



# Child Friendly Spaces in Emergencies

## Case Study Report

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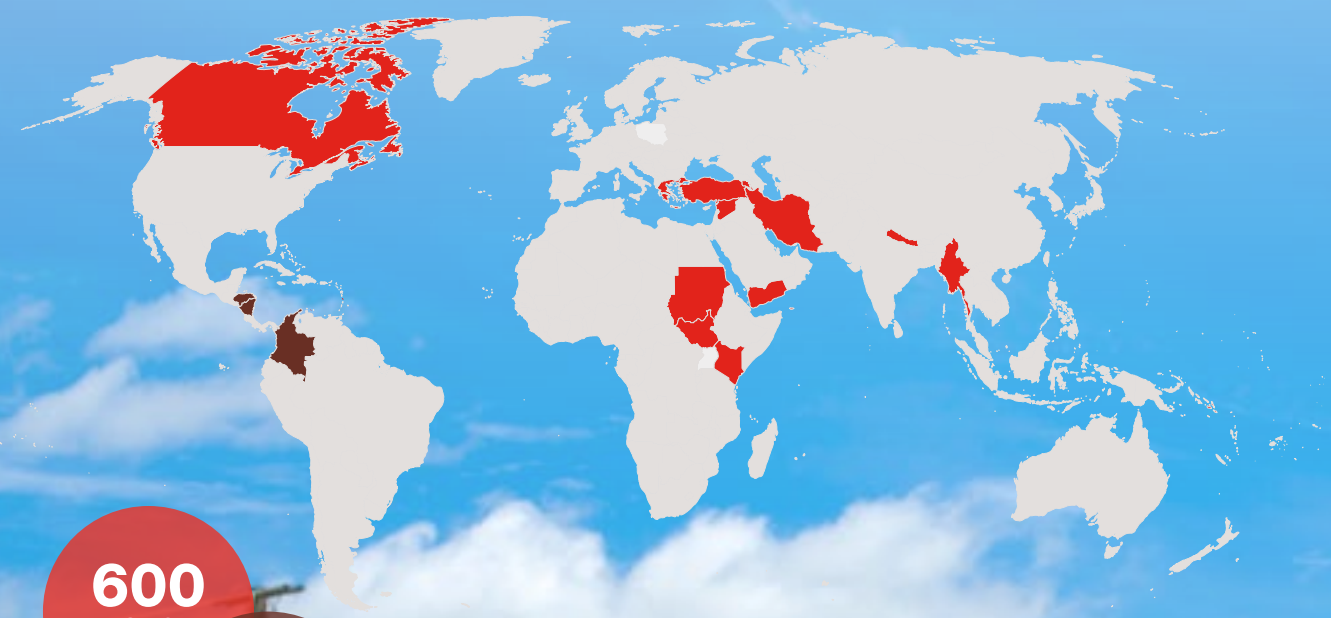


# INTRODUCTION

This case study report complements the IFRC Lessons Learned Review on Child Friendly Spaces (CFS) in Emergencies. The case studies provide examples of concrete activities and related lessons that may benefit future CFS projects.

Rather than being an exhaustive list of the work of National Societies, the case studies provide details of work from a sampling of Red Cross Red Crescent National Societies. These include thirteen National Societies from the Africa, Americas, Asia Pacific, Europe, and Middle-East and North Africa (MENA) Regions. The case studies reflect the experiences from 600 child friendly spaces that have reached at least 645,415 children.

The case studies have a focus on emergencies but also include protracted crises and disaster risk reduction related activities.



600  
CFS

645,415  
PEOPLE  
REACHED

COLOMBIA, NICARAGUA AND HONDURAS  
CONDUCTED SCOPING REVIEWS AND ARE SEEKING TO DELIVER CFS IN THE FUTURE





# AFRICA

South Sudan Red Cross | CFS volunteer showing children's art





## CFS in urban spaces

“Most outstanding for me has been the experience in helping children handle issues, establishing local partnerships, and ensuring we have in place referral mechanisms when children need help.”

IFRC | Kenya Red Cross volunteer working with communities in informal settlements

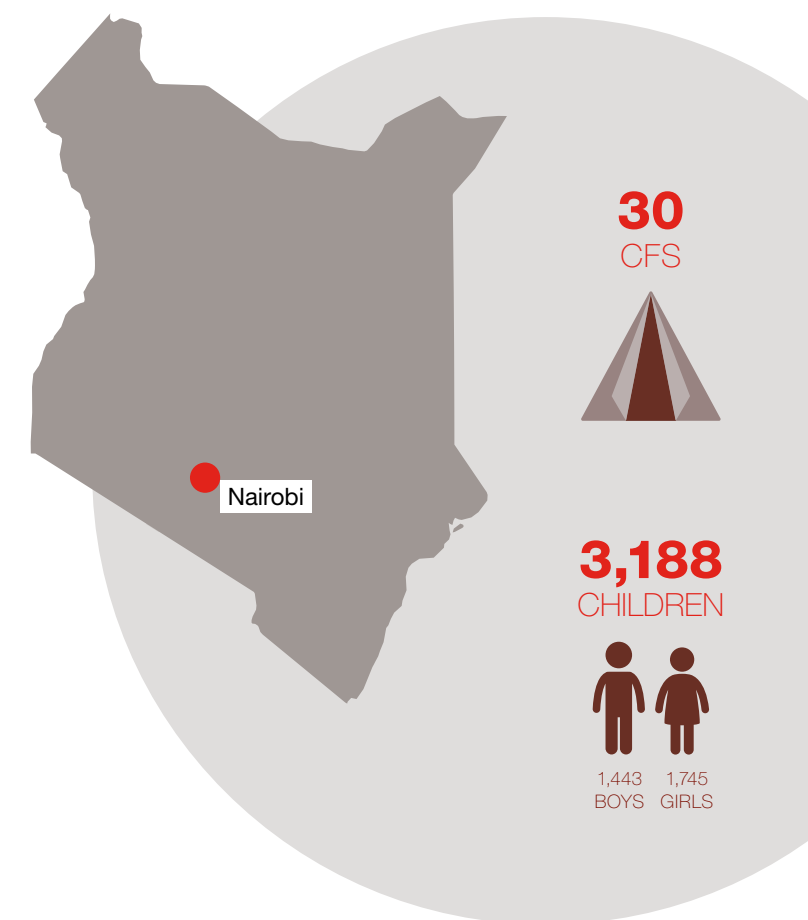
# Kenya

In Kenya’s urban centres there are many informal settlements, referred by some as “slums.” As in many places around the globe, migrants and refugees, labourers and those looking to climb out of rural hardships, come to urban centres seeking employment and new opportunities. A large portion of these are young people, including children. Unfortunately for many the only places they can find or afford shelter are in informal settlements. These settlements are often at risk of disasters like flooding and fires, the spread of disease, violence, and ongoing stress.

“Whether it is day-to-day or during disasters, life in the informal settlements is often hardest for girls and boys,” says Faima Mohammed who leads Kenya Red Cross programming with children in the settlements. She emphasizes, “The stress of living in poor and cramped conditions, struggling to access school and support services, perhaps having to work, and the risk of gender-based violence are all ongoing.”

The Red Cross has responded to these vulnerabilities through programing to increase resilience of urban communities, especially during disasters, in seven informal settlements: Mukuru Kwa Njenga, Mukuru Kwa Rueben, Mukuru Fuata Nyayo, Mukuru Landmawe, Mukuru Kayaba / Tetra Park, Blue Estate / Kinyago, and Mathare.

A key component is the Child Resilience Program that focuses on enhancing children’s psychosocial



well-being and protection. For example, in partnership with 30 schools the Red Cross has organized youth clubs where girls and boys, ages nine to fourteen, can come together in CFS within the schools to learn new skills, plan social activities, and access psychosocial support from approximately forty Red Cross volunteers. Faima explains, “The volunteers are professional counselors who facilitate activities to boost self-esteem, self-awareness, and trust. They also provide children a listening ear, advice, and help them to access local protection, health and social services.” In 2016, approximately 1,745 girls and 1,443 boys had been reached.

The work of the volunteer counselors is complemented by youth volunteers who empower children in their own schools with knowledge and skills to be more resilient and safe within the community. They also act as a link between the



Red Cross, schools, and parents. In fact, the Red Cross youth volunteers have led the organization of school meetings with parents and caregivers in order to help engage mothers and fathers in finding local solutions to improve the well-being of their children.

With so many safety and psychosocial needs in the informal settlements and the schools, the Red Cross has prioritized building partnerships with local agencies. Faima outlines the approach, “In addition to partnering with the Ministry of Education that provides rooms for the child friendly spaces within the schools, we also coordinate with the Girl Child Network that helps conduct awareness sessions on sexual and gender-based violence for the communities and school children, and the local HAART agency that focuses on education around human trafficking. We also collaborate with the Wangu Kanja Foundation that has been organized to refer child survivors of violence to access justice.” In addition, the Red Cross refers children who report violence to Médecins Sans Frontières which provides health services to survivors of sexual and physical assaults.

Seith Simiyu, who volunteers for the Child Resilience Program as a counselor across all seven informal settlements, describes his reason for joining the project, “I joined the child friendly spaces project because I had an interest in ensuring the well being of children. In the community many a-times children are neglected.” He adds, “I have personally benefited by understanding children’s needs in the community and what intervention mechanisms are available. Most outstanding for me has been the experience in helping children handle issues, establishing local partnerships, and ensuring we have in place referral mechanisms when children need help.”



## LESSONS LEARNED

1. **The selection of volunteers is critical.** The recruitment of local professional counselors as volunteers has proven to be a key for ensuring a professional approach to supporting children. The specialized experience of the volunteers has allowed them to more easily interact with girls and boys and provide a safe environment for them to discuss psychosocial and protection issues.
2. **Building partnerships early helps ensure effective referral and support systems.** Having partners with specialized strengths to prevent and respond to violence helps achieve the principle of “do no harm” so that girls and boys have specific agencies to access support right from the start of a project.
3. **Linking to Red Cross youth clubs allows for broader social impact.** By providing children a chance to not only participate in child friendly spaces but also to be active in Red Cross youth clubs allows chances for girls and boys to take their learning on psychosocial well-being and protection and use it to benefit others in their school and community.



# CFS in complex emergencies

“As youth we have come together at the Red Cross. These plays we do can help others know the problems in the camp so they do not continue.”



South Sudan Red Cross | Youth theatre at a CFS

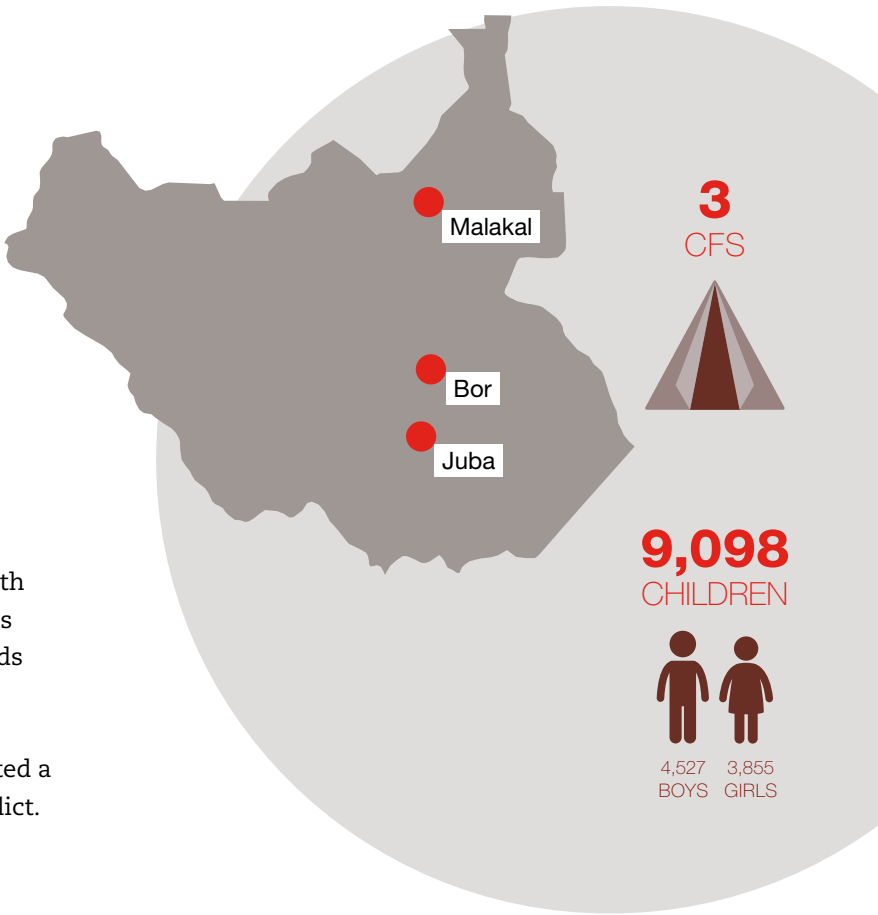
# South Sudan

In 2013, the newly independent country of South Sudan became embroiled in a civil conflict. This led to tens of thousands of deaths and hundreds of thousands of people fleeing their homes for safety in other countries or into humanitarian camps within South Sudan. Children represented a high portion of the people affected by the conflict.

