

**“Hope For Children” UNCRC Policy Center
Magic 6 Capacity Building
Report**

Contextualisation

The Magic 6 Capacity Building activities were implemented at the primary school of Agios Antonios, Limassol, Cyprus throughout November 2015. The school was selected due to the high percentage of Roma students (over 30%). A multidisciplinary team of our organisation (psychologist, sociologist, music educator) was engaged in the planning, development and implementation of activities. Additionally, specialised school staff (fluent in Gurbetche, the Turkish Cypriot dialect spoken by the children) was allocated by the school Director, both to be trained during the PAI along with the children, and to assess our team in interpreting and translating.

The sessions

The underlying theme of the training programme was ‘Human Superheroes’, with the aim of building on the notion that we all, in different ways, have super-powers and are capable of the most extraordinary deeds if committed and well-informed. The theme was our bridge to elaborate on the concept of participation and the different ways in which it can happen on our daily life.

Session 1, took place on November 2nd and was attended by 21 participants. The session’s title “Superheroes”, the main goal being the discussing about characteristics/actions/decisions taken by individuals that make a difference and improve our existence and others’ by which we also wanted to understand the areas of concern to children.

Objectives:

- Get to know each other (trainers and children).
- to introduce project and placing a question mark on the wall (draw a big question mark on the flipchart as a way to express the invitation for the full participation of the Roma Youth)
- Explain the objectives of the Magic 6 sessions in a simple manner: “To work together on a project to change, for the better, something in your lives”.
- Thinking and talking about the group’s surroundings: school, neighbourhood, street, home, playground, beach, religious institutions. “Where do I feel happy, sad, angry?”
- Consider, point out, what have we discovered today.

Tools:

The tools used in this session were icebreakers, brainstorming, Human Library, debate, mind and location mapping, debriefing, footsteps evaluation.

Children warmed-up around the theme of Superheroes. It was a successful start.

A major difficulty was the language, the trainer conducted the sessions in English, and the Session Partner would then translate into the Turkish dialect spoken by the children. Even though children attend a Greek school, their knowledge of the Greek language is poor. This had implications on time management, as activities took longer than initially estimated.

1. Ice-breaker (15')

Goal: The theme 'Super-Heroes' was the session's thread. In a playful, child appropriate manner, participants began by talking about what superheroes they liked/know and how would they describe them. A bridge was then made to talk about how normal people can also be super-heroes and make a difference in their lives as well as in the lives of others. We can all be superheroes in different ways, being aware of our own strengths and qualities. The understanding of connection between the superheroes that were perceived in the movies and the "human superheroes" (the people who overcome great challenges and obstacles in the path of their dream) presented a moderate difficulty.

Practical tasks:

Step 1: Children were asked to draw their favourite super-heroes (alternatively to write the character's name, if not comfortable with drawing). Each person, trainers included, said his/her name and named their favourite super-hero.

Step 2: Trainers deliberately chose real people close to them – children clapped to the suggestion of one of the trainers who said her super-hero was her mother.



2. Brainstorming

Divided in 3 groups of children (each group had 4 or 5 kids) talked about super-heroes and what characteristics they should have. The discussion in each group was facilitated by different trainers. A group representative then talked about the drawing and choices they made.

Difficulty: This activity was initially planned to last 10 minutes, it lasted 25 min. It took time to organise the children in groups, to explain the activity, and to get them to start thinking, debating, and working.

3. Human Super-Heroes/Human Library

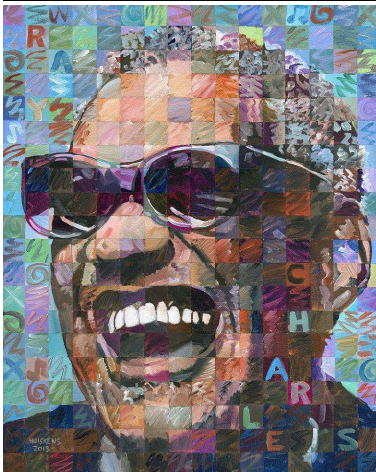
The aim was to make children think about how can any of us become a 'super-hero' no matter what challenges they are facing.

The materials presented were in English and the project Partner helped in interpreting. Three video clips (app. 3 minutes each) were selected portraying the life of ordinary people who had a dream and persisted to pursue it despite the odds. The chosen examples were gender balanced and from different areas: music, education and sport.

