

ART, DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE WORKING WITH ADOLESCENTS LIVING IN INTERNALLY DISPLACED PEOPLE'S CAMPS IN MINDANAO

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Abstract: Within a framework of Communication for Development in Peacebuilding, this article sheds light on the use of art forms such as puppetry and photography as communication channels among youth affected by conflict and displacement. The study presented here evaluates UNICEF Art for Development programme, which was carried out with adolescents living in transitory sites in the city of Zamboanga in 2015. Rather than focusing on the therapeutic effect of the activities, this investigation looks at their ability to provide adolescents living in the context of community-based conflict—such as that of a displaced people's camp—with a safe space to participate and collaborate in art and media production to express themselves and communicate with one another. Copyright © 2017 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

Keywords: communication for development; participatory media; participatory art; peacebuilding; displacement; adolescents

1 INTRODUCTION

Within a framework of Communication for Development (C4D) research, this paper aims to shed light on the outcome that participatory forms of art and media have among young people affected by conflict, with particular focus on an experience from the Mindanao region of the Philippines. The study presented here evaluates UNICEF *Art for Development* programme, which was carried out with adolescents living in transitory sites in the city of Zamboanga in 2015.

While the literature on art therapy with people affected by conflict is extensive, this article wants to be framed within the field of Communication for Development in

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Peacebuilding. In particular, the study presented here sheds light on the results that art forms such as puppetry and photography can lead to when employed as communication channels among youth affected by conflict and displacement. In other words, rather than focusing on the therapeutic effects that these activities may have on individuals, this investigation looks at their ability to provide adolescents living in the context of community-based conflict—such as that of a displaced people's camp—with a safe space to participate and collaborate in art and media production to express themselves and communicate with one another.

A qualitative, exploratory method involving semi-structured interviews with participants has been used to conduct an outcome evaluation of the *Art for Development* programme. The foundations of the data analysis lie on two elements: the first is the *strengths-based model* proposed by Cahill et al. (2010, p.28), which defines a set of protective factors for adolescents that should be addressed by organisations in their programming efforts; the second is the Adolescent Development and Participation (ADAP) approach developed by UNICEF, which puts forward adolescent-specific strategies for programme design and implementation. Through these two components, a framework of analysis has been built to assess the Communication for Development in Peacebuilding outcomes of the *Art for Development* programme.

At the end, conclusions are drawn on the efficacy of the activities in enabling and enhancing a creative collaboration process between youth from different backgrounds, and in allowing participants to share their views on the issues and conflicts affecting their communities.

2 BACKGROUND

The 2007 census established that 43.3 per cent of the Filipino population is under the age of 18, with a further study carried out in 2009 identifying approximately 40 per cent of this group as living in poverty (UNICEF, 2012). In conflict-affected Mindanao, the situation for youth is particularly critical because of the recurring, unpredictable and highly localised violence. Conflict occurs as a result of unsolved disputes between local actors such as family clans, political leaders, military units, police and insurgent groups. State interventions have been mostly unable to either prevent or mitigate these violent incidents (Asia Foundation, 2014). Zamboanga, the main urban centre in western Mindanao, is a city that has experienced infrequent but unanticipated violent attacks from the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), a secessionist insurgent group that has been engaged in a protracted armed struggle since the 1970s, with the goal of transforming Mindanao in the independent Bangsamoro nation.

Alejo (2015) recounts that

[o]n September 9, 2013, a group of the [MNLF] attempted to march to Zamboanga City Hall and raise the flag of the Bangsamoro Republik. This [...] was an expression of protest against the fast progression of the Philippine government negotiation with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) facilitated by the Malaysian government. That action stirred a confrontation with the government that lasted for three weeks, leaving 10,000 houses burned and rendering more than one hundred thousand residents homeless. This event has been called the *Zamboanga Siege* (p.150).

As a result of the siege, camps have been built to serve as shelter for the families that were internally displaced. Two years after those events, these ‘transitory sites’—as termed locally—bring together people from different ethnolinguistic groups, religions and cultures. They also host families who are still undergoing a process of livelihood adaptation, as they have been transplanted from a life at sea to one at land.

