



Storytelling Club for children in a refugee shelter in Munich/Germany November - December 2020

Preparation:

In November and December 2020, the PRIX JEUNESSE Foundation organized an analogue Storytelling Club at a refugee shelter in Munich, supported through funds from the German Beisheim Foundation. The local partner was the "Innere Mission", an Christian organization that offers shelter for refugees.

As this STC took place in the middle of a second Corona lock-down we needed to get special permission by the Bavarian State ministry and had to strictly take care of COVID-19 precautions. It took about a month to get ready with all preparations.

The casting of the children was done by the social workers in the shelter. They specifically chose six children they thought would benefit most of an initiative that aims at empowering their self-confidence. From the side of PRIX JEUNESSE two consultants conducted the activity. We arranged for eight STC sessions, closely following the concept of the Storytelling Club guide book, but changed the theme of one session to "The Day I Became Strong in the Pandemic". Additionally to the suggestions in the guide book, we worked with films from the international coproduction series "The Day I Became Strong", presenting two short dramas per session which turned out to be a very helpful extension.

The STC took place twice a week, on Monday and Friday evening, from 5 – 6:30 pm. This was very challenging for the children, as it meant meeting at the end of a long day with school and homework sessions in the afternoon.

Among the six children, the age range was rather wide: The youngest child was 6 years old, the oldest 11. This age-range turned out to be a bit problematic. The youngest children just had started to learn to read and to write. However, their enthusiasm to participate and to express their stories compensated their lack of writing skills. We solved this problem by the children telling their stories to one of the consultants who wrote it down.

The energy level in the group varied quite much: While some children were eager to join the activities and to make progress, others were tired after a long day and more in the mood to fool around with their friends. But still: Every child came up with good results in each module of the STC.

Observations of progress, challenges:

Over time, all children became more easy with the tasks in the Storytelling Club. They became familiar with us, the consultants, and understood the basic concept of this activity. It was wonderful to observe some children clearly becoming aware of skills they were not aware before: For example, an Afghan boy in the beginning was very hesitant to “trust” his drawing skills. Through constant encouragement he realized that he was able to produce really impressive drawings of his stories and turned into the one who inspired other children in the group to find ideas for their own pictures. The STC clearly helped this Afghan boy built up confidence in his own artistic skills.

We also observed a process in the children’s ability to identify their strong moments. Several elements supported this learning effect: The similar system of each module – children more and more understood how to search for the stories in their daily lives. Additionally, they got inspired by the stories of the other group members. Highly important was also the encouragement from the side of the consultants as well as from their fellow group members when presenting their stories – this made them realize that they have strong stories to tell! And last not least: The film examples of strong stories from children in different parts of the world from the series “The Day I Became Strong” also helped the children to become aware of their own strong moments. While in the beginning we received complaints that we were planning to “only” present short films of 5 minute duration each, they soon very much enjoyed these short dramas. It was great to see that all children quickly learned the lyrics of the theme song and loudly sang along – even the shyest among them!

A takeaways for STC facilitation:

During most sessions we were at least three consultants who took care of 5 – 6 children. This lucky situation was a very helpful element to make sure that each child came up with results that she or he was happy about – for example by providing help with getting a story written down or and offering support when searching for a story. You can’t be too many consultants!

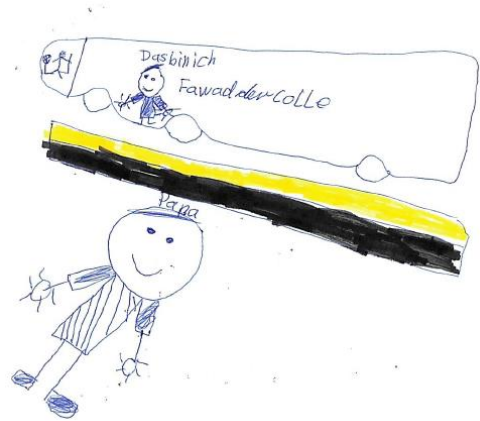
Conclusion:

Although our Storytelling Club took place at a challenging hour of the day and the readiness of the children to concentrate on producing own stories varied a lot – depending on their level of tiredness and ambition – they all came up with strong stories and – I dare to say – a strengthened awareness of what they are capable of mastering and achieving. It was wonderful to see that in the end the children expressed great interest to continue with the Storytelling Club.

Kirsten Schneid, PRIX JEUNESSE Foundation

**A story from Fawad
(9 years old, from Afghanistan, since 5 years in Germany)**

Fawad together with his father was travelling on the Munich subway. The train was very crowded. When they reached the station they had planned to get off, his father managed to get out of the train, but Fawad didn't. So suddenly he was all by himself in the train. "I was a little bit afraid, but not too much". When the train stopped at the next station, he got off. He remembered that his father had once shown him how to change to the opposite platform. So that's what he did: He changed the platform, took the train back and found his father who was already waiting for him.



A story from Isra, (11 years, originally from Eritrea)

A story from school: Isra noticed that a teacher checked the bag of a friend of hers while this friend was not in the classroom. Isra approached the teacher and asked her if it was ok to check a bag without asking the person to whom it belongs. The teacher admitted that this is not quite correct and thanked Isra for bringing up this point. Isra felt satisfied that she was brave and confronted the teacher.