In addition to health, water and sanitation, first aid and restoring family links activities for girls and boys, the South Sudan Red Cross also established three CFS in order to enhance psychosocial support and protection of children. The CFS were set up in the cities of Bor and Malakal and the Protection of Civilians Camp number three (POC3) near the capital city, Juba. The projects in Bor and Malakal, in particular, were in hard-to-access locations where few agencies other than the Red Cross had access or were able to provide humanitarian services.

A detailed Red Cross psychosocial assessment, including with participation of girls and boys affected by the conflict, found there were key issues among children and youth such as feelings of sadness, fear, hopelessness, and a sense of loss. In addition, the findings highlighted the risk of physical and sexual violence, dangers and injuries, and limited activities for children and youth.

As a result of the high needs among children and youth, the South Sudan Red Cross included within



their emergency programming a key result area to “support children engage in structured play, recreational and learning child friendly spaces.”

By 2015, 9,098 children (3,855 girls / 4,527 boys) accessed services from the CFS. The key activities implemented by volunteers were sports like football matches, story telling, artwork, and songs and crafts. Each of the activities aimed at helping children recover from the negative effects of the conflict and cope with living in their new environment. Many young children would spend time creating sculptures and art. Often these would depict the homes they left behind, the friends they miss, their cattle, and even images of war and relief planes providing aid.

In POC3, youth organized themselves into a drama group and with help from Red Cross volunteers and a local theatre artist, developed short plays to



communicate to children and adults in the camp the risk of violence like sexual harassment and exploitation and conflict between communities. A youth volunteer explains, “Here in the camp many people come from different places. As youth we have come together at the Red Cross. These plays we do can help others know the problems in the camp so they do not continue.” A local leader shares, “Child friendly spaces have been very good opportunities for children affected by the ongoing emergency in South Sudan. The learning and play opportunities provide a healing environment for children.”



Uganda Red Cross

## LESSONS LEARNED

1. **A holistic approach is important.** In order to increase reach and impact, it is has been important to not restrict activities only to the child friendly spaces but rather also to interact and find solutions in collaboration with youth and adults in the communities.
2. **Regular training for volunteers is crucial.** To improve quality and capacity, it woul benefit volunteers to have regular training on a variety of psychosocial and protection topics.
3. **Partnerships add value.** Working with partners for joint training, sharing resources, or establishing referral services can be a challenge because of the perception by some armed combatants that, unlike the Red Cross and Red Crescent, some agencies may not be neutral or impartial. Working with partners is also difficult due to the hard-to-access locations, often with limited health and psychosocial services, where the Red Cross or Red Crescent is operating.
4. **Internal organizational protection systems are essential.** Having a child protection policy would improve the understanding among volunteers about their responsibilities to keep children safe and provide some basic guidance on how to interact safely with children in the child friendly spaces.
5. **Specific efforts and approaches can be required to engage girls.** In some locations, the participation of girls between the ages of 13-18 years in social events was generally low compared to boys. This is attributed to the lack of security and risk of violence against girls and also parents being protective because girls of this age group are considered ready for marriage according to the local cultural beliefs.



Juozas Cernius | IFRC





## CFS in mass population movements

“Nothing leaves us as satisfied as seeing the once-withdrawn children running around, playing, laughing and being just that – children!”

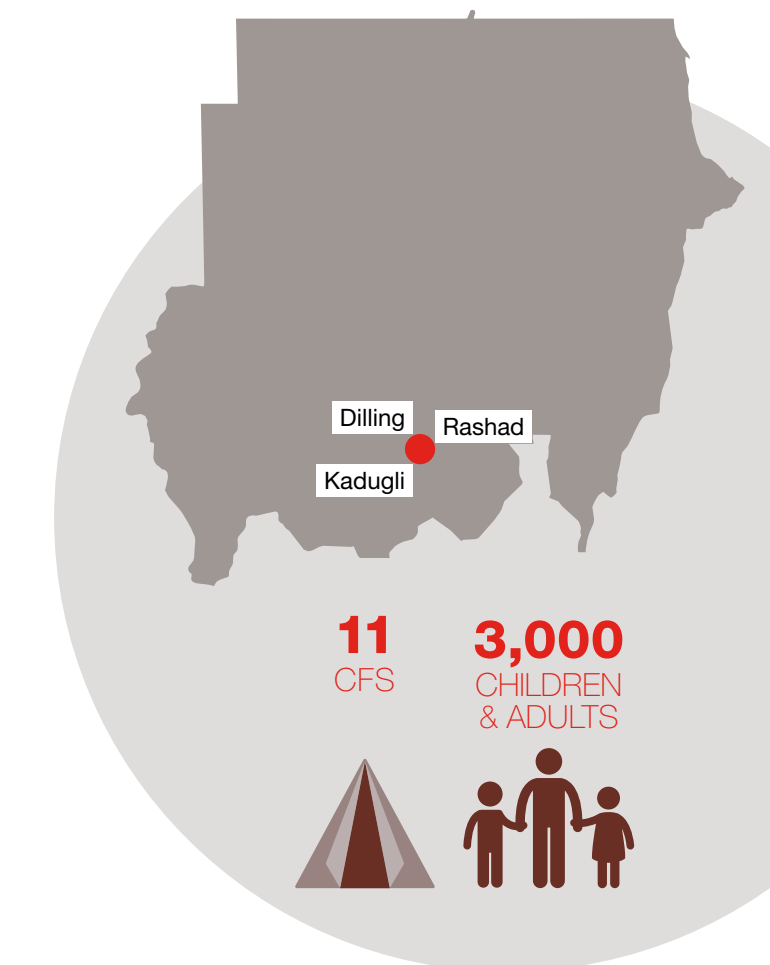
Sudan Red Crescent volunteer at a CFS

# Sudan

In Kenya’s urban centres there are many informal Following violence in 2011 South Kordofan, Sudan and an armed conflict in neighboring South Sudan in 2013, many Sudanese and South Sudanese families were displaced, including children of all ages. The Sudanese Red Crescent Society knew a priority would be to help girls and boys cope with what they had experienced. Therefore, through its tracing department, the Red Cross implemented eleven CFS targeting girls and boys ages 6-11 years old.

“Children are victims of circumstances during conflict. Some are too young to even comprehend what is happening, but they are definitely aware that something is not right. Their fears may not be audibly expressed, but through their actions, we are able to identify children who are traumatized,” says Emaddin Al Imam, the Red Crescent tracing field officer. As such, the goal of the CFS project, that was funded by UNICEF, was to “provide a safe, protective space, and to support delivery of child welfare, protection, psychosocial, and other support services for disadvantaged children made vulnerable by conflict or disasters.”

Al Imam continues, “After the South Kordofan violence, we initiated several child protection activities to provide a safe space for children to come to address the trauma they had witnessed. We did this through recreation, education and awareness activities. We also worked on identifying and responding to cases of



separated and unaccompanied minors, to help reunite them with their families or to find alternative care solutions where reunification was not possible.” In addition, the project also integrated important messages around health education and hygiene awareness.

Staff and volunteers at the Red Crescent say they have seen children withdraw from their daily life, while others exhibit extreme fear. “Through education and recreation we are able to identify the children’s fears and traumas, and help them deal with them professionally,” says Al Imam, adding that when asked to draw or make something, some children often draw or mold images of guns and bullets; things related to the violence. “They express the same during play, with some children being very withdrawn, others becoming aggressive, and still others using language to voice their fears.”



Umbala Mohammed Gumaa is a mother to a boy and girl, both of whom took part in the CFS.

*“We were displaced during the violence. When we returned to Kadugli, the kindergarten where my children went had been closed down. The teachers had also been forced to other villages. The children had no school to go to and stayed at home with me. That was when I realized that they had been so deeply traumatized by the sound of gunshots that they could not even stand the sound of a vehicle. They would scream and run in fear and refuse to go out, to eat or even to play for days,”* says Gumaa.

However, after taking part in the activities arranged in the CFS, Gumaa says she a positive change in her children in a very short time.

She also shares, *“When my children started attending the child friendly space sessions, they started eating well and became more lively, trusting and telling stories about the games they played, their encounters with the Red Crescent volunteers and their new friends. They generally looked relaxed.”*

But it is not easy to help a child work through their trauma. Al Imam explains, *“Depending on the magnitude of the trauma that individual children undergo, it takes time to gain their trust and even that of their parents. Some children need to be referred to a specialist. In addition, there are times when you deal with the child, but the parent is also traumatized. If they have not been assisted emotionally, there is the risk they will undo the positive progress being seen in their children.”*

The Red Crescent reached approximately 3,000 girls and boys and parents through the CFS. *“Nothing leaves us as satisfied as seeing the once-withdrawn children running around, playing, laughing and being just that – children!”*



## LESSONS LEARNED

- 1. Partnerships add value.** Working with other agencies such as UNICEF and PLAN Sudan has increased the quality, reach and capacity of the project including in hard-to-access locations. Partnerships allowed each agency to build on the strengths of the others, reduce overlap, and to increase local initiative from communities to become involved. In addition, coordination with other agencies through the inter-agency Child Protection Cluster, led to improved sharing of information on the needs, capacities and status of children in different locations. It also provided a forum for more consistent messaging to communities across agencies.
- 2. Child and parent committees are platforms for participation.** The establishment of volunteer Children's Committees and Parents' Committees allowed for meaningful and consistent participation by children and parents in the design and implementation of the child friendly spaces.
- 3. Internal child protection systems strengthen programs.** Having a child protection policy would improve the understanding among volunteers about their responsibilities to keep children safe and provide some basic guidance on how to interact safely with children in the child friendly spaces.
- 4. CFS can be used for many interventions to complement protection and psychosocial needs.** CFS can be opportunities to not only share psychosocial and protection messages but also health education and hygiene messages to girls, boys and their parents and other family members.



# AMERICAS

Canadian Red Cross | children participating in protection event



## CFS in natural disaster responses

“The child friendly spaces were places where kids could feel secure and have normal childhood experiences in the midst of upheaval.”

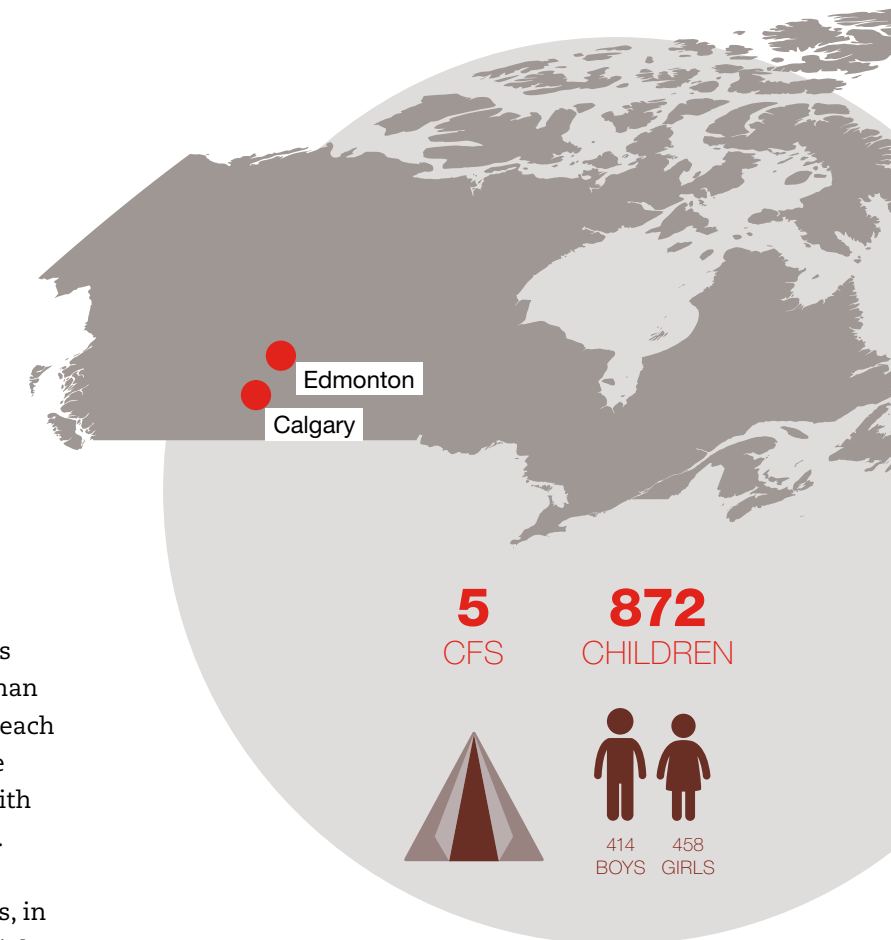
Canadian Red Cross | child participating in CFS

## Canada

In early May 2016, a wildfire tore through Fort McMurray, Alberta, destroying neighbourhoods and threatening an entire community. More than 80,000 people fled through smoke and fire to reach safety. In the largest wildfire evacuation in the province's history, many residents were left with almost nothing and some with nowhere to go.

