ATD Fourth World International Movement
Knowledge Action Commitment Team (CAE)
Education Series | Tapori Madrid Story

Tapori Madrid: Building a Safe and Empowered Group of Children

In recent years, as public debate has focused on addressing the challenges faced by children from working-class backgrounds, ideas have been raised about learning through adaptation, personalisation, and individualisation. ATD Fourth World has conducted several pilot projects using this approach to address the inequalities of access to knowledge among many children living in poverty (e.g., the Ang Galing programme in the Philippines). Through its work with a group of children from the marginalised neighbourhood of Ventilla in Madrid, ATD Fourth World gained valuable insights from its programmes and approaches. They learned that for children living in extreme poverty to develop properly, it is essential to nurture the relationships they build with their peers.

In Madrid, the ATD Fourth World team consistently adapts their work to the individual situations of each family. For example, they developed an educational support program adapted to each child facing difficulties at school. Their method was always to connect these children with a "Tapori[1]" group—a collective of children who support one another. This group of Tapori children in Madrid has the explicit goal of cultivating solidarity among the children, their families, and their neighbours. This was made possible through a series of discussions and activities that enabled the children to know themselves better, assume greater responsibility for one another, and become more aware of the social environment in which they live. The group's unique successes warrant further exploration of the facilitators' expertise in creating a safe and empowering children's collective.

One notable example is the success of Marta, 17, who now leads the Tapori Madrid children's group, having been a member since age 5. When she reflects on her journey today, she says, "Now I feel like a person. [When you live in poverty], people judge you, or you feel judged, and you feel like sh**. Tapori and the children's group helped me feel like a person." It is also the success of Paula, Raquel, and Alma, who, in 2019, at the age of 10, spoke at the UN in New York to highlight the impact of poverty on children. It is Sandra's success, as she demonstrated her abilities to her teacher by speaking about Picasso’s Guernica, a work she had previously studied with her Tapori group. It is also Clara's success, as she now understands that her father is not responsible for her situation and that she does not need to think or make decisions on his behalf in order to protect him.

The stories we want to tell in these pages are of children who, a few years ago, were unable to sit still or listen to instructions. Today, they can express, with lucidity, courage, and dignity, their experiences of growing up in poverty, while remaining united in supporting those who

1 The Tapori international movement brings together children aged 6 to 12, from different cultures and backgrounds, creating spaces where they can speak out, reflect and act together to make the world a better place. For more information: https://www.atd-quartmonde.org/jeunesse/tapori/.

continue to struggle. It is the story of Tapori Ventilla: a group of children learning to reflect on their experiences and take action to change them. It is also about young people learning to channel their anger once they recognise and understand it; children witnessing their parents' participation in spaces where their voices matter for the first time; and mothers gaining confidence as they see their children flourish. Gradually, the children open up, visit museums, debate, create, and make demands. Together, they supported a family facing eviction and advocated for their rights.

In just a few years, the Tapori Ventilla group has become much more than an after-school activity group: it is a space for transformation. The children have learned to work as a team, to name the inequities they experience, and to discover that they are neither alone nor powerless.

However, this story did not begin with success. It has been the result of a long and patient process that continues today, demonstrating that collective action is not a linear path.

Tapori Ventilla (2015-2017)

The creation of a group

In 2015, Volunteer Corps (VC) members from the ATD Fourth World Madrid team decided to stop the Street Library[2] they had been running in the Ventilla neighbourhood. Mariángeles, a mother from the neighbourhood whose two daughters participated in the Street Library, took the initiative to gather a dozen children aged 6 to 7 and create a Tapori group. To facilitate this group, Mariángeles had the help of a VC member and other mothers. She also used the *Tapori Newsletter,* published quarterly by Tapori International[3]. They met every Friday from 6 pm to 8 pm. A year later, Rocío, a VC member, joined the group. She believed that these children should be a priority for the ATD Fourth World Madrid team.

A difficult start

For a year and a half, the children refused to listen to the facilitators. It was almost impossible to carry out an activity from start to finish. Eventually, several mothers attended the weekly meetings. They saw it as an opportunity to get together and talk.

