



## Self-Protection with children in the community

### Recommendations



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## Introduction

These recommendations result from a two year project backed by the European Commission “Self-Protection with children in the community”.

This project has been coordinated by the French Red Cross and included the following partners: Belgian Red Cross, Bulgarian Red Cross, Finnish Red Cross, and the University of Paris V René Descartes. It received the backing and support of the French ministry of Sustainable Development and the French ministry of the Interior.

The general objective of this program was to prepare children to face risks situations by:

- **Helping to develop children’s psychological and social potential to face risk situations.** We are looking for a global approach to risk. We do not want to concentrate our efforts on any one risk in particular (domestic, major....) but to increase children’s risk awareness and potential to face situations which represent a danger for them.
- **Supporting the educative practices of adults regarding risk education.** Children should be guided by adults knows to them, their parents, their grandparents, and teachers. We would like to increase the responsibility of adults in children’s risk education. This is an innovative new step compared to the most current pedagogical methods which teaches the children to in turn teach their parents thereby, placing a too heavy burden of responsibility on them and producing a role inversion by giving them the role of educating their parents who are considered as incompetent. Our approach is to the contrary to reinforce confidence in the adults’ capacity to protect children.
- **Reinforcing the links with the community.** We hope to make children think about the resources they could have when they face a risk by reinforcing the social intergenerational link. These resources are then individual and come also from the community.

This project also aimed at developing a new pedagogy regarding risk education, taking into account:

- The cognitive and emotional development of children and their needs
- The necessary interactions of children with the wider community for their preparedness and their protection
- Communication strategies concerning safety prevention and their consequences

These recommendations are addressed to any organization willing to develop a risk education program based on this approach. This approach might be complementary to an approach focusing on risks and the right behaviors to adopt. Any partner of this project would be pleased in training any organization who is interested in implementing such a program in its country.

The project partners

## I. Children risks education: Global approach

When developing children risks education programs some dimensions should be taken into account in order to be respectful of children's affective, cognitive development and in order to take into account their environment.

### 1. Taking into account children 'needs and capabilities

What do children need in terms of risks preparedness and what are their capabilities? This question should be answered before any children's' education program development.

We must remember that children have a personality in the making and thus will be more vulnerable and will not have the same capabilities as adults.

The specific needs of children and also their capabilities have to be considered for several reasons:

Firstly, these needs and capabilities have to be taken into account in the development of the resources in order to use pedagogical strategies adapted to children.

Secondly, we have to take into account and find out how children's specific needs can be highlighted in pedagogical resources in order to make adults of the community aware of these needs to enable them to build their own preparedness solutions.

#### - Risks perception and diagnostic abilities

From a cognitive point of view, children will not be able to recognize dangers as adults. Indeed, children' evaluation of risk might be different according to the gravity of risk situations because their lack of death conceptualization limits their consciousness of danger. So the gravity and the consequences of an emergency situation might not be easily perceived by young children.

Children' ability to diagnose and perceive danger is also related to the cognitive development stage. Under 12 years old, children have a lack of practical experience (including experience of their vulnerability which is a predictor of risk evaluation) and a lack of information (especially conceptual information) which is the main reason for which young people are unprepared for risks situations.

Children's risks perception might also be related to the situation itself. Indeed, concerning children's capabilities in terms of risk perception, the study<sup>1</sup> carried out during this project showed that their perception is based on their daily experiences. For example, they know more about the risks of playing with fire than about risks they incur at home or at school because playing is part of their daily experience. Working with children on everyday risk and death conceptualisation seems adequate enough to protect children from those risks as well as to enhance safety in serious situations.

Furthermore, risk education programs should be based on children' daily life experiences.

According to Pr. Louis Crocq<sup>2</sup>, from an affective point of view, a 6 to 12-year-old child' imagination hinders their objective view of risks. Death is reversible and they can just play at being dead and get up and walk away. Their imagination (about death, disasters...) is not

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<sup>1</sup> Study available at <http://www.autoprotectionducitoyen.eu/enfants/>

<sup>2</sup> Symposium Self-protection with children: what pedagogical resources can improve community preparedness? April 7th, 8th and 9th, 2010

controlled and their conception of death is not the same as adults. They need adults to bring coherence and to relieve them from their internal fears. Additionally, a destructive future filled with disasters is always countered by denial, which is the effect of optimism. Thus, children need to feel protected and secure as Pr. Louis Crocq emphasised. Risk education programs must give some input for parents to begin questioning the situations children live in and their feelings about these situations.

