



CHILD FRIENDLY SPACES



Save the Children

EMILIA ROMAGNA
EARTHQUAKE
RESPONSE

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INDEX

INTRODUCTION	2
Children and emergencies	
PART ONE	5
Child Friendly Spaces	
PART TWO	23
Workshops and activities in Child Friendly Spaces	
CONCLUSIONS	51
Notes	III

INTRODUCTION

Children and emergencies

As the largest independent children's rights organisation in the world, Save the Children Italy has been working, since 1919, to improve the living conditions of children in Italy and around the world.

In emergency situations, caused by natural or man-made disasters, children are among the most vulnerable victims. Save the Children's educational intervention in these contexts is based on the involvement of children and adolescents in the reconstruction phases, giving them the opportunity to process their experience.

Save the Children Italy has been responding to the emergency in Abruzzo and Emilia Romagna since 2009, creating **"Child Friendly Spaces"**: safe places where children and adolescents can feel welcomed and protected thanks to educational, recreational and psychosocial comfort. After the intervention in L'Aquila, Save the Children Italy promoted the creation of a working group of professionals that developed some precious **"Child and adolescents protection guidelines in Italian emergencies"**; on a national scale, this working group also provides advocacy services so that the protection of children is recognized within the emergency response.

Save the Children Italy has also fostered the creation of a group of partner organizations for the emergency response (Emergency Network). Since the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding with the Civil Protection Department (DPC) in December 2012, Save the Children has been working directly in the areas affected by emergency events, helping to spread and ensure a large-scale child protection culture in emergency contexts. The kind of activities offered is measured to both a careful analysis of the local context and a detection of actual needs of potential beneficiaries involved. A quick and effective response to an emergency situation is complex and it also needs a careful analysis of the local context as well as a proper activity scheduling; different parameters such as gender differences, possible disability, ethnic and cultural diversity, language differences, personal difficulties, previous habits and living standards must be taken into account, providing specific attention to the most vulnerable or at risk of marginalization groups. Intervening in emergency situations also means, for Save the Children, ensuring the highest standards of protection and safeguard of children and adolescents from all forms of maltreatment and abuse¹, within an emergency scenario of extreme insecurity and uncertainty. Save the Children controls and monitors all operations, personnel as well as active partners in the area working with children. Since the first violent earthquake that hit Emilia Romagna on May 20, 2012 forcing nearly 3,500 people to live in 22 camps, Save the Children has directly supported more than 400 children in four Child Friendly Spaces created in the tent camps of Finale Emilia, Novi di Modena, Concordia sulla Secchia and San Possidonio. This type of intervention, widely experienced on an international scale, not only provides protection but helps traumatised children to rediscover a precious sense of normalcy, that is crucial to start living again.

This document is the result of the experience of Save the Children Italy during the emergency response to the Emilia Romagna earthquake; it describes the methodology and the activities developed within the Child Friendly Space thoroughly and it is intended for both operators/educators with limited experience in the creation of Child Friendly Spaces and to

experienced personnel whose aim is to improve the knowledge and improve the skills through new tools and resources. The first part of this document outlines the key concepts and the necessary steps to develop educational and psychosocial activities in emergency situations; it also describes the intervention carried out in Child Friendly Spaces together with the effects that emergencies can have on children and adolescents and therefore highlighting their specific needs.

The second part consists of 20 technical sheets providing practical examples for the creation of educational paths and psychosocial activities in national emergency situations. Actually, this document does not intend to describe exhaustively the work done in Child Friendly Spaces or in national emergency contexts; it rather wants to emphasize - through practical examples - Save the Children's basic approach and methods for an effective implementation of educational programs in Child Friendly Spaces on emergency situations. The purpose is therefore to provide a real contribution to the operators working with children and adolescents in emergency situations. These activities, however, should not be intended as merely recreational or entertaining; they actually aim to recreate normal life conditions and occasions in which children may experience again new forms of sociability and aggregation; children can also rediscover their skills and abilities, learning, sharing and participating in a group, with the help of a psychosocial support.

The examined activities are the result of a shared methodology based on the fundamental principles contained in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), on the knowledge and experience of local culture and habits, on the constant sharing with children, adolescents, parents and with the whole group who got together in the Child Friendly Spaces.

The proposed activities and workshops are those actually carried out in the camps of Modena; they are all inspired by the pedagogy of rights² and centered on local context and specific emergency.



PART ONE

Child Friendly Spaces



Photo: Luciano Zanechia/Save the Children

1.1 Children and emergencies: rights and principles in action!

Natural disasters such as earthquakes have effects - beyond the physical harm - on the lives of individuals. The rhythms of life are altered, the days are often marked by unpredictable events, economic and job prospects are uncertain and most important reference points such as homes, squares, schools and meeting places are eroded. Children and adolescents are particularly vulnerable when a disaster occurs. In addition to the shock of emergency itself, in fact, they find themselves into harsh consequences to deal with: flee their homes, give up daily habits and privacy, sharing spaces with strangers, live outside their usual contexts as well as serious difficulty in reaching friends and continuing school activities.

How children adapt to difficult situations? Children have a great ability to deal with difficult and potentially traumatic events; they usually react positively to most of the difficulties that emergency situations inevitably involve; children can sometimes handle tough times or unexpected and problematic situation better than adults, quickly adapting to a new difficult scenario.

However, it is important that children and adolescents are not isolated from their natural context: the camps can actually be enhanced by creating some entertaining cognitive and exploratory workshops based on natural curiosity, adaptability and playful approach that children and adolescents usually have towards new situations in everyday life.

At the same time, it is however important to know and carefully consider their specific needs, to help them overcome the difficult situation, making sure that they can look to the future with serenity.

As a matter of fact, an earthquake may arise emotions of fear, insecurity, despair and anger in children. It is therefore normal that children change behavior and mood after such an event for they are victims of a natural disaster, hence they are deeply frightened both for what they have personally experienced and for the fear and uncertainty that they perceive in parents or caregivers.

At all stages of emergency, children not only should be involved as active subjects in the development of their rights to education, play, leisure, recreation and participation, but must also live in Child Friendly Spaces. International experience has been teaching us that only through the development and implementation of participation right, children and adolescents are able to have an active voice and express their skills thoroughly, even within the tragic scenario of natural disasters or different emergencies. Children have the right to get their daily habits in protected environments through the participation in regular and structured activities able to give them back a "sense of security." This is an important protective factor for their psychological well-being, so fragile in similar situations. Such a participation routine and social interaction with other children can contribute to learning process development and continuity.

Below are listed several suggestions and procedures that transfer those principles and rights at the base of Save the Children's methodology and approach, from a purely theoretical basis to a practical purpose, so that they can serve as guidelines for the educators working in the field, especially those working in emergency contexts.

SAVE THE CHILDREN METHODOLOGIES AND APPROACH

When emergencies occur, Save the Children intervenes immediately by transferring its experienced operators on the field, either by activating partnership with local operators (who had to interrupt normal business activities because of frequent emergencies).

To share the approach, objectives and methodologies with educators and the professional figures who already work on the field,

Save the Children has adopted and implemented four main strategies:

- 1) Sharing of reference materials;
- 2) constant training of the whole team by an Child Friendly Spaces and Education Coordinator;
- 3) a training opportunity for all personnel - local or not - involved in the project to deepen both the issues concerning children protection from all forms of abuse and purely educational themes;

- 4) a specific, on the spot training providing any cognitive tool to interpret the signals of children post traumatic vulnerability.

These activities are aimed, on the one hand, to pass on the experience acquired by Save the Children in previous emergency responses and, on the other hand, to provide coherent and united basis of information to be shared with the whole personnel, regardless of factors such as the number or the creation date of Child Friendly Spaces.

1.2 Child Friendly Spaces

In May-June 2012, Save the Children created four CFS within the same number of tent cities in the province of Modena, with the aim of supporting children and adolescents during the emergency, ensuring them a welcoming physical space to live in safely respecting their rights as enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Following the protocol adopted by Save the Children International in emergency contexts, the staff has quickly identified a number of psychosocial, recreational and educational activities to be offered to children and adolescents in the tent cities.

SAVE THE CHILDREN'S CHILD FRIENDLY SPACES

Child Friendly Spaces have been created by Save the Children as a method of intervention in case of natural disaster; they actually are protected areas where children can experience cooperative forms of socialization, rebuild emotional relationships with peers and adults, tell and process their experience in a safe place, in a time when most of the certainties seem to have crumbled. The activities carried out in the CFSs bring direct

benefit to parents as well; they can actually leave their children in a safe place and start rebuilding their lives. Based on its own experience, Save the Children believes that a Child Friendly Space can offer children and adolescents a quick and precious support; a stable, continuous, professional and specialized aid in emergency situations which are often characterized by fragmentation of interventions, service discontinuities and rapid turnover of operators. Child Friendly Spaces allow children to spend their time

in a safe location along with peers, preventing them, as far as possible, from event-exposure stress (images of the disaster on television, adults and parents talking about tragic events, etc.). The CFSs help to identify children's difficulties providing them with adequate support at home or within their communities.

PART ONE

As previously mentioned, a timeliness intervention is crucial: the presence of a CFS in a tent city is a good strategy to provide support in the moment of greatest displacement, creating an important reference point for children, adolescents and their families. At the same time, **the intervention must respond to actual and urgent needs of the beneficiaries.**

It is essential to note that although not all children can manifest post-traumatic diseases, a wide spectrum of personal **reactions** in the different phases of the emergency can be mitigated by an appropriate response and support. Many studies show that **social support** has a precious part in the prevention of children's post traumatic symptoms. Working in an emergency context actually means answering to the curiosity of children and adolescents, even if not relating to a specific traumatic experience.

After the interventions in L'Aquila and Emilia Romagna, Save the Children has been able to define the actual functionality and specificity of Child Friendly Spaces, together with the related activities carried out in emergency context.

The response experience to national emergencies has shown that **flexibility, supervision and proper coordination of activities** can give to Child Friendly Spaces the possibility to adapt and change in the different phases of the emergency, in keeping with the needs and requirements identified.

A Child Friendly Space has not been conceived as an isolated island; indeed, it can help to recreate the social support networks undermined by the earthquake and by the proliferation of various tent cities.

The CFS become a **meeting, aggregation and socialization** place, thus, a very important point of reference.



WORKING IN THE FIELD

Creating a Child Friendly Space implies having an overview of the place in which operators will work. This means being fully aware of the operating modes of the hosting organization, hence, Save the Children's operating modes must be contextualized and harmonized - within the given area – to the needs of different organization so as to start a synergistic partnership. It is also important to develop the constant ability to adjust the emergency phases since there may be structural and methodological changes altering the working context in the long term. This changing capacity will be required at all times of the day since the commitment in a project of medium and long-term response, actually involves a constant presence in the areas affected by the emergency; this often produces conditions of forced cohabitation, even outside the working hours. It is therefore useful to take into account the private needs,

identifying and preserving some personal time and space on the basis of the very group that the operator represents.

Being part of a team means facing stress related conditions throughout any phase of the project, supporting each other without neglecting oneself or overworking, considering those extraordinary working conditions as "normal".

It is therefore essential to ponder carefully on personal physical and mental condition, reporting any concern, discomfort, problem or need to departmental coordinators in order to discuss problems and find appropriate solutions for any kind of issue.

The path also includes regular meetings, moments of discussion and debate to constantly monitor the operator's physical and mental condition, as well as the general condition of the whole group; a final debriefing has been contemplated to discuss (at least one month after the closure of the project) doubts, perplexities and weaknesses found during the emergency with an external specialized psychologist.

As a matter of fact, Save the Children makes use of specialized operators to take immediate action in emergency context; they can work in the field at short notice delivering their knowledge and skills to less experienced colleagues.

The educational activities within Child Friendly Spaces is coordinated and supervised by a Save the Children's educational coordinator, expert in emergency response projects.