As part of its response the Canadian Red Cross, in partnership with Save the Children, took special care to ensure girls and boys had psychosocial care and were protected from all forms of violence. This was mainly achieved through supporting five CFS located in the cities of Edmonton and Calgary where families were evacuated to. A total of 872 children (458 girls / 414 boys) were reached between May and the end of June.

Volunteer, Laurence Lepine, who led the Red Cross work on CFS, explains “We were concerned that because of the massive damage caused by the fires, it would be some time before children and their families could return home. During this gap the children were in a totally different environment than they were used to, often having few of their normal belongings or other daily markers. This presented a risk of children's safety and their development being impaired if they did not have access to a safe, stable and predictable environment.” Working with children who are in stressful situations is a specialty for Laurence who is also a psychology teacher at CÉGEP de la Gaspésie et des Îles and a researcher at Centre



d'Initiation à la Recherche et au Développement Durable, both in Quebec.

To meet the needs of people located in several shelters, and to maximize the strengths of the different agencies involved in the response, the Red Cross partnered with Save the Children to implement the CFS. The Red Cross was able to fund the activities and mobilize volunteers from its national Respect Education program. The program is delivered across Canada through schools and other agencies to protect children from physical, sexual, and psychological violence, neglect and bullying. Because of their existing work with local children, the Red Cross volunteers had already been screened to ensure children were safe under their supervision, had a grasp of key protection issues, and were familiar with the needs of local communities.



Save the Children, drawing on their extensive technical and operational experience, were able to lead on organizing the activities with girls and boys, the training of volunteers, and the day-to-day management of the CFS. Save the Children’s experience also led to some spaces being dedicated to adolescents in order to meet their specific needs and to focus on games and activities that were more relevant for them.

The collaboration was further enhanced through support from municipal governments that provided the Red Cross with room in the shelters to run the CFS.

Among the children reached, many were from families in precarious situations because they had lost livelihoods, had pre-existing economic struggles, or were immigrants new to Canada. Laurence observes, “After the fires, many of the well-to-do families were able to find temporary lodging through their social networks or because they could afford to pay the costs. However, many of the new immigrant and low-income families had more restricted options so made more use of the shelters. An emergency can show the sometimes hidden divisions in a community.”

Some of the children’s favourite activities included time for creative play, educational dramas organized by the children themselves, and evening performances including those by local clowns that had the shelters full of children and adults.

Looking back at the experience, Laurence reflects, “The child friendly spaces were places where kids could feel secure and have normal childhood experiences in the midst of upheaval.”

## LESSONS LEARNED

1. **Pre-position.** Having specific emergency preparedness plans that include CFS specific pre-defined partnership agreements and tasks, logistics, staff, and scheduling can help ensure even faster and more efficient implementation.
2. **Ensure adequate volunteer capacities.** Work with disaster and human resource teams to build a network of volunteers trained specifically on managing CFS so that in an emergency they can be deployed and can focus on that one task. When there are regular and consistent volunteers managing child friendly spaces it increases predictability and the sense of security for children.
3. **From the start plan for age and gender specific activities.** Having specific space and activities for adolescents is important as attention otherwise often focuses mainly on young children who have different developmental needs and capacities. In addition, including an analysis of the unique needs of girls and boys from the beginning allows for activities that better meet every child’s needs.
4. **Enhance the implementation and development of the CFS by using a participatory approach.** Prioritize from the beginning the perspectives of parents and girls and boys in the planning, design and management of CFS. Use participation as an empowerment opportunity for people affected by emergencies.



# ASIA PACIFIC





Thorkell Thorkelson | Icelandic Red Cross

### CFS in conflict

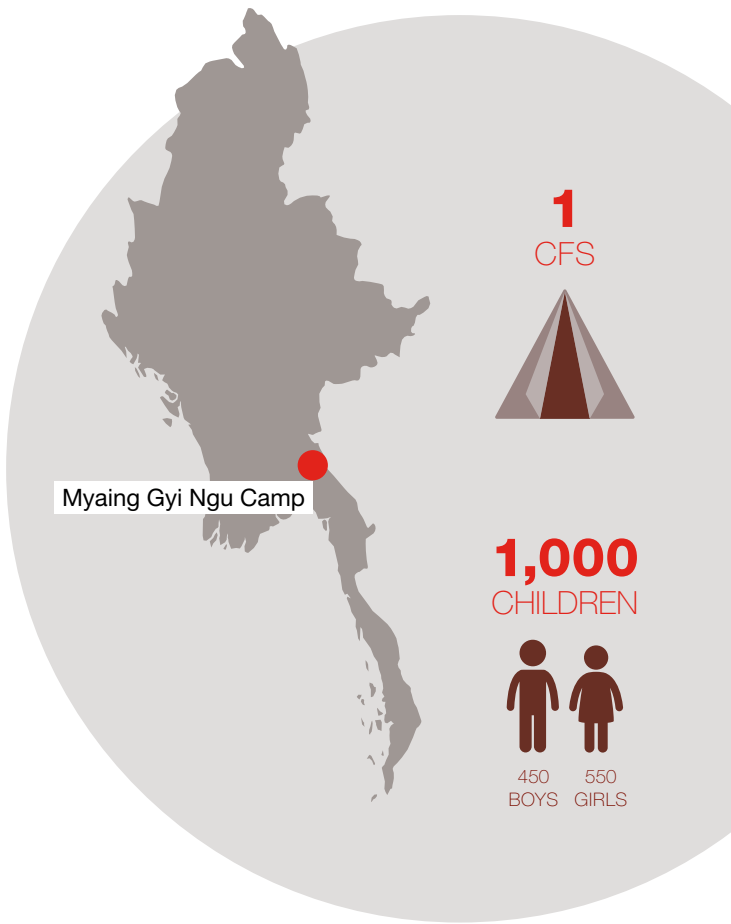
“The child friendly space allows the children to be carefree again and to strengthen their resilience.”

## Myanmar

In September 2016 violent clashes between two armed groups occurred in the Hlaingbwe Township of Kayin State, Myanmar. This was part of ongoing tensions in the state and has been a source of fear and unpredictability for people living in local villages. As a result of the conflict, approximately 6,000 people left their homes seeking protection; they took refuge in the Myaing Gyi Ngu Camp for internally displaced people (IDPs). Among these there were 1,000 girls and boys, some of them unaccompanied.

In order to help support children on the move, in partnership with the Myanmar government Department of Social Welfare, Save the Children International, and UNICEF, the Myanmar Red Cross trained twenty volunteers, over three days, from Hlaingbwe and nearby Hpapun township branches on delivering CFS. In addition to providing technical support for the training, UNICEF also donated five CFS kits containing material that can be used for psychosocial activities and recreational play for children of different ages. “The teamwork among our partner agencies allowed us all to share our strengths and work together for children’s safety. We believe this type of teamwork is the best way to make the most of our resources and skills in emergencies,” says, Dr. Nanda Lwin Shwe, Myanmar Red Cross Child Protection Project Coordinator.

Dr. Nanda Lwin Shwe continues, “The aim of the child friendly spaces was to provide a place for



temporarily displaced girls and boys where their basic rights as children, as outlined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, could be promoted even during an emergency. For us this especially means protecting children from abuses and supporting them psychosocially.”

Once trained, the twenty Red Cross volunteers managed the CFS in the IDP camp on a rotation basis each day. The volunteers organised sessions, for different age groups, that involved art, games, and education sessions. Particular effort was made to support children with disabilities to access the CFS by developing an environment where the children could participate with minimal or no help from others. By the end of December 2016, when the camp closed, approximately 550 girls and 450 boys were reached through the CFS.

Just prior to the emergency, the Myanmar Red



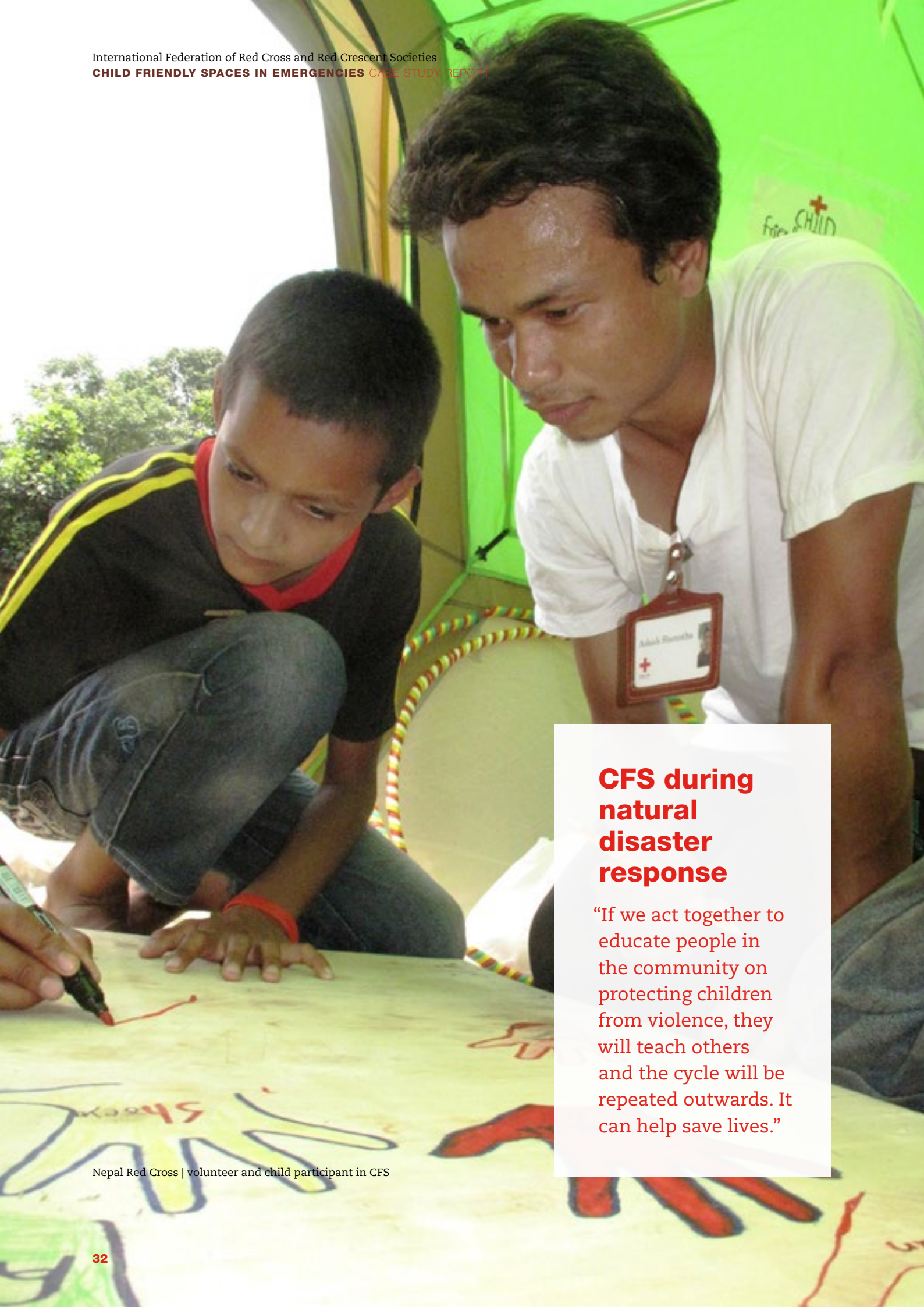
Cross, in partnership with the Australia Red Cross, had completed a scoping review on what actions they could take to establish CFS in emergencies. The scoping found the Red Cross was well positioned to implement CFS. This was based on extensive work already done to develop a child protection policy, years of existing work by the Red Cross with UNICEF to support remote villages to build their child protection capacity, previous programming to educate adults on how to protect girls and boys from violence, and also the Red Cross’ volunteer base and its ability to reach and access locations that few other agencies can. Dr. Nanda Lwin Shwe, shares, “Through the drawing exercises and other activities, it is clear the children are deeply affected by the displacement. The child friendly space allows the children to be carefree again and to strengthen their resilience.”



## LESSONS LEARNED

1. **Ensure enough time to plan.** Before the emergency, the Myanmar Red Cross had conducted a thorough scoping review to determine opportunities, challenges, and specific actions required to implement CFS in emergencies. The findings from the review allowed the Red Cross to know what systematic steps would be required and what partnerships would be available. This led to swifter action when an emergency did occur.
2. **Find volunteers among IDPs.** In order to maximize local ownership and participation and to reduce transport time, identifying and supporting some volunteers, with appropriate experience working with children, from among the IDPs would have been more efficient than relying only on volunteers from local towns.
3. **Partnerships are essential.** The ability of the Myanmar Red Cross to reach out and work with local government, nongovernmental, and UN agencies was crucial to the success of the CFS. By having the support of others there was greater technical capacity, resources, and access to children affected by the conflict.
4. **Support for children with disabilities needs to occur across the project cycle.** From the onset, the Red Cross took steps during the assessment, design and implementation of the CFS to ensure that girls and boys with disabilities were able to access and participate in activities.