In considering these issues, listening and dialogue with children are essential and adults have to develop these capabilities.

- The need to feel protected

One very important need of children is to be surrounded by the adults of the community in order to feel protected.

Indeed in emergency, children are easily overwhelmed by their emotions and the mediation of the adults is crucial for children's protection. That is why it is important to include adults of the community who are in charge of children in risks education programs. Adults have to be aware of children's needs for protection as soon as the preparedness phase begins. Working together during this phase will give adults a better insight on children's needs.

Furthermore, the 6 to 12-year-old child is a personality in the making and is therefore fragile. They depend on parents or other adults for meeting their needs for shelter, food and clothes. They need to feel protected and be shown affection, and to show affection in return. They need to be freed from their fears and communicate with others. However, if they are vulnerable and unsure they cannot ensure their own safety. Nevertheless, through a mechanism of identification, they consider adults, particularly their parents, as role models and will obey them and seek their approval. There is therefore a dependence that gives security, but there are also the first steps towards autonomy. Children need models in order to build their personality and to gain autonomy.

- Need for protection to autonomy

It sometimes happens that children have to face disasters or risk situations on their own, without the help of an adult to give them instructions or to protect them. In some cases children will be alone or with other children without any adults or in an unknown environment. Parents may also be there but overwhelmed by emotions or suffering from acute stress disorder and thus unable to protect children. In all these situations, it is important that children can rely on these models they have interiorised and which will help them to act.

- Need for supervision

The children's needs which have been recognized by the adults (their parents, grandparents, and teachers) participating in the study carried out during this project are: protection, holding, supervision, dialogue and listening. Supervision has been considered as essential even by children. They indeed believe that they cannot always help each other in every situation and that they sometimes need the help of adults. Supervision will also help adults recognize children's capabilities and limits confronted to different kinds of situations. It may encourage autonomy in the long term supporting children to undertake actions they are able to carry out alone or to help them if needed but without overprotecting them.

- Need for sharing with peers

Not only should the communication between children and adults be supported but also the communication between peers. Vincent Magos<sup>3</sup>' experience shows that children need to

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<sup>3</sup> Symposium Self-protection with children: what pedagogical resources can improve community preparedness?

know that when they face difficult situations, they are not alone and that other children can feel the same way as them.

Thus we should consider their needs in order to:

- Support educational practices of adults which will participate to cover children's needs

But we should also consider children's capabilities in order to:

- Increase children's fundamental capabilities both social and psychological to face risks
- Not overestimate their capabilities (physical, cognitive, psychological) and place on them a too heavy burden when dealing with risks preparedness

#### Recommendations regarding children's needs and capabilities:

1-Adults need to be made aware of the emotional vulnerability and capabilities of children.

2-The dialogue about adults' experiences as models for action should be sustained on a daily basis.

3-Discussion about risk representation at home, at school and death conceptualisation should be addressed

4-Children should be encouraged to undertake actions if necessary under adults' supervision instead of preventing them to take any risks at all.

5-Children's knowledge of themselves, of their limits, of their capabilities should be developed.

## **2. Taking into account the community**

Two general statements should be taken into account while developing risk education programs:

- Everyone can play a role in risk preparedness, even children
- Trust and cooperation in the community should be promoted instead of mistrust and individualism.

This implies that the whole community will have a role to play. Risk education programs should not be developed only with and for children but with and for all the members of the community for several reasons:

First, because citizens are expected to work together to face local demands particularly during the response phase. The community is thus considered as people sharing the same environment. The notion of local level for risk preparedness is important, but the social support networks should be emphasized before a disaster in order to enable trust in the community in case of disaster.

Second, because children need to know that adults participate to risks preparedness for their protection. They need to know that they do not have the responsibility to ensure their own protection which could generate anxiety.

Third, because if it seems relevant to include parents in risk education programs, it is also important to think about the other adults of the community like grandparents, teachers or any other important adult in children's education should also be encouraged to participate in these kinds of programs. Children are not always with their parents and any adult of the community in charge of children should feel responsible for their protection.