Not only the educational coordinator is a skilled team trainer but he also runs weekly meetings for Save the Children's expert educators and local operators working as a team in different Spaces; he also schedules a weekly program based on different opinions, weaknesses, strengths or operative suggestions, in a process of constant monitoring and evaluation of activities.

1.3 The education and psychosocial intervention in Child Friendly Spaces

Although further objectives may be relevant within the needs and limits of different situations or contexts found in the field, the two most common goals of Child Friendly Spaces are:

- 1) Give children the opportunity to grow/develop, learn/play and build/strengthen the resiliency after an emergency, a crisis, or during a long lasting emergency.
- 2) Identify and find a fitting response to specific threats for all children and/or specific groups - such as those with particular vulnerabilities - after an emergency, a crisis, or during a long lasting emergency.

From an educational point of view, the intention of the CFSsis to contribute to a constant process of learning and development while the primary psychosocial aim of Child Friendly Spaces is to strengthen the resilience of

children and adolescents, that is, their ability to recover, to fight adversities and return to usual daily activities, even in unpredictable and changeable emergency environments. The people's resilience capacity can vary over time and according to circumstances; actually human relationships are the basis of social and psychological development of children as well as particularly important factors in building children's resilience. Since children react differently to emergencies and all children are different, various features have been associated to children's increased ability to recover. Furthermore, the resilience implies some existing protective characteristics of children (some can be learned, others are natural) as well as environmental protective factors.

Among these resilience strengthening factors we have:

- a strong attachment and interaction with adults or peers who take care of them;
- a regular engagement in gaming activities and active interest in hobbies and activities;
- the example of parents in addressing problems and behaving properly; predictable routine and sense of structure;
- access to game, educational and learning opportunities;
- a positive and consistent discipline and the presence of family members and friends as well as community support networks.

Child Friendly Spaces are therefore able to provide and strengthen these protective factors both environmental and individual.

Child Friendly Spaces can also strengthen the ability of families to take care of children, helping parents and caregivers to communicate with them after recent harsh experiences, identifying their fears and hopes for the future. Through the involvement of the family, CFSs can also help to build or rebuild a sense of community.

During the Emilia Romagna Region emergency, Save the Children published a **"A Parent's practical guide: how to help children cope with the effects of disaster"** to provide information on some typical reactions that parents may notice in children during and after the emergency according to age, and different support strategies. The Guide proved a useful tool for adults who had to communicate with children and adolescents; actually, it is not always easy for parents to answer children's questions with sincerity, accepting and respecting their emotions.

CFSs also offer children and adolescents a precious chance to tell and/or to process their experience within a safe environment and in a secure way, providing an appropriate and receptive psychosocial support, not to be confused with a clinical or more structured psychological intervention that takes into account individual differences in children and adolescents reactions to emergency and potentially traumatic situation such as an earthquake.

Save the Children wants to encourage adults to be close to children; adult care and support during an emergency within a supportive environment is one of the main strategies of the Organization. As a matter of fact, children and adolescents who require specific attention are sent to specific treatment centers. The specific objectives, included in the 20 laboratory-sheets mentioned in the second part of this document, have to be interpreted in the background of educational and psychosocial general objectives described above and within the scenario of Save the Children's programmatic interventions in national emergency situations.

Finally, the educational and psychosocial role of these Spaces needs to adapt to the specificities of the local context and to the various phases of emergency in order to be fully relevant and receptive. Most pertinent examples of different roles and activities, carried out in a CFS following the three different phases of emergency, are listed below.

WHAT IS MEANT BY “PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT”?

Child Friendly Spaces, together with educational or psychosocial interventions during and after the emergency, can help improve the children and adolescents psychosocial well-being by strengthening and promoting their cognitive, emotional and social development. Such spaces can also strengthen the minor’s support systems, both internal and external, providing social and structured play activities with peers.

Child Friendly Spaces provide children with time and space to:

- Restore a normal development path through “normalizing play activities”;
- process and reduce the harmful levels of stress accumulated during and after the tragic events;
- learn and share new and positive strategies to address the difficulties through socialization with peers and adults in environment where support and adult supervision is guaranteed;
- gather useful information about personal safety.

Child Friendly Spaces and educational or psychosocial interventions during and after the emergency are not conceived with the objective of providing individual psychological counseling or trauma therapy to children. Actually, children and adolescents requiring specific attention should be sent to specific treatment centers.

Text adapted from:
“Child Friendly Spaces in Emergencies: A Handbook for Save the Children Staff”
Save the Children,
October 2008



1.4 The principles of non-discrimination and inclusion

Numerous migrant communities were living in the earthquake affected area, that is why CFSs in Emilia welcomed many children of different cultures, nationalities and religions.

Save the Children's approach is based on the principles of non-discrimination and inclusion, assuming diversity as a precious asset and an added value to be fostered within any different intervention.

The Emilia experience has shown that the Child Friendly Spaces can become an environment in which children and families experience new forms of sociability and aggregation, dialogue and intercultural exchange, where diversity is recognized and improved. Diversity can actually be integrated in the activity scheduling so as to share traditions, celebrations and social, cultural or religious rituals on the basis of solidarity, mutual understanding and enrichment of children and families.

A successful intervention is essentially based on the activities that best allow to recover and sometimes to discover existing resources, skills and knowledge. It is therefore necessary to put children and adolescents at the center of the process considering their experience, relationships, experiences, thoughts and needs. Since social tensions usually increase in emergency situations, it is important to create opportunities that allow children and adolescents to try new forms of cooperative relationship, rather than developing a competitive environment.

It is crucial that conflicts are recognized and solved creatively or impartially. Child Friendly Space becomes a place where children, under the supervision of experienced professionals, can experience solution, mediation and negotiation strategies, free from the anxiety of having to compete with others.

The educator must adopt a **participatory and inclusive approach**, encouraging both **negotiation and game rules sharing**.

The **management and the organisation of materials and spaces must be organized in such a way that children may access it safely, easily and with autonomy**.

Different activities should be proposed on the basis of children and adolescents skill enhancement opportunity, taking into account possible disabilities, gender differences, different cognitive and learning methods as well as language and expositive skills.

In Emilia, the planning of activities has been scheduled according to ethno-cultural and religious diversities, encouraging all children and adolescents of the CFS to join the cultural celebrations and events within the camps such as the end of the holy month of Ramadan. Upon request of little girls, mothers and girls, cultural open days have been organized to share different traditions with the community as a whole.

The **relationship with the community and the family units** must be very carefully taken into account to promote an active involvement as well as communication, information exchange and discussion moments.

To this end, **regular meetings with parents and caregivers** were organized with the aim of proposing and discussing the features and specificities of Child Friendly Spaces, spreading information about children and adolescents common reactions in emergency situations.

During the meetings, some precious advices about the kind of support that adults can provide, were given; actually, the main goal was to discuss and share distinct experiences to strengthen the adult's ability to protect and safeguard their children.

The activities were carried out and shared with children, educators, parents and families on a weekly basis. Children and educators, scheduled a weekly program visible to everybody, providing an alternation of structured game and free play moments. Such a program flexibility was essential to allow the development of specific age-differentiated activities, focusing on the very needs and indications of children and adolescents.

1.5 The protection principle

The protection principle is the criterion upon which the planning and implementation of activities carried out in protected contexts is based on. It is important that all operators approach children and adolescents without adopting an invasive method, protecting and preventing children from distressing or violent events (images of the disaster on television, adults and parents talking about tragic events, etc.).

After particularly difficult events, as an earthquake, educators might note that children express their fears, anxieties or discomfort through games activities. This can happen, for example, by putting in place “repetitive” games that enact the earthquake. Such a repetition mechanism is normal though educators must pay attention to the frequency and quality of these play activities.

Should the educator observe that these activities create or are likely to cause discomfort in the child or his peers, it is critical that they know how to orient him/her properly, gently and tactfully, to another activity.

HELPFUL TIPS TO ENSURE THE CHILDREN'S PROTECTION AND SAFEGUARD IN EMERGENCY CONTEXT:

- Prevent children from being hit by adult's anxieties;
- respect the children's privacy preventing them from being filmed or interviewed invasively;
- promote the safety of the places where children's activities are carried out in the whole tent city area;
- always keep in mind that in emergency contexts - especially inside the camps - families and children come in contact with unknown people, residents, workers and volunteers, hence, one must never trust them - not even temporarily - with children;
- promote family training on emergency prevention after natural disasters;
- develop good relationships with social services, law enforcement agencies or other active local services to give or receive support in case of child protection needs;
- develop Children's peer relationships to increase their ability to protect themselves;
- identify children at greater risk, ensuring the presence of a timely and adequate support at home or in the community.

1.6 The participation principle and the right to freedom of expression

According to the **participation principle** and the **right to freedom of expression**, everyone should join the activities and have fun. Activity scheduling must be based on children and adolescents **shared proposals** in order to promote forms of verbal and non-verbal expression, express their feelings and points of view or relate their experiences. Children victims of calamities or natural disasters often experience a growing sense of helplessness, that is why the participation and active and direct involvement are crucial to develop “empowerment” giving them the feeling of regaining control over their lives.

On the basis of children rights in emergency contexts, the definition of the most useful technical strategies to promote the participation of children and adolescents in emergency situations is a challenging and complex moment that definitely requires proper methodologies and clear goals. The experience of Save the Children in Emilia has shown the value of **peer education** in starting laboratories built on the very interests and proposals of children or adolescents.

It is essential to choose the proper timing and participation modes in the light of the specific emergency phase; at the same time, educators should gradually develop children and adolescents time management skills, being always ready to intervene in case of need. The educator should also ease the work of the whole group and be capable of managing different techniques or encouraging children with useful materials to develop reflection, sharing and cooperation; an educator must also know how to read the different stages of group development in order to propose the proper games at every stage.

It is always useful to involve children and adolescents in the CFS management and organization phase both from a logistical point of view (preparing materials, supply orders etc.) and organizational (timetables proposal and drawing up of activities, etc.).

PARTICIPATION IS A COMMON RIGHT

Being sure that children and adolescents have an effective opportunity to contribute and succeed in the realization of activities means making up practical schedules (pragmatic and not unrealistic), and specifically:

- Adopt a participatory approach in identifying a theme to work on;
- share and explain both goals and possible outcomes of activities;
- consider timetables and deadlines;
- have available suitable materials (or creating materials with children and adolescents);
- know both the techniques and proposed themes.

1.7 Spaces in different phases of emergency

PHASE 1 (ACUTE ONSET EMERGENCY - THE VERY FIRST DAYS)

In the first phase of the emergency, the CFS's primary role is providing a **sense of security** through the creation of a **safe environment**. Furthermore, the purpose of the CFS is to encourage a quick resumption of a daily **routine**. In the early days, educators come into contact with children through **empathic listening** and non-invasive support. The experience in Emilia showed that the CFS can be defined and secured together with children in a creative way by identifying with them the **rules** of a peaceful group **coexistence**, creating and managing the objects that have a special value for them within the CFS itself.

Within one of the CFS's in Emilia, for example, the children proposed to build a big cardboard "guardian witch" to be put at the entrance of the CFS to keep the dangers out and protect the whole area during the closing time thus creating a "security barrier" with a "magic" white and red thread (to be less creative, a simple signaling tape).

In this first phase, the CFS provided a safe and **structured** environment in which educators and operators, with their calm, participative, friendly and consistent demeanor, provided **reassurance and comfort** to both children and adolescents. Children were told about the behavior of Save the Children's adults, they actually knew they could report any concern or inconvenience caused by other children or adults at any time. Hence, the levels of distress, anxiety and stress dropped significantly, limiting the sense of uncertainty and fear as well.

On the **psycho-educational side**, educators have supported children in overcoming their fears, identifying the proper strategies to deal with problems, stress and difficulty. In this first phase, children may be confused and it is important to give them clear and sincere answers about the event that affected them. The Emilia Romagna experience has confirmed the importance of explaining to children what has actually happened with an age-appropriate language.