## CFS during natural disaster response

“If we act together to educate people in the community on protecting children from violence, they will teach others and the cycle will be repeated outwards. It can help save lives.”

Nepal Red Cross | volunteer and child participant in CFS

# Nepal

In the hours and days immediately following the April 25, 2015 earthquake in Nepal, the needs for shelter, clean water and basic health care all became increasingly apparent. In addition to these needs, for the Nepal Red Cross, reaching out to and protecting the most vulnerable, such as children, was also a key priority.

The Nepal Red Cross, in coordination with the IFRC and its network of Red Cross and Red Crescent societies around the world, began taking steps to limit the risk violence such as abuse, exploitation and trafficking of girls and boys. This included briefing their personnel on the Red Cross child protection policy, providing information on child protection as part of communication with affected populations, adding safety messages for girls and boys within programs like for water and sanitation, and, in particular, establishing CFS.

Child friendly spaces were prioritized to bring together children, parents and community leaders. Sushil Raj Regmi, Nepal Red Cross Psychosocial Programs Manager, highlights: “Child friendly spaces are an entry point for child protection and psychosocial well-being in emergencies. An important element is that, child friendly spaces can be established quickly through local resources and can be designed to reflect each community’s culture and practice.”

Within the CFS volunteers implemented structured games and provided girls and boys



opportunities to play and express themselves. Reo Morimitsu, a Japanese Red Cross Psychosocial Support Delegate, adds: “We aim to create a safe environment for children to have fun. This is part of the process of recovering a sense of security.” In the CFS, children came together to play, learn, heal and stay safe. Volunteers also worked to train local teachers, partner agencies and local leaders on psychosocial and protection issues to support the transition from disaster response to recovery.

Altogether, twelve CFS using large durable tents, either as part of emergency field hospitals, through local schools, or as stand-alone locations, were set up in earthquake affected communities. This included in hard to reach and mountainous locations where few other services for children were available. Within the first few months of response, approximately 2,000 girls and boys were reached with protection messages and activities.

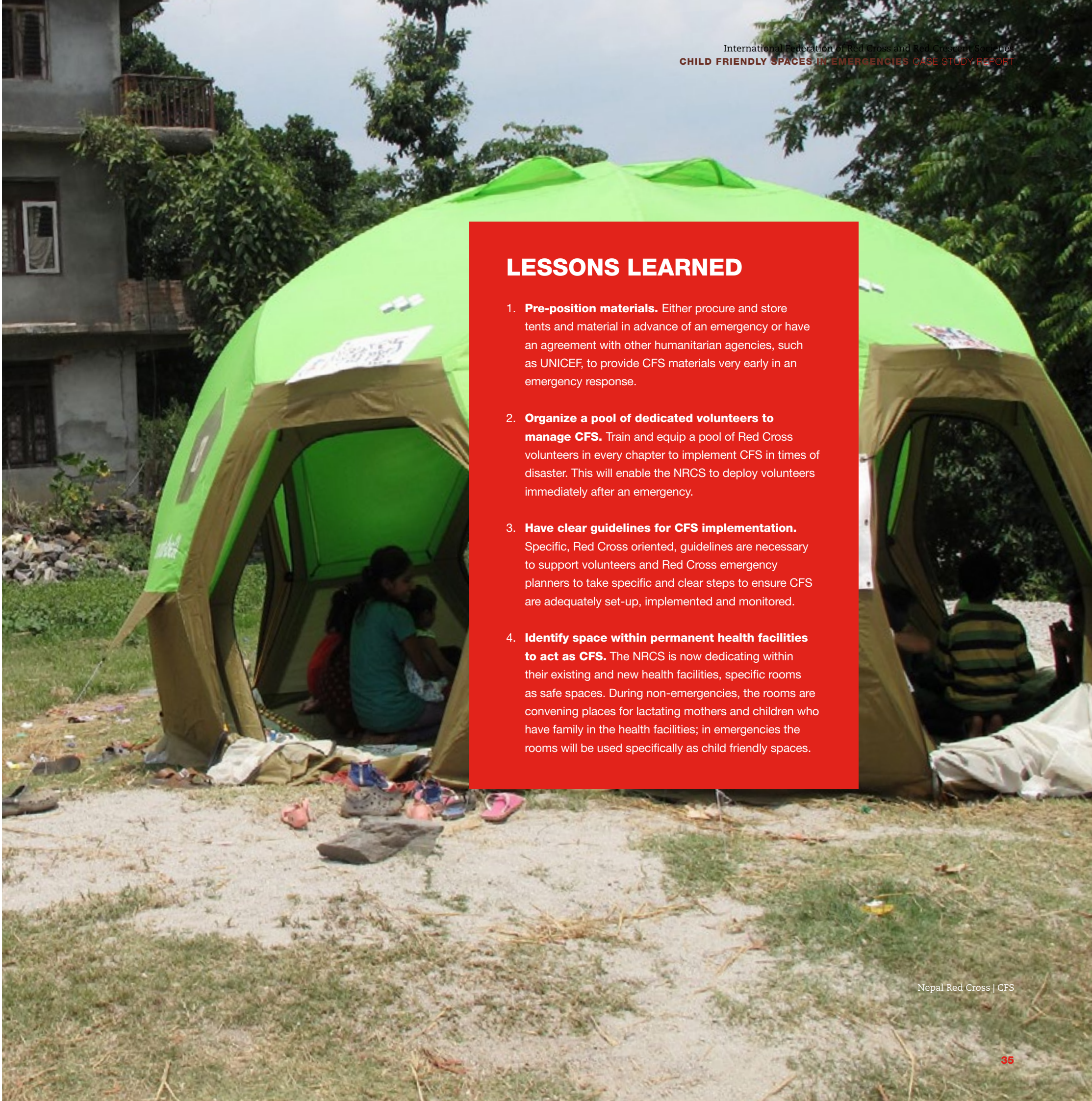


In order to ensure effective coordination, partnerships with local government and humanitarian agencies were established. For example, play materials in some CFS were provided through UNICEF, referral systems were made available through inter-agency child protection clusters, and children and families requiring protection were supported to access help from government agencies. Regmi emphasizes, *“One organization is not enough for effective child protection. We aim to partner and coordinate with government, UN and NGOs and community groups.”*

In the CFS located in Dhunche, in the high mountains, a survey by the Red Cross found that children who participated felt “very safe” or “safe” while attending the CFS.

Since the earthquake, the Nepal Red Cross has put in place plans to include CFS as part of its ongoing health services across the country. In existing and new health facilities specific rooms are being designated for lactating mothers and for children. In emergencies these rooms will be used as CFS and are being designed to be accessible for girls and boys with disabilities too.

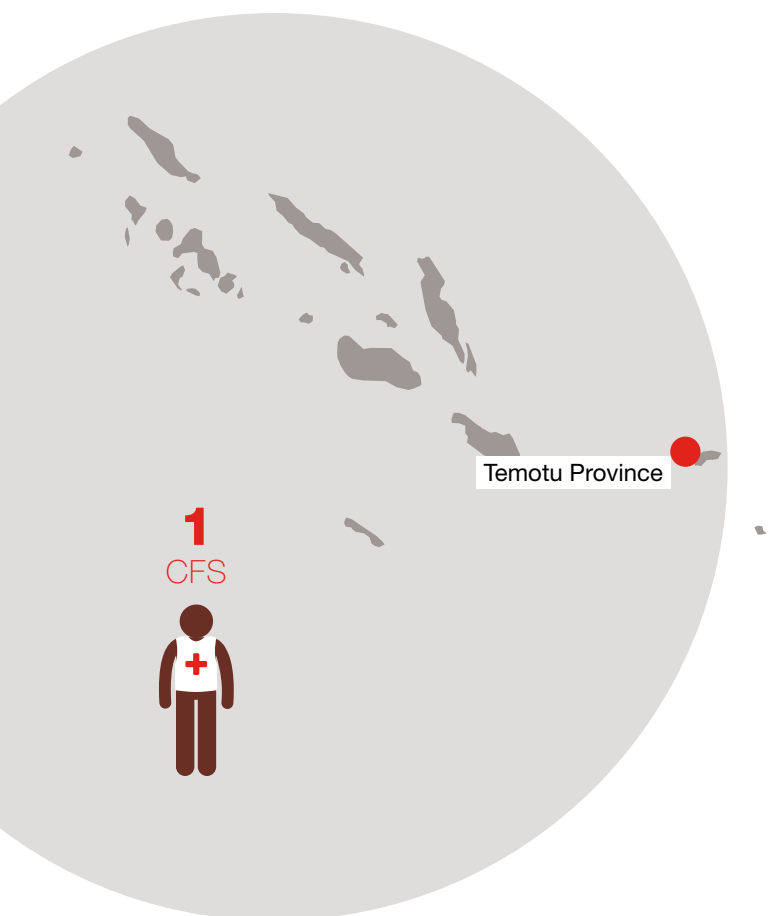
*“If we act together to educate people in the community on protecting children from violence, they will teach others and the cycle will be repeated outwards,”* says Tsichu Shrestha, a 15-year-old volunteer team leader at a child friendly space in the village of Melamchi, Sindhupalchok district. *“It can help save lives.”*



## LESSONS LEARNED

1. **Pre-position materials.** Either procure and store tents and material in advance of an emergency or have an agreement with other humanitarian agencies, such as UNICEF, to provide CFS materials very early in an emergency response.
2. **Organize a pool of dedicated volunteers to manage CFS.** Train and equip a pool of Red Cross volunteers in every chapter to implement CFS in times of disaster. This will enable the NRCS to deploy volunteers immediately after an emergency.
3. **Have clear guidelines for CFS implementation.** Specific, Red Cross oriented, guidelines are necessary to support volunteers and Red Cross emergency planners to take specific and clear steps to ensure CFS are adequately set-up, implemented and monitored.
4. **Identify space within permanent health facilities to act as CFS.** The NRCS is now dedicating within their existing and new health facilities, specific rooms as safe spaces. During non-emergencies, the rooms are convening places for lactating mothers and children who have family in the health facilities; in emergencies the rooms will be used specifically as child friendly spaces.





# Solomon Islands

“In disasters the stress on families can lead to things getting out of hand and adults harming children,” says Joanne Zoleveke, Secretary-General of the Solomon Islands Red Cross. In response, and in recognition that to all humanitarian agencies have a responsibility to meet the inter-agency Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action, the Red Cross is mainstreaming child protection across its emergency programming in partnership with other agencies.

“Child friendly spaces can give kids a place to heal and be away from gender-based violence.”

Cameron Vudi, the Solomon Islands Red Cross Manager for Emergencies, notes, “Resilience in disasters means we also support child protection because it often overlooked in an emergency.” He continues, “Child friendly spaces give kids a space to heal and to be away from problem like gender-based violence that can take place in evacuation centres and in homes.” In 2013, Cameron and his team partnered with UNICEF to help establish CFS in the remote Temotu Province after a severe tsunami struck. The province is among the most remote and hard-to-access in the country. In fact, by boat, in good weather, it can take four days to reach.

The Red Cross Logistics Coordinator, Debbie Lukisi, explains, “Because Red Cross volunteers are from local communities, the Red Cross has quick access even in the most far away islands of the country. Volunteers can respond to local needs right away.”

While the Solomon Islands Red Cross was able to use their logistics experience to construct the CFS, UNICEF led the implementation of activities with children, and together the Red Cross and UNICEF conducted joint monitoring of the spaces during the emergency response. The paramount aims of the CFS were to act as safe areas for girls and boys where they could access psychosocial support and protection activities, and to act as temporary education sites because the local schools were damaged and closed for several months.

## LESSONS LEARNED

1. **Assume protection and psychosocial supports are needed.** Rather than waiting for hard data, it can be assumed that children will need psychosocial support and protection from gender-based violence.
2. **Pre-position volunteers is remote and hard-to-access locations.** Among the main added values of the Red Cross for CFS are its pre-positioned volunteers who come from and know local communities and are able to respond rapidly, especially in hard-to-access locations like remote islands.
3. **Train volunteers in advance of emergencies.** Knowing that protection needs are a high risk, volunteers require training and support before an emergency. In particular, it is necessary to have volunteers and staff, including those in hard-to-access provinces, trained in child protection as part of cyclone season planning. This can be done in partnership with agencies like UNICEF and Save the Children.
4. **Develop standing-agreements with partners.** Having a Standing Agreement with key partners, like UNICEF, that defines key roles, coordination arrangements, mechanisms for sharing of assessment data and tools, and a structure for technical support can assist National Societies to quickly implement, with the right materials and knowledge, CFS.
5. **Include child protection within appeals and reporting templates.** Child protection activities, like CFS, need a specific section within IFRC and National Society appeals and reporting templates. Otherwise, with the host of other activities that are being addressed, the child protection elements can be missed or under-resourced.





# EUROPE





## CFS in protracted crisis

“The child friendly spaces are where children can see the world does not end in the refugee dormitory; they see that the world can be bigger and full of hopeful opportunities.”