Finally, as it has been highlighted earlier, a child will need the supervision and the support of the adults because children 'development and children 'behaviours in risk situation will also depend on adults educational practices. Indeed Children's coping and resilience appears as a multifactor phenomenon strongly related to internal and external factors. In short, coping is the reaction within the situation, and resilience is the reaction afterwards. However a resilience process is based on the success of coping, which depends on: giving sense to the situation based on imagination and creativity (Guedeney, 1998), optimism (Cyrułnik, 1999), efficient risk taking and initiative (Le Breton, 1995), flexibility and change of usual behaviours (Rowland, 1989). Internal factors represent complex skills: vulnerability and capability perception, learning motivation, identity valorization, imagination and creativity, optimism, efficient risk taking and initiative, flexibility of usual behaviours.

We assume that these factors are strongly limited by:

- the difficulties of children to assess risks and dangers, especially when they are lethal,
- the difficulties of children to understand the situation, due to their lack of experience and information,
- the emotional sensibility, inducing intense fear and insecurity,
- and the risk of inefficient risk taking due to internal factors or emotion.

External factors are therefore essential especially social support, parenting and trust that should be supported in risk education programs.

### Everyone can play a role

Considering these issues, what could be the role of each individual in the community? Risk education programs should firstly help everyone to be prepared to the role they could play during emergency situations.

A study shows the importance of the role of adults in children' risk education. Zdanowicz & al. (2008) discuss the importance of differentiation between adults and children to limit children's risk taking. The legitimacy of adults' role, as an educational role, appears as a major factor influencing the construction of children's identity which helps limit children's risk taking. In any case, it appears important, for children's identity and behaviours, to preserve childhood and define clearly an educational role and responsibility for adults.

One important aspect of the roles of the adults is to address the question of risks with children and dialogue with them on a daily basis.

The discussion about risks should address risks perceptions. Children and adults don't necessarily have the same perception of risks. Because risks education is partly based on adults 'perception of risks and it is necessary that they understand that children do not

perceive certain risks whereas they may perceive other risks that adults do not think about. An adjustment needs to be done between their risks perception.

But it is also important that the discussion about risks should address the issue of emotions. Risk preparedness should also be conceived with an emotional point of view.

This is why talking about emotions with children is important in order to understand their feelings; their fears and finding with them what could reassure them in risk situations.

It is also useful to note that an everyday life situation for instance watching news on television can be an occasion to discuss risks with children and give meaning to what they see or experiment but do not understand.

This participates to support sensitive parenting. This “sensitive style” is the one that encourage the best development of social, emotional and cognitive abilities. It is based on both a cognitive and affective dimension: listening and behavioral adaptation to children ‘affective needs and interest while providing interactional answers to children ‘cognitive needs.

Elderly persons can also help provide meaning to the events because they represent the memory of the community and are most of the time able to describe the risks incurred by the community, what has been done in the past to prevent these risks and how the community prepared itself to face these risks. Placing importance on elderly people in the community and acknowledging the expression of local culture is essential in risk education programs.

Furthermore, the study carried out during this project showed that grandparents ‘role as supervisors is recognized by all the categories of participants (children from 8 to 11 years old, their parents, grandparents and teachers). However, the results also showed that calling grandparents to help out if there is a problem is underestimated by all the categories of participants except by the grandparents themselves. This means that grandparents feel able to give some help in some situations but they are not considered as capable by some of their family. It might be useful to reinforce trust of children towards their grandparents as well as each one representation of elderly persons in case of an everyday problem and we can assume in risk situation too.

Everyone can play a role in risk preparedness, even children. But it is essential, as it has been already described not to place a too heavy burden on children because it happens that programs overestimate children ‘abilities, responsibility and autonomy.

A balance should be found between overprotecting them and overestimating their capabilities and placing them in too responsible role. Furthermore, this balance should be regularly revised because as a child grows up, his self-protection capabilities increase and its needs to be protected decrease. That is why risk education programs should give the possibility to adapt to each individual and to make participants think about their needs, capabilities and to not apply standardized procedures.

### Supporting trust in the community

As it has been highlighted earlier, trust and social support are external factors contributing to coping and resilience capabilities.

However trust and cooperation within the members of the community are not always so obvious. Indeed the study carried out during the project assessed educational community bonding and showed that:

- All the groups agreed that children can’t always help each other and that they also need the help of the adults to face some situations

- Parents have a strong role in terms of trust, dialogue and supervision so that they appear as the mainstay of education but
- Children's dialogue with parents might be under evaluated by teachers and elders (50-70 and 70+). In France and Bulgaria only 50% of teachers participating to this study consider that children can talk to their parents in case of problem.
- The role of teachers neighbours seems to be under evaluated by parents, grandparents and children. Only 61% of parents and grandparents consider trusting teachers, which means that 58% consider that they cannot count on teachers in case of problem. As for children in Belgium and France only 57 % of them consider that they can talk to their teacher in case of problem.
- Rescuers and neighbours appear to be the least trusted. It is also important to note that only 77% of children trust their grandparents.