Children saw first a video clip from the movie on the life of musician Ray Charles. A clip from his childhood when he lost his sight, showing his humble origins, and his mother helping him adjust and trying to make him understand that he need to be strong and help himself.

Afterwards, trainers explained who Ray Charles was and the success he achieved. Ray Charles video was followed by short clips on the life of Malala Yousafzai

and her struggle to achieve education to all girls, and another on the life of Cristiano Ronaldo from his humble family to the success as a footballer.



Difficulties: While watching the video clips some children kept talking and it was difficult to explain and keep their attention. We needed more/different strategies to call children's attention and keep them focused. Planned to last 20', the activity lasted 45'. Again, it was difficult to keep children quiet and to engage them in a debate about the video clips.

4. Debate: Reflecting and Identifying issues

AGREE/DISAGREE

The room was divided in three sections corresponding to an agree/disagree scale. The facilitator made a statement and the children were asked to position themselves in the room according to their opinion. Lighter statements were introduced first ('girls like football' 'boys like dancing') moving to more serious statements ('school is boring' 'teachers are here to help me'). Debriefing was followed and children were asked to comment on their options.

5. MAP YOUR SURROUNDINGS

Children were divided in 3 groups and were asked to create a map of their surrounding, including significant places. Children were given a flipchart sheet, pens, illustrations (school, houses, beach, playground, church) and emoticons (happy, sad, hungry) to express their feelings in relation to the geographic area. One group representative presented their map and explained the choices.



6. Evaluation: Footsteps

- a. Children think about what they've learned in the sessions and write their thoughts about it were on a drawing of a footprint given to them, then place the footprint on the floor in relation to how close/far they are in discovering what's behind the question mark on the wall (the sessions' goal). Children enjoyed the activity but struggled to express their thoughts.
- b. Participants completed evaluation forms . This was particularly difficult for a number of reasons: children are too young to understand the questions, they're not proficient in writing. There was a need to have an adult supporting them, which was not possible time-wise.



A short process of debriefing followed where the children began to discuss their social context in relation to the geographic map, but there was no time to have a group discussion on this. Some themes that were identified related to violent situations that the children face in their everyday life like school bullying and street bullying and loneliness in the context of their home/family. The reflective practise was postponed for the next session.

Because of age and language barriers, the children showed signs of boredom with the analytical activities. For future sessions we decided to include shorter and more varied activities.

As a general comment to improve the efficiency of the sessions and given the age of the participants (7-14 years old) we recommended for next trainings to engage a trainer who speaks the Turkish dialect spoken by the children.

Children were seating while trainers were standing. It might have helped if the children were standing as well avoiding being in a 'inferiority' position and less intimidated by the grownups.

Session 2 took place on November 5th and its title "The Path of Change". The main goal was to debate the social contexts of children, to identify priority themes and steps that can be taken along the path.

Objectives:

- Review the previous session

- Identify any locations and issues that children see as problematic or in need of change, the Theme for Change
- Debate and reflect on the issue

Tools:

The tools used in this session were icebreakers, debriefing and reviewing, debate, brainstorming, evaluation. The selected tools included mostly body movement and drawing.

From the 1st session we noticed that working in small groups works better to keep a higher level of engagement and most of the activities were divided as such having as a leader one of the teenage Roma girls. This was a chance for them to practice leading small exercises and solve the exercises involving all the members of their team. Nonetheless each group needed also a facilitator to supervise and guide the process.

The biggest challenge for this session was the time management and group management for the trainers and for the school staff. The session started later than initially planned and activities took longer to accomplish - a few children wouldn't settle down and disrupted the whole group.

Several times we used the clapping technique (copy the way and the intensity of my clapping) to re engage the children in the activities of the session.

1. Ice-breaker (15')

Goal: To energise and engage the children in active different walks. The exercise was used as a base for the following debate exercise.

Practical tasks: Children were prompted to walk in different ways (whisper in one child's ear the move and others imitate and are asked to guess the walk) for example: superhero flight, the baby is sleeping, the boots in the mud, the dog on the leg etc.

