

Learning by Ear 2009  
Children's rights and working for peace series  
Episode No. 3: Children's parliament  
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**Learning by Ear 2009  
Children's Rights Series  
03 Children's Parliament**

**Topic:** Children's parliament, political and civil engagement for democracy

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	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Language</b>
<b>IN/OUTRO</b>	<b>X</b>		<b>Unimportant</b>	
<b>Narrator</b>		<b>x</b>	<b>Ca. 25</b>	
<b>Nadia</b>	<b>X</b>		<b>12</b>	<b>French</b>
<b>Mère</b>	<b>X</b>		<b>Ca. 35</b>	<b>French</b>
<b>Rachid</b>		<b>X</b>	<b>Student</b>	<b>French</b>
<b>Mamadou</b>				<b>French</b>
<b>Baro</b>		<b>X</b>	<b>Ca. 45</b>	
<b>Youssef</b>		<b>X</b>	<b>Ca. 14</b>	<b>French</b>

## **LbE Soundtrack**

### **INTRO:**

Hello everybody and welcome to this, the third episode of our Deutsche Welle Learning by Ear series on children's rights.

Today we're going to talk about political engagement. We're off to Burkina Faso, a country in which 56 percent of the population is under 18 and only 24 percent of adults know how to read and write. There's been a children's parliament in Burkina Faso since 1998. Its role is to make sure the voice of young people is heard and to lobby institutions and NGOs so that children's rights are respected and promoted. Yaya Boudani is going to introduce us to Nadia, a budding Burkinabe parliamentarian.

## **REPORTAGE**

### **1. Nadia motivation (French) 0'24**

I wanted to understand what children's rights are. And at the same time to help children. I thought if I became an MP I could do this or that for them. We will be able to find solutions. That's what made me want to promote rights. But there are some children who don't know this. We have a duty. That's what motivated me.

### **Narrator:**

This young girl is called Nignan Nadia. She is only 12 years old and she goes to school in Ouagadougou, the capital of Burkina Faso. Her curiosity brought her to the children's parliament where she is now the second vice-president after winning free and transparent elections. In Burkina, as opposed to in France, the children are elected by secret ballot.

### **2. Nadia élection (French) 0'20**

First of all, the ministry sends out forms to each school and club, basically anywhere where there are children. Then two children are chosen from each school, centre or club. Then there's an election in each province and a provincial office is set up with 10 members.

**Narrator:**

It's not by chance that Nadia has a seat of responsibility in the junior parliament. Her mother, Nignan Maïmouna Ouedraogo, says that Nadia has always been a driving force:

**3. Mum: leader (French) 0'22**

She always wanted to be the leader and she still does. When she's with her friends, everybody follows her -- even before she was in the parliament. Even when I picked her up from school, everyone wanted to see her. The attitude between her and her friends hasn't been changed by the fact that she's in parliament. She is still the same person.

**Narrator:**

The children's parliament in Burkina Faso is made up of children from all social classes. It has 126 members from all over the country. The only criterion is age. The young MPs have to be under 18. Mamadou Baro is in charge of the national children's parliament. He also runs the children's rights service at the Ministry of Social Action.

#### **4. Baro: representativeness (French) 0'20**

There are some children who have never gone to school and others who go to school. All social classes are represented, all religions as well. There are some children who live on the streets, some who are disabled, all children are represented in the children's parliament.

#### **Narrator:**

This diversity is supposed to guarantee differences of opinion and democratic debate. But, just as in adult parliaments, it can also complicate matters. Nadia explains how the young MPs manage to agree:

#### **5. Nadia: difference of opinion (French) 0'20**

It's true that we don't have the same opinions but we always have a basis for agreement. Each person puts forward ideas and then we try to find a solution, which suits everybody. The office is like a family. We're like brothers and sisters. If one person isn't happy then we try to find a solution to keep everybody satisfied.

#### **6. Atmo parliament office**

**Narrator:**

The parliamentary office is organizing the next session, which will take place during the school holidays so that everyone can attend. The agenda is long. The children choose the topics themselves.

**7. Nadia: topics (French) 0'14**

We talk about health, food, activities, what we should do to help other children. What to do to make sure there's equality between boys and girls. We especially talk about those aspects.

