

unicef  for every child



# CHILD STORYTELLING WORKSHOPS

Every child  
has a story  
to tell



## Acknowledgements

The Child Storytelling Workshop concept was originally inspired by Mark Cousin's 2009 documentary film *The First Movie* in which he gave Kurdish children in northern Iraq cameras to film any aspect of their lives they wanted to document. Lynne Jones developed this concept over a five-year period working with migrant children, beginning in 2016, funded by the Rights and Opportunities Foundation. Detailed narrative accounts of the project – as it was conducted in Greece, Italy, France and Mexico – and examples of the children's stories and pictures can be found in *The Migrant Diaries* (The Refuge Press 2021). We are grateful to The Refuge Press for permission to draw on and quote from these accounts. All the children's pictures and stories are published on the website: [www.migrantchildstorytelling.org](http://www.migrantchildstorytelling.org).

**Authors:** Louise Juul Hansen and Dr Lynne Jones

**Reviewers:** Marcio Gagliato (mhps.net), Kate Harris (MHPSS Collaborative), Anna Koehorst (UNICEF), Loes Loning (UNICEF), Dr Ashley Nemiro (MHPSS Collaborative), Dr Victor Ugo (MHPSS Collaborative) and Ann Willhoite (UNICEF)

**Graphic design:** GrasshopperDesign.net

## Thank you!

To all the children who have shared their pictures and stories. Your ability to confront hardship and find beauty and love in the toughest places, and your strength and determination to overcome challenges, is inspiring.

To the staff and volunteers working tirelessly, without whose support and effort the camera storytelling project would not be possible.

To Simona Ruznic (UNICEF, Bosnia and Herzegovina) and Maja Andrich, Tina Rashadatjou and Someyya Aelkhatib (Save the Children, Bosnia and Herzegovina) for sharing their experiences and tips from conducting child storytelling workshops in Bihac, Bosnia and Herzegovina. Your insights have been invaluable in the making of these guidelines. Thanks also to Medin Islamovic and Mirsad Asceric for helping to conduct the Bihac workshops.

To the staff of the MHPSS Collaborative who have helped to facilitate and further develop this project.

This guidance was commissioned by UNICEF with support from The German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and carried out in coordination with the MHPSS Collaborative and Dr Lynne Jones.

## Pictures

All photos have been taken by children participating in child storytelling workshops. The names of the children have been changed, and all children and caregivers have given their consent for the use of the pictures.

**Cover photos:** Participants in the following child storytelling workshops took the cover pictures: Fereshte, Bosnia and Herzegovina (boy with camera); Lamees, Northern Greece (girl on swing); and Alexander, Belize (cows).

## Suggested citation

United Nations Children's Fund, *Child Storytelling Workshops – Every child has a story to tell*, UNICEF, New York, 2023.



# CONTENTS

|                                                                                                  |           |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| <b>Introduction</b>                                                                              | <b>2</b>  |
| Benefits of child storytelling workshops                                                         | 3         |
| Who this guide is for                                                                            | 8         |
| <b>How to use this guide</b>                                                                     | <b>9</b>  |
| <b>Preparing for the workshop</b>                                                                | <b>11</b> |
| Participants                                                                                     | 12        |
| Focus and location of the workshop                                                               | 12        |
| Timing and duration                                                                              | 13        |
| Obtaining consent                                                                                | 14        |
| People involved in conducting the workshop                                                       | 15        |
| The storytelling facilitator                                                                     | 17        |
| Space                                                                                            | 18        |
| Cameras and other equipment                                                                      | 18        |
| Budget                                                                                           | 20        |
| <b>Carrying out the workshop</b>                                                                 | <b>21</b> |
| Introducing the workshop and setting expectations                                                | 21        |
| Rules and safety during the workshop                                                             | 22        |
| Instructions on how to use the cameras                                                           | 23        |
| <b>Picture choosing and storytelling</b>                                                         | <b>24</b> |
| Choosing the pictures                                                                            | 24        |
| Storytelling                                                                                     | 26        |
| Supplementary forms of storytelling                                                              | 28        |
| <b>Keeping the children safe</b>                                                                 | <b>29</b> |
| Referral                                                                                         | 29        |
| <b>Exhibition and celebration</b>                                                                | <b>31</b> |
| Timing of the exhibition                                                                         | 32        |
| Printing                                                                                         | 32        |
| <b>Measuring and evaluating benefits</b>                                                         | <b>33</b> |
| <b>Advocacy</b>                                                                                  | <b>34</b> |
| <b>Annex A – consent form examples</b>                                                           | <b>35</b> |
| Annex A1: Sample information sheet and consent form for the child to participate in the workshop | 36        |
| Annex A2: Sample subject release form                                                            | 39        |
| Annex A3: Sample non-exclusive copyright release permission form                                 | 40        |
| <b>Annex B – Inspiration from online resources and past workshops</b>                            | <b>41</b> |
| Storytelling resources                                                                           | 41        |
| Technical resources                                                                              | 43        |

# INTRODUCTION

**We all have a story to tell, whether in words, pictures, or both. Storytelling lets us decide what is important to keep and what to let go of – essentially, what aspects of our identity we want others to understand.**

Storytelling helps us capture, share, and celebrate love and beauty. Storytelling allows us to make sense of tragedy, grieve, mourn, and memorialize loss. When we have a camera in our hand, we can focus more fully on the present and perhaps see it clearly for the first time. By using pictures and words to show others what matters to us, we give significance and validity to our experiences. When others respond we feel connected and empowered. Storytelling also helps us to imagine and depict the future and connect to past moments of both joy and sadness.

A child's outer world can have profound effects on their mental health. Poverty undermines physical and mental health and can expose children to violence and severe distress; discrimination can expose children to disadvantage, prejudice and social exclusion; and humanitarian crises and pandemics – like COVID-19 – can lead to extreme and lasting distress. As a result, children can experience many barriers to engaging in the activities and structures that provide connection and stability.

The storytelling workshops outlined in this guide can be carried out with children anywhere in the world. While they were originally developed and piloted with migrant children, they can be implemented in any setting where children are able to participate from start to finish. Children everywhere will benefit from showing pictures that matter to them and sharing their stories with others, regardless of their background or environment.

The storytelling workshop is designed as a brief, easy to administer intervention to support and engage children in a creative and empowering activity. Its simplicity means that it can be used in many different contexts and situations to promote positive mental health and psychosocial wellbeing. Children's sense of agency, self-esteem, self-confidence and trust in others are promoted by providing a space where they can express themselves in any way they wish through words and pictures, and have their achievements recognized.

The child storytelling workshop is simple in form: 1) lend the child a camera and teach them how to use it; 2) set a time in which to take pictures of what matters to them; 3) ask them to choose a picture to display and explain their choice in their own words; and 4) organize an exhibition of their chosen pictures and accompanying stories.

The purpose of this guide is to outline the steps needed to facilitate these components.

## Benefits of child storytelling workshops

There are many benefits to child storytelling workshops. While they are designed to benefit children, they also benefit the trusted adults surrounding children (e.g., caregivers, family, staff and volunteers). They may also benefit relations with the community in which the children live.

### Benefits for children

The project is highly interactive as children learn new skills together, interact with the facilitators and share their pictures publicly in the exhibition. The workshops offer a chance to celebrate and strengthen love and connections – both with those close to the children and with the wider community. Children often choose to exhibit a picture of their family, friends or project staff, and take time to describe how much they love that person and why. Love and connection are among the most important components of a child’s wellbeing. Knowing that a responsive, caring adult is in a child’s life to protect the child from adverse experiences and feeling stressed. Feeling connected is essential to children’s positive adjustment and feelings of confidence in others and themselves.



#### **Aisha, 9, living in Bosnia and Herzegovina**

“I took this because of my dad because I love him. One time he let me go into town to play with some other children who were my friends. Sometimes he gives me chips which I like. I think it is a beautiful picture. I would like to cut the picture just to focus on my father. He is a good man because he plays with me and sometimes, he makes me laugh.

He’s funny, he likes jokes a lot, although not always, because sometimes he is not in the mood. He takes care of me. I love this camp because they let me go to school. All the people inside the camp are nice to me. I like going to school. I want to learn English because that can help me. I want to go to Canada.”

The facilitator explains what happened when this photo and story were shared with the father:

“One child took a picture of her father and explained why she loved him so much. We needed the father’s consent for the picture to be shown so she went to find him. He came, sat and looked at the picture, and then listened to the words she had written about it. He then started to cry, hugging his daughter and telling her that he loved her as well.”





**Amin, 17, living in Bosnia and Herzegovina**

"This is the football ground. I started playing football when I was six years old and I have loved football ever since that time. One day I want to be one of the best football players. I am training with the team that train there: Jedinstvo [United] is the name and I like it. It's the local team. My favourite club is Barcelona and I want to play for Barcelona one day. I've been in Bosnia for four years and I am the first migrant to go to high school. This is my first year, I began two months ago. The students are good, the teachers are good. They respect me. I speak English, Farsi, Bosnian and a little German. It's hard, everything is hard. I couldn't be in the team until two months ago, but they were always trying to help me and now that I'm playing, I am happy. Whatever happens, we have to be strong, this is life. I didn't know four months ago that I would be playing in one of the biggest teams in Bosnia. This shows that I will never give up my dreams until I achieve them."



