



CREATING SAFE ENVIRONMENTS STRATEGY

Practical application of the INSPIRE framework for effective prevention of violence against children

SUMMARY

Creating safe spaces for children both physically and socially can help change attitudes, perceptions and actions and prevent violence against children. This reader provides guidelines on how child rights actors can plan and implement resource-efficient safe environments for children. These guidelines can also fit into the greater goal of urban planning to ensure that infrastructure caters for the safety needs of children.

Keywords: INSPIRE, laws and policies, safe environments, hotspots, social environments, online safety, violence, community and private sector partnerships, Cardiff Model

An overview of the INSPIRE safe environments strategy

The safe environments strategy is a multi-pronged approach that draws from current evidence to address key issues: reducing violence in identified 'hotspots'; working the social environment; and improving physical infrastructure to protect children. These safe environments are built through inclusive participation of communities, adolescents and children to ensure relevance, ownership and sustainability.

The hotspot approach to creating safe environments identifies areas that foster violence and recommends focusing interventions on those areas. Changes in the social environment can influence change in attitudes and actions that perpetuate violence by deterring conflict among the most-at-risk youth.

Improving the built environment

Creating a safe environment requires proper planning and infrastructure design, lighting, accessibility for all children including those with disability, surveillance, proper sanitation, access to power, and leisure centres that engage most-at-risk children. Safe spaces target both the perpetrators and victims of violence.

Although infrastructure improvements can be costly, there are several cost-effective strategies that can improve safety in the built environment:

- Solar lighting for dark corners, paving and covering of open holes, and clearing bushy areas regularly can dramatically change how people perceive a place and what activities they engage in.
- Partnering with the private sector can also be a resource-efficient strategy –for example recycling and branding large metallic containers as dustbins or placing concrete flowerpots with public information messages, and hotline services numbers.
- Multi-purposing public spaces for recreational after-school and weekend activities for children and adolescents with private sector staff volunteering hours a week to facilitate the activities.

Box 1: How the safe environments strategy integrates with other INSPIRE strategies

Safe routes to schools ensure that children can go to and from school safely thus supporting the education and skills and strategy.

Public service areas like health facilities, police stations, can be designed to be child-friendly, offer privacy and confidentiality and therefore improve the response and support strategy.

Restricting alcohol usage and child possession of firearms supports the implementation and enforcement of laws.

Norms and values strategy determine what activities people do in public spaces and whether these precipitate or prevent violence against children.

Implementing the safe environments strategy

- Assessment of sources of risk, drivers of behaviour and opportunities for change
- Forging multi-sectoral partnerships with the community, public agencies, private sector, health, education, justice and law enforcement, social services, housing and transportation
- Involving communities in the planning process to ensure ownership and child participation
- Safe environments can only thrive when legal rights and access to justice for children is guaranteed

Focusing priorities for creating safe environments

- Where, among whom and when does violence commonly occur in your setting? What are some characteristics of those physical spaces or social environments?
- Who controls access to and management and maintenance of the physical spaces where violence commonly occurs?
- What outcomes are you most interested in affecting?
- How can you engage community stakeholders, including children and youth, in making public spaces safer?
- Based on your reflections above, what is your goal for strengthening the Safe environments strategy in your setting?

In Practice: The Cardiff Model

Even developed countries like the United States have observed that half of the incidences of violent crime are not reported to law enforcement agencies, which hampers the development of relevant solutions for prevention of violence.

Similarly, in Cardiff, Wales, a surgeon –Dr. Jonathan Shepherd, observed that only a handful of violence cases treated in the emergency ward were being reported to the police. Dr. Shepherd suggested that multi-stakeholder information sharing could improve violence prevention. He brought together a taskforce comprising health service providers, law enforcement and community leadership to harmonize data sharing which provided insights into violence hotspots and triggers and the design of relevant interventions. The Cardiff Model¹, as it was subsequently named, has been used since 1998 in the United Kingdom to facilitate solutions that create safer cities.

The interventions under the Cardiff Model are specific to the context: for example where children lack adequate schooling the focus would be education and skilling for the youth and their families; or ordinances where

Box 2: Protecting children in online environments

The WePROTECT Global Alliance model recommends the following for child safety online:

Corporate social responsibility in the tourism and leisure industry to safeguard against online-supported abuse or exploitation of children

Accurate media reporting of the widespread nature of online abuse issues

Child sexual exploitation and abuse (CSEA) hotline for the public and children in partnership with internet service providers, and law enforcement to report and remove inappropriate internet materials

Establishing offender support systems that offer psychosocial and self-help interventions to deter future violence

¹ www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/fundedprograms/cardiffmodel

alcohol misuse is widespread; policing of designated areas and clearing built environments like dilapidated buildings in partnership with urban planners.

The model is currently being adopted globally in Australia, Brazil, the Netherlands, South Africa and the United States. The Toolkit is available at the US CDC Division of Violence Prevention.

Further Reading

Global Threat Assessment 2018 Report
https://www.weprotect.org/s/64159_WeProtect-GA-report-1.pdf

World Bank Group. Urban Crime and Violence Prevention: self-paced e-learning. Washington DC: World Bank; 2018.

<https://olc.worldbank.org/content/urban-crime-and-violence-prevention-self-paced>,

(This 10- module online course teaches practitioners, policymakers, and city managers working in African and the English-speaking Caribbean about urban crime prevention and violence with an emphasis on CPTED. The 10 modules include both conceptual and applied learning.)

World Vision International Child-Friendly Spaces. In: World Vision International [website]: WVI; 2017.

<http://www.wvi.org/topics/child-friendly-spaces>

(This webpage showcases written and video case studies about child-friendly spaces in humanitarian settings.)

Emergency Handbook: Camp planning standards (planned settlements). In: UNCHR Emergency Handbook [website]. Geneva: UNCHR; n.d.

<https://emergency.unhcr.org/entry/45582/camp-planning-standards-planned-settlements>

(This section of The UN Refugee Agency's Emergency Handbook contains detailed standards for planned settlements in crisis settings.)

Global Kids Online Research Toolkit. In: Global Kids Online [website] London: London School of Economics; 2018.

[\(http://globalkidsonline.net/tools/\)](http://globalkidsonline.net/tools/)

This toolkit from the Global Kids Online project provides qualitative and quantitative tools, methods and adaptation guides to help practitioners gather evidence about the impact of digital technology on children's safety and rights.

Developed and written by IIDC Technical Advisor, Joyce Tonda, reviewed by IIDC Head of Programmes, Samalie Lutaaya
© IIDC 2019