Armenia Red Cross | participants of Smiley Club CFS Program

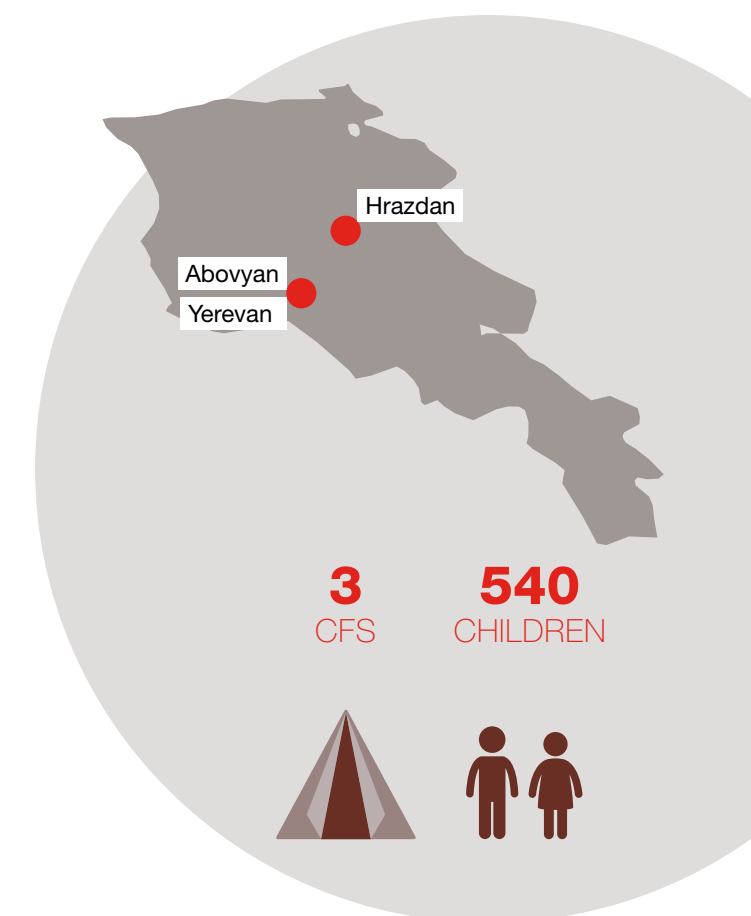
# Armenia

“We have had refugees come from Azerbaijan since the early 2000’s and we have seen many Syrian-Armenians return from places like Aleppo since the fighting there,” says Katarina Vardanyan, Head of the Armenia Red Cross Youth Department. Among the refugees and migrants have been many girls and boys. The Red Cross has prioritized the protection and resilience of these children through a series of programs dedicated to meet their specific needs and to build on their capacities.

Since 2003, the Armenia Red Cross, in partnership with the Austria Red Cross, has run the “Smiley Club” program that is made up of three CFS within refugee settlements, or “dormitories”, where dozens of refugee families from neighboring Azerbaijan live. The dormitories are located in the cities of Yerevan, Abovyan, and Hrazdan.

Although most child friendly spaces in emergencies tend to be for a few months, with the protracted nature of the displacement of the refugees from Azerbaijan and the limited services available to support them, the CFS in Armenia have grown and adapted to meet ongoing needs.

Katarina explains, “The places where refugees live can be uncomfortable, old, and in poor condition. The parents have many stresses and few support options, economically there are a lot of challenges, and often the families are led by single-parents. There are many needs for the children even after so many years.” Within all



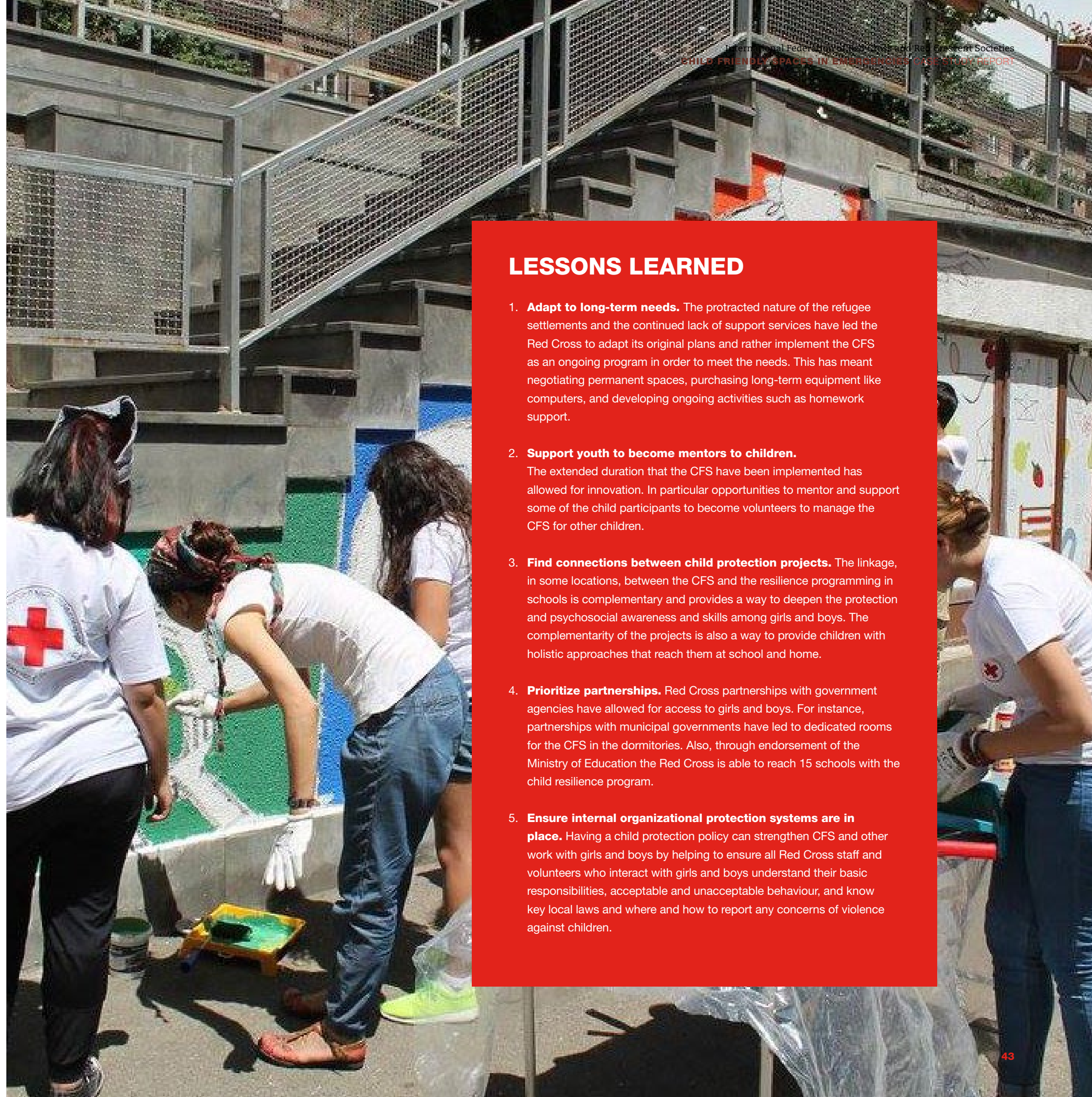
of this, the Red Cross engages parents and child refugees to create places that are safe, nurturing, and friendly. Spaces where girls and boys can meet with friends, access games and technology, receive mentorship and help with school work, and where they can feel protected. In the summer, children also participate in a one week camp where they can explore nature, experience outdoor games, and learn skills for resilience.

With the protracted nature of the refugee settlements, some of the child participants in the CFS have now become Red Cross volunteers and manage the spaces for the new generation of girls and boys. These and other young volunteers are able to make connections with the children that are unique and motivating. Youth volunteer, Khachatur Vantsyan, emphasizes, “The refugee dormitories are hard places. There is low income and the attitudes towards children can be bad. But the Red



*Cross is like a good role model for the children and provides some relief. The child friendly spaces are where children can see the world does not end in the refugee dormitory; they see that the world can be bigger and full of hopeful opportunities.”*

Some of the children in the dormitories also attend public schools where the Red Cross, in partnership with the Ministry of Education, delivers child resilience programming for primary-age students. This involves multiple weekly sessions for girls and boys representing a mix of migrants, refugees and Armenians that learn skills around self-esteem, team-work, communication, and nonviolence. Sixteen year old Kristina Aleksanyan has been a participant of the program and is now a youth volunteer who helps to facilitate the sessions with young children. She notes, “It is rewarding because you can be like a friend or a mentor to a child. You can be someone they know they can trust in case anyone tries to hurt them.” The efforts with children are complemented by education to teachers and outreach to parents so they can also advise the program, discuss how to enhance their children’s resilience, and strengthen parenting skills.



## LESSONS LEARNED

- 1. Adapt to long-term needs.** The protracted nature of the refugee settlements and the continued lack of support services have led the Red Cross to adapt its original plans and rather implement the CFS as an ongoing program in order to meet the needs. This has meant negotiating permanent spaces, purchasing long-term equipment like computers, and developing ongoing activities such as homework support.
- 2. Support youth to become mentors to children.** The extended duration that the CFS have been implemented has allowed for innovation. In particular opportunities to mentor and support some of the child participants to become volunteers to manage the CFS for other children.
- 3. Find connections between child protection projects.** The linkage, in some locations, between the CFS and the resilience programming in schools is complementary and provides a way to deepen the protection and psychosocial awareness and skills among girls and boys. The complementarity of the projects is also a way to provide children with holistic approaches that reach them at school and home.
- 4. Prioritize partnerships.** Red Cross partnerships with government agencies have allowed for access to girls and boys. For instance, partnerships with municipal governments have led to dedicated rooms for the CFS in the dormitories. Also, through endorsement of the Ministry of Education the Red Cross is able to reach 15 schools with the child resilience program.
- 5. Ensure internal organizational protection systems are in place.** Having a child protection policy can strengthen CFS and other work with girls and boys by helping to ensure all Red Cross staff and volunteers who interact with girls and boys understand their basic responsibilities, acceptable and unacceptable behaviour, and know key local laws and where and how to report any concerns of violence against children.





Mirva Helenius | Finnish Red Cross

## CFS in migration crises

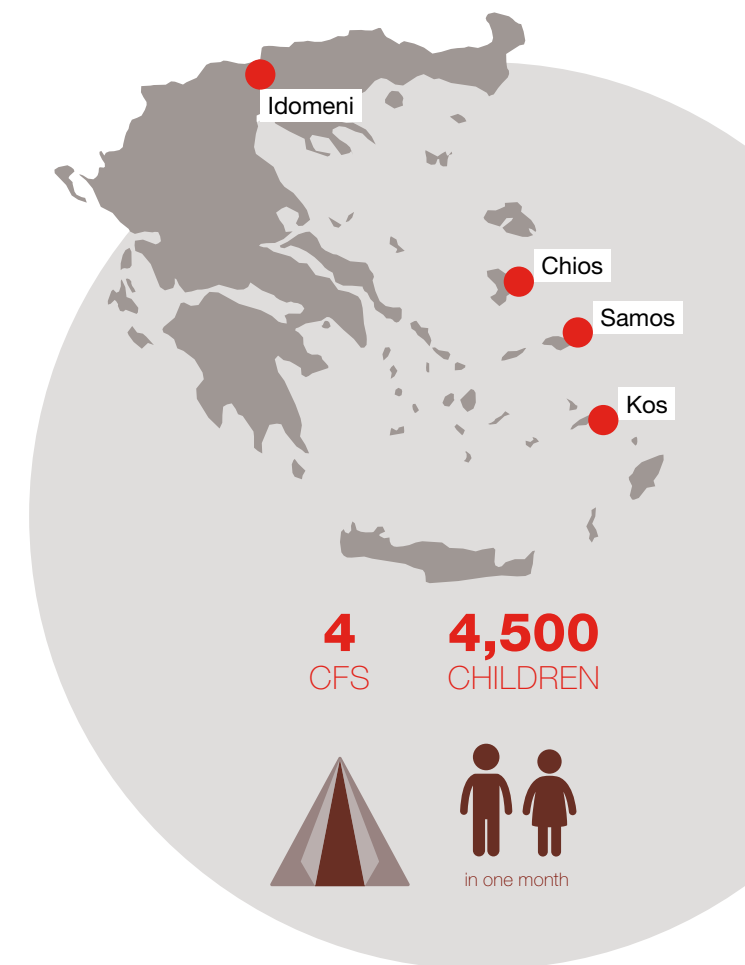
“A place where kids can feel at home after so much hardship.”

# Greece

In the past several years, hundreds of thousands of refugees have arrived on Greek shores on rafts. They are fleeing war and poverty. With winter setting in, the waters of the Aegean Sea can be choppy and the winds sharp; boats regularly sink and drowning is common.

Children, many of them very young, represent a significant portion of the migrants. The Hellenic Red Cross has recognized girls and boys as among the most vulnerable. As such, from the moment a child sets foot on Greece's shore, in their transit through Athens and as they continue their journey north, the Red Cross provides protection services.

