



Oficina de Defensoría de los
Derechos de la Infancia a.c.

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for every child



Handbook of activities that promote resilience

in migrant and refugee children and adolescents
housed in social assistance centres

UNICEF

CHRISTIAN SKOOG

UNICEF Representative in Mexico

ODI

MARGARITA GRIESBACH

Director of the Oficina de Defensoría de los
Derechos de la Infancia A.C.

PREPARED BY:

Analía Castañer and Yamel Díaz Padua

Developed for UNICEF Mexico

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REVISION AND EDITING

Karla Gallo

Alejandra Castillo

Lourdes Rosas Aguilar

Martha Ramírez Reyes

UNICEF - México

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INTRODUCTION

This manual contains suggestions for people who are in contact with **migrant and refugee children and adolescents in social assistance centres. In particular, it emphasizes activities that can facilitate the initiation of resilience processes.** Through these processes, children and adolescents who have experienced traumatic situations can not only recover emotionally from these ordeals, but also emerge as stronger individuals.

Theories linked to resilience processes indicate that, for these to arise in an individual, an interacting person must be present and offer some type of emotional rescue, because, in such times of crisis, the individual faced with a traumatic situation feels unprotected and helpless.

People who provide this support are called resilience monitors. In this handbook, we consider that the Assistance centre personnel who are in contact with children and adolescents have a unique opportunity to become their resilience monitor, as they interact with them (be it for a shorter or longer period). They become someone who leaves a mark on the life of the child or adolescent, who offers a mirror view of them that will help piece together their worth as a person.

Creating activities for resilience monitors in social assistance centres is also consistent with a child rights approach. The adults act as guarantors of the rights of children and adolescents; they are the ones who build the right environments to allow children and adolescents to access resources and enjoy their rights. In this case, this means fostering a self-perception as worthy and valuable individuals and guiding their path through the social assistance centre as an experience that leaves its mark on their life story.

Emotional rescue may be just a small action, regardless of the magnitude or length of the interaction. It all comes down to any action that gives back a sense of respect and dignity to the child or adolescent victim, a gaze of, allowing them to see themselves as a valuable and capable individual.

This might seem to be a difficult and complex goal. However, the resilience process is developed by building and reinforcing bonds with other people¹ as time passes and activities are shared. Both elements are present in the assistance centre.

In addition to the concept of resilience, the approach involving art² as a therapeutic tool has been chosen in devising the activities. It is a widely proven fact that artistic activities allow individuals to connect deeply with themselves (when designing and creating the artwork) and with other people (when exhibiting it). These activities also facilitate the connection of emotions with specific actions that require skills such as control, planning and tolerance of frustration.

¹ Self-confidence is built on the trust in others. According to existing studies, the resilience process in children and adolescents is triggered by the intervention of adults who perform some specific action favouring the construction of their own value and protection. This intervention can be one-off and brief, but it leaves a mark that allows the child or adolescent to begin the reconstruction of the self-image as valuable, worthy of protection and with the ability to exercise her or his rights (Castañer, A., *Migración resiliente. Intervenciones para la reconstrucción de la experiencia de migración a partir de acciones de rescate emocional* [Resilient Migration. Interventions for the reconstruction of the migration experience from emotional rescue actions], México: Oficina de Defensoría de los Derechos de la Infancia A.C. and UNICEF, 2015, p.6).

² Several of the central activities proposed in the Handbook (such as the permanent art workshop, for example) are based on the technique used in art therapy, a technique also called social intervention through art.



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The creative process helps individuals of all ages to resolve conflicts, develop skills and gain new perspectives, as it helps them to assign meaning to things, find relief from traumatic situations, solve conflicts and problems, enrich daily life and achieve a feeling of well-being.³

In addition, when translated into tangible outputs, it allows its author to experience processes, review changes and movements, and build confidence through her or his own artworks. The Handbook contemplates individual activities linked to art and the composition of collective artworks that reinforce the group identity and coexistence within the assistance centre.

Finally, art may be perceived as inherently human. And in this sense, art transmits, as an activity per se, the idea and experience of being human, creative, unique, and free. All these experiences are highly desirable for migrant and refugee children and adolescents in social assistance centres, for they face a critical moment in their life in which the dream and project, into which they may have put all their hopes and resources, has been cut short. Therefore, it is necessary to offer them experiences that will help them reconstruct themselves and realize that the journey continues and that they have opportunities to choose their future.

This Handbook contains activities that need to be carried out when welcoming children and adolescents to the assistance centre; these activities make it possible to put together and sustain a permanent art workshop, as well as to interact with the community outside the assistance centre.

³ Malchiodi, C., *Handbook of Art Therapy*, New York: Guilford Press, 2003.

The Handbook also includes a series of technical file cards with concise information on various topics. These file cards can be useful if the assistance centre staff need to elaborate on a particular topic, for example on the concepts of resilience, art as an instrument of social intervention and adolescence, among others.

To select and design activities, we reviewed bibliography sources and work experiences and analysed art, cultural activities, building of citizenship values in migrants, adolescents in conflict with the law, adolescents who comply with instructions in detention or on probation, etc. This contemplates actions that encompass an extensive reality: that of children and adolescents who have experienced extreme violence, who have been restricted by lack of options to build a life plan, who have committed violent acts and who require tools to understand emotions, overcome frustration, anger and pain, and make decisions and control their impulses in order to plan and build their future.

Even though the transit of children and adolescents through the social assistance centre is constrained and has a relatively short duration, the actions and experiences that they find there are expected to contribute decisively to their life.⁴

It is worth mentioning that the assistance centre staff, or anyone in contact with migrant children and adolescents or survivors of violence can find more information on the concept of resilience and on how to offer messages of emotional rescue in the document *Resilient Migration. Tools for the emotional rescue of migrant children and adolescents*.

Likewise, staff members acting as resilience monitors in social assistance centres can find tools to reach out and monitor the emotional situation of the children and adolescents with whom they interact in the *Guide to monitoring the emotional state of unaccompanied migrant children and adolescents in shelters*, as it is not always easy for them to express emotions through words, but rather through drawings. Analysing their artistic expression can be a useful way of finding out how they feel.

Finally, although staff members of social assistance centres are not expected to investigate, or request from the children and adolescents details of the situations they have experienced, they can find useful tools to reach out, create a climate of trust, and talk to them in the article *Basic Information for interviews and special situations during the interview to diagnose the situation of rights of children and adolescents*. The latter is primarily aimed at the procedure followed by the Child Protection Authorities to diagnose the rights situation and prepare the plan for their restitution. It is, however, possible (without duplicating the proposed steps for the interview which are a matter for the Child Protection Authorities⁵) to extract suggestions for a specific treatment when it is suspected that the child has been a victim of sexual violence, recruitment in exploitation networks, or presents signs of suicidal behaviour and/or self-harm.

These four documents are part of this suite of publications.

⁴ Complex interventions are not required to seed the resilience process in children and adolescents; every adult can offer, even with short and single interactions, emotional rescue messages to help them start their "reconstruction" (Castañer, A., *Migración resiliente...*[Resilient migration]).

⁵ If necessary, the Practical Guide for the Protection and Restitution of Children's and Adolescents' Rights (procedure and toolkit) may be consulted to know the specific interviewing techniques and reaching out procedures that Child Protection Authorities must follow. This will make it possible to differentiate the actions for which the Child Protection Authorities is responsible from those relevant to the work of the assistance centre, so as not to duplicate inquiries or interventions that could re-victimize the child or adolescent.



Foundation
of the
**proposed
activities**

This section describes the direct relationship between the activities and the tools that migrant and refugee children and adolescents need to start their resilience process. Some tools are linked to the skills needed to establish appropriate relationships, in order to handle emotions, develop self-perception based on the positive aspects that favour self-esteem, etc. Other activities relate to perceiving themselves as valuable individuals and as citizens that are part of a community.

In all cases, the positive effects of the activities are sustained in the managing and counselling relationship established with the assistance centre staff member as a significant personality and a monitor of resilience.

The special attention to adolescents also responds to the fact that the majority of migrant children and adolescents usually are at this stage of their life.



Note: the activities in this manual are appropriate for all children and adolescents. However, particular emphasis is placed on adolescence, since this is usually the development stage that presents the most challenges to the assistance centre staff. This is due to the greater significance that they attach to their claims and challenges, as well as other aspects of their behavioural pattern, which place them in a uniquely vulnerable situation.

Art, culture and citizenship for migrant and refugee children and adolescents

Relevant feature

Why is it important to **include art, culture and construction of citizenship** to address these situations?⁶

The passage through the adolescent stage is difficult when there are no protective adult figures in the family context.

Given that the main challenge during the adolescent stage is to build a self-identity from known “pieces” while incorporating new ones, it is essential to integrate into the activities at the assistance centre, in a concrete or symbolic way, family members and other adults who have a place in the adolescent’s life and story, as well as the assistance centre staff, as life reference points. Some migrant and refugee children and adolescents have grown up without the presence of a father or a mother as a significant and protective figure. In these cases, the figure of the assistance centre staff (as a benchmark for attention and protection) has an especially significant impact on their lives. Assistance centre staff who interact with children and adolescents can become a constructive model to follow. This does not depend on the time spent with the adolescent but on the quality of the bond that can be built. And on this point, the recreational, artistic and cultural activities proposed in this Handbook offer a variety of alternatives for expression and warm and positive interpersonal contacts, showing children and adolescents their potential. Even a meeting of just a few hours can be of pivotal significance and change the life of an adolescent.⁷

⁶ Most of the arguments were taken and redesigned from Juliette Bonnafe’s paper, “Programa de formación de lectores y acceso al conocimiento para las comunidades del DF: Desarrollo del marco conceptual, diseño operativo y diseño de los instrumentos de monitoreo y evaluación” [*Programme for the training of readers and access to knowledge for the communities of Mexico City: Development of the conceptual framework, operational design and design of the monitoring and evaluation instruments*], 2013.

⁷ See more about the concept of resilience in Jorge Barudy and Maryorie Dantagnan. *La fiesta mágica y realista de la resiliencia infantil. Manual y técnicas terapéuticas para apoyar y promover la resiliencia de los niños, niñas y adolescentes*, [The magical and realistic celebration of childhood resilience. Manual and therapeutic techniques to support and promote resilience in children and adolescents] Barcelona: Gedisa Editorial, 2011.

The impulsiveness and predominance of emotions are ongoing during adolescence.

In the presence of significant emotional burdens, it is also essential to include actions and practical work when interacting with adolescents. This allows them to channel anxiety through motion. It is beneficial in showing them that they have "self-control". With activities based on action, movement, and carrying out practical work, energy is channelled in a positive way. Skills and abilities are discovered and developed, thus contributing to improving their self-perception.

Art, culture and the construction of citizenship allow movement, channelling of tension and expression of emotions in a way that cannot be achieved by other activities. At the same time, they offer rules and cognitive challenges for adolescents when they are faced with problems to solve, strategies to build, and so on.

On the numerous occasions where teenagers feel vulnerable, anxious, powerless, confused, fragile, etc., they react (through an unconscious psychological mechanism) in an opposite manner: displaying omnipotence ("I do not need help"), aggressiveness, defiance. The best counter-strategy is to offer spaces where they can acquire tools to handle emotions and interact with other individuals in an appropriate manner. Insofar as they rely on artistic and cultural spaces to reinforce skills, build a positive image, and interact with others. This overcomes the omnipotent behaviour and leads to personal growth and constructive coexistence. Cooperative activities (artistic or recreational), in which the goal is achieved only if all work together, provide tools for experiencing (social) skills in which solidarity frees them from a need to feel omnipotent. A show of strength is no longer essential if it is proven that strength comes from the peer group. In a complementary way, artistic activities, linked to reading or any other involving the development of creativity, offer spaces in which adolescents can build scenarios and fantasies in which they can safely feel omnipotent. This minimizes impulsiveness in their behaviour.

Adolescent behaviour is usually dominated by mechanisms of omnipotence and a tendency to challenge adults.

⁸ The bibliography consulted and international experiences indicate that the strategy "par excellence" to achieve this objective is the rapprochement through unconventional, participatory and action-based activities. Rather than imposing them, activities for adolescents should motivate, challenge, invite to play and associate learning with enjoyment. This is particularly true for experiential activities and activities that foster active participation, so that the adolescents themselves may construct and share the learning. Activities that motivate and attract attention favour a progressive approach to activity participation and learning for life skills.

Many children and adolescents have experienced situations of violence in their homes.

It is possible that the respectful, comprehensive and protective daily interaction with assistance centre staff is the first relationship of this type for some children and adolescents, and hence the importance of the positive impact on their lives.⁸ The relevance of the resilience monitor is based on what Gagliano defines as the essential care of adolescents: making them visible to themselves and to others. Whether during the activity and the learning process, that is when sharing a project, as an author and/or spectator, this objective can be constructed in a powerful way.

As someone who is established as caring, the significant adult becomes a support to alleviate anxiety and build self-worth. By remaining close to the child or adolescent, the adult manages and guides actions.

The emotional construction of the adolescent deserves special attention, and actions of this type mark the beginning of emotional recovery, personal development and resilience.

A specific way to support the reconstruction of identity is to propose activities that allow children and adolescents to be actively included in social life and engage in the community and civic life.⁹ Artistic activities offer an ideal setting for this, given that presenting a personal creation to others is linked to personal accountability and to publicly assuming responsibilities, even when presented before a small group of people. In addition, these are essential tools for integration¹⁰, encouraging the formation of one's identity. When performing artistic activities, the adolescent can give free rein to the expression of desires and fantasies, without detachment from reality,¹¹ acting in that reality by transforming it through the production of a work. The pain, the anger and the vulnerability will stop and are processed in this way so that impulses are not turned into actions, without the mediation of reflection, acted out in a way that can be very violent towards themselves or other individuals.

Identity reconstruction is essential and is not easy to achieve, given the situation in which the children and adolescents live.

⁹ See Françoise Dolto, *Seminario de psicoanálisis de niños* [Seminar on the psychoanalysis of children], Mexico: Siglo XXI Editores, 1987. The author states that adults and society are responsible for extending responsibilities to adolescents, so they may be actively incorporated into social life and may later consider the character of society as the facilitator of the adolescents' accession to adult life.

¹⁰ In an artistic production, it is possible to combine creatively different emotions, situations and characters that become part of the work. Exercising the action impacts the adolescent's psychological dynamics; this fosters the acceptance and integration of all fragmented parts of the self, even those in opposition to each other that result in conflict.

¹¹ From Freud onwards, art has been an activity highly valued by psychology, inasmuch as it achieves the reconciliation of impulses and emotions with reality. This is precisely the underlying conflict in human beings, which can cause fragmentation and difficulties in self-identity construction and appropriate self-defense. See Sigmund Freud, "Formulations on the Two Principles of Mental Functioning", *Complete works, Vol. XII*.

Creative group activities, in which adolescents propose something personal under the watchful eyes of their peers, or engage in autobiographical reflection on history, music or writing, can contribute to peer listening and shared learning. This tends to spark constructive behaviour and is one way to promote social cohesion and social bonds. Adolescents are part of the construction of solutions to shared concerns or difficulties.¹²

The peer group is fundamental for adolescents.

Adolescents require tools to understand and manage emotions and the consequences of traumatic situations.

Painting and drawing are clear examples where inspiration is not possible without connecting with emotions, in some sense, while executing the activity. Colour and shapes “speak” the emotions. In painting, it is possible to experience and express violence, anger, despair.¹³ With art, the child or adolescent symbolizes these emotions and does not act them out. In these activities, they learn that, when it is perceived, an emotion can be processed rather than acted out impulsively. This sows the seeds of development of non-violent interactions with other individuals. Feelings of rage, anger or frustration are not denied. On the contrary, these emotions are present in the adolescents’ emotional reality (in some cases deeply embedded, when they have been recruited by gangs and have experienced a highly violent reality, resulting in powerlessness in the face of the impossibility of escaping victimization and its repercussions). By accepting their existence, the young person may transform these emotions, extricate them in the form of an artwork, in order to incorporate the experience of self-control and resources built to deal with painful emotions.¹⁴

¹² In this Handbook, this approach is incorporated into the group discussions proposed at the end of each activity of the permanent art workshop. Adolescents make decisions in all activities to develop their work. Thereafter, they share them, opening them to the scrutiny of the group and receiving personal opinions from (or offering opinions to) the other members.

¹³ Art is a form of sublimation as a creative way to channel impulses and negative emotions.

¹⁴ This counteracts the effect of experiencing traumatic situations, what Martin Seligman calls learned hopelessness. It is a phenomenon that “convincing” individuals that there is nothing they can do to counteract the effects of violence; it has a paralysing effect and deepens the sense of oneself as incompetent and helpless in the face of difficult situations. Seligman, M., *Learned Optimism*, Nueva York: Knopf, 1990.

The experience of traumatic situations gives rise to fatalism, isolation and a sense of oneself as an incompetent and unworthy individual.

