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The importance of child participation in decision making.

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Over the years following the institution of the human rights, several debatable arguments have broken out among intellectuals, with regard to the validity of these prerogatives under various circumstances. One such area that has been subject to scrutiny is that concerning the basic rights of children to actively participate in decision making. Although the concept has been grasped, the execution has been seemingly elusive in recent times, which might only be explained by the judgmental decisiveness and the narrow mindedness that appears to accompany the arrogant nature of all men. However, if this act of ignorance does not come to a halt, we may just as well end up in a childless or a juvenile-free society. This article aims to analyze the benefits of the involvement of children in decision making and in doing so, try to soften the hard heart of all who turn a deaf ear to the innocent pleas of children.

Primarily, as per the United Nations Convention on the Rights of children (UNCRC), all the children are free to express their issues, thought and idea which should be positively

received and seriously considered, provided that the child is well informed and is not being manipulated by an adult for personal gain, action has to be taken; one which seeks to resolve the issue put for or implements the idea and suggestions obtained. This is best summarized by Carol Bellamy; the former Secretary General of the UN, who stated, “In serving the best interests of all children, we serve the best interests of all humanity”.

However, a swift look around speaks volumes: a story with scenes child abuse, domestic violence against children, trafficking, child marriages, and even horrific tales of child murder. Why is it that we exhibit our arrogance to the fullest and belittle the young? How can we expect the future generations to take their own choices and stand on their own feet, when all that we do is to push them along the path we chose? As always, man comes up with excuses and in this case, it is the inexperience of the young that falls as prey our accusations and excuses. However, the dark, undesirable truth remains that we adults are so selfishly wrapped up in our own agendas that we failed to spend a few precious moments with the children around us to those who don't, the wise words of Kofi Annan acts as a reminder: “There is no duty more important than ensuring their rights are respected, that their welfare is protected, that their lives are free from fear and want and that they can grow up in peace. There is no trust more sacred than the one the world holds with the children.” After all, it is we who profit by or pay for whatever they become.

The world of difference made by someone who treats a child as an equal can only be experienced and not justifiably expressed. The sense of security instilled is similar to knowing that whatever happens in the world of fantasy, Superman will save the day, except that in this case, he needs no muscle work. But has to be a patient listener and a source of encouragement, Apart from this, sky-rocketing levels of confidence and self esteem can be observed from the mere satisfaction of adding their contributions. Moreover, their debating, negotiating, and communicating skills are sharpened and often come naturally to those who have been encouraged to speak up and actively take part in discussions and making decisions, at a very young age. More importantly comes the spread of the awareness of rights and freedom of thought, which overtime, turns the once amateurs into professional decision makers. As the old saying goes training a child is much simpler if you catch them young and likewise it is essential that this skill of making choices is nurtured from the time of birth. This independence, with consent is the key factor that lures them to the exciting path of self discovery.

Often, when vigorously diminished, some children escape into a state of depression. Creating barriers and shutting themselves out, while others evolve into bitter, hate filled specimens angered by the society and frustrated by being forced to bottle up their

feelings, without any mode of expression. Such cases often end on a tragic note, which yet again makes us wonder: Are we doing the right thing? And that is for us to decide.

Apart from the benefits to the speakers themselves, the society as a whole is taken to new and different level; provided we are prepared to listen with an open mind. Such a simplistic process, can have several profound impacts on the notion by enabling us to understand and develop more effective policies and services that also caters to the needs of under-aged, thus leading to the development of a more positive, child-safe and child friendly society, open to the suggestions from all ages. For it's the stronger and more decisive children, capable of making the right choices that grow into individuals, building up strong families, in turn creating a united, peaceful society and eventually a self sufficient as well as an independent nation. Active child participation also provides an insight to the life and lies of the young, thus making it all the more easier to resolve juvenile related issues of all kinds. As Jeroo Billimoria once suggested, "Systems inclusive of and driven by children will enable them to respond to their feelings and needs at anytime", and nothing can be further from the truth.

I, for once, strongly believe that the practice of respecting a child and his/her views and issues should begin at home. The change in the attitude should begin with us. For after all, making choices is as much as their right as ours. It is the decision that counts and not merely the opinion, and the world would be a much better if only we all follow the Golden Rule: Do unto others, as you would have them do unto you.