When Rocío joined the Tapori group, she suggested that she and Mariángeles take some time together to get to know one another and discuss the group. Her goal was to help Mariángeles articulate her aspirations for the neighbourhood's children and, together, identify what each could contribute to the group and how they could work more effectively as a team.

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2 The Street Library introduces books, art and other tools of access to knowledge, such as IT, to disadvantaged youth and their families. This activity is accessible to all, as it takes place where they live: outside, in a park, at a square, at a market, on a staircase landing, under a tree, under a streetlamp, in the countryside or in the mountains.

3 Every three months, Tapori International publishes a newsletter addressed to all Tapori groups around the world: this newsletter provides news about the different groups and suggests activities related to a common theme.

Their first goal was to find an activity that would bring all the children together. Since the activities suggested by the *Tapori Newsletter* were ineffective, they tried other techniques—games and arts and crafts—but these did not work either. Rocío recounts:

> *I can't remember a single game we could play together. One child would lose their temper, another one would refuse to play, and another one would want to do something else... So we gave up on games, and I suggested an arts and crafts activity for Christmas since it was December. I brought the materials, something I'd carefully considered... They sat down for five minutes when one of them suddenly said something that annoyed the other, who then destroyed the first kid's project, tearing everything apart, and then the mothers eventually got angry... All week long, I was anxious about going to Ventilla. All week long, it was on my mind. I wondered: what can I do this week to make it work? Why isn't it working? What am I not understanding? What am I missing? I cried on my way there, and I cried when I came home, and I kept thinking, I'm not going to succeed.*

After several months, Rocío had built a relationship with the mothers and explained to them that they were no longer welcome at the activities. Instead, she suggested that they meet up, as most Spaniards do, in a local bar after each meeting. There, rather than standing in the street holding a can of beer, they gradually formed a group of friends, "like everyone else". Rocío wanted to maintain the socialising opportunities offered by the Tapori group, which she felt were important for these mothers. But she also wanted to preserve the children's space: a dedicated, safe and free space where they could speak and be listened to, without being judged. It was a success. The moments spent together allowed the mothers to discuss the neighbourhood, their job searches, the struggles they face as women and mothers, and, above all, create friendships. These moments also enabled Rocío to understand the realities of these women better, build a strong connection with them, and maintain **a regular presence in the neighbourhood and among its residents.**

By the end of the second year, the children were more involved in the activities. Rocío and Mariángeles started reading the *Tapori Newsletter* with them again. Now they knew the children better and could sense when the group's energy was incompatible with the activity. They were also able to improvise and learn what worked or did not work. Rocío explains:

> *The children realised that the games we played were not intended to suppress them. They realised that our aim wasn't to have winners and losers at the expense of others, but to play to have a good time together. We discovered that the children didn't understand the rules of the games, and that scared them. They would rather say that they didn't want to play than risk being singled out.*

From this, the facilitators learned to make sure that everyone understood the rules before starting any game. To do so, they rephrased the rules once, then asked one child to rephrase them again, then another. Gradually, the children discovered they could play very complex games. Rocío adds:

It also allowed us to teach them that listening is necessary to understand certain things. So, we started playing listening games before reading the Tapori Newsletter: 'Today we're going to read the Tapori Newsletter. But first, we're going to play a listening game, and then we'll discuss it. What did this game allow us to do? What did we learn from it?' So, when we were reading the Tapori Newsletter, and they began interrupting each other, we could say: 'What did we learn during the game?' And right away, they understood that the game was for a reason...

Similarly, the facilitators used cooperative games to help the children develop the skills needed to build community. The group's arts and crafts projects or reflections resulted from combining individual efforts. But how could we make them understand that if a personal idea was not retained in the collective decision or discussion, it did not mean that it was worthless? The facilitators organised cooperative games, followed by a discussion about what they had learned. They then applied these lessons in moments of frustration, during collective discussions and decision-making sessions. They could remind them: "What did we learn during this game?" The children would accept it more readily, and the tension would subside.

