



Save the Children
Sweden

Co-funded by
the European Union



Youth participation workshop Digital Storytelling Malmö 21-22 November 2015

Within the framework of the project *No Longer Alone: Advancing Reception Standards for Unaccompanied Minors*, a youth participation workshop was carried out by Save the Children Sweden on 21-22 November 2015 in Malmö.

The aim was to carry out a process together with unaccompanied youth for exploring ways to involve unaccompanied children and youth in activities related to the reception and to develop our methods for listening and strengthening youth participation in the reception process. Another aim was to gain knowledge on youths own experiences of the reception in Sweden.

For the workshop we used the method of Digital Storytelling which is a method for creating visual stories using sound recordings, photography, drawings and film. The result is a short film made by each individual participant, though made by working together in a group during the whole workshop. Digital Storytelling is a flexible method where the setup can be accommodated to each specific workshop. This workshop was planned to take place during two full days in a weekend, due to that a large part of the targeted audience have school during weekdays. The choice of method stemmed from our will to arrange a workshop where not only we as arrangers but also the participants could gain and learn something from the workshop.

Planning and preparation

A work group was put together consisting of a facilitator with own experience of coming to Sweden as an unaccompanied minor, a project coordinator working within the project *No Longer Alone* from Save the Children Sweden and two process leaders with experience of working with Digital Storytelling; one from within Save the Children Sweden and one external.

The target audience for the workshop was youths within the age of 15 to 20 that have experience of coming to Sweden as unaccompanied minors. The aim was that the participants should have resided in Sweden preferably around two years in order to have received knowledge of their rights and to have had the ability to reflect on the reception. Due to the available amount of process leaders for the workshop the aim was a group consisting of around 6-8 participants.

Inviting participants

An invitation was prepared and distributed to the targeted audience by the facilitator. The distribution was made through channels such as personal invites, social media and via a local association for unaccompanied children and youth which through their meeting place and activities regularly meet our targeted audience.

Information meeting

An introductory meeting was held a week before the actual workshop for persons who had shown interest to participate. This one hour long meeting consisted of information on the aim and setup of the workshop. Information was also given on Save the Children Sweden as the organizer and our aim with the workshop within the framework of the project No Longer Alone: Advancing Reception Standards for Unaccompanied Minors.

The final group for the workshop consisted of five youths in the ages between seventeen to twenty-one and who have resided in Sweden between one and a half years up to four years. None of the participants had previously participated in a similar workshop.

Workshop

The workshop consisted of two full days of around eight hours a day. During the beginning of the first day we started with going through the agenda for the workshop and some exercises for getting to know each other in the group. Here we also created common values for the workshop with the aim of creating a sense of ownership in the process for the participants, and to create a framework for the work together. The common values that was agreed on in the group was that all questions are allowed, to be curious, the possibility to take short breaks every now and then, no stress, to dare to try new things and to be present – both in the conversations within the work in the workshop but also to be present both days of the workshop. The final common value we agreed upon was that what we talk about in the workshop stays with the group – meaning that we should be able to share things in the group in confidence and apart from what the participants choose to share in their individual films we think about not to share specific personal details and the like outside of the group. The latter value was important in order to create a confident forum of speaking your mind and then be able to reflect upon and choose what to share further in the films and when showing the films in other forums after the workshop.

The two day workshop was divided in four steps that took place on half a day respectively. I-pads and the program I-movie was used as tools for producing the films. In between steps a short lecture on working with I-movie was held by a process leader. The process leaders lead the agenda of the workshop whereas during the creative work and feedback all members from the work group shared the role of facilitating, giving feedback and assisting the participants as well as developed the process with questions and discussions.

I. Write script

For the first step we started with two exercises, the first one was to draw the neighborhood where one live and tell a memory of something that happened in one's neighborhood. The second exercise was to write a postcard to a friend or family member about the first time in Sweden. When writing the script some participants based it on the text in the postcard whereas others created new texts, during this process the participants read their texts for the group, gave feedback on each other's text both in a group and individually and the facilitators constantly assisted with questions and feedback to develop the texts. One aspect for the participants was to choose what to share in the films and how to develop the text in order to improve the message they wanted to lift.

2. Voice recording

In the second step each participant produced the sound to their individual films. This was done individually with a facilitator where the participant read the written story into a microphone, with assistance of feedback if wished for from the facilitator.

During this step we also worked with storyboards to work out what pictures the participants wanted to use to illustrate the recorded stories.

3. Adding photos, film clips and effects to the sound recording

Day two of the workshop started with the third step. Some of the participants had taken photographs in the previous evening after the workshop and some participants brought photos or drawings from home that they wanted to use. During this step we also produced material by arranging and taking photographs, making film clips and adding sound effects. The role of the facilitators was to encourage and help develop the films with the participants by assisting with photography, working in I-movie and to be curious with questions and assist with feedback.

4. Putting it all together

During the fourth and last step the participants edited their films to match sound and pictures into the wished for result. If there was a need we created new pictures by using photography, the effects in I-movie or drawings. During this step, as in all the other steps, the participants helped each other out with feedback and for example assistance in taking pictures or film clips.

