K REPORTERS

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FRAMEWORK ON CHILDREN'S RIGHTS REPORT

Framework on children's rights from an intersectional and decolonial approach.
International report

Reassembling politics across children's cultures
to scale intersectional pedagogies

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Introduction

In *K Reporters*, the construction of a framework on children's rights from an intersectional and decolonial approach responds to the areas of knowledge, politics and ethics, and resonates in the praxis of the research project. In its internal dimension, the report connects various tasks of the working groups and the collaborative practice, linking the reconceptualisation emerging from critical childhood studies with the decision-making process. *K Reporters* consortium is composed of nineteen institutions from twelve different countries, and the project includes ethnographic fieldwork based on participatory and arts-based methods with children as well as the implementation of non-adult-centric intersectional pedagogies. Then, the frequent critique of the human rights framework as a tendency that construct a universalised subject is something that directly affect us as researchers and educators, and affect all the children, professionals, and communities involved in the project localised in contexts of the global north and the global south, with specific circumstances and power relations. Externally, this report may offer a framework to rethink children's rights from the perspective of some visible contributions in childhood studies that we hope that can impact children's lives and institutions and communities. However, there are some debates that starts with this report in *K Reporters*, and connects us with international theorisations, analysis and discussions, such us the tensioned perspective on the global south and the global north.

The global south is not a strict geographical construct. We reckon with Sud and Sanchez-Ancochea (2022), who interrogate the 'global south' as a territorial, relational, structural, and political construct, arguing that these constructions are fundamentally about the distribution of power in the global political-economic system. The global south is a fragmented geography undergirded by multiple layers of inequalities; and "when the complexities of the local are looked at closely, it is difficult to find a global south" (Aitken et al., 2007: 5). Yet, children in the 'global south' may reside close to borders with rich nations, be raised by diasporic populations, migrate, and seek asylum in the north (Ansell, 2017). It is also possible to find the global north in the global south and vice versa, evident in, for example, pockets of poverty found in the global north, just as there are pockets of wealth in the global south. Power resides partly in Western countries and institutions, but it is also partly found in wealth that lies everywhere –including in parts of the global south (Ansell, 2017). The binary conceptualisations of global south/global north carry the danger of creating static or dichotomous ways of relating to the world not only epistemologically, theoretically, and conceptually, but also empirically (Abebe et al., 2022).

To delve into some of these debates, this report is structured in three parts: the first narrates the pillars for critical studies of children's rights, including the critique of the dominant Eurocentric discourses; the incorporation of intersectional and colonial

perspectives and the benefits-challenges in the field of childhood studies; and the scope of this report covering the global north and the global south, by zooming in on the local and situated contexts (holistic-comparative and bottom-up framework). In the second part, approaches and areas of critical studies of children's rights are reviewed, by establishing the critique of dominant discourses in specific themes (such as Indigenous, gender or biocultural rights); opening possibilities to rethink these rights from other prisms, specially from decolonial theories; and the document formulates and collect some proposals that are being developed in research, policy and training. Finally, in the third part, the report approaches the field of inquiry and professional praxis to challenge forms of participation and explore the alternatives.

PART I. Critical studies of children's rights

1. A genealogy of the Eurocentric discourses on children's rights

A critical genealogy of the dominant human rights discourse can be traced back to the Enlightenment era (Fregoso, 2014; Ibhawoh, 2007). During this time, there was an emphasis on rationalising life and the world, universalising reason, and placing the individual at the centre of secular reasoning (Sánchez, 2020). According to Verhellen (2015), the concept of (codified) human rights began to develop in the late eighteenth century. The initial set of civil and political human rights emerged primarily due to the American (1776) and French (1789) revolutions. The French Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen (1789) played a significant role in introducing traditional rights such as freedom of opinion, freedom of the press, right to assemble, and the right to life. They could be described as defensive weapons against sovereign rulers, inserting that the state must refrain from interfering in the private lives of its citizens. The second generation of human rights takes a more proactive stance toward the State. Instead of simply refraining from excessive interference (as seen with first-generation rights), there is now a call for the State to take on social responsibility. This involves acknowledging economic, social, and cultural human rights, such as the right to a minimum income, work, health care, education, leisure, etc. This means that the State is required to take action (cf. Verhellen, 2015). This second generation, which dealt essentially with social justice, was enshrined in legally binding texts for the first time in the Russian Constitution (1918).

The concept of codified human rights culminated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) in 1948 as a response to the devastation of World War II. Only 50 countries were part of the United Nations (UN) at the time the discussions and approval of the UDHR took place, including only four African countries, which marked the process as well as the outcome of the drafting (Sánchez, 2020). The UDHR was later embraced by many African and Asian countries in their struggle against colonial rule and for national independence, as, for instance, seen in the Bandung Conference (ibid.). In fact, the anticolonial struggles

in Africa, as elsewhere, were as much human rights movements as nationalist movements (Ibhawoh, 2007).

The human rights discourse, also evident in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989), is rooted in ideological ideas of rationalism, secularism, universalism, individualism, and anthropocentrism. These ideas affect views on duty-rights conception, non-state-centric logics, individuality-community, peoples' rights, family as the natural unit of society, and human relationships with nature and time (Ibhawoh, 2007; Sánchez, 2020; Tamale, 2020).

The transition from doctrines of naturalism to positivism marked a significant shift in the way power was conceptualised, according to Sánchez (2020), with the sovereign state emerging as the central entity wielding power, eclipsing traditional societal structures. The state, thus, assumed the dual role of both the source of law and the subject of it by virtue of consent. This development led to a dichotomy where some states, primarily in the global north and considered "civilised", were recognised as subjects of international law, while others, often categorised as "uncivilised", were relegated to the status of objects of international law. The consolidation of state sovereignty further entrenched the state-centric paradigm, in which the state bore the primary responsibility as the duty bearer. This bolstered the state's position as the originator of normative frameworks, enforceability, protection, accountability, and provision in the international system.

Both the UDHR and the UNCRC spring from Western liberal thinking, which emphasises individual autonomy. The pinnacle of rights is the rational and autonomous (hu)man, motivated by self-interest and obliged to nothing and no one beyond his or herself (Fregoso, 2014; Ibhawoh, 2007). Despite some articles (like articles 18-21 and 28-30 in UDHR) address the community perspective, the influence of human rights framed as personal, individualistic rights is significant (Aitken, 2018; Fregoso, 2014; Laufer-Ukeles, 2016). As scholars have criticised, this has resulted in interpretations of rights as divisive, competitive, and individualist, creating boundaries between right-bearing individuals, thus promoting polarisation and conflict (Zafran, 2009, 186). The UNCRC is, therefore, perceived to "…pit the claim of one individual against another without adequate attention to the web of relations that is not reducible to individual claims" (Minow & Lyndon, 1996, p. 6).

2. A decolonial approach to (children's) human rights

Decolonial studies has been described as a "Latin American perspective which seeks to demythologise Eurocentric structures of knowledge, being and power which have served the purpose of colonisation and domination," calling "into question the idea of modernity itself as a unique cultural and political event which put Europe at the centre of universal history and civilisation, past and future" (de Castro, 2020, p. 3). Quijano (2007) calls this intimate connection between modernity/coloniality the cultural complex of coloniality,

where European experience is centred as a universalist paradigm of knowledge. The notion of coloniality of power addresses the interlinkages between power, knowledge, racial hierarchy and capitalism, stressing how such connections reflect a continuation of Euro-centred colonialism, also after the end of 'formal colonialism' through its successor, Western imperialism (Quijano, 2000). The colonisation of the imagination of the dominated is part of a seductive power connected to the logic of development and modernity, which continues to have a dominant position (Quijano, 2007).

The intertwining of human rights and colonisation histories is complex and multifaceted. As Ibhawoh (2007) notes about the history of Nigeria (and other former British colonies), the discourses of rights permeated traditional social and political systems, European missionary work, the antislavery movement, colonial conquest and control, and the nationalist movement for independence. The rhetoric of rights hence imbued both the coloniser's legitimation of his right to rule and civilise and the political struggles to challenge and ultimately end colonisation, facilitating both domination and liberation.

Echoing the genealogy of the Eurocentric discourses described above, advocates of cultural pluralism criticise the human rights movement for being too Western-oriented and reminiscent of a tradition of Western imperialism and paternalism (Ibhawoh, 2007). Regarding modern children's rights agendas, these are perceived as new forms of imperialism seeking to control and dictate the lives of children from the global south justified through a toxic cocktail of power, morality, and the superiority of Western discourses (Faulkner & Nyamutata, 2020). As argued by Ibhawoh (2007),

> international human rights have an inherently colonial dimension since they involve challenges to the practice, and sometimes even sovereignty, of particular regions in the name of universal standards deriving from and largely enforced by the West. (p.5)

To decolonise human rights, we need to acknowledge the contributions of non-Western societies to the development of the contemporary human rights corpus (see Ibhawoh, 2007). This task is connected with the main aim of this report and *K Reporters*, where a diverse group of scholars from the Global north and the global south discuss these concepts in different countries and regions. Decolonial scholars are particularly sceptical of the concept of universalism, as pointed out by Barreto (2018):

> The hegemonic discourse of rights presents itself as abstract and ahistorical, as if it was the result of the exercise of thought, without any geopolitical site as a factual source (p. 490).