Displaced people are a very diverse group, as they often come from different networks and communities. At the same time, the challenges experienced by displaced boys, girls, men, women and elders need to be tackled through a differentiated analysis and tailored response (Bohnet et al., 2015). In Masepla transitory site, where this research has taken place, the discrimination stemming from preconceived biases between the Tausugs, Badjaos, Chavacano, Yakan and Sama tribes is especially evident amongst the youth. As explained by the staff involved in the programme, not only is there overt hostility between members of different tribes, but because of the location of the site, many adolescents do not enrol in secondary education because of the distance they need to travel to reach the closest school. Beside the limits this places on their education, these youth remain inactive in the camp and are not provided with the means to effectively engage in their community. UNICEF has therefore identified them as a priority group to participate in activities that offer them a safe space and the means to understand one another, which are important components of peace.

3 UNICEF ART FOR DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

In situation of emergencies, not enough attention is being paid to adolescents, who are often regarded as mere recipients of aid and are not targeted as a specific group in the humanitarian response. The failure in recognising this particular segment of the young population as active responders represents too often a missed opportunity for planning their participation in rebuilding peace and facilitating development in their communities (Brathwaite et al., 2015).

Through the ADAP approach to its programming, UNICEF aims to deliver results in a number of technical areas that go from child protection and health to education and communication for development. In the Philippines, in particular, the agency has developed four pillars of action in their programming to work specifically with adolescents (Brathwaite et al., 2015).

As part of its post-emergency response to the Zamboanga siege, in 2015/2016, UNICEF implemented a series of programmes with a more long-term view to peace and development in the area. One of such initiatives was the *Art for Development* programme, which was designed and facilitated by the Centre for Culture and the Arts’ team of Ateneo of Zamboanga University; the programme focused specifically on Pillar 1 and Pillar 3 of UNICEF ADAP approach, based, respectively, on creating ‘safe spaces’ and facilitating ‘youth participation and networks’. One of the aims was to work towards the creation of more lasting connections, understanding and friendships amongst the youth of Masepla transitory site. In order to achieve this, the programme employed highly collaborative and formative art forms and communication channels such as participatory photography and puppetry. Target beneficiaries included at-risk youth with specific focus on out-of-school adolescents between the age of 12 and 17, who had not participated in similar workshops or trainings before.

The structure of the programme involved three 5-day workshops: participatory photography was repeated in two batches with 30 participants per batch; puppetry had one batch with 25 participants. The workshops were led by practicing artists specialised in each field, with the crucial assistance of local facilitators.

The art component of the programme consisted of a series of activities that allowed participants to work in small groups towards the creation of their output. With photography, kids were divided in groups of three and encouraged to take photos that represented (i) their dreams for the future and (ii) everyday life in the community of Masepla. With puppetry, the groups consisted of five people who worked individually (at first) in creating their own puppet, and together in developing a story and script for their short performance. Groups were provided with a story template that enabled them to identify characters, plot and final solution. The stories chosen focused on issues related to water management, sanitation, health and education.

A *SUGPAT module* was integrated into each workshop. *SUGPAT* is a local term that carries the general meaning of ‘connecting’, ‘joining’ and ‘merging’. The term is understood by all of the different ethnolinguistic groups present in the Zamboanga area. The module was divided in three sections containing a series of programme activities, which focused on the following themes:

- Section 1. Towards an Understanding of Diversity | Developing cultural knowledge and awareness, and defining diversity
- Section 2. Dismantling Biases and Discrimination | Reflections on diversity-related issues such as inclusion, cultural appreciation, prejudice, discrimination and stereotyping
- Section 3. Creating a Sense of Community across Cultures | Developing and expanding knowledge, sensitivity and respect for cultural diversity.

The *SUGPAT module*’s sections were interwoven with the art and media activities and offered a space for discussion within the wider group in each workshop.

4 THE STUDY

While the literature on art therapy with people affected by conflict is extensive (Byers, 1996; Kalksma-Van Lith 2007; Liebmann, 1996; Zelizer, 2003), little is known on how media and art forms—such as puppetry and photography, among others—can play as communication channels among young people who have undergone displacement. Cahill et al. (2010) explain that because of the diverse experiences that adolescents have in emergency and post-emergency situations, there is a need for creative approaches that may tap into those different frames. Art and media programmes are avenues to give young people a platform and voice. Yet, as these scholars emphasise, such activities should not be confused with therapy and instead regarded as ways to engage participants in critical thinking and sharing.