Fatalism, reactions of submission or domination and loss of connections feed a vicious circle in which events are nourished by the conviction that change is not possible. Participation in art workshop activities (which have a beginning and an end) can be a vehicle to process fatalistic thoughts through a striking and motivating activity. It is possible to incorporate young people in concrete actions that culminate in a specific output, to counteract the conviction that nothing changes. When participating in developing the group mural, for example, from the first graphic outline, concrete facts show that it is indeed possible to modify, in a positive way, the situation they are living. In addition, sharing or distributing the material produced by the young people beyond the assistance centre can build an experience in which not only it is possible to change the day-to-day in some way, but also to offer, from this experience, something that has an impact on others outside.

Based on social and cultural phenomena that stigmatize them, the children's and adolescents' identity is simply subsumed to the migration situation and the myths built around it (they migrate because they are lazy, because they do not want to work, they are delinquents, etc.). The situation they live in blends with the essence of identity. This has profoundly adverse effects on their psychological reality.

The experiences with which they stimulate concrete actions and achievements offer them the elements of their self-reconstruction from a different place, which includes resources, abilities and creative capacity that feed their self-esteem while minimizing the label imposed on them. By adding events in which the works are shown to others, we can reinforce the idea that things can change by merely transforming the actions of young people into positive products that deserve to circulate and be seen.

Migrant and refugee children and adolescents are frequently stigmatized.

Self-knowledge is an essential skill for migrant children and adolescents.

Activities that promote skills in art, reading, music, etc., are actions that allow contact with life and internal dynamics (self-absorption, concentration, creativity, self-dialogue) which, in the action itself or from its output, connect with others.¹⁵ Activities linked to the recovery of one's own history, for example, allow children and adolescents to contact these various aspects of themselves; they help to recall where they come from (history and sociocultural context), on whom they can rely (social networks) and thus transcend the here and now. As a tool,¹⁶ this allows them to rework their heritage (that is, connect with the past and integrate it as an important part of existence), learn from experience and recover memories. All this is liberating, on the premise that one's life becomes comprehensible when it is possible to tell it.

Workshops or activities, linked to art as a strategy to develop expression skills, are alternatives to the spoken word as initiators of communication skills. All artwork created by children and adolescents is intended to say something to someone and communicate something of their own. Through this concrete element, it is easier to promote the development of communication skills in the activities.¹⁷

Assertive communication is essential for children and adolescents.

¹⁵ Gagliano, R. *La escuela en contextos de encierro. Pasado, presente y prospectiva de una construcción en proceso* [The school in contexts of detention. Past, present and prospective of a construction in process]. Colección Pensar y Hacer Educación en Contextos de Encierro. 1st Edition Buenos Aires: National Ministry of Education, 2010, pg. 39

¹⁶ Gagliano calls these activities biographical adventures. Florio, A., "La historia de vida como instrumento de conocimiento" [The history of life as an instrument of knowledge], in *Sujetos educativos en contextos institucionales complejos* [Educational subjects in complex institutional contexts.]. Contexto sociocultural y alternativas pedagógicas, Colección Pensar y Hacer Educación en Contextos de Encierro. 1st Edition Buenos Aires: National Ministry of Education, 2010, pg. 108.

¹⁷ The initiators of behavioural therapy have, for decades, proposed activities that remain in force to promote assertive behaviour and social inhibition, such as six basic exercises that can be taken up in reading or artistic training activities: 1. Express openly, in appropriate contexts and without censorship, any feeling; 2. Openly express emotions; 3. Express contrary opinions when disagreeing; 4. Use the first person pronoun singular (I) when expressing disagreement and emotions; 5. Accept compliments and 6. Improvise. All these strategies were contemplated when designing the activities of this handbook.

Reinforcement of self-esteem is fundamental for migrant children.

The reading workshops offer spaces for creation, appropriation of ideas, opinions and words, relationships with peers, all of them opportunities to build self-esteem based on real skills that can be put into action and incorporated into the sense of oneself. The simple fact of being heard when intervening in a participatory activity is positive for the self-image. Improving self-esteem brings them closer to situations that they enjoy, and this forms virtuous circles for the construction of a life plan distinct from the realities they have known.¹⁸

Participatory and experiential techniques are handy tools for incorporating interpersonal relationship skills. These are not skills that can be transmitted verbally or formally. It is necessary for children and adolescents to experience, through a simple action, the ability to relate in a non-violent way, respecting their dignity and that of other people.

Skills in relating to other people.

Decision-making is an essential skill for migrant children and adolescents.

Education for decision-making respecting others is a prime objective. Throughout the activities, rules are proposed that suppose simultaneous cooperation, exchange and strategies whereby the desired objective can only be reached if the function and role of the rest of the team are respected. The activities proposed in the permanent art workshop require each participant to take into account their own needs and values, at the same time as those of others. It is also necessary to anticipate possible consequences, present and future, both for oneself and for others. Also included are debates on reality (social, political, public opinion regarding migrants, etc.), where fears concerning life, the future and one's capabilities may be exposed and addressed.

¹⁸ Migrant children and adolescents have probably never exercised the ability to reflect on their feelings and wants, nor the ability to transmit and exercise their rights, while respecting the rights of others. Socio-cultural dynamics, in which violence or isolation prevail, make experiential learning difficult. Art offers opportunities to connect with emotions and express them.

Problems and conflict management is essential for children and adolescents.

In the art workshop, skills for negotiation and tolerance of rejection are fostered. The combination of individual activities and creation of personal work, the related group discussion, and the construction of a common work allow the development of tolerance of frustration when contrary views are expressed, respect for other people's space and time, etc. Children and adolescents develop trust and cooperation by participating in these types of activity.¹⁹

In addition to activities that seek to develop personal and interpersonal skills, events outside the social assistance centre are included, such as displays of products manufactured, art exhibitions, etc., that foster contact of migrant children with the community and the social context. This is essential to design a life path, keeping up to date with news, connecting with events abroad, and reinforcing the project with realistic elements. International experience shows the importance of children and adolescents participating in radio programmes, where they make their voice and opinions heard beyond the assistance centre. An important activity to connect adolescents with their citizenry is the celebration of national holidays, community festivals and reasons for social celebrations, both from their birthplace and the country in which they reside. This social bond can be maintained through cultural activities.

The construction of a life plan as a citizen is central to the development of children and adolescents.

Below, the above activities are essentially developed in three stages:

- **Activities to welcome migrant children and adolescents**
- **Activities to establish and support the permanent art workshop.**
- **Activity for closure when children and adolescents leave the social assistance centre.**

¹⁹ The proposed activities take up cognitive-behavioural psychology techniques that provide tools for learning conflict resolution skills. These are exercises in which one person must listen as the other sets out a point of view of the conflict, and then express their own view. The exercise assumes following the rules. In addition to refraining from interrupting during the time allotted to the other party, participants can only use in their presentation, sentences starting with the first person singular (me), making no value judgments on the other person, confining their comments exclusively to the behaviour of the other, not drawing conclusions nor uttering insults. Attention is also paid to controlling posture, tone of voice and gestures. During the exercise, it is forbidden to convey contempt, intolerance, anger, verbally or through voice inflexion.



**Essential
activities**
to welcome
migrant and
refugee
**children and
young people**

This first group of activities offers options for when migrant and refugee children and adolescents arrive at the social assistance centre. In general terms, these activities are designed to offer an environment in which they can perceive themselves as worthy of respect and care, able to rely on adults who are “in charge”,²⁰ when in need of help, and situated in a safe space.²¹



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²⁰ The presence of adults who are in charge is a central element in the development of children and young people. Their guidance and support is essential at all stages of development and is often not present in the lives and contexts of children and adolescents who have experienced multiple traumas in contexts of violence. The staff of the social assistance centre become a protective, present, congruent reference in the life of children and adolescents, setting limits and offering help and protection. This brings experience of being part of a bond of protection and respect, something the child or adolescent probably has not felt in a long time.

²¹ In *Guías para la aplicación del enfoque psicosocial en contextos migratorios. Abriendo fronteras con el corazón*, [Guidelines for the application of the psychosocial approach in migratory contexts. Opening borders with the heart (Community Studies and Psychosocial Action Team)] accessible, at: http://imumi.org/attachments/2014/abriendo_fronteras-con-el-corazon.pdf, it is explicitly stated that the development of the human being is based to a great extent on relationships with other individuals; humans are social beings who need communication, identity, reference persons or feel supported by others and, to this end, need to have confidence in others. This confidence begins with an essential idea: “people are good”. We have the need as human beings to believe in those who will support, protect and give us a safe place where nothing bad will happen. To the extent that people have been unsupportive, and have harmed or hurt those close to them, trust decreases and mistrust grows.

It is not easy to talk about trust and distrust in countries with high levels of violence and human rights violations, as there is a strong prejudice against the belief that “people are good”. It will be useful for children in social assistance centres to be helped by staff members to remember the persons whom they trust in their birthplace, whom they trusted on the journey and whom they trust at their point of destination. It is crucial to include figures beyond the family, for example, friends, neighbours, community, society, government or State. And finally, it will be necessary to point out who’s function it is, in the social assistance centre, to listen to them, protect and support them.

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Greeting Introductions and adults in charge

Feeling welcome in a new space is vital in order to build solid foundations that support taking ownership of the venue, personal objects, the construction of meaningful links, and so on.

Arriving at an unknown space often generates anxiety in children and adolescents, and practical actions to reduce it are linked to information sharing. The greeting begins by introducing them to the adults with whom they will be in contact, as well as to their peers.

It is essential that, during the greeting process, the children and adolescents will be asked the fewest possible questions. At this time, it is all about passing on information, not requesting it.

Goals:

- Minimize anxiety.
- Generate a sense of security (information regarding the people and the venue).



Steps for the activity

1. Introduce yourself when you greet the child or adolescent (say your name, what you do, where you can meet, and something you like to do).
2. Ask the children and adolescents what name they want to be called (and always respect their request from then on).²²
3. **DO NOT** ask more questions (on the contrary, offer specific information and tell them they can ask whatever they want, whenever they want).
4. Introduce them to the others (using the name they chose) and introduce all the members of the assistance centre staff.
 - a. It matters that you know the name of each person with whom they will come in contact.
 - b. It matters that you understand the function of each person so that you can go and request whatever you need.
5. Introduce them to the other children and adolescents.
 - a. If the group is small, encourage each of them to say their name and greet the newcomers. If it is a large group, introducing everyone by name can be overwhelming, so a general greeting is more useful, making it clear that they will be introduced to each of the others later.

²² The way in which children and adolescents ask to be called must be respected, even when it does not coincide with the socially assigned gender. The welcoming person may perceive them as either a girl or a boy, or assume, according to the name shown in the official records, them to be male or female. These scenarios are not real for some children and adolescents with diverse gender choices (transgender), when the sex at birth does not correspond to the way they perceive their gender (being born with male genitals, but perceived as a woman, and vice versa). The identity perceived by the child or adolescent should always be respected, not the one that is assumed from the sex at birth.

b. An excellent opportunity to introduce new children and adolescents to large groups occurs during a given group activity or at mealtimes.

c. You must pay special attention to ensure that they are adequately greeted. Some useful suggestions:

1. Make sure that you initially interact (under any pretext) with sociable and talkative colleagues or partners who have been in the assistance centre for a more extended period than you have.
2. Make sure you do not initially interact with groups of adolescents who may be critical or exclusionary in some way, or who do not have sufficient social skills.
3. Make sure that shy or reluctant children and adolescents are not pressured to talk or answer questions.
4. Always use the name they asked to be called. Avoid addressing them in any way other than the chosen name, including "girl" "boy" or "you". The latter are impersonal and do not favour the establishment of bonds of trust, while the use of the name chosen by the child or adolescent conveys the feeling of being heard and respected while reinforcing her or his identity.



My physical space. Space and personal belongings

The experiences of migrant children are closely linked to uncertainty about themselves and their future, as well as feelings of failure and lack of worth. In this context, having a space for your belongings reinforces your identity. Personal belongings and spaces serve as an "anchor" that organizes reality and helps to generate calmness and a sense of control (they know their belongings, where they are and their location inside the house).

Having knowledge about spaces in general, in order to move comfortably inside the assistance centre, and knowing where their personal space is and the objects are, serves as a concrete reference to start self-reconstructing.

At the same time, the activity allows them to know to whom they can go if a fellow migrant "invades" their space, if their things are taken without their authorization, or their personal belongings broken. Building experiences in which children experience adequate limits includes being respected; in addition, these are also tools for managing conflict without invading or attacking other people. Going to an adult person who can mediate the conflict will always be the recommended action.



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Goals:

- Facilitate the revalorization of children and adolescents who have just arrived, by offering facilities where they can live, in conditions in which their dignity will be respected, as well as the items for personal use that belong to them.
- Offer experiences in which they can rebuild self-esteem, perception of self-worth and self-care actions.
- Transmit rules to promote non-violent resolution of conflicts and provide information about to whom they can turn.

Materials:

- Towel and bedding.

- Soap, brush and toothpaste, deodorant, comb, brush, cream, perfume, mirror and any other personal hygiene item.



- Labels

- Colour markers



- Sewing needles, preferably plastic ones, and thin thread in different colours.

- Backpack, cloth bag or box that can be personalized, to keep personal belongings.

- An object that symbolizes their passage through the assistance centre (a drawing, a toy, a photograph, for example).



Steps for the activity

1. Take a tour of the assistance centre, showing them each of its areas.
2. Take special care to show that they will have a bedroom, eat in a dining room and have the use of sufficient, clean and well-equipped toilets that will allow them to live in conditions in which their courage and dignity are respected on a daily basis.

For this, you could offer messages²³ such as:

- a. "This is the bathroom you can use. It will always be clean when you use it, so you can feel at ease."
 - b. "This is the dining room. We all make sure that it is always neat and clean, so we can always enjoy our meals here."
3. Accompany the newly arrived children and adolescents to the bedroom and bed each will occupy.
 4. Show them the personal items that they will receive.
 5. Give them the object chosen for that purpose and tell them it is unique because it represents their arrival and passage through the Centre. Explain that all children and adolescents arriving at the shelter receive such a gift.

6. It is essential that all children and adolescents receive the same object and that it be brand new. It can be a teddy bear, a small plush individual blanket, a small pillow or cushion, etc.²⁴

7. It does not matter if the child or adolescent rejects the object, says she or he does not want it or claims to be "too old for that" or something similar. Simply leave the object on her or his bed or anywhere else within reach.
8. Give her or him the personal hygiene items: (soap, toothbrush, comb, deodorant, etc.).
9. As appropriate, explain that they can put their name on personal objects and decorate them as they please.
10. Explain the rule that no one can take anyone else's personal belongings. That means that she or he should not take objects from other children, just as they should not take her or his personal belongings. If this happens, it is necessary to tell... (name of the adult in charge) to help solve the problem.
11. Explain that it is not allowed to forcibly seize any object from another person, whether it is their own or not.
12. Ask them to choose the bedroom space they can occupy to store their belongings. As appropriate, tell them that they can put their name, paste drawings and decorate that personal space any way they want so that other people know that it is theirs.

²³ Many of the emotional rescue actions with children and adolescents that promote resilience are not major or elaborate; it is all about the information offered to them on a daily basis, through interaction. It is in these interactions that children and adolescents can perceive themselves differently, depending on how they experience the bond. If they are respected and receive care, they will self-perceive as valuable, and this is how they can begin to rebuild their own value, identity, self-esteem and desire to build a life plan.

²⁴ The activity and objects proposal is linked to Winnicott's theory, which states that all children can cope better with the anxiety of interacting with the outside world and trust their own resources if they have at hand an object that "accompanies" them. In general, this object helps control anxiety and fear and is usually associated with the fact that there is someone (who gave it to them) with whom to interact and who can give support. In Winnicott's theory, it is called a *transitional object*.

13. Accompany them to place their personal items in the space they chose.

14. The space and decoration they choose may not cover, remove or encroach on the decoration of others, and must not destroy a wall or any other object. If something like this happens, she or he will be responsible for repairing or restoring it.

15. Give them the sheets and help them make the bed they will occupy.

16. Tell them again to whom they can turn if another child takes their things, or invades their space in any manner that causes discomfort.

17. Make sure they place any personal items they may have brought with them close to the bed they will occupy, or have them store them in their personal bag or box.

18. Ask them to mark their belongings any way they want. They can put their name or the way they want to be called,²⁵ paint their country flag or anything they identify with that has a special meaning for them.