**Narrator:**

The young MPs receive training so that they can reach their goals. The sessions take place on the fourth floor of the Ministry of Social Action. Officials from the ministry and also from UNICEF, the United Nations children's fund, give them information about children's rights.  
Mamadou Baro:

### **8. Baro: topics discussed (French) 0'41**

You know that there are some principles enshrined in the convention on children's rights. Survival and development, non-discrimination, participation and the fact that a child's opinion has to be taken into account. We train the children by keeping these principles in mind and the main rights of the child. For example, the right to education, to health, to protection, you know that children are victims of many of today's problems. Trafficking, sexual abuse, female genital mutilation. So when they meet, they discuss all these problems, which are damaging children's lives. »

### **Narrator:**

Once they have been trained and informed, the young representatives meet other children in their provinces. They talk to them and try to understand what they are experiencing, what they are suffering.

### **9. Atmo moped**

**Narrator:**

Nadia goes about on her brother's moped when she has time. She looks for children in need. She usually doesn't have to look far. There are children working or begging on practically every street corner, under the burning sun. Once when she saw a begging child, she went to see the mother:

**10. Nadia : begging child (French) 0'42**

I was really moved. I went to see the mother. We talked and I told her to find another solution saying the child shouldn't have to beg. Parents have to look after their children, feed them, clothe them and send them to school I told her And if a child does have to beg, the parents should give him half at least of the takings. And I said that if she had problems she should go to the Social Action Ministry to get help. There are also centers for mothers and their children. She listened to me but she wasn't very happy I could tell. She wondered how a child like me could speak to her that way. But then she realized I was speaking sense and said she would think about it.



**Narrator:**

The young MPs also attend certain meetings between the government and children's rights groups. Thanks to her mandate, Nadia was also a jury member at Fespaco, the most important regional film festival. Alongside several African film directors, she had to choose a film that promoted human rights and also met certain criteria:

**11. Nadia: fespaco (French)**

**0'24**

How it contributed to promoting children's rights, especially health, schooling, education, equality between boys and girls, respect of personality, security, and the responsibility of parents and the State in connection to these rights. To see if the State and parents really look after their children. »

**Narrator:**

Nadia is certain that the children's parliament can help raise awareness among children and adults. But in practice the parliament has several logistical problems: no rooms where we can hold meetings, no regular sessions, not even a computer to write up the minutes. The young vice-president says it's shameful:

**12. Nadia: working equipment 0'16**

We really need equipment to go forward. We need meeting rooms. We need sessions so we can see each other because the office members are very far apart, in different provinces, so we can't meet to discuss subjects that are important to us.

**Narrator:**

Nadia is a fighter. And she learnt at an early age that words are the most potent weapon. At home, like at school, she always manages to get out of difficult situations. She has two big brothers but she never calls on them to defend her. One of them, Rachid, is a law student in Ouagadougou. He is impressed by his little sister's strength of character:

**13. Rachid: no defence (French) 0'25**

She really likes sorting things out on her own. I've never had to use my muscles against her friends or had to threaten someone. Sometimes she tells me she's had an altercation with someone but that she's sorted it out in a friendly fashion. I never get involved. She does it all on her own.

**Narrator:**

Outside of school, Nadia likes surfing the Web, going swimming and especially going to the cinema.

<b>14. Atmo kitchen</b>
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**Narrator:**

But Nadia says her mother would prefer it if she learnt how to cook because she's still got some learning to do:

<b>15. Nadia : kitchen (French)</b>	<b>0'38</b>
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Spaghetti bolognaise I can do (hahaha) and also attiéké, tomato sauce, peanut sauce and rice. But not very well. I like cooking but not only African food. I like discovering new food. So I sometimes neglect African food. I read cookbooks and I try to invent.

**Narrator:**

Don't say a word against Nadia or she will quickly lose her temper. Her friend Youssef is also a young MP and he knows what he's talking about.

**16. Youssef: reaction (French) 0'07**

Sometimes she's a bit impulsive. She reacts abruptly when we talk about children. It makes us laugh and then she calms herself down.

**Narrator:**

Nadia's mum does not disagree:

**17. Mum: big heart (French) 0'06**

She has a big heart, i.e. she gets angry fast. If someone says something she disagrees with, she just sits in her corner and doesn't say a word. That's what I mean by a "big heart".

**Narrator:**

After completing her studies Nadia wants to become a lawyer or the head of a children's rights group. In the meantime, she plans to stand in the next elections to stay in the parliament and continue the struggle. But until then, it's her parents who are subject to her law -- the law of a young girl who knows her rights.

**18. Maman brought back to order (French) 0'09**

She always brings us to order. If we do something, she says "no you don't I know my rights, otherwise you'll be dragged up before UNICEF." **(laughter)**

**End music**

**OUTRO:**

And that's all for today. You can listen to the other Learning by Ear programs broadcast by Deutsche Welle by going to our website at:

[www.dw-world.de/lbe](http://www.dw-world.de/lbe)

And don't forget to tune in next time!

**Music**