



CHILD FRIENDLY SCHOOLS

CHAPTER 2 **Dynamics of theory in practice**

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CHAPTER 2

DYNAMICS OF THEORY IN PRACTICE

2.1 OVERVIEW

This chapter explores the various options for implementing child-friendly school (CFS) models. These options depend on the dynamic interaction between theory (including ideology, concepts and principles) and practice (or practicalities such as resources, capacities and opportunities). It is this interaction that determines the nature and features of child-friendly schools.

The influence of theory is highlighted when concepts and principles are interpreted in different contexts and by different practitioners to produce a variety of institutions that are identifiable as child-friendly schools. Even when institutions have been destroyed in emergencies, concepts and principles can be applied to create temporary shelters that are child-friendly learning spaces. On the other hand, the influence of practice is manifested in how available resources, existing capacity and opportunities for change produce a variety of child-friendly school types. Both theory and practice influence outcomes in the implementation of CFS models. The types of schools that result from this interactive process share enough similarities to be classified as child-friendly, yet they also exhibit important differences that help explain the dynamic and flexible nature of CFS models.

In essence, the CFS model is a pathway to quality education rather than a rigid blueprint. The application of child-friendly school concepts and principles in different countries and the impact of practical realities in determining what is feasible in these situations has given rise to guidelines for implementing CFS models. These guidelines underscore the need for flexibility in implementing the models while demonstrating the limits of variation. The main contentions to be discussed in this chapter include:

- (a) Implementation is an eclectic process, since child-friendly schools are created on the basis of key principles that ultimately shape their main features. True CFS design requires the application of principles, not prescribed characteristics.
- (b) The main features of a given child-friendly school result from applying certain principles to a particular setting and context. There is no fixed set of features that must be in every child-friendly school.
- (c) When child-friendly school principles are applied consistently in different settings and contexts, similar, although not identical, characteristics ensue, which should

not be mistaken for the products of a rigid recipe or blueprint.

- (d) Some characteristics, such as child participation in the learning process, may be intuitively recommended for child-friendly schools, since they can be considered the inevitable, logical outcomes of applying CFS principles to almost any setting or context.
- (e) Making schools child-friendly is not an 'all-or-nothing' process. It can begin with one principle and phase in others over time in a strategic sequence that fits local realities, promoting a 'progressive realization' of the CFS model.
- (f) The key principles that drive the child-friendly school process are so interrelated that interpreting and implementing any one principle invariably sets off a chain reaction that leads to related principles.
- (g) The role of teachers and school heads is so central to the CFS model that their training can usually be a good starting point for making schools child-friendly. Teachers and school heads do not simply work in these schools, they make schools child friendly and maintain schools' child-friendly nature.
- (h) Important synergies are gained by linking key elements of the child-friendly school model. For instance, connecting teacher training to the preparation and provision of appropriate pedagogic materials makes the implementation of quality learning in the classroom more efficient.
- (i) There are cost savings to be gained through economies of scale, as implementation of child-friendly school models shifts from single-school pilots to clusters of schools to district-wide, province-wide and finally sector-wide coverage.
- (j) When the implementation process is driven by key principles rather than a fixed set of characteristics, it is possible to create child-friendly schools in a wide variety of contexts and circumstances.
- (k) Adherence to a fixed set of characteristics can produce superficial models of child-friendly schools that create confusion, invite scepticism and trivialize the concept itself.
- (l) The complexity of applying child-friendly school principles to different contexts means that as efforts move from individual pilots and demonstration models to large numbers of schools and eventually to entire school systems, each setting yields valuable lessons.
- (m) A major challenge for large-scale implementation across the education sector is a lack of standards, guidelines and specifications to be used in incorporating key elements of child-friendly schools in processes that are essential to a sector-wide investment approach, such as scenario-setting, projecting and costing.
- (n) For the child-friendly model to be taken seriously as an area for national investment in quality education, CFS programming requires a logical, consistent approach that can be applied in different settings.

In 2003, a review of global efforts to implement child-friendly schools found that a wide range of conceptual interpretations had been applied, resulting in a variety of manifestations of child-friendly schools in different countries (Chabbott, 2004). This lack of coherence was attributable to the tendency to define child-friendly schools in terms of prescribed features or characteristics, which did not necessarily translate well from country to country. The review found that child-friendly schools were defined in terms of anywhere from 6 to 12 'fixed' characteristics. Most characteristics appeared desirable, although it is unclear where these characteristics originated.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) was often cited to support these prescribed characteristics. The CRC was an ideological framework for child-friendly schools, but in defining the child-friendly school concept the 'real' linkages to the core principles of the CRC were not clearly established. It was therefore not evident whether such prescribed characteristics are a finite set or an expandable list, nor, if expandable, how additional characteristics for child-friendly schools would be generated. This made it difficult to treat child-friendly schools as a coherent model that could be implemented in a logical, consistent, predictable manner in different contexts.

This fundamental weakness can be addressed by means of a sound process for designing child-friendly schools based on key principles with clear origins that can be interpreted

and applied in a variety of contexts to identify appropriate features or characteristics of child-friendly schools. Once these features have been determined, they can be used to develop CFS standards in a given district, province or country. In addition to being a more coherent, predictable and logical model, this approach promotes a democratic process of dialogue and consultation in the interpretation of leading principles and the setting of standards. It discourages mechanical application of a given set of fixed characteristics.

In practice, it is also possible for CFS design and implementation to begin with a specific key characteristic or feature and shift progressively to achieving the model that is ideal for that particular context. In this sense, implementation of the CFS model is an eclectic process, which becomes more grounded, logical and predictable by using standards to mainstream the model into national planning processes.

Efforts to implement child-friendly schools in different countries have undergone two distinct phases. There was an early phase during which efforts were not intended to create child-friendly schools but were designed to improve some aspect of schooling. These efforts usually predate the adoption of the child-friendly school concept by UNICEF and focused more on seizing opportunities for change than on building a fixed set of characteristics. Over time, the changed schools that resulted came to be described *ex post facto* as child-friendly schools.

In the later phase, after adoption of the CFS model by UNICEF, efforts were deliberately meant to make schools child-friendly. Nevertheless, the design and implementation of child-friendly schools has been an eclectic and sometimes superficial process in both phases: What gets done first and how things proceed tend to be determined by such practicalities as what is attractive to or accepted by the national and local education authorities.