In the ports of Chios, Kos and Samos, services include rescues in the water, health care, reuniting separated children, and CFS. Spanish Red Cross Psychosocial delegate, Maria De Laiglesia Noriega has been managing a CFS in Samos. She has seen over one thousand children come through the CFS in a single month. She stresses that the aim of the CFS is to “bring some happiness in a horrible situation... to give courage so families can keep going.” And she explains that through play activities and allowing children to be heard, “The child friendly space is a place where kids can feel at home after so much hardship. The kids interact, have fun, and care for each other. It's amazing to see that no matter where they come from, in the child friendly space, the girls and boys all take care of each other in the same way”.



For children that arrive unaccompanied, almost all of whom are boys, the journey is especially complicated and fraught with dangers. Some avoid registering at all to avoid being caught up in the legal system, or with a motive to speed through Greece toward other countries. Ahmed<sup>1</sup>, a tall 16 year old from Afghanistan, who is unaccompanied, explains that his aim is to go to Germany “to get an education and to find work. At home work is hard and life is unsafe, so my family has sent me here”.

For those boys that are registered, authorities refer them to accommodation centres. The Hellenic Red Cross helps manage centres in Athens and Patras, in partnership with a local NGO named “Praxis”.

Alexandros Antonatos, a social worker at the accommodation centre in Athens, works with groups of 15-30 boys from Syria, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran and Bangladesh for a few days,

<sup>1</sup> Not real name.



weeks or months helping them to learn Greek, integrate into local schools, have access to health services, join neighborhood sports clubs, and to mentor them to work through their distressing experiences. “Our goal is to give a space where these boys, who are in a hard situation, have time in a safe place to put their life in order. Where they are off the street and not at risk of sexual abuse, exploitation, or forced labour. These kids have big decisions to make about whether to stay in Greece or move on, and how to compose a future that allows them dignity.”

The sense of being protected is echoed by the boys

themselves. Malik<sup>2</sup>, a Syrian refugee, confides that “here we feel okay and have time to plan. I go to school and learn new ideas.”

In thinking of the boys in his care, Alexandros reflects, “These are young human beings and need to be treated that way. The Red Cross can help.”



<sup>2</sup> Not real name.

## CFS in migration crises

“We are all brothers and sisters who have a right to be safe”

## Turkey

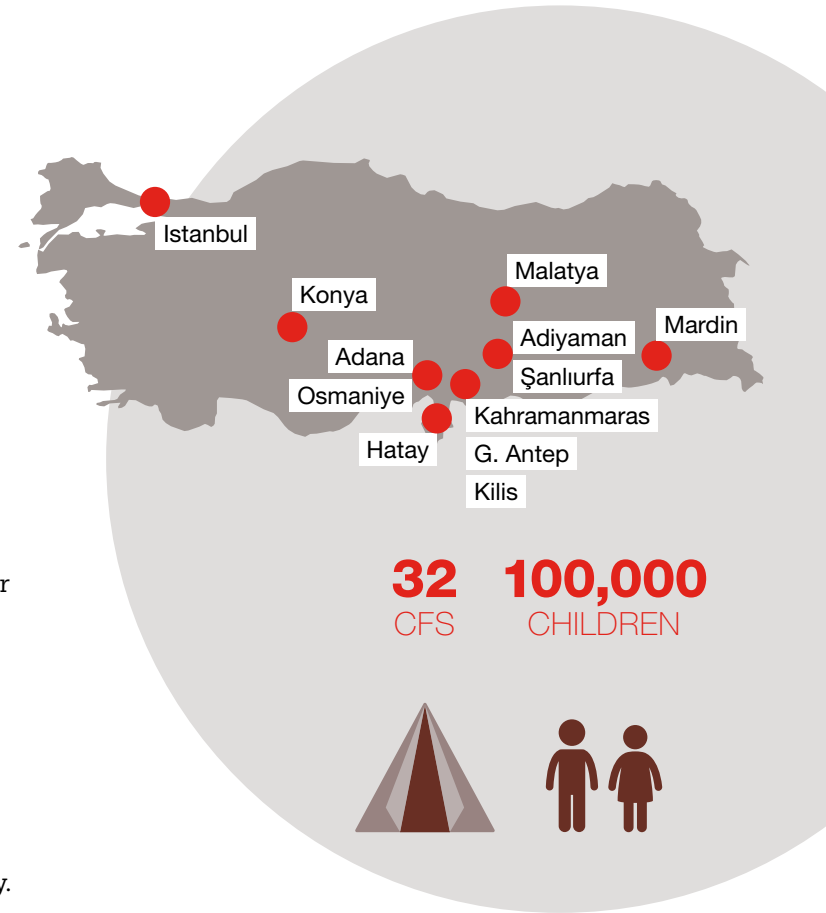
“Violence needs to be prevented,” says Mehmet a 15 year old migrant from a remote part of Syria. Maya, also 15 years old and from Syria, nods her endorsement.

Mehmet and Maya are youth leaders who are part of the Turkish Red Crescent CFS in the city of Şanlıurfa, next to the border with Syria. The humanitarian crisis in Syria has led to hundreds of thousands of migrants moving to this part of Turkey.

A primary focus of the Turkish Red Crescent response to the humanitarian crisis has been the development and management of 32 child friendly spaces. The spaces are supported in partnership with the IFRC and UNICEF. The CFS are intended to facilitate the access of Syrian children under temporary protection in Turkey aged between 4 and 18 years to comprehensive, safe participatory and inclusive educational and recreational activities, thereby supporting their education and development, increasing their resilience, supporting their adaptation, and bringing a sense of stability and continuity back into their lives.

Maya explains, “My family came to Turkey because of the fighting and because my parents were worried by the abductions of girls.” Mehmet adds, “Houses were being hit, and everyone was scared for us children.”

The CFS are large durable tents in protected person settlements or part of community centres in urban locations. In the spaces, girls and boys



have a safe environment to learn Turkish and English, play games, receive psychosocial support, and to gain knowledge to prevent bullying, trafficking and child marriage. These forms of violence have all been concerns for child migrants.

Maya and Mehmet not only learn new skills for themselves, they are also each dedicated Red Crescent youth volunteers who mentor other girls and boys at the CFS. “I love the activities with the younger children. They get so happy when we play with them or assist them with activities. When we help them, we also learn important things like responsibility. The main thing is, we try to help others,” notes Maya.

As an extension to the activities within the CFS, the Turkish Red Crescent has also been working in communities to increase child protection. A group of professional social workers visit migrant families to understand their needs and



challenges and then help provide access to local health, psychosocial and protection services. The Red Crescent also works to influence safer conditions for children within communities. When unaccompanied boys were reporting fear of authorities, the Red Crescent helped to negotiate improved treatment so they would be less fearful. And after girls reported being harassed outside of schools, the Red Crescent communicated this to the local police who increased the safety of girls through enhanced security patrols.

In 2016, the Turkish Red Crescent Child Protection Program and Hacettepe University, Migration and Politics Research Center (HUGO), conducted an evaluation that found children were participating in the CFS had an increased awareness of their rights, experienced participatory and inclusive education, were motivated by recreational activities, and had a restored sense of stability and continuity in their lives. One of the most striking findings was that CFS were the only place where some children were able to feel like a child.

The Turkish Red Crescent is now working to scale up their efforts to reach girls and boys in the hardest to reach migrant settlements. This is planned through two new mobile CFS that will drive to remote locations and spend several weeks in each place mobilizing communities to protect children’s rights to safety.

In just over two years, the Turkish Red Crescent has reached 100,000 girls and boys through its CFS. The demand for the spaces, has led to plans to expand their number and their locations in the country. Mehmet and Maya share that, “*through the child friendly spaces we can tell children we are all brothers and sisters and all of us have the same rights to be safe.*”

## LESSONS LEARNED

1. **Where possible, provide holistic services to families to complement child friendly spaces.** In urban centres, the Turkish Red Crescent has embedded CFS within their community centres that provide livelihood trainings, health services, language classes, case management to vulnerable groups, and a host of other activities. In this way, children are provided safe spaces while adults are supported to develop durable skills to help protect their families.
2. **Reach out to the community.** Turkish Red Crescent volunteers not only host activities in CFS spaces but they also reach out to schools and vulnerable households to engage parents and teachers in discussions around child protection issues. In addition, through mobile CFS they are able to reach even the most hard-to-access locations where children and families on the move might be living.
3. **Engage child participants as volunteers.** Some of the participants of the CFS have reached adolescence and are now volunteers in the child friendly spaces. This allows the adolescence an opportunity to mentor young children, along with adult volunteers or staff, and build their leadership skills.
4. **Develop partnerships and maximize the strengths of others.** Through partnerships with local government (universities, municipalities, Ministry of Family and Social Policy, etc.), schools, health providers, UNICEF, and NGOs, the Turkish Red Crescent has been able to draw on the technical expertise, resources, and guidance of others to strengthen its outreach to children and families.

Turkish Red Crescent | child painting “child rights” at CFS in Istanbul



# MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA



Syrian Arab Red Crescent | children participating in CFS activity





## CFS during large-scale festivals

“Implementing the child friendly spaces during Nowrouz seemed like a natural way to reach more children with messages about humanitarian values and to help protect them during such a busy time.”

Iran Red Crescent | volunteer and participant at CFS

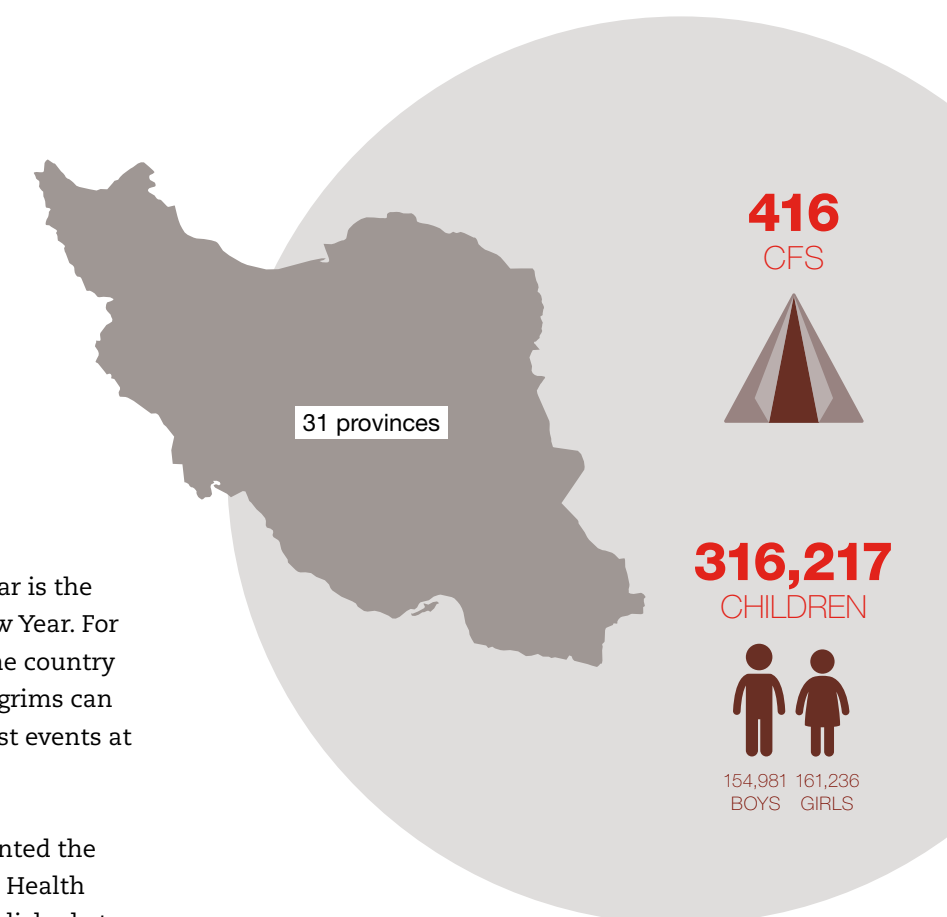
## Iran

The largest public event in Iran each year is the celebration of Nowrouz, the Persian New Year. For fifteen days millions of people across the country participate in festivals. Families and pilgrims can journey long-distances to join the largest events at historical sites.

In 2016, the Iran Red Crescent implemented the National Nowrouz Travelers’ Safety and Health Plan. As part of the plan, CFS were established at the entrance of cities and festival grounds around the country.

“With so many travelers, and the environment being so crowded, and so much traffic, a priority for the Red Crescent was to reduce road accidents and to promote general safety, especially of young children,” notes, Hamed Seddighi Khavidak, Youth Deputy for the Iran Red Crescent Society in Yazd Province. To achieve this aim, the Red Crescent implemented CFS to provide families a place to take a pause from long-distance travel, to find rest, and allow children time to play and learn protection messages. The CFS targeted girls and boys ages 5-10 years and their families.