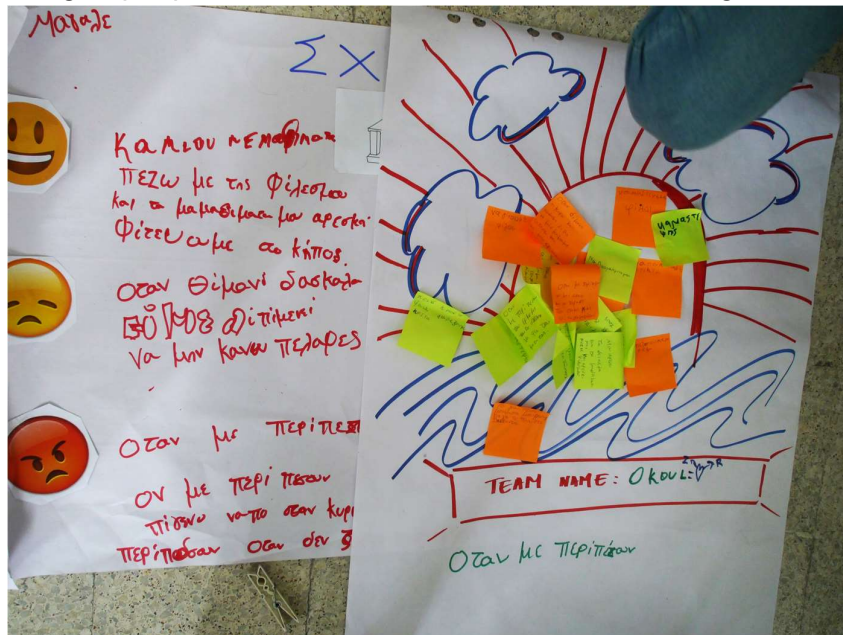
2. Reviewing priority themes (most important issues that arose from previous session)

Activity name: Sun through the storm

Goal: Divided in 3 groups of children (each group had 5 or 6 children) talked about the locations they identified in the previous session and the feelings they expressed using the emoticons. School, street and home were associated more with feelings of sadness and anger.

Practical tasks: Each group chose one of this locations and using colorful post its they analysed the obstacles and the solutions for each problematic issue that was identified.

Using the brainstorming technique all kind of solutions were placed on a piece of flipchart on the sun's rays. The discussion in each group was facilitated by different trainers. A group representative then talked about the drawing and choices they made.



Difficulty: This activity was initially planned to last 10 minutes, it lasted 25 min. It took time to organise the children in groups, to explain the activity, and to get them to start thinking, debating, and working. We've realised that one trainer was not enough, we had to engage two other staff members and at least 2 teachers to help in facilitating the group work as well as serving as interpreters (Greek-Turkish).

3. Identifying the priority theme

The goal of this activity was for the kids to vote in a creative way for the one or two problems that they would like to discover together solutions and implement them as a group.

Using the special walks we practiced during the icebreaker, the superhero flight and the boots in the mud, the children were asked to place themselves in the room according to their perception of finding and implementing solution for the problem generating locations (the problem was facing with violent reactions from colleagues at school and strangers in the street or the problem of loneliness at home).

Practical tasks: Do the super-hero flight to the easy end/ do the boots in mud walk to the difficult end. Choosing the superhero flight would mean that the problem would be easy to solve, on the contrary, the boots in mud would be a problem more difficult to solve and in which the group should work on.

In the end we choose to work on a common theme: reacting to violence in two different contexts: school and street.

Difficulties: We needed to repeat the sentences many times until we got to a common point of understanding and the purpose of using different steps.

4. Debate: The debate encountered difficulties as the children did not know to give details or felt uncomfortable talking about the identified issues.

Evaluation: it had been planned to repeat the Footstep exercise used in session one as a way of understanding the progress made by children from one session to the other. This was not possible as the previous activities took longer than planned.

‘Tell us about yourself’: This final activity was meant to learn about children and their culture. Session 1 showed that children were very interested in romani music and dances, and they were at ease to sing and dance. Children were to suggest a few songs to watch on Youtube and tell the facilitators why they liked them, and what they meant. There was, however, no time left for the activity.

Comments:

A short process of debriefing followed where the children began to discuss their social context in relation to the geographic map, but there was no time to have a group discussion on this. The common theme that was identified was related to violent situations (school bullying and street bullying) and loneliness in the context of their home/family. The reflective practise was postponed for the next session.

The children were the most proactive when working in small groups or in exercises involving body movement. It was noticed that the group was passionate about music. This was taken into consideration in the development of the activities for the following sessions.

Once more, the need for interpreters impacted on the capacity of children to concentrate and engage in the activities.

Session 3 took place on November 11th, the theme “Reacting to violence through role-play”. The main goal was to identify next steps and the participants’ individual resources towards the path of change regarding the priority theme:

Objectives:

- empathise with different roles as a verbal aggressor or a receiver of negative verbal comments.
- identify the strengths of the external stakeholders.

