



GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP IN PRACTICE

**Brochure
for Families**



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Global Citizenship in Practice

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Authors

Ana Raquel Prada (IPB)
Cristina Mesquita (IPB)
Cristiana Ribeiro (IPB)
Ewa Kos (UoI)
Fátima Aresta (APEI)
Luís Ribeiro (APEI)
Maria Luísa Azevedo (IPB)
Marisol Carmelino (AidLearn)
Sabrina Lilli (Piccabulla)
Stefano Bertoldi (Piccabulla)
Wanda Baranowska (UoL)
Xavier Baró (AHEAD)



Associação
de Profissionais
de Educação de Infância



INSTITUTO POLITÉCNICO
DE BRAGANÇA



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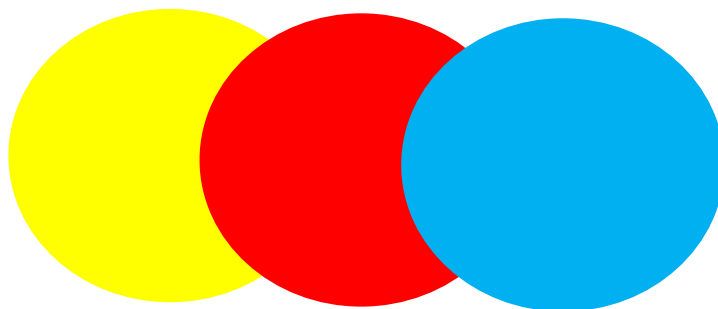
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Introduction

The family is the main and for many years of life the most important space for a child's development and functioning. Also, during the period of self-empowerment and the beginning of independent adult life, it is the support for the young person's path in life and work, and it is a frame of reference for the child throughout his or her further life. It is the child's most important educational environment. We, therefore, hope that, through you, children will be able to encounter issues that are not discussed on a daily basis, and that there is not enough time, space or impetus to address certain issues.

We are giving into your hands a series of story books that will allow your children to understand who they are, and to pay attention not to what others do, but to what they themselves can do. They will allow them to learn that gender, skin colour, clothes, hair length, age, health, and material conditions do not matter because the most important thing in life is openness to others, friendship, and talent. They will help children to become more tolerant and open to the diversity of the world, and cultural differences. They will teach how to engage in social life and how to pay attention to the needs of others and their own well-being.



5-6 YEARS OLD CHILDREN' READINESS TO UNDERSTANDING DIMENSIONS OF GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP

The 5-6th year of a child's life is an extremely important period in their life. This is the time when the child's personality is formed, the first experiences appear, and the developmental processes (physical, cognitive and emotional-social development) are intensive. It is a period characterised by specific features, one of the most important of which is the child's curiosity to ask questions, imitation with a tendency to reproduce and creatively process the surrounding reality and concrete and imaginative thinking.¹ So this is a time when your child is very interested in their immediate environment, the close, world around them.

The 5-6 year-olds' knowledge and understanding of the world relates to the children's everyday life in their homes, families, other people, the pre-school environment and the community. The children operate freely with concepts naming this dimension and make sense of their own actions in it. They look for knowledge about the wider world. They are interested in nature, objects, modes of transport, distant parts of the world and people.

5-6-year-olds are ready to understand other people's points of view, which helps them to make friends and meet new people. At this age, children become more sociable and prefer to play with friends rather than on their own. Learning about the world takes place at this age through free, involuntary learning in a variety of new life situations, and above all precisely by asking questions. These questions have a primarily cognitive function, but gradually take on a general character and eventually take on the form of problems. The content of children's questions can be remarkably rich and varied, dealing with many subjects, phenomena and issues. Although they listen with interest to the answers to the questions posed, it is important to remember that they are not yet fully ready to understand phenomena that are not present in their environment. When a 5–6-year-old child is surrounded by affection and care,

¹ Concrete-imaginative thinking involves your child not only seeing objects, but also being able to imagine or plan how they will be used.

he or she has a limited understanding of "poverty", "hunger", "injustice" or "violence". Going to a kindergarten full of toys every day, it is difficult for her or him to understand the "lack of access to education" for children in other parts of the world. Drinking sweet cough syrup, it is difficult for her or him to comprehend 'lack of access to medicine'.

Although the child already knows that 'the world' is more than the space and people he knows, he is only taking the first steps towards understanding what 'equal opportunities' for all children, 'equal rights' for men and women, or 'two mums' are.

The child usually realises the need to explore in contact with selected areas of reality, elements of the physical and social environment, usually with those close to his/her experience. It is worth mentioning here the phenomenon of 'imprinting', i.e. imprinting and consolidation of prototypes of specific behaviours. It is important to remember that early experiences have a particular impact on the child's later behaviour and are of particular importance for his or her development. This is why it is important to confront the child with issues such as tolerance, diversity.

It is worth remembering that human activity and the experiences accumulated as a result of it are determined, among other things, by the circumstances of an individual's life, which means that the type of environment in which a child lives determines the type of activities, tasks and social roles he or she undertakes. The individual's perception of the environment is a complex process. Most of what an individual knows about the world around him passes through the filter of his perceptions. As a result of perceptual processes (perceives something, focuses attention on it, remembers it), the accumulation of own experiences and learning, the child produces a cognitive map in the mind - an ordered mental representation of his environment. These are stored images of the environment, the characteristics attributed to them and their evaluations.

A child's educational environment, however, is not only what happens in the child's direct experience, but everything that reaches the child through indirect

transmission, if only in the form of the effects of geopolitical or economic actions. The child's life, and therefore the child's development, takes place within social groups such as the family, the nursery, neighbours and peer groups, the local community, and each of these groups can become a source or 'channel' of messages about the world. However, it is the Parent, as the more knowledgeable person, who creates the external context of the child's development in a tailored way, becoming, as it were, a mediator between the child and the physical and social environment.

In the GainKids project - by listening carefully to children's expressions - we have prepared a series of story books in which we create space for children's questions. We allow attention to be focused on specific objects, phenomena combined with an active, emotionally neutral exploration of them. The books address the main dimensions of global citizenship, respond to the developmental needs of pre-schoolers and fit into their current stage of development of knowledge about the world.