Those results might point out lack of bonding between children, parents, grandparents, teachers, rescuers and neighbours, which reflect a vulnerability in the educational community. Education, as the core of children's abilities of risk coping and protection of children, depends upon mutual trust, dialogue and common supervision of children. Thus, the anchorage of children's development and protection needs effective co-implication of the community which might be supported through the transparency of interactions and the upholding of each one's contribution.

Furthermore, the study also showed that there might be no need to enhance the perception of risks or to emphasize severity through communication, but to focus on risk representation and beliefs and on practical knowledge with a distinction between help demands (concerning children) and personal knowledge. These results invite us to consider the lack of sharing of risk representation as a potential vulnerability within the community. The answer is not necessarily the strengthening of one unique level and way of representation. Many authors suggest quite differently that the existence of a "Slack" between different risk representations within a group is an asset for discussions, acute diagnosis and appropriate reactions, due to the possibility of "cross fertilization" (Rijpma, 1993). The lack of sharing might be, more correctly, analysed as a lack of interactions dealing with risks, or a symptom of weaknesses of bonding within the educational community.

In conclusion, participative actions in order to exchange about risks representations and preparedness strategies should be encouraged. Everyone should be able to find its role according to its capabilities, its limits and needs. The identification of these dimensions is part of the preparedness. Adults should help children to find their role by fixing them realistic objectives according to their capabilities.

#### Recommendations regarding the role of the community

- 1-Everyone should be prepared to play a role depending on their capabilities, limits and needs
- 2-Adults educational practices should encourage taking into account children' emotional and cognitive needs through shared dialogue
- 3- Everyone should identify a resource person in the community who could help in case of problem and trust should be promoted within the community
- 4-Risks representations should be shared within the community

### **3. Preparedness communication strategies: the role of fear in motivating people to be prepared**

One major strategy regarding communication about preparedness has been analysed. This strategy consists in diffusing fear appeal messages in order to motivate people to prepare themselves.

However, even if this strategy can work in the short term, it will not change people's behaviours in a sustainable and constructive way.

Furthermore Serge Tisseron<sup>4</sup> emphasized that even if fear may help people obey given instructions on already known risks it will not help them to face new risks. On the contrary using fear prevents people from finding their own means of protection and facing new risks with taking the maximum amount of precautions.

Moreover, the results of the study showed that adults do not consider that fear is a good principle to motive action or understanding. They do not feel that they need to be frightened to act or to understand.

These results could be compared to the findings of experts regarding a research about motivation to prepare. According to Paton the use of distressing images in risk communication messages can reinforce people's beliefs that disasters are too catastrophic for personal action to be effective. So any preparedness action is considered as inefficient and people do not implement them preferring not to think about disasters at all.

#### Recommendation regarding preparedness communication

1-Communication about risks and preparedness should not use fear to be efficient but instead positive messages close to people concerns

### **4. Existing resources and gaps**

Some of existing risk education resources have been analyzed during this project and some dimensions are generally common to these resources:

- The majority of these resources focuses on a specific risk and tends to educate children to adopt the right behaviours when they have to face risk.
- The resources are addressed specifically to the children, often not taking into account that the children belong to a community.
- Preparedness is focused on individual skills and children's interaction with the wider community is disregarded.

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<sup>4</sup> Symposium Self-protection with children: what pedagogical resources can improve community preparedness?  
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Some gaps have been highlighted:

- Focusing on a specific risks and training people to adopt the right behavior does not allow people to think about their own capabilities and limits neither does it allow them to analyze their environment and the risks incurred in their environment. These resources give a procedure without analyzing the context in which people live.
- Addressing children only does not allow involving adults, places responsibility on children to educate adults around them.
- Relying on individual skills only does not allow community preparedness strategies and does not support cooperation and trust.

#### Recommendations regarding resources

1-There will always be risks and people should be prepared to find their own means to cope with risks and increase their self-protection capabilities

2-Making adults responsible and helping them to think about how to protect children psychologically and physically should be encouraged instead of making children responsible for their protection

3-Intergenerational relationships are one of the best ways to cope with a disaster. Links within the community should be created beforehand. The sharing of memory of the community, cultural knowledge should be supported giving the possibility so that anybody can feel part of it and help increase the sense of belonging to a community.