The activities gradually became more organised. The facilitators introduced recurring elements that brought structure to the sessions: every birthday was celebrated with a get-together, some snacks, a card and a gift; every meeting began with a discussion called "tell us about your week", a time that the children could share what they did between meetings. The facilitators introduced the first rule of communication: during this discussion, children were not allowed to respond with just "good", "bad", or "normal". They had to use complete sentences to tell their story. Once a child responded, they invited another child to speak. If a child responded with only one word, the dialogue would stop for everyone. As a result of this rule, the children began encouraging one another to express themselves more effectively, and the group started self-regulating, thereby inspiring everyone to do better. A second rule was then quickly established: **judging oneself, others, parents, or commenting on another person's contribution was not permitted.**

The following year, the facilitators maintained the same goals: to improve listening and attentiveness, foster reciprocity, and strengthen the group. **They added some explicit rules:**

What applies to one child applies to the whole group. For example, if there aren't enough sweets for everyone, no one gets any.

Everyone should leave the meeting happier than when they arrived. This also applies to Mariángeles and Rocío.

Decisions are made collectively. This fosters group dynamics and gradually defuses any resistance, issues, rivalries, or jealousy among children.

Try to get through the activity together, but do not force it if it is not the right time. If one facilitator believes this is the case, the activity can be adapted or suspended and resumed the following week. If a child does not participate or appears more anxious, the facilitators can ask whether anything is wrong and encourage them to share it with the group. They then turn to the group and ask: 'What can we tell them? How can we support them? What can we do today?' Then everyone collaborates on how to support the child. The Tapori group became a safe space, Marta remembers: "It was a space where I knew I would be supported. I felt it was a space where we were safe from problems. Even problems at home."

Today, when we ask Marta what enabled her to keep attending the meetings, even during the most difficult times or moments of conflict within the group, Marta smiles and says: "The truth? You're not going to like it, Rocío! I went because Rocío made me. Well, she didn't make me... But she insisted."

The facilitators did not use threats or behavioural incentives (the carrot and the stick) to elicit engagement; in this sense, participation was always voluntary. However, it was important for Marta to note that Rocío's insistence encouraged her to participate. For example, she visited Marta at home or called her family to remind her to come. The facilitators did not "give up" on the children; they showed them they were eagerly awaited and important to the group. This aspect of their work is not the one they are most likely to highlight (Marta knows this!). It was the facilitators' ambition and great affection for the children that "made" them come. Reflecting on this, Rocío adds:

> *It's clear that letting them know that they are expected [to be there] is important. But sometimes it was really unbearable; sometimes they mistreated us because of their anger (and I put up with it). Nevertheless, the following week, we insisted that they come; we waited for them again. 'It's okay if you make mistakes sometimes, you are important'. Secondly, we never sent them away when they behaved poorly; we discussed as a group where this anger came from. This anger did not originate from the Tapori group, and we listened and addressed it together.*

Creating community

The facilitators took the children to **all kinds of cultural outings**, outside the neighbourhood. They visited museums and just about every popular temporary exhibition (Frida Kahlo, Van Gogh, Picasso, the world of Tim Burton, etc.). Children in poverty rarely have an opportunity to experience this. As Mariángeles says, "It allowed them to discuss other things, things they've seen or experienced. It allowed them to say, 'No one believes we can do it, but we do it!' Take Sandra, for example, a 10-year-old girl who is looked down upon in class and neglected by her teacher. One day, she arrived at the weekly group meeting with a big smile on her face and said, 'Guess what we studied in class? Picasso's Guernica, and I knew how to explain the painting!' The teacher was blown away.

Visiting places also means putting oneself in the public gaze. The children are stigmatised from the moment they enter the building. There is an apparent mistrust of the staff. A security guard might follow them, and they will feel the weight of people's stares. In situations like

this, children can become truly exasperating. The facilitators ensured the children were protected from stigmatisation by keeping the security guards at bay. They also tried to avoid restraining them too much to prevent outbursts.

Elsa, a VC member who accompanied these outings, explains:

> *Respecting the museum's rules was non-negotiable. For example, it was prohibited to touch any artwork. But museums don't clearly forbid running, playing hide-and-seek, or any other activities that children of this age do. These are unspoken rules, and the children can't understand them. As a facilitator, I had to make a real effort not to be on them and not to try to keep them under too much control because I was afraid they would get out of hand. They often got out of hand because we are too hard on them, which makes them feel stigmatised. It is important to learn to let go and trust the children.*

Mariángeles explains:

> *If we normalise the fact that they can be among others, we must also normalise their right to be children. [...] Going to these exhibitions was not easy. They [the staff] wanted to kick us out almost all the time, but we didn't let them. Those were tense moments.*

Attending these exhibitions was an essential step in establishing the group's identity. It was an opportunity for the children to explore and broaden their horizons, but most importantly, it was a chance to "fight" for their right to exist in society (in a non-violent way, of course!). Ultimately, the children retained fond memories of engaging in various forms of mischief together.