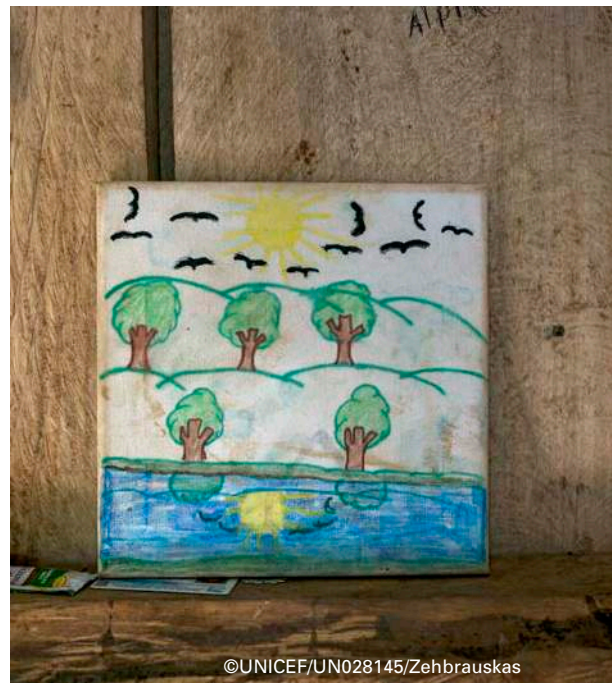
19. Make sure to reinforce and praise the importance of having one's name written on one's belongings and reinforce their roots and identity values.

20. Assign time and materials to personalize lockers, drawers, boxes, backpacks or haversacks that they may keep.

21. Include activities where they can paint, engrave or embroider their name on their belongings or on their personal space.

22. Present the material so that they can choose the way they want to label their personal belongings or decorate the drawers or storage spaces that have been assigned to them.

23. If any of the children or adolescents reject the objects offered,²⁶ do not insist or emphasize the value of things or the importance of being grateful. Simply, leave the objects on their bed or within their reach, explaining that they can do this later if they wish, but that those things already belong to them.



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²⁵ It is not helpful for the interacting adult to propose to the children and adolescents the name that appears on their birth certificate or official documents. It is better if the children and adolescents make contact with the identity they want, and it is essential in that sense that they express the name by which they want to be called.

In particular, when it comes to transgender children and adolescents, the name they choose will be respected and used, without criticism, doubt, or recommendations.

²⁶ Violence experienced by migrant children and adolescents leads them, under the conviction (conscious or not) that they are not valuable, to conceive the idea that someone cannot give them things that will be their own. Given the possibility of being cheated or losing things that they value again, as they have many times in the past, emotional reactions are linked to rejecting rather than being rejected. It is not about disobedience, rebelliousness or wilful rudeness; it is the consequence (and the effect) of having experienced many instances of violence.

C

Personal flavours and tastes

When children and adolescents arrive at social assistance centres, it is essential to consider whether their basic needs are met. In this activity, seize the moment to offer food to reinforce their identity and values. One of the aspects most associated with roots and identity are foods that are typical of the place or family of origin.

When considering the uprooting and longing that a child or adolescent may be experiencing, it is useful to reinforce the identity and personal tastes from the start of the bonding process.

Goals:

- Satisfy basic needs (food).
- Offer a space of respect and appreciation for the identity of the child or adolescent.
- Reinforce values unique to the family and place of origin of the child or adolescent.



Steps for the activity

1. Show them the kitchen and introduce those who are in charge of it. Explain that there is a list of dishes for each day of the week and that you want to include, in that menu, a dish that they may like.
2. Ask which is their favourite food.
3. As appropriate, and according to their age, ask the children and adolescents: Do you know how to cook it? Could you help (cook's name) to prepare it?
4. Write, along with the child or adolescent, the dish on the assistance centre menu.
5. When, for some reason, it is not possible to prepare the dish of their choice, reinforce the choice of the child or adolescent: "I am sure that it must be delicious and that you really want to eat it again. I'm very sorry that here you cannot get (ingredient). However, we do have (alternative ingredient for the preparation of another typical dish of her or his country of origin, or which could replace the previous ingredient).

How about we prepare (which dish can be made)?"



Note: it is recommended that the assistance centre have a series of typical recipes from El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and other places in the world such as Africa and India, to offer alternatives to children and adolescents. If the required ingredients are difficult to obtain, the available stock will only be used for a single welcome event. Otherwise, the dish will be included in the menu of the Centre to be prepared with some frequency.

When greeting children and adolescents who come from a different culture, it is necessary to investigate if any ingredient is not accepted by the religion that they profess.



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Rules of the assistance centre

When children and adolescents arrive at Rules promote order and delimit actions and relationships within the household, and also serve as guide and containment. They are essential not only for adequate coexistence in the assistance centre but also for the emotional stability of the child or adolescent. Knowing “what is permitted” and what is not, allows them to make a choice (obey or accept the consequences of disobeying) and offers feelings of control over reality.

On the contrary, being in a reality with no rules, not knowing what to expect or what follows at each moment, causes chaos, a sense of uncertainty and unrest.



Note: each assistance centre will draw up its procedures, where these rules of coexistence will be described.

Goals:

- Offer specific information to migrant children and adolescents about the shelter’s internal regulations.
- Build a suitable, not chaotic, environment for proper coexistence in the assistance centre.
- Build a predictable and safe environment for migrant children and adolescents.

Materials:

- Pieces of paper.
- Pencils, crayons or coloured markers.
- Print-out of the assistance centre rules abstract (see the appropriate characteristics of the material in the steps for the activity).



5. Talk to the children and adolescents about each rule, and be sure to describe it in a way that is easily understood (with simpler words, examples, etc.).

6. Ask them to draw or write on another piece of paper what helps them to remember the rule more easily.

7. Include the consequences of breaking the rules, and also the incentive system for good behaviour.

8. Ask the children and adolescents if something is unclear or if they have any questions.



Steps for the activity

1. Explain to the child or adolescent that a series of in-house rules need to be followed.

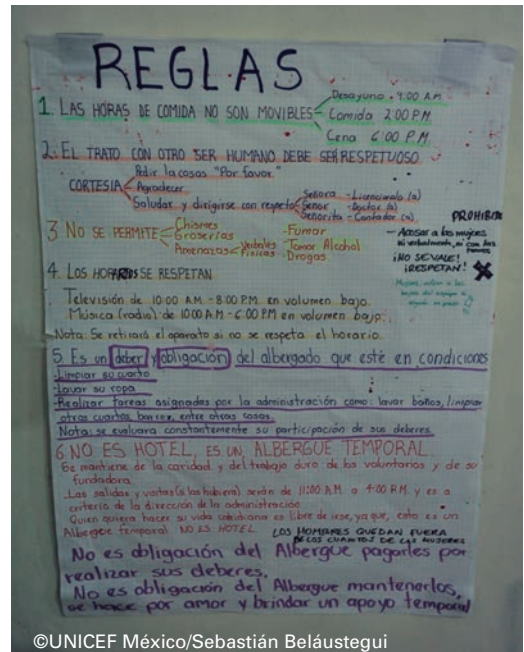
2. Offer (if available) a summary of the rules.

a. The rules should be summarized in concise sentences (with the central idea transmitted in a forthright manner).

b. The abstract should include a symbol or image representing each rule, to ensure that it can be understood and retained by those who cannot read or do so with difficulty.

3. Explain that the rules apply to everyone in the house (not only to the newly arrived child or adolescent).

4. It may be useful to review the regulation along with the other children and adolescents, before starting any activity. For example, ask the others what they remember about the regulation and complement whatever is necessary.



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9. It is vital to emphasize the privacy of hygiene, body care and protection activities to everyone, children and adolescents or adults (no matter who they are), during their stay in the shelter and from that moment on, in such a way that this becomes a lesson learned for the rest of their life journey.

10. Make it clear that there is a chore calendar. This means that everyone living there has responsibilities. Some assignments are for everybody and are rotated, and others are the responsibility of each child or adolescent. Later, after they have rested, they will be told what these responsibilities are.



Schedules of activities and tasks

Once they have been introduced, welcomed and have been assigned space and items, they will need to be included in the schedules and activities (permanent or rotating).

Consistency in the use and scheduling of time will reduce uncertainty, which is overwhelming in the migration situation in which they find themselves. This makes their environment predictable.

Generating an atmosphere of constancy and order will help promote a sense of security; it will also prevent excessive room for leisure during their stay in the shelter, which can make the stay tedious, generate anxiety and fear, and promote conflicts among children and adolescents.

The activity has two different aspects:

- the general timetable, with roles and functions assigned to all;
- the personal schedule, with activities that will be the responsibility of the newly arrived child or adolescent.

e1

General and shared **timetable**



Steps for the activity

Have an open timetable with a clear and established schedule:

- Time to wake up.
- Bedtime.
- Personal hygiene activities: bathing, washing teeth, washing clothes, etc.
- Activities for arranging personal and/or shared spaces: making the bed, storing clothes, cleaning the room, and so on.
- Time for breakfast, lunch, dinner and snacks (if applicable).
- Schedule of group activities: workshops, groups, entertainment, etc.
- Schedule of individual activities: therapies, interviews, errands, etc. (This schedule may be included within the general schedule, but an individual timetable must be developed for everyone.)
- Leisure hours.
- Schedule of visits or activities outside the assistance centre
- Schedule of recreational activities and playtime.
- Class attendance hours.

- Schedule for making phone calls to significant others.

- Schedule of the permanent art workshop.²⁷

e2

Individual activities timetable



Steps for the activity

- Present a timetable of activities on a sheet of paper.
- Write on the schedule the assigned activities, writing their names in the corresponding box (day and time).
 - For example, making one's bed daily.
 - Help clean up the bedroom, along with the other children and adolescents with whom they share it.
 - Cleaning or tidying up shared spaces (such as picking up one's plate after eating, washing it, etc.; assigned dates for washing communal dishes).
 - At the same time, recreational, psycho-educational and personal and social development schedules and activities that they choose, and considered appropriate for them, can be included in the same scheme.

²⁷ The resilience monitors in charge will agree, with the rest of the staff, on the time when the activity should take place. It is essential to plan and respect the schedule, so as to make it as predictable as possible (ex.: Every Tuesday at 4 pm, or Monday, Wednesday and Friday at 10 am, etc.).



Permanent **art workshop**

The permanent art workshop will allow a space in which children and adolescents can express, elaborate and share emotions and experiences. Similarly, it will allow them to create, imagine and plan their history, path and future life in a symbolic way.

It is proposed as a permanent activity, so that a space of trust, always available (not mandatory), is established for expression and creativity. The workshop will bring together the children and adolescents who already know each other and have shared experiences and activities and will welcome those who have recently joined the assistance centre.

The workshop is somewhat complicated, as it proposes individual activities (to be carried out in an orderly manner by all children and adolescents, assisted by staff members guiding their incorporation into the group) and a group activity at the end of each day, to create a mural or a collective and permanent artwork, which will be continuously fed.

The children and adolescents will put together a folder, safeguarding all their work; at any given time, they can add one to the collective mural.

Goals:

- Contain and facilitate the expression of emotions by the children and adolescents.
- Foster creativity.
- Enable the projection of future actions in a symbolic manner.
- Create a collective artwork of permanent growth that records the passage of each child and adolescent through the assistance centre.
- Resume and restore the social bond.



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Materials:

• Any plastic or visual arts material put together for the art workshop will be useful at different times for the sessions that we will describe next.

These may include:

- 5 x 2 cm white labels (approximate measurement).
- Scissors with a round tip.
- Various types of glue (preferably white glue or Pritt glue stick).
- Transparent adhesive tape (scotch tape).
- Opaque adhesive tapes (masking tape).
- A several meters long roll of kraft paper.
- China paper.
- Newspaper and magazines imagery (for collage).
- White and colour drawing charcoal.
- Flipchart.
- White letter size paper sheets.
- Letter-sized colour cardboard sheets or paperboard.
- *Tempera* paint in various colours.

• Oil pastels (an art material similar to crayons, but it favours emotional expression while containing it. These are not more economical than crayons, but they last a long time).

• Dry pastels (a material similar to coloured chalk, but with better quality texture and handling. Very economical and durable).

• Coloured markers.

• Colour pencils.

• Colour modelling clay.

• Scraps of fabric of different designs and colours.

• Plastic stitching needles.

• Coloured threads.

• Recycled material (toilet paper cardboard rolls, disposable containers of different shapes and plastic materials, cardboard boxes of different sizes, etc.).



Note: some activities of the permanent art workshop require specific materials, which will be mentioned when appropriate.



Duration of sessions

Each daily session of social intervention with art workshop will last at most two hours, with a 15-minute break in the middle or at the end of an activity that has taken time to complete. It is suggested that the workshop should take place daily because it is an always open and present environment that helps contain emotions very significantly.

It will be preceded by a sports session or various physical activities such as basketball, soccer or any other game that promotes teamwork and group integration (not competition or rivalry). If a conflict among children and adolescents arises or is detected, they can be replaced by activities that help discharge excess energy, such as running around the yard, performing yoga postures or tai chi with a teacher guide or any other activity where they stay together, but is done individually.

The sessions include carrying out an individual activity (that reinforces identity, history, life plan, etc.) and a group session, at the end of the day, to promote group cohesion and belonging. In the beginning, they will be informed about this arrangement of tasks, specifying the time distribution between the individual and the collective activities.



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Rules for the beginning of the workshop

1. What is allowed and what is not:

- a.** The first rule and the most important one is NOT to hurt others or yourself in any way. This includes words and actions that may harm someone in the group or themselves, such as ridicule, criticism or negative comments about the creations made by others.
- b.** Touching, moving or, of course, destroying the drawing, construction or production of any kind, made by another person in the group, is NOT allowed.
- c.** Listening attentively when other people participate.
- d.** It is ok to ask questions (respectfully) regarding somebody else's creations.
- e.** Respecting the common art material. Damage, spoiling, hiding or destroying any type of material is NOT allowed.
- f.** Removing material from the workshop is NOT allowed.
- g.** All material must be shared with everyone in the group.

2. Describe the workshop as a permanent activity in the Centre, and its operating rules (schedule, recess, assistance).

3. Explain that this is the first activity. Later on, other children and adolescents will be included and will begin the workshop with this same activity and the subsequent ones, while those who have been in the Centre for a long time can extend themselves in the workshop units of their choice, working in greater depth on topics, producing more drawings or representations, or adding elements to those they have already made.

4. Introduce the new members of the group, if any. Try to remember everyone's name, including those who joined recently. Ask them to indicate how they want to be called, two things they like and two that they do not. Participation is voluntary. Children and adolescents who do not want to participate in a group should NOT be forced to do so against their will.

5. Ask them to find a place where they feel comfortable to start (or continue) their day's work "with art".

6. Remind them of the rules regarding sharing and using the materials.

7. Remind them of the time allotted to create their art production.

A few guidelines for the workshop facilitator

- The relationship that the children and adolescents maintain with their own work is always an indicator of their relationship with themselves. It is important to understand and help channel emotions that “come out” in the treatment of their works. If they feel anger, they could destroy or ruin their work; If depressed, they will be reluctant to start, or may not be able to finish.
- It is advisable not to pressure them, or to try to have them carry out the activity in a specific “correct” way. The central idea is for them to express themselves and understand better what they feel. Upon the emergence of emotion, it is recommended to help them recognize it and name it,²⁸ without judging, reprimanding or requesting that it be “corrected”.
- It is essential to model their self-care through the treatment of their daily artwork: handle them with care, look after them, guard and protect them.
- In their art, they frequently show the subjects that can help the accompanying staff member to identify risk situations. One should not generalize, but it is important to pay attention to the following:
 - In cases of children with depression or suicidal thoughts, the drawing will show an imperfect style, a tendency to use less colour, leave empty spaces, put in less effort or leave unfinished pieces.
 - In some children and adolescents at risk of suicide, feelings of despair are clearly and explicitly reflected in their work.
 - When afflicted with severe emotional problems, their drawings will be unstructured, showing only fragmented “pieces” that are not integrated to form a whole. This is expected only in young children.
- Art is especially helpful to children and adolescents with verbalizing difficulties. The resilience monitors should take note and seek specialized assistance when something like this becomes apparent.
- Fostering resilience means, whenever possible, providing spaces for play and humour. Both encourage interactions where children can transcend pain and reconnect with themselves and with others in a new and different manner, lived with satisfaction.²⁹

²⁸ Most children and adolescents have difficulty recognizing, naming and differentiating emotions.

²⁹ Barudy, J., *La fiesta mágica...*[The magic party] pg. 38.

- The art workshop activities should, therefore, not be considered as “tasks” to be fulfilled in a rigid manner and at a predetermined time. They need to be built from the logic of play. This is, par excellence, the means for children and adolescents to assimilate painful situations, repeating what happened, again and again, to find meaning. So that everything that migrant children and adolescents do with the work they produce is linked to what they feel and need to do at that moment.

- The spaces offered to bring out the sense of humour should be carefully planned. It is vital that what children and adolescents construct with humour originates from themselves. Otherwise, they could live it as a joke. In other words, no one can laugh or make fun of what someone else does or says. However, it is permissible for someone to joke about something that they themselves did or said.

- Play and humour are useful in offering the children or adolescents an optimistic vision (“light” and flexible) of their experiences.