DIMENSIONS OF GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE USE OF STORY BOOKS AND VIDEOS

GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP, CITIZENSHIP AND PARTICIPATION

Citizenship is seen as an ongoing process, a collective effort towards realizing human rights and creating a fair and supportive society. In recent times, the concept has devolved and included now a larger definition, global citizenship, which goes beyond national boundaries and acknowledges the economic, social, cultural, and political integration facilitated by globalization.

Global citizenship is the willingness and ability to perceive oneself and to act as a member of a diverse world community, in which mutual understanding, acceptance and care for people and their natural environment are widely recognized as the main value.

Learning social interactions and experiencing citizenship through first-hand processes are considered important, as citizenship is not solely transmitted through thoughts or ideas. It involves awareness, caring, embracing diversity, promoting social justice and sustainability, and a sense of responsibility to act. Citizenship implies **participation**, which can be understood as the influence of individuals in the organization of a society. As highlighted in the Charter of Children's Rights, children have the right to have a say in matters that affect them and for their opinions to be taken seriously.

Social and Family participation

Integrating children **in social and community decisions** is an important aspect of promoting children's active citizenship and fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility. When children are included in decision-making processes, their voices, perspectives, and ideas are valued, contributing to a more inclusive and democratic society.

Involving children in decision-making processes empowers them, boosts their self-esteem, and reinforces their sense of agency. It demonstrates that their opinions and contributions are valuable, leading to increased confidence and a sense of worth. By participating in decision-making, children gain first-hand experience in democratic processes, including dialogue, negotiation,

compromise, and consensus-building. This helps them develop a deeper understanding of democratic values and principles. They also can be open to new ideas, perspectives, and challenges, promoting their cognitive, social, and emotional development. They learn critical thinking, problem-solving, and communication skills, as well as gain knowledge about social issues and community dynamics.

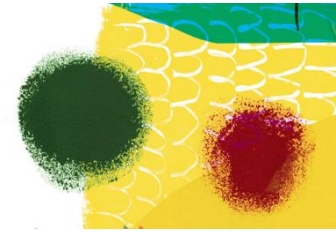
Children bring unique perspectives, creativity, and fresh ideas to decision-making processes. Their involvement encourages innovative thinking, promotes diversity of thought, and ensures that a broader range of viewpoints are considered. Furthermore, integrating children in decision-making promotes social cohesion and inclusion by acknowledging and respecting the diversity of voices and experiences within the community. It helps break down barriers, build bridges between generations, and create a sense of belonging for all community members. By involving them in decision-making from an early age, we equip them with the skills, knowledge, and attitudes needed to make informed decisions and contribute positively to society in the long term.

To meaningfully participate in the life of their family, community, and society at large, children and young people need support and opportunities for engagement. They need information, a space to express their opinions and feelings, and opportunities to ask questions.

The participation of children in a family context brings several important benefits for their development, related to the family bonds that strengthen the emotional ties between children and their parents or caregivers. This creates a safe and loving environment where children feel valued and emotionally supported. It also provides an opportunity to interact with family members of different ages, including siblings, grandparents, aunts, and cousins. These interactions help children develop social skills such as communication, conflict resolution, empathy, and cooperation. Children's participation in family activities allows for the transmission of family values and cultural traditions. Participating in family activities promotes children's self-esteem and confidence. When children engage and contribute to activities, they feel valued.

The Meeting on Watercolor Street, in front of the Artists' Patio

Participating in social and community activities allows children to develop and refine essential social skills, such as communication, cooperation, empathy, and conflict resolution. They learn how to navigate different



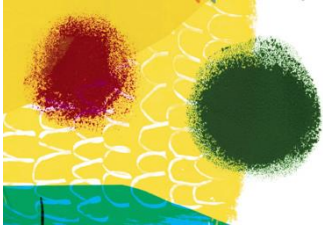
social dynamics, build relationships, and collaborate effectively with others. It also contributes to children's emotional well-being by providing opportunities for positive social interactions, fostering a sense of belonging and connection, and reducing feelings of isolation or loneliness. It promotes self-confidence, self-esteem, and a positive outlook on life.

By participating in diverse social and community settings, children develop cultural awareness, respect for differences, and a broader understanding of the world's cultural diversity. They learn to appreciate and value different perspectives, traditions, and backgrounds, fostering tolerance and inclusivity.

Through social and community participation, children have the opportunity to explore their interests, passions, and talents. They can discover their strengths, develop their unique identities, and gain a sense of purpose and fulfillment. They learn about civic responsibilities, community issues, and the importance of contributing to the well-being of their communities. This cultivates a sense of social responsibility and a desire to make a positive difference in the world.

In this process, children acquire valuable life skills, such as communication, teamwork, and resilience, which are transferable to various contexts. They become more flexible and adaptable in navigating social situations and addressing challenges throughout their lives.

The story "The Meeting on Watercolor Street, in front of the Artists' Patio" encourages children about how they can get involved in solving collective problems by identifying issues and collaborating with others to develop strategies for their resolution.



Global citizenship, citizenship and participation in everyday situations in the community

How can we deal with these situations in a way that is constructive and educational for our children? How can the stories of GainKids help us?

EVERYDAY SITUATIONS:

- 1. INITIATE OPEN DISCUSSIONS WITH YOUR CHILDREN ABOUT COMMUNITY ISSUES AND ENCOURAGE THEM TO EXPRESS THEIR OPINIONS AND IDEAS. LISTEN ATTENTIVELY TO THEIR PERSPECTIVES AND PROVIDE GUIDANCE ON HOW THEY CAN CONTRIBUTE POSITIVELY.**

COMMENT: Engaging in open discussions with children about community issues and encouraging them to express their opinions and ideas is an excellent approach to fostering their active participation and citizenship. By actively listening to their perspectives, parents can create a safe and supportive environment where children feel valued and empowered to contribute positively to their communities. Providing guidance on how they can make a difference helps children develop critical thinking skills, empathy, and a sense of responsibility towards the well-being of their community. This practice not only strengthens the parent-child bond but also cultivates a lifelong commitment to social engagement and making a positive impact on society.