In legal tradition, human rights are generally considered universal and politically impartial, based on a concept of 'common good justice' (Rawls, 1993). Since human rights and children's rights are proclaimed universal in their scope of application, entitlements and formulation of content, their epistemological roots need to be critically explored (Sánchez, 2020). Drawing on Chakravarty, Barreto (2018) encourages us to be critical of concepts that are presented as universal, as they tend to have "an inherent relationship with their locus of enunciation or the material context from which they emerge" (p. 489)

and are consequently historical and local. Ernesto Laclau (1992), an Argentinian political theorist and philosopher, argues that the term "universal" was initially interpreted as the 'logic of incarnation'. This understanding was later replaced by the logic of rationalism, which arose during modernity and was solidified during the Enlightenment, and at a later stage, the universal became 'the symbol of a missing fullness' (the empty signifier) (in Sánchez, 2020). Also, of relevance here is Chakravarty's (2007) *Provincialising Europe*, which criticises Eurocentrism by pointing out that concepts presented as universal are rooted in Europe's specific historical and material circumstances. This challenges the notion of these concepts being transcendental or absolute, arguing that they are historical and local, like any concept born in other parts of the world.

Fregoso (2014) suggests that taking a decolonial perspective on human rights involves considering different perspectives on what it means to be human and on the concept of rights. This requires moving beyond the traditional and legal definition of human rights and considering knowledge systems that have been marginalised during colonization. Similarly, Faulkner and Nyamutata (2020) argue that it is necessary to push dominant theories of "childhood" into the background to reconsider and diversify children's rights (which resembles initiatives of approaching children's rights from below, see part 3). In his analysis of Nigerian history, Ibhawoh (2007) dismisses the notion that the concept of human rights originated solely in the West and was subsequently imposed on Africa. He finds this idea deeply problematic, paternalistic, and lacking historical context. Ibhawoh argues that many African societies had well-established traditions of discussing rights in oral and scripted forms long before European contact. However, contemporary interpretations of rights in research have tended to overshadow these pre-existing traditions. Likewise, Liebel (2012a) asserts that children's rights pre-existed the UNCRC, and its roots are spread across time and space, especially if we include conceptualisations that are not codified in legal documents.

In contrast to the Western ideology of rights based on the abstract and autonomous individual, motivated by self-interest and obliged to nothing and no one beyond himself or herself (Fregoso, 2014; Ibhawoh, 2007), African and Indigenous conceptualisations of rights are based not on the individual but on the community to which the individual is related, focusing on obligations and duties (Ibhawoh, 2007; Sánchez, 2020). According to Faulkner and Nyamutata (2020), these "societies often espouse communal goals more highly, such as learning to live in harmony with one another, competent participation in social events, obedience to authority" (p. 75). According to Ibhawoh (2007), the quintessence of the formulation of rights in precolonial African societies was the conception of the individual as a moral being endowed with rights but also bounded by duties, which fostered communal solidarity, sustained the kinship system, and ensured cohesion in communities. This, however, is not due to African exceptionalism but to moral, epistemological, and ontological traits recognised in many cultures beyond the African continent (see also Barreto, 2018), thus possessing universal ideals (Ibhawoh, 2007). Rights, therefore, should be conceptualised as collectivist rather than individualist,

embodied, not abstract, contingent rather than certain, and interdependent and interconnected instead of autonomous and unencumbered (Fregoso, 2014).

Ibhawoh (2007) argues that in the Western conception of rights, the fundamental unit of society is the individual and that notions of rights and justice within Western law are constructed around the fetish of the abstract individual. Furthermore, the primary basis of securing human existence in society is through rights, not duties, and the primary method of securing these rights is through a legal process where rights are claimed as absolute entitlements and adjudicated upon, not through reconciliation, repentance, and education as in many African societies. This stands in contrast to the matrix of entitlements and obligations that foster communal solidarity and sustain kinship systems that are the basis of the African conception of human rights.

Although decolonial approaches to human rights are critical to the Euro-centric genealogy, scholars do not argue to discard the idea of human rights altogether. As explained by Chakravarty (2007), provincialising Europe is not a project of rejecting or discarding European thought. Relating to a body of thought to which one largely owes one's intellectual existence cannot be a matter of exacting what Leela Gandhi has aptly called "postcolonial revenge." European thought is at once both indispensable and inadequate in helping us to think through the experiences of political modernity in non-Western nations, and provincialising Europe becomes the task of exploring how this thought—which is now everybody's heritage and which affect us all— may be renewed from and for the margins (p. 16).

According to Barreto (2018), a decolonial approach to human rights involves 1) criticising Eurocentric or Western thinking, 2) retrieving concepts from the perspective of the colonised world, and 3) establishing a dialogue between these two approaches. Critiquing Eurocentric thinking involves highlighting the abstract and idealistic understanding present in the traditional theory of human rights and uncovering its European historical origins, demonstrating the genealogical connection that links them to the particular historical and geographical context in which they were developed (see part 1). Following Chakravarty (2007), then, the human rights discourse needs to be "renewed from and for the margins" (p. 16). Lastly, Barreto (2018) encourages dialogue to allow for "a more comprehensive understanding of rights, a non-Eurocentric or plural view of human rights" (p. 492). This will allow us to transcend the limited understanding of human rights as defined by law and challenge the conventional beliefs about universal and absolute human rights (Fregoso, 2014), cross-fertilisation codified ideas with subaltern understandings.

3. Critical perspectives on children's rights: Readings from childhood studies

Childhood Studies have developed in tandem with children's rights discourses, both as a support (for instance, through theorising on children's agency and participatory rights)

and as a critique. In this section, some of the critical arguments will be described, and then some alternative approaches will be offered. According to Twum-Danso (2024), the key tenets of critical perspectives on children's rights include:

a. Critique of dominant discourses which adopt a positivist and legalistic position

b. Critique of a top-down approach results in a very technical discussion on "objective standards"

c. United in contextual orientation

d. Committed to emphasising children's rights as constructed through interactions between people as they live their everyday lives

e. Committed to foregrounding the notion of rights

f. Bringing cultural norms into children's rights

One major criticism is the prevalent positivist and legalistic interpretation of children's rights. This approach leads to a top-down method and technical discussions on "objective standards" (Hanson & Nieuwenhuys, 2013; Reynaert et al., 2009; Twum-Danso, 2024). According to Reynaert et al. (2009), focusing on standard-setting, implementation, and monitoring in the global human rights industry has resulted in technocratic consensus thinking. Consequently, the main debate revolves around "the most effective and efficient way to implement children's rights, how best to monitor this implementation, and how this can be organized" (Reynaert et al., 2009, p. 528) rather than examining and problematising the understanding of rights themselves.

Closely linked with the positivist interpretation of children's rights is the critique of its de-contextualisation (Faulkner & Nyamutata, 2020; Reynaert et al., 2009; Twum-Danso, 2024). As Boyden (1997) noted almost three decades ago, a hegemonic (middle-class) perception of childhood has been exported from the global north to the South. This discourse is highly selective and stereotyped, portraying childhood as a separate period of life consisting of innocence, play, and education within the spheres of family life and formal schooling. This discourse has had and continues to have an enormous influence on human rights legislation and social policy in many countries, particularly through the proliferation and implementation of the UNCRC. As Boyden (1997) further argues, this influence is highly significant for the development of a global standard of childhood because it downplays the impact of broader social, economic, political, and cultural conditions in shaping social phenomena. Rather, it tends to support individual, remedial solutions to social problems, where priority is given to individual causation, highlighting individual dysfunction or pathology.

Critical scholars within childhood studies encourage a contextual orientation, which considers the sociocultural, economic, political, and historical contexts interweaving with the interpretation and implementation of children's rights. Reynaert et al. (2015) argue that children's rights should take this variety of contexts into account, leaving space for a context-specific approach. Context-sensitivity also partially addresses the criticism that

children's rights have been too Western or Eurocentric in their formulation and implementation.

Drawing on Husserl and Habermas, Reynaert and Roose (2015) argue for a lifeworld orientation to children's rights. This orientation concerns how people construct and reconstruct ideas of human rights in their everyday lives. In a lifeworld orientation, an individual's meaning-making needs to be understood in the complex interplay with a context's social, political, cultural, and historical traits. Hence, it explores the intersection of the subject-relative and the socially, politically, culturally and historically structured because "through intersubjective experience, people constitute their common lifeworld consisting of prevailing structures" (p. 104).

Also critical to the common top-down approach to children's rights, Hanson and Nieuwenhuys (2013) propose the concept of 'living rights' to capture the complexities of children's rights as an open-ended endeavour responsive to the world that the young construct as part of their everyday lives in the new world order. The concept is tightly interwoven with social justice and translations. This kind of bottom-up approach embraces the ways in which children, families and other stakeholders engage with, interpret and give meaning to rights. As such, the concept 1) challenges the idea that children's rights are exclusively defined by international institutions or states, 2) questions dominant views on the relation between the centre and the periphery of children's rights, and 3) offers opportunities for empirical investigation of how co-existing, non-hierarchical forms of children's rights. Living rights perceive children's rights as dynamic and contextual, as an imperfect compromise negotiated at a certain moment in time and in specific contexts by individuals representing different local and organizational interests and possessing different kinds of knowledge, skills and power. International children's rights law is but one of the many possible understandings of the rights of the child along with more marginalised or local conceptions, such as those embodied by (reinvented) customs and rules of behaviour.

Moving away from a technocratic approach to the UNCRC, evaluating whether it is correctly applied, Hanson and Nieuwenhuys (2013) urge for an approach recognising that children's rights can have many (sometimes contradictory) meanings.

Lastly, and in a similar vein, Liebel (2012b) criticises the heavy focus on states' responsibilities and legal procedures at the expense of the broader meaning and implications, including the social and political contexts and their significance for children. As he notes, a contextualised exploration of children's rights (or lack thereof) aligns with the key tenets of Childhood Studies, begging the question of how a universal set of rights may embrace the vast diversity of childhoods and conditions of growing up globally. Liebel argues that the UNCRC leaves little space to imagine childhoods that do not conform to the 'modern' childhoods (cf. Boyden, 1997 & above). Liebel and Saadi (2012) call for a subject-oriented approach to avoid a mere emphasis on state obligations regarding implementing children's rights, giving voice to the understanding of the rights-holders themselves and their communities. In this—as with living rights above—lies a view

on human rights as part and parcel of social struggles and movements, not only the legal systems.