The children photograph their environment. This can spark conversations about living conditions that cause them distress, places that provide hope and comfort, activities that give them pleasure, and their relationship with nature.



**Afrodita, 14, living in Bosnia and Herzegovina**

"I chose this because the world cannot survive without water. For example, animals and fish cannot live without water, even the trees need water to live. I chose it because it's beautiful, because of the foam. This makes me think of the water cycle, that process of what happens to water in nature is amazing. I heard about that big meeting (COP 26) We heard a lot. If I had been there, I would have said that we need to safeguard our environment, we need to give trees water so that they can grow and we can make the world more beautiful."



They may photograph people, animals, objects, or places that carry significant memories. These may be happy memories or painful ones. They may photograph objects that symbolize and memorialize loved ones or places that represent their hopes, dreams and ambitions for the future.



### **Ulysses, 13, living in Belize**

"This is my father's guitar. My dad used to play this but they killed him three years ago. He was out selling vegetables. Before that he was in the military. It was the gangs that did it. I remember him playing. He could play every instrument. He worked very hard so he did not have time to teach me but I loved to listen. And my father bought that tiger for us just before he died. It was a family tiger. I miss my dad a lot. I think about him a lot. I like to remember him. I remember things like he played marbles with me. He would always win. After he died, we had to leave immediately. My sister carried the guitar. We went somewhere else for a while and then we came here. We borrow a house. I like living here, it's better than my country because it is more peaceful. I go to school and I like maths."



The workshop enhances creativity. Children depict whatever they like in the way they wish to. Many children discover the unusual and beautiful in their surroundings and find creative ways to depict and discuss them. The workshop also has cognitive benefits. Taking photographs requires children to pay attention to the present moment and keep still while doing so. It has many of the benefits of mindfulness practice through rooting children in the here and now. It asks them to focus visually on the present moment and the external world, and for that moment takes their mind off worries and anxieties about their past and future. It also requires concentration, attention to detail, choosing and describing, all of which develop the child's cognitive skills.

Most importantly, perhaps, the child storytelling workshops are empowering and build self-esteem. Simply lending the child a camera is a token of your respect and trust that they will take care of it and return it in good condition. In the storytelling process, the facilitator listens with focused attention and empathy, and the child's choices and words are respected and appreciated. The child has the chance to show their caregivers, peers and the wider community what matters to them through their pictures and the stories behind them, and to receive attention and praise for doing so.



## Benefits for caregivers

In situations where caregivers and children live under pressure and insecurity for long periods of time, their bonds can sometimes become strained. The everyday struggle to survive and get by under difficult circumstances leaves precious few moments for many caregivers to just sit and talk with their children about the things that are important to them.

In the workshops, children frequently take photos of members of their families and describe the love they feel for their families in the storytelling process. In the midst of hardship, it is good for both children and their families to be reminded of the love they have for each other (see Aisha's picture and story on page 3). Storytelling offers caregivers a view into the child's world that may previously have been hidden. This creates stronger bonds.



### **Seeing the pictures and hearing the stories of their children sometimes has a profound effect on caregivers, as this workshop facilitator recounts:**

"After the exhibition, the mother of one of the participating children came to me. She told me that listening to her child's story had made her realize that things were much more difficult than she had allowed herself to admit. She was very upset, so I gave her a hug and we sat down to talk. From our talk I recognized that she needed more qualified support, and she agreed. With her permission, I made the necessary arrangements to refer her to a specialized mental health service in the camp."

## Benefits for staff and volunteers

There are also many benefits for staff and volunteers. The workshop provides an opportunity for staff to appreciate the children's skills and talents and to learn what really matters to them. They may also discover how much the child values the support they are given.

The picture choosing and storytelling session can provide a rare opportunity for the child to have undivided attention in a safe space, from someone who is genuinely interested in them. This allows them to feel more appreciated and understood. The child may also reveal details that require follow-up support to address issues of concern.



### **The important interaction between children and staff and volunteers is exemplified in this story of a child who exhibited a picture of a toy:**

One child who had taken beautiful photographs of her surroundings and friends wanted to keep those pictures for herself and chose a picture of a toy to exhibit in the show. This puzzled the cultural mediator so, after the child storytelling workshop, she asked the child about it. After chatting for some time it came to light that the child, having been constantly on the move since fleeing her homeland several years earlier, was reluctant to make new friends because she would have to say goodbye to them eventually. The toys were her friends instead. The mediator talked to the rest of the team working with the children and a plan was made to support the child to participate more in activities and connect with the other children, in ways she felt comfortable with.



## Benefits for the community

Inviting the community to the exhibition can benefit both the children and the community. For the community, gaining a better understanding of the children living in their midst can enhance relationships. This is especially valuable when the children are not from the local area. If the focus of the workshop is something local, such as the natural environment or the town or district, the community has a chance to see what the children find interesting, beautiful or of value. At the same time, this also gives the children an opportunity to reflect on the community they live in.

Amin's story on page 4 shows how much he valued the community's support in helping him to join their football club. Omar's picture and story below shows his appreciation of his school.



### **Omar, 10, living in Bihac, Bosnia and Herzegovina**

"This is my class at school, and I love them a lot. They are my friends, they like me and I like them. We play, we study. I have been in school from first grade, now I am in third grade. I have been in Bosnia for three years, one year in Mostar and two years here. I can speak Bosnian. I learn lots of things, My favourite subjects are science, mathematics, the Bosnian language and sport. I'm good at sport, I play striker in football. I support Real Madrid and Barcelona. I am sorry my teacher is not in this picture because I like her so much. She teaches everything except religion and the English language and she's always good. I want to be a footballer when I grow up. We want to go to Belgium, because both sisters are there."

Omar gave a copy of the picture to each of his classmates after the workshop.



## Who this guide is for

You may be a programme manager, a child-friendly space facilitator, a teacher or a volunteer in a programme supporting children. The important thing is that you are interested in arranging a camera storytelling workshop.

To facilitate the storytelling workshops, you need a team, time, facilities, funding and skills.

It is important that those involved in the facilitation of the workshops have solid knowledge of child protection and safeguarding principles, including related skills, to conduct the workshops in a safe and ethical manner for the children, families and communities that participate. Child safeguarding considerations will be further addressed below.

# HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

## **The concept of the workshop is simple and has four components:**

1. Lend the children cameras and give them supervised time to work out how to use them and practise using them.
2. Let them go and take photos. You can give them the freedom to document what they like or ask them to focus on a specific theme such as nature or the town or district where they are living.
3. Give each child the opportunity to review their pictures and ask them which one they would like to show to others. Then give them the opportunity to talk about why they have chosen that photo and tell the story behind it.
4. Exhibit the chosen photos and stories in public.

This guide is not a step-by-step manual explaining exactly how to run a workshop, but it will help you to plan the steps you need to take to run a successful workshop. Conditions, resources, possibilities and limitations vary enormously from place to place. With that in mind, it aims to be flexible and inspirational, building on examples, cases and checklists.

The guide is divided into stages: 1) preparing for the workshop; 2) carrying out the workshop; 3) picture choosing and storytelling; and 4) the exhibition and celebration. Important considerations about child protection and how to conduct the interviews in a safe and ethical manner are included after the chapter about picture choosing and storytelling.

There are case stories from previous workshops throughout the document. Links and QR codes linking to the relevant websites are provided in Annex B.

The workshops fall within a broader framework and continuum of MHPSS services that should be provided for children. The child storytelling project would align with the Minimum Services Package activity 3.4, and UNICEF MHPSS Multi-Sectoral Framework intervention area 2: promoting positive relationships.



## **The Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Minimum Service Package**

The Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Minimum Service Package (MHPSS MSP) aims to improve the scale and quality of MHPSS programming. Based on existing guidelines, evidence and expert consensus, it has a checklist of actions needed to implement activities and contains key guidelines, standards and tools for staff and volunteers to learn about delivering activities safely and effectively.

The MHPSS MSP was developed by UNICEF and the World Health Organization and can be found at: <https://mhpsmsp.org/en>. A link to the resource in PDF format is provided in Annex B.





## Child Safeguarding Considerations

Children's safety comes first. This means protecting them from maltreatment and abuse, sexual exploitation and abuse, and other safety risks. These threats are not only external but can come from people and organizations working with children. They compromise child and human rights and the effectiveness of this programme. Implementing organizations must have child safeguarding policies covering the following areas:

- Risk assessment
- Establishment or application of protocols and standards to mitigate risks
- Prevention of possible harm through vetting, training, and managing of personnel and partners
- Promotion of methods for detection and reporting of concerns
- Responding appropriately to incidents to reduce harm (and provision of institutional knowledge about referral pathways organization-wide)
- Monitoring, evaluation and learning from ongoing safeguarding work.