PHASE 2 (RESCUE OPERATIONS UNDERWAY. FIRST 3 OR 4 WEEKS)

In the next step, when rescue operations (usually the first three or four weeks) are underway, games and activities are carried out within CFSs so as to create a cooperative and cohesive environment, taking into account children's reactions or needs and involving them in the design of activities themselves.

Throughout the emergency phase it is important, to promote a cooperative and supportive environment with games activities, avoiding competitive situations that may fuel children's anxiety or make them feel even "more isolated". Free play activities are actually useful if these are carried out with structure and order.

Throughout this phase, it is equally important, to spread information about common reactions to abnormal situations and to communicate what the caregivers can do to help children, emphasizing the importance of regaining, where possible, a normal life. Finally, in addition to recreational activities, providing basic psychosocial information to children is recommended on a par with simple exercises to strengthen their ability to cope with difficulties.

PHASE 3 (3 TO 4 WEEKS, UNTIL THE END OF OPERATIONS IN CHILD FRIENDLY SPACES)

This three to four weeks-phase, until the end of operations in CFS's, actually varies according to the needs of the context (in Emilia, for example, the first CFS lasted almost 5 months and the last one 4 months). In this third phase, recreational, theater, drawing, painting and sport activities are carried out. Initiating local partnerships with experienced colleagues can develop the specific skills to improve the living conditions of children and adolescents in a post-emergency context, where any given day is usually very long. In the case of Emilia Romagna earthquake, thanks to a partnership with the UISP (Italian Union Sport for All), Save the Children has been able to make use of skilled local operators specialized in game and physical activities for children and adolescents. Thanks to a constant training knowledge sharing, Save the Children's educators and UISP operators could accomplish sport and physical activities suitable for an emergency situation within a CFS.

This third phase should also provide games and recreational activities with a psychosocial aim to enable children to play, tell their stories and process their experience.

At this stage, children often feel overwhelmed by feelings and emotions, so you may want to carry out activities and games that support the verbalization and the expression of feelings and emotions (especially anger and fear).

At this stage, creative workshops, cultural, awareness and educational activities should therefore be structured with children and adolescents, having a receptive disposition so as to include their proposals in the activity planning.

Gradually, it is crucial to carry out specific activities to improve the concentration or to encourage children's relaxation and hope for the future. Furthermore, children and adolescents can actively involve the community or the parents, creating - with the help of educators - open days to set up real exhibitions (art, photography and video) and guided tours within the CFS itself.

These open days and meetings with caregivers are useful to gather some precious information about children's reactions and parents support. When the natural disaster causes a sudden interruption of children's classes and school activities, a specific weekly timetables may be produced within the CFS, to do children's homework or strengthen some skills school, taking into account different age groups and needs expressed by the community and families. In the final phase of the emergency period, for the resumption of school lessons, Save the Children's operators may provide, after a meeting with teachers and school heads, some forms to be filled during the first two or four weeks of school.

With the resumption of school classes, if the situation so requires, Save the Children's protected area may remain open for some time, to ensure the continuity of activities outside of school hours until the very closure of the camp.

At this stage, some short and slow recreation activities - not necessarily structured - together with more structured ones, should be favoured to promote leisure, socialization and relaxation.



1.8 Tips for activity planning: space and time organization

To adopt a participatory and inclusive approach it is crucial that both materials and spaces are appropriate and that children and adolescents can access them easily, in autonomy and security.

The **care, space organization** and **decor** are the basis of this approach and can not be underestimated. The **personalization of the environment** can actually help make a CFS more welcoming for children and adolescents who find themselves living in a tent city.

Actually, the tents can be uncomfortable places, with no green spaces, often adjacent to demolition sites and working machines on the go. Furthermore, the tents provided by the authorities that manage the camp sites for children protected structures, can be poorly lit and poorly ventilated. Making the CFS a **secure, comfortable, familiar, welcoming, cheerful and colorful place**, along with children and adolescents, must be a priority and should always go with the activity planning.

Space and furniture require safe decor and accessories, adapted to the specific needs of children (height of the furniture, protected edges etc.), encouraging teamworks and peer relationships (for example, circular tables). A proper CFS can be divided in different areas according to different activities; an area could be dedicated to artistic/creative/manual activities; more private and less noisy area may be dedicated to reading activities to stimulate concentration and relaxation; another area could be dedicated to outdoor sport and leisure activities. The use of commercial decorating materials in the CFS is not recommended, while, on the basis of children's centrality approach, all artistic products made by children and adolescents can be shown.

The materials used for the activities should also be varied, manipulable, accessible and secure so that children can possibly manage them independently, without asking for the educator's help regularly.

Different color decorated areas should reflect related activities: bright colors such as red and yellow should indicate intense activity areas while areas dedicated to relaxation or reflection should have soothing colors such as white, blue or green pastel. Throughout the Emilia experience, children and adolescents have been fully involved in both the arrangement of spaces and **placement of materials and games**.

Children in the CFS divided toys into different categories, labeling each container and placing tables as they liked; every time a donation was received, they also enjoyed arranging the material. During the whole period of emergency operations, children and adolescents were actually invited to decorate and furnish the CFS with imagination to make it more cheerful and welcoming. In one of the CFS's, for example, adolescents and pre-adolescents painted the wooden fence around the area.

The areas dedicated to reading, relaxation and reflection activities play a particularly important role within the Spaces.

Children and adolescents living in emergency contexts try to give a meaning to what happened, in the attempt to regain control over their lives, leaving little room for relaxation activities which are equally precious for their complete resumption. It is therefore advisable to create an area - though small - where children can take their time to recover.

In proposing age-group activities according to different child development it is useful to provide different timetable and spaces.



Photo: Luciano Zanecchia/Save the Children

In Emilia, children under the age of four and adults were dedicated an area to spend some precious time together in a safe and pleasant environment. Such areas have been specifically furnished to be comfortable for moms, dads, grandparents and children, being equipped with carefully selected materials and secure games suitable for this age group. When a CFS is attended by a group of adolescents, together with a group of very young children, it may be useful for educators to split into two different teams so as to differentiate and carry out activities with two separate groups simultaneously.

Planning transversal activities will make adolescents play an active and leading role in children activities (peer educators). It is useful to have a **safe place** to store items made by children or not finished yet to prevent them from being damaged.

A collecting, processing and documentation job must therefore be done, putting a date and a child's name on the created works in order to give value to the road taken with children and adolescents. In Emilia Romagna, for example, children and adolescents were given some **folders** to decorate and customize with their own names. The folders must be returned to the children when the CFS closes, so as to give them a sense of life continuity. The collecting, processing and documenting job is also useful to set up exhibitions within the CFS and share with families and parents the works produced by children and adolescents, so that they might give voice to their own lives, relate their experiences and share good practices. If there is not a safe place inside a tent or in the surrounding area (a container will be fine) where to store the works made by children, it would be more useful to carry out one-day activities/laboratories at the end of which any object or work made by child can be delivered. As regards the activities timetable, **continuity and structuring** should be ensured, avoiding a daily programming. This may seem an obvious assumption, if we were not in a complex environment whose many variables to consider do not ease the prediction of global flow of children or the closing date of the camps. It is therefore crucial to provide **regular habits and timetable** - though flexible enough to be modified along with children and adolescents - in order to regain the precious routine and predictability that natural disasters usually breaks.

As a matter of fact, the daily rhythms that children and adolescents were accustomed to have been disrupted, that is why the day inside the tent city can be very long for them. Children no longer have the opportunity to attend school, extra-school activities, socialization places or access to useful facilities, therefore they must temporarily give up enjoying their hobbies and sometimes seeing classmates, friends and neighbors. The planning of activities in emergency contexts must give particular attention to children and adolescents' **attention span**, as many of them may initially have concentration and learning difficulties.

One may need to schedule shorter participation activities at a slower pace; it is essential that all children and adolescents can join activities according to their personal availability and capacity. It is crucial to select the activities in which everyone can play an active role and have an assigned task to contribute positively to the fulfillment of the activities themselves, avoiding competitiveness and frustrating situations. Thus, it can be useful to promote team building groups or cooperation games and activities to create a serene environment and prepare workshops. The experience in Emilia has shown how it is particularly important to incorporate **time scales and phases of work** (realistic and consequential), objectives (clear and realistic) as well as the achievements pursued through the activities.

In Emilia, some children and adolescents did not always attend the CFS continuously; it was therefore crucial to structure some activities and workshops which might be brought to completion within a day or even provide the appropriate flexibility and timetable to allow any children to complete the work autonomously.

It is important to prevent the work experience from being a failure, incomplete or too complicated; on the contrary, it is useful to enhance the relationships and strengthen the team, avoiding competing mechanisms. It is also essential to avoid objectives that may inhibit children's imagination, restrict their creativity or increase their frustration making feel some of them not able of doing something in a very delicate time of their lives. To this end, it is essential to have sufficient materials available in the CFS and avoid the use of those elements (for example modeling clay or plasticine) that can not create lasting works and are difficult to store.

MANAGING CONFLICTS IN CHILD FRIENDLY SPACES

In some phases children and adolescents can become very restless, agitated or resentful. In these moments, tensions between them may rise; some children are subject to severe mood swings, others are isolated. It is therefore indicated to monitor the pace of activities, to adjust them or slow them down if necessary, alternating movement with calming activities, through simple games or relaxing motions. Nevertheless, it may be crucial to suspend the activities sometimes, to make the conflicts and problems clear within the group, in the precious attempt to find a solution together. At these times it may be important to remember the main goals and reflect upon the rules identified together to allow a peaceful coexistence of the group members themselves. It may be also necessary to supplement and change the established rules to create some more specific ones and make both children and adolescents understand the consequences for not respecting them. A pedagogy of rights-based approach uses different techniques and teaching practices (such as brainstorming, circle-time, finding and solving problems) to resolve conflicts within the whole group or in small groups, stimulating participatory management

of conflict as well as collaborative, cooperation and problem solving attitude towards common issues. Educators are obviously required to comply with the same rules shared with children and adolescents, which apply to anyone within the CFS.

A proper care and use of materials and games, for example, is a key rule, since everyone has the right to use them while a bad management may give rise to useless discussions and discontent. The situation can become difficult when lots of generous donations are received in an environment where children often find themselves without toys to play with outside the CFS.

During the Emilia emergency, children and adolescents - together with operators - developed some protection and care strategies of games and material as essential part of the time spent together on the CFS.

Two basic rules were established:

- 1) Anyone could get only one object/game on loan at a time;
- 2) new object/game could not be get as long as the previous one was brought back.



Photo: Save the Children



PART TWO

Workshops and activities in Child Friendly Spaces

PART TWO

This part of the document describes the successful activities proposed to children and adolescents in the camps. Different types of activities were organized upon a specific educational and psychosocial path and a weekly programme.

Such activities can be divided as follows:

-  **CREATIVE AND CRAFTS ACTIVITIES**
(Expressive drawing, painting);
-  **IMAGINATIVE, COMMUNICATION / EXPRESSIVE ACTIVITIES**
(Theatre);
-  **SPORT / MOTOR ACTIVITIES**
-  **RECREATIONAL, LEISURE OR FREE PLAY ACTIVITIES**
(Not necessarily structured);
-  **CULTURAL ACTIVITIES**

Let's build our Child Friendly Space: The Adventure Begins

In the first part we have already described the role and the phases of a Child Friendly Space; yet, how the CSF is created practically? The Emilia experience has shown that a CFS is a safe and secure area which built and gradually created along with children and adolescents through a patient, caring, consistent and creative teamwork. The beginning of this process is marked by the very opening day of the CFS itself. However, one should always remember that educators who create and implement an educational and psychosocial path in emergency situations, have to work in a context dominated by an infinite number and highly unpredictable variables, therefore flexibility and adaptation are essential.