4. Why CRC should be situated in local contexts of the global south

The need to challenge Western hegemony on understanding children's rights has been one of the pressing debates in the social studies of childhood. Elizabeth A. Faulkner, in one of her seminal contributions (Faulkner, 2020) stated that scholarship on children's rights needs to be disentangled from the hegemonic Western epistemologies if it is to remain relevant. According to Faulkner, it is important to ensure engagement with other conceptions of rights to remove children's rights from their hegemonic and monolingual position. Studies informed by the postcolonial theories assert that childhood philosophies and practices originating from the global north tend to be more oppressive, coercive, and repressive to values, traditions, and norms of people in the global south (Brett & Guyver, 2021; Shahjahan, et. al. 2021). Studies such as Twum-Danso Imoh et al. (2022), Liebel, (2020), and de Castro, (2020) opt to deconstruct the global north knowledge hegemony and liberate people's Indigenous knowledge of children's rights so as illustrate its diversities across cultures. Accordingly, debates on the need for contextualization of children's rights have been increasing in terms of scope and quality.

The right-based approach to understanding childhood and children's everyday lives across different cultural, economic, and political contexts has been more vibrant. Above all, the interdisciplinary approach to constructing knowledge about the diversities and dynamics of arguments related to children's rights has gotten attention more than it was before. Despite these debates and contributions, the inclusion of children's rights perspectives from the global south has limitations in many ways. Observing children's rights and realities through the lenses of theories from the global north, many scholars still choose to focus on observing children in the global south through the lenses of poverty and indigenous knowledge of the people as abusive social environments, and traditional harmful practices. Researchers from the global south often ignore that CRC was constructed within the contexts of childhood and children's situations in the global north and may be less applicable for children in the contexts of the global south. This report intends to contribute to the critical views on children's rights by hinting at the importance of creating space for global south cultural values, practices, and indigenous epistemologies in the reconstruction of children's rights. With this intention, the report tries to show why universal children's rights (CRC) should be contextualised and inclusive of epistemologies in the global south and that children's rights in the global south context intersect with social phenomena such as age and gender.

In the global south, governments and a multitude of development actors attempt to implement universal children's rights (CRC) to ensure children's well-being. UN agencies, European Union, embassies, faith-based organizations, and governments are investing a lot to realise universal children's rights in the global south. However, within communities

at the grassroots, universal children's rights seem to be less intelligible (Jirata, 2022; Hanson and Nieuwenhuys, 2013; Liebel, 2012). First, the universal child rights do not recognise that children's rights intersect with adults' rights, and it is not possible to address children's rights as separate from adults' (Abebe, 2013). Children's rights are connected to adults' rights because the social, political, and economic contexts in which children live with adults often affect their rights. For instance, the areas where there is no peace, political stability, and climate change, children and their parents extremely suffer from displacement, lack of food and shelter as well as lack of health service and protection. Such catastrophic situations expose children to serious deprivations of rights and victimise them as it also victimises adults and youth (Jirata, 2021). Put in other words, the provision of children with their rights in the local contexts demands the restoration of peace and stability and the creation of climate-resilient livelihoods. This implies that it is unrealistic to implement children's rights separately from adult rights. It is also clear that the implementation of children's rights in the local context is connected to peace-building, democracy, and climate change issues. In the local contexts, the attempt to implement universal children's rights could not be intelligible in the political, social, cultural, and economic contexts of people in the global south (Jirata 2022a; 2022b). Secondly, provisions in CRC are less intelligible to the people in the local contexts as it is less meaningful in their social and cultural contexts, values, and norms related to childhood and childcare practices (Jirata 2019; 2022a). Therefore, contextualisation of children's rights so that it becomes meaningful in the local contexts is important. Here, contextualization refers to making rights meaningful in the local contexts so that the local people understand universal children's rights from their local viewpoints. This can be achieved through the integration of the local children's rights and duties into the discussion about children's rights (Jirata, 2022a).

Thirdly, the universal children's rights do not recognise children's work in the global south. In most countries of the global south children have the right to work from age 14 and work is considered to be a context for children's learning and play (Abebe and Tefera, 2014). Through working, children perform their intergenerational duties and develop their social and cognitive skills (Jirata and Kjørrholt, 2015). Accordingly, children are encouraged to work and actively take part in the household labour divisions. In the global south contexts, children's protection, provision, and participation issues are considered to be the moral obligations of parents and community and Liebel expresses this reality as 'moral rights':

> The distinction in the CRC is based on the assumption that children have different needs than adults. These should be satisfied by rights to special protection and provision, or rather developmental rights. In legal theory, rights that are deduced from needs (for instance, special vulnerability) are generally called moral rights (Archard & Macleod, 2002). Regardless of their codification in formal rights systems, the historically developed 'moral' (self-) commitment of society to care for the especially 'needy' or 'weak' is manifested. (2012, p. 44)

According to Liebel (2012a), children's rights can be fulfilled through the moral commitments of societies rather than the codified rules. This assertion implies that

provisions in the CRC should appeal to the moral and social values of a society and be meaningful in the local cultural contexts. By introducing "children's living rights" as a complementary concept (see also p. 11), Hanson and Nieuwenhuys (2013) argue that the way people understand children's rights can be diverse and CRC has to be responsive to local values, norms, lived contexts, economy, and social phenomena. According to Liebel (2020), de Castro (2020), and Jirata (2022a, 2022b), the contents and implementations of CRC need to be responsive to local livelihood contexts, parenting and childcare values, and local conceptualisation of childhood.

PART II. Children's rights from decolonial and intersectional theories

a. Indigenous children's rights

The differentiation of children's rights based on the economic situations, gender, and age concepts is living but has little research attention so far. For example, there is a scanty number of studies that show how children's rights for boys could be different from that of girls. Jirata (2022b) states that the Indigenous[1] children's rights are age and gender specific. The kind of rights to which children are entitled varies across children's stages of development. Accordingly, the rights of children in early childhood vary from the rights of children in middle childhood and late childhood (Jirata, 2015). Values embedded in the Indigenous cultures set forth about how parents should care for young children, children in middle age, and older children, what young children deserve and do not deserve, how older children should be socialised and educated, what the community should do for children and expected behaviours during childhood (Qamar, 2022; Jirata and Kjørholt, 2015). This reality helps us to understand that values in traditions implicate parents' need to care for children based on their ages and levels of maturity. Jirata (2022b) asserts that similar to rights, children's duties vary based on children's ages. Accordingly, children under five years old are not expected to bear duties but follow their peer members to learn about how to perform their duties in future. Children above five years old share household duties by their age and physical maturity (Jirata and Kjørholt, 2015). In rural Ethiopia, children work on taking care of siblings, looking after cattle, fetching water, fetching firewood, farming, etc. These realities indicate how children's rights intersect with children's age and level of maturity.

Likewise, children's rights intersect with gender. Studies show that the rights children deserve and the duties they are expected to accomplish vary between boys and girls (Jirata, 2022a, 2022b). For instance, among the Guji people, a baby boy has the right to get a heifer as a gift from his parents, and a baby girl is not entitled to this right. When a baby boy is born, a father puts a piece of the umbilical cord of the baby in the mouth of

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[1] In this section we will consider Indigenous groups in a broad sense, this definition comprehends all those communities that maintain pre-colonial cultural practices, which are mainly located in the global south.

the heifer. This practice indicates that the heifer and its reproduction belong to the baby in the future. Then, the father buries another piece of the umbilical cord in the soil and this practice symbolises that the land belongs to the baby boy. Baby girls are not entitled to such rights, and these practices are not performed for them. In such a tradition, boys have better rights than girls and are entitled to the inheritance of resources. Girls are believed to be members of the families of future husbands and do not have the right to inherit resources from their biological parents (Jirata, 2019). Similarly, birth celebration for babies is gender-based. One of the celebrations is the ululation of women upon the birth of a baby. The frequency of ululation is different for a baby boy and a baby girl. They ululate five times for a baby boy and three for a baby girl. Barite (43-year-old woman) expressed this tradition as follows:

> In the Guji culture, women welcome a newly born baby at time of delivery by ululating. They ululate five times if it is a baby boy. They Ululate three times if it is a baby girl. The father puts the umbilical cord of the baby boy in the mouth of an infer. That infer and its reproduces will remain the assets of the baby boy. However, the father does not do this for a baby girl. That is the norm in our culture.

These instances indicate that children's rights vary with children's gender. This situation shows the differentiation of rights as part of the indigenous caregiving practices. One of the elderly people from the Guji people said, "Individuals (both children and adults) deserve rights according to our common norms and values. Their rights and duties are prescribed and guided by the common norms and values". The person added that ululating for a boy five times and for a girl three times does not mean that boys have more rights and duties than girls. It is just a value of differentiating a boy from a girl because they are born different, in this context girls and boys are culturally constructed as different instead. They perform different roles, rights, and duties. That does not mean a boy is superior to a girl. That is simply engendering and differentiation of roles. This assertion reflects that the rights of individuals including children are configured in the cultural values and norms. From a critical approach, we should historically analyse the prevalence and resignification of these practices, and the impact in children's lives.

Similarly, the implementation of children's rights demands economic development in which governments and parents can provide children with what is necessary for their appropriate development and fulfilment of rights (Abebe, 2023). When parents have better income, children can have access to good nutrition which is one of the fundamental aspects of their rights (Jirata, 2022b). It is within the context of democratic and stable political systems that children can live in a peaceful, nurturing, and clean social and natural environment and enjoy their rights in this aspect. This reality indicates how children's rights intersect with economic and political perspectives.