## II. Structure of the program

The aim of this chapter is to present objectives in which risk education programs should be structured. These objectives come from the global approach which has been presented in the previous chapter. They correspond to the fundamental capabilities which have to be encouraged by risk education programs.

These capabilities are the following:

### Fundamental capacities to be reinforced in children:

- Relational capabilities such as being able to call others for help
- The knowledge of one's capacities and limits
- Self-confidence in one's capacities and trust in others
- The capacity to learn from one's experiences and from those of others
- The development of autonomy
- Decision making and initiative taking
- Creativity
- Adaptability
- Autonomy

### Adults' educational practices to be supported:

- Understanding of children's affective and cognitive needs and emotional vulnerability
- Listening and dialogue abilities
- Understanding of the limits and capabilities of children
- Leading and guiding children to autonomy

### Dialogue among the adults of the community about children's safety should be encouraged.

They can be gathered into 4 categories of objectives which will be detailed in this chapter:

- Relational capabilities
- Decision making and initiative taking
- Understanding
- Behavioral capabilities

## 1. Relational capabilities

| Capabilities / results   | Means for children  | Means for adults  | Recommendations  |
|--|---|---|--|
| <b>Relational capabilities</b><br><b>Call for help</b><br><b>Help</b> each others<br><b>Bonding through:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· <b>Trust</b> each others</li> <li>· <b>Attachment</b></li> </ul> | <b>Dialogue</b> with adults and peers<br><b>Support</b> from adults and peers               | <b>Dialogue</b> within the community<br><b>Support</b> of the community   | <b>To facilitate the feeling of belonging to the community</b><br><b>Situations supporting:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- dialogue and support</li> <li>- adults helping children</li> <li>- Children's co-activity</li> <li>- positive interaction (Altruism, cooperation, trust)</li> </ul> <b>Information supporting:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- coherence in the community</li> <li>- positive image and legitimacy of parents, teachers and grandparents</li> </ul>  |
| Capabilities / results   | Means for children  | Means for adults  | Recommendations  |
| <b>Listening and Learning</b> from its' own experiences<br><br><b>Listening and Learning</b> from those of others  | <b>Dialogue</b> with peers and adults habits and practices<br><b>Supervision</b> from peers | <b>Questioning</b> habits and practices<br><b>Supervision</b> of children | <b>Adults as models for children</b><br><b>Lessons from the local culture and elderly persons</b><br><b>Situations:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- at home and at school</li> <li>- to help adults questioning their own habits and practices</li> <li>- to learn lessons from adults' experiences</li> </ul> <b>Pedagogy:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- to help children learn from their experiences and the experiences of the others</li> <li>- cooperation between grandparents, parents, teachers, neighbours and rescuers</li> </ul> |

Relational capabilities objective covers several expected results:

- calling for help
- helping each other
- bonding through trust and attachment
- listening and learning from one 's own experiences
- listening and learning from those of others

These relational capabilities which should be backed up by risk education programs are both individual skills and community skills because they are closely related. Trust and mutual help in the community are indispensable conditions to fulfill in order to develop self-protection behaviors at a community level. Everyone should be able to identify the useful and operational community for children concerning risks as resource persons. These resource persons could be called for help in case of risk situation and could be some kind of mentors from whom children could learn from their experiences in a daily basis. Each one should also be ready to give some help if necessary.

This means helping adults to question their own habits and practices, and that there is dialogue within the community in order to not only deliver coherent messages to children but also acknowledge that the entire educational community for this role not only requires the parents but teachers, grandparents too. The lessons learnt from local culture and elderly persons should be encouraged which could facilitate the feeling of belonging to a community.

## 2. Decision making and initiative taking

| Capabilities / results   | Means for children   | Means for adults   | Recommendations  |
|--|--|--|--|
| <b>Decision making and initiative taking</b><br>Capabilities to assess limits and capabilities | <b>Knowledge</b> of one's capabilities and limits<br><b>Capabilities to recognize</b> that they are able or not able to use their knowledge and know-how<br><b>Capabilities to know</b> that they have to call an adult for help | - Knowledge of one's capabilities and limits<br>- <b>Balancing personal practical knowledge and help needs</b><br>- Decision to act alone or with help | <u>Questioning stereotypes about gender, age, strangers, rescuers...</u><br><b>Signs / Information:</b><br>· to assess limits and needs<br>· to understand limits and capabilities of children<br><b>Pedagogy:</b><br>· to help children develop decision making and initiative taking |

Decision making and initiative taking is an important ability to have in case of risk situation which cannot be reduced to a standardized know-how about what to do. This comes from an individual and collective process of observation, deduction, analysis, elaboration. This process should take into account the assessment of one's capabilities and limits and the possibility of whether or not to use one's knowledge and know-how and when to call someone for help.