The CFS can also be conceived as an adventure involving both children and adolescents in a difficult time of their lives. Here are some starting tips:

- 1) Involving children and adolescents in the area delimitation process to make it safe and respected by everyone.
In Emilia, three Child Friendly Spaces consisted of tents located inside the camps and in very different areas of the tent-city; the fourth CFS was located in a wide area covered by two marquees and bounded by three fences only while the fourth side was left open; that is why, in this latter CFS, both children and educators devised creative strategies to delimit the area carefully.
They decided to close the fourth side with a signaling tape (“magic red and white thread”) that could be tied or untied on two poles to create a “magic door” so that the games and the whole CFS could be better protected. Throughout the early days of the CFS, a large cardboard witch was built and painted as a scarecrow to “ward off the dangers”.
- 2) Involving children and adolescents in the organization and placement of teaching materials and games within the CFS. In Emilia, since the earliest days of the Child Friendly Spaces, children were invited to participate in the management and placement of materials and games

inside the tent with the precious aim of involving the children in the care of the CFS itself, making the area a kind of dedicated area for children. They had fun categorizing - along with educators - materials and games, placing them in transparent plastic containers (so that everyone could see the contents) and labelling each container.

Particularly in the initial phase, when the CFS was receiving frequent and generous donations, these activities have been a creative management of children's time and have also helped to create a sense of routine, safety and order both mental and practical. By participating in these activities, children and adolescents have been motivated to take care of the space responsibly, learning to find items and clear up the area after both group or independent play.

3) Involving children and adolescents in creative division of spaces, by creating separate areas for kids, pre-adolescents and adolescents where necessary. In some CFS, pre-adolescents and adolescents told the educators their difficulties in sharing spaces with younger children, expressing the necessity to have a dedicated area within the tent city. That is why, after pondering possible solutions, it was decided to create separate spaces by building dividers recycling some cardboard boxes and decorating them with tempera; two wooden tables were also added for each partition.

4) Engaging children and adolescents in furnishing and decorating the CFS and the surrounding area with imagination to make them more cheerful and child friendly. Actually, the area surrounding Finale Emilia was initially sad with wire fences, concrete and stones around, therefore it was not suitable for children.

In addition, Save the Children's tent was somehow detached from the large area in which most of the activities were carried out. For this reason, the educator asked the children to realize a kind of colorful murals writing positive messages on big sheets to hang on to the fences; some stones were also painted to create symbolical paths connecting Save the Children's tent to this common space within the camp. Furthermore, once the refugee camp was transferred to another area and the Child Friendly Space was set up in a park, children and adolescents created a fenced community garden manufactured with painted wood waste collected in the field.

In San Possidonio, pre-adolescents and adolescents started an artistic project to paint with carefully selected colors the wooden fence surrounding the three sides of the space while in Concordia, some decorations, created with recycled plastic bottles, were hung to the neighboring trees.

5) Putting in place, from the early days, a kind of collection and catalogue system of children's work through individual, customized folders or portfolios. In Emilia, both children and adolescents were invited to create their own folders or portfolios to collect spontaneous works as well as those made in laboratories or in more structured activities. Children had some simple cardboard folders and stationery to beautify and personalize their own folders with names or decorations. The folders were safely kept all the time inside the CFS and returned to children when the CFS was closed; this allowed them to share and tell this precious experience to those peers or friends who had not attended the CFS with them. The folders made children and adolescents feel definitely proud of the experience lived together, allowing them to leave the camp with solid memories concerning their achievements and contributions.

PART TWO

6) Helping children and adolescents identify creative strategies to take care of the CFS's materials and games; as a matter of fact, after the earthquake children and adolescents suddenly found themselves with no toys and recreational or learning materials (e.g. books, school slates, musical instruments they were generally fond of or related to). In Emilia, some children created a decorated notebook: 'Our Book of Loans' was the name inscribed on the cover; the aim was keeping the record of both games and books loaned.

Four columns were created; one for the name of the boy/girl who asked for the loan, a second for the object borrowed, a third one for the signature (or scribble) and a final column to draw a star when the object was finally returned.

As a basic rule, everyone could ask for a single loan, one object at a time, provided the previous object had already been returned.

Pre-adolescents had an active role in this process, strengthening the emotional relationships through their precious collaboration in the management and implementation of this activity devoted to young children.

7) Identifying and implementing some prompt techniques and educational activities to encourage common participation and develop those rituals that can mark the beginning and the conclusion of the daily activities, creating a welcoming environment and giving children and adolescents a sense of regularity and predictability (a routine), hence, security.

Circletime has been a widely used teaching practice within the CFS; it marked the beginning and the end of both morning and afternoon activities and it was often combined with brainstorming technique.

Every morning, after 30 to 45 minutes of free play activity, children were asked to tidy up and then gather in a large circle, sitting or standing, along with educators. In the morning, while singing and dancing, the circle was useful to introduce the daily activities while in the evening it usually marked the day closure and the final reflection moment.

Besides these organizational and management activities of the CFS, some examples of children and adolescents' activities and workshops can be listed below.

CIRCLE TIME MAIN FUNCTIONS:

- 1) Welcoming and allowing the group to say hello, good morning or good afternoon to each other to start the daily activities in the morning or to end them in late afternoon;
- 2) implementing games and activities to promote: team building and group cohesion - interaction, knowledge and trust and time orientation - self-managed activities and scheduling;
- 3) setting up, integrating and updating the rules to allow a peaceful coexistence within the group and the CFS;
- 4) introducing and proposing daily or weekly workshops or activities according to a weekly schedule, making them meaningful and relevant for children and adolescents, explaining the actual meaning and involving them in activity description and discussion;
- 5) collecting feedback from children and adolescents on implemented activities and on the CFS itself, creating some sharing and restitution moments for the group to reflect upon what has been done together;
- 6) bringing out the needs and problems within the group and - where appropriate - showing the actual conflicts so as to find shared solutions;
- 7) allowing both educators and children to share important information or communications with the group.



2.1 The Invention Lab (Kid inventors) Self-managed Art and Crafts Workshop

Beneficiary: children and adolescents aged 4 to 18 years old

Materials: recovery and recycling materials (cardboard boxes, plates, glasses, spoons and half-liter plastic bottles, flour, sand), basic office stationery (scissors, glue, pencils, brushes, tempera, watercolors, string, adhesive tape, markers, white and colored paper sheets, cardboard, pictures, various decorations, balloons etc ...).

Objectives: supporting children with a structured intervention inspired by the 'peer education model' in which all children participate in setting up and managing activities actively, acquiring the skills from each other through observation and thus learning how to self-organize and self-manage themselves; developing and fostering children's creativity promoting interactions and relationships, encouraging mutual respect and trust; fostering cooperation and mutual help, developing both individual and collective resources; promoting future projects and strengthen children's self-esteem by building useful objects to play with or by decorating the space; showing children that everyone has something to teach or to explain to others. This weekly workshop was born from the initiative of a little girl living in the CFS; one day she showed to other children the 'magic glasses' she had built by combining two transparent plastic spoons recovered in the canteen with scotch tape.

The little girl's glasses actually aroused the enthusiasm of other children who started asking how to achieve them. Hence, the proposal to start an "invention lab" (name chosen by children) where every week one children could share his own creation or "invention" with others, was finally made. In addition, the idea to create an "Invention Manual" to collect and document all the children's creations, was developed as well.

Realization: in a first phase, the children's proposals are collected and a programme is drawn up; when necessary, proposals and programmes may be amended and supplemented. Every week is therefore dedicated to the proposal of a different child, so that nobody is excluded and everyone may participate according to his/her own devices. Children can seek, collect and prepare the material needed to complete the project with the help of educators. Any week, one child at a time can lead the invention lab and - supported by educators – can finally teach to other children how to create his/her invention in two hours' time. Children must however help others by providing advice and support in the realization of the article. According to different requirements, children can sometimes work together, other times in groups. When the workshop is over, some precious moment are shared to tidy up the tent or play with the new invention while the artist, or inventor, is given the task of drawing up a technical sheet about his/her work to be included in the "Invention Manual" with: name, short biography, name of the work or object created, instructions or steps followed to accomplish the work, materials and tools as well as possible creative uses of the invention itself.

Some objects invented during the workshop:

- **“Magic glasses”**, sun, fashion or pool glasses built by combining two transparent plastic spoons recovered in the canteen and personalized with different decorations;
- **Trasif**, a board game similar to the tris game;
- **Paper flowers**, built with the origami technique;
- **The “Star” bag**, built with paper;
- **Anti-stress flour balloons**: made by filling a plastic bottle with flour for more than a half, inflating a balloon and attaching it to the neck of the bottle without letting the air out. The bottle is then reversed and the flour inside is slowly released into the balloon, letting the air out of the balloon which is closed with a knot;
- **The “How long does it take?” Project**: creating “hourglasses” with two recycled half-liter transparent plastic bottles to which the caps have been removed. Realization: one of the two bottles is half-filled with sand and the neck is closed with a little cardboard on which a 7/8 mm hole had been previously created; the cardboard was fixed with tape while the second empty bottle was united to the first one by the neck with tape. Children decorated the hourglasses as they wished;
- **Recycled Library**: light and colored bookshelf created by pasting several cardboard boxes one above the other, making it solid, stable and prevent it from being tilted; the “library” was then painted with tempera;
- **Plastic Model of Cities**: in the first phase, some folded rigid cardboard sheets were cut and each child created a paper house - following the two ‘inventors’ directions – choosing both materials and form, using a free individual technique to build, furnish and decorate it, hence, giving free expression to their creativity. A child, for example, placed a light inside the house by connecting wires to a hidden battery. In a second phase, the plastic model was created by cutting some waste cardboard boxes on which children attached their homes and drew some streets and landscapes;
- **Magic Envelope**: made with paper sheets and decorated with various colors and materials;
- **Save the Children’s Home**: a house built with recycled wood fence and assembled by children with plastic, twine to secure the roof and tape to ensure the elements of the structure; the house was then furnished with chairs, table, carpet, cushions, mat, games and **water paths**; **“the Talhah and Babar forum”** was also created digging a hole or a tunnel in the sand to play with toy cars.

This workshop was so successful that older boys in the camp, curious about these inventions, decided to teach children how to build a kite with recycled materials by simply using a garbage bag to build the sail and flexible wood sprigs to create the structure.

2.2 Clay Workshop or “My clay monster!”

Beneficiary: children and adolescents aged between 4 and 18 years old.

Materials: a 25 kg clay block, string to cut the clay, plywood tablets for each child, cardstock paper, tempera paints, brushes and a big plywood table.

Objectives: creating a space dedicated to activities that would allow children to express themselves creatively through touching, feeling and building actions was considered an essential step. This activity proved particularly suitable to enhance and stimulate the creativity of children and adolescents, allowing them to unleash their imagination and fantasy or, in some cases, to express emotions and loose tensions, mastering both energy and nervousness. Clay is a safe, hygienic, natural, fresh and soft material and it is easy for children to model.

As a matter of fact, clay modelling does not require tools and it is also fresh and wet, therefore very pleasant to the touch. Starting from a single large block of homogenous clay, children, with the help of educators, can get the wished quantity to be modelled, learning how to share and cooperate with each other.

Monocolored clay can also avoid the competition between children to get specific colors, particularly during the creation of the same object when children might compete again with each other to decide which is the best object, as it usually happens when small amounts of colored plasticine are distributed. Actually, every child can fully express her/his individuality or share the various processing techniques learned during the modelling activity with the group. Having to work with a single piece of clay without ever joining new parts together can prevent the clay from breaking and, above all, may stimulate older children to conceive a better project. For both younger and older children, clay manipulation, combined with child friendly manufacturing can be very satisfying and allow everyone to succeed successfully.