- 2. ENGAGE IN VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES AS A FAMILY. CHOOSE COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS OR PROJECTS THAT ALIGN WITH YOUR CHILDREN'S INTERESTS AND VALUES. THIS ALLOWS THEM TO EXPERIENCE THE JOY OF HELPING OTHERS AND UNDERSTAND THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNITY SERVICE.**

COMMENT: Engaging in volunteer activities as a family is a wonderful way to instill a sense of compassion, empathy, and community spirit in children. By actively participating in community service, parents can provide their children with hands-on experiences that promote a deep understanding of the needs of others and the value of giving back. Choosing volunteer opportunities aligned with children's interests and values ensures that they are personally invested in the cause, fostering a genuine sense of joy and fulfilment in helping others. This shared

experience as a family not only strengthens the bond between family members but also reinforces the importance of community service as a collective responsibility. Through volunteer activities, children learn valuable lessons about empathy, teamwork, and social responsibility, which can positively shape their character and inspire a lifelong commitment to making a difference in the lives of others.

3. ENCOURAGE YOUR CHILDREN TO TAKE ON LEADERSHIP ROLES WITHIN YOUR COMMUNITY, SUCH AS ORGANIZING SCHOOL EVENTS, LEADING A CLUB, OR INITIATING COMMUNITY PROJECTS. SUPPORT THEM IN DEVELOPING LEADERSHIP QUALITIES AND TAKING ON RESPONSIBILITIES.

COMMENT: Encouraging children to take on leadership roles within their community is a powerful way to foster their personal growth, self-confidence, and sense of responsibility. By providing support and guidance, parents can help their children develop essential leadership qualities such as communication, decision-making, and problem-solving skills. Taking on leadership roles, whether in organizing school events, leading clubs, or initiating community projects, allows children to step outside their comfort zones, learn from challenges, and develop resilience.

4. HELP THEM DEVELOP ACTION PLANS AND GUIDE THEM THROUGH THE PROCESS OF TURNING THEIR IDEAS INTO REALITY. THIS EMPOWERS THEM TO TAKE OWNERSHIP AND BECOME ACTIVE CONTRIBUTORS.

COMMENT: Helping children develop action plans and guiding them through the process of turning their ideas into reality is a powerful way to empower them and nurture their problem-solving and project-management skills. By providing support and guidance, parents can help children break down their ideas into actionable steps and develop a roadmap to achieve their goals. Through this process, children also learn valuable lessons about perseverance, resilience, and adaptability. They may encounter challenges and setbacks along the way, but with parental guidance, they can navigate these obstacles, learn from them, and develop a growth mindset.

'Mia-Melody-Cat' - the help of stories from the animal world of Storybooks

In order to meaningfully participate in the life of their family, community, and society at large, children and young people need support and opportunities for engagement. They need information, a space to express their opinions and feelings, and opportunities to ask questions.



The participation of children in a family context brings several important benefits for their development, related to the family bonds that strengthen the emotional ties between children and their parents or caregivers. This creates a safe and loving environment where children feel valued and emotionally supported. It also provides an opportunity to interact with family members of different ages, including siblings, grandparents, aunts, and cousins. These interactions help children develop social skills such as communication, conflict resolution, empathy, and cooperation. Children's participation in family activities allows for the transmission of family values and cultural traditions. Participating in family activities promotes children's self-esteem and confidence. When children engage and contribute to activities, they feel valued.

The story of Mia-Melody-Cat highlights the importance of family in building secure emotional relationships. It emphasizes the need for parents to encourage their children's autonomy, as shown through the cat's journey and the connections she makes with other animals along the way. The story underscores the significance of collaboration within the family and the responsibility shared by all members, starting from childhood, as portrayed by the various characters. Family decision-making is also depicted, highlighting the importance of everyone's participation in family decisions. Additionally, the story reveals the recognition that a family should give to its members, demonstrated by the surprise Mia Melody's family prepares to celebrate her birthday.



Global citizenship, citizenship and participation in everyday situations in the family

How can we deal with these situations in a way that is constructive and educational for our children? How can the stories of GainKids help us?

EVERYDAY SITUATIONS:

- 1. AFTER READING THE STORY, PROMOTE A REFLECTION WITH YOUR CHILD(REN) ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF FAMILY AND HOW THEY CAN SUPPORT AND COLLABORATE IN ALL FAMILY ACTIVITIES.**

COMMENT: By engaging in this discussion, you provide an opportunity for your child(ren) to deepen their understanding of the significance of family bonds and their role within the family unit. Reflecting on the story together allows for open communication and encourages children to express their thoughts, feelings, and perspectives. It fosters a sense of belonging, as they recognize the value of their contributions to family life. Moreover, it reinforces the idea that every family member has a role to play and that their involvement is essential for the well-being and harmony of the family. By actively involving your child(ren) in this reflection, you empower them to develop a sense of responsibility and agency within the family context. It cultivates their ability to identify ways in which they can offer support, collaborate, and actively participate in various family activities. This, in turn, strengthens their sense of belonging and connection to the family unit. Engaging in these reflective discussions also provides an opportunity to reinforce positive values and principles, such as empathy, cooperation, and mutual respect. It allows for the transmission of important family traditions, fostering a sense of continuity and shared identity.