A large number of programmes employing art have been implemented in development contexts. Most part of the literature on Art for Development has focused on the use of theatre (Abah, 1997; Banham et al., 1999; Byam, 1999; Epskamp, 2006; Levert and Mumma, 1995; Salhi, 1998). More recent work has begun to look at other creative channels such as dance (Johnstone, 2013) and music (Clark and Koster, 2014). The approach taken by this study explores the topic of (participatory) art in development within the context of

the emerging field of Communication for Development in Peacebuilding, which has been largely examined in the work of Baú (2014a, 2014b, 2015a, 2015b).

UNICEF is the United Nations agency that engages greatly in communication for peacebuilding, peace education and advocacy in peacebuilding work through its programmes. Through a Communication for Development in Peacebuilding lens, this study wants to determine the outcome that the art and media activities and related outputs from UNICEF *Art for Development* programme have had on the adolescents who participated in it. In the words of Rockwell and Bennett (2004), '[o]utcome evaluation assesses the extent to which [the] targets [...] are achieved. It focuses on program outputs as well as on benefits or changes for individuals or populations' (p.26). Contrarily to impact evaluation, which looks at the broader social changes that can be achieved as a result of a programme—usually apparent after a certain length of time from the end of the activities, outcome evaluation reflects on the immediate changes that are visible as soon as the programme has ended (UNDP, 2011).

C4D in Peacebuilding has been defined by Spadacini (2013) as

[...] a social process that fosters dialogue and meaningful conversations to reduce and prevent the risk of conflict or relapse into it. By using a range of participatory tools and methods, C4D in peacebuilding creates safe spaces for discussing both the causes and consequences of conflict, as well as 'normal and everyday life'. This process generates transformation at all levels by promoting listening, debating, building trust, learning to appreciate differences, sharing knowledge, developing skills [...] and learning in order to lay the foundations of a sustainable and durable peace (p.4).

This definition allows us to identify participation, cooperation (working together) and meaningful exchange as important components for building a peaceful co-existence between groups. At the same time, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR, 2014) defines 'safe spaces' as

[...] any kind of space, formal or informal, where groups or individuals can feel physically and emotionally safe. The word "safe" in this context refers to the absence of trauma, excessive stress, violence (or fear of violence) or abuse. A safe space is a place where individuals can build social networks, express, and entertain themselves (p.1).

Research was conducted as a follow-up activity at the end of both participatory photography and puppetry modules. This involved 15 semi-structured interviews with programme participants. For the respondents' selection, a stratified sample was identified looking at categories of:

- gender (both male and female),
- age (between 15 and 17 years of age),
- ethnic background (Tausugs and Badjaos, dominant groups in the camp).

The framework of analysis is built around the *strengths-based model* proposed by Cahill et al. (2010, p.28), shown in Figure 1. This encompasses a spectrum of protective factors for adolescents that organisations should address in their programming efforts.

The analysis assesses the Communication for Development in Peacebuilding outcomes of UNICEF *Art for Development* programme. These have been articulated in relation to two key protective factors and related enhancement of Cahill et al. (2010)'s model, which