In the end of the second day of the workshop a celebration was held to recognize the intense work and the final result. Here we showed all the films made on a big screen and had snacks as a festive end to the workshop.

The final product of five short films – themes and ownership

Five short films was produced during the workshop. The themes of the films included the following topics: missing one's family and the worries it entails, the struggle to catch up with school due to language challenges and lost years of school, experience of racism, challenges related to waiting for an asylum decision and being denied, age assessment and dreams and plans for the future.

The method of digital storytelling includes that each participant have ownership of their own created final product – the short film, meaning that it is up to the participants to choose if they want their film to be screened on further occasions outside of the workshop. This was important in order for the participants to feel comfortable with sharing personal and sometimes difficult stories in the workshop, but also in order to not feel limited but instead to be able to dare oneself and try new things such as recording your own voice. When seeing the final result many of the participants said they are positive to share their films in forums where it can inspire others or to be part of lifting issues and experiences related to the reception process. A contract was signed by each participant giving Save the Children Sweden the authority to screen the films in internal forums and a deal was made to ask for the participant's permission before screening the films externally.

Evaluation

During the two day workshop we had rounds in the start and end of each day where we talked about expectations, experiences of the workshop so far and where there was possibilities to raise questions or talk about the setup and the process.

In the end of the workshop an evaluation form was filled by each participant. On the question on what was most appreciated with the workshop the answers included team work, good treatment by the facilitators towards the group, the group dynamic, to learn techniques for making a film and the possibility to dare yourself and try new things. In the evaluation the participants expressed that felt they have learned new skills in regards to filmmaking and writing but also that they have improved their skills in regards of working with others in a team, to give feedback to others and to challenge themselves to new experiences. The feelings of watching one's own film in the end of the workshop was described with words such as excited, happy, satisfied, nervous and proud. The participants also expressed it as positive to share one's own experiences with others in a small group and be part of each other's processes in the filmmaking. During discussions in the end of the workshop the participants expressed a will to continue in different forms with developing their skills in writing, photography and film that they learned in the workshop.

Use of the films after the workshop

The films have been shown internally within Save the Children Sweden where they are being used to develop the work with methods for youth participation. One of the films was screened with positive feedback during a study visit in Sweden for actors working with the reception of unaccompanied children in different EU member states. During this study visit the film contributed to a presentation with the aim of inspiring ways to strengthen youth participation in the reception process.

Reflections after the workshop and on the method of digital storytelling

The method of digital storytelling opens up for the participants to influence the content and the topics to be included in the workshop. We set a framework for the topic which was our interest in the participant's experiences of the reception in Sweden, though the participants had the influence over what specific experiences of the reception they wanted to bring up as most important to them. Compared to a method of for example interviews with guided questions this method can give a positive result for us to develop our understanding of the youths own perspective on what is important in the reception process. Another positive reflection related to this is that it may encourage the participants to feel ownership in both the process and the final result of the workshop. One participant expressed that the believe before the workshop was to sit down and just answer guided questions, and that when arriving in the actual workshop it was a positive experience to be a co-creator of the content and the outcome.

A challenge with the method of digital storytelling may be the limitation in participants if the goal is to draw conclusions on youths own experiences in a wider scale. Another challenge may be that the content of discussions cannot be as specifically predicted as with for example a method of interviews.

Our aim was to try a method where we can offer the participants to learn something and not just provide us with information, to create a give and take workshop. What we could

provide here was the opportunity for both ourselves and the participants to gain and learn from each other. When working with digital storytelling the roles of process leaders/facilitators and participants not have to be strict, it rather opens up for the opposite; a group of persons working together as a team.

One positive reflection after the workshop is the group development as well as the individual development within the participants during the process. These developments and the creation of a sense of ownership in the process for the participants made the method positive and inspirational from an empowerment perspective. Another positive aspects was the possibilities the method gave for talking about experiences with other means and tools than just words by adding drawing, photography and film to express oneself.

The method of digital storytelling opens for the participants to direct and control what they want to share, but also on what they as important related to the topic. Many conversations around the creation of the films contributed to us gaining knowledge and gave a wider understanding of how and why the issues raised by the youths are important from their perspective. These are positive aspects but may as well be considered a challenge depending on the expectations and aim from the arranger in form of result.

The positive aspects of group development and individual development to a great extent depended on the amount of intense time spent within the workshop. The time factor may as well be seen as a challenge due to the intense work and hours needed both from the perspective of arrangers and for the participating youths.

Limitations

One challenge was to achieve the suggested amount of participants. The impression when spreading the invitation was that this depended on reasons beyond control of the work group, such as that the workshop was taking place during a period when the target audience had a stressful period in school in the end of the semester. We received a lot of positive response when spreading the invitation and received interest from youths who wanted to participate if the workshop was to be arranged again during a less stressful time in school. Another challenge we acknowledged when trying to receive a group of mixed female and male participants was that another workshop in photography for unaccompanied youths, but only for girls was held in the same area during the same week as our workshop. The girls we talked to though expressed that they would want to participate, and had a request for arranging another workshop for them later in time in a group with only girls.