Information Sheet on Stories of Most Significant Change

Brief Description of the tool:

The 'Most Significant Change' method involves collecting "stories" about change at regular intervals and interpreting / discussing them in a participatory way (through group discussions etc). The use of Stories of Most Significant Change as a tool during the evaluation process will help the direct involvement of children and young people (and adults). It could be used at regular intervals - for example, every 3 months or so - to help those involved in the process to search for significant program results. It will also help thinking about the value of these results - are they good, bad, what should be done about them etc? In this way children and young people will be able to express, document and make use of their views about the benefits and/or disadvantages of programs to “change” or improve them. This will contribute to a process of research through informed discussion or formative dialogue research.

Stories are a valuable part of ‘MSC’ for several reasons: They encourage everyone, whatever their experience, to participate. They are likely to be remembered as a whole. And, they can help keep discussions based on what is concrete rather than what is abstract. Storytelling is an ancient and cross-cultural process of making sense of the world in which we live and is familiar to all peoples. In evaluations, stories are an ideal way for people to make sense of all the different results of a program. They also help understanding of the values of those who participate in programs or benefit from them - key stakeholders (see Dart and Davies, 2003).

The ways in which children and young people creatively express their "stories" - for example, through art, letters, poems, photography, drama - can be promoted and supported. This collection of children's stories may contribute to child led documentation and media coverage of the history and impact of their own peace building and child rights initiatives. For example, children and young people may decide to produce and disseminate their stories for wider awareness raising and advocacy work. This could be done through a gallery display of their drawings, illustrated children's books / magazines of children's stories of significant change, and/or radio broadcasts of 'stories of most significant change'.

Key Objectives of the tool:

- To help individual girls and boys (and men and women) in different contexts to reflect on and share their own personal stories of most significant change resulting from their involvement in child participation or peace building initiatives.
- To help discussions (dialogue) and analysis of the values expressed by children and young people (and/or adults) with regards to the main benefits of their participatory or peace building initiatives, as well as any unexpected results (negative or positive).

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To creatively document and disseminate children's stories of most significant change to contribute to child led documentation and advocacy.

To help children and young people build upon the analysis that they have shared with each other to improve their child participation and peace building initiatives. This will contribute to the formative dialogue research process.

**Time Needed:**

This tool can be used every 3-6 months with children and young people - both individually and collectively through their children's groups (in different locations) during the thematic evaluation process. This tool can also be used with adults (for example, children's parents, community members, NGO facilitators, local or national leaders etc). The actual process of helping girls and boys to reflect on and create their stories of most significant change is likely to take 1-2 hours. First individual stories should be developed. This should be followed by a collective (group) sharing and analysis. Time and support throughout the process will also be required to allow for child led documentation and the creative dissemination of children's stories of most significant change.

**Key Steps:**

- Children/ young people are individually given sheets of paper, pencils and crayons or paints and paintbrush. They are asked to think about stories / examples which illustrate the most significant changes (either positive/successes or negative/challenges) that have occurred as a result of their child participation or peace-building initiatives.

- Each child should think about and decide on the most significant change story that they would like to share. They could draw a picture to illustrate the change that has taken place (and could record key details of what, where, who, how on a separate piece of paper). Or, they could write a poem, a story or a letter.

- In small groups each person presents and explains their picture/ story of significant change. They are encouraged to share a brief description of what happened, where, when, who was involved (enough detail so the story can be confirmed); as well as a brief explanation as to why they chose this story, why it is most significant to them.

- Notes from the sharing of stories should be recorded (by the facilitators and/or the young people themselves) on an accompanying sheet of paper / flip chart. The age, gender and background of the person should be recorded, but all names should be changed to maintain confidentiality.

- After the individual 'story-telling, discussions among the groups of children should be facilitated to explore similar and/or different experiences, as well as analysis of the values and results expressed by children and young people regarding their participation or peace initiatives. Such analysis could be used by the children and young people to identify and inform action planning to improve their own participation and/or peace initiatives.
- If stories are then shared with a wider group - for example at network meetings at district or local level - children and young people in each group can be helped to discuss and choose 1-3 stories from their group which best illustrate the most significant changes they feel have been achieved through their participation initiatives which they would like to share.

- Creative child led documentation and dissemination of children's stories of most significant change can be encouraged throughout the thematic evaluation process. This has been mentioned earlier - for example, the production of an illustrated children's book/ magazines, a gallery exhibition, and/or anonymous radio broadcasts of examples of significant change achieved through their participation initiatives.

Facilitators Notes:

- **This tool can also be used with adults** (for example, parents, community members, NGO facilitators etc) to seek their views regarding the most significant changes arising from children's participation initiatives.