The intersection of children's rights with gender and concepts of age is one of the features of Indigenous children's rights. From the gender perspective, the Indigenous children's rights as observed in the empirical instances presented above, rights are gender-based. It means that boys and girls are entitled to different rights and duties. Children are

socialised into different rights and duties based on their gender. Such gender-based differentiation of rights is part of gender socialisation in the global south. However, as we will address in the next section gendered socialisation—and the inequalities it creates—is a global phenomenon, not specific to the global south. Feminist movements in many parts of the world, including the global south, are actively challenging these norms. In this section, what we just highlight how intersectionality recognises the cultural specificity of contexts while still allowing space for critical reflection. Children's rights also intersect with age-based studies of childhood. In this case, children are entitled to different rights and duties based on their ages. It is to mean the rights and duties of children in the early childhood is different from those in the middle childhood and that of the middle childhood children is different from those in the late childhood. This is embedded in the age-based socialization of children.

b. "Right?" to gender and sexuality education

Is gender and sexuality education (only) a right?

Gender and sexuality education has widely been advocated as a fundamental right for children and young people. Although such education is frequently framed within rights-based discourses and positioned as essential to the fulfilment of children's rights, the most influential international legal framework concerning children's rights, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), does not explicitly reference gender or sexuality education (Bourke, Mallon, and Maunsell 2022).

While the UNCRC has been extensively critiqued for its adult-centric and ethnocentric orientations, there has been less attention to its lack of gender perspective, specifically, its failure to address sexist and LGBTIphobic violence and discrimination, its refusal to acknowledge children's and young people's sexual agency, and, therefore, its inadequate provisions for access to comprehensive sexuality education. As a result, issues related to gender and sexuality remain largely excluded from the UNCRC (Allen 2007; Linde 2019; Bourke, Mallon, and Maunsell 2022). Joosten (2024) further interrogates the UNCRC through a queer lens, arguing that the convention reproduces normative assumptions that marginalise queer children and deny the diversity of childhood sexualities.

This lack of explicit universal recognition of gender and sexual rights results in children's and young people's access to gender and sexuality education being largely dependent on local policies and is often subordinated to the social, cultural, and political controversies that this topic tends to generate. As Bhana (2007) highlights in the South African context, global discourses on children's sexual rights often fail to resonate with local realities, especially analysing the case when intersecting with public health crises such as HIV/AIDS.

Challenges of the institutionalisation of gender and sexuality education

There is a global consensus regarding gender and sexuality education, and that is that schools are a key site for delivering it. International bodies such as the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education (UN 2010) have recommended that comprehensive sexuality education be made mandatory and universally accessible from early childhood, with a holistic, scientific, and pluralistic approach. Similarly, organisations including the WHO among others, have highlighted schools as vital community spaces for promoting sexual health, preventing risky sexual behaviours, and providing children and young people with access to essential information (Ioannou et al. 2014; Kirby 2000; WHO Europe 2010). Educational settings, as Atkinson et al. (2023) argue, have both the responsibility and the potential to meaningfully engage with children's learning in this area.

However, the institutionalisation of gender and sexuality education within formal school settings must also be approached critically. As Allen (2007) shows, schools often regulate student sexuality through implicit cultural norms that deny children's sexual subjectivity and reinforce heteronormative ideals. This policing of sexuality is embedded within broader colonial and normative frameworks that conceptualise children as innocent and asexual (Robinson 2013), leading to a sanitised, disciplinary version of sexuality education. Atkinson et al. (2023) argue that traditional, developmentalist approaches to Relationship and Sex Education (RSE) impose linear, universal narratives of childhood that fail to account for children's diverse and non-linear experiences. In response, they propose the concept of "growing sideways" to reframe childhood through a lens of relationality, fluidity, and contextuality.

Beyond the inaccurate and partial framing of gender and sexuality education, it can be argued that its institutionalisation within formal education systems often activates underlying racist discourses. These discourses tend to frame the "failures" or "ineffectiveness" of the so-called comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) programs as the result of resistance from individuals or communities marked as culturally "other." In doing so, blame is subtly (or explicitly) shifted onto racialised and migrant populations, portraying them as barriers to progress or modernisation. Such racist narratives simplify the structural challenges within educational institutions themselves (such as heteronormativity, adultcentrism, colonial legacies among others) and reinforces cultural hierarchies in which white, Western norms are positioned as inherently more enlightened or progressive regarding gender and sexuality. As Twum-Danso Imoh (2016) and Bhana (2007) demonstrate, such framings ignore the diversity of values, histories, and epistemologies present in non-Western contexts, while simultaneously depoliticising the real material inequalities that shape educational effectiveness.

School as the meeting point for collective transformation

While it is important that international frameworks on children's rights explicitly include the right to access comprehensive gender and sexuality education, we argue that rights-based approaches often tend to individualise and decontextualise the issue. For this reason, this report considers that intersectional and situated approaches are necessary,

because the previous framing risks overlooking the broader social, cultural, and structural dimensions that shape children's and young people's lived experiences. As pointed out before, even when children are positioned as rights-holders, these frameworks often fail to engage with the gendered and intersectional power relations that structure those rights in practice.

In many ways, schools are simultaneously positioned as spaces of possibility and sites of regulation. As Twum-Danso Imoh (2012) suggest, dominant educational models often reflect the imposition of global frameworks onto local contexts, with insufficient attention to the plural forms of childhood that exist across cultural and historical locations. Therefore, while schools hold significant potential for engaging with gender and sexuality education, they must be reimagined as spaces of collective responsibility and transformation—rather than instruments of social conformity (Twum-Danso Imoh 2022; Ioannou et al. 2014).

Therefore, the rights language frames gender and sexuality justice as something that can be "achieved" through legal or institutional recognition, without addressing the ongoing social struggles that children and their communities face daily. By shifting the focus from "achieving rights" to engaging with everyday social struggles, we can highlight the importance of understanding children's lived experiences within broader socio-political contexts. This means considering the structural inequalities, such as race, class, gender, and colonial legacies, that shape how children experience gender and sexuality at a social level. It is crucial to acknowledge what is happening here and now, to listen to how children and young people are experiencing gender and sexuality in their daily lives, and to take discomfort seriously, not as something to avoid, but as a sign that meaningful, transformative work is underway. As Allen (2007) and Robinson (2013) argue, discomfort often arises when normative expectations around childhood, innocence, and sexuality are disrupted, and these moments offer powerful openings for learning, reflection, and change.

Rather than imposing top-down, one-size-fits-all programs, gender and sexuality education must emerge from the ground up, rooted in the lived realities of children, families, and communities. This means working with the complexity of local contexts, histories, and cultural values, as Twum-Danso Imoh (2016) reminds us, and being responsive to the multiplicity of childhoods that exist beyond dominant Western models.

Crucially, this also requires the involvement of the entire community. Following Ioannou et al. (2014), sexuality education should be understood as a collective responsibility, one that engages children, parents, educators, and wider social actors in sustained, reciprocal dialogue. Education, in this framing, becomes not just about the transmission of knowledge but about building shared understandings and relational accountability across generations.

Reciprocal learning, then, is central to this vision. Drawing on Twum-Danso's (2022) concept of mutual obligation and interdependence, we must move away from models that

cast children as passive recipients of adult knowledge and instead recognise them as active participants in shaping ethical, responsive approaches to gender and sexuality. This perspective aligns with Atkinson et al.'s (2023) idea of "growing sideways," which disrupts linear, normative notions of development and opens space for diverse, situated experiences of becoming.

Ultimately, schools can become transformative spaces not because they deliver predefined rights-based content, but because they support communities in collectively negotiating how to live, relate, and learn together in ways that affirm gender and sexuality justice.

c. Children's right to care as relational

Care in the global polycrisis

From the sociology of care and feminisms, Izquierdo (2003) approached to the production of subjectivity in care activities, which is mediated by the sexual division of labour, as well as by the role of the state, which can be minimal (leaving the provision of resources to the market) or perfectionist (the state is responsible for solving the detected needs). From this perspective, "the socialisation of care" constitutes our subjectivities, relationalities, and desires, since care is involved in the production of existence, and we learn it from others. In other words: "The problem of care belongs to each and every one, as is that of the production of goods. We are all objects of care, and we care, as we are all productive and we consume or use our productions" (Izquierdo 2003, p. 22). In addition to pointing out the crises of care, this author also highlighted that gender-based violence as the other side of care is an indicator of resistance to the socialisation of care by analysing the relationship between care and sexism. This perspective of care was developed in the nineties, and was inaugurated by Fisher and Tronto (1990), who held the idea of "caring citizenship" in the formation of democracy, thus providing a social and political conception of care:

> In 1990, Berenice Fisher and I offered this broad definition of care: "On the most general level, we suggest that caring be viewed as a species activity that includes everything that we do to maintain, continue, and repair our 'world' so that we can live in it as well as possible. That world includes our bodies, ourselves, and our environment, all of which we seek to interweave in a complex, life-sustaining web" (see also Tronto 1993, 103; Fisher and Tronto 1990, 40). (Tronto 2013, p. 19)

In this direction, Precarias a la Deriva (2004) examined how a transformation in the care chain in the Western countries has been produced since the rupture with the Fordist model of family, which relegated women to home, contributing free of charge to the maintenance of the domestic social infrastructure of care. From the nineteenth century onwards, a model of collective services based on women and the family had already begun to be produced, aimed at controlling and pacifying the population and which also

fell into crisis in the period between the two world wars. According to this group, the current crisis of deregulation is related to the emergence of a new repertoire of workplaces related to care services, in the face of the scarcity of public services and because a double workday of some "liberated women" oriented to both work and reproduction, leads them to look for other women to outsource this second activity.