All staff and volunteers working with children must know and understand your safeguarding and protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) policies. If you need to update these policies, you can find useful information here (links in Annex B):

- UNICEF: Policy on Conduct Promoting the Protection and Safeguarding of Children
- UNICEF: Child Protection Strategy (2021–2030)
- UNICEF: PSEA Guidance
- Save the Children: Child Safeguarding Policy

See the Keeping the children safe chapter on page 29 for practical tips on ensuring children's safety during the workshop.

# PREPARING FOR THE WORKSHOP

## **A little bit of good planning goes a long way.**

You should only organize a child storytelling workshop in a safe setting, e.g., a school, child-friendly space or community centre. It is important that the children and facilitators can gather somewhere where they feel safe and have the space and time to think creatively and focus on the activity.

Depending on how many children want to participate in the workshop, you will need at least two, possibly more, facilitators. If you work with children with a different mother tongue from yours, you will also need cultural mediators.



### **What you will need: a quick check list**

- ✓ Staff and volunteers all have basic training in communicating with children and know child protection procedures and referral pathways
- ✓ Safety assessment for when the children go out with the cameras
- ✓ Time and enough people for all stages of the workshop
- ✓ An undisturbed space for the storytelling workshop and photo selection
- ✓ Technical equipment (cameras, batteries, SD memory cards, external drive for storage, projector, etc.)
- ✓ Local printer who can print hard copies of the photos for the children and large photos with text for the exhibition
- ✓ A suitable space for the exhibition

## Participants

The workshop is suitable for children aged eight and above. From this age, they are likely to be able to follow instructions, operate the cameras and keep themselves safe.

You can mix age groups, but you will get a more productive group dynamic if the children are close in age. For example, make separate groups for 8–12-year-olds and teenagers. Consider whether mixed gender groups are culturally appropriate, especially when working with teenagers and adolescents.

Consider whether some of the children need further support to participate. For example, a child with a learning disability may need extra support in learning to operate the camera, while a child with a hearing impairment or who uses a wheelchair may need someone to accompany them so that they can safely move around when taking photos. It is not uncommon for families to be extra concerned about the safety of girls. In these cases, when obtaining consent from caregivers you may need to explain how you have ensured that the activity is safe and appropriate for all children.

Eight to 10 children per workshop is ideal. It is important to have enough time for each child to feel seen and heard. The photo selection and storytelling are a one-to-one process with the facilitator. It takes at least 30–45 minutes per child and cannot be hurried.

Children are likely to be keen to participate in the workshops. You may not have the capacity to include all the children who want to participate, so make sure you have transparent and fair selection criteria – e.g., a specific age range, lottery, etc. Use a waiting list system if time and resources are available. What is appropriate may differ depending on your context.

## Focus and location of the workshop

The simplest focus for the workshop is to encourage the children to photograph anything they like/find interesting/striking/beautiful/important in the area where they are living, and which they would like to share with others. Give them the cameras for a set amount of time. Three to four hours is usually sufficient but giving them for 24 hours allows children to pick any aspect of their daily lives they wish to share. Ask them to return their cameras at the end of the agreed period.

Alternatively, you may choose to focus on a particular theme and take them to a particular location. You can, for example, do nature photography in areas of natural beauty or take children on an escorted walk through the local community, explaining its architecture and history.



## Timing and duration

A workshop can be as short as 10 days from beginning to end. Normally, however, the whole process will take longer as the activities are often carried out over several days, or with days or sometimes weeks between stages.

In its **most compressed form**, a workshop process for one group of children can look like this:

### Sample workshop agenda

|                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|---------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Day 1</b>        | Preparation: plan the workshop; decide on focus/location and check safety; decide selection criteria and select participants; acquire and check equipment; collect consent from caregivers; identify (and if necessary book) a suitable exhibition space.                          |
| <b>Day 2</b>        | Workshop Part 1: Explain the purpose of the workshop, rules and safety measures; teach the children how to use the cameras. Give the children a set time in which to do the actual photography. If they are working independently, tell them when and where to return the cameras. |
| <b>Days 3 and 4</b> | Workshop Part 2: Children return the cameras. Download and correctly file each child's pictures; meet with each child individually for at least 30–45 minutes so that they can review their photos, choose one to exhibit and explain why they have chosen it.                     |
| <b>Days 5 and 6</b> | Write up the stories; translate the stories into relevant languages (where necessary); prepare texts and photos for layout and printing.                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>Days 7 to 9</b>  | Print chosen photos and texts; send out invitations; plan/prepare for the exhibition.                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <b>Day 10</b>       | Set up the exhibition; welcome children and guests to celebrate the exhibition.                                                                                                                                                                                                    |

Any of these steps may take longer. For example, if several groups of children are participating, you may do part 1 with the first group, then download the pictures and give the cameras to second and third groups over the following days. The picture selection and storytelling component can then be done with each group in a later week.

You may have to rely on volunteer or part-time cultural mediators, so their availability also needs to be factored into the planning process.



When working with displaced children and a **cultural mediator**, you should allocate a little more time for the storytelling process. Building trust with two people, especially if one or both are strangers, takes more time. And the process of interpreting and repeating what is said takes longer than speaking directly with the child in their own language.



### Cultural mediator or translator?

In this guide the term “cultural mediator” is used rather than “translator” or “interpreter”. A cultural mediator is someone who understands both the language and the culture a child comes from. Cultural mediators do more than merely interpret or translate the words spoken between the facilitator and the child. They assist in the facilitation and storytelling process, explaining cultural references and pointing out if any questions or requests are inappropriate or might be misunderstood.

The role of a cultural mediator often extends to providing support in navigating bureaucracy and health care systems, and they may be the link between the school/daycare and the child’s parents. They provide support to both parties in the dialogue regarding cultural attitudes, beliefs and behaviours.

Resources relating to being or working with cultural mediators are listed in Annex B.



If the storytelling project is being implemented in a context where children are staying in temporary facilities, there is always the possibility that they will move locations. Indeed, this factor may be a reason why parents discourage their children from participating in normal educational activities, or why the children themselves don’t want to bother. Keeping the time frame as short as practically possible allows the child to benefit from both the activity and the pleasure of seeing their work exhibited.

## Obtaining consent

Obtaining consent is an essential component of the workshop. Four types of consent are needed:

- Written consent from the caregivers for the child to participate in the workshop.
- If a child wants to photograph another person, the child must explain how the photo will be used and obtain verbal consent before taking the photo.
- If a child chooses a photo of one or more people for the exhibition, they must all give written, informed consent.
- If you plan to use a picture outside the direct context of the workshop and exhibition, e.g., for advocacy purposes, you need to gain written, non-exclusive copyright release permission and ensure that the person granting it understands what that means.

Please see Annex A for sample consent forms.

Teaching the children to ask for verbal consent before taking a photograph of another person provides a valuable lesson about the importance of asking permission and showing respect for your subject.

It is the responsibility of the facilitators to obtain the written informed consent. Obtaining consent from the children's caregivers and from the people in the children's photographs can be time consuming. To explain the consent process and consent forms to caregivers, the facilitators or cultural mediators may organize a community meeting for caregivers of potential participants where questions and concerns can be addressed. Written consent can sometimes feel a little intimidating. Make sure that you are available for a conversation to clarify how the photo will be used, and that the conversation is held in the family's own language.

Remember that the purpose of asking for consent is to respect the rights and dignity of the people in the photograph and of the photographer.

This process is easier and quicker with workshops that take place in established settings, such as schools or child-friendly spaces, where the caregivers know and trust the people and organization running the workshop. If you do not already have an established bond of trust with the children's families, expect to spend more time building it.

In order to protect the child's identity, their real name is never used beyond the exhibition that is part of the workshop. As children read their own stories at the workshop exhibition, they cannot be anonymous at that time. But when organizations use the children's work elsewhere for programmatic or advocacy purposes, the child's real name will not be used. This is made clear in the consent process and in the forms. The consent forms need to be in the family's own language.

## People involved in conducting the workshop

The workshop itself involves several different roles and tasks.

It is not possible to give exact numbers for how many people are needed for the workshop because it depends on the situation and the competencies and availability of staff and volunteers. In some situations, the same person will be able to oversee all the coordination – obtaining consent, the workshop itself, writing up the stories and organizing the exhibition. In other situations, the coordinator may be a programme manager and all the activities with children carried out by staff and volunteers in a child-friendly space. Depending on the languages spoken by the children, you may need one or more cultural mediators as well as a facilitator. Or the cultural mediators may be able to facilitate the storytelling themselves. Either way this can present logistical challenges, particularly if the cultural mediators are volunteers with limited availability.

How you put together your team for the workshop depends entirely on your context and resources.

The table below outlines the key tasks that need to be carried out during the workshop. Apart from the competencies listed in the table, all staff and volunteers working directly with the children must have training in child protection and basic psychosocial skills.