- **Use of photography:** If time and resources (access to cameras - disposable or otherwise) allow, children / young people could be given access to cameras and asked to take photos which illustrate the changes they feel are the most significant (in addition to, or rather than art or written stories). However, care needs to be taken to ensure that children's identities are protected.

- Where children's groups exist in isolated locations a 'postcard version' of this tool could be developed and adapted. For example, each of the children's groups could be given a set of three stamped postcards to fill in and post to the SC office every 3-6 months. Each card could have a symbol, a drawing or text to illustrate its purpose: for card 1 the group should describe its most significant success in relation to their child participation initiative; for card 2 the group should describe the most significant challenge it has faced and any attempts to overcome it; and on card 3 the group should write their action plan ideas for the next 3-6 months to achieve their goals and overcome challenges. These three postcards could be posted regularly to the SC office supporting the children's initiative. SC researchers could analyse the cards from different children's groups and document the important outcomes and learnings. This mechanism would encourage the children to take responsibility for monitoring and evaluating their own group, while at the same time permitting both local and wider scale documentation of activities and processes. Ongoing visits by the facilitators/local researcher would still be necessary, but the postcards would complement any existing monitoring and evaluation approaches.

**Materials Needed:**
Sheets of paper
Pencils and erasers
Crayons or paints
If resources are available – cameras can also be distributed to help children take photographs which illustrate significant change.

There will also need to be adequate resource material and people available to support the proposed wider child led documentation and dissemination of stories of most significant change – for example, the book, gallery exhibition, radio broadcasts etc).

Development and dissemination of stamped postcards IF using the postcard monitoring version.

**Tool/ Activity: Stories of Most Significant Change**

**Brief Description of the tool/activity:**

The ‘Most Significant Change’ method involves collecting “stories” about change at regular intervals and interpreting / discussing them in a participatory way (through group discussions etc). The use of Stories of Most Significant Change as a tool during the evaluation process will help the direct involvement of children and young people (and adults). It could be used at regular intervals – for example, every 3 months or so – to help those involved in the process to search for significant program results. It will also help thinking about the value of these results – are they good, bad, what should be done about them etc? In this way children and young people will be able to express, document and make use of their views about the benefits and/or disadvantages of programs to “change” or improve them. This will contribute to a process of research through informed discussion or formative dialogue research.

Stories are a valuable part of ‘MSC’ for several reasons: They encourage everyone, whatever their experience, to participate. They are likely to be remembered as a whole. And, they can help keep discussions based on what is concrete rather than what is abstract. Storytelling is an ancient and cross-cultural process of making sense of the world in which we live and is familiar to all peoples. In evaluations, stories are an ideal way for people to make sense of all the different results of a program. They also help understanding of the values of those who participate in programs or benefit from them - key stakeholders (see Dart and Davies, 2003).

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Key Objectives:
- To help individual girls and boys (and men and women) in different contexts to reflect on and share their own personal stories of most significant change resulting from their involvement in child participation or peace building initiatives.
- To help discussions (dialogue) and analysis of the values expressed by children and young people (and/or adults) with regards to the main benefits of their participatory or peace building initiatives, as well as any unexpected results (negative or positive).
- To creatively document and disseminate children's stories of most significant change to contribute to child led documentation and advocacy.
- To help children and young people build upon the analysis that they have shared with each other to improve their child participation and peace building initiatives. This will contribute to the formative dialogue research process.

Time Needed: This tool can be used every 3-6 months with children and young people - both individually and collectively through their children's groups (in different locations) during the thematic evaluation process. This tool can also be used with adults (for example, children's parents, community members, NGO facilitators, local or national leaders etc). The actual process of helping girls and boys to reflect on and create their stories of most significant change is likely to take 1-2 hours. First individual stories should be developed. This should be followed by a collective (group) sharing and analysis. Time and support throughout the process will also be required to allow for child led documentation and the creative dissemination of children's stories of most significant change.

Key Steps:
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- Each child should think about and decide on the most significant change story that they would like to share. They could draw a picture to illustrate the change that has taken place (and could record key details of what, where, who, how on a separate piece of paper). Or, they could write a poem, a story or a letter.
- In small groups each person presents and explains their picture/ story of significant change. They are encouraged to share a brief description of what happened, where, when, who was involved (enough detail so the story can be confirmed); as well as a brief explanation as to why they chose this story, why it is most significant to them.
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documentation of activities and processes. Ongoing visits by the facilitators/local researcher would still be necessary, but the postcards would complement any existing monitoring and evaluation approaches.

- Use of stories of most significant change may also be useful to capture the positive impact of children and families when they have returned to their own homes and communities following the restoration of peace and security.

**Comments on the Usefulness of the Tool (Strengths and Weaknesses):**

*Feedback from participants in Uganda (from national reflection workshop):* We liked sharing stories of most significant change.

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*Development and dissemination of stamped postcards IF using the postcard monitoring version.*