- 2. HOLD REGULAR FAMILY MEETINGS WHERE EVERYONE HAS THE OPPORTUNITY TO VOICE THEIR OPINIONS, DISCUSS IMPORTANT MATTERS, AND MAKE DECISIONS TOGETHER. THIS FOSTERS A SENSE OF OWNERSHIP AND INVOLVEMENT IN FAMILY MATTERS.**

COMMENT: Holding regular family meetings where everyone has the opportunity to voice their opinions, discuss important matters, and make decisions together is an excellent practice that can greatly benefit family dynamics. This approach fosters a sense of ownership and involvement in family matters, allowing each family member to feel valued, heard,

and respected. Family meetings provide a dedicated space for open communication, where every member has an equal opportunity to express their thoughts, concerns, and ideas. This inclusive environment encourages active participation and promotes a sense of belonging within the family. It sends the message that everyone's perspective and input are important, regardless of age or position within the family hierarchy. By involving everyone in the decision-making process, family meetings promote a sense of empowerment and shared responsibility. When family members are given the opportunity to contribute their opinions and ideas, they develop a greater sense of ownership over the decisions made, leading to increased commitment and cooperation in implementing them. Additionally, family meetings serve as a platform for problem-solving and conflict resolution. By openly discussing important matters, families can address issues, find common ground, and work together towards solutions. This collaborative approach helps to build stronger relationships, improve communication skills, and teach valuable negotiation and compromise abilities. Regular family meetings also provide a forum for setting and revisiting family goals, establishing routines, and reinforcing family values. They create a sense of structure and consistency, which can contribute to a harmonious and well-functioning family unit. In conclusion, holding regular family meetings where everyone can voice their opinions, discuss important matters, and make decisions together is an effective way to foster a sense of ownership, involvement, and unity within the family. It strengthens communication, builds mutual respect, and cultivates a shared vision for the family's well-being and growth.

3. INVOLVE CHILDREN IN AGE-APPROPRIATE CHORES AND RESPONSIBILITIES AROUND THE HOUSE. THIS CAN INCLUDE TASKS SUCH AS SETTING THE TABLE, TIDYING UP THEIR ROOM, OR HELPING WITH MEAL PREPARATION. ALLOW THEM TO CONTRIBUTE AND TAKE PRIDE IN THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS.

COMMENT: Involving children in age-appropriate chores and responsibilities around the house is a wonderful way to foster their sense of responsibility, independence, and self-confidence. By assigning tasks such as setting the table, tidying up their room, or helping with meal preparation, children not only contribute to the functioning of the household but also develop important life skills. Assigning chores to children teaches them the value of hard work, accountability, and teamwork. It instils a sense of pride and accomplishment as they actively

participate in maintaining the home environment. When children see their contributions making a difference, it boosts their self-esteem and self-worth. It also provides an opportunity for them to learn essential life skills. They develop organizational skills, time management, and the ability to follow instructions. They also learn about cleanliness, organization, and the importance of taking care of their personal spaces. Furthermore, involving children in household tasks promotes a sense of unity and cooperation within the family. It encourages teamwork and shared responsibilities, fostering a supportive and inclusive family environment. Working together towards common goals strengthens family bonds and cultivates a sense of belonging. It's important to assign age-appropriate chores that match the child's abilities and developmental stage. This ensures that the tasks are manageable and safe for them to perform. Additionally, it's essential to provide clear instructions, guidance, and positive reinforcement to support their efforts and help them develop the necessary skills.

4. DECISION MAKING: WHENEVER POSSIBLE, INVOLVE CHILDREN IN DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES THAT AFFECT THE FAMILY. THIS CAN RANGE FROM SELECTING A MOVIE TO WATCH TOGETHER, PLANNING A FAMILY VACATION, OR CHOOSING HOUSEHOLD RULES. ENCOURAGE THEM TO EXPRESS THEIR PREFERENCES AND LISTEN TO THEIR OPINIONS.

COMMENT: Involving children in decision-making processes that affect the family is a powerful way to foster their sense of agency, responsibility, and respect within the family unit. By including them in choices such as selecting a movie to watch, planning a family vacation, or setting household rules, you not only value their opinions but also nurture their decision-making skills and autonomy. Encouraging children to express their preferences and listening to their opinions sends a message that their input is valued and respected. It empowers them to actively participate in family discussions and cultivates a sense of ownership over family decisions. This involvement helps children develop critical thinking skills, learn to consider different perspectives and understand the importance of compromise and negotiation. In addition to building decision-making skills, involving children in family choices also strengthens familial bonds. It fosters a sense of belonging and unity as everyone's voice is heard and considered. It creates an inclusive and collaborative family dynamic where each member feels valued and has a stake in the outcomes. Furthermore, engaging children in decision-making processes provides an opportunity for them to learn about

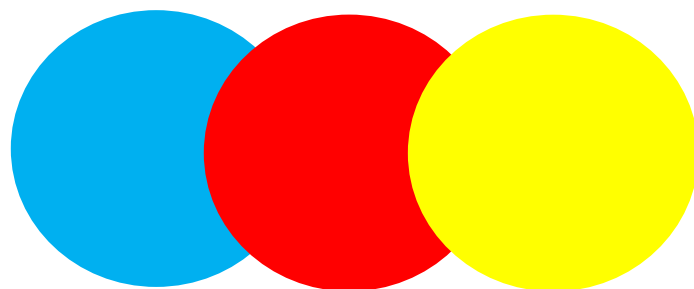
responsibility and consequences. By allowing them to contribute their ideas and opinions, they can see first-hand the impact their decisions have on themselves and the family as a whole. This promotes accountability and teaches them to think critically about the potential outcomes of their choices. Of course, it's important to balance involving children in decision-making with age-appropriate boundaries and parental guidance. Some decisions may require more parental authority, while others can be shared collaboratively. Providing guidance and context, when necessary, helps children understand the bigger picture and make informed choices.

5. INITIATE PROJECTS THAT INVOLVE THE WHOLE FAMILY, SUCH AS GARDENING, HOME IMPROVEMENT TASKS, OR ORGANIZING A FAMILY EVENT OR OUTING. ENCOURAGE CHILDREN TO CONTRIBUTE THEIR IDEAS, CREATIVITY, AND EFFORTS.