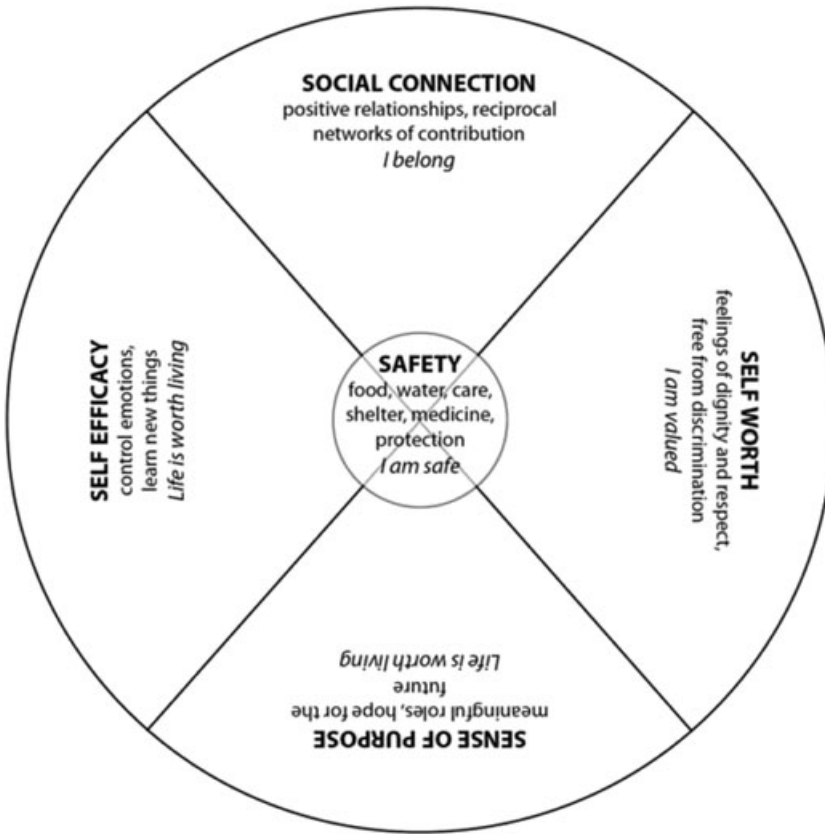


Figure 1. Strengths-based model to work with adolescents in emergencies (Cahill et al., 2010, p.28)

strongly connect with pillars 1 and 3 of UNICEF ADAP approach (previously discussed). Table 1 exemplifies the study framework.

5 ANALYSIS

Participants’ interviews were initially coded under the broad themes of *social connection* and *self-efficacy*. Once the evidence for these key protective factors was isolated, a subsequent coding process of these selections brought to the surface specific programme outcomes related to C4D in Peacebuilding and linked to *creativity and participation, cooperation and exchange*.

5.1 Creativity and Participation

From almost all of the interviews, it emerges clearly that one of the most convincing elements of the programme was providing the kids with the opportunity to learn new skills, both in reference to photography and puppet making. This demonstrates that the

Table 1. Framework of analysis applied to this study

Key protective factors	Protective factor enhancement	UNICEF ADAP approach
<i>Social connection.</i> Feelings of belonging and acceptance from a social group, positive relationships with peers. <i>I am wanted and needed. I can contribute and be contributed to. I can listen and be heard.</i> [Cahill et al., 2010, p.28]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safe spaces available to young people • Opportunities to participate [Cahill et al., 2010, p.28]	<i>Pillar 1:</i> safe spaces <i>Pillar 3:</i> youth participation and networks
<i>Self-efficacy.</i> Feelings of control and agency and autonomy; capacity to learn, to manage and shape aspects of the environment; to manage the expression of emotions; to look after oneself. <i>I can do things to look after myself and others. I can learn. I can control the way I behave. I can influence my environment.</i> [Cahill et al., 2010, p.28]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vocational skills • Opportunities to participate • Contribution to care for the community [Cahill et al., 2010, p.28]	<i>Pillar 1:</i> safe spaces <i>Pillar 3:</i> youth participation and networks
<u>C4D in Peacebuilding-related programme objectives</u>		
<i>Creativity and Participation.</i> Participants' sense of gratification in engaging with the medium and the production process safely and creatively.		
<i>Cooperation.</i> Participants' sense of gratification from the small group work; ability to produce an output through a collaborative participatory process.		
<i>Exchange.</i> Possibility to express themselves, share experiences and learn about others.		

participatory approach adopted in the activities strengthened participants' involvement with the media and their sense of ownership.

'When I took photos, I liked applying the perspectives of birds eye view, worms eye view and eye level' (Interviewee4Ph).

'I didn't know how to use the camera but when I joined the workshop I was able to learn a lot of this' (Interviewee6Ph).

'I also learned how to operate the camera, specifically in turning it on, turning it off and using the flash; if I hadn't participated in the photography workshop I would have not learned anything about it' (Interviewee8Ph).

'I learned a lot of things on how to operate the camera and take photos' (Interviewee15Ph_M16).

'I was able to learn how to create the puppet and make a story out of the puppet and how to talk using the puppet' (Interviewee1Pu).

'I was happy working with other people especially when putting the eyes of the puppets and the nose of the puppets' (Interviewee3Pu).

‘The thing that I liked most of the puppetry is that I was able to create my own puppet and I held the puppet for the first time’ (Interviewee9Pu).

‘What I liked the most is when we were asked to sit on the chairs and perform with our puppets’ (Interviewee10Pu).