At a collective level, adults must question stereotypes for instance about gender and age in order to understand individual limits and capabilities of children.

## 3. Understanding

| Capabilities / results  | Means for children  | Means for adults   | Recommendations   |
|---|---|--|---|
| <b>Understanding</b><br>Understanding of children affective needs, emotional vulnerability and capabilities | <b>Dialogue</b> among children about their experiences and feelings in the presence of adults | Knowing:<br>- if children are able to undertake<br>- about children care<br>- about the situations children live<br>- about children feelings about these situations<br>- children abilities to cope<br>- children needs | <u>Questioning stereotypes about gender, age, strangers, rescuers...</u><br><u>Understanding human limits and capabilities</u><br><u>Working about children vulnerability especially death conceptualisation</u><br><b>Situations or topics:</b><br>- to enable adults to recognize the cognitive needs and emotional vulnerability of children<br><b>Pedagogy:</b><br>- to question the situations children live and their feelings about these situations |

|  |   |                          |                          |  |
|--|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--|
|  |   |                          |                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- to help adults reassuring children</li> <li>- to address death issues in particular with children</li> </ul>  |
|  | <b>Risk representation and perception</b> | Understanding situations | Understanding situations | <p><u>Differences in risk representation could be an opportunity for discussion, acute diagnosis and appropriate reactions</u></p> <p><b>Pedagogy :</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- to share risk representations</li> <li>- to recognize unperceived risk situations to improve risk perception</li> <li>- to enable the expression of the local culture</li> </ul> <p><b>Signs:</b><br/>to alert children/adults that they might incur a danger</p> |

The understanding objective comprises of two categories of expected results:

- The understanding of children affective needs, emotional vulnerability and capabilities
- The understanding and sharing of risks representations and perception

As it has been highlighted in the first chapter, children might be psychologically more vulnerable than adults their imagination (about death, disasters...) is not controlled and their conception of death is not the same as adults. They need adults to bring coherence and to relieve them from their internal fears. In other words they need efficient protection but also the feeling of being protected. Dialogue among children in the presence of adults should be encouraged as a mean for adults knowing if children are able to undertake action, about children care, about children abilities to cope, about children needs about the situations children experience, about children feelings about these situations. Situations children experience should also be discussed in order to understand their representations and perceptions of risks which might be different than those of adults. In that way, adults may acquire a better understanding of situations in which children need to be reassured, supervised; know when they can face a situation alone, or alert them when they run a risk of danger. These adjustments will help children to actively participate to their self-protection and progressively to learn how to become autonomous which can only be done if they are shown how to do, and if they feel cared by responsible adults.

#### 4. Behavioural capabilities

| Capabilities / results   | Means for children   | Means for adults   | Recommendations   |
|--|--|--|---|
| <b>Behavioural capabilities</b><br>· <b>Self-confidence</b> of children in their capabilities<br>· of the adults in their capabilities | Practices  | Practices  | <u>Encourage children to undertake actions instead of always preventing them to take risks</u><br><u>Fixing realistic objectives instead of giving information</u><br><b>Situation</b> to enhance self-confidence of children and adults                          |
| <b>Autonomy/Helping the others</b>   | Fixing <b>realistic objectives</b> for children instead of giving information<br><b>Balancing</b> personal practical knowledge and call for help | <b>Fixing realistic objectives</b> for children instead of giving information<br><b>Balancing</b> personal practical knowledge and call for help<br><b>Encourage</b> children to undertake actions instead of preventing them to take risks<br><b>Enable</b> a follow up of children's achievements in terms of preparedness | <u>Encourage children to undertake actions instead of always preventing them to take risks</u><br><u>Fixing realistic objectives instead of giving information</u><br><b>Pedagogy:</b> to develop children autonomy<br><b>Information:</b> for children practices |
| <b>Creativity and Adaptability</b>   |  |  | <b>Pedagogy:</b> to develop children's creativity<br>to develop children's adaptability   |

Behavioural capabilities objective can be divided into 3 expected results: self-confidence, autonomy, creativity and adaptability. These qualities might appear useful when facing risk situation. Encouraging children to undertake actions if necessary under adults supervision instead of preventing them to take risks, fixing them realistic objectives, ensuring a follow-up of children 'achievements in terms of preparedness, balancing personal practical knowledge and how to call for help can contribute to make them more autonomous and to be confident in their capabilities.