COMMENT: Engaging in projects together allows family members to work towards a common goal, fostering a sense of teamwork and cooperation. It provides a platform for open communication, where each family member can share their thoughts, suggestions, and unique perspectives. This inclusivity not only strengthens family bonds but also nurtures a sense of belonging and shared responsibility. Encouraging children to contribute their ideas, creativity, and efforts in these projects promotes their sense of ownership and boosts their self-confidence. It empowers them to take initiative, make decisions, and see the tangible results of their contributions. This helps develop their problem-solving skills, critical thinking abilities, and ability to work collaboratively with others. Projects that involve the whole family also provide opportunities for learning and skill development. For example, gardening can teach children about nature, responsibility, and patience, while home improvement tasks can involve learning practical skills and fostering a sense of pride in the family's living space. Organizing a family event or outing can help children develop organizational skills, teamwork, and an appreciation for the value of shared experiences. Moreover, engaging in these projects encourages creativity and innovation. By allowing children to contribute their ideas, you tap into their unique perspectives and foster their creative thinking abilities. This not only enhances the quality of the project but also helps children develop their imagination, problem-solving skills, and ability to think outside the box.

- 6. CREATE AND MAINTAIN FAMILY TRADITIONS THAT INVOLVE EVERYONE. THIS COULD INCLUDE CELEBRATING HOLIDAYS, COOKING SPECIAL MEALS TOGETHER, OR ENGAGING IN SPECIFIC ACTIVITIES ON CERTAIN DAYS OF THE WEEK. ENCOURAGE CHILDREN TO ACTIVELY PARTICIPATE IN THESE TRADITIONS AND CONTRIBUTE THEIR IDEAS.**

COMMENT: Family traditions provide a sense of continuity and stability, anchoring family members to their roots and creating a sense of belonging. They offer a unique opportunity for children to learn about their cultural heritage, values, and customs, fostering a sense of pride in their family's traditions. Encouraging children to actively participate in these traditions and contribute their ideas empowers them to take an active role in shaping their family's experiences. It helps them develop a sense of ownership and responsibility and fosters their creativity and decision-making skills. When children are actively involved in planning and executing family traditions, it strengthens their connection to the activities and enhances their enjoyment. Moreover, family traditions provide an avenue for quality time and shared experiences. Engaging in activities together promotes communication, bonding, and the development of shared memories. These shared experiences create a sense of nostalgia and strengthen the emotional connection among family members. Family traditions also offer opportunities for learning and passing down skills from one generation to another. For example, cooking special meals together can be a way to teach children about family recipes, culinary traditions, and the importance of sharing meals as a family. It fosters a sense of togetherness and reinforces the value of spending time with loved ones.



GENDER IDENTITY AND EQUALITY

Gender identity represents a social and cultural process of constructing a role and therefore a set of expectations that are made their own by the other people they come into contact with (with friends, at school, in sporting activities, in games, etc.) and above all in the first years of life in the family; it is in this more restricted environment that children begin to make them their own and therefore to construct their own identity, both personal and social, from different points of view. In order for this path to take place with the widest possible margins of freedom for the child/children, the parent must first of all get rid of all the gender stereotypes that are often projected onto their children: "the (good-accepting) boy does not usually cry"; "the boy is always more exuberant, energetic-violent, than the girl"; "the boy is naturally inclined to mechanical-technological games and action and force sports"; "the girl is calmer than the boys and tends to gather quietly to talk-talk rather than chase each other around, playing violent pranks", etc. etc.

Then there are the daily actions and the implicit proposals of a "set" of expectations such as the little girl helping her mother and the little boy helping his father in activities that are almost always on the one hand caring, relating and on the other hand technical or household services involving a certain physical strength. Therefore, there are actions and relationships that are unconsciously put into practice, which require awareness, and also actions that are easier to intervene on, since "premeditation" is required, regardless of the final objective: for example, the purchase of toys, especially those given as gifts, or the choice of sport to play, which is often the one the parents like or liked, or the one in which the parent could have been, or would have liked to have been, a champion and which, according to common belief, is "more suitable".

The theme of **gender equality** is closely related to that of gender identity because in the process of constructing gender identity, all those cultural models inherent to the role of men and women in society or in the micro-social

sphere between men and women can also be implicitly acquired in terms of the expression of affectivity or sexuality.- The specific topic of equality represents a field of possible actions that can be put in place starting with the model that parents in the first instance can offer their children from an early age. In the story of Akiak and the egg, for example, the father-male role of care recurs several times, and the episode of the sardines also represents the concept of solidarity and sharing that goes beyond the family nucleus, proposing an idea of reproduction and care of the species as the responsibility of a community and therefore no longer of "that" mother or "that" father, thus triggering a mechanism of the search for freedom and therefore autonomy on the part of the "offspring" that is antithetical to the concept of "possession" ("children as my blood"). Returning to the subject of the model to be proposed in the family, father and mother who both play the role of "man" or "woman" alternating with each other will eventually become for the children simply the "parents" while the activities they perform simply have no connection with a specific gender. In this way, we can reduce that "gap" between men and women in terms of affection and attachment with their children, linked solely to a period that, however important and intense it may be, such as childbirth and immediately after breastfeeding, is still a limited phase in time compared to the long path of socialisation and parent-child relationships until they have achieved their full autonomy outside the family. Roles should therefore be made as interchangeable as possible and family and domestic tasks equally divided and alternated, as should the children's involvement in their daily tasks: moreover, this alternation of interchangeable tasks makes it easier precisely to share and divide them, thus facilitating parenting.

'Akiak and Egg' - the help of stories from the animal world of Storybooks



It is essential for the parent to be able to answer the child's questions about what the teacher or classmates did or said in class: as far as gender identity and equality are concerned, the teacher or classmates could follow exclusionary behaviour or make conformist judgments and it is therefore important, if nothing coherent can be found in the animated scenes that can be linked to what happened in class and recounted by the child, to identify the fundamental element relating to gender identity and gender roles and to propose an equally socially acceptable way forward, possibly referring to some key passages of Akiak's story and presenting them in a simple way, even in the choice of words

- The two grandparents who appear together in the story stay together simply because they love each other;
- The sardines are happy even if they are looked after by the fathers and mothers of other sardines;
- In the elephant herd, it is the females who are in charge;
- The two penguins, mum and dad, are both important in bringing the egg and the life inside to life;
- For snails, the presence of both male and female is not important for making babies;
- The twins are little girls even though their hair and clothes may be those of a boy;

The mix of the animal world, where male-female roles are not defined by power and discrimination as in the human world, and of characters from everyday life (the little brother or sister, grandparents, etc.), from Akiak's story but also from the other stories, can help the parent to deal gradually with very sensitive issues. By making a comparison between man and nature, i.e. the very nature that is often held up as an example for human culture to follow, it is possible to present alternative and equally acceptable or indeed 'natural' models.

