

Annex 26: Guidelines Spiritual Development Programming

As a Christian organization we get our inspiration to address poverty and injustice from the Bible, Gods word. As God plays such an important role in our intentions and desires it is more than natural to also involve Him in the spiritual development of the children we serve.

The fourth dimension of well-being

A human being is not only a physical, mental and social being but also spiritual. That is the way God has created man. Therefore as a Christian organization we value the spiritual development of a child as much as the physical, mental and social development. The spiritual development is to contribute to the realization of the child being a unique child of God. Indicators of spiritual growth are having hope and vision for the future, acquiring moral values and feeling loved and valued as a human being.

Local contributions towards spiritual development

The bible clearly tells us that God cares for creation. He sustains what he has created. Therefore it can be assumed that God is at work contributing not only to the physical, mental and social well-being of people but also at work to impact the spiritual well-being. As Christians we are called to work alongside God and through prayer get an understanding what God is doing and what we can do towards the spiritual development of children.

As Christian workers we represent God here on earth. Who we are, how we do our work, and what we say can make a difference in the spiritual development of children. We may do our work trusting that God will work in and through us.

However both Red een Kind and the partner organization have a limited and temporary presence in the target communities where the children live. Therefore partner organizations are encouraged to work with local Christians and churches as change agents. Partner organizations could serve as a facilitators for local Christians and churches. Local Christians and churches can thus be supported to provide long term pastoral care in the target communities and can potentially have an impact on the holistic (four dimensions) well-being of children.

Principles for spiritual development

To be effective in the spiritual development of children and the community they live in it is necessary to work with a number of principles in mind. These include:

1. Children are assisted because of God's love for mankind independent of background, gender, denomination, whether they are Christian or non-Christian, tribe, cast or class.
2. Children are given the freedom to decide to participate or not participate in the spiritual development activities.

3. Parents are aware and give their consent for the participation of their children in such types of activities.
4. The local Christians and churches with which the partner organization works express mainstream biblical teaching.

Facilitation of spiritual development

In many target communities the majority of the people are Christian. For the children it comes naturally to learn to live according to Christian moral values based on the Bible teaching/stories. In this context bible stories can be used in a natural manner to teach moral values to the children. However also in a more non- Christian environment with the necessary sensitivity children can be taught moral values by using bible stories and thus learn about the love of God for mankind.

Starting point for Christians and churches to get involved is a realization that they have a role to play in sharing the love of God with the poor and vulnerable in the community. This is expressed through a concern and care for the holistic well-being of the poor and vulnerable in the community. In particular vulnerable groups such as orphans, child headed households, widows with children and people living with Aids. Christians and churches can thus have a significant impact on the well-being of vulnerable children and families.

The most obvious platform for the (spiritual) development of children are the children groups where children meet regularly. Church members could join as facilitators of the groups. However it is important facilitators are selected according to the existing criteria (including facilitation skills and affinity with children) and receive sufficient and appropriate training to be a facilitator in the groups.

Besides a role in the children groups churches could also play a role in the care of the vulnerable in the community through care and support of individual families and children. This could be coordinated with and within churches. Also with these activities consider what training and support might be required.

Similarly to other activities in the communities it will be important to carefully monitor activities that are taking place, learn lessons and make corrections in the implementation where necessary.

Collaboration with other agencies

Not all partner organizations have experience in the area of spiritual development and the training of community facilitators to do so. It is also possible the partner organization does not have the time to implement these activities. In most countries there are experienced well equipped organizations to support churches in reaching out to vulnerable children in the community.

If no use is made of these services it might be worthwhile to investigate what Christian materials exist in the country that can be used for the spiritual development of children. Partner organizations are furthermore encouraged to learn from each other and share best practices amongst each other to be effective in spiritual development.