In Bangladesh, for example, the Intensive District Approach to Education for All (IDEAL) project did not begin with efforts to implement a certain number of CFS characteristics. It was a reform designed to improve the quality of learning as integral to expanding access for achieving the Education for All (EFA) goals. IDEAL began in 1996 by experimenting with multiple ways of teaching and learning, sensitizing teachers to the different ways in which children learn and helping them adapt their teaching styles accordingly. This invariably became a starting point for greater child-centredness (a CFS principle) in schools and classrooms. Over time, there appears to have been a chain reaction through which IDEAL generated new features as part of the process of strengthening quality. These included safe learning environments, community involvement in school planning and management, and assessment of learning achievement. As a result, IDEAL's structure and process of education reform created new characteristics that allowed the project's schools to be classified as child-friendly schools.

Similarly, the Programme for the Advancement of Girls' Education

(PAGE) in Zambia did not begin with the intention of creating child-friendly schools but with the intent to help provide quality education for girls that would promote gender parity and empowerment. A multisectoral approach to dismantling the many barriers that prevent girls from accessing and performing in schools evolved. This entailed a variety of interventions – developing community capacity, providing learning and teaching materials, creating single-sex classrooms in math and science – designed to improve the learning environment for girls and resulted in these schools being classified as child-friendly.

In Egypt, community schools were inspired by Colombia's Escuelas Nuevas model and predate the CFS framework in UNICEF. Here too the initial intent was not to create child-friendly schools. Rather, the focus was on cultivating strong local community engagement in education (a CFS principle) in order to provide quality learning opportunities for children who did not have access to mainstream schools. Subsequently, these community schools generated additional features, such as stimulating classroom environments and learner participation, that have brought them closer to classification as child-friendly schools.

Similar efforts to provide quality learning opportunities for disadvantaged populations in West and Central Africa began in the mid-1990s with integrated approaches to strengthen community involvement. These reforms predated the launch of the CFS model by UNICEF. However, by 2001, 7 of the 24 countries in the region were engaged in reforms



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purposefully designed to promote child-friendly/girl-friendly schools. These CFS initiatives included setting up multigrade community schools that make education viable in sparsely populated rural areas and creating satellite schools that make it possible for children to get an education close to home until they are old enough to transfer to regular schools farther away.

In the Eastern and Southern Africa region, more deliberate efforts to promote child-friendly schools took place in countries including Ethiopia and Kenya, where converting existing schools into child-friendly ones was a major focus of UNICEF's investment in education. These efforts centred on classroom processes and the school environment to promote more 'joyful learning', immersing children in a highly participatory learning process within a resource-rich environment guided by teachers

trained to be 'friendly' facilitators. The transformations are depicted in 'before and after' photographs of classrooms and schools that show the simple measures employed to promote change, such as:

- (a) Brightly painted rooms, clean floors and colourful displays on walls;
- (b) Child-appropriate furniture arranged flexibly for a variety of learning approaches;
- (c) Pupil activity centres or learning corners created around the classroom;
- (d) Adequate water and sanitation facilities;
- (e) Provision of recreation kits;
- (f) Nutritious school meals.

Little systematic work has been done to evaluate the impact of these

measures on improved learning, better all-round development and other outcomes associated with child-friendly schools. However, less rigorous evidence, such as views expressed by teachers and parents and observations linked to the 'before and after' realities, suggest at least an initial upsurge in quality of education. It appears that most children thrive as learners in these new environments, and many teachers who work in them express a new sense of professional pride in what they do as facilitators of learning. These impressionistic conclusions need to be quantitatively evaluated.

Despite such positive signs, efforts to mainstream child-friendly schools into national plans and priorities in countries such as Ethiopia and Kenya have been only partially successful. Even when governments have agreed in principle to adopt child-friendly schools as a model for improving the quality of education, they have failed to include adequate programming tools for setting scenarios, making projections and costing options for incorporating child-friendly schools into the education planning process. This results from becoming bogged down on a fixed set of CFS characteristics rather than focusing on key principles that can promote a planning dialogue around the desired aspects of child-friendly schools. Such a dialogue is vital in determining the key features of child-friendly schools for a country and for setting national standards that can be used as variables in national education sector planning.

The lack of a consistent, logical approach for incorporating CFS features and standards into education

sector planning has produced patchy results almost everywhere the attempt to mainstream child-friendly schools in the education system has been made.

In Azerbaijan, for instance, the Government has selected some of the prescribed CFS characteristics and rejected others. UNICEF continues to advocate for the acceptance and fuller implementation of child-friendly school characteristics, because to do otherwise would mean that child-friendly schools could become a menu of features from which governments select rather than a model based on key principles relating to what is in the best interest of children regarding their right to quality basic education.

A similar challenge exists in other countries where advocates continue to press governments to accept and implement the full set of prescribed characteristics for child-friendly schools. Some progress is being made in these countries, resulting in serious government efforts to implement some CFS elements in various categories of schools. The hope is that if governments can be persuaded to adopt a CFS policy, this patchwork of CFS elements will spread to as many schools as possible. The reality is that even with powerful advocacy and governments' willingness to adopt such a policy, the major challenge of adequate planning tools for mainstreaming the CFS model into the education sector planning process remains.

This challenge is most evident in East Asia and the Pacific. Since UNICEF first introduced the concept in the late 1990s, countries in the region have taken the lead in demonstrating the benefits of CFS models and adopting

CFS policy. In Thailand, for example, the Child-Friendly School Initiative helps schools and communities create partnerships to help track and ensure children's school participation, learning and well-being. UNICEF has provided technical support to help the Government develop standard architectural designs based on CFS principles that are expected to be used to construct new schools and renovate existing ones as part of the drive to implement a CFS policy in Thailand. These measures will undoubtedly produce benefits for quality education in that country and enhance the use of CFS models to provide quality basic education for children elsewhere.

These developments, however, fall short of systematic mainstreaming of child-friendly schools into an education system. There needs to be a more holistic approach in which specific CFS principles are used to decide on key elements and standards for child-friendly schools in a given country and on the extent to which these features will be adapted to different parts of the country or at different stages of the national implementation process. These features and standards can then be included in education planning models as an integral part of the many variables used in the national education sector planning process.