Building trust, engaging parents

Trust was gradually forming, and the children were feeling valued. The facilitators helped change the way children viewed their parents. For example, Clara, a child from the Ventilla group, reported that she couldn't join the next outing because her father couldn't afford it. Mariángeles encouraged her to ask him as a way to restore her father's role as a parent. She recounts:

> *I told her to ask him before assuming he wouldn't pay because parents want to make an effort for their children. If you don't ask him, he can't make the effort. I never thought I would have to say that to a child: 'It's not your role to take care of your family, it's the other way around'. These situations change your perspective. [...] Ultimately, the trip was cancelled, but the father agreed to pay. Trying to change what we think is a real learning process. We must push a little further to see that things can be different. We must change our perspective and remove the many obstacles and prejudices that prevent us from recognising that some things are not possible, when in fact they are. It gives me a lot of hope.*

The mothers could tell their children enjoyed attending the Tapori group. Rocío decided to invite them to join in preparing the Fourth World People's University,[4] an initiative for adults living in extreme poverty. The mothers participated in the preparations whenever they wanted to or could. Since 2017, several of them have been attending the plenary sessions of the People's University and have brought their children. As a result, the team sought to recruit additional facilitators to offer activities for these children, in the same spirit as the Tapori group. This further involved the children, motivating the mothers to attend the People's University. A friendly get-together with a meal was organised after the plenary sessions, giving the mothers and children the chance to "see" one another in a different way. Observing their parents' involvement transformed how children perceived them. They were no longer “struggling” parents. The children saw them connecting with others, talking, thinking, and contributing, and realised that their parents had value and something to offer. They were no longer "parents with problems".

Gradually, the various actions of ATD Fourth World in Madrid became interconnected, all working towards the same goal: changing the lives of those living in poverty and building a movement and a collective struggle.

Building a collective dynamic with the children (2018-2021)

Establishing other Tapori groups — individuals creating community

In 2018, after five years of organising a street library in San Isidro, the VC members established a new Tapori group in the neighbourhood. Children of a Roma community living in poverty participated. Some of them came from families living on the margins of the community, and therefore did not benefit from its shared solidarity.

In September 2020, another Tapori group was created in the *Entrevías* neighbourhood (in the *Puente de Vallecas* district, South-West of central Madrid), in partnership with the social services department of the San Carlos Borromeo parish. The children in this group were welcomed and supported by the parish, along with their families. Most of them were recent immigrants. For the team, it was an opportunity to learn from children with experiences different from those in Ventilla or San Isidro.

In 2021, the team remained focused on reaching the most excluded children and began exploring new disadvantaged communities. They decided to establish themselves in Parla, a working-class town south-west of Madrid. There, they organised weekly Tapori activities in a class at the Rosa Luxembourg school in Parla.

Like in the first group in Ventilla, the facilitators’ goal was to build the group starting from the individuals within it. Elsa, a VC member who helped create the San Isidro group, explains:

4 The Fourth World People's University is an initiative that promotes the development of thinking and knowledge through experience for adults living in extreme poverty. For more information: https://www.atd-fourthworld.org/what-we-do/participation/peoples-university/

We took the time to get to know each child, and what we learned from each of them inspired us in our work with the group. To succeed in building a group, it is crucial to be an active listener, because when children reveal useful things for the group, it can be a very fleeting opportunity. To get to know the children, we decided to work with them on a presentation of their neighbourhood, through their own eyes. We also did some small art projects that gave us a chance to chat while we were together: the children played music and talked about their week. These moments are ideal opportunities to observe the dynamics at play: who generates ideas, who takes initiative, and who doesn't follow through with their arguments. For example, one of the children in the group, José, was very shy. His mother told me that he was being bullied at school. I wanted him to be able to speak up and feel proud of himself. I needed the group to encourage José to speak in public. The children prepared questions to interview people in the neighbourhood. The interviews were done in pairs (we assigned the pairs): I paired him with the oldest girl in the group, who was the most dynamic and the most attentive to others. Thanks to her, José was able to ask a question himself during the interviews. It may not seem like much, but for him it was a big deal.