Below are the activities suggested for the development of the permanent art workshop. They have been planned in a sequence that is important for emotional learning and the promotion of resilience processes. It is suggested that the sequence not be modified. However, each child or adolescent can extend into more than one session in the development of an artistic activity, if required.

The coordinator should keep a record of the activities of each child or adolescent, keeping to the sequence without skipping any. Since some children and adolescents may be integrated into the group at different times, this record is vital, as not everyone carries out the same activities at the same time.

If any children and adolescents are reluctant to participate in art activities, they can be told that it is not just about drawing or painting and that they can do other hands-on activities or crafts if they wish.

a

This is me

Goals:

- Reinforce and revalue identity.
- Reinforce and revalue personal values.

Materials:

- Letter-sized colour paperboard sheets.
- Oil pastels.
- Colour markers.
- Colour pencils.
- One 4 x 1.5 m roll of kraft paper.



Steps for the activity

1. Assign each child or adolescent a sheet of colour paperboard of their choice.
2. Divide and fold the sheet in three equal parts lengthwise, so that it looks like a presentation triptych.
3. Then ask them to write their name (by which they like to be called) with the materials available on one of the three faces of the paper.
4. Ask them to draw three symbols (shapes, forms) that they feel represent or define them.
5. Then, ask them to represent with drawings two things they like and two that they do not. Ask them to place their drawings on any face of the triptych.
6. This sheet will stay in their room for the length of their stay to mark their presence, whether they want to attend the session of the day or not (a sheet folded in three may be placed as a triptych in their bedroom space) to let them know that there is always "a place" for them there.
7. It is essential that each session start by asking them if they want to stay in that same place or move to another.
8. It is suggested that children and adolescents be interspersed by age. In this way, it is easier to encourage the elders to support the young in different activities and relate to each other; however, we must be very aware of interactions and possible abuses of power or hierarchies due to age, size or personality.



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9. Whoever proposes the activity may encourage the children and adolescents to reflect on identity with the following messages:

- a.** “It’s very important that you indicate where you come from.”
- b.** “Everything you think is also very important, for example, something that is relevant to you. What is important to people is called values. What are some of your values?”
- c.** “What is your community like? Do they have any tradition that you like? Do they have typical costumes? What do they look like?”
- d.** “What do you like and do not like about your birthplace?”
- e.** “It gives me great pleasure to know more about who you are.”³⁰

³⁰ Messages of this type are very important for the reconstruction and revalorization of the child or adolescent, and it is essential that adults repeat them whenever possible, since they allow children and adolescents to perceive themselves as persons, having been through multiple scenarios and experiences where they probably did not feel that way. When children and adolescents are in a place different from their own, where they possibly do not understand codes, words and other interactions, they often feel disoriented, feelings of “I am nobody” or “nobody understands me”. In interactions of this kind, they can “feel they are somebody”, that they have a role, that they respect and are respected, and, from there, start the recovery and resilience process.

10. If their identity and roots are a reason for rejection, for example, for having a different sexual orientation (homosexuals, transgender, lesbians, who have been persecuted and stigmatized), it will be necessary to confirm their rejection emotions and clarify that the rejection behaviour has to do with the attitude of other people, and not with themselves:

- a.** “I see that you have a very clear idea of what you feel. Often people cannot understand and respect the feelings of others, but you do respect what you feel. That is very brave.”
- b.** “In the world, there are ‘many heads’; all people think differently; they are different. Some people cannot ‘get out of their head to understand others’.”
- c.** “It is very important that you know that everything you think and feel is important and valuable. If other people do not understand it, you have to know that what you think and feel is fine and protect it inside you.”³¹

³¹ It is essential that the adults at the assistance centre actively encourage talking about the issue of diversity so that children and adolescents find a space in which to express themselves freely and reveal and do not conceal their sexual identity.

d. "I would very much like you to do a drawing about yourself and how you feel about this. After you do it, you can decide if you want to save it in your folder, to see it there whenever you want, or, if you prefer, hang it in some special place, where you can see it."



Common code

Goals:

- Foster group cohesion.
- Encourage communication and collaboration.



Steps for the activity

1. Place a long piece of kraft paper on a wall.
2. Ask the group to design a collective identity code shared by the group on the piece of paper, whichever way they want. Together they will build a mural that will be the memory of the group. Those who are staying, those just arriving and those leaving will be represented.
3. The collective identity code can be constructed, for example, by inventing a group name, defining ideals or shared beliefs symbolized in figures, shapes, graffiti, blobs, colours, etc., or from a topic that interests or disturbs them and their different ways of representing it.



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4. Tell them that the mural should represent, in any way they want, integration and non-discrimination as a general motto of the assistance centre. Explain that this means that, in the assistance centre, all persons are equally valuable and significant, regardless of their religion, the work they do, their sexual orientation (whether they like women or men), their gender identity (whether they feel like a man or a woman, even though the body they were born with corresponds to the opposite sex), their race, whether they are indigenous, if they live with a disability, and so on.

In all cases, the mural will be affixed to the wall. At the end of each session, the entire group will work on the mural.

In this first session, it may be necessary for the person facilitating the activity to encourage participation with phrases such as:

- “Think of something you would like to contribute to the collective mural, to the work of the group.”
- “Any learning, idea or something positive that you believe will be useful to all for life.”

As the group grows and integrates new children, if no more space is available, a paper extension can be added to the mural. In this manner, creation is encouraged “as a team”, including everyone’s ideas, helping them to shape a topic they can work on throughout their stay.



My hand as a signature and entry into the group

Goals:

- Strengthen the identity of the child or adolescent.
- Strengthen the recovery of, and appreciation for, personal values.
- Promote the expression of needs.



Steps for the activity

- 1.** Two new sheets are distributed to each child or adolescent. They are then asked to draw the silhouette of one of their hands with the material that is available in the common spaces.
- 2.** Ask them to write on it what they need from others to feel comfortable and safe in that space and in the group, although the information that is usually difficult to tell is shared. For example, “they should not laugh at what I say or do”, “they should listen to me quietly and attentively, etc.”.

3. Explain that things of the heart and feelings that can be difficult, painful or embarrassing to talk about will be shared many times, and it will surely be an emotion felt by everyone because it is reasonable to feel that way.

4. Also, ask them to write or draw what they are willing to give to the group so that their classmates also feel comfortable and safe. For example: "I offer not to make fun of what my classmates tell me", "to support them as they need when they are sad", "to learn about other cultures", and so on.

5. Reiterate that, in the art workshop activities, they can express themselves with drawings or words, using the available materials as they please, to convey what they carry in their hearts (good or bad). These can be drawings or paintings, and also be objects (such as bracelets, carvings, models, etc.).

6. The children and adolescents will write (in words) or draw with a symbol, inside their hand silhouette, every idea or request to feel safe in the group with everyone, guides and classmates.

7. You can also ask them to make a design and paint it or decorate as they wish the drawing of their hand to present it to the others.

In this way, their entry into the group will be signalled or symbolized and ritualized, legitimizing their voice to ask for what they need.



Here stays our voice

- First, ask them to cut out the drawn hand and glue it anywhere they want around the collective mural.
- Once this is done, ask volunteers to read what they wrote aloud and discuss each idea.
- The facilitator will act as a moderator to promote the idea that every need expressed reinforces the rules for the group (when they are common) or emphasize the idea of respecting the wishes of others.
- You can carry out this activity saying, "I would ask my classmates to..." and then, "I pledge to..."
- The facilitator will close the activity by thanking the participation and reinforcing the idea of courage since it is difficult but vital to dare to say what one needs. The facilitator will also highlight the importance and responsibility of pledging something to the group.



e

Emotions in my body

Goals:

- Work self-awareness and self-care (knowing how to use art to facilitate the expression of emotions and knowing techniques to work with self-esteem).
- Identify, name and normalize (legitimize and universalize) emotions, especially afflictive ones, such as fear, emotional pain, sadness and anger.
- Facilitate the expression and modulation of feelings and emotions.
- Facilitate the differentiation between feeling and acting according to one's emotions. For example, recognize feelings of rage and discern appropriate and inadequate ways of expressing it.
- For boys, normalize and legitimize fear. Due to the subjection to gender and cultural stereotypes, fear is an emotion whose possibility of expression is frequently denied, as it is often interpreted as a sign of weakness and questions masculinity. It is also commonly understood as an emotion opposite to courage. It has been proven that the cultures that do not teach children to accept being afraid are the ones with the highest rates of violence against women and children.
- Learn to recognize emotions in oneself and in others to promote the development of empathy.
- Help to learn strategies to exchange negative emotions for more positive ones.



Steps for the activity

1. Give each child or adolescent a large piece of kraft paper (a sheet measuring approximately 1 x 1m).

2. Then ask them to represent their body as a human silhouette (as they wish to represent it) on the piece of paper.

3. After providing drawing materials, if available, read them a story that talks about emotions, for example, *El pájaro del alma* [The bird of the soul], or show a movie that spells out certain moods, such as *Up* or *Chain of Favours*; or simply give them a brief exposition of the most common feelings and emotions (anger, sadness, happiness, worry, etc.) It is important to mention that the feelings are not adequate and inadequate, good or bad, but that they *simply exist*.

4. Next, ask them to talk aloud about the feelings they experience most frequently (both afflictive and positive).

5. At the end of this brainstorming, ask them to locate these emotions within their body. For this, they can close their eyes (“where do you think you can locate or have felt the anger, the rage, the sadness, the guilt, the joy, etc.?”).

- Ask them to pinpoint the emotions in their human silhouette, giving each one a name and a colour (as each one wishes to call that emotion) colouring the entire area corresponding to each emotion, either within, on the margin or on the surface of the body.

- Once done, ask them to share the individual work with the group (respecting those who prefer not to). Help them see the similarities and differences between emotions, and how they live them, how they name them, what colour they see them, and so on.

- The resilience monitors have the job of encouraging the children and adolescents to talk about their emotions, recognize them and legitimize them, for example, mentioning that it is normal to feel them in certain circumstances, as those in which they or others have found themselves.³²

³² Barudy, J., *La fiesta mágica...*[The magic party]

The bubble Metaphor³³

Goals:

- Enable a space in which it is possible to talk about violence (a reality that is often silenced or naturalized).
- Describe what violence is.
- Allow each child or adolescent to describe what she or he considers as violence (particularly what is painful or hurts).
- Construct, in a symbolic way, the perception of abilities for their own protection that favour self-esteem and the perception of self-control.
- Discussion of self-care tools.



Steps for the activity

1. Ask them to take their drawing (the silhouette in which they drew the emotions) to continue working on it.
2. Ask them to close their eyes, wherever they are, and to imagine that a bubble that surrounds them completely has formed around their body.
3. Tell them that the bubble is individual. No bubble covers more than one person.
4. Give them a few seconds to imagine what that bubble looks like, and then ask trigger questions:
 - a. What colour is your bubble?
 - b. Does it have only one colour or several?
 - c. Is it bright, or opaque?
 - d. What does it seem to be made of?
 - e. Is it still or moving?
 - f. Any other possible characteristic of "the bubble" that comes to the mind of the activity facilitator.
5. Ask them to imagine that the bubble that surrounds their entire body is made of a light and fragile material -such as soap bubbles-, and that, in addition to being fragile, it is precious.
6. Now, tell them to open their eyes and trace that bubble around their silhouette, with their emotions, on the same paper.
7. Give them a few minutes to draw and decorate the bubble as they wish.

³³ Treviño, AL, Working document, Mexican Institute of Art Psychotherapy, in press. Mexico City.

8. The facilitator will then say the following:

a. “Imagine that this bubble is your living space, which is the space that surrounds your body and protects your emotions and feelings from everything that happens outside and affects you (your body, your thoughts and your feelings).”

b. “We know that many things happen outside of you that provoke emotions. You cannot control whether they occur or not.”

9. The open question is then asked:

a. “Let’s all think: what can make the bubble break or hurt?”

10. Wait for them to respond, noting on a flipchart the ideas that we can consider as correct (such as insults, beatings, general ill-treatment, aggression, abuse of power, threats, violence, etc.).

11. If no one answers, you can suggest ideas about what violence is. “The bubble is broken with words or actions that hurt the body or the emotions, with actions that hurt or make you feel uncomfortable and that are felt inside your body.”

12. Now describe the concept of violence, adapting the language to the characteristics and abilities of the group. The ideas that should be present are:

a. It is a behaviour that seeks to dominate or hurt someone, in order to achieve their own ends or “have it their own way”.

b. Actions are carried out by people who have more power (strength, information, resources, possibilities) than others. There is always someone stronger, who is violent towards the weaker.

c. Violence happens everywhere.

d. In general, people do not talk about violence much, or it seems to be “natural”, as if it were ok.

e. In fact, it is important that whoever exercises violence stop doing so because it hurts others. Also, there are things to be learned in order to escape or stop the violence.

13. Then, explain that this bubble is their protection, and it is important to think about how to care for it and preserve it. Caring for your bubble is something that you learn. It does not matter if things have already happened that hurt or cause pain, because we have all experienced violence at some point, or have been violent in some way towards other people.³⁴

14. Next, ask them to modify the drawing of their bubble, changing what they think will “make it stronger”.

³⁴ It is important to remember that the majority of children and adolescents present come from contexts of violence or secondary victimization; that is, they have experienced family and/or social abuse and hence rejection or stigmatization and social discrimination. Therefore, we must pay close attention to how we use the words so as not to make children and adolescents feel more guilt or shame than they certainly are already bearing.



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15. When their task is done, ask them for ideas on how they can protect their bubble and write down the answers on a flipchart.

16. At this point, try to guide the discussion to retrieve the opinions in which you notice the use of a resource that has to do with resilience or assertiveness, with which they solved some risky situation and could safeguard their integrity and self-protection - by themselves or with the help of another person- (for example, having protected themselves from a risky activity, to prevent accidents, not gone on to a verbal or physical fight, knowing how to defend oneself with words that do not trigger more violence, etc.).

17. Do not remark what you think was “wrong” or say anything that can be interpreted as judgment or reproach. If you consider that some of the content needs to be clarified, do not say so directly; ask the group if they can think of other ways to go about it and guide the discussion towards the information that is most useful.

18. Finally, ask each one to think of a situation – the first that comes to mind – in which they were able to preserve their bubble untouched. This means that something happened to them that broke their bubble (hurt them, confused them, etc.), but they were able to repair it and then feel better.

19. Tell them to represent how they “looked after their bubble” with an image (drawings, figures, colour spots, etc.) in their work today.

20. Time permitting, ask two or three people to share their work and reflections.

As a group activity, they are asked to incorporate into the collective wall something that represents violence, in any way they prefer. This could be adding to the mural a specific colour, a symbol, words or drawings. Whoever accompanies the activity will promote the inclusion of topics such as discrimination, exclusion and intolerance.

Collage of emotions³⁵

Goals:

- Recognize and associate emotions with situations, interactions, gestures and words.
- Encourage going from expressing the emotion to controlling it.
- Connect the child or adolescent with the possibility of stopping to think before acting.

Materials:

- Magazines to cut out or magazines cut-outs.
- Scissors.
- Glue.
- A roll of kraft paper.
- Sheets of cardboard or paperboard of different colours.
- Felt-tip pens.



Steps for the activity

1. Ask the children and adolescents to cut out images, words, situations, etc. that can awaken the following emotions: joy, sadness, nervousness, fear, tranquility, concern.
2. Tell them that they can master or control these, and therefore it is possible to go from one to the other.
3. Ask them to explain how they think you can move from one emotion to another (or from one emotional state to another).
 - a. It's not about "hiding them, burying them forever, ignoring them or forgetting them", but "doing something conscious" to achieve it. For example: "How can a child be angry and then relaxed?"
 - b. "What do you think happened to move from anger to relaxation?"
 - c. "How can you go from being sad to being happy?"
 - d. "Who can give an example of someone being nervous and then relaxed?"
 - e. "Do you think you can feel multiple emotions all at once?"
 - f. "What could we do to put them in order? or to leave the state of confusion about what is happening to us or when we feel several things simultaneously?"

³⁵ Barudy, J., *La fiesta mágica...*[The magic party], pg. 57.

4. They are likely to give answers related to changes in the environment, and not with personal strategies. The latter is what is expected to be promoted during the group discussion (what can they do “within themselves”).

5. Next, give them a few more minutes to write or draw a situation next to each emotion, represented with a collage, in which they have personally felt that way.

6. Then, ask them if that emotion changed by doing something with the determination to be better. Ask them what they did to achieve this and ask them to represent this, too, with a symbol or drawing.

7. Invite them to share today’s work with the group, and help them to convey their story. Powerful stories are likely to emerge, so it is important to be very attentive to their reactions. Try to listen to the stories in detail, without correcting what happened, without judging, or giving advice.



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For the work activity in the group mural, the last 30 minutes of the session will be set aside, inviting them to represent, as an option, something they learned or thought about during the day’s work. If they cannot think of something, just let them create the mural. Indeed, the most important aspect of this activity is the integration of the group and the roles they play (who helps who, who may need more help, etc.).

h

Dealing with rage

Children and adolescents who have been mistreated or lived in a hostile environment show great difficulties in modulating their emotions, impulses and desires, as well as moving from an unpleasant emotional perception to a more pleasant one,³⁶ a fact that was addressed in the previous activity.

