1. Introduction

Within the framework of children friendly school initiative, Child Club is an organization that is initiated, organized, managed and run by children with some support from a teacher or mentor in each school. Child Friendly School (CFS) is a broad and holistic approach which UNICEF has been promoting and supporting in different states in Sudan in order to fulfill the right to quality education. Ministry of education and UNICEF envisage a Child Friendly School as a place where children can enjoy their learning experiences and are actively and joyfully involved in effective learning processes in safe, healthy, and enabling environments.

This document is an outcome of a training workshop organized by Federal Girls’ Education Department and UNICEF in May 2010. It was attended by 40 participants from all 15 Northern States. It was participatory and consultative workshop on how to establish Girls education clubs or child clubs in Child Friendly Schools. In addition to the participants’ views some ideas were quoted from relevant documents. The objective of this document is to provide some guidance for education officers, teachers, children and implementers on how to form Girls education child / child club.

2. Child and youth participation

Participation is a fundamental human right, which affirms children as rights holders entitled to demand their own rights. The CRC defines children’s participation as the rights to expression, information, involvement in decisions, and association (among others). By exercising and enjoying their participation rights, children are better able to develop, to survive and to be protected. As a consequence, children’s participation has to be a fundamental part of any strategy to achieve children’s education, health and protection.

Child participation must be authentic and meaningful. It must start with children and young people themselves, on their own terms, within their own realities and in pursuit of their own visions, dreams, hopes and concerns. Promoting meaningful and quality participation of children and adolescents is essential to ensuring their growth and development. Children have proved that when they are involved, they can make a difference in the world around them. They have ideas, experience and insights that enrich adult understanding and make a positive contribution to adult actions.
Children’s civil and political rights include:

- Article 5: parental provision of direction and guidance in accordance with children’s evolving capacities
- Article 7: right to birth registration
- Article 8: right to name, identity, nationality
- Article 12: right to be heard
- Article 13: right to freedom of expression
- Article 14: right to freedom of conscience, thought and religion
- Article 15: right to freedom of association (to join and form associations)
- Article 16: right to privacy and respect
- Article 17: right to information
- Article 29: right to an education that promotes the fullest possible development, and respect for human rights, peace and tolerance
- Article 30: right to culture, language, religion
- Article 31: right to rest, leisure and play
- Article 40: civil rights of children in contact with the law

3. Ministry of education policy on child participation

The child participation concept in general and school children associations (Child Club) in particular is not new for Sudan. Historically child participation associations in schools were initiated in the early 1960s though the focus was mainly for boys. Children associations were almost established in all schools participating in curricula and extra curricula activities under director suppression of the school management. However, in the last 25 years child participation in basic schools scaled down due to lack of resources and ineffective policy implementation. The following are key policies related to child participation school activity:

- To take care and support the student activity.
- Support local culture and maintain unity through curriculum content and student activities.
- Establish and support school library.
- Establish school radio run by the students.
- Organize students’ campaign, including sport, cultural and academic activities.
- Establishment of Student Activities Department at Federal and States to enhance child participation (Focused on in school children – mainly in secondary education students). These are fully functional.
- Student activities Department organize national school competitions regularly supported by the government.

School clubs (including child clubs, girls’ education clubs, peace ambassadors’ clubs, health/hygiene/life skills clubs) are school based for a established by the children themselves freely and voluntarily through which children engage in dialogue and exchange. It allows them to learn constructive ways of influencing the world around them. Schools are a great way for students with similar interests to meet and discuss issues affecting their schooling and their overall development.

4.1 Purpose of the club

There are different interpretations of children’s club activities. Below are the basic purpose of voluntarily formed clubs which principally promotes child participation initiatives, leadership, collaboration and other life-skills:

- Strengthen the participation of children and young people and equip them with the principles, qualities and life-skills which enable them to live in peace with their neighbours.
- Promote girls’ and boys’ dialogue and participation in educational decision-making, peace building, health awareness and overall development.
- Promote excellence in education for boys and girls.
- Enable girls and boys to understand and claim their rights, while helping others to understand gender issues and other rights.
- Create and nurture friendships and good neighborliness across ethnic groups, while creating corridors of safety for boys and girls.
- Combat exclusion, discrimination, disease, corporal punishment, violence.
- Protect girls’ bodily integrity and prevent gender discrimination.
- Cultivate leadership qualities in young people and their mentors.
- Create a safe, protective and peaceful environment.
- Promote socio-economic empowerment of young women and men.

