

Give Happiness Back To The Children

—Play Intervention for Young Children in WenChuan Earthquake

China National Society of Early Childhood Education

Feng Xiaoxia

Yan Chaoyun

Guo Liangjing

- On May 12th 2008, a massive earthquake occurred in Wenchuan, Sichuan, China. This earthquake was measured at 8.0 magnitude, affected over 100,000 square kilometers, killed 70,000 people, with 18,000 missing and 375,000 injured.





Many children suffered a lot from witnessing their houses' collapsing and their family members' death.







Children are the top priority in front of the disaster. In the rescue in every country, the benefits of vulnerable young children should always be considered first. The China National Society of Early Childhood Education deeply concerned the physical and psychological health of children in the quake-hit areas.

Children can't wait!

On June 2nd, the CNSECE organized experts to investigate in the quake-hit area, and then launched the “mobile kindergarten” project shortly after. Over 100 volunteers from Beijing, Nanjing, Shanghai, Suzhou, Chongqing, Chengdu, Qingdao went to the worst-hit areas such as Deyang, Mianyang, and Dujiangyan to comfort the young children.





Volunteers in front of the earthquake ruins——HanWang primary school and kindergarten



From their first day on June 18th to September 5th, during this two and a half month, the volunteers overcame a variety of difficulties. According to the circumstances in the quake-hit areas, they organized various forms of “mobile kindergartens”. With love and professional skills, they had built “spiritual oases” for the local children.





- To investigate how children were infected by the earth quake, the project conducted questionnaires and interviews to 1,184 parents from Mianzhu, Shifang, Anxian and Beichuan. According to the results:
- 75.6% of the parents reported that their children were frightened in the earthquake. This number rises to 84.9% for those worst-stricken families.
- 74.6% of the parents reported that their children have exhibited behavior changes. This number rises to 83.6% for those worst-stricken families. Mainly, the behavior changes included:
 - Rely too much on parents or other caregivers(69.0%), over-fear of darkness and separation(52.4%), anxiety and easily frightened(52.1%), nightmares(29.1%), and changes of diet or living habits(33.9%). These numbers are higher by around 10 percent for those children from the worst-stricken families.

The ultimate mission of the moving kindergartens is to heal the children's wounds and help them walk out of shadows. To meet this end, the volunteers tried a verity of plays and activities to GIVE HAPPINESS BACK TO THE CHILDREN.

- **Parent-child play**

Intimidated by the earthquake, many young children became withdrawn and reluctant to separate from their parents. Many parents couldn't understand their children's problems, let alone knowing how to cope with these problems. Some parents overlooked their children because they were also suffering from psychological difficulties themselves. In some cases, parents passed their negative mood to the kids. Therefore, the volunteers took *parent-child play* as a main method. During the play, the parents and children initiated intimate interactions with each other. These interactions brought sense of security to the children, eased their tension, and consoled the parents as well.





- Motor play
- Motor plays can help children vent negative emotions, improve the digestion, promote the appetite, adjust the nervous system functions, and improve their sleep.





- Dramatic play
Kids enjoyed themselves in watching and participating in dramatic play. During the play, they ere encouraged to express their feelings and enthusiasm. The play also fostered their confidence.

Pulling the Radish





**Here comes a
Mickey Mouse!**



**I laughed
until my sides
ached!**

**How was
teachers'
performance?**



**Let us try
it!**





**Move aside!
Grandma is
almost lying
on grandpa!**

**We don't
mind the
crowd.
Squeezing is
fun!**



- All kinds of interesting activities.
Reading books, listening to stories, doing arts, finger plays ... they all brought the children happiness











The earthquake had changed children's lives. However, the volunteers of the CNSECE made a difference to their changed lives with plays!





Thank You!