Tools:

The tools used in this session were icebreakers, debriefing and reviewing, debate, brainstorming, interview, role play, evaluation. The selected tools included mostly body movement, impersonation of a certain role or feeling and drawing as visual output support.

1. Ice-breaker (15')**The emotional bridge**

Goal: to empathise with different roles as a verbal aggressor or a receiver of negative verbal comments.

Practical tasks: Three volunteers are selected and get out of the room. The rest of the children are given a sentence. Children line up in two rows facing each other.

Trainer chooses one volunteer to walk under the bridge, while the others whisper their sentence as he/she passes by.

a) Lonely Walk

Children are presented with 3 sentences: I Hate you!, I'll beat you up! I don't want to play with you!

b) Friendship Walk

Children are presented with 3 sentences: I'll help you, I like you, I'm your friend

Debriefing: Walker shares with the group how he/she felt walking under the emotion bridge.

2. Activity name: Interview the external human resources/stakeholders

Goal: To identify the external resources, that can help them in identifying the optimal solution and in the same time to contribute to their path of change.

Practical tasks: Look at the posters prepared in the previous session, review the issues. On the flip-chart make a list of people that we will encounter along the Path of Change (those who will be able to help; those who will be an obstacle). Ask children, in groups, to choose and draw one of these persons in a poster and prepare 3 questions they'll like to ask them.

Difficulty: There was no significant difficulty with this exercise as it was implemented in small groups (each group had a leader that made sure that each opinion is heard and noted) and also involved drawing.

3. Role-Play

To motivate the children to think of a real situation, a scenario and write 3 questions that they would be interested to find out related to their situation and priority theme.

Comments:

The children were more proactive and more creative in small groups and (each group had a leader that made sure that each opinion is heard and noted) and also involved drawing.

Create a context that attracts the children with sounds and music for the icebreaker and presented as a fairy tale of a magical bridge.

The discoveries made during the previous sessions were reinforced: to introduce as many activities as possible using the small groups technique and use their interest in music and acting for next sessions.

Session 4 took place on November 12th, the title was “On the fast track to change” and the priority theme identified “Reacting to violence through music and drama. The main goal was to show a clear difference between a positive and a negative reaction to violent behaviour

Objectives:

- to ensure that all children feel involved in the creative exercises
- to mimic a real situation of their choice
- to prepare a scenario and act it in front of the others
- to discuss about the differences they notice between the two alternatives presented in the role-play

Tools:

The tools used in this session were icebreakers, debriefing and reviewing, debate, drama, music, evaluation. The selected tools included mostly body movement, impersonation of a certain role or feeling and drawing as visual output support.

1. Ice-breaker (15')

Goal: To find out what we have in common and to have fun as a group.

Practical tasks: Arrange chairs in a close circle and ask children to sit down. Stand in the middle of the circle and explain that you are going to state your name and make a statement about yourself. For example: “I am Anca and I like CARTOONS”. When you do, everyone for whom that statement is also true must change chairs. Try to get a chair for yourself. The person left without a chair then makes a similar statement about herself or himself. Continue until most children have had a chance to introduce themselves in this way.

When you perceive that the group has understood the rules of the game, introduce music and repeat the same action using percussion instruments. When the music plays you move according to the rhythm of the music and as soon as the music stops you need to find a chair to sit on.

2. Role-play/drama

Goal: Implementing solutions using drama

Practical tasks:

Each group to create a mini-play in relation to their action grid determining:

- Action to be taken when faced with a violent situation at school or on the streets (the 'What')

Presenting two alternatives: a negative reaction to violence and a positive reaction to violence (the same scenario)

- Defining main characters (the 'who') and the main stakeholders that they discovered in the previous session

- Short text for dialogues

Difficulty: No significant difficulty was noticed during this exercise, although because some roles were more visible than others some children felt more involved, others felt bored.

3. Taking action

Goal: to show a clear difference between a positive and a negative reaction to violent behavior

Practical tasks: Writing the scenario inspired by real life, design roles and tasks, prepare a scenario inspired by and present the idea to the whole group and act the scenario in front of the other group

Comments:

The children were very creative expressing themselves better when "empowered" with a certain role. They had full freedom in choosing the lines and the characters that will be involved in the negative or positive alternatives.