**Key tasks that need to be carried out during the workshop**

| When          | Tasks                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Competencies                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|---------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Before</b> | Plan workshop, including focus of photography; secure all necessary resources and identify location to hold the workshop. If the focus of photography is outside children's habitual living area, check safety. | Planning and budgeting skills, knowledge of how to use a camera.                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|               | Collect caregivers' consent for the children to participate.                                                                                                                                                    | Good interpersonal skills, ability to communicate with the caregivers in their own language, solid understanding of ethical implications of the project and knowledge of informed consent and safeguarding principles.                                                       |
| <b>During</b> | Explain the purpose of the workshop, teach the children how to use the cameras, explain rules, accompany the children when they take pictures (if necessary).                                                   | Experience in doing activities with children.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|               | Storytelling with the children.                                                                                                                                                                                 | Listening skills, knowing how to interview children without pressurizing them, ability to support children in distress, ability to recognize when a child needs further support. Must have received – as a minimum – basic training in community-based psychosocial support. |
|               | Translation and cultural mediation (if necessary).                                                                                                                                                              | Deep understanding of the language and cultural background of the children. Familiarity with the role of interpreter/translator.                                                                                                                                             |
|               | Transcribing the children's stories. Check with the children that the story accurately reflects what they want to say. Translate stories into relevant languages.                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |

*continued on next page*

**Key tasks that need to be carried out during the workshop** *continued*

| When              | Tasks                                                                                                                               | Competencies                                                                                                                                                     |
|-------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Exhibition</b> | Plan the exhibition, make sure the venue is available, send out invitations, check that equipment is available and works.           | Planning and budgeting skills.                                                                                                                                   |
|                   | Collect consent from the subject/s in the photographs.                                                                              | Good interpersonal skills, awareness of the ethical implications of the project and knowledge of informed consent and safeguarding principles.                   |
|                   | Gather the photos and texts, and prepare them for print for the exhibition. Prepare a booklet with all pictures if resources allow. | Often the local print shop can do the necessary graphic design work for a fee, or you may have communications staff in your organization who can undertake this. |

## The storytelling facilitator

You do not have to be a mental health professional to conduct a storytelling workshop. But you must:

- ✓ Be empathetic
- ✓ Enjoy working with the children
- ✓ Be genuinely curious and openminded about their stories.

Everybody working directly with children must have knowledge about child protection and safeguarding. The person who sits with the children during the storytelling process must also have the skills to:

- ✓ Ask questions in a way that does not put pressure on the child to talk about things they are uncomfortable discussing
- ✓ Handle a situation in which the child has a strong emotional reaction to the storytelling process
- ✓ Identify situations in which it is necessary to refer the child to more specialized services and know the local referral pathways.

The storytelling facilitators must have completed at least some form of basic training in psychosocial support<sup>1</sup> that includes the main components of psychological first aid:

- ✓ Look (assessing the situation)
- ✓ Listen (active listening, calming the situation)
- ✓ Link (referring to other services as necessary).

Recommended training resources include *Psychological First Aid for Child Practitioners, I Support My Friends* and *EQUIP: Ensuring Quality in Psychological Support*. Please see Annex B for further suggestions and links for recommended reading and training.

## Space

The workshops can be conducted in any safe space that is accessible to the children,<sup>2</sup> e.g., a school, child-friendly space or community centre.

The picture choosing and storytelling process, which takes place individually with each child, must take place in a space where the conversation cannot be overheard or interrupted. Make sure that one adult is never alone with a child behind closed doors. There should always be two adults present.

The exhibition space should be large enough for the children, their caregivers and anyone else you invite (for example, community members, teachers, extended family, neighbours, siblings, friends, classmates, etc).

## Cameras and other equipment

Simple low-cost “point-and-shoot” digital cameras are the best type of camera for this activity.

For a workshop with 10 children, you will need:

- 10 simple, low cost compact digital cameras
- 10 SD memory cards compatible with the cameras
- 10 extra sets of batteries, compatible with the cameras
- A laptop onto which the pictures can be downloaded
- An external drive on which to back up and store the pictures until the end of the workshop
- An LCD projector for showing the pictures and stories on a big screen during the exhibition

<sup>1</sup> See MHPSS MSP Section 3.2 “Orient frontline workers and community leaders in basic psychosocial support skills” (see Annex B for link).

<sup>2</sup> For more information about setting up safe spaces for children, please see Chapter 2: Setting up a safe space in *Operational Guidance for Child Friendly Spaces in Humanitarian Settings*, World Vision International and IFRC Reference Centre for Psychosocial Support, Copenhagen, 2018



## Digital cameras versus smartphones

In some settings, using smartphones may be a good solution but, in general, using simple digital cameras is recommended. These can generally be purchased at low cost.

Using a real camera is a different experience from using a smartphone. Children often say that photography with a camera is a much better experience, and the loan of the camera makes them feel special.

Even inexpensive digital cameras take better pictures than smartphones (except perhaps very expensive high-end smartphones, which should never be used in a workshop).

Providing cameras for all the children means that they participate on an equal footing with the same equipment independently of whether they own their own phone (or the “right” brand of phone).

Other benefits of using a digital camera rather than a smartphone include:

- Digital cameras have a wrist strap that reduces the risk of the child dropping the camera by accident.
- Digital cameras often have a much longer battery life than a smartphone.
- A smart phone is often more expensive than a camera and places a burden of responsibility on the child to take care of something valuable. It can also increase the risk of the child becoming a victim of theft.
- Unlike smartphones, a digital camera does not contain any personal information about the owner.
- The process of transferring images to a computer can be complicated for the facilitators if they need to figure out how to transfer pictures from different types of smartphone with different operating systems.
- Since a camera’s sole function is photography, it helps the children to stay focused and not be distracted by apps and messages.

### When to use smartphones instead of cameras

Buying cameras for a workshop can be costly. You might be able to get people to donate their old smartphones or you may be holding the workshop in a setting where the children have access to smartphones. If using a smartphone is the only option, it is worth using one.

If you do decide to use smartphones, consider the following:

- Remove the sim card and reset the phone to its factory settings to remove all personal information about the previous owner.
- Older smartphones may not have a very long battery life so make sure that the children can recharge the phone if necessary.
- If the children use their own phones, make sure they have their caregiver’s permission.

Before the workshop begins, charge the camera batteries and label your cameras with a number or letter. This is essential to keep track of which child has which camera, and to avoid getting children's pictures muddled when you download them.

Remember to delete all the photos on the camera and SD card before using it again for the next workshop. When the workshop is over, you must delete all pictures from any device they are stored on unless you have explicit permission to use a picture for other purposes.

## Budget

Costs vary from context to context, so it is impossible to estimate exactly how much a workshop will cost. The first workshop is the most expensive because buying the cameras is a one-off expense. Previous experience is that children have taken good care of the cameras and returned them at the end of the workshop. If you work with one or more cultural mediators, the cost in human resources is higher. Your printing costs will depend on how you choose to exhibit the pictures.

When drawing up the budget, you should consider the following items:

- Digital cameras with SD cards and extra batteries
- External drive
- Snacks and refreshments during the workshop and for the exhibition
- Human resources (coordinator, facilitators and cultural mediators)
- Graphic design and printing
- Laptop computer and LCD projector



### **Lynne Jones provides insight on how she co-organized and conducted a camera storytelling workshop in northern Greece in 2016:**

"In the camp I worked with a group of five refugee volunteers who did all the preparatory work, kept an eye on the children while photographing, and had a dedicated tent which functioned as a child-friendly space, where we could hold the workshop and exhibition. I was accompanied by a full-time cultural mediator who collected all the consents and conducted the storytelling process with me."

*The Children's Film* is a 40-minute film made by the children during this workshop (link in Annex B). The first two minutes illustrate part of the introductory workshop and show how the children practised asking for consent before filming someone.