4.2 The mission

To provide a safe, supportive place where children and youth can experience new opportunities, overcome barriers, build positive relationships and develop confidence and skills for life.

4.3 Membership

All children (in and out of school are eligible and free to joint school clubs. A group of 10 – 12 children, gender balanced in case of mixed school, or single sex, could be elected by all children in school as their Child Club executive Committee to plan, manage, and monitor club activities. The executive committee selects the chair person, vice chair person, secretary, and Treasurer.

4.4 Structure

It is recommended that one child club is established in each school. Then sub-clubs or associations can be formed to deal with the different aspects (girls’ education issues, peace building, health and hygiene education and awareness raising, environmental care etc), that children would like to
engage in. Each club can define its own agenda. There are numerous and varied children’s clubs already in existence such as:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Field</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Girls’ Education Movement (GEM) clubs</td>
<td>GEM clubs promote girls’ education and support their enrolment, completion and performance. They are not restricted to the school but encourage girls out of school to participate in GEM activities. This helps create demand for education of girls in the communities while addressing the barriers to their participation in education.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sport</td>
<td>Sports give children a chance to engage in physical activity as well as make friends, develop skills, learn teamwork and build self-esteem. The sporting options are virtually endless.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Health &amp; Nutrition</td>
<td>Health and nutrition club provide an opportunity to the children to educate themselves on food handling issues, healthy practice and contribute in dissemination of health messaging.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Religious</td>
<td>Religious clubs give children the opportunity to learn more about their faith, grown in that faith and make friends within their faith. The activities vary by club but usually include social programs as well as educational. Some religious clubs also do outreach and community service projects.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic</td>
<td>Academic clubs recognize children’s academic achievements or give children the opportunity to work in an academic area in more depth than offered in class. They may also help prepare children for their future in a specific area.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Agricultural /livestock</td>
<td>Agricultural/ livestock clubs give children the opportunity to work in various areas of farming, plant and animal sciences, horticulture, agricultural technologies and related fields. They provide a place where children can have fun, make friends and prepare for futures in agricultural fields.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Art &amp; Music</td>
<td>Children develop creativity and express themselves through the arts. Singing, dancing, painting, and drama give children the chance to find out who they are – or sometimes pretend to be someone different and express it in beautiful ways.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hygiene</td>
<td>Hygiene club contributed much in school hygiene promotion and raising children awareness in hygiene issues (hand washing, good hygiene practices, school latrine cleaning, and positive culture).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Peace ambassador</td>
<td>A Peace Ambassador is a young person who understands his or her rights and is informed with knowledge and Life-skills to not only to claim his or rights but to take responsibility to create peaceful home, school and community environments. Peace ambassador club will enable the children participate effective in peace building in school at community level using different possible ways.</td>
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4.5 The rules

It is critical to develop some rules that govern and direct the formation of a child club. Children themselves should develop simple rules in consultation with the school heads and designated mentors. The proposed rules may differ between states, but in general they may include: Formation process; membership, role of executive committee; management system, funding & financial control, and accountability. In addition to the general rules, children can set up their own behavior control rules and guidelines while agreeing on a code of conduct for the school management (e.g., corporal punishment by teachers, lateness, flexible time for homework especially for girls who work at home, etc).

4.6 child agenda

Participation in child club must be seen by children as an opportunity to do things together to get real experience in how to make decisions together, to manage and lead their own organization. The following are examples of benefits children may get as a result of participating in child club:

Make friends: Joining a club gives children a comfortable place to meet others with similar interests. This often forms the basis for lifelong friendships.

Learn new Skills: Children who participate in a variety of activities are introduced to new skills and given a chance to develop them. As children realize they “can do”, their self-confidence grows.

Learn team work: Many activities require children to work together towards a common goal. Whether they’re trying to win a game or complete a community service project, children learn to work as a team.

Develop Independence: By participating in clubs, young children learn to be outside of their family. Older children learn skills and values that will carry them through to their adult lives.

Leadership / Responsibility: Children have the opportunity to make their own decisions and elect officers. They learn to lead, follow and carry their portion of the responsibility.

