

UN Committee on the Rights of the Child Day of General Discussion

Nidos – Developing specialised guidance and alternative care for unaccompanied children in the Netherlands

Introduction

The role of Nidos

[Nidos](#) is a certified youth care organization in the Netherlands. Nidos is responsible for legal guardianship for all unaccompanied and separated children that arrive in the Netherlands. Nidos is appointed as guardian by the court and guardianship is exercised by professionals who ensure proper accomplishment of the care provided to the child. Depending on various factors such as age, gender, vulnerability and level of independence, children are placed in different settings of alternative care. Aside from arranging appropriate shelter and living circumstances, Nidos is also responsible for protecting the children, intervening when their development is at risk of stagnation, acting in their best interest and legally representing them.

Unaccompanied children

When children (are forced to) migrate and embark on a dangerous journey without their parent(s) or guardian(s) they often experience a lot of uncertainty and hardship. Although these unaccompanied children in the Netherlands form a distinct group with shared experiences, vulnerabilities and strengths, this group is far from homogeneous. Diversity is not only encountered in terms of age, gender, origin, or reasons to migrate, but also in terms of perspective for the future, migration goals, qualities, strengths, and difficulties. Therefore, there is no such thing as a one size fits all approach in attending to the needs of these children.

Resilience Projects

During and after the 2015 refugee crisis Nidos' guardians, reception staff and other professionals in the Netherlands, encountered a group of children with a nationality they didn't guide before. Combined with the long felt need for better and more specialised trauma care, Nidos, together with ARQ National Psychotrauma Centre, initiated the Resilience Project. The project aimed to gain better understanding of the background and needs of Eritrean unaccompanied children and provide alternative care and other reception staff, guardians and other professionals, with knowledge and tools. When the project turned out to be relevant and successful it was followed up by the Resilience II project. Both project and its results are described here.

First Resilience Project

The first resilience project successfully conducted the following activities with its corresponding results.

1. Research on the Resilience of Eritrean unaccompanied children identifying factors that influence the development of unaccompanied refugee children from Eritrea. The research considered both factors that stimulate or hinder development.
2. Toolkit supporting resilience of Eritrean unaccompanied children.
Based on the above research, a Toolkit was developed for guardians and reception staff to support the resilience and self-reliance of unaccompanied refugee children from Eritrea.

3. Research on Trust focusing on the concept of trust amongst unaccompanied refugee children from Eritrea and their environment. Research data outlined that trust is conceived as a process and emphasised that refugee children are resilient and strategic.
4. A culture sensitive, stress and trauma informed intervention was developed. In order to be able to help unaccompanied refugee children from Eritrea directly and thus to avert an imminent development stagnation, the project piloted a short-term culture sensitive intervention, based on EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing) and NET (Narrative Exposure Therapy).
5. The “Knowledge Centre – Eritrean Unaccompanied Children” addressed questions from guardians and youth coaches, prepared information materials in the form of background notes based on case studies and frequently asked questions, organised information and exchange meetings, supported external research, and piloted intercultural mediation. The material developed was supported by an illustration showing the journey of the children from Eritrea to the Netherlands and the journey from guardianship to self-reliance.

The Resilience Project’s reports, toolkit, illustration and more information (Partly in Dutch and some in English) can be found on <https://nidosineurope.eu/projects/resilience-project/>

Resilience II Project

The Resilience Project was followed up by a second project, building on the results of the first Resilience project and further developing it. Under the Resilience II project the following activities were deployed:

1. Training and professionalisation of intercultural mediators following the lessons learnt from the pilot under the first project. In-line with the WHO recommendations regarding intercultural mediation, Nidos and ARQ National Psychotrauma Centre/ Centrum’45 have taken several steps to professionalise and integrate intercultural mediation within guardianship and trauma informed interventions. A short film, to learn more about the intercultural mediation programme is available on the projects webpage.
2. Strengthen the culture sensitive and stress & trauma informed approach within guardianship Testing of the short-term culture sensitive and trauma informed intervention, based on EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing) and NET (Narrative Exposure Therapy), developed in the first phase of the project was continued and broadened. In this phase the intervention was provided to unaccompanied refugee children from Eritrea, Syria, Afghanistan and North Africa. An [article](#) (only in Dutch) describes the approach taken with intercultural mediators in the intervention.
3. E-Learning ‘culture sensitive and stress & trauma informed guardianship’.
A new e-learning for guardians and coaches was developed (in Dutch). The e-learning is designed to practically guide professionals in their day-to-day work, increase their knowledge and understanding, and improve their awareness and attitude towards stress and trauma among refugee children. The e-learning provides best practices, interactive cases, questions and expert videos. Various experts provide their insight and, uniquely, the modules also include excerpts from former unaccompanied refugee children who share their experiences. The e-learning consists of two parts:
 1. *Cultural Connection*
 2. *Trauma-sensitive Guidance*

More information about the project and the short film on intercultural mediation can be found on: <https://nidosineurope.eu/projects/resilience2/>

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