In total, four hundred and sixteen CFS were implemented in thirty-one provinces. The CFS combined to reach 316,217 children (161,236 girls and 154,981 boys). The main activities within the spaces were group reading, playing games, painting, learning first aid, and accessing



information about humanitarian values. Hamed points out that a highlight for many of the girls and boys was an art competition, “The Red Crescent set up a national poster competition on the theme of peace. The children who joined the child friendly spaces were able to take part. The competition very popular and the messages from the young children were inspiring for the parents and people across the country too.” By the end of the festive season 50,000 posters had been created and with help from a national television network 1,000 posters were broadcast over thirty-seven installments.

In order to reach so many children, 1,400 Iranian Red Crescent volunteers worked in the CFS during the fifteen days of the New Year holiday. These volunteers were kindergarten or pre-school teachers who are part of an ongoing Iranian Red Crescent Youth program in 3,500 schools that educates children, ages 5-7, on emergency



preparedness using activities like song, play-acting, and painting. One of the teachers who volunteered was Mahdieh Dehehstani from Ardakan city in Yazd province. He explains, “I manage a kindergarten and we partner with the Red Crescent Youth program. Implementing the child friendly spaces during Nowrouz seemed like a natural way to reach more children with messages about humanitarian values and to help protect them during such a busy time. So I thought volunteering would be a good thing and a way to celebrate the values of our new year.”

Another key aspect of the project was to partner with local agencies like Iran’s Welfare Organization. The Red Crescent and the Welfare

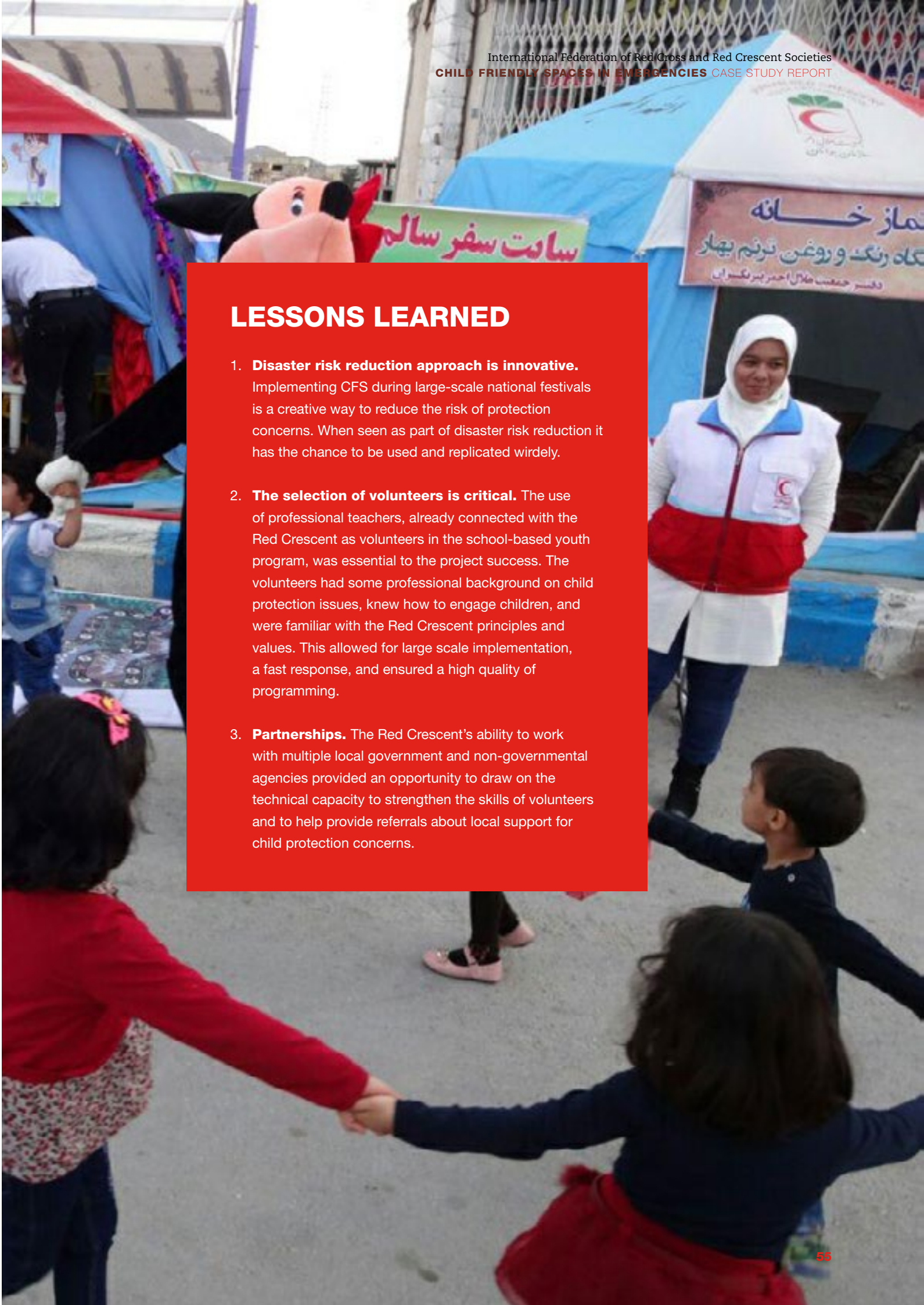
Organization worked together to train the volunteer teachers on how to manage CFS and to promote the rights of girls and boys. Among other information, this partnership approach allowed volunteers to understand how to respond to protection concerns. Mahdieh highlights, “Our training and professional experience as educators was important. During the excercises, one child disclosed to me he was being bullied at school and was being mistreated at home. He felt he could trust us and talked and talked then he cried. We were able to provide resources for him and his mother to get help in their local place. This memory remains with me.”



Iran Red Crescent  
Sample of artwork submitted for poster competition on the theme of peace

## LESSONS LEARNED

- 1. Disaster risk reduction approach is innovative.** Implementing CFS during large-scale national festivals is a creative way to reduce the risk of protection concerns. When seen as part of disaster risk reduction it has the chance to be used and replicated widely.
- 2. The selection of volunteers is critical.** The use of professional teachers, already connected with the Red Crescent as volunteers in the school-based youth program, was essential to the project success. The volunteers had some professional background on child protection issues, knew how to engage children, and were familiar with the Red Crescent principles and values. This allowed for large scale implementation, a fast response, and ensured a high quality of programming.
- 3. Partnerships.** The Red Crescent’s ability to work with multiple local government and non-governmental agencies provided an opportunity to draw on the technical capacity to strengthen the skills of volunteers and to help provide referrals about local support for child protection concerns.





## CFS during internal conflict

“Children in this crisis are in more and more need because they are living in unsafe and stressful situations.”

Syrian Arab Red Crescent | children playing at CFS

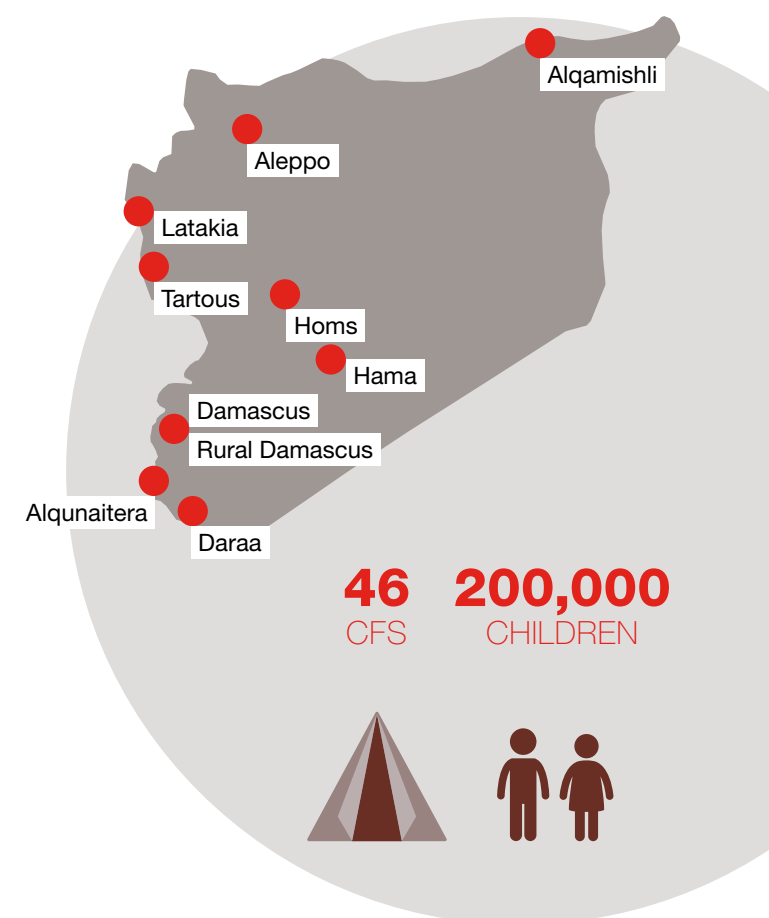
# Syria

The crisis in Syria has been particularly cruel for girls and boys. For many children the ongoing instability has led to hardships including struggling with stress and trauma, feeling unsafe and insecure, being at risk of physical and sexual violence, and losing access to education and health care.

As a practical response to the needs of children, the Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC) has implemented a number of CFS. The CFS are part of Red Crescent community centres and provide girls and boys with an opportunity to play, access psychosocial support, and learn protection skills. In fact, SARC has a history of using CFS in emergencies such as previous work in 2008 to respond to refugees from Iraq.

SARC volunteer, Dima Kikoloff, explains why the CFS are a key part of the SARC response to the current crisis, “In general, there are few safe places ready to provide protection and psychosocial services for children, or places where children can engage with others in their community. Unfortunately, children in this crisis are in more and more need for these services because they are living in unsafe and stressful situations and witnessing unusual conditions.”

Through partnerships with other members of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, UNICEF and UNFPA, the CFS are delivered in eleven locations including Damascus, Homs, and Alqamishli. In addition, in order to reach



communities in hard-to-access locations and to support children who have limited travel options, SARC has innovated by deploying thirty-five mobile teams that travel the country and create CFSs for local communities in places like Rural Damascus, Aleppo, Latakia, Tartous, Hama, Alqunaitera, and Daraa.

The SARC Psychosocial program coordinator, Kinan Aldamman, describes the approach used in the mobile CFS, “We start by working in areas where there are many vulnerable children such as shelters, schools, and camps for internally-displaced people. Volunteers reach out to inform adults and children about the Child Friendly Spaces. The volunteers then encourage people of all ages in the community to participate in the design of activities so they reflect the local needs and cultural traditions.” Volunteers then work with adults and young people to create safe spaces for children.



Aldamman continues, “For us, protecting children also means we must work with parents. For this reason, inside the community centres where the CFS are located, we have activities for mothers and fathers too. Parents participate in awareness sessions about healthy parenting and the psychosocial and protection needs of their children. They also support their children to plan activities for the Child Friendly Spaces.”

One of the populations that SARC has made particular efforts to reach has been children with special needs. Sadly, in emergencies and day-to-day, girls and boys with disabilities are among the most marginalized members of society and their risk of gender-based, physical and sexual violence can be significantly higher than other children. SARC has adapted its activities so they are more accessible for these children. In addition, it works with parents, young people

and communities to find joint solutions to reduce stigma and help integrate children with special needs into their programming.

Despite the many challenges of working in a complex emergency, the work of SARC volunteers has led to approximately 200,000 girls and boys being reached in the last one year. This includes within some of the most insecure locations in the country.

“The thing that affects me most is when I see the children come to the Child Friendly Space in their school uniform,” says Kikoloff. She adds, “The children enjoy coming and feel so safe that the kids come direct from school even before going home. They like the CFS and this gives me motivation” says, Kikoloff.

## LESSONS LEARNED

1. **Participation of children and parents throughout the project is essential.** Participation of parents is crucial to ensuring they understand protection risks in order to support and protect their children. In addition, having parent and child participation allows for culturally appropriate interventions and increased ownership from communities. For instance, through consultations it became clear that having separate sessions with girls and boys would be necessary.
2. **Mobile CFS can be essential to reach hard-to-access locations.** Mobile CFS are a practical and agile method to reach girls and boys in hard-to-access locations, and places that have a high density of IDPs like shelters, and schools.

3. **More attention is needed for situations when protection systems have broken-down.** A key challenge, that has no easy solution, is supporting children when local referral pathways and support systems are strained, lacking, or not accessible due to conflict. Similarly, a lack of protection systems can mean that children do not have access to personal documents, because they have been lost or left behind due as families flee conflict. Having no systems in place to replace them puts children in danger and limits their access to schools and other essential services. This can mean children rely even more on CFS.
4. **Internal child protection systems can strengthen a response.** The lack of local protection standard operating procedures or internal organizational guidelines or child protection policies, limits the consistency and quality of work with children, and can pose risks for girls and boys.
5. **Regular training of volunteers is important.** To build capacity and strength programming, it is necessary to conduct ongoing training of volunteers so they can increase their skills, learn from peers, and better adapt to circumstances. Working with partners and using research-based tools are ways to increase efficiency and improve quality of training.
6. **Deliberate approaches are needed to reach children with disabilities.** When CFS are overwhelmed with children, it can make support for children with special needs more difficult. It can take time and intentional processes to integrate children with special needs into CFS so that activities are adapted to their needs and to reduce the risk of stigma from other children.
7. **Access to / travel to and from CFS can pose threats.** The risk of harm against children can also be associated with CFS. However, careful planning can reduce the risk. For example, unsafe roads can pose a threat to girls and boys as they go to and from CFS yet the physical location and design of CFS can reflect safety measures and education to parents and children and local residents can further reduce possible harm.