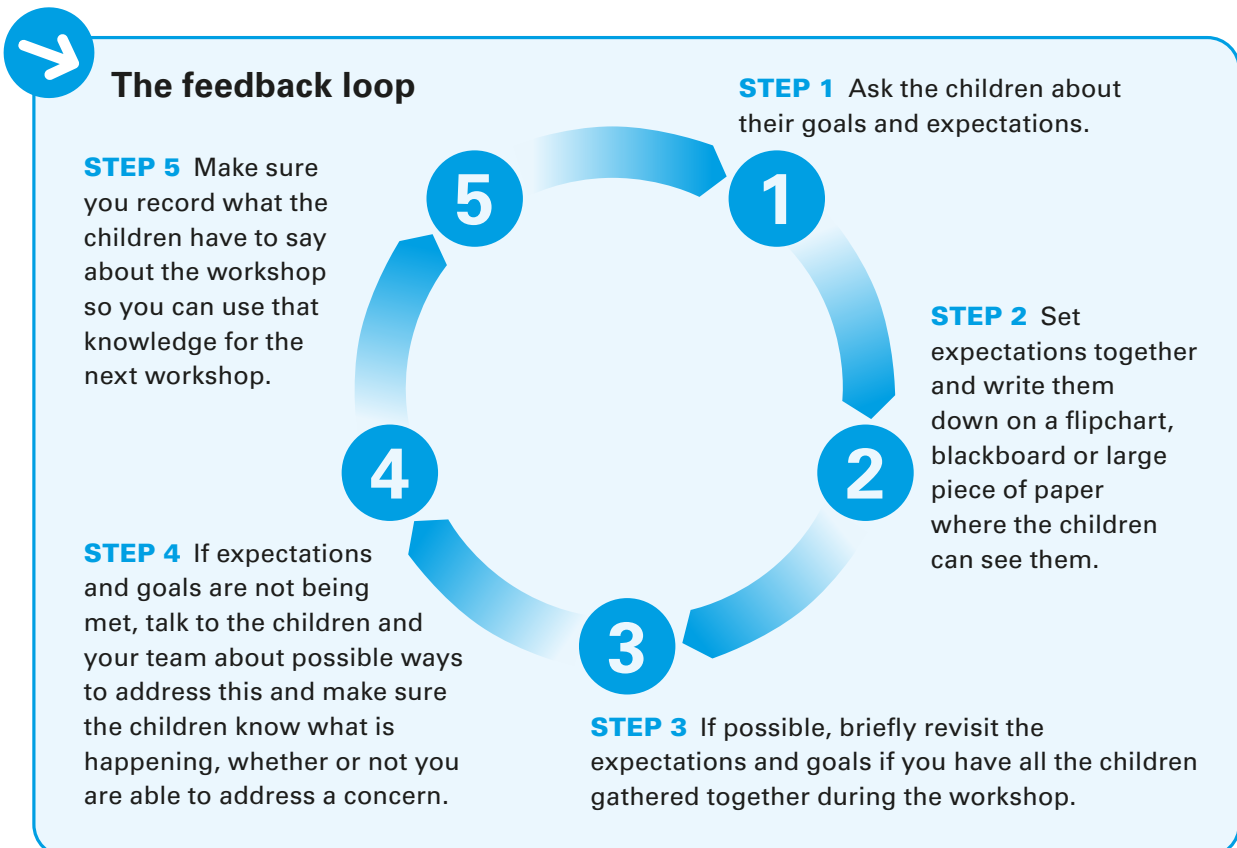
# CARRYING OUT THE WORKSHOP

## Introducing the workshop and setting expectations

Open the workshop by explaining its purpose. It may be helpful to bring the LCD projector to show children a few pictures and stories from previous workshops and inspire them. These are easily available on [www.migrantchildstorytelling.org](http://www.migrantchildstorytelling.org).

Then ask the children about their expectations and goals for the workshop. Setting expectations and agreeing on goals together shows the children that you are interested in their perspectives and gives you more insight into what matters to them. There are several ways to set expectations and goals depending on the age and capabilities of the children. Whatever method you choose, make sure that all the children feel included and have the chance to express themselves.

Revisit the expectations and goals throughout the storytelling process and with the children after the exhibition, and listen to how they believe their expectations and goals were or weren't met. Make sure you respond to any feedback and ensure that it is documented and shared anonymously with future facilitators to improve future workshops.



For suggestions about how to gather and use feedback in a child-friendly manner, please see the *Child-Friendly Feedback Mechanisms: Guide and Toolkit* developed by Plan International (see Annex B for link). Tool 5 contains suggestions for inclusive and age-appropriate feedback activities.

## Rules and safety during the workshop

Before starting the workshop, you should conduct a safety assessment. Consider things such as:

- Is the area where children will be taking photos safe?
- Are there any areas that are off limits?
- Is there anything the children are not allowed to photograph (restricted areas, police, military, etc.)?

If you want to involve the children in this step, *The Children's Resilience Programme* includes an activity for children to map out their surroundings and discuss safe and unsafe locations. Please see Annex B for link.

Go through the rules with the children, making sure that everybody understands them as well as the importance of following them.

A good way of ensuring this is to make the rules together with the children, making sure you cover the essentials. In this way the children are heard, feel ownership, and can raise issues important to them of which you may have been unaware.

Write (or ask one or two children who feel confident to write) the agreed rules on a blackboard or flipchart. Ask the children to repeat the rules back to you.

Using two sets of rules is recommended: one for the use of cameras and one for taking pictures.

### Use of Camera Rules

- ✓ Keep the wrist band on so you don't drop the camera
- ✗ Don't lend your camera to anyone else
- ✗ Don't touch the menu button (to minimize the risk of accidentally deleting the pictures)
- ✗ Don't touch the lens

### Taking Picture Rules

- ✓ Do ask permission (verbal consent) of the person(s) you are photographing; don't take a picture if they say no
- ✗ Don't photograph verbal or physical fights, or any acts of violence
- ✗ Don't photograph any person in uniform/military personnel

Insert any other off-limits situations, people or places you identified during your safety assessment.



**The following examples from previous child storytelling workshops show how it's impossible to foresee all problems that might arise. But you can learn and respond immediately, and set guidelines for the future:**

- At a photography workshop in Bosnia and Herzegovina, a group of 12–14-year-olds were photographing close to the bank of a fast-flowing river that runs through the city. The facilitator noticed this and a new rule was immediately introduced for the workshop: “Don’t go closer than two metres to the riverbank.”
- During the first child storytelling workshop at a refugee camp in Greece, children went out to take pictures in the afternoon. When loud shouting erupted between two groups in the camp, some children found it exciting and ran after those who were arguing to take photos. Luckily, the volunteer facilitators saw what was happening and stopped the children. Children also wanted to take pictures of the police and military around the camp, who complained about this. From then on rules prohibiting photographing any arguments or fights and anyone in uniform were introduced. This must be standard practice for all workshops.

## Instructions on how to use the cameras

Children are creative and quick to learn. So, at its most basic level, the instruction can be limited to showing the children which buttons to press to turn the camera on and off, take photos, and view the photos on the screen. Once given the cameras, children can work out these steps quickly for themselves, and they enjoy doing so. The facilitators can then work with individual children as they practise, reinforcing the messages above in an age-appropriate way (e.g., how to avoid deleting pictures by mistake), and providing more information for those children who want/need it, such as how to charge the batteries or use the flash.

If you are unfamiliar with the cameras, spend some time getting acquainted with them and their functionalities.

Before sending the children out to take pictures, make a register with each child’s name and the number of the camera they have borrowed. This will enable you to keep track of the cameras. When the children have finished taking pictures and returned their cameras, download all their pictures into a numbered and named file. Remember to delete all pictures from all devices when the workshop is over. The only exception is pictures for which you have explicit permission to use outside the workshop.



The purpose of a camera storytelling workshop is not to teach children photography techniques or how to take beautiful pictures. However, sometimes it is possible to get the help of a professional photographer who can add to the experience by teaching the children a little about basic photography, themes, light and shadow, etc. This may be too complex with the younger age groups, but for teenagers it can add an interesting layer to the workshop.

# PICTURE CHOOSING AND STORYTELLING

**The picture choosing and storytelling component of the workshop takes place when each child sits down with a facilitator, chooses the photos they want to keep for themselves and the one they want to show at the exhibition, and explains why they have chosen that picture.**

It is both a very simple and complex step in the workshop. It is simple because in its essence it is about the child, their picture and whatever they want to say about it.

It is complex because it is the part that requires the most resources and the most knowledge, skills and experience on the part of the facilitator.

The picture choosing and storytelling takes time – at least 30–45 minutes per child. If the facilitator is not fluent in the child’s own language, you will need to have a cultural mediator present, which requires more time.

Ideally, the storytelling facilitator will speak the child’s language and can conduct the whole process in the child’s own language.



## Language barriers

Sometimes the child can speak languages other than their own, e.g., English. It can be tempting to do the storytelling in a language that doesn’t require translation by letting the child speak in their second language.

However, we all express ourselves most fluently and naturally in our mother tongue. It is vital for the storytelling process that the child can express themselves freely in the language they are most familiar with. So, if the facilitator cannot speak the child’s own language, you will need the help of a cultural mediator.

## Choosing the pictures

If the child has taken many photos, it is best to break this section down into stages. Explain clearly that each child has a chance to do two things:

1. Choose 10 photos to keep for themselves. These will be printed and given to the child during the exhibition. This is important as the pictures often become cherished mementos for the children.
2. Choose one photo they would like to exhibit. This can be from the chosen 10 personal photos, or from the others. Make clear that this picture is their chance to show the public

what is important/interesting/beautiful about their lives and the world around them. Do not direct the child's choice in any way, through verbal or nonverbal signals. If they ask you to choose, emphasize that it is their choice and that you want to exhibit what matters to them. Praise them when they have made their choice.

If the child chooses to exhibit a photo of a person or group, the people in the picture must give consent. Therefore, ask the child to choose an extra photo without people in it as a back-up in case consent is not granted. (Note: If just one person in a group picture does not give consent, the picture cannot be used for the exhibition. The back-up should be used instead.) Also, make sure that the people in the photos chosen for the exhibition are represented in a dignified and respectful manner.

Choosing between many pictures can be difficult, especially for younger children. One option, if facilities allow, is to give more time for the child to simply browse through the pictures at their own pace, before the storytelling. This means you will need to set up a space where children can do this, e.g., a supervised laptop where the child's file of pictures can be opened by them. Alternatively, if they or the family have a mobile phone, all of their pictures can be given to them to go through at their leisure.



Some children may tell you they want to keep all their photos. Ask if anyone in their family has a mobile phone and arrange a time for the child/parent to bring the phone and transfer all the pictures for them.