The clay can be preserved better than other materials such as plasticine or salt dough; furthermore, some simple precautions can be taken so that, once the block is dried it may be worked for months and finally decorated. Clay manipulation can therefore be a soothing and calming activity for children - as well as for adults – stimulating imagination and creativity or creating precious stress releasing moments. Clay manipulation, as well as drawing or painting, can be an alternative way to express children’s anger, fear and other emotions. The clay has definitely been one of the favourite materials used by children in all four Child Friendly Spaces.

Realization: according to the principles of active education, this workshop was inspired by an intervention planned by two skilled volunteers that proposed to organize a first meeting in the four Child Friendly Spaces to introduce clay manipulation to children. The first phase of the workshop consisted of a meeting in which children and adolescents were encouraged to share existing knowledge, theories and hypotheses on the material’s origin and nature (What was it? Where did it come from? Could it be found in nature? Where?).

Throughout the second phase, children were encouraged to analyze the clay with sight, touch and smell. Fantasy and imagination were therefore stimulated since children were invited to shape objects with clay in a way that these could be “magically” transformed into other forms or objects, as children liked. After this first successful meeting, by children demand,

workshops were finally started.

In this second phase, any different CFS had its own objective according to children's age, interests and needs with the common goal of integrating them all within the educational and psychosocial paths afoot.

Asking children to create their own monster and its planet, without giving further details was one of the proposals that mostly involved them.

Modelling an imaginary monster with clay can, in some cases, help children to express their fears and actually be a particularly useful technique in emergency contexts. Once the modelling was over, each child placed his/her creation on a plywood tablet; the children were then invited to give a name to both their monster and planet, adding a description of its features on a cardboard.

The arts and crafts exhibition, organized within the Child Friendly Space, gave children the opportunity to present proudly to parents and families their monsters accompanied by fanciful planets and elaborate descriptions. In other CFSs, children had fun modelling amulets, good luck objects, animals, vases, decorative objects for a plastic model made in another workshop, their own faces (portrait workshop) or objects with sentimental value. Actually, the clay was always available to any children and adolescent wishing to have fun modelling it.



2.3 Plastic workshop: “The Supervilla for all”

Beneficiary: children and adolescents; age 4 to 18 years old.

Materials: cardboard boxes (20 x 30 cm), watercolors, tempera, DAS modelling clay, large table of solid cardboard (base of the plastic model).

Objectives: this workshop was born out of a conversation with both children and adolescents who told educators their difficulties in sharing spaces with strangers after the abandonment of their homes and daily routine. Children and adolescents mainly spoke about the difficulty of not having their own room inside the camp, they reminded their homes, rooms, all the games, objects and things they loved and were suddenly forced to separate from.

The workshop was actually born from the children’s need to talk about their homes, some of which had been declared inhabitable and therefore would be demolished soon. Educators noticed, through play and drawing, the children’s need to talk about the homes they left, describing their colors, flowers in the gardens, drawing the cracks on the walls, representing figuratively how the earthquake had damaged their affections. For example, a little girl had drawn her house as she had left it, drawing herself as a woman at the door. Another child, playing with toy cars on a carpet, told that his new home would be the castle depicted on the track, since his old house was full of big cracks. Other children spoke nostalgically about their rooms, especially during sand and plasticine manipulation activities. Hence, educators, together with children and adolescents, decided to start a specific workshop that offered them the chance to “rebuild” their own rooms or to design a perfect room, able to “protect” them.

This workshop allows children and adolescents to work on the ground of desire, future planning and reality though it does not force them to tell experiences or separations that children are not ready to share yet. Being able to work on both levels, the construction of their own room may represent a bridge between what children were forced to abandon and future desires. After being forced to abandon their homes, finding themselves sharing the space with strangers, by building their new rooms with cardboard or manipulating the clay, children are finally free to recreate their own familiarity, intimacy and privacy.

Decorating his/her room with colors, shapes and custom furniture, children are free to express their individuality and creativity.

Through this workshop every child and adolescent, using individuality and creativity, contributes to the achievement of a common and shared objective: the creation of a plastic model to promote and encourage solidarity, collaboration and cooperation among children. The workshop actually encourages both cohesion and teamwork; it also fosters the integration of differences. Furthermore, since each individual room has its own place inside the plastic, every child somehow finds his/her own place in the group. An additional writing activity can introduce, describe and comment the children’s room, promoting a useful verbalization of the experience lived and the normalization of the emotions as well.

Realization: in a first phase, children designed, using cardboard, the structure of their own rooms, cutting out doors and windows, painting and choosing patterns for both the walls and the floor. In a second phase, children were asked to model the furniture, accessories or objects with clay, decorating their room with beautiful moulds that children could paint



as they wished. The children were then free to decide whether to build or not objects to place inside the room; some of them have chosen not to put anything in their ideal room.

In a third phase, children were invited to locate their room on a base (rigid cardboard table), large enough to accommodate all the rooms and then decide together how to arrange the rooms thinking about the global meaning to be given to the plastic. In addition, children decided whether and how to decorate the base, if and how merge them together (for example, some children decided to set their rooms on top of each other as to create a building or a skyscraper, while others wanted a wide space to surround their room, or designed a garden with a swing; others created doors or windows so that their room communicated with their mate one, some children even drew roads or paths on the plastic base so that they could “travel” from their own room to other’s.

The fourth and final phase was developed as a real writing work: children described freely their own room (educators transcribed the words of younger children). They were asked to find a name for the plastic and finally chosen to call it: “The Supervilla for All!”.

The plastic model was then presented to parents, families and adults on the occasion of children’s exhibition; those who wished to do so were also able to present their room and read their composition aloud.

Many parents were moved while children were visibly proud of the beautiful and meaningful work done together.



2.4 Gardening and Creative Recovery Workshop

Beneficiary: children and adolescents; age 5 to 18 years old.

Material: earth, seeds (beans, parsley, oregano, lemon balm and other herbs), water, gardening tools for children (such as gloves, aprons, watering, garden spades, rakes), recycled materials (paper or plastic cups, plastic bottles, wood scraps found in the field, etc...), pva glue and various materials to decorate the jars, 1m X 1m plastic transparent sandbox possibly not too deep (a wood or plywood version can be built with the help of children).

Objectives: this workshop was born from the awareness that the earthquake can transform the landscape of the affected area. After an earthquake, children see around them a lot of rubble and, throughout the reconstruction period, they are often surrounded by plans for the demolition of historic buildings and private homes. Furthermore, in the early days, bulldozers and other machineries operate and work in the tent camps. Hence, the proposal to start a series of child friendly gardening workshops to create green areas dedicated to the growth of seeds, herbs, flowers and aromatic plants within Child Friendly Spaces. The gardening activities, allow children to take care and follow the growth of a seed or a plant; such an activity helps them develop patience and stimulate both reflection and relaxation as gardening is based on a long term project.

The whole process must be followed, respecting the seed's germination length and development, without accelerating or anticipating the stages. Moreover, the gardening helps to develop a sense of restraint, as a seed always needs the right amount of water to grow. Finding the right balance is not easy at the beginning though children need a little time to learn how to measure the amount of water that seeds or plants need.

Actually, children learn to cooperate and work together to achieve the common goal of creating a vegetable or a community garden. They learn to live with diversity and unpredictability of nature, as not all the seeds planted will sprout, and no plant is identical to another.

Easy gardening activities for children favor a temporal orientation (waiting for the plant to grow) and give great satisfaction to children who can see the seeds sprout thanks to their attention and care. Educational and recreational gardening activities can also be particularly suitable for a group of children and adolescents who have experienced an earthquake, helping them to reconnect with the cycle of life understanding both diversity and unpredictability of nature at the base of all natural disasters.

Realization: the workshop has been divided into several phases and structured in a way that children and adolescents may work both individually or in groups.

In a first phase, through a simple and funny technique, each child was able to plant the seeds of various herbs (lemon balm, oregano, parsley, basil, thyme, coriander) in a recycled plastic glass. The children were also able to decorate and personalize their jars (white transparent plastic glass) sticking some recycled and decoration materials with vinyl glue.

Later on, children were able to transfer the sprouts into larger pots, made by recycled 1,5L plastic bottles cut in half, using the lower part only, painting and decorating them freely.

That was the moment when seedlings begun to grow, facilitating children's care of the plants by regular and moderate watering, keeping the soil constantly moist. At the end of activities, when the CFS closed, children were allowed to take away their seedlings.

In the third phase a small garden or vegetable garden was created. In three of the four CFSs a garden was created using a 1mX1m sandbox. Such activity has been a great success and children took care of their small orchard and garden with enthusiasm, watering it regularly and removing all the dry leaves. In one of the CFSs, located in a little garden inside the camp, children were able to choose an area to create their own community garden, preparing the ground for it. This activity gave birth to a more general redevelopment of this little neglected park, outside of opening hours of the tent. Children and adolescents had fun raking away all the dry leaves, natural materials and all kind of rubbish from the ground.

They were also able to draw the boundaries of their community garden and transplant their seedlings directly into the ground of the park, leaving the growing and most delicate plants in jars on the ground. In the same CFS, children had previously painted, decorated and customized the wood waste recovered within the camp. At this stage, children could plant some wooden sticks in the ground to build a small fence to enclose and protect their own vegetable garden.

2.5 Nightmares Protection Workshop: “My personal dream catcher”

Beneficiary: children; age 4 to 13 years old.

Materials: recycled materials (pasta, straws, string, plastic cups), tempera, brushes, colored cardboard/paper, stapler, glue, scissors.

Objectives: especially in the initial phase, several children told their nightmares about the earthquake to educators. This workshop aims, through the creation of a “dream catcher”, at normalizing nightmares and night terrors that can occur after a frightening event for children, by sharing nightmares and reassuring children that they are safe again. The construction of a “dream catcher” – according to American Indians this object could keep away nightmares and night terrors – can help children to separate reality from fantasy and reassure them by explaining that imagination is sometimes worse than reality. Workshop apart, a parallel objective was to encourage and to enhance children’s creativity and imagination.

Realization:

First phase: in a circle – using a child friendly language - some tribal legends of native North America cultures related to this object, were told to have children and adolescents curious and explain how such a “magic” object could filter their dreams.

Children were told that the function of this “magic” tool is to protect them from bad dreams; its outer circle represents the cycle of life or the universe, while its “net”, similar to a spider’s web, is used to ward off bad dreams and retain the good ones. In the same circle, educators reassured children that having nightmares or night terrors was normal after a frightening event and that fear was a human feeling caused by the presence or imminence of danger. Educators emphasized that the positive function of fear was to make them alert and vigilant in everyday life. Children and adolescents could share their dreams, identifying those from whom they wished to protect themselves through the construction dream catcher.

Second phase: a dream catcher for Child Friendly Spaces was realized. Gathered in small groups, younger children painted the pasta with different colors while older children built the structures using two crossed straws and twine, making some decorations with cardboard. Once built, the “dream catchers” were hung inside the Child Friendly Space or brought in the tents to be hung next to children’s beds. Following this workshop, children and adolescents started to share their dreams more often, that is why other activities, such as expressive drawing, expanding the theme of dreams, were later started.

2.6 Mehndi³ Workshop (Henna Decorations)

Beneficiary: children; age 0 to 18 years old, the community, particularly the families of children and adolescents attending the CFS.

Materials: plastic cones containing henna paste, stencils previously made by girls and little girls, sugar and lemon mixture (optional) – to put on the skin once the mehndi application is dry, paper and pens (to design and draw the decorations).

Objectives: starting activities and workshops involving the community; taking care of the relationship within the community itself, encouraging integration and sharing moments between different cultures and ethnic groups; promoting the participation of children in both planning and implementation of activities or workshops for the whole community; celebrating the ethnic-cultural and religious diversity within the tent city and the CFS, without neglecting the connection between children and their pre-existing conditions. The Mehndi workshop is born from the firm belief that proposing significant activities is crucial for children and adolescents, recognizing context specificities, cultural references, habits and life before the emergency.

Though experienced in the emergency context of a tent city, this workshop helped the resumption of the household’s everyday life, fostering the precious emotional sharing contained in the family intimacy.