The globalisation of care implies approaching care from a transnational perspective to subvert capitalist logics and the precariousness of bodies, as well as the marketisation of care. The care crisis in the Global north has led to an externalization of care and its capitalisation; as well as has provoked a crisis of the sustainability of life in the South and the transfer of South-North care work, which consists of emigrating to care. The care network directly affects the wellbeing of children in the global south, who are dispossessed of their caregivers that will provide for care and wellbeing to other children in the Global north. Facing the globalisation of care, this group claimed for the construction of global chains of affects and a care revolution, to resignify care through strengthening alliances between all women affected by these transformations.

Furthermore, Fisher and Tronto (1990) have described the different phases of care that might provide an analytical framework to understand the assemblage of actors, actions and structures, and these steps include: caring about or noticing unmet needs; caring for or the responsibility to take care of them; care-giving or the labour of care; care-receiving, which requires an assessment of the care provided; and care-with or its consistency regarding the principles of democracy, justice and equity (Tronto 2013). Framing care in globalisation might consider the current "planetary polycrisis" as "a set of inextricably entangled system crises that are nonetheless irreducible to each other, or that cannot be reduced to a single system of agency" (Albert 2024, 17). In this context, "the roots of today's crisis of care lie in capitalism's inherent social contradiction –or rather, in the acute form this contradiction assumer today, in financialized capitalism" (Fraser 2017, p. 36). The crisis of care overlaps with other economic adversities, provision of goods and services, environmental challenges, expropriation of land and housing, and health crisis, among others, and is stressed by war, abuse, and pandemics, among others.

Reconceptualising ethics and politics of care

Feminist ethics of care was developed by Carol Gilligan (1982) to confront Kohlberg's stages of moral development and highlights the inclination of women to generate wellbeing by constructing a less abstract approach to ethics based on care, which became situated and interpersonal facing ethical dilemmas. Currently, this ethics of care needs to be reinterpreted and rethought from contemporary feminist approaches that denaturalise and deconstruct gender power relations from non-binarisms. Following the idea of caring-with, which give sense to the link between care and the influence of care work in our subjectivities framed in the current global polycrisis, some researchers like Vodovnik (2024) realise of a turn in researching care, which seems more engaged with the idea of caring-with, by the scholars reflecting on the political, economic and social organizational dynamics of care, as well as on the practices of care. This repolitisation of

care focuses on the relational dimension of care as entangled with life and conceived as dynamic, even it seems that this has been less explored in childhoods and youths:

> We have thus witnessed the conceptual expansion and a repoliticisation of care, with the politics and ethics of care also being conceptualised as mutual aid (Spade 2020), accompaniment (Farmer 2013; Lynd 2012), friendship (May 2012; Schwarzenbach 2009), camaraderie (Dean 2019), mālama (Osorio 2021), solidarity (Inouye et al. 2023), conceptually linked to ailment (Zechner et al. 2022) or viewed as a survival strategy or palliative politics in the post-apocalyptic world (Brown and Woodly 2021; Grove 2019). However, such discussions generally do not systematically explore the role and potential held by young people, their political engagement and innovation regarding climate change. (Vodovnik 2024, p. 389)

Interdependence, mutual responsibility, and vulnerability are constitutive of the human condition. Based on Levinas' and Arendt's theories, this have been developed further by Cavarero (2016), and Judith Butler, who reflect on who is allowed to live, and how to make lives liveable facing necropolitics,[2] under the consideration that "radical dependence makes us equals" (Butler 2018). Judith Butler (2018) situates vulnerability to understand social relations and the global and mutual bounds and obligations. From this perspective, we should analyse how the absence of care or violence are embedded in the modes of colonization and subordination, adultcentrism, racism, poverty, social and gender oppressions, and are constitutive of modes of exploitation, discrimination and exclusion. In fact, from this perspective, care is directly entangled with survivability, and becomes political, which means that when we recognise we are interdependent, we also recognise otherness. In Matters of care, Puig de la Bellacasa (2017), invites us to reformulate vulnerability and pay attention to the mutual acts of care in the world:

> ...politics of care engages much more than a moral stance; it involves affective, ethical, and hands-on agencies of practical and material consequence. Another critical dimension of this generic conception is the accent on care as vital in interweaving a web of life, expressing a key theme in feminist ethics, an emphasis on interconnection and interdependency in spite of the aversion to "dependency" in modern industrialized societies that still give prime value to individual agency. While this field is often focused on unpacking the specificity of "dependency work" –necessary when we are unable to take care of ourselves (Kittay 1999; Kittay and Feder 2002)– it also suggests interdependency as the ontological state in which humans and countless other beings unavoidably live. (Puig de la Bellacasa 2017, p. 4)

The ensemble of care relations and the acts of care, become a "matters of care" for Puig de la Bellacasa (2017), who dialogues with feminist posthumanism, actor-network theory and relational ontologies. From her point of view, inspired by Donna Haraway and Bruno Latour, the relations of care extend beyond human and incorporate more-than-human in the entanglements of care, here "ethics of collective empowerment that puts caring at the

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[2] Based on Foucault's biopolitics, Achille Mbembe (2019) refers to necropolitics as the modes of domination and controlling of lives, which is directly related to precariousness and death, and mainly affects African population.

heart of the search of everyday life struggles for hopeful flourishing of all beings, of bios understood as a more than human community" (Puig de la Bellacasa 2017, p. 22). On the other hand, from decolonial theories, by comparing Western ethics of care and Afro-communitarian ethics, we should move towards a more complex vision of relationality and care as relational and social. From an Afrocentric ethics, care involves "not merely caring for others' quality of life, but also sharing a way of life with others," then care is about responsibility but also community involvement because this approach is more based on "identifying with others or sharing a form of life with them [that] involves forms of cognition, emotion, conation, intention, volition and motivation that differ from those inherent to a caring relationship" (Metz 2013, 85).

Researching care as relational for children's rights

After reconceptualising care from a relational perspective that contest the resistances towards the socialisation of care in global capitalism as well as with the aim of incorporating feminist, postcritical, posthumanist and decolonial perspectives to rethink ethics and politics of care, critical studies of care and children's rights might expand. This report does not claim for a new set of rights, rather it proposes to reconceptualise children's rights critically after the repolitisation of care from relationality that is crucial for human condition. As current research on care and relationalities in children's rights from critical childhood studies demonstrate, new opportunities, orientations, and challenges for a local and situated research on care emerge from this perspective. The following table summarises the main studies of care as relational in critical children's rights studies that make evident this move toward community and collective rights:

Reconceptualising children's rights as relational	▪ Childhood's survivability and resistance (Mizen and Ofosu-Kusi 2010) ▪ Children's living rights and everyday rights (Hanson and Nieuwenhuys 2012) ▪ Care, relationality and interdependence (Abebe 2019) ▪ Vulnerability in children's agencies (Rifà-Valls and Bertran 2020)
from the perspective of invisibilised acts	▪ Children as caregivers (Evans 2013) ▪ Queering child and youth care (Zaman and Anderson-Nather 2021) ▪ Intergenerational care and solidarity (McGovern and Devine, 2016) ▪ Childcare and Indigenous children (Findlay et. al. 2023) ▪ Children and Earth caring (Pacini-Ketchabaw and Boucher 2019)
towards a collectivisation of care	▪ Caring communities and community parenting (Asmorowati, Pitaloka and Triana 2019) ▪ Reciprocity and mutual care (Twum-Danso Imoh, 2022) ▪ Life-world approach in childhoods (Reynaert 2024) ▪ Pedagogies of collective intersectional care (Pham, Vita and Nyachae 2024)

Table 1. Mapping the local and situated research on children's rights as relational care

In short, care from the perspective of interdependence and relationality pushes us to reread children's rights from a complex assemblage of lives, affects, desires, learnings

and cures that constitute the entanglement of subjects' experiences of worlds. Moreover, feminist and non-Eurocentric ethics and politics of care will not only be transferred to research, by creating a new framework or a scenario for researching care with children, it will also contribute by reflecting on the praxis of caring researchers and professionals. In the end, this relational approach to care re-inscribes children in society, by recognising them co-responsible and life-relational makers from a non-adultcentric perspective.

d. Approaches to biocultural rights

When laws go against nature, there is no reason to obey them.
Manuel Quintin Lame (Indigenous leader, 1880-1967)

This section presents an approach to understanding biocultural rights concerning children's rights and contextualising these rights from the situated perspective. This endeavour seeks to contribute to an ongoing discussion on the decolonial construction of rights. It highlights the connections between cultural and biocultural rights and examines their relationship with nature and ecosystems as subjects of law. Furthermore, it underscores the importance of recognising diverse identity practices within a framework of cultural plurality, which supports cultural justice and fosters cultural resistance as pathways for children's agency. This perspective facilitates a critical examination of identity practices in regions affected by war and conflict, emphasising a commitment to decolonising identities to avoid revictimising the communities involved in these processes. According to Sánchez Zapata:

> Biocultural rights, as the foundation of the rights of nature, arise in response to the coloniality of knowledge that has historically favoured knowledge (scientific rationalism) and marginalising other ways of knowing, particularly those related to spiritual and "mythical" experiences, as well as with other expressions of human experiences such as that of indigenous peoples. These rights are a typology that transcend social, economic, and cultural rights, as well as collective rights. They embody reciprocal protection consistent with the holistic perspectives of the ethnic worldviews that support them: furthermore, this approach not only promotes strong environmental advocacy but also fosters a framework for considering alternative methods of nature protection through the lens of intercultural justice and the rights of cultural groups. (2023, p. 101-102)

Ecosystems as subjects of law

When we place the (bio)cultural perspective in terms of cultural rights for children, we are emphasising the connections between culture and nature, which should not be seen as opposites. This means that the relationships between communities, the territories they inhabit, and the networks/systems/ecosystems that sustain them should not separate human and non-human cultures (González-Morales, 2022).