The therapeutic use of art serves primarily as catharsis (emotional discharge). The artistic process is often sufficient to assimilate and release tension, and this function does not depend on verbalization but precedes it.³⁷ This means that art is itself an elaboration, “doing something” with emotions.

Goals:

- Legitimize anger as human emotion and discover ways to express it. Differentiate between feeling and acting.³⁸
- Understand where it comes from (what other emotions can be composed or originated).
- Recognize the anger that different situations in daily life provoke or have provoked, which, if not expressed, runs the risk of “staying inside”, making us very sad, uneasy with ourselves and finally come out in an awful way. Learn how rage can be transformed from something destructive, into something constructive.

Materials:

- A flipchart or chart affixed to the wall or a blackboard divided into two columns.
- Colour markers
- The same drawing materials as the previous sessions (oil and dry pastels, coloured pencils, etc.).



³⁶ Barudy, J., *La fiesta mágica...*[The magic party], pg. 50.

³⁷ Feder, E. and B. Feder. *The Expressive Arts Therapies*. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1980.

³⁸ Barudy, *La fiesta mágica...*[The magic party], pg. 65.



Steps for the activity

- Present the poster on rage (see Appendix) to the group and have them look at it for a few seconds. Then ask them what they think it wants to tell us. Open the group discussion about it.
- Guide the discussion towards the following ideas:
 - This poster explains that the emotion more readily felt by human beings is rage (facial expression located at the centre of the image).
 - Rage often appears in life because it is usually the way in which many of us learn, in our culture, to express emotions that have been kept inside for a long time and have not been vented.
 - Rage is not only a mass of accumulated anger; it also hides other emotions that are more difficult to recognize or accept, some that are more painful and others that make us feel more vulnerable.
 - Some of those emotions are those illustrated around rage (here they are asked to say them aloud, in unison, while we point them out).
 - Another collective lesson in our cultures is that, when we feel the other emotions, we are told early on not to express them or are punished for expressing them. For example, boys are not always allowed to cry. If we do not give ourselves permission to recognize when we feel vulnerable, then it is likely that this situation will turn into rage that is usually expressed as violence.

- Then, on the flipchart, draw a two column table. As a header, in one of them write Emotions (what you feel) and in the other Behaviour or Action (what you do), in order to ask children and adolescents to give examples of emotions and the corresponding action.
- You can use the analogy of the pressure cooker: as pressure grows, without safety valves that allow steam to be slowly released, the cooker will be increasingly closer to exploding. Further indicate that, to the extent that our environment becomes more tense or problematic, we become filled with the tension caused by emotions; we become filled with rage.
- Provide a sheet of paper of the colour they choose so they can write (not draw) all the reviewed emotions, including anger, and have them believe they have been stored in their hearts (what happened? When? Where?). Also, ask them to think about the disadvantages of acting as a pressure cooker and holding back or ignoring emotions.
- Also make them think about the risk of letting their rage out, not having safety valves, in an explosion.³⁹ What can happen if the rage builds up and blows out?
- Retrieve the human figures from the previous session and ask them to represent visually (with colours, shapes, etc.) what they wrote and how rage has affected their bubble.
- Finally, ask them to write, on the reverse side of the page where they wrote their examples, what would be a safer way to get angry (that is, the constructive ways of expressing rage).⁴⁰

³⁹ Barudy, J. *La fiesta mágica...*[The magic party], pp. 60-61

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pg. 67.

- Possible answers that you should encourage are: write a letter, play sports, look for someone to talk to about how they feel, say what they really want to say without harming the other, wait for the intensity of the rage to diminish, tell others, as calmly as possible but truthfully, how what they have done (pain or hurt) has affected them, draw what you are feeling, breathe deeply and think of something positive, imagine yourself in a situation that will happen, tell someone else something that starts with “when you do this or say this to me this, I feel...”

The group activity differs slightly from the previous activities.

- Instruct them to partner up, then ask them to remember all the ways in which people harm others, harm themselves and damage things in their environment when they get angry. They may write this on a sheet of paper.

- Then, ask each partner pair to come forward and present their ideas to the group. These are usually destructive forms of rage.⁴¹

- Close the activity by concluding that the destructive forms of rage are abusive and that the constructive expressions of rage are healthy, explaining why it is so. Also, explain that we are all responsible for our own rage and how we express it.

- The activity facilitator will expose the three rules of rage (she or he can ask one or more volunteer child or adolescent to write them down on a flipchart or piece of kraft paper and add the works that are left exposed on the wall).

THE THREE RULES OF RAGE⁴²

You have the right to feel rage, but...

1

NOT to hurt yourself

2

NOT to harm others

3

NOT to damage things



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⁴¹ Barudy, *La fiesta mágica...* [The magic party], pg. 67.

⁴² Barudy, J., *Ibid*, pg. 66.

Have the group read these aloud and ask them if they want to add an idea, drawing or symbol on the theme of the day to the group mural.

If any children and adolescents become very anxious or break into tears during the activity, ask them to accompany you outside for a moment and do the following:

- Tell them that some things are hard to talk about.
- Ask them to breathe deeply five times.
- Ask them to describe for you three things they see around them at that moment.
- Once calmed down, ask if they want to talk to you about something and, if they agree, propose an hour to do so calmly and in a private space.
- Repeat that everything they want to say is important; that you are going to believe everything they say and that you will try to do everything you can to make them feel better.

Regardless of whether or not they want to talk about their feelings, report the situation to include diagnostic actions and therapeutic support for the child or adolescent.



My life path (3 to 5 sessions)

Goals:

- Open spaces to analyse life and travel learnings and build more significant strengths for the future.
- Track the “milestone” moments in their lives (positive or negative).
- Think about their stories, recount the good and the bad (integrating experiences).
- Identify the obstacles they have faced and currently face and the tools they have to overcome these obstacles.
- Show them their abilities to make decisions (projected into the future).
- Analyse what seems useful to them (what they would keep, what they would not do again).
- Assess the results to benefit from the experience. What was learned and what else needs to be learned? What were the successes and what were the failures? (all experiences involve them).
- Explain that successes can be used to face the next adverse experience with greater confidence, and failures can be analysed and then corrected.

- Offer spaces to receive information, to again make decisions, now armed with more experience and tools. In the spaces in which they analyse the experience, they can perceive and build new alternatives and add lessons learned.

- It is NOT about criticizing or lecturing about risks and dangers (this information will not be useful, nor will it be incorporated). Nor is it to discourage them from travelling again (although we are legitimately concerned about the multiple risks to which they are exposed along the journey). It is more about recognizing them as individuals, with the capacity to decide on their own lives (they have already shown this by arriving here), individuals who can make decisions, time and again, about their life. Thence, it is possible to show them the skills they have to maintain a meaningful life (according to their own values and desires).

- Encouraging them and opening spaces for alternatives also allows them to build the idea of transition, of transformation. "This life experience transforms you; you choose how." Just as you have made a great effort to achieve this, you can achieve anything in life. You are individuals of great strength, courageous, who know how to choose, and how to reject what does not serve them.

- Enable spaces in which they are encouraged to advance towards their goals.

- Promote ingenuity (ability to identify the most important resources, including human resources) to solve any difficulty, large or small, in any situation.

Materials:

- Have several previously horizontally cut cardboard sheets, of different colours, in 13 cm wide strips.

- It will also be necessary to have the same number of vellum or tracing paper strips, or similar paper that allows seeing through, of the same size as the cardboard strips.



- For this activity only dry and oil pastels will be used (or the closest similar material).



Steps for the activity

1. The activity will consist of asking the children to represent in drawings the different stages of their life, divided into various moments. Once they fill a strip (if this happens), they will glue another one, and another, and all those necessary to fit all the drawings or figures they wish, session after session.

2. In the end, there should be a single strip as long as each child or adolescent wishes to make it.

3. The session is preceded by a relaxation exercise. Then, they will be asked to make an artistic representation of the most significant number of memories that came to mind during the exercise (at least three). It is recommended that they progress in sets of three memories per session.

4. The instructions for the relaxation exercise are as follows:

- “Lie on your back on the floor and close your eyes for a few minutes. Try not to fall asleep. Now imagine that you are standing where a road begins. Choose a means of transport. For example, walking, by car, on a bike, a skateboard, or even having wings to watch the road from above.”
- Next, guide the exercise describing the path to the past:
 - “How is this road to the past? Is it straight? Winding? Full of stones? Smooth? What is the soil made of? Dirt road? Concrete? Grass? ”
 - “What is on this road? Who is there? Are they familiar or unfamiliar?”
- Ask them to go down that road to their oldest memory, when they were very young; they are in their birthplace, in the first location where they ever lived. Have them make the first stop of the journey.
 - “What is happening around? Who are you with? How is that place? What’s going on? How do you feel? Is there someone next to you?”
 - Ask them to recover at least three significant moments of their lives, before reaching the “end” of the journey, which would be the time of migration and boarding the train. They will also be asked to include all the stops and what happened in each one until they reached the assistance centre.
 - Now, ask them to take the path back to the present time. “You are just beginning, do not hurry, remember memories, good or bad, that mark significant moments or the passage from one stage to another in your life. Choose some of them for today, preferably from the oldest to the most recent.”



Individual activity

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1. Give them a strip of paperboard or cardboard of the colour of their choice and place the dry and oil pastels within reach of all.

2. Next, ask them to represent, with drawings, figures, shapes, colours or words, the memories recovered today, one on each strip, and one by one.

3. It is important to watch them and accompany them as they work. The resilience monitor should never lose sight of children's and adolescents' activities in which memory and emotions are stirred, most of them probably very painful; one must be very present, observing each reaction.

4. Tell them they are in a group of people who are already familiar, who have gone through similar experiences and can understand very well the emotions that may arise.



5. Unless a child or adolescent plunges into a crisis or breaks into tears, remain silent, hold their gaze, and encourage them to finish in silence, without interrupting their concentration and progress.

6. In this exercise, all kinds of reactions can occur in children and adolescents. If you see they need further containment, come close to them, normalize the emotions raised and invite them to translate these in the drawing, with words such as:

"I understand that you feel that way; thank you for your trust in expressing it. I think you could draw that also somewhere in your today's drawing. Where would you like to put it? Whether we like it or not, emotions or feelings are also part of what happens to us, our history, and they can have a place in the drawing."

7. When the majority have finished representing their memories for the day, give them one or two strips of tracing paper (vellum) or the same number of cardboard strips they used.

8. The instruction now will be: "Place this strip of paper on top of the strip(s) you have already drawn. Now draw on the tracing paper (which is on top of

the drawing you made at each stage) the obstacles that you encountered at that time and/or what you learned.



Group activity

Once the obstacles drawing has been made, the (voluntary) discussion starts on these ideas:

- “What would you do differently now if you were in a similar or in the same situation?”

Once they have expressed their ideas, space is made to comment on the activity:

- “What did you like best, and what did you like the least?”

As a closing, they are thanked for sharing something as important as their story and their memories with everyone else. They are reminded that this work will be continued in subsequent sessions.



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Following sessions

The instructions and tasks are given as described above (three memories per session). In the final sessions, they will be asked to remember and draw the moments before departure, the moment when the decision to start the trip was made, what happened on the journey, the detention and the transfer to the social assistance centre, that is, the present moment.

As the sessions progress, the activity facilitator will include key ideas. These can be drawings or sentences written on chips that are left in view of the child or adolescent, on the table where she or he is working. The facilitator will read them aloud in one of the sessions, and will later leave them again within easy reach.

These ideas are intended to provide the children and adolescents with the greatest possible amount of information and memories about their history and their journey. Keep in mind that these are ideas for children to remember and develop artistic expressions that help psychologically to process painful experiences. These are not questions that have to be formulated or that require specific answers. It must be remembered that children and adolescents will have already answered many questions to different authorities. It is important not to create an interrogation or interview context. You just have to offer them a space that helps them connect with the experiences they usually share and allow them to transform those memories into artistic expression.

The suggested topics are the following:

- The persons who belong to my history (and I know where they are).
- The persons who do not belong to my history (because I do not want them to).
- The persons who belong to my history (but I don't know where they are).
- The debt.
- The train.
- The community of origin.
- The destination I did not reach.
- Things that did hurt me.
- Things that made me stronger.
- Things that transformed me.
- Things someone did for me (assistance)
- Things I did for other people.
- Things that I would like to do.
- Things I would not do again.
- Things that are valuable to me (dignity).
- Good things that I achieved.
- Things that frightened me.
- Things I did to protect me.
- Nightmares.

- Sad memories.
- Happy memories.
- People I met on the journey.
- People I want with me now.
- People that I want with me in the future.
- Places that frightened me.
- Names of frequent places of entry to Mexico (for those that may have passed through):
 - From Honduras to Guatemala: El Corinto and Agua Caliente.
 - From El Salvador to Guatemala: La Hachadura.
 - From Guatemala to Mexico:
 - El Ceibo, Tenosique, El Naranjo (north region of Guatemala).
 - La Mesilla, El Carmen (centre region of Guatemala).
 - Tecún Umán (south region of Guatemala).
- Labels (myths and ideas about migrants and refugees, which are NOT true and hurt a lot).
 - “They left their country because they have to escape a pending prosecution or court case.”
 - “Migrants are lazy and dirty”.
 - “All migrants are criminals.”
- Reasons to leave the country of origin:
 - Gang pressure to join them.
 - Persecution for diverse sexual condition (lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgender, transvestites, intersex).
 - Harassment (pressure to be a gang member’s girlfriend).
 - Gang threats (violence against yourself or someone you love).
 - Pressure on the family (fees) by gangs.
 - Violence within the family.
 - Violence from someone known to the family.
 - Lack of options for studying or working.
 - Desire to meet with relatives who previously migrated to Mexico or the United States.
 - Desire to find work in the United States.
 - Desire to find a place where they feel protected and a family in the United States or Mexico.

The cards, written or with drawings, which symbolize these scenarios or circumstances, are like pieces of the jigsaw puzzle of their stories, which they can review, select and include in their life path stories.



Note: once the children and adolescents have carried out the previous activities, they will be offered the chance to attend the workshop to create any artwork they wish. For example, free drawing and painting, clay, play dough or plasticine modelling, etc. They may repeat, complete or refine activities previously carried out and included in their artwork binder.



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If a migrant child or adolescent leaves the social assistance centre before completing all the activities, it will be necessary, before she or he leaves, to perform the closing activity that appears in section V. This is essential for the emotional rescue and to enhance the experiences and learning related to emotional development as well as to the development of interactions.

IV

Activities **outside the social assistance centre**⁴³

It is not possible to conceive that children and adolescents could trace a life plan without being able to perceive themselves as citizens, interacting actively with their immediate environment – the community. The life plan⁴⁴ requires, in addition to integrating past experiences, the decision to manage one's life and achieve one's goals, the perception of one's skills, the construction and sense of oneself as a citizen, understanding and learning skills to exercise one's rights in society. That is why activities are included to interact with the immediate social context, beyond those carried out within the social assistance centre.⁴⁵

The layout of the life plan is the construction of what one wants to be, transcending the present day and the labels previously imposed and impacting (in any manner) on the context.⁴⁶ The ultimate challenge is to develop one's potential to the fullest, in all spheres of one's life (intrapsychic, intimate relationships, social relationships, community, institutions, society, etc.).

To assist children and adolescents in building themselves as citizens, the proposed activities seek to achieve the following goals:

- Create awareness of belonging and being committed to society.
- Create a commitment to society, not in an abstract manner but grounded in respect for the rights of other citizens. The seeds of this skill are sown in the activities within the assistance centre, and developed in the activities carried on outside the centre.
- Possess a feeling of belonging to a political community.
- Create awareness of the cultural richness that can contribute to the new society in which one finds oneself, with the knowledge and experience of one's own history (interculturalism).
- Obtain recognition from the political community to which one belongs.
- Understanding and living equality, understood as the right of individuals who are members of society to have access to the exercise of their rights.
- Initiate (or reinforce) the concept of cooperation and society, the concern for what is collective and shareable.

⁴³ Most of the activities suggested in this section have been taken up and redesigned on the basis of the information contained in Bonnafe, J., *Programa de formación de lectores* [Reader Training Programme].

⁴⁴ According to Jacinto Inbar "it means a deliberate behaviour, not a casual one, directed to conscious objectives: subsist, resist, continue the project, grow despite adversity; a rational cognitive process: reflective, analysing the benefits and costs of each alternative, in the short term, and, when possible, over the medium and long term". See Inbar, J., "Modelo integrativo enfocado en las soluciones para el desarrollo de la resiliencia individual familiar" [Integrative model focused on solutions for the development of individual family resilience], *Revista Perspectivas Sistémicas*, special issue 94 (5), 2006.