Adults should also be confident in their capabilities to educate children to risks and to protect them.

#### Recommendations concerning the structure of a program

A risk education program should enable:

- 1-To facilitate the feeling of belonging to the community
- 2-To present adults as models for children
- 3-To learn lessons from the local culture and elderly persons

- 4-To question stereotypes about gender, age, strangers, rescuers...
- 5-To understand human limits and capabilities
- 6-To work on children' vulnerability especially death conceptualisation
- 7-To share differences in risk representation which could be an opportunity for discussion, acute diagnosis and appropriate reactions
- 8-To encourage children to undertake actions instead of always preventing them to take risks
- 9-To fix realistic objectives instead of giving information

### **III. Pedagogy in risk education programs**

#### **1. Giving information or building shared knowledge?**

The greater part of risk education programs are based on transmission of information concerning risks or the right behaviors to adopt.

If information is necessary too much information has some limitations like overexposure to information or contradictory information messages. Furthermore people can receive information which does not necessarily concern them and finally they do not prepare themselves. According to Mc Ivor (2008), it is not information per se that determines action, but how people interpret it in the context of their experience, beliefs and expectations.

Information should then be relevant to people otherwise it will not have any impact on their motivation to prepare.

Engaging people in participative actions, in debates where they can express their concerns may be a way to involve people and to motivate them to prepare. Furthermore using memory of the community enables to take into account the context and the environment where people are living.

So it would be preferable to guide a community to build its own knowledge and preparedness strategies according to their observations, analysis of the situation, past experiences, their practices and habits. This knowledge would be shared by the different members of the community which should enable to involve people in preparedness because this knowledge would be close to their concerns.

Risk education pedagogy should then be based on participants' knowledge and not on the transmission of information by an expert.

The role of the organizations is to guide the participants in their reflection, to help them question their habits and practices. Organizations should then have a facilitation role in opposition with an expert role.

## 2. Knowing risks or capacity building?

Knowing risks is a necessity but should not be the only objective of a risk education program. Risk education programs should help people face any kind of risks and thus should initiate participants into thinking about: analyzing their environment, analyzing their own capabilities and limits and finding answers collectively. These dimensions are more related to both collective and individual capabilities building than knowing risks per se. Development of psychological and social capabilities is therefore essential for risk preparedness.

## 3. Using fear to make people understand?

Risk culture should be developed through the community but not through fear As it has been explained in the first chapter using fear concerning risk communication has some limitations and will not necessarily motivate people to prepare.

That is why risk culture should promote positive and optimistic messages but also realistic ones. This recommendation results from the symposium organized during this project.

Furthermore recommendations coming from the study carried out during the project highlighted that there might not be need to enhance perception of risks or to emphasize severity through communication as risks are already well perceived. However, children might not have the same perception of risks as adults as they have difficulties to perceive risks at home and at school which are just two everyday risks. That is why risk education programs should focus on making participants think about everyday risks or even everyday situations which do not overwhelm them by emotion in order to help them think about the dimensions mentioned above (analyzing their environment, their capabilities and limits and exploring solutions together). If people are overwhelmed by fear they might be able to react by a reflex behavior but will not necessarily provide possibilities to think about a process that could help them in every situation. If adults and children are used to solving simple situation together they will know that they will be able to solve more complex situations in the future.

### Recommendations regarding pedagogy of risk education programs

1-Building shared knowledge is preferable than giving information

2-A psychological and social capabilities centered approach is preferable to a risk centered approach

3-Focusing on everyday situations should be preferred to situations involving fear for the participants of the program

## IV. Example of program

The example of program that is presented hereafter results directly from the objectives that have been exposed in order to structure a program. This is an example of activities that can be of course adapted or transformed; the importance is to preserve the objectives which represent the structure of the program.

