



Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies
Réseau Inter-Agences pour l'Éducation en Situations d'Urgence
La Red Interagencial para Educación en Situaciones de Emergencia

INEE Good Practice Guide: Child-Friendly Spaces

During an initial emergency response, NGOs and communities often work together to create "safe areas" or "child-friendly spaces" for children and adolescents to play, socialize, learn and express themselves. These activities have a strong psychosocial component as they provide a caring and normalizing environment to mitigate the impact of the crisis on the children when their parents and guardians may be otherwise occupied. Typically these activities are located under trees, in schools or any available space and offer regularly scheduled activities such as games, drama, art activities, non-formal education and sports. Eventually these activities transition into formal schooling, after-school recreational activities for out-of school adolescents and youth, and club activities or community social activities.

Strategies

- **Establish programs rapidly**

To mitigate emotional and psychological impact, it is important for safe area programs to be started as quickly as possible. To do this, staff must have a clear understanding of what child friendly areas are and how to train their staff. Additionally, educational and recreational equipment must either be pre-positioned or ordered immediately to start activities.

- **Provide activities for all ages**

Activities should be planned for children of all age groups and for boys and girls, separately and together. A useful strategy is to have youth organize activities for younger children, take part in safe space management and organize community service projects such as information campaigns, trash cleanups, and care of persons with disability and elderly. When appropriate the safe area can be scheduled for youth-only activities such as cultural events and dances. Additionally, the child-safe area can also be used as a social center for community activities.

What Makes a Child-Friendly Learning Environment?

The school environment is:

- a place where children's opinions and needs are included
- a place where peace and gender equity are upheld and differences of class, caste and religion are accepted
- a place where opportunities for children's participation are extended, both inside the classroom, and in the community
- accessible to all, including those with learning disabilities, and those who are pregnant
- safe and secure, free from violence and abuse, sale or trafficking
- a place where children take responsibility for their learning
- a place where healthy lifestyles and life skills are promoted
- above all, a place where children learn

The school resources:

- safe water and sanitation facilities, first aid supplies
- age-appropriate furniture, and resources within reach (bookshelves, chalkboards)

The curriculum should contain at least:

- Knowledge
- Language
- Mathematics
- Science
- Social studies
- Skills, including:
 - Literacy
 - Numeracy
 - Life skills
- Values, such as:
 - human rights
 - moral and spiritual values
- Processes
 - Age-appropriate, child-centred, gender sensitive and linked to experience
 - Freedom of expression, creativity, association; play and recreation; free from physical and mental violence; linked to children's rights with key learning outcomes

Teachers

- appropriate training in learning centred education so that children participate actively, individual differences are respected, and children's well-being is promoted
- opportunities to foster professional skills so that children can achieve desired learning outcomes
- understanding and monitoring children's rights
- able to communicate goals for schooling to parents and others in the community
- educational materials, textbooks, writing tools, and learning resources are gender sensitive and encourage active learning in a language which children can understand
- flexible schedules to accommodate out of school responsibilities
- offering a adequate instruction time for learning in key curriculum areas
- offering a range of learning options
- establishing schools where children live and work
- building education systems which support children's learning as a first priority
- focusing supervision on teacher improvement rather than covering the curriculum

In the Community

- viewing home and community as sources for children's learning
- involving parents in school management and learning activities
- providing parents with freedom of access to information about children's learning so that they can put into practice at home what is learned in school

Checklists

Set-up

- Is the identified area safe?
- Can children travel between the safe area and their homes safely? If not, what support can be given for their parents to provide activities in their homes?
- Are there materials pre-positioned to set-up child-friendly spaces?
- Are materials available for training?
- Is there a roster of available staff to establish these programs?
- What training has the staff received? Have the staff been given adequate security briefings? Do they have the necessary communication and security equipment?
- What monitoring of activities is occurring?
- How was the site selected? Is it safe? Has it been cleared of landmines/unexploded ordnances? Is the building structurally sound? Any electrical problems? Is the ground level and cleared of any sharp objects? Is the area clearly delineated?

Programs

- Are there a variety of programs going on? Are there activities offered for all age groups?
- Are there too many children for the number of facilitators?
- Are activities happening at the same time everyday?
- Are their sufficient activities for all of the children in the community?
- Which children in the community are not attending? Are girls attending? Minorities? Children with disability? Young children? Old children? What can be done to promote their attendance?
- Does the safe area allow specific times for specific age groups?
- Are lists kept of children who attend? Is this a security concern?
- What happens if a child doesn't attend the activities? Is there any follow up?

Resources

- **Implication of the Convention on the Rights of the Child for Education Activities** By Pigozzi, M. (1997) Supported by UNICEF Unpublished paper, Education Section, Programme Division, UNICEF.
- **Child Friendly Schools Initiative Education News**, Issue No 16, April 1996, UNICEF (1996)
- **Master Plan of Operations between the Government of the Philippines and UNICEF, 1999-2003**. UNICEF (1998).
- **Teachers Talking About Learning**. Online resources for teachers in the majority world: <http://www.unicef.org/teachers/>