### Editing the pictures

If you have the time and resources, it could be valuable to give the chosen pictures to a photo or picture editor who has the skill and an understanding of the project, to enhance the child's chosen picture (colour correction and other alterations that do not change the photo in any substantial way).



In Greece and Bosnia and Herzegovina the team collaborated with an experienced photographer. They sent the pictures chosen for the exhibition to him via a file transfer service. He made no substantive changes to the children's pictures but was able to enhance their quality, returning them overnight to be sent to the printer.

### Printed photos for the child to keep

This component may be skipped, but it is recommended that you allow the child to choose 10 photos that you print for them to keep. These pictures often become treasured mementos for the children. If you have the resources (perhaps you could enlist the support of someone from your organization's communications team) you could collect all the exhibition photos and stories in a PDF and print a copy for each child.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> For an example of how stories and pictures were collected in a flipbook in Greece, see [https://migrantchildstorytelling.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/MCSt\\_Flipbook.pdf](https://migrantchildstorytelling.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/MCSt_Flipbook.pdf)



## Storytelling

After the child has chosen which picture they want to exhibit, explain that you would like to learn more about it, why they chose it, and what it means to them. Explain that you are going to write down exactly what they say, and that this text will be displayed under the picture in their own language and the language of the exhibition (if different), so that everyone coming to the exhibition can read it.

The most important thing when guiding the child through the storytelling process is not to put pressure on them to talk, or to talk about things they don't want to discuss. That does not, however, mean that you can't ask them questions or prompt them a little. Some children are shy and not used to anyone being interested in what they have to say, so initially they may be reluctant to say anything at all. For example:

*Facilitator:* Why did you choose this photo of a tree?

*Child:* I liked it.

Without gentle prompting, this could be the end of the conversation. But with non-intrusive questions that follow the child's lead, the story can unfold:

*Facilitator:* I like it too. What do you like about it?

*Child:* It's got funny droopy branches.

*Facilitator:* It has *(pause)*. What do you feel when you see those branches?

*Child:* Me and my brother love playing underneath that tree because no one can see us.

*Facilitator:* What do you play?

And so, the story continues...

### Interviewing dos and don'ts

#### Do pay full attention

Show the child they have your full attention:

- Give encouraging verbal and non-verbal feedback: "mmm...", "I see", etc., nodding.
- Keep eye contact, but make sure to do it in a way that feels comfortable for the child. Intense eye contact can seem intimidating.
- Show with your body language that you are focused on the child by facing towards them, not away from them.
- Keep your telephone in your pocket or out of sight.
- If the child has a lot to say and appears to want to tell a longer story but you're unable to extend the session, explain that you want to hear everything they have to say and will arrange more time. (See case study below.)

*continued on next page*

**Interviewing dos and don'ts** *continued*

**Do not push**

Some children feel comfortable speaking and telling stories. Others are more hesitant, and some may not want to say much at all. That's OK. Don't push the child to talk. Be available and show them that you're genuinely interested in hearing what they want to say if they want to share it. Some children may feel their picture says everything and that they don't want to say much about it.

**Do ask open-ended questions**

Open-ended questions encourage the child to speak freely and openly about their experience and invite dialogue.

Closed-ended questions invite short "yes" or "no" answers. With less talkative children, these questions tend to lead to very brief conversations.

You should also avoid asking leading questions or questions that may cause the child to think you are prompting them for a specific answer.

*Say:*

- "What do you like about the tree [you photographed]?"
- "How did you feel when that happened?"
- "Can you tell me something about the person you photographed?"
- "What did you find interesting when you took this picture?"
- "Then, what happened?"

*Do not say:*

- "Do you think the tree is beautiful?"
- "Were you afraid/angry/happy/amused when that happened?"
- "Do you like the person you photographed?"
- "I think this picture is interesting because of how the bird is sitting, don't you?"
- "And then you did [X,Y,Z], didn't you?"

**Do write down everything the child says**

It is important to write down the child's words and answers to your questions verbatim. If the child goes too fast or is unclear, ask them to repeat.

**Do read the story back to the child**

At the end of the storytelling session, read what the child has told you back to them to ensure that you've accurately recorded what they want to say. Ask if there's anything they would like to add, remove or say differently. This gives the child the opportunity to hear their own words, check them for accuracy, and reflect on whether there are things they would like to cut and/or add. On numerous occasions children have said, "No, delete that sentence. I don't want it in," and/or "Yes, I want to add that ..."

## Supplementary forms of storytelling

Not all children want to take photographs. Some want to draw pictures, some to tell longer stories verbally, and some want to do these things in addition to the photography.

If space, resources and available staff allow, create a supervised space with necessary materials where children can come to do this. It can be a supplementary activity for the workshop. Use of the materials is subject to the same guidelines regarding consent and publication as the picture stories. Drawn stories can be used along with the verbal storytelling process in the same way as photographs.

See, for example: “My life story by Mia” (link in Annex B).

Some children may also wish to shoot videos and interviews and discuss things on film. This is a more time-consuming process that will require more technical support in the form of film editing, subtitle insertion, etc. Instructions and considerations on the use of video and film are beyond the scope of this guide.



### Storytelling Workshop in Belize, 2018

In Belize, we had the use of a communal room belonging to the community as a base. The children were given cameras for 24 hours. They were told that the facilitators would be in the room all afternoon on the first day and all morning on the second if they wanted to do drawing, check any problems with their cameras, or chat about anything. Children therefore had the opportunity to come whether they were on morning or afternoon school shifts, and out-of-school children could come whenever they wanted. Almost all the children came in to draw, and these pictures were also exhibited in the final exhibition. See, for example: “Ana misses school” (link in Annex B).



In northern Greece, it became clear during the storytelling component that some children had much longer stories they wanted to tell. The facilitator and cultural mediator therefore made extra time to meet with the child for longer so that they could tell the whole story they wished to relate. See, for example, Maria’s picture and her story from northern Greece (link in Annex B).<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Lynne Jones, *The Migrant Diaries*, The Refuge Press 2020, p. 171

# KEEPING THE CHILDREN SAFE

**Keeping children safe in all circumstances is, of course, essential. In the storytelling workshop you may be working with children who have fled war, persecution or abject poverty, or who for other reasons live in precarious circumstances. Many of the children have seen or experienced things that no child ever should.**

In the workshop, children are given the opportunity to depict and then discuss anything in the world around them that they find interesting and/or which is significant to them. They have your full empathetic attention, and you build trust with them. In this attentive and trusting space it is possible that some children will share things that upset them or cause you to be worried for their wellbeing and safety.

You should have mechanisms in place to address risks to the children. These include internal risks from the organization, staff and volunteers, and external risks from the local communities and surroundings. All staff and volunteers working with children must therefore have completed foundational training in abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence that affect children in their families and communities.<sup>5</sup>

## Referral

The storytelling facilitator, and indeed all staff and volunteers working directly with the children during the workshop, must be able to support and comfort an upset child, recognize signs that the child needs further support or is in any kind of danger – and know how to act on this information.

When you have identified a need for a child to be referred for further support and you have the consent of the child and/or its caregivers, you need to know which services are available and how to refer the child to them. These are your referral pathways.

Services could be mental health care, protection against violence and abuse, medical care, education, psychosocial or recreational activities, food or other necessities. You need to have an up-to-date mapping of which services are available, and how to access them. For example, some medical services can be accessed directly, others require a referral from a general practitioner. Your organization should have a person responsible for child protection and referral that you can consult with.

Further guidance can also be found in the Inter-Agency Guidelines for Case Management and Child Protection and the IASC Guidelines for Gender-Based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Settings (links in Annex B).

---

<sup>5</sup> United Nations Children's Fund, Save the Children/MHPSS Collaborative and World Health Organization, I Support My Friends – Theory and Implementation Guide, UNICEF, New York, 2021



During the storytelling process, a Syrian boy told the facilitator that he had suffered from bad nightmares since crossing from Turkey to Greece in a small, overcrowded boat, when he thought he might drown: “The waves came over us, but we were OK because another big boat came and saved us.”

He told the facilitator that in the dreams a devil comes and tells him to kill his sister or his mother, both of whom he adores, and he is afraid. He also dreams about Daesh and the things he has seen on television: the throat cutting and heads on poles.

The facilitator recognized the severity of these nightmares. They had been going on for a long time, and were affecting the boy emotionally and physically.

As preparation for the workshop, the team had mapped what services were available in the camp for different needs and referral procedures. The next day, the facilitator was able to take the boy to an NGO that provided mental health services for further support.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> United Nations Children’s Fund, Save the Children/MHPSS Collaborative and World Health Organization, I Support My Friends – Theory and Implementation Guide, UNICEF, New York, 2021



# EXHIBITION AND CELEBRATION

**The exhibition is an important component of the workshop. It provides the opportunity for children to share and celebrate their work, particularly with their caregivers, friends, teachers and others in their community. The experience is meaningful to the children and very empowering. It can also be a challenge to organize.**

There are many variations of how an exhibition can be arranged, depending on the place, available resources, and what seems fitting in your particular context.