Have Fun: Playing a game, camping, singing -- whatever the focus, children participate because they enjoy the activities, and sometimes fun is as good a reason as any other to join a club.

4.7 Principles

- Confidentiality
- Transparency and honesty
- Respect culture and cultural diversity; thus:
  - a. All children have equal rights to participation without discrimination. Protection of children
  - b. Children have rights to be listened to, to freely express their views on all matters that affect them.
  - c. Measures should be put in place to encourage and facilitate their participation in accordance with their age and maturity.
  - d. Participation should promote the best interest of the child and enhance the personal development of each child.
  - e. Right to Play.
Guidelines and standards

a. Children participate actively in the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of education and club activities and in decisions that affect them.

b. Children are allowed and encouraged to organize themselves and identify and do activities if interest to them.

c. Child clubs involve those who are out of school in respect of their rights to education and participation.

d. Schools provide mentors to guide and support the children in carrying out their club activities but do not dictate or dominate decision making. Mentors should be interested, active and confident.

5. Getting start

Step (1): The Girls’ Education focal point will obtain approval of the concerned education authorities at different level to establish the club in each school. In particular the school head should approve the establishment of new clubs and provide support.

Step (2): The Girls’ Education focal point will orient all the basic schools in the state that club activities are very important extracurricular activities which enhances child participation and leadership.

Step (3): Each school will develop and provide minimum rules and guidance for club establishment in consultation with education officers, children and mentor/facilitators.

Step (4): Girls’ Education focal point and school head in consultation with children select and train interest mentors as well as one teacher from each school to act as supervisor / facilitators that provide necessary linkage between the child club and school.

Step (5): The focal person from education authority visit schools and discuss with the children about the importance of child club and all related benefits. Ask about the child clubs or associations currently existing in the school (if any) before establishing new one.

Step (6): The focal person from education authority, reach agreement with children and school for setting up a new child club. Most schools are very welcoming to clubs so the process should not be too hard.

Step (7): The focal person from education authority ensure children are well guided and established their club freely and voluntary. Post notices announcing the new club around campus, and include a contact person for interested students.

Step (8): The focal person from education authority, arrange for first meeting of the club to discuss / review roles and agree on vision, goal, priorities and defining roles and responsibilities. Mentors and teachers should facilitate and promote activities that are appropriate to the children’s education and development process, and avoid activities or issues that are not appropriate for children’s activities.

Step (9): Children develop action plan and school approves the plan and provides mentorship. Share and discuss the plan with children focus on a direction of the club so that no one is getting into something they did not plan for.

Step (10): Mentor identify training needs and train club members. Execute committee members
and sub-group leaders should receive training on leaderships, meeting organizations, child rights, simple planning and monitoring of activities. The training should design and implementation according to the children needs. Include what needs to be done to build the capacity of the group in the action plan.

**Step (11):** Mentor and Ministry of education focal person agree on recognition system and discuss how effective club members can be rewarded annually. The rewarding may be in term of certificates of merit, medals (Bronze, Silver, and Gold), community/Private Sector Awards and Scholarships and prizes given in children speak out events. For example, towards the end of school year, schools can make a few hours or one day for the club members to present their activities undertaken and achievements in front of all school children, PTA members and community members. Children may want to exhibit some of their works (crafts, music, dance, sports etc.). Teachers can help children organize such club reporting day. Such kind of event will raise interest of children in club activities, especially those who have not yet participated, and motivate club member children to do more or better.

**Step (12):** Inter-school exchange of club activities is very stimulating for children Clubs; discuss how to link up or net working with other clubs, consolidate and harmonies visions, constitutions, and club rules, codes of conduct, joint events and exchange experiences.

**6. Mentor / facilitator**

A mentor is a role model, someone girls or boys can admire and look up to as a good role model. A mentor encourages children to stay in school and have aspirations for themselves beyond school. A mentor can be almost anyone; mother, young women, religious leader, community leader or professional person in any field. Mentors should not try to be a teachers or parents. Instead, mentors should play the role of a trusted older friend who can raise issues to think about, answer questions based on knowledge and life experience, and encourage children to join the conversation.