Realization: the workshop has been proposed by some boys and girls since the art of Mehndi has an important role during Ramadan to which the community was preparing for. This workshop was therefore started to allow children and adolescents to share their interest in the history, the meaning and the nature of this celebration with others, on the basis of the interest that most of them had shown to skin painting or decorations. Actually, children were able to experience a natural and non toxic skin decoration technique, enhancing creativity and diversity through intercultural exchange. Educators have enthusiastically embraced the proposal to start the workshop, leaving much space to girls and little girls to organize and plan the whole event, preparing the materials and assigning the roles. Older girls, for example, prepared some booklets with special stencils for hands and arms decorations. Educators offered logistic support helping children to design posters to publicize the event in different languages: Italian, English, French, Urdu, Arabic, Punjabi. Children and adolescents affixed the posters in the camp.

The workshop was held in an open gazebo to make the space welcoming and easily accessible to all; there were tables, chairs and all the necessary materials (stencil booklets prepared by children, henna cones, handkerchiefs). All morning was dedicated to this activity, a useful way to engage the community; many mothers, grandmothers, cousins, aunts,

sisters and even great-grandmothers expert in Mehndi decorations came to the gazebo to share this important tradition and art form. An environment of acceptance and intercultural sharing between adults, children and families of different nationalities was created. Even those parents reluctant to accept and respect the ethnic, cultural and religious differences within the camp, eventually enjoyed having some decorations by the Mehndi artists. Although this ritual is typically done by women and addressed to them, children and adolescents were able to participate by giving logistic support, information or advices to participants. According to Mehndi tradition, some mothers shared cakes and sweets, congratulating organisers for planning such a special and “intimate” event inside the tent city.



Photo: Save the Children

2.7 “Exhibition” Workshop: open days, exhibitions and tours inside Child Friendly Spaces

Beneficiary: children; age 0 to 18 years old; tent city communities, parents, families and children caregivers within the Child Friendly Space.

Materials: all significant works to show and share with the CFS community, in particular with children’s families; various stationery products (such as paper, colors, scissors) to present the works and prepare some identification labels or captions describing the exhibited object, the work’s title and the author’s name.

Objectives: showing as many works as possible in order to share the works produced during the intervention; make children and adolescents participate in the socialization best practices; allow both children and families to voice their own experience; stimulate children and adolescents reflection on the path made together; strengthen self-esteem and self-efficacy, developing cooperation and collaboration throughout shared organization.

Realization: in emergency contexts, exhibitions can be scheduled in the final phases, in conjunction with school resumption dates so as to have an adequate and satisfying “closure” of project and activities together. In this case, the show represents the final exhibition of all works produced in the course of time, a way to involve the whole community and increase self-esteem of children who, showcasing their creations, can feel a sense of gratification and achievement right before the greetings of the final phase. Preparing and setting up the exhibition encourages children and adolescents to start processing their own experiences, hence, such a workshop can be a very useful tool in the final restitution phase, through which children can return and show to the community what has been done and realized together.

Exhibitions should not be programmed in the final phase of the intervention only but can be set up at any phase of the path so that children and adolescents may have fun in devising creative, participatory, interactive and dynamic ways to share their working activities with parents and families. As happened in Child Friendly Spaces in Emilia, a small exhibition can also be a way to illustrate the meaning and get to the heart of the CFS itself. Exhibitions had been actually set up in Emilia’s four Child Friendly Spaces, in different times and with different purposes, though always based on the needs and requirements specified by children and adolescents living in the CFS itself. In an intermediate phase of intervention, an exhibition was organized within one of the CFSs; children with the help of educators, recalled the workshops experience as well as different materials and objects created together. Later on, children were invited to join the preparation of the exhibition pro-actively, collecting advices on how to exhibit their work by parents. It was decided to set different thematic areas, each one with its own captions or labels and entrust the presentation of activities for families to a group of children. Within this scenario, plenty of room was made for improvisation by any child who wanted to share emotions, memories or information about the activities presented during the exhibition. Each of the children working groups took care of various aspects of the organization of the exhibition: guests reception; preparation of thematic areas; order and tidiness; preparation of captions and identification labels for each area; making of short oral presentations or readings to introduce thematic areas, specific

activities or objects produced; preparing refreshments, etc.. Throughout the visit, the intervention of educators and facilitators has been minimal; children have accompanied and guided parents within the Child Friendly Space independently. The show has also encouraged the participation of children who were reluctant to perform in public. The exhibition had a great success and parents were moved by their children reading the captions of the cardboard rooms they had created or the description of people, places and objects that made them feel safe. At the end of the visit, children and adolescents made parents and caregivers try the circle-time method. Gathered together in a circle and holding hands, children sang and told some of their favorite songs and stories, accompanied with dancing, gestures and group movements. After this collective and concerted play time, parents were led to a quiet refreshment area with tables and chairs arranged carefully for the occasion by a group of children.

2.8 “Start from scratch” Workshop: video and photography

Beneficiary: children and adolescents from 12 to 18 years old, families and parents.

Materials: video and photo camera, PC, easel, CD, photo printer, colored cardboards, twine, masking tape, pens.

Objectives: starting a workshop based on the needs of adolescents and older children of the camp, considering that the CFSs had been frequented mostly by younger children; recognizing the active role of adolescents by enhancing their ability to organize the time within the CFS independently; carrying out outdoor activities in order to channel the energy, the vitality and the typical adolescent hunger for adventure; relating personal experiences, socializing and getting closer to each other, having fun exploring the surrounding area; joining activities outside the Child Friendly Space, taking a break from both camp and family life. The aim of this workshop was encouraging children and adolescents to represent both the situation they were experiencing and future expectations (through video and photography). It was particularly important to give voice to children’s experiences regarding the earthquake and the camp life manifesting their feelings about what had happened and changed in their lives; such an individual reflection and collective elaboration of reality - as daily life in a tent city – developed a forward-thinking way of planning the future. Finally, the workshop was aimed at strengthening self-esteem satisfying the need to share experiences with others as often happened when children showed their pictures to others.

Realization: the workshop was designed starting from the children’s interest and will to tell their experience through video and photography. This is how the collaboration with Save the Children started: a professional video-maker and photographer gave the children the basics of photography and video making, encouraging both creativity and teamwork. Throughout the workshop, this professional figure, though exercising an authoritative function, played and had fun with children, urging them to participate providing new ideas and variations in building a flexible and adequate environment for the objectives that had been set.

Phase 1:

Set up objectives and workshop methods.

After meeting the video and photo expert in a brainstorming session and group discussion, children and adolescents agreed on the common goal of letting their experience know, sharing their emotions with peers and with those who had not experienced the earthquake. They made some interviews with their relatives, volunteers and operators to describe life inside the tent city, showing their hopes and expectations for the future. Through the lens of a camera, children were therefore able to represent the destruction of their city as well as the reconstruction prospects of its community.

Phase 2:

Video.

Children and adolescents working on the interviews divided into two groups: the first one took care of operators and volunteers while the second one looked after the camp residents. Children voluntarily chosen not to make any direct question about the earthquake since the aim of the interview was focusing on both the present and the future, leaving it to images to talk about the earthquake and the pain it caused. Children were also interested in knowing what had motivated operators and volunteers to work in Emilia Romagna's camps. A team of little girls chose to create a little documentary about Ramadan within the camp. The working groups, started shooting with the technical support of the facilitator, paying great attention to the content and selecting videos for editing; children and adolescents were provided the basic technical knowledge so that the selection had a meaning and a logical order to achieve the goals the boys had set in the early phase of the workshop. Children were actually given the basics of documentary profession and were also taught the key facts and the tricks of the trade.

Phase 3:

Photography.

As for the photography activities, children made various tours all over the municipality or in the country of San Possidonio trying to represent moods and emotions aroused by the earthquake through the best images. Later they expressed their thoughts on the reconstruction of their city. Throughout the group tours, children were accompanied by the professional photographer, an expert able to offer them, when necessary, technical consult or guide on light, angle or tips on the most effective way to convey a message giving prominence to some special details rather than other. The pictures were first viewed on computer and shown to the group, before choosing the most representative photos to be printed. Finally, children were invited to give a name to their works.

Phase 4:

“Let's catch up” exhibition.

After the workshop, children organized a presentation of their works called “Let's catch up“ set up in the evening within the Child Friendly Space, to which tent city residents, Save the Children team and families - even those no longer living in the camp - were invited to.

This activity made the children feel protagonist and responsible of the work done together, strengthening the self-esteem and awareness of their personal or collective resources. They also learned to work together and

cooperate to prepare and set up the presentation which has enhanced and encouraged the teamwork as well as children's skills and creativity. Children and adolescents agreed on the works to be shown by carefully selecting the most relevant creations and assigning the necessary roles and tasks for the preparation of the exhibition.

Adolescents and pre-adolescents, for example, dealt with the creation of a leaflet to be distributed to adult residents in tent cities with the necessary permissions for the exhibition set up. Since the exhibition was held in the evening, some spotlights had to be installed inside the CFS so that the pictures could be appropriately illuminated; besides, the Child Friendly Space was an open area, without walls, therefore, children had to find a solution to hang the pictures and make them visible even for the little ones. Children stuck the pictures on colored cardboard using scotch paper tape and had fun choosing the best matching colors for their photos, writing the title of each work on the frame. Younger boys and children have been involved in decorating the CFS to make it more comfortable (for example, through the creation of colorful welcome multi language posters). They also prepared the final songs to sing along with the guests when the exhibition concluded.

Children, boys and adolescents welcomed the guests and guided them through the exhibition "hall". An area of the exhibition was dedicated to the presentation of two videos made by children entitled "Make the most of Emilia" and "Starting from Scratch" a second area was instead dedicated to the photographic exhibition and a third one to the presentation of an imaginary city plastic model built by younger children called "Formicopoli" (Ant City) based on a true story about the earthquake.

2.9 “Our Greetings” Workshop

Beneficiary: all children, families and care givers that joined the activities within the Child Friendly Space.

Materials: cardboard box, drawing (pens and colors) and decoration materials, white and colored sheets of paper (possibly, other materials to build paper decorations, ornaments and festoons), stereo and CDs, drinks and food for refreshment, short qualitative multi language questionnaire for parents and families, folders to collect all the works made by children and adolescents, a symbolic memory of the whole work done together.

Premise: greeting time is the most sensitive aspect for children, adults and educators. Involving children and adolescents in the planning of final activities can actually reduce the risk of living this final moment as an abandonment or an imposed solution. The CFS closure and activity completion are managed following an approach based on rights and participation, developing empowerment and ensuring the right course of the whole organization. Educators in Emilia could count on a closing decalogue based on the precious experience of Save the Children in L'Aquila. Such a handbook of rules provides some guidance on how to manage the closing CFS so as to avoid a stress increase in both children and families; these rules had been distributed to Save the Children educators and local operators in the middle of the project, after the closure issue had already been discussed in a specific meeting.

Objectives: creating an opportunity to talk with the children about the CFS closure and the conclusion of activities using a child-appropriate language; making children and adolescents active participants in the development of this final chapter written together, enhancing and encouraging their creativity. Providing a creative management of the time spent together, hence, turning the closure moment from an obstacle into a positive activity; determining children's way of saying goodbye to the CFS and to educators before concluding the experience together; talking about the closure itself as a natural process, avoiding words or behaviour that may cause stress symptoms.

Realization: using a child-appropriate language, educators have forewarned children and adolescents about the closure of the CFS and conclusion of activities. Some final considerations were made about the life challenges in children's life after the earthquake and the closure of tent cities (many children returned to their homes, some were transferred to hotels, others had to rearrange their houses). As a matter of fact, children and adolescents had the time to express their feelings on the closure and to figure out how they wanted to greet both the CFS and educators. This precious moment of restitution - where feedbacks, thanks, comments, reflections and children's emotions were shared - was touching and deeply felt by children and educators.