In this context, an important opportunity arises for the recognition of biocultural rights that extend beyond human cultural production. These rights acknowledge the significant agency of various ecosystems and diverse "non-human entities," allowing for cosmogonies and worldviews that transcend Eurocentric and hegemonic knowledge frameworks as Sánchez Zapata (2023) has explained. Thus, valuing the voices of water, mountains, dialects (non-official languages), and the different ecosystems to which we belong— including fluvial or river ecosystems as subjects of rights—becomes essential.

This recognition is crucial in contexts where struggles for territory are ongoing, especially considering recent transitions from war to peace processes. Many armed conflicts have originated from disputes over territory and the natural resources it holds, alongside the economic and developmental paradigms that accompany them.

Consequently, these conflicts are intertwined with environmental crises that manifest across intergenerational and intercultural perspectives, emphasising that both prominent and marginalised voices (Guha, 2002) —including those of children and "non-human entities"— needs inclusion in the shaping of these rights. Facilitating dialogue with these historically silenced voices, allowing them to share their narratives and assert their presence in alternative ways, necessitates a reimagined exercise of presence and agency. This involves rediscovering "other citizenships" that advocate for reciprocity in a biocultural framework.

Multiple exercises have emerged from various biocultural initiatives. A recent example is the *Biocultural Map of Colombia* (Ministerio de Cultura, 2024), which underscores the significance of the Convention on Biological Diversity that advocates for conservation efforts. This map was created during COP 16, an event that underscores the significance of the Convention on Biological Diversity. This convention promoted the conservation of biological diversity, the sustainable use of its components, and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits derived from the utilization of genetic resources; and it has been ratified by 196 countries.

From a biocultural perspective, the cultural rights of children are broadened to encompass the recognition of agency among non-human entities. This viewpoint is supported by the Universal Declaration of the Rights of Mother Earth (Latin American and Caribbean Parliament, 2010), which advocates for interdependent relationships not only among human beings but also with all living entities. Such relationships are crucial for restoring ecological balance, addressing the challenges posed by climate change, and enhancing the symbolic, spiritual, and material connections with both nature and children.

The recognition of rivers as living entities or sacred places, such as Sierra Nevada in Santa Marta (Arias, 2018), signifies their acknowledgment as subjects of law. This perspective entails engaging with the often-overlooked narratives of Indigenous peoples who have experienced significant colonisation, thus facilitating the reclamation and construction of knowledge through various epistemological frameworks.

Relationship between children's rights, cultural justice and cultural resistance

The relationship between the rights and duties of children involves both universal and local normative frameworks. These regulations have led to exclusions in specific contexts, where it is essential to pause and compare the established (hegemonic) discourses with those that emerge in particular realities. Therefore, the perspective of cultural rights for and with children is positioned as a fundamental need that must be addressed. It is necessary to recognise what has been established, identify current gaps, and reclaim and inventory existing practices in the local context that enable the weaving of conversations contributing to the reconfiguration of children's rights from a perspective of reciprocity and mutuality (Afua Twum-Danso Imoh, *K Reporters* International Workshop, 2024).

An initial discussion on these rights centres around cultural justice and resistance. Cultural justice involves questioning established labels as a form of rebellion against historical epistemic violence (Castro-Gómez, 2000). Advocating for cultural justice is not only for indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples but for all vulnerable groups in the global south, like in Colombia that is marked by narratives of violence and armed conflict. A pertinent local debate is emerging and is relevant to our project: it is historically acknowledged that indigenous and Afro-descendant communities, along with peasant (rural) communities, have been among the most vulnerable populations, with significant inequalities that have not been recognised totally. Furthermore, it is essential to understand that the groups with whom we engage in classroom and community processes are often heterogeneous. Within these groups, indigenous, peasants, children of former paramilitaries, and reincorporated may coexist, among others. We advocate for the principle of non-revictimisation in our work with these diverse communities and heterogeneous.

This relationship between cultural justice and cultural resistance serves as a potential framework for understanding children's rights from broader perspectives. It involves recognising or redefining rights more collectively, taking into account the collective subjectivities (Rivera, 2018) that form around a common cause. It is essential to acknowledge the historical struggles of territories and communities to allow them to voice their own experiences, which connect to wider communities. Imagining or reimagining children's rights from the standpoint of situated communities presents a challenge that is addressed through acts of resistance and the pursuit of cultural justice. An example of this is Puerto Resistencia (2021)[3] and other movements in Latin America and the Caribbean that advocate for the rights of communities resisting various forms of oppression, where community resistances are being generated (Mignolo, 2010; Bácares 2024).

Decolonising identities for non-revictimisation

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[3] *Puerto Resistencia* is more than just a geographical location; it emerged during the social uprising of 2021 in Cali. It symbolises a collective feeling of discontent and a desire for social change. This movement is driven by a community call to improve living conditions and ensure dignity for all. The youth, along with children, play a significant role in this struggle for rights and justice

In Colombia, marginalised groups face complex challenges due to categories related to the armed conflict, such as paramilitaries, guerrillas, self-defense groups, reintegrated, and reincorporated individuals. These categories need to be re-evaluated from the perspective of (bio)cultural rights. This re-evaluation involves a critical perspective on decolonisation and community engagement, to recognise the specific conditions of the territories and avoid re-victimising those affected by the conflict. Following Mara Viveros (2023), this review implies a critical perspective on the decolonial, and community turn because it is necessary to recognise the particular conditions of the territories in terms of the (de)colonising labels and identities that have generated the war in order not to fall into the re-victimization of its actors. Recognising cultural pluralism and the principle of interculturality, where ancestral and Western traditions coexist, requires us to rethink existing identities shaped by armed conflict. This involves a contextual re-examination of land tenure, the redefinition of artistic and cultural practices, and the coexistence of Indigenous, Afro-descendant, peasant, and *mestizo* communities. It also considers migratory movements and forced displacements, prompting us to understand identities as dynamic and fluid rather than fixed.

This perspective encourages us to critique the concept of conflict through the lens of changing identities, while acknowledging the agency of human histories and traditions as they interact with other elements of nature. Such recognition fosters narratives that expand our understanding of childhood beyond those defined solely by humans for human purposes. A pertinent example of this dynamic is the Guardians of the Atrato River movement (2024) and the knowledge exchange initiative with the Wiwa community (2024).

How to plant (growing up) in education and community

Biocultural rights provide a valuable framework for rethinking the bonds between communities, nature, and children through reciprocity, care, and cultural justice, and they relate to key concepts, such as children's agency, intergenerational relations and decolonisation, build upon and inform one another. This section has brought together many important ideas, including biocultural justice, the rights of nature, childhoods, conflict, and interculturality, which constitutes the central conceptual axis of our proposal. To move forward, we proposed some questions for the action or articulation of framework in educational settings:

Eco-social crises arising from the conflict
1. What role do education and culture play in navigating the ecosocial crises resulting from conflict, both on small and large scales?

Children's rights and biocultural rights
2. How can we apply a biocultural approach to restore children's rights in our pedagogical, community, and artistic processes?

Engaging with nature as community
3. In what ways does education create spaces for reflection and action regarding our interdependent relationships with nature?

Earth caring and children's wellbeing
4. How can education encourage alternative ways of understanding, appreciating, creating, and coexisting with the Earth, emphasising care and good living (*buen vivir*)?

Table 2. Reconceptualising biocultural rights through education

This set of inquiries has been designed to expand the dialogue surrounding children's rights and their integration within educational processes. Our examination entails the consideration of eco-social crises, the restoration of collective and community rights, and the acknowledgment of interdependent relationships with nature. Such an approach aims to cultivate a harmonious relationship with the Earth, promote the concept of good living (*buen vivir*), and foster care within communities. Through these initiatives, we aim to reassess the contextual understanding of children's rights in conversation with bio-cultural rights. In short, biocultural rights interacts with previous critical analysis of rights developed in this report, like Indigenous rights or children's right to care as relational. All this these questions will be addressed in future *K Reporters* actions from research, training, innovation and collaboration.

e. Digital rights

Children's digital rights: A critical and decolonial perspective from Latin America

In recent decades, the advancement of digital technologies has radically transformed children's lives, presenting both opportunities and challenges in terms of rights. However, most discussions and regulations concerning children's digital rights have been dominated by a protectionist and universalist perspective, in which children are primarily conceived as vulnerable subjects. This section proposes a critical reading of children's digital rights, analysing how the universalization of certain principles can render invisible the socioeconomic, cultural, and political differences that shape children's digital experiences in different parts of the world, —especially in Latin America, and more specifically in the case of Colombia. Likewise, the need for a decolonial perspective will

be discussed— one that acknowledges the plurality of childhoods and questions the dominance of a digital agenda that often reflects the interests and experiences of the Global north.

Digital rights provide a window for critically analysing the dominant discourses on children's rights as established in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989). In recent decades, children's relationship with digital technologies has sparked various reactions from the institutions that play a key role in childhood—family, school, and community. Most of these reactions have focused on negative aspects, particularly the different online risks that children may encounter in these experiences. This perspective has contributed to entrenching an adult-centric paradigm that, while often grounded in protective normative frameworks, constrains children's agency and fails to account for the contextual specificities and lived experiences of children navigating digital environments across diverse socio-cultural and geopolitical settings.

