

Save the Children Sweden's Animate-it method

Animation is a powerful tool that can enable children's creative expression. Through the Animate-it technique children use animation to discuss their concerns, report on their situation and educate other children and adults about issues important to their lives. Through this medium, children are able to tell their stories free of external effects such as social pressures. Animation taps into children's creative potential to enable them to better express themselves. SCS' Animate-it method is based on making the rights of the child heard and is aimed at providing children with a space to discuss and advocate for their rights.



Children are responsible for making all parts of the film

The children are fully responsible for making all parts of the film: they write the story, draw and colour the characters in the film and give voices to the characters they create. Their stories are thus told through a third-person of their making.

Animate it and the CRC

SCS continuously seeks new methods of empowering children and making their voices heard. Animate-it is based on the Convention on the Rights of the Child, particularly:

Article 12 (Respect for the views of the child): The child has the right to express his or her opinion freely and to have the opinion taken into account in any matter or procedure affecting the child.

Article 13 (Freedom of Expression): The child has the right to express his or her views, obtain information, make ideas or information known, regardless of frontiers.

Animate-it as a child participation tool

Children have the right to express themselves and to participate: to express their views, to access information, to form their own associations and to participate in decisions affecting their lives. Young children are resourceful citizens capable of helping to build a better future for all. It is the duty of adults to respect their right to express themselves and to participate in all matters affecting them, in accordance with their age and maturity.

Animate-it supports the rights of girls and boys of different ages and abilities, particularly the most marginalized groups to express their views and emphasize the violations they experience and, as rights holders, take action to prevent and address exploitation in their communities. The energy and creativity of young children is nurtured through Animate-it so they can actively take part in shaping their environment, their societies and the world they will inherit. Listening to the child promotes the child's constant participation. Children are encouraged to speak, communicate and interpret their feelings through participation in the animation activity.

Child participation through Animate-it is not manipulation where children are told what to say, or decoration where young people are used to look good or boost a campaign or program, nor is it tokenism where participation is not meaningful for children. Child participation promotes fulfillment of children's rights and can also be seen as a means towards protagonism. For example, the inclusion of some elements of protagonism (rights and responsibilities and social actors) within the Animate-it movies, initiated and led by the children for the children, can serve to enhance to make clearer the concept and practice of child participation.

Animate-it as an advocacy communication tool

Animation can be an excellent advocacy and awareness raising communication tool. Children raise awareness on issues affecting their lives and advocate for change based on their rights guaranteed by the UNCRC. This tool, animation is in-expensive in terms of cost and is highly efficient in attracting attention of decision makers (duty bearers) because it is simply "animation", which everyone enjoys watching, particularly because it is done by children. It is human nature that adults pay much more attention to children than to their peers.

Advocacy for Save the Children is a set of organised activities designed to influence the policies and actions of others to achieve positive changes for children's lives based on the experience and knowledge of working directly with children, their families and communities. Different communication tools are used for the abovementioned organised activities. These include press conferences, posters, billboards, public debates, town meetings, fact sheets, newsletters, banners, newspapers, leaflets, radio, magazines, private meetings and finally Animation movies that could be shown on television, in conferences, in public events and even private meetings.

While using animation, children work together to deliver messages needed to convince the policy makers to make the desired action that can have a positive change for children's lives. Children explore their creativity and it is a fun and enjoyable way to advocate for change. It is also enjoyable for adults to watch animation.

The experience of SCS MENA

SCS has piloted this method since 2007 and managed so far to work with 59 organisations in six countries in the MENA Region (Lebanon, Jordan, OPT, Yemen, Egypt and Tunisia) on the method of animation involving 1000 children. More than 100 animation movies were produced by children raising awareness and advocating for issues covering violence in schools, accessible facilities for children with disabilities, racism in society and at school and other issues which children felt affect them. These animation movies were used in advocacy and awareness raising activities and events targeting decision makers and the general public.

What is Animate-it?

An Animate-it workshop is an active learning workshop during which simple animation techniques are presented to trainers and children. The main purpose of the training is to present animation films as a tool of expression rather than a technical process of film-making. The Animate-it training and the process of film-making places more emphasis on the content of the film and less on the technique used to make the film. It presents animation as a means of expression in which children can discuss their concerns, voice their demands and reflect on issues they deem important. It also creates a fun space for children to develop their mental and imaginative capacities. The workshop is thus a combination of learning, expression and fun.

Furthermore, animation films are educational tools: they carry children's messages across borders and bring them to the attention of children and adults across the world (child-to-child approach). In addition the technique is easily transferable and can be used with an array of groups.

The Animate-it workshop uses 'cut-out characters' as its primary medium as it is efficient and cost-effective. The value of the workshop lies in the simplicity of the animation techniques, enabling children to participate in all stages. 'Cut-outs' are used as the primary medium because they are affordable, easy for children to use, and produce satisfactory results. Once the children have acquired the technique, they can use different materials (e.g. clay, house utensils, recycled material etc) to make their films.



Ex-detainee children in OPT making an Animate it movie

Animate-it is ideal for children in communities with limited resources: very little input is used to create an effective output. A 5-day Animate-it workshop with children, with low-cost materials, can produce short films that can be broadcasted as TV spots, in public events or in film festivals.

Why Animate-it?

Children are usually the main consumers of animation (cartoons etc). Thus it is an ideal way to engage their attention. Animation workshops aim to move children from being the receivers of cartoons to the producers of them. Films made by children are more likely to be easily understood by other children. Children are able to communicate to other children in a language that they understand, describing situations and emotions that are experienced by many.

Moreover, animation, particularly when it is made by children, attracts the attention of adults. It helps children to advocate for their rights, raise awareness and change mindsets.

Animations produced by children in the MENA Region

- 1.) Short animated film made by Palestinian children in Baddawi and Nahr el Bared camps in Lebanon – “Violence in the Camps”:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wj_MQcWd0IE&feature=channel_video_title
This animation was produced during an "Animate-it" workshop in July 2010 for 12 Palestinian children from Nahr el Bared and Beddawi camps, between the ages of 10 and 12. This animation was produced as part of a child-led advocacy campaign, which is part of the "Protecting the rights of Palestinian children affected by armed conflicts through community-based mechanism in the Gaza Strip and North Lebanon", funded by the European Union.
- 2.) Short animated film made by Palestinian ex-detainee children – “Where is our childhood?” -
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fTVxKnxQ5WQ&feature=channel_video_title
This short animated film was made by Palestinian ex-detainee children during a workshop in October 2010, as part of the "Post-trauma Rehabilitation of Palestinian ex-detainee children in the West Bank Programme", implemented by the EJ-YMCA Rehabilitation Programme in partnership with Save the Children with funds from the European Commission Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection department (ECHO)
- 3.) Short animated film made by children in Yemen – “Future without violence”
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7lr2zOlwkl&feature=mfu_in_order&list=UL
- 4.) Early Marriage in Yemen
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D98e7WTV3Gk&feature=channel_video_title
- 5.) Short animated film made by Palestinian ex-detainee children in the West Bank
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vHP72cIQsDo&feature=channel_video_title