Particularly for the photography batch, participants welcomed the autonomy that was offered to them in choosing what to capture and in deciding the subject of their images. This shows the importance that is placed on creativity and on the freedom of producing one’s own content.

‘I liked when I took the photo of a tree, because the tree is big and very beautiful’ (Interviewee4Ph).

‘I liked when we went to the community here in Masepla and took photos because our community is so meaningful’ (Interviewee12Ph).

‘The thing I liked about photography is that we were asked to take pictures of our fellow participants, the emotions; and every time I take photos, I am also able to express myself honestly’ (Interviewee13Ph).

‘It feels good that I was able to take photos of the people who are happy, who are sad, who are lonely’ (Interviewee14Ph).

5.2 Cooperation

Participants expressed their happiness towards the experience of working together in groups. Several kids described the experience as similar to being with their families and felt other group members as close as siblings. New friendships were formed, which transposed into life outside the workshops and after the programme. The opportunity to support one another regardless of the ethnolinguistic background and to create something together was also emphasised.

‘We talked to each other and then we helped each other make the puppets. I really enjoyed when we practiced for the puppet show and when we helped each other creating the puppets’ (Interviewee7Pu).

‘I was very happy for the five days that we were together. It reminded me of my family, my relatives, my cousins when I was still a child’ (Interviewee9Pu).

‘I felt like we were like siblings’ (Interviewee6Ph).

‘In the workshop we became very close friends’ (Interviewee13Ph).

‘I was very happy, I enjoyed it and I didn’t even want to go back home [...] In the group, we shared experiences about the community and we joined our experiences together to come up with the story’ (Interviewee11Pu).

5.3 Exchange

The way in which taking photographs and developing puppets’ stories were discussed indicates that participants engaged with the art and media outputs as a form of meaningful exchange. The kids were able to express their thoughts, something they felt, or even a personal experience about their community in the camp through these channels.

'I took that photo because I want to show to the people the real situation of the kids in Masepla [...] because the area is not clean and it should be expressed in the photos' (Interviewee 7Ph).

'I took the photo of the building of Ateneo [University] because someday I wants to study there, and that is my dream, to reach Ateneo' (Interviewee 4Ph).

'The reason why I took the photo of the classroom is because I really want to finish my studies and eventually become a teacher' (Interviewee 13Ph).

'Our puppets' story was about education because the schools are far from our community and some of these kids do not have money to pay for their transportation [...] that's why we created that story because we experienced it and it is true that the school is far away and far from the community' (Interviewee 2Pu).

Similarly, looking at other people's photographs and puppets' stories created a sense of connection, as the feelings and stories conveyed through each medium were recognised to be common between participants.

'The [story] that stood out for me was that of the kids from Masepla who cannot go to school because the school is very far from the community. [...] My nephew is also studying at that school but since the school is very far and they do not have means to pay for transportation, he cannot go to school anymore' (Interviewee9Pu).

'The photo that stood out for me was the one of Ateneo building. Because just like me, the one who took the photo, when she shared her story she said that the building symbolised her dream of going to university one day' (Interviewee 15Ph).

'There was this one photo where a child holds his grandmother as they walk down the stairs. [That image stood out for me] because that is something that I will never forget: helping the old ones in walking down the stairs' (Interviewee14Ph).

'I can relate to that picture because my brother and his wife are expecting a baby this December, so I can relate to the picture of the family' (Interviewee16Ph).

The idea of self-expression was also a recurring element. The kids emphasised the power of each medium even as a means of communication that had given them the chance to be heard.

'I was able to express myself honestly whenever I took photos. I felt very happy' (Interviewee13Ph).

'The photos that I took symbolized myself' (Interviewee 15Ph).

'I was able to share everything and I was able to share that to the people, not to throw their garbage anywhere and to recycle' (Interviewee11Pu).

'I was able to share my experience with my new friends' (Interviewee17Pu).

One participant presented an important reflection that was developed while watching one of the puppets' stories:

'The story started with a girl from the community who hadn't been able to take a bath for three days because she was waiting for the truck loaded with water to arrive but it had already been three days... She waited for the rain to come but after three days the rain still didn't come. [...] Eventually the truck arrives and the girl is able to take a bath and the two boys who teased her before say that the girl is now properly bathed. [This story stood out for me] because in reality there are still a lot of people who can't take a bath even though the truck arrives' (Interviewee11Pu).