When discussing children's digital rights, we refer to a debate concerned with the rights of children in today's digital world, which is largely inclined towards the need for provision, online protection, and, more recently, the right to participation (Nawaila, Kanbul & Ozdamli, 2018). Since 2021, General Comment No. 25 on Children's Rights in relation to the Digital Environment (2021) has explicitly acknowledged how digital technologies and environments have become an integral part of the very infrastructure of children's lives. This phenomenon affects their family life, education, and worldview. Moreover, in many cases, it enables and expands their opportunities for communication, education, and play in diverse ways.

In this highly digitalised context, tensions arise regarding how to guide and support children in their everyday digital experiences. Terms such as the "anxious generation" (Haidt, 2024) or "screen generation" have become popularised, often framing children's relationship with technology primarily in terms of risks or problematic use. These narratives contribute to constructing an image of children as victims or lacking agency. In this context, excessive emphasis has been placed on the protection aspect of children's digital rights, often portraying them as victims while overlooking the interconnectedness between their participation and protection in digital environments (Collins, Rizzini, Mayhew, 2021). This has led to adults' assessments of children's best interests taking precedence, frequently disregarding children's own perspectives on what is truly in their best interest. Similarly, most governmental efforts have prioritised protection, often at the expense of participation. In some countries, child protection has even been used as a pretext to justify restrictions, filtering, or surveillance of public Internet access, as seen in policies such as the prohibition of smartphones in schools across different countries or the implementation of screen-free education systems (Rahali, Kidron & Livingstone, 2024).

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) structures children's rights around three fundamental principles: protection, provision, and participation. However, as Manfred Liebel and Marta Martínez Muñoz (2009) have pointed out, protection and provision rights

have traditionally been prioritised, while participation rights have been relegated to a secondary level. This imbalance reflects a paternalistic view that perceives children as passive recipients of protective measures rather than recognising them as social actors with independent thought and agency.

In this regard, Lansdown (2005) argues that excessive concern for children's vulnerability can undermine their participation rights and reinforce a position of subordination. The author emphasises that the predominance of a protectionist model has hindered the proper recognition of children's real capacity for participation, highlighting how the need for protection has been used as a justification to restrict children's autonomy.

Thus, de-paternalising the concept of protection does not mean eliminating adult responsibility but rather redefining it in ways that allow children to influence decisions that affect their daily lives. As Liebel and Martínez Muñoz (2020) argue, protection should ensure safety without undermining children's agency, enabling them to become co-creators of the experiences that shape their interaction with digital technologies. In this regard, it is important to highlight the concept of child protagonism proposed by Cussianovich & Figueroa (2009), understood as a cultural process, a way of life, and simultaneously a synthesis of ideas that generates emancipatory meanings. It constitutes a symbolic space where childhood is progressively recognised as claiming autonomy, demanding respect for its rights, and asserting its right to participate with independent thought and voice.

According to Livingstone & Third (2017), it is also important to redefine the notion of the child that serves as a category that both defines and challenges the boundaries of dominant perspectives on rights and the digital sphere. In this sense, the child—often a reflection of adult cultural anxieties and a focal point for society's aspirations for the future—becomes a crucial figure for re-examining digital and human rights, a subject laden with significant implications. Consequently, rights-based approaches to children's engagement with digital media have recently emerged as a response to the constraints of the risk and safety paradigm, which has long shaped research, policy, and practice on a global scale.

A decolonial perspective on children's digital rights

Research on children's digital experiences has been largely dominated by the Global north, leading to a universalist perspective that does not always reflect the realities of children in other parts of the world. Similarly, in the global south, for instance, some Colombian children living in major cities and belonging to middle- and upper-class backgrounds share characteristics with their European or North American counterparts. These children spend most of their day at school —primarily in private institutions— have access to various recreational activities and extracurricular courses yet experience restricted mobility in public spaces. In contrast, children from rural areas and lower socioeconomic backgrounds have markedly different daily experiences. In some cases, they take on economic responsibilities within their households, face difficulties accessing technology

in their schools—most of which are public—and are exposed to violence in their immediate surroundings. However, they also enjoy greater autonomy in their daily activities and have broader access to public spaces. Moreover, specific groups, such as Indigenous children, migrant children, or those affected by armed conflicts, have had their digital experiences largely undocumented.

Livingstone and Third (2017) argue that while the opportunities and risks of digital technologies emerge from the collective and social dimensions of digital media, it is the isolated and decontextualised child who remains at the centre of rights-based claims. A frequent critique of the human rights framework is its tendency to construct a universalised subject, often failing to account for localised contexts, specific circumstances, and structural inequalities related to race, class, gender, and age. Unsurprisingly, these critiques of universal rights have led to a growing trend of exceptionalism —the emergence of distinct groups of claimants whose needs are either overlooked or, in some cases, directly contradict the principles outlined within the universal human rights framework. As a result, this exceptionalism has contributed to the development of legal frameworks that prioritise protection, often framing so-called marginalised groups as requiring special safeguards.

A decolonial approach to the study of children's digital experiences requires recognising that not all childhoods are the same, and that rights must be interpreted and applied according to the specific context of each community. Recknagel (2009) warns about the dangers of imposing a Western model of childhood, which assumes that all children share the same needs and aspirations. Instead, it is essential to create space for alternative paradigms, where communities themselves define what protection and participation mean in the digital context, as well as identify which aspects constitute opportunities and challenges for children.

 Incorporating children's perspectives into digital policymaking is essential for ensuring that regulatory frameworks reflect the realities of those they aim to protect. As demonstrated by recent research (Livingstone et al., 2024), children's perceptions of online opportunities and risks, when approached from the standpoint of lived experience, often diverge markedly from adult assumptions. Adultcentric frameworks risk misrepresenting or overlooking how children themselves understand and navigate digital environments. This reinforces the importance—previously discussed—of conceptual frameworks such as *living rights* (Hanson & Nieuwenhuys, 2013), which emphasise rights as embedded in children's everyday experiences and interactions with the world around them. Such approaches call for moving beyond static, top-down models and recognising children as active agents in co-constructing their rights in diverse digital contexts. For example, a recent study on online opportunities and risks for children in Colombia (López-Ordosgoitia et al., 2024) found that many children develop their own strategies for self-regulation and safe internet navigation. This challenges the notion that children are merely passive recipients of adult-imposed rules, reinforcing the need to acknowledge their agency in the digital environment.

Towards a digital rights agenda based on equity

The debate on children's digital rights must move away from a victimising and protectionist perspective and instead adopt a rights-based approach that recognises children's agency and the diversity of their experiences. Technology is neither inherently harmful nor beneficial; its impact depends on the context, access conditions, regulatory frameworks, and children's own participation in defining its uses.

To move forward in this direction, it is necessary to: (1) De-paternalise the concept of protection, ensuring that children have a voice in decisions affecting their digital lives; (2) Abandon the universalization of childhood experiences, recognising the plurality of childhoods and adapting digital policies to the specific contexts, cultures and regions; (3) Incorporate children's perspectives into research and policymaking, allowing them to become co-creators of regulatory frameworks that seek to ensure their safety and well-being.

In accordance with Livingstone and Third (2017), the transition from a "protection" paradigm to a rights-based approach does not mean minimising digital risks but rather recognising that the best way to protect children is by empowering them, equipping them with the necessary tools to navigate the digital environment in an informed and critical manner. This must be done with methodologies and needs appropriate to the age of the users and in a safe manner. Furthermore, it must be a concerted effort among those who access them, those who guide them (parents, guardians, and teachers), the organisations that ensure their wellbeing, including the State, and those who produce content and applications. Each of these actors has a role to play. Ultimately, a true guarantee of digital rights for children will only be possible if it is built in an inclusive, participatory manner and grounded in the diversity of experiences that characterise childhood in the 21st century.

PART III. What could alternative frameworks on children's rights look like to reimagine them

Participation in research and communal rights

The dominant frameworks of children's rights —shaped primarily by international conventions and legal instruments— have established a critical foundation for safeguarding children's welfare. However, as has been widely observed, these frameworks are not neutral or universally applicable. They often reproduce adult-centred, colonised, and universalised assumptions about childhood that fail to capture the diversity of children's lived experiences across distinct cultural, social, and political contexts.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) presupposes a singular, universal conception of childhood, thereby asserting that children across all cultural and economic settings are entitled to an identical set of rights. While normatively compelling,

this perspective risks marginalising children whose lives are situated within local contexts that diverge sharply from the partial vision of childhood underpinning the CRC. As a result, the rights enumerated in the Convention are often less meaningful, and at times less implementable, in societies not organised around these universalist assumptions. This tension suggests the necessity of revisiting global children's rights frameworks to ensure they are responsive to local realities and attuned to the cultural values of diverse communities, without undermining their core protective function.

Children's rights remain more relevant if disentangled from hegemonic Western epistemologies (Faulkner & Nyamutatata, 2020). Within Childhood Studies, Ursin and Lyså (2024) use a decolonial lens in their analysis of ethnic minority children's rights in the child welfare system in Norway. They argue that such an approach is helpful to avoid leaning on normative, hegemonic, and ethnocentric notions of childhood and upbringing and, furthermore, to challenge existing power structures. Decolonial thinking allows for critical reflection and cultural sensitivity in studying and working with children's rights and family life, embracing subaltern voices and worldviews by, for instance, translating the principle through the philosophy of ubuntu and the African Charter of the Rights and Welfare of the Child as alternatives to individualisation and the UNCRC (Ursin et al., 2022; Ursin & Lyså, 2024).