Two developments in 2007 hold promise that child-friendly schools can be successfully mainstreamed in education systems. In China, major advancements towards mainstreaming CFS as a model for implementing the Government's policy of nine years of compulsory basic education and what is termed the 'whole child' education policy have followed the successful piloting of CFS models by

UNICEF in selected schools in some of the country's most disadvantaged provinces. The Ministry of Education has set up high-level policy and technical teams to work on principles, features and standards for child-friendly schools in China, and the results of their work will be used in a pilot exercise to mainstream child-friendly schools in the education planning process of selected provinces. It will then be rolled out to other provinces throughout the country. UNICEF is committed to providing guidance and technical support to the Government in this important area.

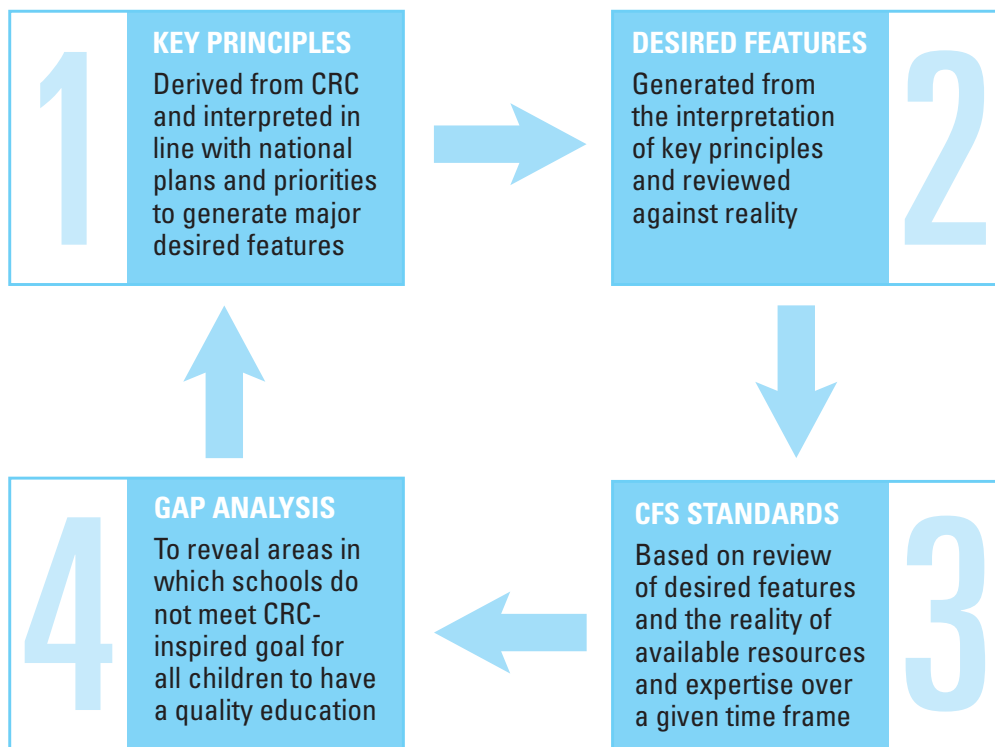
The second development with regard to incorporating CFS elements into education sector planning models and processes has been at the global level. In joint support to countries developing credible plans for achieving the education MDGs and the EFA goals, three United Nations agencies – the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and UNICEF – have decided to modify an existing education simulation model and commit to a single education simulation model (EPSSim) to support education sector planning in developing countries. UNICEF has worked with UNESCO to incorporate CFS elements into this model, ensuring that CFS principles are a visible part of policy dialogue and that CFS elements are considered in scenario-setting during the planning process. The existence of a single model also means that CFS standards can be part of the planning process and that selected CFS elements included in a sector plan can be properly analysed in terms of costs over the plan period. (See Chapter 7.)

2.3 KEY PRINCIPLES, DESIRED FEATURES AND STANDARDS

Key principles based on the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) can be used to generate the desired features, or characteristics, of child-friendly schools in particular settings. These in turn can be reviewed against the reality of available resources over a given time frame to arrive at a set of feasible standards for the design and implementation of child-friendly schools in a given country. (See Diagram.) This approach makes it easier to incorporate child-friendly schools into national planning

processes and investment plans in a consistent and reliable way.

Consideration of the CFS model begins with generic key principles that are subject to interpretation. It is generally agreed that the CFS concept as introduced in the 1990s was inspired by the principles of child rights as expressed in the CRC. As the ideological foundation of child-friendly schools, the CRC gives rise to the generic or key principles that drive the process of making schools child-friendly.



The application of the CRC to education provides us with a rights-based approach, stressing that all children have a right to education – they are rights holders. Education is not a privilege that society grants to children; it is a duty that society fulfils towards all children. One of the most self-evident principles generated by the rights-based ideology is inclusiveness, which requires schools to be open and welcoming to all children without exception. The school does not just passively receive children who seek schooling but actively seeks out all eligible children for enrolment. Beyond enrolment, it also helps children stay in school and attend regularly. This means that fair, transparent and non-discriminatory rules for accessing school are necessary but not sufficient. There must also be strategies and measures in place to tackle the barriers that prevent children from taking the opportunities to participate in education.

Factors that keep children out of school include household poverty, ethnicity or minority status, orphan status, gender, remote rural location, need to work and early childhood illness caused by exposure to unsafe and unhealthy environmental conditions (such as contaminated water and indoor air pollution). Other exclusionary factors can be fostered within the school itself. Marginalization by teachers who fail to engage students in the learning and teaching process, do not speak their language, do not believe they are capable of learning or do not have the pedagogic skills to handle the diversity these children bring to the classroom prevent them from having a quality learning experience.

In some cases, the physical design and infrastructure of a school may exclude children. The design may inadvertently obstruct access and participation for children with disabilities, or the lack of separate toilet facilities may dissuade girls' participation. The way in which a school is managed or its prevailing ambience also may discourage some children from participating in the education process. When bullying is part of the school culture, for instance, or certain populations are routinely demeaned or stigmatized by school practices, some pupils will drop out.