We got to know the children through their view of the neighbourhood. For example, they didn't interview any non-Roma Spaniards. We kept that in mind, so we could bring up the subject later, when the time was right. Another example is our discussion of school after the COVID-19 pandemic. I asked them whether they got along well with the non-Roma Spanish children or stayed among themselves. José said that the other children made fun of him. Two other children in the group reported seeing children teasing others. It was a perfect opportunity for group reflection: "How can we help each other at school? And how can we keep working on this together after school?" In facilitating, it is crucial always to be paying close attention to maintain the connection between the individual and the collective."

For Rocío as well, the active listening and the attention mentioned by Elsa are crucial when working with children. After years of facilitating, Rocío has learned that the essence of working with children is about "supporting them as they grow". "As part of a collective, children need to be supported differently from adults. You need to give yourself the time to really get to know who they are." For Rocío, the facilitators' work is about creating a group where the children can feel supported and safe enough to be themselves. She makes a great effort to give children the freedom to be and become who they want to be, **without being assigned a fixed identity by the facilitators, the group, or even themselves**. She explains:

Working with children means working hard not to label them. I think it's much more difficult than with adults. For example, you know that this one child is going to bother you all the time... It isn't easy to interact with them without labelling them. It is also difficult to facilitate knowing that they are going to bother you, but you're not

going to allow yourself to label them. You can't let them have this label because they already have it elsewhere.

In practical terms, the facilitators offer children multiple opportunities to reflect together, creating new activities each time to generate and nurture discussion. They want to give children the chance **to learn to express their ideas, to exercise the right to disagree, to think differently, and to change their minds.**

For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the team supported Tapori children's distance learning and noticed that school was a significant source of distress for them. To better understand this and identify potential solutions with them, the facilitators suggested the following activity: each child received a star in a different colour from the other children and could choose an emoji to affix to the centre of the star to express the emotion the school brought up for them. Each child shared their feelings with the group, and the children offered ideas, reflections, or "solutions". They wrote it on one of the branches of their star, cut it out, and stuck it onto the star of the child speaking. The facilitators were astonished by the range of emotions triggered by school. Some of them created debates: one little girl said that, for her, school is joy. Some got angry and refused to give her advice. They said, "You're useless, that's impossible. There's no way we're giving you anything because you're wrong..." The facilitators asked the group to think about the little girl's feelings, and to reflect on what could bring her joy at school, just like they did for everybody else. They really struggled to get the children to give her a branch of their star "without any negative comment". One of them added, "Come on, let's give her something because she's little. Give her some time, and she'll change her mind." This comment really saddened the facilitators. Rocío thought: "Damn it, they already know that in a few years, she'll think just like them..." And sure enough, just a few years later, the same girl stated that school was a nightmare... Rocío concluded: "Children already know how to read their reality—they know it, even if they don't understand it yet."

From this example, Rocío learned valuable practical lessons about facilitating a group of children. She stresses that activities developed from insights shared by children require particular care. "We are getting to know people who are growing, developing, and changing. When we reflect with children, we need to implement safeguards. On the one hand, we may end up placing a fixed image on a child that we made up at a given moment (a "label"). On the other hand, we may jump too quickly on something they said, and we may develop a whole project based on that, at the cost of unconsciously exploiting the children. Our goal is not to *build projects around children*, like good socio-cultural students seeking to put the principles of co-construction into practice; our goal is for that child, right now, to grow up in the best possible way. Rocio explains:

You shouldn't take children's words at face value or use them to your advantage. That is to say, you have to take all the children's words, everything they say, everything they may have learned, and let them be, let them be, let them be, and see how they develop, before deciding what is best for them to work on. [...] I could take a single sentence from a child and build an entire project around it, but if I cling to those words, if I guide the children based on those words alone, then I won't have the patience or the interest to learn who they are and what they

need. When working with children, perhaps we need to create, create, and create before we can truly understand what we are learning from them. Because otherwise we end up restricting them, in a way.