In the four CFSs, children, together with educators, planned and carried out several activities to accompany children throughout the closing of the CFS. Through various creative, manual and communicative activities, children were able to tell one or more favorite moments, reflecting on the many things learned and on the new friendships made within the camp. In this final phase, the attention has been focused on group activities and upon the creation of those shared objects that, somehow, could represent

a trace of the journey made together. Children, for example, created a symbolic quilt made up of tiny colored square cards on which each one left his/her own personal memory with a sentence or a drawing. During the closing parties, a long roll of paper was available to let the children leave a message or a greeting as they liked. In each Child Friendly Space, the group of children and adolescents organized a customized closing feast, preparing the CFSs for the party, drawing signs, making decorations, planning the guest list as well as activities and refreshments. The children and the families who did not take part in most of the Space activities were invited through text message so that they could join the final event and say goodbye. The children were actually happy to get together with their “old CFS friends”, while the families came running and participated with joy. On this occasion, parents and caregivers were asked to answer a short questionnaire to get a final feedback on CFS and activities while children and adolescents were handed the folders with all their works or creations. Children were also given by educators some colour pencils and bookmarks with quotes from the book “The Little Prince”, specifically made for the occasion, as a symbol of the continuity of all the educational and psychosocial achievements got together.

2.10 Other activities

In the following section, the main types of activities - in addition to those already described in detail - will be listed and described briefly according to which the weekly program was scheduled. Activities were carried out to obtain feedback from children and adolescents about the work done within the Child Friendly Space and to encourage them to tell their experience inside the tent city. Children were able to tell their story and actually express their wishes, reflect upon both the positive and problematic aspects of life inside the camp describing their perceptions on the CFS itself. These frequent and continuous activities, gave children the opportunity to share with peers and educators what they were learning, what they actually liked about the CFS and tent cities, identifying what needed to be changed and how.

Activity 1

One of the activities consisted in placing four billboards in the four corners of a large space - in which children were free to move around, with a relaxing music in the background - describing or drawing on each billboard:

- 1) activities, preferred materials and toys within the CFS;
- 2) things they did not like of the CFS;
- 3) wishes;
- 4) close friendships with children known within the CFS.

All children - the little ones helped by educators – joined this activity before greeting the group and taking some time to think and comment together about the meaning of the billboards.

Activity 2

Children and adolescents were asked to draw the camp from their own perspective, starting from their personal earthquake and actual experience. Once the drawings were completed, children gathered in a circle with

educators to share their different visions.

We must remember that, unlike L'Aquila, in Emilia, household situations were very different from each other; some were living in tents in the garden or nearby private homes, others in campers while some families stayed in their own houses or in rented ones, hence, not all the children attending the Child Friendly Space were actually living inside the camp. Furthermore, some families were sleeping inside the camp, but returned to their homes by day. Once the drawings were completed, children - no matter where they had been living - gathered in circle with educators to share their different visions of the camp and the structures (Save the Children's tent, infirmary, canteen, warehouse). Such activities are fundamental as they allow educators to get precious feedback from children about the organization of weekly activities, understanding the ones that are most relevant to them. At the same time, children can be engaged in the definition of activities or in both the discussion or the setting of the CFS rules, adding new guidelines or even applying appropriate sanctions for those who break the few but important rules set together.

Some storytelling workshops were held, using both classical and modern fables, images and colored or black and white photos as well as ordinary objects (hidden in a basket) so as to introduce children to reading experience, rediscovering the oral dimension of storytelling both on a personal and group level, encouraging relaxation, fantasy, imagination, creativity and curiosity of children. In pairs, in small groups or in circle, children were able to transform the stories told or create new ones, improvising and sharing tales and stories, often through a group theatre performance.

Emilia experience has taught the essential role of storytelling workshops in order to create moments of silence, peace and tranquillity, helping children to relax; for this purpose it may be useful to set up a library and a comfortable reading area with pillows and carpets within the CFS.

In addition, storytelling workshops encourage emotional reflection for they allow children to transpose their thoughts and moods on different levels so as to express themselves indirectly by reporting their experiences within the characters, situations or episodes of the tale read, invented or represented. Inspired by the work of Bruno Munari and his wonderful children's books, a creative **book manufacturing workshop** was started in Emilia; in a first phase, some books of this Italian artist were shown to children ("In The Dark of the Night and The Fog of Milan"), letting the children free to interpret the images and participate with questions and comments. In a second phase, children were invited to build their own "magical", book with title and author on a real cover. In order to create the graphic effects inspired by Munari's books, children drew on different types of coloured paper sheets (eg dark or black cardboard, rough paper, tracing semitransparent or opaque paper, brown wrapping paper, tissue paper, etc ...). In a third phase, children, proud of the manufactured books, presented and showed them to the group gathered in a circle, sharing them with their families as well.

This successful workshop for all children and adolescents is an excellent example of productive and solid creative activity. The choice of the two inspirational books, specifically from the topic point of view, was not entirely accidental: the book "In The Dark of the Night" can be actually used to talk about and face the fear of the dark of many children as well as many other fears, both old and new, which can emerge after a shocking event like an earthquake.

The book “The Fog of Milan” was instead selected as it tells the story of a trip out of the dense fog of a city to arrive at a coloured circus, therefore, it could have a significant meaning for the group of children who lived in Emilia, an area known for its thick fog in the winter season.

Older children took part in most of the activities carried out in order to help children and adolescents know their **rights** on the basis of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). By playing the “**Rights Game**”, already proposed in L’Aquila, adolescents invented some trials to face basing on the articles of the Convention, splitting younger children into small groups, and guiding them throughout the game test. Any test was conceived so as not to exclude anyone but enhance relationships instead, strenghtening the teams and encouraging diversity, collaboration, cooperation and solidarity. Such game, designed as a treasure hunt, integrates some activities that allow children to share desires, opinions, ideas, and to give their feedback on the Child Friendly Space.

Actually, many **cooperative games** were planned and played (mostly movement activities) taking into account children’s age, gender as well as specific contexts, cultural references and habits. Every group and any team member participating, has to engage in these games – where no one has ever been excluded or eliminated - to accomplish the final task; the goal was to strengthen both the team spirit and knowledge, encouraging mutual listening and trust, allowing the children to mitigate the thoughts of the emergency situation, directing their energy into different directions, giving vent to their vivacity within safe and fun activities. As one children exclaimed during a game: “If we do not win together, we will all lose... so let’s do it, one for all”.

Cooperative games are particularly suited to an emergency situation as they rarely require materials and can be played using recycled materials within the Child Friendly Space. The activities carried out were actually very simple though amusing; the real aim was encouraging children’s cooperation and coordination.

As a matter of fact, some traditional activities, such as “musical chairs” or other chasing games, were proposed with some variations so as to promote emotional bonds, socialization and collaboration among children. For example in “musical chairs” no player could be eliminated and everyone had to gradually find a place on an ever smaller number of chairs, sitting in one’s arms or in the lap of a mate. During the chasing games, the “caught” children had to stop with the arms forming a circle in front of his/her shoulders and could only be saved by another children entering the arm circle and embracing him/her.

Throughout the educational and psychosocial path created, educators have paid special attention to children’s **emotions** and **emotional literacy** within the CFS.

Besides, the already mentioned brainstorming, during the circle time, educators asked children and adolescents their opinion about emotions; from where they were born or how and where they could felt. Children and adolescents were then asked to list all the emotions they knew, writing them on a visible billboard, identifying together the four or five basic human emotions. Children were encouraged to identify situations that could make one feel sad, happy, scared, or angry, sharing those moments related to specific state of mind. Children were also helped to reflect together upon the facial and body expressions that communicate emotions. Through mime games, theater and body expression, children represented and staged various “emotional situations” identified in the brainstorming. A useful tool in carrying out emotion and emotional literacy activities are the emotions cards, depicting images of a sad, happy, angry and frightened

PART TWO

faces; these cards can be manufactured with children and adolescents representing familiar faces of characters from fairy tales. These can be used to accompany the reading of a tale or reflect together on different emotions felt by the main characters thus expressing children's emotions.

Cards can also be useful to create movement games by arranging them within the CFS and asking children to stay near the card expressing their actual emotion, this is the way through which they are encouraged to listen to what they experience and feel, learning to communicate with others.

The Emilia experience has shown the importance of taking precious time to carry out emotions activities developing children's sense of safety, especially through the construction of symbolic objects able to enable children and adolescents to reflect and identify what really makes them feel or helps them feel safe and secure in instability situations, such as the very earthquake experience in Emilia.

For instance, in one of the CFSs, educators, inspired by the "ants with yellow helmets" from the fairy tale "*The ants are stronger than the earthquake*" (Scataglini, 2009), symbolizing the operators that bring relief to the population from the early moments of the disaster – made children build their own paper yellow helmet, identifying the places, people, pets and items that made them feel safe and protected. The Emilia experience has therefore shown how the path of emotional activities needs to be adjustable to develop specific activities, characterized by different age groups, focused on distinct needs and indications of children and adolescents attending the Child Friendly Space. In one of these CFS, according to the needs expressed



Photo: Luciano Zaneccchia/Save the Children

by the children in a particular phase of the emergency, educators carried out specific activities to help them face and manage some high conflict situations among children experiencing violent quarrels between families in the refugee camp. Later on, during a *circle time*, children verbalized what scared them or made them angry in that moment expressing what could reassure them as well (such as mutual listening and respect characterizing the relations within the CFS).

Relaxation games, movement activities, breathing and visualization exercises - with and without music - have been found to be great stress relief strategies for children. These activities were carried out in times of fatigue and tension within the group or at the conclusion of activities, replacing the daily activities when necessary.

A lot of **sensory activities** were accomplished, in line with different age groups. Together with smaller children, some outdoor tactile paths were created to stimulate children's awareness, walking bare feet on different materials and natural elements such as water, sand, pebbles, leaves and grass. Children, could even walk with their eyes shut, telling the feelings aroused in them by walking bare feet on these natural elements and the memories associated with these. Older children instead, had fun identifying and describing hidden objects through their touch alone.

In all four Child Friendly Spaces, some large plastic containers were set up on the ground and filled with sand and water. Both **contact and free play with these natural elements** allowed children to distract from the thoughts of the emergency situation context, relaxing and imagining being elsewhere; for example, a mother reported that her little son had told her he loved playing with the sand and the water inside the Child Friendly Space because that made him feel "like being at the sea". We must not underestimate the potential of activities that put children in contact with natural elements in their various forms: the land in gardening activities, water or sand and clay activities. This involvement with natural elements can therefore reassure and put children in contact again with the land after the harsh and scary experience of the earthquake, especially in the difficult living conditions of the CFSs where children can not go to the beach or stay freely in the open air with summer heat and high temperatures.

Within the CFSs, many **theatre games and exercises** have been created to stimulate concentration focusing on listening, observation and respect for each other and for the group. These exercises were inspired by the social theatre, in particular the *Theatre of the Oppressed*, using different techniques of *Image Theatre* and *Forum Theatre*, simplified and adapted to a specific age group and child friendly context. The Emilia experience has shown how these activities can be useful in emergency situations as they are very flexible and rarely require specific materials. Notably, in Emilia, theatre games had the goal of promoting well-being as well as the development of a serene environment, fostering communication, socialization, sharing, cooperation, understanding, empathy, trust, respect and attention to the other's act on both individual and group level. At the same time, the intention was to promote and encourage creativity, imagination and expressive abilities of children and adolescents, in particular through an exploration of the expressive power of body and voice; to that end, different theatre techniques, such as improvisation, playing of different parts and reality transformation. Another main goal was facilitating children's knowledge, encouraging diversity as a crucial resource for the development of a richer personal identity as well as for the creation of real group and community; children were helped get in touch with their own feelings, exploring each other's chords and managing their emotions through play and artistic expression.