A “standard” exhibition could look like this:

- An exhibition space is identified that is available and accessible to all the children and families involved. For example, it may be a school hall, a community centre, NGO spaces, or a large tent in a refugee camp.
- All the pictures with stories (in the relevant languages) are printed in large format on some form of board such as hardboard or forex.
- All the pictures with stories are hung in the exhibition space, chairs and food arranged, and an LCD projector and microphone set up. (Allow at least three hours for this in spaces that are only temporarily available.)
- The exhibition is opened.
- A representative of the workshop welcomes everyone and explains a little about the ideas behind the workshop.
- The pictures are then shown one by one on a big screen and each child is invited to read the story accompanying the picture. Some children may not be comfortable speaking in front of a crowd. In this case, a facilitator can read the text out loud.
- Each child is thanked, applauded and given the printed copies of their chosen 10 pictures.
- After the presentation, refreshments are served, and the audience is invited to go around and look at the pictures in their own time.
- After the exhibition is over, gather the team together for a wrap-up discussion about what went well and what you could do better if the workshop is repeated. This relates both to practical matters and to the content and outcomes of the workshop.
- Gather the children together after the exhibition and talk to them about how the workshop met their expectations and if they have any suggestions about how future workshops could be improved.



### The details matter

Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2021:

“We did two exhibitions in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The first was held on a sunny Saturday morning when many families preferred to go into town, and the children wanted to be outside. Consequently, very few attended. The facilitator read the stories as each picture was shown, without a microphone. The audience could not hear properly and grew restless, which was not a nice experience for the children in the room. The second exhibition was held in late afternoon and all the families and children attended, along with local media. We had a microphone, and we showed each picture, with either the child or the facilitator reading the story aloud. This time the audience paid attention and each child’s work was loudly applauded. This worked much better. Before and after the speeches, children moved around showing their family and friends their pictures. Local media also interviewed many of the children in front of their work.”



When you decide how to print the photos, make sure you consider where and how they will be hung. For example, in Bosnia and Herzegovina it was necessary to ask the camp management for their permission and help to drill holes in the walls as no other fixtures were available. Then we had to allocate time to fixing string to the boards. These may seem like small details, but they take time.

## Timing of the exhibition

Choose a time for the exhibition that is convenient for the participants and their families. In some cases, that would be outside the regular working hours of the staff members involved. Therefore, remember to take potential overtime payment into consideration when planning and budgeting.

## Printing

You will need to budget for printing both the 10 photos for each child (e.g., 10 x 15 cm) and the enlarged photos with text for the exhibition. The size of the exhibition pictures depends on how much space you have for the exhibition and how you choose to hang them.

There are cheap printing solutions online, but there can be benefits to using a local print shop as they may be able to assist you with mounting the pictures and text if you don’t have that expertise in house.

Prices vary from country to country, so it’s impossible to set a budget in these guidelines. Printing the large photos for the exhibition can be expensive depending on how you choose to do it, so it’s important to research printing costs during the planning phase.

# MEASURING AND EVALUATING BENEFITS

The workshops can have many benefits for children, caregivers, staff and volunteers. Benefits include improved social connectedness and wellbeing.<sup>7</sup> You could show these benefits through an evaluation of the changes brought about by the activity, but changes are more likely to be visible if this activity is part of a broader programme supporting children’s mental health and psychosocial wellbeing. It is therefore recommended to integrate this activity into the monitoring, evaluation and accountability system of the larger programme or project of which it is a part.

Evaluation also supports organizational learning and helps programme staff to adjust and adapt activities based on the results.

You can collect qualitative feedback through, for example, focus group discussions. This could include questions that explore changes in relationships or the impact reported by children, caregivers and facilitators.

You could also collect quantitative information. The table below provides a few examples of indicators you could use to measure the reach and impact of the activity.

## Activity reach and impact indicators

| Indicator type                      | Indicator                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Process indicator</b><br>(reach) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Number of children participating in structured group activities.</li><li>• Number of service providers receiving MHPSS supervision while delivering structured group activities for children</li></ul>                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>Impact indicator</b>             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Percentage of children who report or demonstrate an improvement in their mental health and psychosocial wellbeing following their participation</li><li>• Percentage of service providers trained who demonstrate or report improved knowledge and skills in supporting the mental health and psychosocial wellbeing of children</li></ul> |

For more information on monitoring and evaluation you can refer to the Inter-agency Standing Committee Common Monitoring and Evaluation Framework for MHPSS Programmes (link in Annex B).

<sup>7</sup> See MHPSS MSP Section 3.6 “Provide group activities for children’s mental health and psychosocial wellbeing” (see Annex B for link).

# ADVOCACY

**The exhibited pictures and text can be used for advocacy in many ways, both in digital and hard copy form.**



For example, displaced children's pictures and stories are exhibited online on a dedicated website: [www.migrantchildstorytelling.org](http://www.migrantchildstorytelling.org). Pictures and stories from this website have gone on to be used as a resource to educate others in many different contexts, including teaching on climate change and a TEDx talk, *Giving the Migrant Child a Voice* (link in Annex B). There is nothing to stop project coordinators developing unique websites or platforms for their children's work. They may be able to exhibit the hard copies at other locations/exhibition spaces. Local communities may be interested in exhibiting the children's work, which offers more opportunities for connection and integration.

Do remember to obtain consent from the children and the people in the photos if they are to be used beyond the exhibition.

Through the child storytelling workshops, children take the time to look around their environment and show what they do or don't like about it. This may be friends made at school, local staff, beautiful architecture or historic buildings in the local town, or surrounding nature. In all these cases, the local community has the opportunity to see that they are valued and appreciated, and the children have the chance to share something about their lives. Stereotypes on both sides are broken down.

Through sharing pictures and stories that reflect on different aspects of their lives, children are given the opportunity to tell others what matters to them, what their hopes and dreams are, what needs to change, and what should stay the same. They are given a voice and become their own advocates. It's an empowering, enjoyable experience that connects them to the outside world and other people around them, and can have a profound and positive impact on their mental wellbeing.

# ANNEX A – CONSENT FORM EXAMPLES

**Obtaining consent is an essential component of the workshop. Four types of consent are needed:**

- Written consent from the caregivers for the child to participate in the workshop (Annex A1)
- Verbal consent if a child wants to photograph another person
- Written, informed consent from all the people in the photo a child chooses for the exhibition (Annex A2)
- Non-exclusive copyright release permission if you plan to use the photo outside the direct context of the workshop and exhibition, e.g., for advocacy purposes or on a website (Annex A3).

Please note that the legal requirements for how broadly consent can be given vary from country to country. The examples provided below may not be compliant with your country's specific laws. It is your responsibility to ensure that you comply with relevant rules and regulations. Your organization's communications and media team should be able to help you.

Please follow these minimum requirements when obtaining written consent for permission to exhibit a photo with a person in it:

- ✓ Compliant with local law
- ✓ Written in the signee's native language
- ✓ Written in an easy-to-understand manner without complicated legal terms
- ✓ Contains accurate information about how the picture will be used and shared (only in the exhibition? On a website? On social media?)
- ✓ Contains contact information for the person responsible for the workshop in case the signee has questions or wants to withdraw consent
- ✓ The person gathering consent must ensure that the signee has read and understood the consent form before signing.



## Annex A1: Sample information sheet and consent form for the child to participate in the workshop

Please note that these are a SAMPLE information sheet and consent form for guidance. They may not be compliant with legal requirements in your country or with your organization's standards. It is your responsibility to adapt them to meet all requirements.

### INFORMATION SHEET

[Project name]

[Project address]

[Contact details of person responsible]

#### What is the Child Storytelling Project?

The storytelling project is a creative and empowering opportunity for children to express themselves through their words and photos. We will lend a group of children a camera and we will teach them how to use it. Then we will set a time for the children to take pictures of what matters to them. Afterwards, the children will choose a photo to display at an exhibition we will organize. We will ask the children to explain their choice in their own words and tell their story of the photo. We will invite you and other community members to the exhibition, where the photos of all children who have participated will be displayed and we will ask them to read their story. The project aims to promote the children's self-expression, self-confidence and sense of agency.

#### Workshop Details

The workshop will take place [explain where and when the photography part will take place].

At the end of the workshop, some of the artwork (photographs, stories, drawings, etc.) will be shown at [explain where the pictures will be shown]. The artwork shown will be selected by your child with the support of a workshop facilitator. We will not show any artwork without your child's permission.

At the exhibition, we will ask your child if they would like to read their stories. This means that they and their photos and artwork will be identified. If your child does not want to read their story, a workshop facilitator can read it with your child's permission. Your child can choose whether or not their name is used. If your child chooses not to use their own name in their story and/or photos and artwork, we will not use it. However, we cannot fully guarantee that your child will not be identified by some people due to the nature of their story or photo. We will not use any pictures taken of other people without their consent.

#### Does my child have to participate?

It is up to you to decide whether your child participates. If you agree, we ask you to sign the consent form.

*continued on next page*

**INFORMATION SHEET** *continued***What are the benefits?**

The storytelling workshop gives children an opportunity to show and speak about what is important to them. It gives them time and space to share something personal with others, which can be uplifting and increase their self-esteem. It also gives others, such as yourself and the community, a chance to learn more about the children. Previous storytelling workshops have shown that the project can improve relationships between the children and those who care for them. Ultimately, it's a fun activity.