Gender identity and equality in everyday situations in the family

How can we deal with these situations in a way that is constructive and educational for our children? How can the stories of GainKids help us?



EVERYDAY SITUATIONS:

- 1. CHOOSING BETWEEN SEVERAL TOYS. ON A FLOOR, A CHILD HAS DIFFERENT TOYS AND OBJECTS AROUND HIM/HER. SOME ARE "NEUTRAL" AND SOME ARE MORE SUITABLE FOR A BOY OR A GIRL ACCORDING TO THE MOST COMMON CLICHÉS: THE CHILD CAN BE LEFT FREE TO CHOOSE OR DIRECTED TOWARDS WHAT THE ADULT CONSIDERS TO BE MORE APPROPRIATE.**

COMMENT: The child is confronted with a certain number of **toys** which, according to contemporary culture, can be labelled according to the gender for which they are intended, but there can also be "neutral" toys: without any particular suggestion or help, the child chooses them freely for his or her own play activities. (OFFER OF A FREE CHOICE SET) In the case of an only child, boy or girl, the typical situation that arises is in the toy shop where the choice may depend on where the parent "directs" the child. Outside this situation, i.e. when the toy enters the home, for example in the form of a surprise gift, the option that the parent can choose is between a gift that is as "neutral" as possible and one that is connoted in terms of gender stereotypes (e.g. toy car, doll).

It should be noted that even video games, which are increasingly popular even among the youngest age groups, can present a stereotyped set of actions or virtual settings for boys or girls that can be much more 'powerful' than material toys. These, in fact, can take advantage of a total immersion environment based on sounds, images and pre-constituted proposals of virtual worlds connoted in terms of genre, whether in terms of the mode of action performed by the characters, the objects, the clothing worn, etc., or in terms of the type of action performed by the characters.

- 2. THE CHOICE OF COLOURS: WHICH COLOUR TO WEAR? THE COLOURS ARE NOT CHOSEN BY THE PARENT BUT SHOULD BE MADE TO BE CHOSEN FREELY BY THE CHILD EVEN IF IN THE END THEY WILL TURN OUT TO BE "NON-COMPLIANT" ACCORDING TO COMMON SENSE. THE SCENE TO BE REPRESENTED IS THAT OF VARIOUS CLOTHES TO BE WORN IN DIFFERENT COLOURS INCLUDING PINK AND BLUE: THE CHILD CHOOSES A GARMENT OF ONE COLOUR AND THEN ANOTHER GARMENT OF ANOTHER COLOUR**

COMMENT: Colour is according to common sense a distinctive sign of gender, so the everyday situation that often arises is to wear an item of clothing of a specific colour. Among several possible colours, the choice may fall on a "neutral" colour or one that is socially connoted in terms of gender such as pink, the colour of calmness and conciliation, or a brighter colour or blue, which is the colour that generally defines the child as opposed to pink. It should be noted that these two colours, as well as the types of toys divided by gender, represent the fruit of a consumerist model of society that has established itself fairly recently, in such stark terms, since the so-called 'economic boom'. In this way, the production system has differentiated into two targets the new protagonist of consumption, boys and girls, leading to a multiplication of supply in a way that is functional to the production system itself.

3. WHO SETS OR SETS THE TABLE? WHO DOES THE DISHES AND CLEANS THE HOUSE? A SCENE CAN BE REPRESENTED WHERE A MAN AND A WOMAN SET AND CLEAR THE TABLE TOGETHER, OR WHO CLEAN TOGETHER, SHARING THE TASKS. THE SAME SCENE CAN BE REPRESENTED WITH THE CHILDREN AS PROTAGONISTS WHERE BOTH THE GIRL AND THE BOY SET AND CLEAR THE TABLE OR HELP WITH WASHING DISHES OR CLEANING. CARING FOR THE ELDERLY AT HOME OR THE SICK; BOTH CHILD AND CHILD CAN HELP EQUALLY EFFECTIVELY

COMMENT: The distinction of roles can take place either by repeating the same set of actions over time, ending up appearing completely "natural" in the eyes of the children, while in front of the children the everyday situation may instead present interchangeable roles. The message can be even stronger and reinforced if one "plays" these two roles to the children in an interchangeable manner. The other typical situation is that played by the role of *caregiver*, almost always the prerogative of the woman: the grandmother or grandfather, on the other hand, can be cared for with small actions by either the granddaughter or the grandson, just as the example to be proposed and followed is that of an interchangeability of roles between the two parents. In Akiak's story, we have, among others, the example of twins with non-stereotypical features who can be identified at first glance with two children and who live with two grandparents, so all aspects that offer equally acceptable and plausible anti-conformist models to their children.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL CHILDREN

Equal opportunities for all children are understood as the assumption that all children, regardless of gender, level of mental or physical ability, ethnicity or socio-economic background have the same opportunities in life and in the future. It follows that it is recognised that every child should be given the chance to maximise his or her full potential for cognitive, physical, and emotional-social development.

Adults know that certain groups have been discriminated against in the past because of these characteristics, and many still struggle with discrimination today. For 5–6-year-olds, this topic is not close, it goes beyond understanding the causes and effects of this phenomenon regardless of the characteristics of the environment in which they grow up. Children at this age are just beginning to transcend egocentricity (which is a typical early stage of social development) in favour of being a 'social being', acting among and for other people. They are ready to take 'for granted' equal opportunities for all children, but will relate this to familiar, close-to-home indicators of fair distribution and access to spheres of social life.