Thus, in the spirit of the Tapori Ventilla group, each Tapori group in Madrid took the time to develop and define itself. The aim was to give all the children the opportunity to meet together. In 2021 and thereafter, this became a reality: the team began gathering all the Tapori groups in Madrid twice a year for a shared day. These gatherings allowed the children to get to know one another, feel part of something larger, and develop as active members of the Tapori collective and ATD Fourth World.

Speaking at the United Nations

While more groups were forming, Tapori Ventilla was entering a new phase: public speaking, developed collectively. In 2019, Tapori children in Madrid focused on the theme of children's rights to mark the World Day for Overcoming Poverty on 17 October. The Tapori group from Ventilla was invited to take part in the event at the United Nations headquarters in New York. Three young girls represented the group at the commemoration and addressed an audience of officials and ATD Fourth World partners.[5]

Meanwhile, in Madrid, their families and the rest of the group watched the event on a large screen in a café among other customers. It was a moment of shared pride and emotion. By working together to write their contribution, the children gradually developed self-awareness. They came to understand the importance of reflecting on their daily experiences—the injustices they face, as well as the resilience and courage their living conditions demand of them and their families. For Mariángeles, this is fundamental; the group has reached a new milestone: "The fact that three Tapori children spoke at the UN changes everything. They built this testimony together, and it changed their lives. They learned how to speak about their experiences without exposing themselves." The three girls represented the entire group.

The transformative experience of summer camp

Beginning in 2019, several children had the opportunity to participate in a ten-day summer camp organised by the ATD Fourth World team. The invitation was extended to Tapori groups **and to other children from diverse backgrounds**. For many Tapori children, it was their first time away from their families or taking part in a group holiday. The team provided support to the mothers and children, helping them feel confident enough to participate. Without this gentle encouragement, many of them would never have dared to go.

These moments were filled with joy, games, and the quiet presence of nature. It provided a space where children could interact with peers they had never met and step outside the roles they usually played in their neighbourhood. But it's not all simple: the facilitators have to do a

5 For more information and to read their presentation: https://www.atd-fourthworld.org/children-from-madrid-speak-about-poverty-at-the-united-nations-in-new-york/

great deal of work within themselves to truly support the children, to give them the freedom to be different, and to define who they want to be in front of people who know nothing of their daily lives. It is an exercise in shared vigilance to give the children freedom without letting them "run wild"—especially when, halfway through the stay, they suddenly realise that the camp will eventually come to an end. At that point, the facilitators must be highly attentive: one child may be on the verge of falling ill, and another may be so overwhelmed that they could "lose their temper and lash out".

Meetings were held daily and the facilitators had an opportunity to discuss their experiences together—for some, this was their first time in this role. For those who had previously been involved in Tapori activities, this deepened their understanding of the children.

The birth of a youth movement

From 2019 onwards, a question began to weigh on the Madrid team: what kind of collective space could they offer to the older children in the group, beyond the neighbourhood gangs, sometimes associated with drug trafficking? The team decided to create a youth group that would help everyone find their place and feel a sense of belonging. The group was led by three team members, two of whom got to know several teenagers during a summer camp the previous year. The first year was full of trial and error. Getting a new programme off the ground is slow and difficult. The teenagers were leaving childhood behind, and the familiar markers of the Tapori group (the facilitators, the collective, the rhythm, and the dynamic) no longer worked for them.

As with the participation of the Tapori children’s mothers in the People’s Universities, the creation of the youth group was part of a gradual, collective process developed with the children and for them. This process led to the progressive expansion of programmes, each supporting or creating the next: new Tapori groups, Fourth World People’s Universities, summer camps, youth groups, and the creation and support of new forms of involvement.

The challenges of building a collective dynamic

Before the weekly Tapori group meetings

Every two months, the facilitators from all Tapori groups in Madrid prepared a joint project based on the theme featured in the Tapori Newsletter. They identified common goals for the children, and each group then imagined activities tailored to the children's experiences. This preparation took time and required constant adjustment. Success depends on many factors: the group’s energy, the children's experiences, the atmosphere in the neighbourhood, and also the facilitators’ own energy. The programme then became a shared framework that enabled everyone to move forward together.