Many **outdoors motor activities** were carried out in collaboration with the **UISP** operators (Sport for All Italian Union), specialized in performing sport and physical activities with children and adolescents. In this context as well, children have actively participated in the activity planning, proposing, designing and organizing games with the help of educators. In the Child Friendly Space of Novi di Modena, for example, a group of Pakistani adolescents proposed to teach cricket, the most popular sport in Pakistan, to the group of children and adolescents attending the CFS. Such motor activities incorporated some relay race and hurdle tracks, often created by children and teenagers themselves, taking into account what the spaces could offer or using materials not commonly used in motor activities such as Child Friendly Space recycled materials and objects creatively readapted.

In the hottest months of summer, water was included as a useful element in those physical activities invented together with children and adolescents with an endless variety of cooperative water games.

All physical activities were actually planned and implemented taking into account the psycho-cognitive, motor needs and socio-cultural diversities of children and adolescents in order to make the games engaging, interesting, fun and appropriate to the field life context. Children of heterogeneous age groups were included so that the older could be encouraged in taking care of younger children while little kids could easily learn from them. Motor activities were proposed as an entertainment moment, allowing children to divert their thoughts from the current emergency situation, enhancing and encouraging their creativity, developing and maintaining global motor skills, socialization and helping them in the conflict management process.

In the four Child Friendly Spaces and all along the activity program, the **cooking workshop** has been a constant weekly event, in which children and adolescents, together with educators, prepared some snacks or cooked creative recipes without the using an oven.

Children were encouraged to create traditional recipes of their region (such as the “chocolate salami”), trying new recipes so as to create a group recipe book. When the canteen staff allowed the use of the oven, children were able to prepare cookies and cakes to offer and share with the whole camp community (their families, professionals, volunteers, etc.). During the open days, tours and exhibitions held within the CFS, children and adolescents exploited this workshop or weekly cooking session to prepare the refreshments for “guests”. Some residents of the tent cities having particular skills or abilities, were identified to organize the workshops. In the fields of Concordia sulla Secchia and San Possidonio, for example, bread making workshops were held with the help of an old and famous baker living in the Concordia Field; he taught children how to make the typical handmade bread of the region out of nothing. The bread prepared by the children was then cooked in the camp oven and the children were able to enjoy the result of their efforts during the snack times. In some periods, even weekly, boys and girls, residents inside and outside the camp have been involved in the creation of recreational and leisure activities within the CFSs, for example by organizing group dances and choreographies.

To help children develop a forward-thinking ability, enhance and stimulate their creativity and manual dexterity, some **plastic models construction workshops** were started.

As a matter of fact, in Finale Emilia a group of children rebuilt using only recycled cardboard boxes, tempera paints and clay, their city which was heavily damaged by the earthquake. In San Possidonio, children and adolescents designed and built with various recycled materials, an ideal city called “Formicopoli”⁴. In this city, with houses and condos, a school, a church,

a mosque, a football field and green areas with swings, slides, trails and roads, bridges, trees and lawns, children and adolescents chosen not to host only ants but different animals as well, illustrating their idea: “Not just ants are living in Formicopoli (Ant City) as for sure, not just italians do live in Italy”.

In Emilia, Save the Children’s Child Friendly Spaces and Education Coordinator had the role to collect some collaboration proposals and offers received from other groups and associations, carefully selecting the most satisfactory and advisable for children and adolescents in different stages or emergency phases and taking various factors into account.



Photo: Luciano Zanecchia/Save the Children

In selecting external proposals, the Child Friendly Spaces and Education Coordinator can rely on the following questions⁵:

- can these activities or workshop enable all children to participate, regardless of age and personal situation?
- what does the workshop really need? (adequate space and materials, etc.);
- the workshop organization allows multiple meetings?
- does the workshop encourage the process of emotions?
- can it enhance and cultivate fun, creativity, fantasy and imagination?
- does it help children normalize daily life?
- can it contribute to the creation of a useful object, a game or a creative tool?
- does it help the development of group dynamics and collaboration between children?
- can it use simple or recycled materials to be worked by anyone?
- is the workshop methodology playful, challenging and consistent at the same time?

Field experience shows that it is advisable for external associations to devote their first meetings to so-called game presentation in order to create an environment of unity, joy and cooperation in the group, supporting the development of real workshop activities.

In Emilia, as already mentioned, associations and external groups held juggling, clay manipulation, puppet making and animation workshops.

The juggling workshop, led by some young street performers was a less structured activity, hence, a big fun and entertaining moment for children and adolescents. The clay manipulation workshop was instead a huge hit with children and adolescents of all ages in all four Child Friendly Spaces. With regard to creative/manual activities, such experience has underlined the importance of collaborating with pedagogy and art education experts, specialized in different teaching methods, able to manage the whole work or answer to any children question, providing high-quality, significant and suited activities for those who participate. On many occasions, the educators without previous experience in the activities conducted by specialized artists, had the opportunity to acquire new knowledge and techniques which they later successfully repeated with other groups.

The difficulty of accessing to spaces other than the tent cities can result in monotony, despite the diversity and multiplicity of activities proposed to children within the Child Friendly Space. It is therefore essential to guarantee children and their families a chance to get away both physically and mentally from the “pre-packaged” environment of the tent city. It is very important to develop external partnerships and agreements with local associations to provide, as soon as possible, to all children and families the opportunity to participate in solely recreational activities, distinct from the psycho-social/educational ones carried out within the Child Friendly Space. Outdoor activities take place in unusual and not daily places in order to stimulate children’s interest and feed their spirit of fun, adventure and exploration. To this end, Save the Children organized some swimming pool days and - in collaboration with UISP - a trip to *Mirabilandia* amusement park as well as a jaunt to *Esploraria Adventure Park* for “albering” activities in which children and adolescents could safely (wearing protective helmets and harnesses) hike on trees, according to different age and height. Lastly, Save the Children Adventure Camp donated 100 - one week nature holidays in Tuscany beaches or on the hills in Umbria, to children from 7 to 14 years old who attended the CFSs or lived in areas affected by the earthquake.

CONCLUSIONS

The activities carried out on the field by Save the Children's emergency team are based on the articles contained in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

This Convention must be conceived as the basic teaching and learning tool for the planning and implementation of activities or educational and psychosocial courses. In an emergency context, in fact, children and adolescents may find themselves for the first time faced with a strong sense of powerlessness, finding emotions, such as fear or bewilderment, in caregivers themselves. In these cases it will be essential to help them use their resilience through the adoption of methodologies and approaches centered on both rights and participation. It is not only a question of carrying out entertaining activities or games to fill children's temporal gaps after harsh events; it is about structuring a real educational and psychosocial path with children, offering them a wide-ranging support, safeguarding those rights too often endangered by the many critical issues that characterize an emergency situation. The kind of educational and psychosocial activities that Save the Children intends to structure in emergency contexts, along with children and adolescents, have a purpose which certainly includes a purely entertaining aspect, though, simple animation is not the only aim. Different courses, carefully designed by Save the Children's educators along with local children and operators, always take into account the fact that not all children are vulnerable to post-traumatic disorders and that each of them can experience a wide spectrum of reactions at different phases of emergency.

All activities, though, encourage a return to a sense of "normality", processing the experience lived and developing the resilience ability that is the power of the population to recover readily after being struck by the event. The emergency can also bring some positive experiences to the community as a whole by strengthening the capacities of parents and caregivers to be close to children and adolescents in emergency situations by providing them listening, support and protection. The intervention on the field has taught that parents, caregivers and school teachers are keen to be informed or sensitized to the reactions that some children may show within different phases of the emergency or in the subsequent ones, but above all they need to be supported in understanding the perceptions and doubts of their children about the event in order to provide clear, honest explanations and recommendations in a child friendly language. The Practical Guide for Parents, published by Save the Children, was actually born with the goal of helping parents and adults to answer to their children questions about the earthquake.

It is essential to support parents and caregivers in responding to children's curiosity about the natural disaster in an appropriate and understandable way. The Emilia experience has shown that some parents, with the intent to protect their children, actually let the situation grow worse, causing confusion or disorientation by explaining the event with little relation to reality. To this end, it is important to strengthen the ability of caregivers to accept, respect and be able to manage their emotions in the first place, being always able to embrace the children's ones. In order to take care of their children, parents and caregivers must be able to take care of themselves first; Child Friendly Spaces, in this sense, can bring a direct benefit to parents who can leave their children in a safe and secure place, while they begin to take back and rebuild their lives again.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, or UNCRC, is the basis of all pedagogical and educational works for the structuring of education and psychosocial programmes in emergency contexts, having careful analysis and participatory evaluation involving children, adolescents, families and the larger community as main requisites.

Since there are almost one million foreign born children living in Italy, many of whom arrived in Italy recently, any emergency intervention must take into account the ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic diversities within the affected population. Starting from the conviction that discrimination is something that children learn from adults, in order to put into practice the basic principles of the UNCRC, activities and workshops have been implemented to engage parents, caregivers and the community as a whole, in a dialogue and intercultural exchange which developed a greater mutual solidarity.

In case of presence of foreign people (especially if recently arrived in Italy), educators, as well as associations managing the refugee camps, should make use of cultural and linguistic mediators to ensure respect for the rights of all within the camp itself. In addition, it is important - to celebrate diversity and multiculturalism – to pay special attention to the scheduling of CFS activities, for example, avoiding songs, nursery rhymes or games that may contain offensive names or messages.

As a matter of fact, the prominence given to specific details, make children understand that their culture, language and customs are deeply respected and appreciated by everyone. To this end, educators should play music from different countries of the world encouraging children to suggest their favored songs or nursery rhymes in different languages and containing positive messages of solidarity between different peoples and genders.

One should also consider that activities and workshops accomplished and described so far within the Child Friendly Space are built around hints and group needs of children and adolescents between 2 and 13 years old with a strong prevalence of younger children between 2 and 6 years old.

That is why most of the activities proposed in this document are not suitable for adolescents.

In the interest of being replicated, these proposals must be adapted to the specific age group with whom one is working with and to the distinct needs and indications emerging from the actual context.

In conclusion, the drafting of this document wishes to reproduce, enhance and share the experience achieved by Save the Children on the specific emergency scenarios of Abruzzo and Emilia Romagna, being confident that those who are to intervene in similar harsh situations can get precious operational insights to take up some educational and psychosocial path for the protection of little girls, children and adolescents.

Notes

¹ Save the Children's personnel, representatives and partners work by adhering to a specific and mandatory Policy for children and adolescents protection, a Code of Conduct and a General Procedure for responding to minor's mistreatment or abuse. Application guidelines to specific emergency contexts are hence proposed.

² The project's didactics, the E.U. learning process and the different techniques used in both formal and informal education sectors to foster the participation of children and adolescents.

³ Mehndi is a ceremonial art or temporary decoration made with natural henna paste, generally painted on hands and feet with the involvement of all women of both the family and the tribe. Mehndi is an ancient form of body art that has been practiced in the Middle East, India and parts of Africa for thousands of years; Henna designs are usually applied in wedding, auspicious or protection rites as its drawings on the skin are considered a good omen. Rites like these are particularly precious for involving the community in emergency contexts as they are born with the actual intent to promote social interactions, favoring socialization, having a "protective" role throughout periods of transition and growth, guiding people in important celebrations of their lives.

⁴ Activity inspired by the reading of the story "*Ants are stronger than the earthquake*" (Scataglini, 2009).

⁵ Most of them are inspired by the excellent descriptive sheet prepared by "*The Commedia dell'Arte Puppets*" for the puppets construction and animation workshop held in Novi di Modena.

Save the Children

believes every child deserves a future. In Italy and around the world, we work every day to give children a healthy start in life, the opportunity to learn and protection from harm.

When crisis strikes, and children are most vulnerable, we are always among the first to respond and the last to leave.

We ensure children's unique needs are met and their voices are heard. We deliver lasting results for millions of children, including those hardest to reach.

We do whatever it takes for children - every day and in times of crisis - transforming their lives and the future we share.



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