⁴⁵ D'Angelo Hernández, O., "Proyecto de vida como categoría básica de interpretación de la identidad individual y social" [Life plan as a major category of interpretation of individual and social identity], *Revista Cubana de Psicología*, 17 (3), 2000.

⁴⁶ Tracing and sustaining a life plan involves multiple variables, and therefore constitutes a complex task: the individual has to display skills and abilities obtained during her or his development, and continue to do so throughout her or his life. Furthermore, this must be achieved not only within the individual (as an intrapsychic ability) but must involve mind, body, behaviour and interaction in various contexts. Bronfenbrenner, U., *La ecología del desarrollo humano: experimentos en entornos naturales y diseñados* [The ecology of human development: experiments in natural and designed environments]. Barcelona: Paidós, 1987.

- Build a human climate of security and mutual trust.⁴⁷
- Encourage the participation of children and adolescents in joint projects and, with this, foster their sense of commitment and belonging to society.
- Create real spaces for the different forms of citizen participation.⁴⁸

*The construction of citizenship is an axis of development. It implies perceiving oneself as a holder of rights, and also participation and commitment to the society's destiny. It implies the subjects' awareness of belonging to society.*⁴⁹

Art and culture are everyone's right, and in that sense, any action that includes them favours the equality of possibilities of having access to activities, development of skills, knowledge, values and social and collective identity. For example, broadening their knowledge and developing negotiation skills, emotional control and specific skills (artistic, reading, oral and written communication, critical and creative thinking, etc.). The activities proposed in the handbook can be constituted as vehicles for non-discrimination and the construction of shared skills inside and outside the assistance centre.

Goals:

- Generate activities as ways to develop life skills from the information obtained from the activity itself, for example in book clubs and discussion groups on current issues, and from the connection with and openness to other groups of people, interaction with whom requires social skills, impulse control, and so on.
- Interact with the community and with other groups of people, to promote their perception as citizens and their insertion in the community.
- Promote activities in which they interact with other institutions and with the community, and that allow to counter the stereotypes regarding migrant childhood and adolescence, exclusion, marginalization and the sensation of disability.
- Provide activities in which human dignity is restored through knowledge (reading, music, art, culture, popular knowledge, etc.).
- Strengthen communication skills.
- Foster creativity.
- Counteract experiences of tension and loneliness, with recreation and collective construction.
- Promote joint decision-making and teamwork.

⁴⁷ Ocampo, J.A., *Equidad, desarrollo y ciudadanía* [Equity, development and citizenship]. Chile: ECLAC, 2000, pg. 51.

⁴⁸ Ochoa León, S.M., "Construcción de ciudadanía y derechos sociales [Constructing citizenship and social rights]". Working document N° 38, April 2008, Mexico: Centro de Estudios Sociales y Opinión Pública.

⁴⁹ Bojórquez, N. *Ciudadanía* [Citizenship], in www.uam.mx/cdi/derinfancia/5nelia.pdf accessed on October 28, 2013.

a

Activities related to reading

a1

Workshops or book clubs in non-traditional spaces

Children and adolescents can organize reading workshops in non-traditional spaces (old people's institutions, hospitals, parks, etc.). In the case of indigenous children and adolescents who speak different languages, readings in the indigenous language, or in another language, if applicable, may be included. Individuals from those institutions can participate as listeners or be active in the development of workshops or clubs.

- Work teams are formed with the children and adolescents who want to participate.
- The team of participants is required to distribute roles:
 - Children and adolescents (or assistance centre staff members) who wish to read aloud can participate as readers in the project.



- Other children and adolescents can lead the logistics to find which institutions in the community to approach and propose reading workshops, as well as manage permits and calendars.
- Children and adolescents who want to participate in the selection of books for the book club.
- Children and adolescents who want to participate as listeners in the reading workshops.
- The reading workshops can be offered in various ways, for example, children and adolescents from the assistance centre go to the institutions to read previously selected books aloud, or members of the institutions can participate actively in the selection of books, read them for themselves and then arrange meetings to discuss the books.
- Team members and clubs can dedicate a number of meetings to choosing a name and a logo representative of the group.



Composing a **collective construction** book

- The children and adolescents at the assistance centre can organize campaigns to request donations of books they have researched, and whose content they would like to share with other groups. Also, they can set up a library for the centre or institution participating in the workshop or club.
- The children and adolescents that make up the group can choose adults (whether well-known in the community or not, such as journalists, teachers, radio announcers, etc.), and invite them to read at the workshop or club.
- Children and adolescents can write stories, poems, stories, acrostics, childhood memories, reflections, artwork produced in the permanent art workshop, drawings or stories, and make a book that they then will share with children in other institutions.
- The creation of a book represents a strategy in which the output itself reflects and transmits the achievements and then serves as a concrete element to show the children and adolescents their resources.
- When the activity of composing a book is developed, it is possible to suggest to the group that they look for a bookbinding workshop or someone who can teach them how to do it. The idea of binding the book is linked to the idea of preserving the work of the group in the best way and for as long as possible, to reinforce its value.
- As each activity of the permanent art workshop ends with the creation of concrete products, these can support the publication.
- It is possible to achieve objectives linked to the resilience, group cohesion and self-esteem of the children and adolescents embodied in specific products.

- The staff members who are in contact with the children, as guarantors of resilience, can also convey important messages in a project like this. For example, by writing an introduction or a dedication for the book, which would include:

- The value and potential that was observed in each child or adolescent participating in the project, as well as in those who inspired the stories depicted there (whether or not they participated directly in the drafting of the book).
- Adjectives that highlight virtues and achievements (for example, “this exceptional group”, expression of pride in the work, highlight the importance of working together and of a job well done, etc.).



Travelling suitcases or backpacks

- The suitcase or backpack will contain books, magazines, videos and other material selected by the children and adolescents, in order to share something they like with other children or adult members of other institutions.
- The idea is that the “travelling” suitcase stays for a time, as a loan, at the chosen institution to share its content, and later retrieve it along with the experience or messages of that institution after they have made use of it.
- Agreements are concluded to designate a child or adolescent (or group) of the assistance centre responsible for taking care of the travelling suitcase or backpack, and a child or adolescent or a member group of the other institution, with the same responsibilities.

- Both children and adolescents and institutions’ groups must coordinate to deliver and return the travelling suitcase or backpack.

- The suitcase or backpack is lent to an institution with which the service is agreed for a specific period of time.

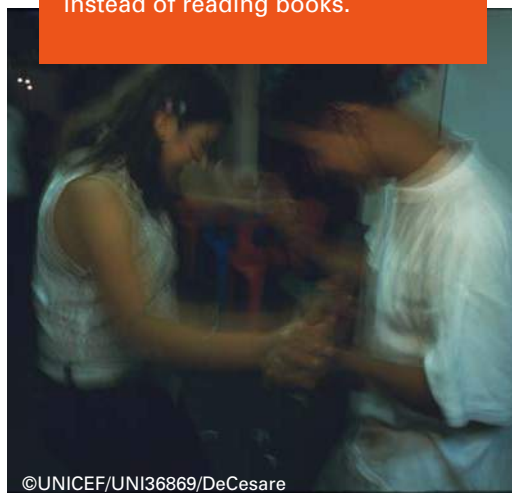
- Once the cycle is completed, the suitcase or backpack is handed over to another group (within the same institution, or in another one).

- The group returning the suitcase must leave in it a message or feedback letter to the group that created and lent it, indicating their impressions of the materials, which they liked best and which the least, what they would add to the suitcase or backpack, etc.

- The specific strategies of the suitcases are complemented by book clubs (a group of people who read the same book at the same time and meet to discuss it).



Note: the proposed activities with books can be carried out using the same general methodology, but as a video library, projecting films instead of reading books.



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b

Puppetry

- The children and adolescents can organize groups among those who enjoy writing scripts and set up stages to present a puppet show.
- Roles will be distributed to determine who will find out which institutions within the community could benefit from this artistic performance (possibly the most appropriate audience will be children and adolescents in hospitals or other institutions, or special events in schools, etc.).

Those participating in the activity will craft the puppets, according to the characters required for the public presentation.

c

Collective music

- Music-loving children and adolescents can integrate groups in which each member proposes a musical genre, and each person selects songs that they like about that genre.
- It can be proposed that typical songs from the children's and adolescents' place of origin be selected.
- It can be suggested that the music selection be shared with the rest of the institution during meetings or parties, and CDs will be distributed among children and adolescents who are in other assistance centres, hospitals, etc.

- If any child or adolescent or assistance centre staff member knows how to play an instrument or sing, compose songs, they could be performed and recorded in the album.

- Workshops on rap, hip hop or other musical genres with social content could be considered to express the experiences of migrants and refugees.⁵⁰

- Names can be proposed for the albums or CD's, with themes related to history, origin, etc. For example, "the music of my life", in which they select songs that they have liked throughout their life, or that remind them of some enjoyable moment, or "the music of my country" selecting typical or folk songs from their places of origin.

- Children and adolescents from other institutions are also encouraged to send CD's with their own selections.

- These activities can be complemented with discussion groups about song lyrics.

- If any of the songs selected by the children and adolescents contain indigenous language, a discussion meeting around its translation into Spanish will be an excellent opportunity to assess their roots.

⁵⁰ There are applications that facilitate making *rap* music in an easy and fun way, where you can write lyrics and add sound.

d

Let's finish the story

- A group of children or adolescents from the assistance centre write a story but leave it without an ending. It is printed and shared among children and adolescents at other institutions (school, hospital, other assistance centres, health centres, etc.) with the title "Wanted..."
- The distribution of the story without end includes the instruction and indication that the response is to be sent back to the assistance centre.
- As an alternative to printing and distributing, it can be sent by email (indicating immediately below the email to reply to) if applicable, or even publish it on Facebook or any other social network supervised by centre staff.

e

Radio workshop

- If the community has access to a radio station, provide a space for a group of children and adolescents, guided by a member of the assistance centre, to hold debates on current issues, from their own points of view.
- If it is not possible to design and maintain an exclusive space, encourage an announcer who has a current affairs programme to invite, at specific intervals, children and adolescents from the assistance centre.
- Lists of current topics to be discussed will be prepared as a team.

f

Socio-educational and cultural visits

- With a predefined frequency, a group of children from the social assistance centre will be in charge of reviewing newspapers, searching the Internet (when applicable) or going to community culture centres to find out about the cultural activities offered.
- Activities taking place in the community may include:
 - book fairs
 - local parties
 - religious activities children and adolescents may want to attend, workshops of various kinds, art exhibitions, exhibitions of local crafts, screenings at the cinema
 - theatre plays
 - concerts
 - sports activities, and so on.
- The group in charge of obtaining the information on activities will present the available options at a collective event at the assistance centre (for example, during lunch, dinner or leisure and recreation time).
- Lists will be posted in visible places showing the different activities for the week so that the children and adolescents can sign up for the one they want to attend.
- Once the lists are finalized, and with the support of the institution's staff members, logistics for departure will be organized (transport, transportation costs, entry costs, etc.).

Exhibitions

- Staff members of the assistance centre will assess in advance if the activities included in the lists are feasible (based on cost, times, schedules, etc.). If an activity is not accessible to the resources of the institution, the reason for deciding not to include it as an option will be explained to the child or adolescent.
- It will never be the case that some children are allowed to attend an event while others are not, due to budgetary reasons.

- Periodic events in which the adolescents exhibit their products at the permanent art workshop and other workshops in which they have decided to participate, according to their aspirations and occupational skills.

- The event is open to the community. The adolescents choose special guests (community members, teachers, guides from the workshops in which they have participated, neighbours, schoolmates, etc.).

- The child or adolescent is encouraged to participate actively, as meritorious and successful protagonists, in the presentation of the products created in art, literature and other workshops.

- Brief workshops for girls and boys are proposed to the community, in which the children and adolescents of the assistance centre will act as guides or coordinators. The workshop themes could be those proposed in this Handbook, but in this case, the children and adolescents will be the directors of the activity, under adult supervision in case any difficulties arise in the handling of the group.



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**Closing
activity when
a child or
adolescent
leaves the
shelter**

Before any migrant child or adolescent leaves the social assistance centre, it is necessary to carry out a closing activity. Psychologically, closures are rituals that allow people to capitalize on all their experiences and lessons learned.

All children and adolescents will have stayed at the shelter and interacted with its members for a considerable amount of time, that will never be without meaning or insignificant in their history, or in the history of the staff members working at the shelter. It is not possible to think, then, that they would simply leave the institution as if nothing had happened. Closure is a critical activity.

It is possible to think of the assistance centre as a social fabric of transitional belonging for the children and adolescents. In the shelter, they have been allowed to review and talk about the wounds and pains in their history. They have been helped to recognize the resources and skills they possess. They have been offered interaction with adults and with peers in a climate of respect and clarity of rules.⁵¹ They have been able to use and develop their own skills and resources. All this will give them the opportunity to give back meaning to their history, their reality and their project in the future.

The activity will allow them to recount and recover their past experiences so that they are aware of their resilient qualities and the skills and tools they have acquired with each stone or obstacle that crossed the path.



The backpack for the journey

Goals:

- Recognize the importance of their stay in the social assistance centre and their participation in the dynamics and groups.
- Reinforce the resources that they realized they possess.⁵²
- Ensure that they leave “their mark” on the institution.
- Symbolically open the next stage of their life, with tools to face it.
- Normalize emerging emotions due to departure.
- Achieve interactions in which they use and detect their own competencies and aptitudes, and from there, help them to reconstruct the perception of their self-worth.

⁵¹ One of the objectives of promoting resilience in migrant children and adolescents proposed in the document *Migración resiliente* [Resilient migration] is the notion and experiences expressed by the phrase “I have external support”, which comes from the support provided by one or more people in your environment who you can trust, who respect you, set boundaries for you, give you precise and concrete information about what is allowed and what is forbidden, model your behaviour and ways of proceeding, promote your independence, and so on. All these tasks have been included in the activities suggested in this Handbook, and they will be “revived” to be updated when the migrant girl says goodbye to the assistance centre.

⁵² Just like the skill mentioned on the previous page, one of the ideas that need to be provided to migrant children and adolescents to foster resilience processes is the experience of “I can”, that is, memories and objectives achieved through acquiring personal, interpersonal and conflict resolution skills. All of these will be symbolized both in the work that is carried in the bookbinding and in the letters received from peers and staff members of the social assistance centre.

Conduct of the session

For this session, the workshop space is prepared as a gallery. The work tables are set in such a way as to leave room to walk between them. All of the children's and adolescents' artwork will be placed next to each other, as pieces of the exhibition. Each path of life (and their respective transparent sheets) will be placed in the entire space or gallery.

The artwork of a child or adolescent who is about to begin a new stage away from the social assistance centre will be positioned centrally, to appear "important" and noticeable. It is essential to display the works related to the activity called "My way of life".

Materials:

- Scraps of fabric.
- Stitching needles.
- Ribbons, threads of various colours.
- Boxes of different sizes (not too large) to build a backpack for the trip.
- White glue.
- Adhesive tapes.
- Paint.
- Scissors.
- Objects of different shapes and sizes, such as coloured beads, buttons, pompoms, coloured stones, natural stones, and so on.



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Individual activity

1. Ask the children and adolescents to consider the gallery in silence, review all their classmate's path and reflect on their own once more.

2. Then ask them to take their seats.

3. Tell them that there are situations in life that are BEYOND our control.

4. You can start a brainstorming session and write down the ideas on a flipchart to further explain them, for example: the environment in which we were born, the people in our family, their life circumstances, poverty, the resources in their neighbourhood or community that allow the children and adolescents to receive the same opportunities, to grow up healthy, to not lack anything, etc. Then, talk about other situations that we have the responsibility to change, even with minimal participation, and about others that only change as time goes by or due to circumstances. The important thing is that they understand what internally learned resources could be put to work to face the adversities they will continue to face in their path.

5. Hand them a sheet of paper and a pencil or pen with which they will list the tools that, from the reflection and the previous exercise, they have discovered they have: those they have had since childhood and those they have learned throughout their life and that have helped them, along their journey, to overcome the obstacles.

a. "If you found yourself in a difficult situation, how did it turn out?"

b. "Is there anything you have done that would help you snap out of it?"