Reimagining children's rights therefore involves more than amending existing instruments; it requires questioning foundational assumptions about autonomy, agency, protection, and dependency. Alternative perspectives, particularly those foregrounding interdependence, relational care, and community-based notions of justice, offer valuable pathways toward more contextually grounded frameworks. Such approaches conceptualise rights not merely as safeguards against harm but as dynamic, co-constructed practices that empower children to participate in shaping their futures on their own terms. Importantly, such transformations cannot rest solely at the level of discourse or norm interpretation. They require structural changes in governance, policymaking, and institutional praxis. A genuine transformation demands new models of co-production, whereby children, families, and communities are meaningfully included in the drafting of laws, the design of policies, and the implementation of decisions. By moving away from technocratic, top-down governance toward dialogical, participatory approaches, institutions can begin to dismantle the asymmetrical adult–child hierarchies that continue to shape both rights discourse and practice.

Ultimately, reframing children's rights in this way is not about rejecting universality altogether but about cultivating a plural and context-sensitive universality—one that acknowledges multiple epistemologies of childhood and justice. This shift requires a commitment to intercultural dialogue, epistemic humility, and systemic reform. Only then can children's rights frameworks achieve both global legitimacy and local resonance.

In the final section, we will revisit the notions of participation, community-communal rights and collectivisation to complete our critical approach to children's rights in this report.

Popularisation of child participation

Since the emergence of the 'new social studies of childhood' and the adoption of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) in 1989, children's participation has become a widely embraced concept in ensuring that children's rights are respected in research practice. Article 12 of the UNCRC acknowledges children's right to freely express their views in matters affecting them, with those views given due weight according to their age and maturity. This marked a shift from viewing children as passive recipients of protection to recognising them as active agents with agency. However, critical scholars argue that Article 12's Eurocentric framing emphasises individualistic, Western notions of participation. These often fail to consider the relational, reciprocal, and communal dimensions found in non-Western and Indigenous contexts. While Article 12 has advanced the conversation on children's agency, its limitations must be critically examined across diverse cultural and epistemological contexts.

Participation has never been a static concept. Its meaning and enactment have evolved as researchers, policymakers, and practitioners have grappled with the question of how individuals, particularly children, engage with and influence the world around them. In tracing this evolution, we uncover not only the aspirations embedded within these interpretations but also the cultural, political, and epistemological frameworks that shaped them.

Different approaches of participation in research

The 1990s marked a significant moment in the theorization of participation, particularly with the introduction of Roger Hart's Ladder of Participation in 1992. This model, designed as a visual metaphor, depicted participation as a series of rungs on a ladder—each representing a step closer to "genuine" involvement and agency. At its base, the ladder illustrated forms of "non-participation," such as manipulation or tokenism, where children's involvement was superficial or symbolic at best. Higher rungs represented increasing levels of engagement, culminating in shared decision-making and child-initiated actions. Hart's Ladder resonated deeply at a time when participation was being institutionalised through frameworks like the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Its linear structure captured the *era's optimism*: the belief that with effort and intention, participation could progress from limited to meaningful. Yet, the metaphor of the ladder also reflected certain assumptions of its time—such as a unidirectional, hierarchical path toward empowerment.

In the early 2000s, Harry Shier expanded this thinking with his Pathway to Participation model. Building on Hart's work, Shier offered a more nuanced approach, highlighting the dynamic interplay between individual agency and institutional readiness. Shier's pathway

emphasised the role of adults and systems in enabling participation, suggesting that the journey toward meaningful engagement was not only about children stepping forward but also about adults stepping aside—or stepping with.

This participatory approach is also extended into research design. In recent years, various authors have debated how incorporate participation in research (Ennew & Plateau, 2004; Lundy & McEvoy, 2012) and developed tools and models to help researchers to this aim (Habashi, 2013; Shier, 2019). These classifications allow participatory approaches to be integrated into the methodological processes of research. However, Spyrou (2018) goes beyond, supporting the idea of child participation in research but criticising the challenges of the assumption that children's voices can be directly accessed and transparently represented. He warns against the tendency to treat children's expressions as unmediated data, urging researchers to reflect on the discursive, contextual, and power-laden processes that shape what is said, how it is heard, and what becomes knowable.

As participation gained prominence. Among these, the *Lundy Model of Child Participation* offered a more holistic perspective. Developed by Laura Lundy in 2007, this model emphasised four key elements: space, voice, audience, and influence. By situating participation within these interconnected dimensions, the Lundy Model challenged researchers to think beyond participation as an endpoint and instead to view it as an ongoing process shaped by context and power dynamics.

Yet, even as these models sought to capture the richness of participation, critiques began to emerge. Authors like Amy Hanna questioned the dominance of voice as the central metaphor for participation. In her work on silence Hanna (2024) argued that participation or agency does not always manifest through words or actions. Silence, too, can be meaningful—a form of resistance, a space for reflection, or an expression of emotions that defy articulation. By bringing silence into the conversation, Hanna urged us to reconsider what counts as participation and to recognise the diverse ways children engage with their world.

Participation as a living concept

These approaches and models, while varied in their assumptions and aims, share a common thread: they each reflect an ongoing effort to understand, structure, and facilitate participation in ways that encourage children's agency. At the same time, they reveal the limits of our understanding. Participation resists easy categorization. It spills out of our frameworks, occurs in unexpected places, and often defies our attempts to document or structure participation.

As we move forward, perhaps the task is not to perfect our models but to embrace the messiness of participation, to see it not as a fixed concept but as a living, evolving practice. This requires us to remain open to discomfort, to listen for the silences, and to

acknowledge the spaces and places where participation happens in ways we cannot always see or know.

The limits of participation in research with childhoods

Participation happens. But how does participation happen? How is it mediated? We are no longer certain that we can know how participation happens. Yet, why is it that we constantly seek to know it for "real"? What is clear is that the participation we've been demanding exceeds our ability to write, document, research, understand, or even know it. The children's participation we have sought to structure, articulate, and make comprehensible is slipping away from us, it becomes liquid, uncertain, inaudible, or messy. Are we ready to embrace such discomfort? Can we truly know how participation happens simply because "I" participate in it? Participation may occur in an interview, a group activity, or a photograph, but might it not also occur in the dreams of our sleep, in a walk by the sea, or in spaces and places that name and claim us? Does participation happen in research?

To deconstruct the idea of participation in research allows us to tackle the research from the intersectionality of decolonial, biocultural and digital rights' approaches as well as through care and sexuality lenses. In this part of the report, the attention is turned to the question of participation in childhood studies. More specifically, we provide a critical overview of the concepts used in childhood studies in light of broader, ongoing debates arose through the UNCRC about participation and its limits in childhood studies. To illustrate the possibilities for rethinking the use of the concept of participation in childhood research, we offer a new participatory research methodology. This emerges from the intersection between the steps of research and the key elements of participation. At the same time, it incorporates peer research, coproduction and iteration as strategies. From this research methodology emerge the limits that can interact with it and that must be considered in any research.

Researching about, from, and with childhoods: A reflexive turn

For years, the research group "Childhood, Adolescence and Families Research Group" (GRIAF) has engaged in research *about*, *from*, and *with* children and their families. Over time, the nature of participation within our studies has undergone a significant transformation, not merely as an ethical or methodological concern but as the very phenomenon under scrutiny. Participation itself has shifted from a methodological "tool" to a subject of inquiry. In this light, a pivotal study (Mateos et al., 2020) turned the lens inward, critically examining our own research and the projects we had carried out, comparing it to the multiple ways in which child participation in research is manifested. Drawing on Dixon et al.'s (2019) participation approaches, we analysed how our engagements with children often operated at the level of consultation. Within this evolving consultative framework, where adults were the ones eliciting children's views without involving them beyond that, the modes of participation diversified beyond spoken dialogue, integrating written, visual, and enacted forms. Artistic and abstract techniques,

ranging from drawing exercises to reflective dynamics mediated by cards became integral to our participatory methods.

Building upon these insights, this research group embarked on a collective reflexive practice, critically assessing our positionality and methods. This process ultimately led us to develop a peer-based participatory research methodology called PAVT (see Urrea-Monclús et al., 2023), one that does not merely invite participation but is co-constructed through the very act of engaging in research with children, rather than merely about them.

Weaving children's rights with communal and collective rights

This reflexive turn in children's participation that affects our positionalities, knowledges, methods and relationalities as researchers in childhood studies and children's rights (Twum-Danso Imoh & Okyere, 2020; Llovet et al., 2025) pushes us to experiment with non-adult-centric and decolonial approaches that focus on co-creation and knowledge co-production. The idea of children as co-researchers is not new, but in the field of rights it seems we had assumed a particular form of protection, provision and participation, which goes just from one direction towards another. Beyond the paradigm that "authorise" children to participate in collective decisions, in this report, we decentred the role of States when establishing static and monolithic rights towards a more situated, intersectional and decolonial views that also consider children as rights makers. Understanding politics in the public sphere as dynamics, ephemeral and communal, starts by considering relationality as crucial as it is to re-inscribe children in the collective spaces:

> Inclusiveness, community-mindedness, and collaboration as forms of relational personhood open the lens to reconceptualizing children's rights. They imply that rights are predicated on, and are, the outcome and the means to (re-)producing a relationship that is ultimately dynamic, situated, and contextual. Conceptualized as such – rights as relational – the consideration of the community's understandings is a starting point to identify what kind of rights children have, how they obtain and exercise it, how context shapes it, and how their rights relate them to others, and with what outcomes (see Durham, 2011). (Abebe, 2025, p.114)

To conclude this report, as we analysed in the previous sections, there is much to be done to defocus the official studies on children's rights and to develop critical perspectives and methods that pay attention to Indigenous rights, to other sexual and gender education, to care as a relational right, to biocultural rights, to children's digital rights and to their participation in society. Finally, this report opens many possibilities for action for the *K Reporters* project and for all those agents, groups and institutions that work with children.

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