5–6-year-olds recognise differences in the ownership of things (she/he has something I don't have or vice versa), identify different social roles (child, adult, mother, grandparent, policeman, cashier and teacher), are able to identify and describe differences in the living conditions of their peers and family members. They are able to cognitively and emotionally identify 'diversity'. They are only just learning to recognise the cause and effect relationships that determine 'equality of opportunity' or the lack of it. They already want to share what they have with others but relate this to everyday social interactions. They are ready to lend their favourite toy to a colleague (the colleague's enjoyment is developmental for them - they want to be accosted and liked and they have found one of the ways for this), but they get impatient (frustrated) when the colleague holds on to it for too long.

5-6-year-olds are able to express feelings, although they may need help and time to identify and talk about difficult emotions, such as frustration at not

understanding social phenomena. Therefore, the pre-education stage for understanding equal opportunities for all children is to tame the perception and acceptance of diversity, which 5–6-year-olds do very well with.

'Unicorn' Friends'- the help from the story of the real people world and fiction hero



The story of the Unicorn' Friends was based on free expressions from 5–6-year-olds, related to the understanding of 'equal opportunities for all children'. The fictional but well-known and popular Unicorn character was also suggested by the children as a summary of the topic covered in the conversation. It is easy to see that the focus of the 5–6-year-olds adopted 'diversity', which corresponds to their stage of cognitive and social development.

In the story of the Unicorn, the children included what they see and what they are concerned about. The story of the Unicorn, who invites friends to a picnic, engages with the world of experiences of the children. Moreover, by depicting a variety of characters.

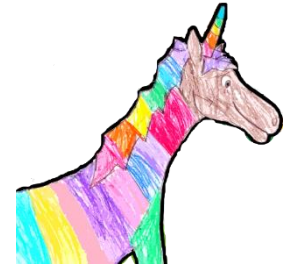
- it addresses issues related to disability, skin colour, differences in external appearance,
- character and temperamental differences,
- diversity of emotional reactions and behaviours (including difficulties that are rooted in fear),
- diversity of talents, interests,
- diversity of occupations, differences in the context of wealth and place of residence.

Against the background of perceived diversity comes the reflection and the 'dilemma' of providing an 'equal opportunity' for a good meeting atmosphere for all those gathered at the picnic. The unicorn 'refreshes' children's altruism

and, more importantly, triggers ideas for action that bring children closer to providing equal opportunities in an ever-widening social world.

Diversity and Equal Opportunities for Children in everyday situations in the family

How can we deal with these situations in a way that is constructive and educational for our children? How can the stories of GainKids help us?



EVERYDAY SITUATIONS:

- 1. SHOPPING TOGETHER, TARGETED OBSERVATION OF PEOPLE (ESPECIALLY OTHER CHILDREN) AND CONVERSATION (DURING OR JUST AFTER SHOPPING). IN EACH OF THESE SITUATIONS, THE PARENT CAN DIRECT THE CHILD'S ATTENTION TO PEOPLE WITH SPECIFIC CHARACTERISTICS (WHEELCHAIR USERS, ELDERLY, CHILDREN, COLOURFULLY DRESSED, SPEAKING OTHER LANGUAGES, ETC.) AND THE WAY THE SALE IS ORGANISED, GUIDING THE CONVERSATION TOWARDS FINDING OUT WHETHER THE SHOP ALLOWS ENTRY FOR EACH PERSON AND THE FREEDOM TO REACH FOR ITEMS, E.G. IN A SUPERMARKET.**

COMMENT: An important thought-provoking statement about equal opportunities for all children in a shopping situation is that EVERY CHILD (including those in pushchairs) HAS THE RIGHT TO ACCOMPANY A PARENT INTO A SHOP, where conditions are safe for them, because the people working in the shop have taken care of this. The child is still learning about the reality around him, any 'otherness/diversity' is interesting to him, and at the same time neutral. In a shop setting, he is most likely to spontaneously draw attention to the goods he would like to have. A parent posing a question or an observational task for the child to complete while shopping (which, when completed, he or she can reward) helps the child to get to know people and situations in a structured way, which encourages reflection and the formulation of conclusions.

- 2. SUNDAY LUNCH WITH A 'SPECIAL GUEST'. THE PARENTS PREPARE A CARD FOR THE 'SPECIAL GUEST' (IT COULD BE ONE OF THE CHARACTERS FROM THE UNICORN STORY OR A CHILD FROM A CHILDREN'S FILM), FOR WHOM TABLEWARE IS PROVIDED. AFTER OR DURING LUNCH (IF THE RULES OF EATING AT HOME ALLOW IT), HAVE A DISCUSSION WITH THE CHILD ABOUT**

WHETHER THE FAMILY'S MEAL WOULD BE ENJOYED BY THE SPECIAL GUEST. INCLUDE IN THE CONVERSATION THE TOPIC OF CHILDREN WHOSE COUNTRY LACKS FOOD, USING VOCABULARY FAMILIAR TO THE CHILD.

COMMENT: Doing a typical family activity, which involves meeting attitudinal needs, is a good opportunity to gently increase the child's knowledge of the situation of other children. It is also a good space for the whole family to reflect on inequalities in the world. Questions that can guide the conversation include: What do you think our 'special guest' in your home usually eats for dinner? What could he treat us to if we were visiting? The conversation can be supported by parents' statements about children living in poor regions of the world or poor neighbourhoods in the city where the family lives.

- 3. WORD-PICTURE GAMES - "KINDERGARTEN" IN DIFFERENT WORLD LANGUAGES. THE ACTIVITY REQUIRES PARENTS TO PREPARE IN ADVANCE, GATHERING WORDS FOR "KINDERGARTEN" IN DIFFERENT LANGUAGES AND DRAWINGS OR PHOTOGRAPHS ILLUSTRATING THESE INSTITUTIONS AND SIGNIFICANTLY OTHERS IN DIFFERENT COUNTRIES (E.G. KINDERGARTEN BUILDINGS, KINDERGARTEN SQUARES IN THIRD WORLD COUNTRIES, SHOPS, HOSPITALS, ETC.). DURING A SHARED TABLE GAME, THEY CAN SAY THESE NAMES AND ASK THE CHILD TO MATCH THE PICTURE WITH THEM. THE GAME IS A STARTING POINT FOR A DISCUSSION ABOUT WHETHER ALL CHILDREN IN THE WORLD HAVE THE INSTITUTIONS DEPICTED IN THE PICTURES CLOSE TO WHERE THEY LIVE.**

COMMENT: This type of cooperative play broadens the child's knowledge and makes them aware of the different conditions of children's lives, including different access to education and health care. The use of pictorial material allows cognition to be related to the developmental achievements of the child, who at the age of 5-6 has concrete-pictorial thinking.