Group activity

(focused on the child or adolescent who is leaving)

- 1.** Ask everyone to reflect on the life path of the child or adolescent who is about to start a new stage, away from the social assistance centre.
- 2.** The task will be to find, in the life path of that child or adolescent, specific things that seem very important to them, what she or he knew how to do, what they think she or he did well, what they liked about how she or he resolved a situation, what they think is relevant, what they believe was very brave, what she or he knew how to do, etc.
- 3.** The instruction focuses on looking for positive aspects in the life path and resources of the child or adolescent, and in the time they had to know her or him in person. What are the resources, abilities and positive characteristics that her or his classmates observed?
- 4.** After that, each one will write a letter or draw a picture for the child or adolescent who is departing, expressing all those things they observed.
- 5.** The child or adolescent who is leaving will also write a letter or make a drawing that will remain at the social assistance centre. At the end of the activity, she or he will be asked to incorporate the letter or drawing in the group mural.
- 6.** After they finish the letters, ask them to choose the materials with which they can make some type of backpack, haversack, suitcase, etc., crafted by all the children and adolescents in the social assistance centre and given to the child or adolescent who is leaving, placing inside it the letters that her or his classmates wrote. They can also include some object that represents one of her or his qualities, for example, "this purple stone represents your strength", etc.
- 7.** Once the backpack is ready, make sure that the letters are read to the child or adolescent who is leaving. Make sure that all the tools or qualities (cognitive, emotional, social, physical, etc.) that the child or adolescent showed during her or his stay in the social assistance centre, in the history path activity, are included in the letters.

8. You may consider the following guidelines to take into account different skills or personal tools of the migrant child or adolescent:

- Is able to talk about scary or disturbing things.
- Is able to find a way to solve problems.
- Is able to control her or himself when she or he feels like doing something dangerous.
- Is able to choose the appropriate time to talk to someone.
- Is able to choose the appropriate time to act.
- Is able to find help when needed.
- Is capable of generating new ideas or new ways of doing things.
- Is able to carry out a task until it is completed.
- Is able to find humour in life and use it to reduce tensions.
- Is able to express thoughts and feelings to others.
- Is able to listen to other people when they are sad.
- Is able to offer help to others who need it.
- Any other characteristic that is observed in the migrant child or adolescent: cheerful, patient, relaxed, calm, active, full of energy, affectionate, supportive, etc.

9. The staff members of the assistance centre (especially the activity facilitators) will also include letters addressed to the child or adolescent where her or his qualities and skills are listed.

10. A child or adolescent who cannot or does not want to write a letter or draw a picture can craft an object that represents a quality of the child or adolescent that is leaving (symbolized by an object made with pieces of cloth, paper, yarn, ribbon, etc.). At the time the letters are read, each will explain what is symbolized by the object that is presented to the child or adolescent who is leaving.

11. Make sure to normalize emotions, for the child or adolescent who is leaving, and for those who stay. It is expected that she or he may feel tired, irritable, moody, sad, wanting to cry, with a feeling of emptiness. It's okay for emotions to come out; it means their heart is healthy and can feel many things.

12. At the end of the activity, they will put the cards, drawings and objects inside the backpack. This serves as a metaphor for what they have within themselves, what they carry with them on the road, for every step they will take from the moment they leave the assistance centre.

13. Also included is the bound folder containing the works created by the child or adolescent throughout her or his stay at the assistance centre. If so wished, they can add a new page with thoughts or good wishes, or simply write their names.

14. If possible, a photo of the group can be included in the folder, with the signatures or names of their classmates and staff members on the back.

15. Finally, ask the departing child or adolescent, with a pair of scissors, as a ritual, to cut out a piece of one of her or his significant or important works, and affix it on the group mural as a personal symbol of her or his passage through the shelter, as "gift" to the group.



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16. After the activity, arrange a gathering to celebrate with joy the child or adolescent who is leaving. Show a movie that she or he may like or carry out an activity that she or he especially enjoys, with the music of her or his choice and, if possible, her or his favourite food.



**Theoretical
file cards**
with central
concepts

For didactic and practical reasons, it was decided not to include in the handbook the activities sustaining the theoretical framework. The detailed development of the supporting theory and experiences would result in too large a document, unhelpful as a guide.

However, it was deemed important to include a brief mention of the theoretical axes and central concepts, to provide the user with additional information on particular topics for further investigation.

Thus, at the end of this document, a series of technical file cards are included, containing summary information on the theoretical support and central concepts used for the selection and design of activities



Theoretical file card # 1

Resilience

According to Barba, resilience is “the capacity of the individual to successfully face adversity and the flexible strength that allows one to resist and reconstruct oneself after having experienced an adverse condition.”⁵³

People achieve this, in large part, by attributing new significances to lived experiences, making these experiences more bearable and, sometimes, even assigning them a completely different sense of strength and humanity. From this point of view, the stay of a child or adolescent in a social assistance centre can (and should) be considered as an experience that promotes the inception of the resilience process.

It is then possible to select and design activities, to be carried out at the centres that provide shelter for migrant and refugee children and adolescents, through which it is possible to promote...

*... social and intrapsychic processes that allow successfully confronting adversity, (...) a process that characterizes a complex social system at a given moment and that implies a successful interaction between the child or adolescent and her or his environment... scenario of resilience promotion [that] can foster and provide (or not) the deployment of protective [personal] factors [she or he might possess].*⁵⁴

According to Vanistendael,⁵⁵ activities have been designed considering the following alternatives (proposed by the author) for promoting resilience:

⁵³ In Guzmán-Carrillo, K., et al. “Recursos psicológicos y percepción de la migración en menores con familiares migrantes [Psychological resources and perception of migration in minors with migrant family members]”, *Revista Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales, Niñez y Juventud* [Latin American Journal of Social Sciences, Children and Youth], 13 (2), 2015, pg. 704.

⁵⁴ Gianino Gadea, L., “La resiliencia en niños institucionalizados y no institucionalizados [Resilience in institutionalized and non-institutionalized children]”, *Revista de Psicología de la UNIFE*, Lima, Av. Psicol. 20 (2), August-December, 2012 pg. 80

⁵⁵ Vanistendael, S. and J. Lecomte, *La felicidad es posible. Despertar en niños maltratados la confianza en sí mismos: construir la resiliencia* [Happiness is possible. Awakening self-confidence in abused children: building resilience], Barcelona: Gedisa Editorial, 2000, pp. 56-57.



Note: For more information on resilience processes for migrant and refugee children and adolescents, the document *Migración resiliente [Resilient Migration]* is a useful reference prepared by the “Office for Protection of Children’s Rights” for UNICEF Mexico, in 2017, and which is part of this suite of publications.

- Generate interactions in which they can identify and recover, in their history and in their present, individuals who accept them unconditionally. If none are reachable, act like an adult who expresses respect and acceptance.
- Generate interactions in which they can give a sense to their history, their reality and their life.
- Generate interactions in which they can use and detect their own competencies and aptitudes, and find help to reconstruct from this the perception of self-worth.
- Generate interactions in which they can transcend pain, bonding with other people and reconnecting with creativity and sense of humour.

**b**

Theoretical file card # 2

Resilience monitors

Resilience is an attitude and a capacity to face adversity, a potential for hope that provides resources to recover from stressful and even traumatic situations. In the case of children and adolescents, it is possible to generate resilience when their environment includes adults who offer healthy ties and possibilities for finding new meanings to their experience.⁵⁶

The activities proposed in the Handbook and their impact on the lives of migrant children and adolescents are based on this concept and on the relevant experiences of specialists.⁵⁷ Children and adolescents have the ability to overcome life's challenges and adversities due to the affective and social support of their resilience monitors. Despite having been mistreated from childhood, in family, institutional, and social contexts of poverty and violence, they can achieve adequate development and social integration.

This Handbook takes the view that social assistance centre staff, living with children and adolescents, can act as resilience monitors, appealing to their own attachment and empathy skills, so as to become role models (individuals to identify with), on the basis of the affective and instrumental support that they will bring to migrant children and adolescents.⁵⁸

Resilience monitors⁵⁹ must display an attitude of genuine interest in everything that concerns children and adolescents. Throughout the activities, for example, it is crucial that attention is given to artwork or verbalization on any topic, and to listening with an attentive and empathetic attitude.

Resilience monitors should:⁶⁰

- Decipher the emotions expressed through the images.
- Not be reactive to them.
- Accept them.
- Not make any judgments or comments regarding those images (irrespective of the emotion represented or the content of the artistic expression).
- Respect the time it takes for each child or adolescent to do a job. Do not push them if they fail to complete their work, but rather understand this as part of their mechanisms of defense and adjustment to living conditions.

⁵⁶ Barudy, *La fiesta mágica...* [The magic party]

⁵⁷ Concepto de resiliencia secundaria acuñado por Barudy [Concept of secondary resilience coined by Barudy], *Ibid.*, pg. 27.

⁵⁸ Barudy, *La fiesta mágica...* [The magic party...], pg. 25

⁵⁹ *Idem.*

⁶⁰ Marxen, E., *Diálogos entre arte y terapia* [Dialogues between art and therapy], Barcelona: Gedisa Editorial, 2011, pg. 101.

- Do not praise a work for its content or aesthetics, nor underestimate it for not meeting the desired expectations.

- Under no circumstances should you “interpret” any of their drawings or crafted items.



Theoretical file card # 3

The importance of art to initiate resilience processes

- Contemplating on paper images outside oneself provides a distance that can improve self-exploration, to better understand and assimilate emotions.

- Artwork helps to express, liberate and discharge covert anger and aggression, or, failing that, to contain the aggressiveness externalized in past, or potentially present, situations.

- Art diminishes despair and creates a communicating bridge to the outside world, reducing the feelings of loneliness and helplessness.

- Creative work connects children and adolescents with their own capacities and strengths, as well as their personal agency, that is, their creative autonomy. This can help them to stop being passive and become active individuals, and thus cultivate their resilient impulse.



Theoretical file card # 4

Social intervention through art

According to Schaverien (1997, 2000),⁶¹ the main advantage of social intervention through art is possessing a tangible object (drawing, poster, collage, painting, sculpture, craft, etc.) that provides an area of mediation and containment. This means that the object concerned may contain aspects of the children’s and adolescents’ reality that are too overwhelming to be addressed verbally.

The emotions and the contained feelings that are expressed in this safe, delimited and tangible place that the crafted object represents, can be better handled and controlled. These emotions and feelings can also be talked about (verbalized) as many times as needed until the child or adolescent assimilates what the object represents.

The object constitutes a symbolic relationship and interaction with one’s emotions, as it fulfils a mediating function. Hence, artwork acts as an indirect and symbolic language to address and contain the multiple social conflicts suffered by migrant children and adolescents.

⁶¹ Quoted in Marxen, E., *Diálogos...*, pg. 91



Theoretical file card # 5

Adolescence as an evolutionary stage

Considering the cultural diversity of children and adolescents, allows symbolically and verbally working on interchange and mutual respect for their different cultures. From the practical point of view, it is a symbolic work (indirectly representing memories, stories, adventures, getting hold of experiences and emotions) and, from an emotional point of view, a space for containment and empathic listening.⁶² Images are more universal than words, and facilitate visual connections between different cultural contexts (Evans, 1981)⁶³ as well as the discovery of common themes and human experiences (Copper, 1999).⁶⁴

The most important advantage of this approach is that it allows the expression of feelings, emotions and memories in a specific cultural manner.⁶⁵ In addition, the artwork can be used as a support upon which aspects of the multiple migratory grief are developed and integrated (as work progresses), from the elements of their past, through the elements of the often traumatic journey, and up to their current situation.

The creative process produces well-being. It improves and helps repair the quality of a person's life,⁶⁶ and promotes personal growth and self-knowledge. The result and the aesthetics of the work are NOT important; what IS important, is the process of doing something, and also the meaning assigned by each person to their work.

Florio⁶⁷ describes adolescence as “a process of transition without a fixed state, a second birth” in which some elements of psychic organization are distinguished:

- Discovery and reconstruction of the self.
 - Gradual building of a life plan.
- It is an evolutionary crisis⁶⁸ in which people question everything familiar, discard what they do not want for themselves and reconstruct their identity. This identity becomes effective with the consolidation of skills acquired during childhood and with the incorporation of new personal and social skills, to go out into the adult world.

Change and restructuring are pivotal in adolescence, which is why any action taken in this evolutionary period has a massive impact on a person's future development.

⁶² In Marxen, E., *Diálogos...*, pg. 131.

⁶³ In Marxen, E., *Ibid.*, pg. 156.

⁶⁴ *Idem.*

⁶⁵ In Marxen, E., *Ibid.*, pg. 155.

⁶⁶ Definition taken from the American Art Therapy Association, 1996. Available at <https://arttherapy.org/aa-ta-boutus/>

⁶⁷ Florio, A., *Sujetos educativos...* [Educational Subjects], pg. 89.

⁶⁸ Charlesworth, R. *Understanding Child Development*. New York: Delmar Publishers, 1983.

Adolescence is the crucial moment in which individuals must deploy skills of autonomous behaviour and mindset, and, in that sense, start the construction of their life plan.

The accumulation of situations that adolescents go through is linked, in one way or another, with the presence or absence of significant adults. For example, the outbreak of emotions from hormonal development makes them prone to risk-taking behaviours in which there would ideally be a protecting adult figure who would set appropriate limits. The difficulties in the lives of adolescents multiply exponentially if no significant adults are present to provide support and containment.⁶⁹

Adolescents need to gradually perceive their resources, aware of being contained and accompanied by significant adults, in order to dare explore the world, perceive themselves as capable of doing so and be immersed in a context that allows them to do so.⁷⁰



Theoretical file card # 6

Special adolescent vulnerability

Adolescents face the need to rebuild their identity and achieve individuation,⁷¹ but do not yet have enough resources to achieve this.⁷² This puts them in a situation of particular vulnerability. Adolescents go through a process of several years finding themselves in a paradox: they must show that they are unique and different from their significant adults, but feel fragile as their identity is not yet defined. They need adult support, but they also need to distance themselves to build their own image and life plan.

In addition to the rebelliousness needed to build one's identity, and the paradox that this implies with respect to adults, strong emotions and uncontrolled impulses caused by hormonal change come into play. Physical development subjects adolescents to sudden outbursts of emotion (love, hatred, fear, doubt), emotional lability, extreme emotions, difficulties in achieving self-control, difficulties in thinking and planning objectively,⁷³ and so on.



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⁶⁹ Bowlby, J., *Attachment and Loss*, 2nd edition, New York: Basic Books, 1982.

⁷⁰ Craig, G., *Desarrollo psicológico* [Psychological development], 8^{ta} edición. Mexico: Pearson Education, 2009, pp. 6-7.

⁷¹ Understood as being able to conceive oneself as an individual, with specific characteristics and resources, personal and at the same time different from those of others, including their significant figures.

⁷² Papalia, D. et al., *Desarrollo humano* [Human development]. Mexico: McGraw Hill/Interamericana Editores, 2010.

⁷³ Kohlberg, L., *Child Psychology and Childhood Education. A Cognitive-Developmental View*. Harvard University: Longman, 1987.



Due to their significant predominance, emotions end up defeating reason. The intelligence and cognitive skills acquired at this stage of development must be stabilized before they can be used objectively and systematically⁷⁴ and this is effectively achieved once the crisis and personal restructuring of adolescence have passed, provided that the living conditions have been and still are adequate. Various studies conclude that the majority of people do not achieve deductive hypothetical thinking⁷⁵ until the age of 23 and a large percentage of the population never achieves it, depending on their conditions of nutrition, stimulation, learning, etc. Other research works⁷⁶ bluntly state:

The area that helps make sound decisions is not fully operational until after 21-22 years of age when the neural network is complete and relatively settled... Until that age, the human being is not fully capable of controlling her or his impulses, directing her or his behaviour towards goals and objectives, weighing risks and benefits, making evaluative judgments, maintaining a personal moral or ethical stance, and so on.

Theoretical file card # 7

The adolescent omnipotence and challenge

The sensation of internal fragility during adolescence is confronted with specific psychological mechanisms associated with omnipotence. They display power, but their subjective experience is one of confusion and fear.⁷⁷ If only the visible behaviour of the adolescent is considered, they seem sturdy and determined, and rarely admitting being afraid. On the contrary, they act defiantly.

This type of behaviour is understandable, given the situation faced by adolescents and the psychological mechanisms that it triggers. At the same time, their omnipotent and defiant attitude weakens access to different life skills, which are essential for healthy development, along with access to protection, when those who interact with them do not understand these mechanisms. For example, their attitude interferes with interpersonal relationships, constructive solution of problems and conflicts, tension and stress management, and requests for help when offered by different institutions (help they manifestly refuse, not to be seen as fragile).

⁷⁴ Terry, H., "The Surly Years: brain development in adolescence...", *Talking Incoherently, Dawn Patrol Child & Youth Services Journal*, 4 (1), 2005, in <www.dawnpatrol.on.ca/LinkCljck.aspx?fjletjckct=7wYAR63CHas%3D&tabjd=283&-mid=756>, accessed November 2, 2013.

⁷⁵ The last stage of thought development is the stage of "formal operations", attained during adolescence when lived under ideal conditions. Under ideal situations, the adolescent can handle abstract concepts independently of his immediate concrete environment and simultaneously consider multiple aspects or properties of a problem (Piaget, J., *Seis estudios de psicología* [Six studies of psychology], Barcelona: Seix Barral, 1967).

⁷⁶ McCain, M. et al. *The Early Years Study Three Years Later*. Toronto: The Canadian Institute for Advanced Research to the Ontario Government, 2002.