A child-friendly school is not just a child-welcoming school but also a child-seeking school. It works to attract and retain children from different backgrounds, respects diversity and ensures non-discrimination. Some innovations that have helped make schools more inclusive are:

- (a) *Local school mapping and community monitoring systems* to help track enrolment and identify children who are out of school;
- (b) *Satellite schools* that ensure younger children in remote communities can go to school close to home until they are old enough to attend existing primary schools farther away;
- (c) *Community schools* that provide education opportunities for children who do not have access to the existing standard schools;
- (d) *Mother tongue instruction* in the early grades and multilingual/multicultural education designed

to ease the transition from home to school and render education more relevant to minority populations;

- (e) *Non-formal education programmes* that are equivalent to the formal system but have flexible schedules to cater to the learning needs of children engaged in daily or seasonal income-generating activities (working children);
- (f) Special efforts to combat exclusion and stigmatization of *children affected by HIV and AIDS*;
- (g) Safe spaces to facilitate children's right to education in *emergency situations*;
- (h) Promoting *birth registration* and strengthening community-based *early learning opportunities* that help meet the legal requirements for enrolment and better prepare children from disadvantaged populations for schooling (school readiness);
- (i) Building *partnerships* through a mix of education and non-education partners who can promote the principle of inclusion.

Efforts to put the CFS principle of inclusiveness into practice lead to clear observations. First, because child-friendly school implementation is an eclectic process, it can begin with any key CRC principle. Yet implementation of any one principle quickly generates a chain reaction, leading to other principles and factors that are important for child-friendly schools. This explains why programmes that began by implementing one key quality issue invariably generated further concerns

that brought in new principles, leading inexorably towards child-friendly school status. Second, through discussion of inclusiveness it is possible to choose the most appropriate measure to solve the problem of a particular situation. Applying different solutions will mean that schools end up with different features, yet they are all addressing the issue of inclusiveness.

The principle of inclusiveness effectively enables the progression towards child-friendly school status by leading to the implementation of measures that promote access and retention of children from a wide diversity of backgrounds. So, is it enough just to get all children in school? What if children are enrolled in squalid 'boot camps' or rote learning centres that pass for schools – has their right to education been fulfilled or violated?

The rights-based approach stresses that as rights holders, children should have a say in the form and substance of their education, as should those who facilitate their rights. This is the principle of democratic participation, through which children, parents, communities, employers, political leaders and others have a role in determining the structure, content and process of education. It is only through such democratic participation that child-friendly schools can claim to be fulfilling children's right to education. This is simply a reaffirmation of good curriculum design principles, which promote 'negotiation' of the curriculum by different stakeholders, including children. However, there are important caveats in applying this principle



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that have to do with the legitimate roles of different stakeholders and the place of objective expertise in determining content and other aspects of the learning/teaching process. The rigours of knowledge and the learning process cannot be trivialized in the name of democratic participation. To do so would give child-friendly schools a bad name.

In the process of negotiating the curriculum, it is generally accepted that policymakers are mandated with outlining a vision of society and the country's priorities for development. This usually has implications for the role of education and the type of education in which the country should invest. It is also accepted that parents and communities

have aspirations for their children that schools should reflect. They also expect certain benefits from investing in education, and schools should realize these benefits as fully as possible. In the same way, other stakeholders, such as employers or civic and religious leaders, normally contribute to the process of negotiating the curriculum by advocating for knowledge, skills, norms, values and behaviours that should be acquired and upheld in society.

These varied inputs by different stakeholders need to be processed and administered by professionals, such as curriculum planners, subject specialists, school managers and classroom teachers, whose main role

is to translate vision, aspiration and expectation into a viable curriculum that can be interpreted and implemented in schools. Part of this role involves safeguarding standards regarding forms of knowledge and what constitutes education. For instance, witchcraft and magic are not normally accepted as forms of knowledge for educational purposes. Similarly, exclusive use of rote learning and memorization does not count as education. Just as importantly, enforcing a particular political ideology or religious viewpoint to the exclusion of other possibilities amounts to indoctrination rather than education. These are matters that must be safeguarded by professionals who work on curriculum.

Discussing a key principle like democratic participation brings up issues of the school's accountability to various stakeholders. This discussion can be a springboard for examining links between schools and their communities on the one hand and links between schools and central or local policymakers and administrators on the other. Whatever the starting point, there is always a sense in which other key areas of concern will be brought into the discussion, to be given attention as part of the process of making schools child-friendly.

Having all children in school and establishing the democratic participation of key stakeholders in negotiating curriculum content, structure and method would represent good progress towards fulfilling children's right to a quality education. However, the participation of the adult stakeholders, many with

powerful voices, could easily drown out the voices of children. This is why the CRC, with its rights-based approach to education, emphasizes the importance of safeguarding the interests of the child by making such interests central to all decision-making in education. This is the child-centred principle (See 2.4), perhaps the most important principle generated from the CRC and its rights-based ideology. It needs to be applied with caution, because the issue of what is in the best interest of the child can be contentious. Who decides what is in the best interest of the child? Is it the same as the best interest of all children, and if not, which child's interest should be given priority? Does it mean that children rule and whatever they want they should get?

These and other controversies are part of the discussion of this principle, and it can be argued that even children themselves may not always know what is in their best interest, especially at a young age. They need to take certain judgements and decisions on trust from parents, teachers and others who have an obligation as well as the authority to safeguard their welfare. Even so, it is always important to promote child participation as one of the features of the child-centred principle and to include children's views in the process of negotiating the curriculum and other aspects of a child-friendly school. For example, young children can express their views through drawing and playing games relating to CFS components. It is also possible to obtain the views of children by engaging them in open discussion on such issues as discipline.

Because the principle of child-centredness is so critical to child-friendly schools, it deserves special attention. Child participation has already been briefly discussed as one of the features of this principle. The aspect in which child participation matters most is in the classroom process of learning and teaching. Learning is central to education and, in line with the child-centred principle, the child as learner is central to the process of teaching and learning. In other words, the classroom process should not be one in which children are passive recipients of knowledge dispensed by a sole authority, the teacher. Rather it should be an interactive process in which children are active participants in observing, exploring, listening, reasoning, questioning and 'coming to know'. This is at the heart of the classroom process in all child-friendly school models, and it is critical for teachers to be well trained in this pedagogy.

Children are active agents in constant discovery of the world around them. Every day brings new learning opportunities and experiences, while every place is a new learning environment to explore, starting with the home and the local community. There is always new knowledge to be gained, and there are always new skills to master, new facts to learn, new emotions to experience, new ideas to explore, new puzzles to ponder and new ways to understand.