| Activities  | Pedagogical objectives                | Support different knowing objectives | Enlarge educative and relational practices in the community | Objectives in terms of preparedness to face risk situations and dangers | Learning objectives        |
|---|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---|---|----------------------------|
| <b>Photolanguage</b>                                    | Support the expression of each one    | How to be                            | Take into account oneself emotions and others'              | To develop emotional abilities to cope with danger                      | Comprehend emotions        |
| <b>Role play</b>  |                                       | Know how                             |   |   |                            |
| <b>Risk mapping</b>                                     | Facilitate dialogue and communication | Collective knowledge                 | To share, to dialogue and to cooperate                      | To develop sharing knowledge regarding risks perception and dangers     | Identify risks and dangers |
| <b>Videos</b><br>• Video of mime<br>• Interactive video | Stay impartial                        | Collective experience                |   |   |                            |

This table can also be seen as a pedagogical process which has different dimensions:

- Awareness of emotions, capabilities and limits
- Analysis of the environment (risks and resource persons)
- Knowledge and capacity building

All these activities should be organized in intergenerational groups and require a facilitator. The pedagogical criteria concerning the facilitation are summarized in the second column of this table. It is important to note that the achievement of the objectives of the activities depends for a large part on the quality of the facilitation. This is why the training of the facilitators should not be neglected.

Before the organization of these activities conferences for adults dealing with the issue of addressing the question of risks with children can be organized.

At the end of these activities, pedagogical resources can be given to families in order to encourage them to prepare themselves. A family self-protection plan booklet has been especially developed. This booklet has to be fulfilled by families at home. It describes different kinds of situations that families may have to face one day. Families should be think about risk situation in order to determine the role of each individual and how to face these situations. They also should think about what would be the specific needs of the members of the family - ensuring that prevention measures have been implemented. A DVD showing a

mime actor facing different situations (toxic cloud, flood, poisoning and earthquake) presenting the right way to react and a card game have also been given to participants.

### Description of the activities

#### - Photolanguage

This activity aims at enabling participants to identify and talk about the emotions from the pictures.

#### - Role play

This activity aims at showing that everyone has capabilities and limits when faced by certain situations, but that it is essential to help each other, to co-operate and look for an adult especially if one is a child. Through role plays about everyday life situations, children are made aware that cooperation is sometimes essential, as the help of an adult. This activity enables to think about a process determining if children are able or not to undertake action. As for adults it enables to discover that children have some capabilities and resources that they did not imagine before.

#### - Video of the mime actor

This video shows a mime actor facing a risk situation and the right way to react. Participants are invited to interpret the behaviors of the mime and to identify the national warning signals. This activity is to help the participants to question their level of practical preparedness and encourage them to take more steps towards completing their family self-protection plan.

#### - Risk mapping

This activity aims at encouraging adults and children in the community to learn about the dangers children have to face while analyzing the environment and sharing risks representations of adults and children. Children are also invited to determine if they could cope with the situation alone or with the help of an adult and to identify the resource people of the community as well as the prevention measures they already know.

#### - Interactive video

This video shows a family confronting a flood who has to prepare to face this situation and to start organizing itself. The intention is to make everybody aware they have a role to play in terms of preparedness. Issues like collaboration, listening to one another, the role of children and adults, specific needs, how can each one play a role helping the whole family are addressed. It is highlighted that one aspect of preparedness is dialogue within the family, the neighbors, through the past experiences, and lessons given by the elders.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, 11 major recommendations relevant to the general objectives of the project are presented here.

### **Helping to develop children 'psychological and social potential to face risks situations**

- Children' knowledge of themselves, of their limits, of their capabilities should be developed
- Children should know how to balance personal practical knowledge and call for help
- Capacities like listening to the others, verbalizing its emotions and learning how to cooperate should be developed

### **Supporting the educative practices of adults**

- Making adults responsible and helping them to think about how to protect children psychologically and physically should be encouraged instead of making children responsible for their own protection
- Adults should understand children' emotional vulnerability, capabilities and needs through dialogue
- Adults should help children find the role they could play , give them realistic objectives and follow their achievements in terms of preparedness according to their capabilities and discussing risk issues with them

### **Reinforcing the links within the community**

- Everyone should be prepared to play a role depending on their capabilities, limits and needs
- Intergenerational relationships are one of the best ways to cope with a disaster. Links within the community should be created beforehand. Community memory sharing, cultural knowledge should be encouraged allowing anybody to make it their own and spread the feeling of belonging to a community.
- Trust, cooperation, dialogue should be promoted within the community

### **Risk education programs**

- Communication about risk and preparedness should not use fear to be effective but instead positive messages which are more relevant to people's lives
- Encouraging a reflection process to face risks situation is essential instead of just giving information

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