## CFS during internal conflict

“Children are overwhelmed by the conflict and do not feel safe hearing the sounds of bombs and warplanes.”



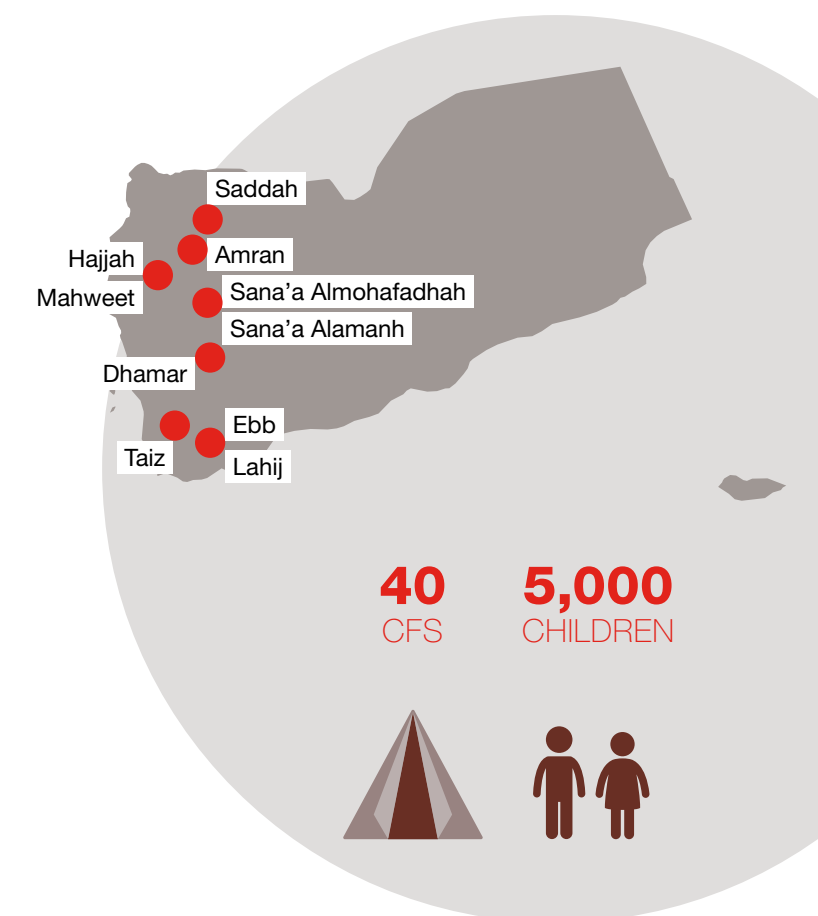
Yemen Red Crescent | children participating in CFS activities

## Yemen

Since 2015, communities across Yemen have had to endure turmoil caused by an armed conflict within the country. Thousands of people have been killed in the fighting, half of whom have been civilians. Insecurity and instability has forced approximately 2.8 million others to flee their homes, seeking safety in other villages and cities, or in neighbouring countries. Schools, hospitals and infrastructure have been badly affected – many have been completely destroyed.

The consequences of the conflict have been particularly difficult for girls and boys. Existing problems of recruitment of children into armed conflict, child marriage, and physical, sexual and psychological violence have been made worse. In order to help support children's psychosocial wellbeing and to improve their protection, the Yemen Red Crescent Society, working with the German Red Cross and IFRC, has established CFS in forty schools in Sana'a Alamanh, Sana'a Almohafadhah, Taiz, Lahij, Ebb, Saddah, Amran, Mahweet, Dhamar and Hajjah. The outcome of the project that builds on psychosocial programming prior to the conflict is “to contribute to the promotion of self-esteem, reduce trauma caused by war, and support children's protection.” Essentially, the project aims to let children be children despite the difficult circumstances.

After an assessment by the Red Crescent was conducted, a consultation was held with the



Ministry of Education to identify the most affected schools where the project would be implemented. Following this, one hundred and eighteen Red Crescent volunteers in addition to 133 school teachers from forty schools were trained on psychosocial support and developing safe spaces. “Students in Yemen have been feeling disconnected from school and are not motivated to continue their education – many have withdrawn from classes. Children are overwhelmed by the conflict and do not feel safe hearing the sounds of bombs and warplanes,” says Mr. Adel Thamer, a Red Crescent volunteer who oversees the CFS project.

The volunteers, teachers and local community members have responded to the poor conditions of the schools and the lack of equipment in several ways. For example, the Red Crescent has worked to create dedicated safe space rooms in each school and renovated those to



provide a place where girls and boys can access psychosocial support, play games and learn protection skills and messages on topics like child rights and preventing child marriage. An emphasis is put on peer education because the schools and Red Crescent believe that youth led activities are the best way to maximize impact. In addition, first aid posts have been put in place, new playground equipment like slides and swings installed, bathrooms fixed to be safer, and outreach has been conducted to parents. Moreover, volunteers have held psychosocial support sessions for children of different ages at the school district level.

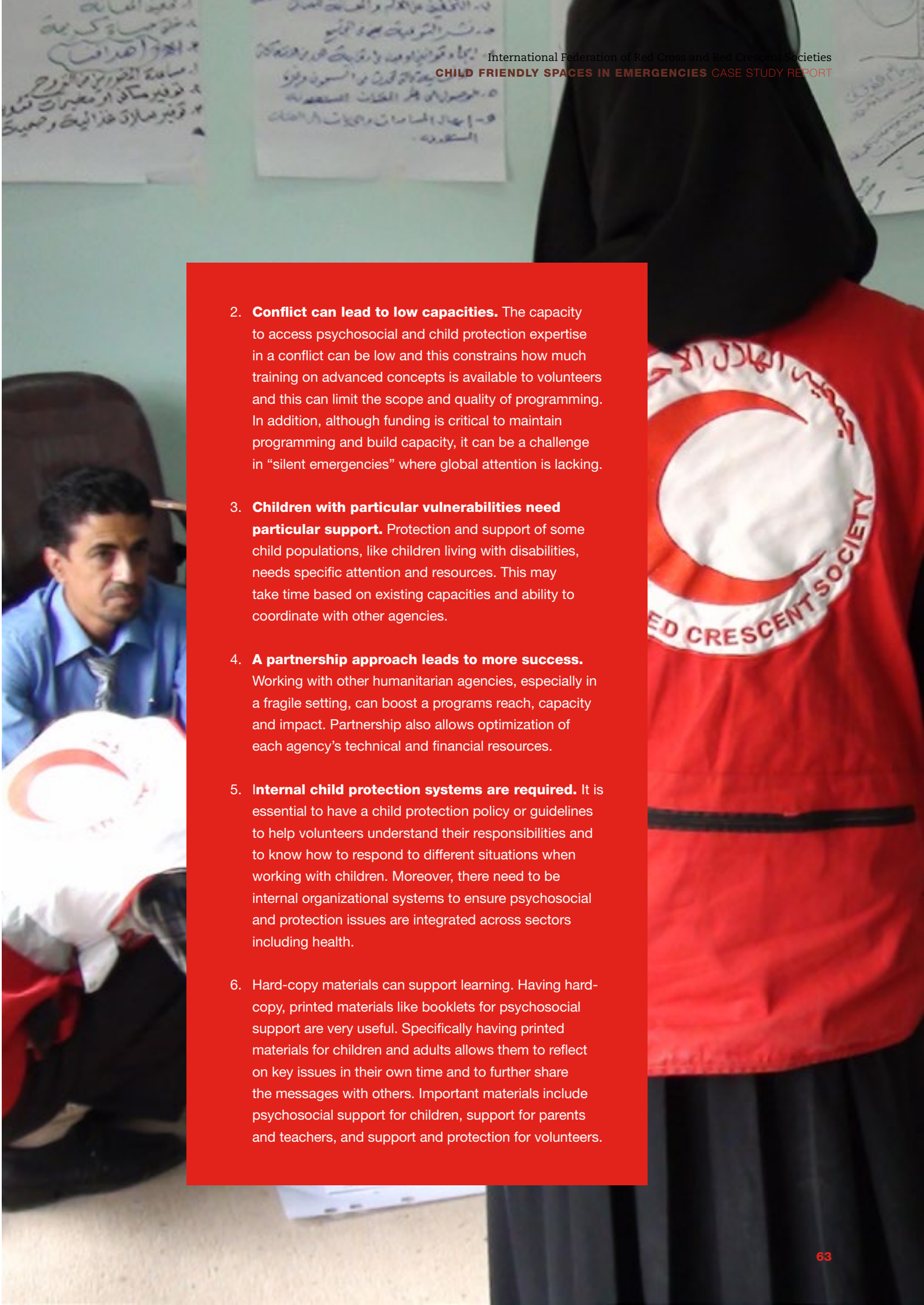
“Our programme helps children express themselves. They were reluctant at first, but then they started interacting more and more with us. The number of returnees to schools has increased since the beginning of the programme. Now we are also engaging with more children, including those that are successful students as they are going through the same stresses and also need a safe environment,” notes Mr. Adel Thamer.

Nearly 5,000 girls and boys and 350 adults have been reached each month through the project. The Yemen Red Crescent is now also developing a strategy to better reach children with disabilities, especially children who are blind, as they are at particular psychosocial and protection risks and can often be left out of services for other girls and boys.

Elham Alsawani, is a twenty-four year old Red Crescent volunteer in Sana’a branch’s CFS project. He observes, “The sense of helplessness stands out. We connect with many displaced families and we get to know them. The impact of this crisis is severe. So many have lost everything; their homes, loved ones, assets, as well as their safety and security.” He continues, that despite the challenges, “It’s nice to volunteer in a child friendly space because when we are around the kids it makes us feel happy to help relieve their psychosocial stresses.”

LESSONS LEARNED

- 1. **Ongoing monitoring is necessary.** Working in a conflict situation requires consistent and ongoing monitoring to ensure that the project locations are safe for children and for volunteers. This recognizes that safety can change daily or by the hour in some locations and so projects need to adjust and have contingencies in place.



- 2. **Conflict can lead to low capacities.** The capacity to access psychosocial and child protection expertise in a conflict can be low and this constrains how much training on advanced concepts is available to volunteers and this can limit the scope and quality of programming. In addition, although funding is critical to maintain programming and build capacity, it can be a challenge in “silent emergencies” where global attention is lacking.
- 3. **Children with particular vulnerabilities need particular support.** Protection and support of some child populations, like children living with disabilities, needs specific attention and resources. This may take time based on existing capacities and ability to coordinate with other agencies.
- 4. **A partnership approach leads to more success.** Working with other humanitarian agencies, especially in a fragile setting, can boost a programs reach, capacity and impact. Partnership also allows optimization of each agency’s technical and financial resources.
- 5. **Internal child protection systems are required.** It is essential to have a child protection policy or guidelines to help volunteers understand their responsibilities and to know how to respond to different situations when working with children. Moreover, there need to be internal organizational systems to ensure psychosocial and protection issues are integrated across sectors including health.
- 6. Hard-copy materials can support learning. Having hard-copy, printed materials like booklets for psychosocial support are very useful. Specifically having printed materials for children and adults allows them to reflect on key issues in their own time and to further share the messages with others. Important materials include psychosocial support for children, support for parents and teachers, and support and protection for volunteers.





## The Fundamental Principles of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement

**Humanity** The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, born of a desire to bring assistance without discrimination to the wounded on the battlefield, endeavours, in its international and national capacity, to prevent and alleviate human suffering wherever it may be found. Its purpose is to protect life and health and to ensure respect for the human being. It promotes mutual understanding, friendship, cooperation and lasting peace amongst all peoples.

**Impartiality** It makes no discrimination as to nationality, race, religious beliefs, class or political opinions. It endeavours to relieve the suffering of individuals, being guided solely by their needs, and to give priority to the most urgent cases of distress.

**Neutrality** In order to enjoy the confidence of all, the Movement may not take sides in hostilities or engage at any time in controversies of a political, racial, religious or ideological nature.

**Independence** The Movement is independent. The National Societies, while auxiliaries in the humanitarian services of their governments and subject to the laws of their respective countries, must always maintain their autonomy so that they may be able at all times to act in accordance with the principles of the Movement.

**Voluntary service** It is a voluntary relief movement not prompted in any manner by desire for gain.

**Unity** There can be only one Red Cross or Red Crescent Society in any one country. It must be open to all. It must carry on its humanitarian work throughout its territory.

**Universality** The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, in which all societies have equal status and share equal responsibilities and duties in helping each other, is worldwide.



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The vision of the IFRC is to inspire, encourage, facilitate and promote at all times all forms of humanitarian activities by National Societies, with a view of preventing and alleviating human suffering, and thereby contributing to the maintenance and promotion of human dignity and peace in the world.

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