For children, many situations represent an unknown challenge that they must make sense of as they listen, act, react, reflect and interact with others through

a process that is guided and facilitated by the teacher. Ideally, children will be able to do all this in a manner that will not harm them but will instead stimulate, motivate, encourage and reward them as learners trying to make sense of their surroundings. The implication is that to assist the continuous development of children in a constantly changing world, every learning experience and every learning



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environment should place children at the centre as active agents of their own learning process, allowing them to develop to their full potential with appropriate guidance and an informed freedom of choice.

TEACHING AND LEARNING: AN UNBREAKABLE BOND

“In general, the heart of the matter in education is the interaction between the student and the teacher. It is in this process that quality education is created.” (Education International, 2003) This is the reason the Dakar Framework for Action refers specifically to the need for “well-trained teachers and active learning techniques” in order to achieve quality learning outcomes. To be effective, teaching and learning must include a variety of interactive methodologies, looking also at the different learning styles of girls and boys, to create stimulating, participatory and child-friendly learning environments. This is particularly true when addressing such sensitive issues as HIV and AIDS and reproductive health. The role of teachers is to facilitate participatory learning rather than conduct lectures in a didactic style, and it can only be accomplished if their crucial role and status are fully recognized, if they are supported through quality pre- and in-service training to reach sustained transformation in the classroom and if they are involved at all stages of educational planning – defining policies and programmes, choosing methods and modes of delivery and evaluating results.

For children to develop their full potential, schools must provide learning opportunities that help develop children’s abilities to think and reason, build up their self-respect and respect for others, and think ahead and plan their future. Sadly, the environment in which many children develop is not always conducive to even basic learning, let alone skills acquisition. Too often, it is a harsh, uncaring environment that can be detrimental to the emotional, social and physical health and well-being of the child.

Whether a school or an informal learning space, environment plays a significant role in the development of children’s potential. It is in recognition of the importance of the environment that delegates to the World Education Forum, held in Dakar in 2000, pledged to “create safe, healthy, inclusive and equitably resourced educational environments conducive to excellence in learning.”

The environment for learning is a critical feature of child-friendly school



models. But it is also important from a child-centred perspective to consider what children bring to this environment and how this environment should cater to other aspects of a child's well-being in order to support learning. In other words, while excellence in learning through active participation is the ultimate goal, consideration of the whole child and his or her well-being is also crucial. Many children start school poorly prepared for learning because they have not had appropriate early child development (ECD) care and support. Also, for children who are malnourished or infested with worms or suffering from repeated bouts of malaria or other illnesses, learning will be difficult.

The environment in a child-friendly school must respond to these challenges, many of which can be met by applying the principle of child centredness through:

Starting with the child. Consider each child holistically and coherently, embracing the particular characteristics every child contributes to the rich diversity of the school. Every child's developmental and learning needs should be considered throughout the life cycle, and every child's ability, health and nutritional status, as well as any discriminatory pressure they may be subjected to because of their gender, race, ethnicity or other factor, should be acknowledged. This approach enables all children to access, participate in and profit fully from learning opportunities. Additional efforts and resources are required to allow child-friendly schools to take such a holistic and coherent approach from early child development to basic primary education and beyond, but they are cost-effective in that they

ensure that investments in such areas as teacher training or provision of textbooks are not undermined by a lack of attention to other crucial areas required for the child to take advantage of what is offered. Child-friendly approaches may appear to cost more in the short term, but they are much more efficient investments in the long term because they provide savings by addressing problems of low or delayed enrolment, increased absenteeism, repetition and dropout due to such issues as basic health, nutrition and safety.

Healthy for children. Schools alone cannot guarantee children's health, but they should not make their health worse. Unsanitary and unsafe learning environments result in injury and illness. Girls abandoning or being withdrawn from schools that fail to provide separate toilets is just one example of how environmental factors can undermine student participation in education. Providing safe water and appropriate sanitation facilities are basic first steps in the creation of a healthy, child-friendly learning environment. Other important elements include establishing and enforcing rules to make the learning environment free from drugs, alcohol and tobacco, eliminating exposure to hazardous materials, providing sufficient numbers of ergonomically designed benches and chairs and adequate lighting, allowing opportunities for physical exercise and recreation, and ensuring that first-aid equipment is properly maintained and readily available. Such a healthy environment provides an appropriate venue for school feeding and other health-related interventions like deworming, micronutrient supplementation and malaria prevention.

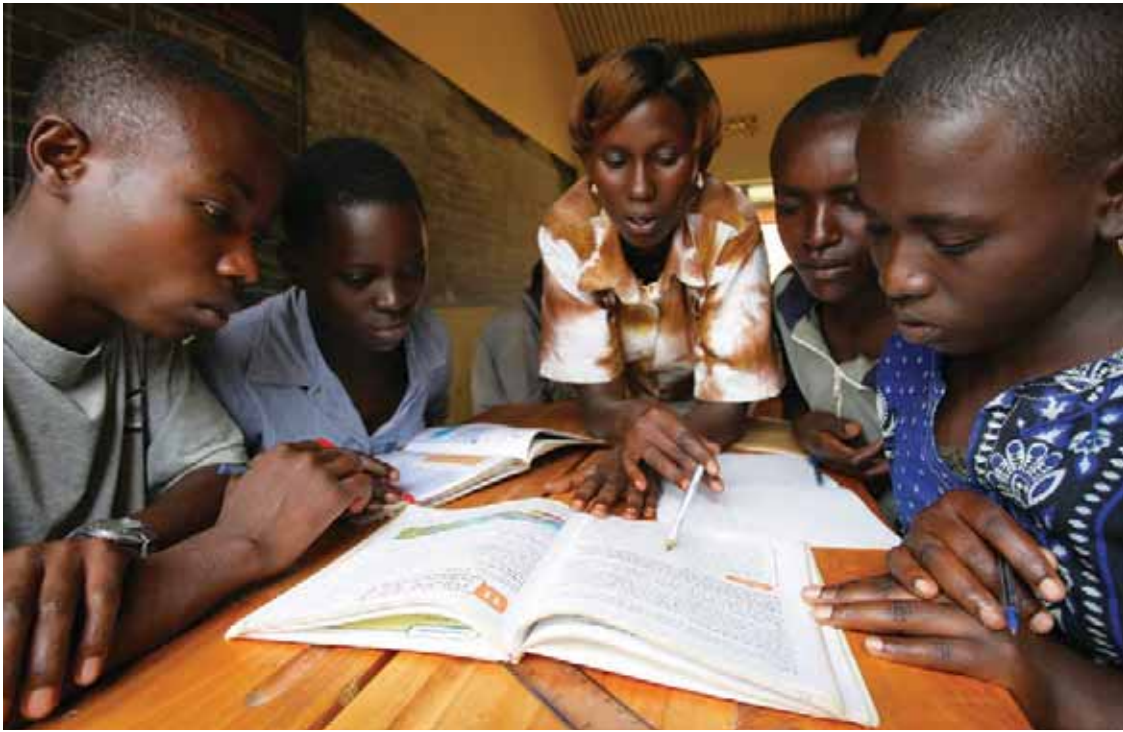
Safe for children. The physical learning environment must be able to accommodate all children in the community in safe locations with access to energy for school electricity, an especially important consideration in rural locations that are off the grid. The environment needs to be designed to meet the basic needs of children. Schools need to provide access to clean water for drinking and hand washing and take gender into account by providing separate and private restrooms for boys and girls and, if applicable, secure dormitory accommodations. Schools must identify and eliminate causes of injury in school buildings and on school grounds, ensure that emergency response equipment is properly maintained and readily available, establish emergency procedures and practise emergency response. Child-friendliness can be further promoted through children's involvement in activities that make the school cleaner, prettier and more environmentally sustainable, including planting vegetable gardens, trees or flowers, painting walls or removing debris from school grounds.