6 OUTCOME ASSESSMENT

From the interview analysis, it emerges with clarity that UNICEF *Art for Development* programme has been effective at reinforcing the commonalities, rather than the differences, of adolescents living in Masepla transitory site, developing a sense of *social connection*. Through the activities, the kids uncovered their ability to cooperate towards the production of a shared output; this cooperation superseded the barriers of their ethnolinguistic and religious backgrounds, which are typically used as dividing factors. The programme created a bond among participants and has led to new friendships; it has also strengthened the adolescents' sense of community of the camp.

These ideas, as also exemplified in the interviews quotes, address the *Cooperation* outcome of C4D in Peacebuilding. This was expressed in particular through the kids' happiness towards the opportunity that was given to them of working in a group and towards the act of creating something together.

Another important effect of the programme was that the group took conscience of their ability to choose and to produce something that was meaningful to both themselves and others and were able to reflect on the process and what they had achieved. This indicates that the activities built their sense of *self-efficacy* and helped them to recognise the importance of their role in identifying problems and solutions together with others.

They also had the opportunity to recognise other participants' experiences of life in the camp and dreams for the future in relation to their own. This demonstrates how the programme has addressed the *Creativity and Participation* and *Exchange* outcomes connected to C4D in Peacebuilding. The participatory approach employed to produce both the photos and the puppets reinforced their engagement with and appreciation for these media and art forms as channels to express themselves, understand others and share something personal.

For adolescents living in the context of community-based conflict—such as that of a displaced people's camp—these outcomes are significant to generate a positive change in relation to the disputes that arise between young people, particularly among those from different backgrounds, and to begin to build a broader sense of peace and understanding. The opportunity to be provided with a safe space to participate, collaborate and communicate and with the chance to create a network with other youth in their community is an important pillar of UNICEF ADAP approach. This study shows how the collaborative forms of art and media used by the programme are avenues for the inclusion of adolescents in the post-emergency response, as they offer them a channel to both communicate with one another and to express their views and feelings.

6.1 Limitations

Two main limitations can be identified in the overall assessment of this programme. First, the analysis conducted is unable to provide insights on the dynamics that took place during the workshops and particularly in the small group work. Whether gender and/or ethnolinguistic variables had an impact on who had more voice over others cannot be determined here. The issue of power is an important one, and it plays a major role in the context of community-based conflict already from a young age; in displaced camps, where different ethnicities and religions co-exist, this gains greater relevance. Even in the reality of the *Art for Development* programme, it is necessary to recognise that power dynamics might have shaped the process and outcomes of certain activities.

The second limitation is related to the type of results that an outcome evaluation is able to ascertain. This form of evaluation is unable to establish the long-term impact that the programme has had on the youth involved. Hence, while we can claim that the activities have developed, among the kids, a new awareness that can lead to positive change in the community of the camp, we cannot establish the extent to which change will effectively occur. Yet, this investigation has demonstrated that the design adopted by the programme is helpful in engaging adolescents in the post-emergency response, providing them with a safe space to express themselves and enabling them to build a network of peers while cooperating and learning from one another.

7 CONCLUSIONS

This paper has discussed UNICEF experience of implementing an *Art for Development* programme with adolescents living in an internally displaced camp in the southern Philippines. The area of Mindanao, where this study took place, has been affected by long-term conflict that has forced diverse groups of the population into close proximity. In order to address community-based conflicts arising from the post-emergency context, UNICEF has focused on engaging adolescents by providing them with the opportunity to participate in the production of art and media content.

Using a framework of Communication for Development in Peacebuilding, the investigation presented here shows how the programme has led to positive outcomes in relation to peaceful cooperation and meaningful exchange between the youth. The evidence brought forward has highlighted, in particular, the relationship between key protective factors such as *social connection* and *self-efficacy* (Cahill et al., 2010) and the programme activities, and how the elements that connect them can be found within communication and peace.

By reflecting on the challenges faced in the realities of emergencies and displacement, innovative approaches that recognise adolescents as a specific target group and promote their participation through activities that are tailored to their needs can be helpful in designing a more effective response. The evidence that this paper brings forward on the outcomes of UNICEF *Art for Development* programme offers an insight into one relevant experience and provides important reflections that want to contribute towards further research and development practice in this area.

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