The session could have been improved given more time for the development of the scenario and characters, as well as with props and scene atmosphere for better engagement and impersonation.

The two Roma girls trained to become trainers acted as "directors" for the theatre play and they practiced what they been learning in the previous sessions. Nonetheless, we decided that we should dedicate a whole session only for their preparation and their empowerment as they will be the next facilitators.

Session 5 took place on November 18th, a continuation of the "On the fast track to change" idea. The main goal was to channel children's attention to their individual resources and discuss about choices they have made every time they were faced with a violent behaviour.

Objectives:

- to raise awareness about each other qualities
- to review the materials from previous sessions and recognise progress or obstacles
- to celebrate the sessions and the journey by creating a song using the words that resonate with their present understanding of previous sessions.

Tools:

The tools used in this session were icebreakers, debriefing and reviewing, debate, drama, music, evaluation. For this session the focus was on creating using the transformative power of music.

1. Ice-breaker (20')

a) *Goal:* to challenge the children to use positive words when addressing to their classmates

Practical tasks: Each child is asked to choose the name tag of another participant, say something that they like about that person and then give him/her the name tag

b) Dum Dum Dah Dah musical icebreaker

The facilitator is singing a melody and the participants repeat the melody and body movement.

2. Review the past in order to define the future

Goal: Review the progress we made in the previous sessions and recognise the steps and the future milestones.

Practical tasks - Role play the scenarios from the previous sessions and debriefing and discussing about the scenarios they choose.

Screen photos/videos of the previous sessions. One session at a time and ask children to re-cap on what was done. Hands-up if you liked the activity; hands-up if the activity made you feel happy/sad/angry; ask 3 children to say what she/he has learned and hands-up if agreeing.

3. Taking Action (continuation) facilitated by 2 Young ROMA girls.

Goal: create a song with the participation of all children as a result of what they perceive to be important

Practical tasks: All the materials created by the children during the sessions are displayed in the room. The group is divided in two groups and encouraged to choose at least 3 words that they consider significant for the priority theme and compose a song.

Difficulties: The children did not perceive the two leaders as their facilitators as they know each other for a long time and the time for their transition from a simple participant to a facilitator was too limited.

Evaluation: The apple star story

Goal: motivate and encourage each child to believe that they are “superhero” and believe in their strengths and qualities.

Comments:

Two songs were created as a result of the final exercise. One of the song was connected to the priority theme recognising the role of a father in the situation of facing a violent behavior and asking for his advice, yet the other song was written in the Turkish dialect and was a celebrating of the Roma culture and lifestyle.

The path the children took to identify the priority theme was the following:

1. the children were challenged indirectly to think about their own strengths and difficult situations they might be facing
2. first they identified the locations/places associated with different emotions (happy, sad, angry)
3. discussion, debating and voting on the locations that received sad and angry emoticons
4. brainstorming for solutions
5. identifying external resources that can support the path of change
6. channel their attention to their internal resources and discuss about the choice they have every time they are faced with a violent behavior

There is a need to ensure children understand the instructions of the exercise yet allowing space for creativity and self-expression.

The number of session is too limited to actively determine a long term difference/change for this age group (7-14).

Further knowledge about their culture and their lifestyle could help us use examples during the sessions that they encounter every day.

Session 6, took place on November 19th and targeted the further training of the future Roma youth facilitators. The main goal was to discuss in more details about the main

goal and activities of the PEER project with the young Roma facilitators and offering the opportunity to act as facilitators

Objectives:

- understand the PEER vision and goal
- discuss and review material from previous sessions
- act as facilitators for 30 minutes.

Tools:

1. Discussion (15')

Goal: discuss in more details about the main goal and activities of the PEER project

Practical tasks: review the previous sessions and the process we followed as way to understand the progress the group made and the new lessons learned.

2. Act as a facilitator - taking action

Goal:

Practical tasks: choose an icebreaker that we used in the previous sessions and an activity and act as facilitators for 30 minutes.

Difficulty: The girls took a lot of time to prepare the materials and they read what they prepared. The processed understanding was very good but faced with a real group they might lose their attention.

Debriefing about the possibility of them leading the next 6 sessions.

Comments:

- the age of the Roma facilitators is still a matter of importance for the preparation of the next 6 sessions
- the two Roma young facilitators will need our support for their preparation and creation of the sessions.
- the problem of translation will be minimised for the future sessions yet in case of an obstacle they encounter it might take time to re-establish a balance in the group until the support staff is informed.