Protective of children. When the school environment is perceived as unwelcoming or threatening, attendance suffers. In general, a child-friendly, protective environment is not only conducive to learning, but also to play and healthy interaction. Harassment and antisocial behaviour cannot be allowed; abuse, bullying or sexual exploitation must be confronted. Child protection and safety in homes has a direct impact on children's capacity to attend class and to learn, and children must also feel safe as they travel from their homes to school. Interventions to address these situations include

training teachers and parents in non-violent discipline, as well as establishing and enforcing codes of conduct that protect children from sexual harassment, abuse, violence, bullying, physical punishment, stigma and discrimination. Special attention should be given to orphans and children made vulnerable by HIV and AIDS. In situations with high levels of violence, counselling and mediation programmes and persons should be identified.

Work can be richly rewarding for those charged with the responsibility of implementing a CFS policy in the education system. The main purpose of such work should be not only to increase the learning effectiveness, efficiency and reach of education systems but more fundamentally to enable all children to realize their right to learn. It should also be about expanding the focus of attention beyond formal schooling into broader environments and spaces where all sorts of learning takes place, especially in times of crisis. Ideally, it is also about making connections between the school, the home and the wider environment through a holistic, child-centred approach.

But to date, UNICEF and its national partners have not fully utilized this ideal approach. A mixed picture emerges from efforts to implement and mainstream child-friendly schools. On the one hand, there is little doubt that many of these efforts have improved the quality of education and helped set new standards for the well-being of children in schools. On the other, it is also clear that the process and outcome of implementing CFS models have been patchy in most places, far from being mainstreamed in education systems.



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A final issue worth considering is the extent to which child-friendly school models are feasible in a policy environment that is not child-friendly. It may be that child-friendly education policies are a requirement to guarantee success in the promotion of equal rights and opportunities for all children. These would provide a framework for regulating provision of and access to education in a transparent and equitable manner, and would also provide a rationale for increased investments to address safety, protection, health and nutrition issues as part of the process of making schools child-friendly.

At the national level, child-friendly education policies may include promotion of fee-free enrolment, promotion of the use of local languages in schools, requirements to include disabled children in regular schools, provisions for pregnant girls to complete their education, regulations that prohibit corporeal punishment and regulations allowing HIV-infected and -affected children to

attend school and continue learning. For such policies to be pragmatic, they need to be linked to other sectors and broadly collaborative with various stakeholders in health, environment, infrastructure and other areas. Most importantly, such national policies should be the basis for ensuring that child-friendly approaches receive a proportion of the national budget adequate to run the new system, covering appropriate teacher salaries and teacher support measures as well as investments in training, materials provision and other requirements.

At the community level, there may also be a need for supportive policies and practices so that local resources can be mobilized in support of child-friendly schools. Additionally, policies must advocate and support children's rights and CRC principles. In dealing with rights, such issues as nutrition, health, violence prevention and discrimination on the basis of gender, ethnicity or class must be considered by the local community.

2.5.1 Broad overview of trends

In a number of countries in Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States, the concept of Global Education has been integrated into the CFS approach, preschool activities have been emphasized in some programmes, and community-based education management information systems have been utilized to locate and reach disadvantaged and excluded children. Global Education is also promoted in the Middle East and North Africa as a means of improving quality and incorporating key CFS elements such as child rights, children's participation in democratic processes and interactive learning. The community school model piloted in Egypt and extended to a number of other countries incorporates all major components of child-friendly schools, with a special emphasis on gender equity, teaching processes and community participation.

In India, in the aftermath of the Gujarat earthquake, the CFS concept has been applied in emergencies as a framework for the reconstruction and restoration of primary education. In Afghanistan, reopened schools are used to deliver a wide range of services, and community support and involvement has been critical. And in Latin America and the Caribbean, where inclusive quality education for all is a key goal, the CFS framework has been used in a number of countries – Bolivia, Colombia, Guyana, Honduras and Nicaragua – sometimes building on or associating with earlier initiatives such as the Escuelas Nuevas, which

began in Colombia and spread to other countries in the region.

The East Asia and the Pacific region has been developing and applying the CFS framework since it was first introduced in the 1990s, producing various manifestations. In Indonesia, for example, training in what the country calls Active, Joyful and Effective Learning is a principal activity. In the Philippines, schools are part of a wider framework of child-friendly families, communities, provinces and the country as a whole.

In Eastern and Southern Africa, national standards exist to promote child-friendly and gender-sensitive school environments in a number of countries. And schools that are healthy, safe and protective are looked to as means of support for children and families affected by HIV and AIDS. In both African regions, child-friendly and girl-friendly initiatives are clearly linked. In West Africa, girl-friendly school models have been implemented in Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Mauritania, Nigeria and Senegal, and a child-friendly/girl-friendly school manual has been developed.