**What are the risks?**

Children may choose to share a photo that is emotionally important to them. A facilitator will ask them to talk about the photo they have selected and what it means to them. If your child gets upset, our facilitators are trained and equipped to comfort them. If the facilitator believes your child would benefit from further support, they will contact you to discuss what services are available.

**What are my rights and my child's rights?**

If you change your mind about your child's participation, you can withdraw your consent at any time. But we encourage you to speak to us first so that we can discuss your decision. Your child may also choose to stop participating in the project at any time. They may also decide not to read their story at the exhibition, even if earlier they said they wanted to. Your child can change their mind, as can you.

You will receive a copy of this information sheet and the consent form.

## CONSENT FORM

Your child is invited by [organization] to take part in our child storytelling project.

Before you decide whether to give your child permission to participate in the storytelling workshop, it is important for you to understand why we are doing the workshop and what it will involve.

Please take time to read the information sheet carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. If there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information, please ask us. You can contact us here [contact details].

I confirm that the child storytelling project has been explained to me and/or I have read the information sheet.

I have been provided with a copy of the information sheet and this consent form.

I, the undersigned parent, guardian or adult responsible for

[write the name of child in capital letters]

give permission for my child to participate in the workshop and for their photo, story and other artwork to be shown at [write where it will be shown].

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Your name in capital letters)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature)

## Annex A2: Sample subject release form

Please note that this is a SAMPLE consent form for guidance. It may not be compliant with legal requirements in your country or with your organization’s standards. It is your responsibility to adapt the form to meet all requirements.

[Project name]

[Project address]

[Contact details of person responsible]

By signing this release form, I hereby grant [organization] the right to use, display and reproduce the photograph(s) and/or video showing my likeness as described below.

My name will not be displayed in any published materials.

The photo(s) and/or video can be used on websites and in reports and print media worldwide for the purposes of promoting peace, tolerance and children’s rights. The photographs and/or video may not be used for commercial purposes.

The photograph(s)/video containing my likeness were taken on (date) \_\_\_\_\_  
in [location including town/country] \_\_\_\_\_  
by [photographer’s name] \_\_\_\_\_

I further confirm that these images are a true likeness of me and were taken with my knowledge and consent.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of subject      Age (if under 18 years)      Date      Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Address and other contact information

IF SUBJECT IS A CHILD UNDER 18 YEARS OF AGE:

I confirm that I am the legal guardian of the child named above and therefore may grant permission for this subject release on behalf of the child:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of legal guardian/relationship to child      Date      Signature of guardian

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of witness/organization affiliation      Date      Witness signature

## Annex A3: Sample non-exclusive copyright release permission form

Please note that this is a SAMPLE consent form for guidance. It may not be compliant with legal requirements in your country or with your organization's standards. It is your responsibility to adapt the form to meet all requirements.

[Project name]

[Project address]

[Contact details of person responsible]

Individual Release:

This form hereby grants to [organization] the non-exclusive\* copyright to reproduce, display and disseminate worldwide and forever, in any traditional or electronic media format or platform, the original work or works described here and created by me, whether drawings, photographs, audio recordings, videos, writings (including their translation into any language) or other media. I affirm my permission to grant these rights to [organization] with my signature here:

---

Name of Child Creator / Age of Child / Date / Signature

[Description of Work or Work Project & Media / Year Created / City, Country]

---



---

If creator/copyright holder is a child – under 18 years of age – this release must also be signed by the child's legal guardian:

I affirm that I am the legal guardian of the child named above and therefore also grant permission for this copyright use:

---

Name of Legal Guardian / Relationship to Child / Date / Signature of Guardian

---

Name of Witness / Organization Affiliation / Date / Witness Signature

\* A grant of "non-exclusive" rights means that the copyright owner also keeps the rights to continue to reproduce her/his own work as she/he wishes.

# ANNEX B – INSPIRATION FROM ONLINE RESOURCES AND PAST WORKSHOPS

## Storytelling resources

### [Migrant Child Storytelling – The Children’s Film](#)

A 40-minute film made by children in a refugee camp in northern Greece in 2016



### [Storytelling project in Belize](#)

In November 2018, UNHCR lent cameras to 20 refugee children to document their lives. After taking pictures in their home communities for a day, each child chose their favourite picture to exhibit. This is a selection.



### [Ana misses school](#)

Ana and her family have been displaced from another part of Central America and live in Belize. She was 10 years old in November 2018.



### [My life story, by Mia](#)

Mia comes from Yemen. She was nine years old and living on the island of Samos, Greece, when she drew this picture story about her life in June 2019.



### [Maria’s picture and story from northern Greece](#)

Maria, from Syria, was 11 years old and living in a refugee camp in northern Greece when she told this story in August 2016.





### **It's all about love**

At a migrant storytelling workshop in Greece, all the exhibited pictures were collected in a flip book. The children each received a printed book as a memento.



---

### **Kefrem's hopes and dreams**

Kefrem was 14 years old in April 2017 when he told the story of how he escaped to Mexico from El Salvador when gangs threatened to kill him and his parents.



---

### **Giving the Migrant Child a Voice**

Dr. Lynne Jones's TedX talk about the Migrant Storytelling project



---

### **"The first movie"**

Trailer for the documentary by Mark Cousins that inspired the Migrant Storytelling project



---

### **The Nature Photography Project with children from Mousehole School**

A 2020 photography workshop for school children in Cornwall, England, as part of their "Seeing the Landscape" project.



## Technical resources

### General programming

#### [The Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Minimum Services Package – For an effective MHPSS emergency response, PDF version](#)

Developed by UNICEF and the World Health Organization



#### [Global Multisectoral Framework for MHPSS of Children, Adolescents and Caregivers Across Settings](#)

Developed by UNICEF



### Safeguarding and child protection

#### [Operational Guidance for Child Friendly Spaces in Humanitarian Settings](#)

See Chapter 2: Setting up a safe space

World Vision International and IFRC Reference Centre for Psychosocial Support, Copenhagen



#### [The Children’s Resilience Programme, Facilitator’s Handbook 2 – Workshop tracks](#)

Workshop 10: Keeping safe in the future 2 includes an activity for mapping risks and safety in the children’s community (p. 131)

Developed by Save the Children Denmark and IFRC Reference Centre for Psychosocial Support



#### [Child Protection System: Mapping and assessment toolkit](#)

See Chapter 4 on principles and standards on child safeguarding and safe programming.

Developed by UNICEF



**Inter Agency Guidelines for Case Management and Child Protection**

Developed by the Child Protection Working Groups



**Inter Agency Guidelines for integrating gender-based violence interventions in humanitarian action**

Developed by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee



**Policy on Conduct Promoting the Protection and Safeguarding of Children**

UNICEF



**UNICEF Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and Sexual Harassment**

UNICEF



**Child protection strategy**

UNICEF



**Child safeguarding policy**

Save the Children



## Training

### Psychological First Aid for Child Practitioners

Training in psychological first aid with a focus on children. The training targets professionals such as teachers, educators, health and social workers, etc., and volunteers working directly with children in emergencies or in the aftermath of conflicts, natural disasters and critical events.

Developed by Save the Children Denmark



### I Support My Friends

"I Support My Friends" builds on the principles of Psychological First Aid to equip older children and adolescents with the skills and knowledge to support their friends in distress, under the mentorship and guidance of trusted adults.

Developed by UNICEF, Save the Children, the MHPSS Collaborative and WHO



### EQUIP: Ensuring Quality Psychological Support

EQUIP provides guidance and tools to assess and monitor competencies in helpers to enhance training and supervision and build safe, effective, and high-quality services.

Developed by WHO and UNICEF



## Setting up a safe space

### Operational Guidance for Child Friendly Spaces in Humanitarian Settings

For more information about setting up safe spaces for children, please see Chapter 2: Setting up a safe space

Developed by World Vision International and IFRC Reference Centre for Psychosocial Support



---

## Working with cultural mediators

---

### **Supporting Survivors of Violence: The Role of Linguistic and Cultural Mediators, with a Focus on Gender-Based Violence and Sexual Violence against Men and Boys. A Training Curriculum**



Module 3 goes in depth into the roles and responsibilities of linguistic and cultural mediators.

Developed by Women's Refugee Commission and UNICEF

---

### **Field Guide to Humanitarian Interpreting and Cultural Mediation**



Guide to support humanitarian field managers, interpreters and cultural mediators in their daily interactions and responsibilities

Developed by Translators without Borders

---

## Monitoring and evaluation

---

### **The Common Monitoring and Evaluation Framework for Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergency Settings: with means of verification (Version 2.0)**



Developed by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee

---

### **Plan International (2018) Child-Friendly Feedback Mechanisms: Guide and Toolkit**



Comprehensive guide to child-friendly feedback mechanisms with a strong focus on prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse

Tool 5 in the toolkit focuses on how to conduct child-friendly feedback activities.

---



[www.unicef.org](http://www.unicef.org)



[www.mhpsscollaborative.org](http://www.mhpsscollaborative.org)