The range of images and concepts used depends entirely on the decision of the parents, who know the child and his or her vocabulary resources best.

NON-DISCRIMINATION AND DIVERSITY

Value diversity means acknowledging and appreciating the differences and similarities among all human beings. While the basic needs are similar, there is a broad variety of identity traits when it comes to gender, class, culture, ethnicity, religion, nationality, or language.

Respecting diversity entails to recognize that these differences shape each person's identity while being open to other cultures and identities. Non-discrimination refers to the principle that no one should be treated differently due to a certain set of identity criteria and nobody should be deprived from their political, social, civic, economic or cultural freedoms and rights.

Non-discrimination is a central element of human rights and is also reflected in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on November 20th, 1989.

Discrimination is often based on ignorance, prejudices and negative stereotypes. Because many people fear what seems strange or unknown, they react with suspicion or even violence to anyone whose appearance, culture or behavior is unfamiliar. Discrimination impacts on society as a whole, reinforcing prejudice and racist attitudes, and prevents individuals and communities from exercising and enjoying their human rights and fundamental freedoms.

'The Rainforest Monster'- supporting stories from the Lemur's world of Storybooks

The storybook supporting the reflection on non-discrimination learning is based on the direct experience of the author working on the study and protection of lemurs in the Ranomafana national park in Madagascar. The story was elaborated together with 5-6 years old children and the final story was created from the different solutions proposed by the infants.



This Lemurs' story takes place in the Madagascar's rainforest, while in fact is addressing very concrete realities of potential discrimination and the danger of the single story in the children's local context.

The Rainforest Monster storybook recognises the need to develop in every child a respectful, non-discriminatory attitude and create a learning environment that acknowledges and benefits from diversity instead of ignoring or excluding it.

The storybook encourages and supports children to raise awareness and empathy to deconstruct stereotypes and prejudices, and develop resilience and assertiveness to confront discrimination.

Diversity and Non-Discrimination for Children in everyday situations in the family

How can we deal with these situations in a way that is constructive and educational for our children? How can the stories of GainKids help us?



- 1. ONE DAY AFTER SCHOOL YOU TAKE YOUR CHILD TO THE PARK WITH HIS OR HER CLASSMATES. WHILE WATCHING THEM PLAY YOU SPOT ONE CLASSMATE PLAYING SADLY ALONE. USE THE SITUATION TO MAKE YOUR SON OR DAUGHTER THINK AND ACT TO BE MORE INCLUSIVE TO OTHER CHILDREN BY HYPING HIM OR HER TO PLAY TOGETHER.**

COMMENT: This case may increase the awareness about a situation where there is an exclusion process going on. It may empower children to be the ones that act on it and decide how they want to solve these situations. Families could support their children by having a previous conversation and reminding about the learnings in the Storybook hyping them to be the ones acting on future situations.

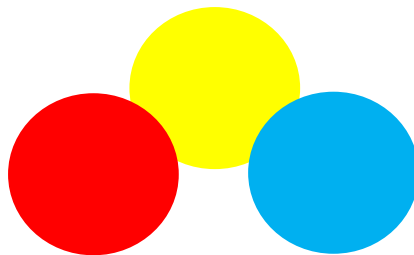
- 2. IT IS YOUR SONS OR DAUGHTERS BIRTHDAY AND THEY WOULD LIKE TO ORGANISE A SPORTS COMPETITION WITH THEIR FRIENDS. ONE OF THEM HAS FUNCTIONAL DIVERSITY. DURING THE ORGANISATION YOU MAKE THE CHILD THINK ABOUT HOW TO ADAPT THE GAMES TO EVERYONE'S ABILITY, SO EVERYONE FEELS INCLUDED AND CAN HAVE FUN.**

COMMENT: It is important to make the children aware of the functional diversity and how this affects the physical abilities of people. At the same time, it is relevant to use the games they already know, so everyone can be included.

Sidenote: It is important to emphasise that the solution mustn't make someone feel different or excluded, but everyone should play the same version of the game.

- 3. YOU ARE STROLLING WITH YOUR CHILDREN WHEN YOU WALK ACROSS A PEOPLE FROM ANOTHER ETHNICITY. YOU FEEL YOUR CHILDREN ARE BEING AFRAID OF THEM. LIKewise, YOU TAKE THE CHANCE TO TALK ABOUT THE DIFFERENT GROUPS OF PEOPLE THAT LIVE AROUND YOU AND THE CONCEPTS OF DIVERSITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION.**

COMMENT: Children should be aware of the diversity of our society in all the senses. And that the reaction towards a situation that is different from what they are used to should always be open-minded and respectful. In other words, the reaction to the diversity mustn't be related to fear or disgust.



INSTEAD OF A SUMMARY

DEAR PARENT AND CHILD CARER,

what you have found in this brochure is just an inspiration for you to create with your child the world in which he or she will begin to live as an adult in a few years' time.

We are sure that you want this world to be a place of dignity for all people. Don't wait, act "HERE" and "NOW" - we are designing the future today, making sure that the UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS can be "touched", "seen" and "felt".

We wish this and we will also act on it
*the Heroes of Storybooks
and their YOUNG and adult AUTHORS*



<https://gainkids.eu/wp/>

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights can be found here

in English <https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/keydocuments/english/universaldeclara1.html>

in Italian <https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/keydocuments/italian/universaldeclara1.html>

in Polish <https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/keydocuments/polish/universaldeclara1.html>

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<https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/keydocuments/portuguese/universaldeclara1.html>

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