2.5.2 Specific country examples

■ Malawi: Intersectoral partnerships for child-friendly schools

The Malawian child-friendly school model stresses the importance of intersectoral partnerships. UNICEF and the World Food Programme work in partnership with the Government,

non-governmental organizations and other civil society organizations to provide quality primary education. The collaboration encompasses teacher training on child-friendly methods, school feeding for both boys and girls attending primary day schools, and take-home rations for girls and orphans. Schools are also provided with furniture, teaching materials and water and sanitation facilities, along with life skills training, deworming services and micronutrient supplementation.

■ **Nigeria: Gender components of child-friendly schools within diverse realities**

The Child-Friendly School Initiative was launched in Nigeria in 2002, with the goal of creating 600 child-friendly schools by 2007. Initial CFS interventions were planned for the six northern states where the overall level of enrolment is lowest and the gender gap highest. While gender equity was a key dimension in the CFS model from the outset, greater success was achieved in the overall enrolment rate in child-friendly schools than in reducing the gender gap. From 2002 to 2004, the African Girls' Education Initiative (AGEI) focused on interventions to attract and retain girls in school, addressing structural constraints at the policy level, not least the shortage of female teachers in rural schools in the north, where they are particularly needed as role models. Lessons learned from AGEI were scaled up with the launch of a national Strategy for the Acceleration of Girls' Education in Nigeria (SAGEN), the development of a common strategy to support girls' education (SAGEN+) and the launch of a US\$48 million Girls' Education Project (GEP), a Government of Nigeria-United Kingdom Department

for International Development-UNICEF partnership.

Prospects for closing the gender gap now appear to be improved, as the GEP has leveraged increased complementary funds from the six selected states. However, serious concerns remain about the overall quality of schooling in Nigeria, with the question 'What about the boys?' being increasingly raised and a growing reverse gender gap in the south in favour of girls. To address this imbalance, the focus in the south is on overall school quality and a broader approach to gender. CFS principles remain at the core of the Nigeria-UNICEF country programme, with different emphases in different geographical and cultural areas coupled with a diversified resource mobilization strategy to enable scaling up on quality Education for All nationally and girls' education in the north.

■ **The Philippines: Multiple components of child-friendly schools**

Effectiveness.

Child-friendly schools in the Philippines aim to enhance school effectiveness through capacity-building activities that enable teachers and school heads to have a better understanding of child development, which is critical if they are to apply appropriate teaching practices and foster more meaningful relationships with students and their families.

Protection.

Child-friendly schools have succeeded in transforming the norm in classroom discipline from one that condones verbal and physical abuse to one that calls for a 'shoutless and stickless'



form of discipline. Also through CFS, a school protocol was developed for identification, reporting and referral of cases of abuse, violence and exploitation. This was approved for all schools by the Department of Education.

Community involvement.

As one of its most important tasks and part of how it defines itself, the child-friendly school engages in genuine partnerships with families and communities. This has raised awareness of the importance of education and generated better understanding of the constraints faced by principals and teachers, resulting in an improved school-community relationship. Schools that are successful in this area take pride in being truly schools of their communities.

Inclusion.

Child-friendly schools seek out and assist at-risk children through the Student Tracking System, which monitors and tracks individual children. The system puts together relevant information about the child to create

a socio-economic, academic, health and nutrition profile that enables the teacher to know the child better and understand his or her strengths and barriers to learning. It also permits the teacher to identify children at risk (non-readers, absentees and potential dropouts, physically and sexually abused children, students with learning disabilities and attention deficits) and intervene appropriately. In metropolitan cities, child-friendly schools work with community councils to identify out-of-school children and bring them back to school.

■ **Mongolia: Policy support**

In order to establish and maintain child-friendly learning environments, Mongolia adopted a national policy aimed at improving the quality of education and the implementation of child rights. The policy provides support to all stakeholders from the national to the sub-national level and underscores the collective commitment to children by policymakers, school managers, teachers, parents and communities. The CFS training programme is integrated into the curriculum of national teacher-training colleges, as well as in-service teacher training and distant learning programmes. Additionally, basic education monitoring and management systems include CFS indicators.

2.5.3 Child-friendly spaces in emergencies and their aftermath

Child-friendly spaces/environments (CFS/E) have been developed as a rights-based approach to guaranteeing children's rights to survival, development, participation and protection in situations of crisis or instability. The CFS/E initiative offers an integrated approach to promoting

physical and emotional security, social and cognitive development, and health and nutritional status. At the operational level, child-friendly schools and environments attempt to integrate primary and fundamental health, primary education, childcare and psychosocial development services into a protective environment that is both family-focused and community-based. Centres set up as part of the CFS/E approach provide a safe, caring space where children can engage in structured recreational and educational activities and have access to basic primary health and nutrition services. The centres have programmes geared to preschool children, primary-school-age children, youth and parents. Minimum standards have been established to ensure that sufficient space and equipment are provided.

In the face of a global environment altered by climate change, desertification and the degradation of natural resources, as well as conflict situations and their devastation, rapid restoration of learning in emergency situations and their aftermath is crucial. Education interventions aim to establish safe environments for learning, recreation and psychosocial support; play a dual role in rehabilitation, or restoring a sense of normalcy and healing in children's lives, and prevention; and contribute to values of peace, tolerance and respect for human rights. Safe learning spaces established in emergency situations also offer a gathering place for children and their families where other programmatic services can be implemented. Such learning spaces need to become protected environments where pupils and teachers have the opportunity to build resilience, heal and engage in self-expression. Play, sports, storytelling and other recreational activities are critical elements.

Child-friendly spaces/environments have been established in a number of countries affected by armed conflict or natural disasters. First launched in Kosovo in 2000, the child-friendly spaces initiative provided basic services to large numbers of Kosovan refugee children and women. Preventive maternal-child health and psychosocial services, pre- and primary school education, and recreation were provided within one identifiable site, which also served as a space for the protection of children and their caregivers. Since then, the concept has been adapted to respond to emergency conditions in Angola, Colombia, El Salvador, Liberia, Timor-Leste, Turkey and the North Caucasus region.