**7.1 Criteria for selecting mentors**

- Community should help children to select mentor freely.
- A mentor does not have to be a teacher (can be anyone), preferably from the same community as the school.
- Good listener.
- Builds Trust (keeps private information).
- Does not judge or pick favorites.
- Does not expect or ask for gifts, payment, rewards.
- Gives wise guidance and allows girls or boys to choose.
- Interested and enjoys spending time with girls and boys.
- Have fun.

**2 Mentor role**

- Help children to organize themselves.
- Establish good relationship with the children through child or GEM clubs.
• Share knowledge and personal experiences that may be useful for the development of child in GEM clubs.

• Support and guide the child to personal growth and foster the development of that new person.

• Meets regularly with girls and boys to discuss important issues that girls might not discuss with others.

• Assist in the networking of the child /GEM clubs at different level.

• Help to set specific objectives for Child /GEM clubs activities that are stimulating and can take into practice.

• Participate in identifying child /GEM clubs training needs and support the training.

7. Role of partners in child clubs

The below matrix summarizes expected roles of Parents, School Heads / teachers, Community Leaders, Professionals and Civil society organizations in the formation of clubs and implementation of child / GEM club activities.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Partner</th>
<th>Role</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>• Encourage and motivate children to participate.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Create environment where children would feel free to participate.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Provide moral and financial support.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Participate in some activities by providing incentives, advice and their own experiences.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Commit them self to attend GEM clubs activities.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Asking for feedback at home.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Partner</td>
<td>Role</td>
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<tr>
<td>School heads</td>
<td>• Help prepare and provide the space for GEM club.</td>
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<td>• Publicize the idea to the community and to convince the education authorities on the importance of the club.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Encourage and help mentors to perform their roles.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Provide financial and material support.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Be the godfather to the club - Serve as sponsor to the activities.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Facilitate networking among clubs from different States/localities/communities/schools.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Allocate time for student’s activity and encourage teachers to do so.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Community including women leaders</td>
<td>• Agree and encourage the formation of the clubs.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Interact with the clubs and mobilize the community to take part.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Share ideas on the role of the clubs.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Suggest and guide the children in the selection of mentors.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Relate their experiences so that children may make use of them.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Provide moral and financial support and promote the activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professionals</td>
<td>• Promote and publicize the idea of clubs.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Make resources available.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Support the clubs through scientific researches and studies.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Share activities/ideas with other States.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Provide technical guidance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner</td>
<td>Role</td>
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</table>
| Civil Society Organizations  | • Convince the society of the purpose of the clubs.  
                          | • Help in establishing and funding the clubs.  
                          | • Train clubs members on child participation and leadership issues.  
                          | • Contribute to the functioning, development upgrading, follow-up/monitoring of the clubs.  
                          | • Help GEM clubs to develop communication materials.  
                          | • Facilitate and support GEM clubs networking.  
                          | • Support expansion and sustainability of GEM clubs in all basic schools. |

8. Communication

The following are sample of messages suggested by the girl’s education focal points in order to be disseminated through child or GEM clubs targeting different audience advocating for child participation and child /GEM club initiative.

- Girls’ club is a link between school and community
- Girls club is a pioneer idea, should cover all schools
- Educate girls to educate of the nation
- Educate your child for a better future
- Girls’ club for decision making
- Education of girls developing a community
- Girls club for leadership building
- Girls, form your club
- Establish the clubs to empower girls
- Girls club for excellent community – Educated and developed
- Girls club is a key for education and goodbye for ignorance
- Girls club is a culture and future
- Girls clubs for education quality and sustainability
Girls forum for capacity improvement
- Girls clubs develop skills
- Girls clubs for peace building
- Girls club for gender equity

9. Five support elements

- Raise community awareness and develop their understanding about children’s views, their rights and participation in society.
- Develop capacities of children and adults in child participation.
- Establish standards for ethical and meaningful participation.
- Build structures and mechanisms for child participation in key institutions and processes.
- Allocate resources: financial, materials, tools, and people.

Necessary materials

The club needs some basic administrative supplies such as a meeting register book, box files, pens and staplers. It would be ideal if Ministry of Education provides. If there is space with a closet to keep their administrative supplies would be ideal. If the club has carom board, football, volleyball rope, ring, snakes and ladders games would encourage them. Collection of publications and establish small club library including magazines on child rights, laws, news papers and others is suggested.