⁷⁷ Esquivel, Fayne et al. *Psicodiagnóstico del niño* [Psychodiagnosis of the child]. Mexico: El Manual Moderno, 2007.

Even when the adolescent's attitude is provocative or full of self-confidence, it is important to remember that these behaviours are psychological defense mechanisms against the vulnerability experienced throughout this evolutionary crisis. At the same time, these are mechanisms for taking the initial steps towards adult autonomy.

Given the omnipotence of adolescent behaviour, social assistance centres must have clearly defined rules (and consequences for breaking them), explained at admission time, and enforced by consistent figures of authority (who do as they say). The adolescent must make decisions with explicit knowledge of the rules: accept them or challenge them and face the consequences.

Similarly, adequate work to counteract omnipotence is not linked to actions directly addressing the adolescent's defiance and aggressiveness (this is addressed through the rules applied by the assistance centre), but rather to the guidance in the acceptance of anxiety and the feelings of vulnerability. As the adolescent feels less fragile, helpless and distressed, the need for defense mechanisms to "look tough" will be less frequent. All the activities in the Handbook are aimed at facilitating the development of specific skills and, in that sense, they address the root of aggressive, reactive and defiant attitudes in children and adolescents.



Theoretical file card # 8

The importance of the peer group

As they go through the process of rebuilding their identity, adolescents tend to be especially concerned about how they look in the eyes of other people. In general, they compare what they think others see, with how they feel about themselves. In the comparative perspective of adults, adolescents often feel anxious and helpless, as they go through the situation of vulnerability that characterizes this stage of development.

The adult figure triggers actions linked to differentiation and defiance, which constitute an inescapable generation gap. Thus the peer group emerges as a support context par excellence,⁷⁸ where they can measure, compare and construct themselves along with their peers. At this stage, the feelings of equality, mutual construction, support and understanding come primarily from the group. Belonging to a peer group becomes vital.



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⁷⁸ According to Erick Erikson, adolescents try to establish a subculture in order to build their own identity (Erikson, E., *Infancia y sociedad* [Children and Society] Buenos Aires: Horme, 1983).

In this light, by promoting activities linked to art, culture and construction of citizenship, specific interchange, communication and cooperation actions between peers are proposed. In a dual sense, this is fundamental because:

- Peers constitute the context with which adolescents identify and reconstruct their “self”. It is in that context that they rehearse and measure their abilities to communicate, understand and relate to others.
- Peer pressure and opinions can be stronger than those exercised by the family, teachers or other significant adults. The peer group is also where they will learn (or not) to make decisions, develop skills to solve problems or conflicts, either in a peaceful way or, on the contrary, in a violent or inhibited way.



Theoretical file card # 9

Context of provenance for migrant and refugee children and adolescents

In 2016, 94.6% of migrant children who entered Mexico came from the countries of the Northern Triangle of Central America (NTCA).⁷⁹ El Salvador, Honduras⁸⁰ and Guatemala. In the light of this fact, it will be important for the assistance centre staff to know various aspects of the situation that the children and adolescents, with whom they will interact, may have lived and confronted.

Indigenous girls and adolescents suffer discrimination and social exclusion on a regular basis. The profoundly entrenched phenomena of discrimination against women and inequality in gender relations lead to fewer opportunities for education and employment for Guatemalan girls and women. Factors such as poverty, inequality and discrimination combine to force them to leave their countries. Many temporarily migrate to southern Mexico to work. A large number of them are detained at migrant stations by Mexican immigration authorities in Chiapas and Tabasco.



⁷⁹ Migration Policy Unit, Segob, based on the Migration Statistics Monthly Bulletin 2012-2016.

⁸⁰ Honduras has the second highest number of violent deaths in the world, only behind Syria. The Honduran city of San Pedro Sula has the highest homicide rate in the world.



Theoretical file card # 10 Dynamics of gang recruitment

Children and adolescents also migrate due to violence.⁸¹ Girls and adolescents find themselves in a context of high vulnerability to sexual and gender-based violence. Children and adolescents are exposed to gang enrolment or to suffer various forms of physical violence.⁸² This unrelenting situation forces children to abandon their roots, their customs, their belongings and their loved ones.

However, the journey exposes them to equally adverse conditions. The invisibility needed to avoid being stopped by immigration authorities makes them easy prey for organized crime, trafficking and human trafficking, extortion by other migrants or corrupt authorities, kidnappings, assaults, and other dangers that irremediably undermine their dreams and hopes.

Violence associated with gangs and organized crime has also increased and disproportionately affects young people. Children and adolescents flee to escape violence at home or from coercion to join violent groups.

Migration and the detention process, introduced in their identity and history as a stigmatizing label, aggravates their feelings of inadequacy and lack of resources and tools for life.

According to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights:

Numerous children and adolescents suffer situations of violence, abuse and neglect in their homes, communities and schools, by adults, their peers and even the police. The quality of education is poor, and many obstacles impede access to secondary education, job opportunities and decent employment...

In areas where criminal organizations and gangs operate, children are often pressured, threatened or tricked into collaborating. Other adolescents approach these groups in search of the opportunities, recognition, protection and sense of belonging that they otherwise cannot obtain. Once inside these structures, they are used by adults for a wide range of activities, ranging from surveillance, transfer and sale of drugs, robberies, extortions, up to kidnappings and other violent activities serving criminal groups' interests...

⁸¹ According to the University of Lanus "In 2010, 49.4% of homicides in Guatemala occurred in the five provinces with the highest levels of migration (Guatemala, San Marcos, Huehuetenango, Quetzaltenango and Jutiapa).

Guatemalan children, especially girls, suffer high levels of violence within the family, including incest. Between 2003 and 2012, intra-family violence increased by more than 50%, the majority of the victims being girls and women. Sexual abuse by family members is common but usually goes unreported, as children and adolescents are afraid and ashamed, and also do not trust the authorities to protect them" (Azaola, E., *Diagnóstico de las y los adolescentes que cometen delitos graves en México* [Diagnosis of adolescents who commit serious crimes in Mexico]. Mexico: UNICEF, 2015).

⁸² "Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, "Informe sobre la situación de derechos humanos en Honduras" [Report on the human rights situation in Honduras] 2015a, pg. 52.



Theoretical file card # 11 Gangs as the “only” way of life

Dependence on drugs is one of the strategies drug traffickers use to attract new children and adolescents... The structures of these criminal organizations are hierarchical, with stringent rules of discipline, entailing violence in case of non-compliance with internal directives or orders from their superiors, even resorting to extreme actions such as “executions”. Leaving these organizations may involve risking one’s life and personal integrity...

... While boys are frequently used for activities related to trafficking and sale of drugs, robberies, extortion and violent actions, girls are generally victims of sexual and gender-based violence. Many are forced to maintain relations with members of criminal groups, are sexually abused and treated and exploited for sexual purposes.⁸³

The Commission considers that the pattern and context for recruiting of children and adolescents in criminal structures, and the characteristics of this connection to the criminal group, can be considered as situations of abuse and exploitation.⁸⁴

The power held by gangs and the successive forms of violation of human rights and victimization, to which children and adolescents are exposed in environments with high rates of violence and precarious living conditions, are based on the following realities of the context where they live:

- They suffer abuse or violence within their family, at school or in their community, from adults or their peers.
- Lack of adequate care in their family and lack of support from State institutions.
- They do not benefit from the right to an education of quality, in a protective environment where they can develop their full potential; some even abandon their studies altogether.
- They suffer stigmatization or other forms of discrimination on the basis of their socioeconomic status, origin or sexual preference.



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⁸³ Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and Organization of American States, *Violencia, niñez y crimen organizado*, [Violence, children and organized crime], 2015b, pp. 12-13.

⁸⁴ Inter-American Commission..., *Ibid.*, pg.13.



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- They lack real opportunities to develop their life plan due to structural situations of social expulsion. This often pushes them towards criminal groups, as their most accessible and viable option.
- They suffer pressure, abuse, violence or exploitation from criminal groups that use and exploit children to carry out their criminal activities.
- They face violence, abuse and violations of their rights by police or corrupt authorities.⁸⁵

The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights states the following:

Gangs... use in their favour adolescents' need for socialization spaces, in environments lacking constructive options. Gangs offer adolescents a sense of identity, belonging and social recognition in contexts of exclusion and limited opportunities to participate in public life and in matters of interest... The motivation for adolescents to join a gang may be related to these factors, but their incorporation may also be due to threats and pressure by gang members themselves, or as a protective mechanism in very violent contexts.⁸⁶

A report made in Honduras by the National Programme for Prevention, Rehabilitation and Social Reintegration⁸⁷ underlines the opinions expressed directly by members and former members of gangs: Children and adolescents are attracted to gangs in search of power, sense of identity, close bonds of group solidarity and feelings, social recognition, respect, admiration, access to goods and money.

⁸⁵ Inter-American Commission., Ibid., pg. 38.

⁸⁶ Inter-American Commission..., Ibid., pp. 39-40.

⁸⁷ Inter-American Commission., Ibid., pp. 77-78.



Theoretical file card # 12

Myths and facts about adolescents and violence

According to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights,⁸⁸ there is a widely shared social perception that adolescents are the leading cause of insecurity and violence. In particular, young males from traditionally excluded poverty-ridden social sectors are generally perceived as a “social danger” and held responsible for insecurity and crime.

However, this perception does not correspond to reality; statistics on detainees show that the number of adults guilty of violent crimes far exceeds the number of adolescents. According to findings from the Honduran police, one of the countries with the highest homicide rates in the world and where the “mara” gangs are present, “less than 5% of homicides are committed by individuals under 18 years of age”.⁸⁹

If risk factors are related to feelings of alienation, a sense of exclusion among certain groups, etc., we can see how myths about the motivation to join and belong to a gang can be explained. They do not join and stay in a gang because they “want to”, but because they do not fully perceive the risks involved (as mentioned above, critical judgment has not yet been developed) and do not find a better alternative in their environment. In many cases (threats and pressures), they have no other alternative; they do it to survive.

Countering isolation, low self-esteem, hopelessness, etc., are appropriate actions to foster resilience in migrants and refugee children who have been in contact with gangs (even, and especially, if they have been a member). This implies promoting spaces of integration, construction of positive identities, participation, empowerment and dialogue, as well as spaces and activities for the positive use of free time, leisure, culture and recreation.

This contributes to creating a sense of belonging, of inclusion, of citizenship and helps to overcome the divisions and tensions based on social class, ethnicity and gender, among others.⁹⁰

It is essential that links be fostered in which they are given recognition (sorely needed during adolescence to rebuild oneself as a valuable individual, endowed with resources, hope and possibilities to build a future project).

⁸⁸ Inter-American Commission, *Ibid.*, pg. 40

⁸⁹ *Idem.*

⁹⁰ Inter-American Commission, *Ibid.*, pg. 99.



Theoretical file card # 13

Replicating the violence experienced

In general terms, organized crime has found a fertile ground to exercise control at each regional level in the Northern Triangle of Central America (NTCA) through agreements with gangs. Most of the territories are controlled by gangs at local, community and institutional level, with the aim of mobilizing drugs, weapons, contraband merchandise, and human trafficking.⁹¹ The rampant poverty, inequality and social marginalization accentuate the impact of violence in all spheres of life of individuals and their families. Under these conditions, the social fabric is weakened and broken, and neighbourhoods or communities cease to be a space of protection for children and adolescents. Moreover, children and adolescents are most often exposed to numerous instances of violence (discrimination, harassment, threats, sexual, emotional and physical violence, gender violence, etc.) through critical stages of their development.

Experts specializing in adolescents who have committed actions against the law have found that these behaviours are linked to compulsion and repeated instances of abuse and violence.⁹² In psychology, compulsion is understood as repetitive acts, not processed by the psyche, generally experienced as “something that one cannot stop doing” voluntarily. When a person has experienced a traumatic, violent situation, its impact on the psychological reality remains “in force” but is not consciously assimilated. In an effort to process it, the act is repeated again and again, through impulsive unreasoned behaviour.

According to specialists, not every mistreated person will react violently, as indicated by prospective studies. However, it has been established that most individuals involved in violent crimes have suffered significant violent situations in their childhood. Similarly, retrospective studies indicate an active link between physical abuse endured during childhood and aggressive adolescent behaviour.⁹³ According to Barbich and Molina,⁹⁴ “... these children pin on others what they endured at an early age”. Adolescents who have few experiences of love and commitment manifest a high momentum for aggression and desire for submission and domination by third parties.

⁹¹ ACNUR, *Arrancados de raíz* [Uprooted], in <www.acnur.org/don-de-trabaja/america/mexico/arrancados-de-raiz/> pg. 28.

⁹² Barbich, A. and M.L. Molina. *Atrapados.. Adolescentes implicados en ofensas sexuales* [Caught: Adolescents involved in sexual offenses], Buenos Aires: Editorial Dunken, 2009.

⁹³ Barbich y Molina, *Ibid.*, pg. 27.

⁹⁴ Barbich y Molina, *Ibid.*, pg. 30.



Theoretical file card # 14

Skills for life

The feeling of competence in young people is annulled if they lack the foundations of self-confidence to deploy their potential. They can only perceive the world as a dangerous and insecure place, in which their only option is to defend themselves in order to survive (“he who hits first, hits twice”).

The learned hopelessness (lack of meaning and conviction that “nothing is going to change”) restricts their capacity for future projection and vital sense. They distrust their environment and thus harden their capacity of expressing themselves.⁹⁵ Violent interaction is the only alternative they know.

Children and adolescents who are victims of abuse are more likely to be hypersensitive to signs of hostility from their environment, to not perceive social information devoid of hostility and to attribute hostile intentions to others, to a greater extent than other children and adolescents.⁹⁶

The World Health Organization suggests that: “a life abilities approach develops skills that enable adolescents to acquire the competencies necessary for human development and to face the challenges of daily life effectively.”⁹⁷

Abilities (unlike attitudes or competences) are specific skills aimed at undertaking a task, which are accompanied by knowledge, attitudes and values. The objective is not the effectiveness in the performance of the task, but the development of behaviours that contribute to the subject’s satisfaction.⁹⁸ By acquiring abilities, people achieve a satisfactory coexistence, with others and with themselves. The abilities for life proposed by the World Health Organization (WHO) are as follows:

Self-knowledge: The process of organizing and making sense of an experience. It involves knowing and making contact with all aspects that make up the self: what is told, what is wanted in life, and how to face adversity.

⁹⁵ Barbich, A. and M.L. Molina. *Atrapados*

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, pg. 31.

⁹⁷ Mangrulkar, L. et al. *Enfoque de habilidades para la vida para un desarrollo saludable de niños y adolescentes* [Approach to life skills for the healthy development of children and adolescents]. Pan American Health Organization. Swedish International Cooperation Agency. W.K. Kellogg Foundation. 2001, at: <www1.paho.org/Spanish/HPP/HPF/ADOL/Habilidades.pdf>, pg. 5.

⁹⁸ UNICEF. *Una mirada a la infancia y la adolescencia en México* [A look at childhood and adolescence in Mexico]. Educación, Redes y Rehiletes. A.C. Proyecto “Somos comunidad educativa: hagamos equipo [We are an educational community: let’s team up]”, 2013, pg. 281, en: <www.unicef.org/mexico/spanish/mx_4topremioUNICEF-WEBV2.pdf>.

Empathy: It is the ability to share an emotional response with another person. It favours supportive behaviour and understanding the reactions and opinions of others. It fosters tolerance.

Assertive communication: Express and assert personal opinions, rights, feelings and needs, while respecting those of other people.

Interpersonal relationships: Learning skills to relate in a positive manner with the people with whom they interact in different contexts. Expressing feelings, attitudes, desires, opinions or rights in a way that is appropriate to the situation.

Problem and conflict management: Facing difficulties with dynamics that handle problems and conflicts in a flexible way, identifying opportunities for change and growth.⁹⁹

Creative thinking: Combining reason and emotions, intuitions or fantasies to see reality from different, concocted perspectives. Devising something new, relating to something known in an innovative way, and moving away from usual thinking or behavioural patterns.

Critical thinking: Analysing experiences and information and reaching one's own conclusions about reality. Critical thinking is vital for achieving autonomy and essential for making life choices.

Management of emotions and feelings: Involves the ability to contact our own emotional world and that of others.

Strain and stress management: Coping with tensions constructively, tolerating learning processes, celebrating achievements and results, and so on.

⁹⁹ Redondo Illescas, S. y A. Pueyo, "La psicología de la delincuencia" [The psychology of delinquency]", *El Observador, revista especializada en temas de infancia y adolescencia* [specialized journal on issues of childhood and adolescence], August 4, 2009. Chile's Government: National Service for Minors (SENAME), pg. 8.

APPENDIX

WHAT ARE THE ELEMENTS OF RAGE?



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Vicente Suárez 17
Colonia Condesa
06140 Mexico City, Mexico

© United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
Paseo de la Reforma 645
Colonia Lomas de Chapultepec
11000 Mexico City, Mexico

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