share power and responsibility for decisions?	Is it a policy requirement that patients/ carers share power and responsibility for decisions?
4. Patients/ carers are involved in decision-making processes	Are workers/ organization ready to let patients/ carers join in decision-making processes?	Is there a procedure to enable patients/ carers to join in decision-making processes?	Is it a policy requirement that patients/ carers must be involved in decision-making processes?
3. Patients/ carers' views are taken into account	Is the worker/ organization ready to take patients/ carers' views into account?	Does the decision-making process enable the worker/ organization to take patients/ carers' views into account?	Is it a policy requirement that patients/ carers' views must be given due weight in decision-making?
2. Patients/ carers are supported to express their views	Is the worker/ organization ready to support patients/ carers in expressing their views?	Does the worker/ organization have a range of processes to help patients/ carers express their views?	Is it a policy requirement that patients/ carers must be supported in expressing their views?
1. Patients/ carers are listened to	Is the worker/ organization ready to listen to patients/ carers?	Does the worker/ organization work in a way that enables listening?	Is it a policy requirement to listen to patients/ carers?
Start here			

Uniting's people work with many groups who are disadvantaged and whose voices go unheard. In the area of citizenship and human rights, we may have more to learn from one another than we realise.

3: CESESMA's view of 'Empowerment'



4. Our role as facilitators of processes – as well as providers of service

Learning from Paolo Freire, CESESMA takes the view that **“No-one empowers anyone”**.

But what we can do is facilitate process through which the people we work with come to experience their own empowerment.

As leaders in the organisation, we can strive to build capacity in our teams – through professional development and through critical reflective practice – for the facilitation of processes of empowerment.



73

5. A Taoist view of leadership

There are three types of leaders.

The first type of leader is the person of whom, when their work is done, the people say, “Look what our great leader has done for us.”

The second is the person of whom, when their work is done, the people say, “Look what our leader has helped us to achieve.”

The best is the person of whom, when their work is done, the people say, “What leader? We did all this ourselves”.

The Tao of Development (a reinterpretation of the Tao Te Ching of Lao Tzu), Chapter 17



References

- Benbow, S. M. (2012). Patient and carer participation in old age psychiatry in England. Part II: models of participation. *International Psychogeriatrics*, 24(2), 185–196.
<http://journals.cambridge.org/action/displayAbstract?fromPage=online&aid=8457396&fileId=S1041610211001876>
- CESESMA. (2012). *Learn to Live without Violence: Transformative research by children and young people*. (H. Shier, Ed.). Preston: University of Central Lancashire and CESESMA.
http://www.harryshier.net/docs/CESESMA-Learn_to_live_without_violence.pdf
- Lansdown, G. (2011). *Every Child's Right to be Heard*. London: Save the Children.
http://www.ipkl.gu.se/digitalAssets/1429/1429848_shier2001.pdf
- Lester, S., & Russell, W. (2010). *Children's Right to Play: An examination of the importance of play in the lives of children worldwide*. The Hague: Bernard van Leer Foundation.
<http://ipaworld.org/ipa-working-paper-on-childs-right-to-play/>
- Shier, H. (2001). Pathways to participation: Openings, opportunities and obligations. *Children & Society*, 15(2), 107–117. http://www.ipkl.gu.se/digitalAssets/1429/1429848_shier2001.pdf
- Shier, H. (2007). *The Tao of Development*. Matagalpa: Shier.
http://www.harryshier.net/docs/Harry_Shier-Tao_of_development.pdf
- Shier, H. (2010). 'Pathways to Participation' revisited: Learning from Nicaragua's child coffee workers. In N. Thomas & B. Percy-Smith (Eds.), *A Handbook of Children and Young People's Participation: Perspectives from Theory and Practice* (pp. 215–227). Abingdon: Routledge.
<https://www.routledge.com/products/9780415468527>
- Shier, H., Hernández Méndez, M., Centeno, M., Arróliga, I., & González, M. (2014). How children and young people influence policy-makers: Lessons from Nicaragua. *Children & Society*, 28(1), 1–14.
http://www.ipkl.gu.se/digitalAssets/1429/1429869_shier-et-al--how-cyp-illuence-policy-makers.pdf
- Young Consultants of Santa Martha. (2009). The Young Consultants of Santa Martha coffee plantation investigate the problem of violence. In B. Percy-Smith & N. Thomas (Eds.), *A Handbook of Children and Young People's Participation: Perspectives from theory and practice* (pp. 228–229). Abingdon: Routledge.
http://www.cesesma.org/documentos/CESESMA-Young_Consultants_of_Santa_Martha.pdf
- Young Consultants of Santa Martha. (2011). *Rights and Wrongs: Children and Young People of Santa Martha coffee plantation research the relationship between business and human rights on the plantation*. San Ramón, Nicaragua: CESESMA.
Retrieved from http://www.cesesma.org/documentos/CESESMA-rights_and_wrongs.pdf