

CHILD-FRIENDLY SPACES



What would happen in your community if there was a natural disaster?
Where would children go for support and help?
Who are the people that could help them?
What do children need at times like this?



After a disaster, spaces where children can feel safe are a priority for World Vision. Child-friendly spaces help children to establish a routine, while their parents deal with the practical realities of a disaster situation.

WHAT IS A CHILD-FRIENDLY SPACE?

A child-friendly space is a space set up specifically for children, usually after a disaster, emergency or conflict. Its purpose is to address the needs of children in a stable environment that invites trust.

WHERE ARE THEY SET UP?

A child-friendly space can be a school, a community centre, a tent or an open space in a camp or in a community. It must be a place where the children feel safe; often the children are asked to map where this might be before the space is set up.

WHO RUNS THEM?

World Vision recruits qualified staff from the local community where possible: for example, teachers or community workers, adults who work well with children or who have some childcare training. World Vision helps them design culturally appropriate activities and trains them so that they can identify and refer children who are at risk of long-term trauma.

WHAT HAPPENS THERE?

A child-friendly space is a safe place where children and youth can:

- **Play** – a fun place with sports, team and cultural activities that help them switch off from their worries and concerns
- **Learn** – literacy and numeracy skills, life skills and health education to deal with hygiene and safety risks, and child rights
- **Express their feelings** – through role-plays, dance, talking and cultural activities that help them realise that they are not alone and that they're having a normal reaction to an abnormal situation
- **Find out important information** – about what is happening around them to help them regain a sense of control in their lives
- **Be looked after** – while their parents or caregivers attend to daily activities. It also becomes a place for parents to meet and support each other
- **Be reunited with family** – children are registered so families that have been separated can enquire about missing children or siblings.

WHY ARE THESE SPACES IMPORTANT?

Child-friendly spaces give children a sense of safety and continuity that supports them amidst overwhelming experiences. They're also important in keeping children away from dangerous places and protecting them from exploitation or abuse. Trained staff can help children who need counselling or medical care. After the emergency is over, child-friendly spaces continue to run as community centres.



USE THESE RESOURCES WITH A DISASTERS UNIT:

- After the quake article and Disaster Fact Sheet
- Print copies from www.worldvision.org.nz/education
- EQ simulation game
- www.worldvision.org.nz/eq
- EQ game pack and AfterShock poster
- Order from www.worldvision.org.nz/catalogue
- Relief and Rehabilitation topic sheet
- www.worldvision.org.nz/pdf/resources/How_WV_Works_Relief.pdf