■ **Albania:** The CFS/E initiative was designed as an innovative community-oriented, integrated services strategy in response to the influx of Kosovan refugees. It incorporated educational, recreational, health and psychosocial facilities – normally in tents – run by non-governmental organization partners and child professionals from within the refugee community. Lessons learned have served as the basis for the development of subsequent approaches in other contexts

■ **North Caucasus:** An assessment of the education system in the city of Grozny revealed that up to one third of school buildings were destroyed in the Chechen conflicts. Children attended classes in alternative premises, normally without the most basic equipment, and in the absence of electricity and functioning stoves the situation for preschool age children was even worse. The child-friendly school/environment approach integrated active learning and recreation with elements related to child protection, child rights, mine awareness, psychosocial and

healing activities, and HIV and AIDS, addressing both camp-based schools and mainstream schools that had large displaced populations. The approach helped re-centre the education strategy around child protection activities that moved families and communities from emergencies into reconstruction. Special efforts also focused on preschool populations in well-organized centres with indoor and outdoor playing spaces and equipment.

■ **Gujarat:** In the aftermath of the massive earthquake that struck in 2001, a major effort was made to get children back into school as quickly as possible so as to reinstitute learning and re-establish some normalcy in their lives. Multiple stakeholders were enlisted in this effort, including non-governmental organizations that mobilized communities to create tent schools. The child-friendly spaces strategy helped provide a haven for children and ensured that they were able to resume normal activities. Nearly 2,300 schools were established in temporary shelters, facilitating access for nearly 400,000 children across 17 worst-affected blocks and preventing the loss of an academic year. Moreover, psychosocial interventions in primary schools proved so successful that the Government decided to include them as part of pre-service teacher training. School reconstruction emphasized safety standards and equity, with quality improvement a key aim.

2.5.4 Child-friendly learning spaces outside school

The promotion of other child-friendly learning spaces, environments and opportunities goes beyond a response

during emergency and crisis situations. These efforts should be an overall strategy to expand all children's and adolescents' right to learning and participation outside the school environment, taking advantage of all possible opportunities available to children and youth. These spaces or environments should be seen as a 'critical reinforcement' to the formal learning process while expanding opportunities to strengthen additional life skills building and participatory initiatives.

Other opportunities include sports and recreational activities, journalism (print and radio), school tutoring, debate clubs, health education, job-skills training and community activities. These are often undertaken after school, during vacation periods or as part of weekend initiatives and can expand the notion of child-friendly learning spaces.

2.5.5 Linkages between child-friendly schools and early child development

Building on the life cycle perspective and recognizing the importance of the early years, child-friendly approaches should extend to the preschool years as a way to enhance the scope, equity and quality of early interventions. This in turn contributes to improved developmental readiness among children, timely entry into school and better learning outcomes. Moreover, child-friendly approaches in both early child development and lower primary grades can ease the transition from home to school and help build linkages between families, community-based service providers, and teachers and other school officials.

TABLE 2.1

EARLY CHILDHOOD YEARS	CHILD-FRIENDLY SCHOOLS AND LEARNING SPACES			
	Home setting	Community setting	School setting	System/policy
0–3	Caring (health, nutrition, hygiene, water, sanitation), stimulating, interactive, gender-sensitive; availability of appropriate play and reading materials. Smoke-free indoor environment.	Health, hygiene, nutrition, water, sanitation, social welfare services. Access to energy for cooking, community gardens for food. Parenting programmes.	Child-to-child programmes teaching schoolchildren how to care for and play with their young siblings.	Basic services system and policies that support families and communities.
3–5	Caring (health, nutrition, hygiene, water, sanitation), stimulating, interactive, gender-sensitive; availability of appropriate play and reading materials. Smoke-free indoor environment.	Community-based quality childcare centres. Early learning in safe, protective, stimulating settings. Access to energy for cooking, community gardens for food.	Supports early learning programmes in the community by providing professional guidance, training and criteria. Safe, healthy environment with access to water, sanitation, food, energy.	Basic services for promoting and maintaining community-based early child development centres.
5–6	Caring (health, nutrition, hygiene, water, sanitation), stimulating, interactive, gender-sensitive, promoting child’s developmental preparedness for school; availability of play and reading materials. Smoke-free indoor environment.	Safe, protective centre-based group learning opportunities. Prepares children for schooling. Ensures that children are free from disease, undernutrition, abuse and exploitation.	Supports or provides group learning spaces. Collaborates with community and parents to create quality early learning centres. Safe, healthy environment with access to water, sanitation, food, energy.	Establishes and maintains group learning opportunities for children to start school physically, emotionally, cognitively ready.
6–8	Caring (health, nutrition, hygiene, water, sanitation), stimulating, interactive, gender-sensitive. Encourages learning; collaborates with teachers; participates in school events; availability of play and reading materials. Free of labour that prevents child from attending school. Smoke-free indoor environment.	Proximity provides safe route to school. Protective; ensures that children are physically, emotionally, cognitively ready for school and that all attend. After-school programmes for children at risk of dropping out, faltering, repeating. Engages children in environmental activities.	Ready to receive the child and attend to individual needs. Ensures that child is physically, emotionally, cognitively ready for school. Partners with parents to prepare children for smooth transition to school. Relevant curriculum, teaching and learning processes.	–

■ **Bangladesh:** The people of the Chittagong Hill Tracts are among the most disadvantaged in the country with regard to access to health and education facilities. Hence, an integrated child development project was developed to provide them with learning opportunities. Multigrade centres, called Para Centres (community centres), were established to serve children from 3 to 5 years of age. Selected community women were trained in child-centred teaching and learning processes to work in the centres, and an existing learning package was modified for children from 4 to 6 years of age (although even younger children often go to the centres). Para Centres are also used as a one-stop delivery point for other services to children. They disseminate messages on sanitation, hygiene and early child development directly to families and assist them in the installation of appropriate water sources and the building of

sanitary latrines. In addition, Para Centres are used as outreach sites for immunization and distribution of vitamin A for children, health services for pregnant women and newborns, and birth registration. Caregiver education provides information on child protection and includes messages about the creation of safe and secure environments for children and equal care for girls and boys.

Early child development activities can also be built into child-friendly spaces during emergencies in an effort to support young children's emotional well-being and learning potential during natural disasters, humanitarian crises and transition. Examples include Afghanistan, where toys were distributed to young children for therapeutic play, and Liberia, where child-friendly spaces serve as the entry point for implementation of early childcare and development activities.



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