After the Tapori meetings

Following each meeting, facilitators took the time to document their observations. This ongoing evaluation was enriched through exchanges within the entire team, including facilitators involved in other ATD Fourth World programmes such as the People’s Universities.

This allowed everyone to take a step back and gain perspective, and the young facilitators learned to plan programmes and reinforce coherence across all initiatives. The evaluation process was ongoing and largely informal.

In discussing the importance of programme coordination, María, a young facilitator in the group, highlights the role of knowledge: the personal knowledge of children and young people, their experiences of extreme poverty, and the actions undertaken to end it:

ATD Fourth World's approach is to build knowledge collaboratively as a team. [...] Often, several members of the team work with the whole family. Within the [entire] team, knowledge is shared. This shared understanding enables us to connect all the different programmes, and this is where you find a fuller sense of what you are experiencing.

At the heart of the collective action approach is collaboration and the shared knowledge it fosters. It is about creating programmes that avoid isolating children and instead involve their parents and the other adults in their lives.

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Tapori children as active participants (2021-2022)

The programmes that emerged and expanded within the Tapori group reinforced one another. It provided Tapori children with opportunities to meet other children and young people from different neighbourhoods and backgrounds in Spain and across Europe, as well as the adults participating in the People's Universities… By opening themselves to these experiences, recognising themselves among their peers, learning to think alongside others, and discovering different ways of living, the children came to know themselves better and, as a result, to take greater control of their lives, both individually and collectively.

Regaining control by understanding injustice and the meaning behind one's anger

When asked to share an experience that was particularly important for her in Tapori, Marta describes a moment of realisation during a trip to meet other Tapori groups in Switzerland. During this trip, the young people were prohibited from smoking. She and another young person couldn't cope with the frustration of not having cigarettes; they ended up getting into a fight and ruining the trip. Marta explains, "Something suddenly clicked. I said to myself: 'Sh***! We're having a good time on this trip, surrounded by people we love, and we're about to ruin everything for a cigarette? We're crazy... [...] Damn it, Marta, if you fight with him, if you fight with whomever, you'll always end up in conflict with someone, so change, and that's it."

According to Rocío, Marta understood that what she was going through—or had gone through — had taken away her ability to enjoy things, leaving her with an impulse to destroy everything when she felt insecure. Being part of a group (Tapori and the youth group) and having many discussions—sometimes even arguments—within a climate of trust helps young people understand that they must resolve their conflicts in ways other than violence.

Over her years of involvement in the Tapori group and the youth group, Marta has come to realise that she is not the only one living in the situation of extreme poverty:

> *Realising that it's not just our neighbourhood... When you're a child, you think your neighbourhood is worthless, that it's the worst place in the world. But by taking part in ATD, you discover that there are other neighbourhoods where people experience the same things as you. Realising that there are neighbourhoods like yours all over the world changes the way you look at your own neighbourhood, and you start to see the people who live there differently, saying to yourself: 'It can't be our fault if this is happening everywhere, can it?' I must, and I can change the way I am and act so as to inspire change in the future. I must make my mother proud, and I am proud of her. I want to be able to tell her: 'Now you don't have to suffer economically or socially, I'll take care of it*'.

Learning together to transform destructive anger into a peaceful collective struggle

Tapori's work in Madrid involved resistance. Maríangeles explains how activism was developed and passed on within the Ventilla group:

> *At Tapori, we became rebels and were outspoken. We raised awareness of the European Social Charter. Whenever there was talk of minimum income or when a family was threatened with eviction, we made banners. Whenever a mother had a problem, we drew up a list of demands. The struggle, being engaged in a struggle, and when [the children] came [to the group] full of anger, [we tried to help them understand]: 'you are feeling this anger because you are feeling powerless and you need to work on that, but resisting is something else, resisting must be calm'.*

Participating in ATD Fourth World research

In 2021, as part of a research project conducted with the Merging of Knowledge[6] approach on extreme poverty and the keys to ending its reproduction from generation to generation,[7] the children in the Tapori groups reflected on this legacy passed on by their families—both its positive and negative aspects—and on how it shapes each child's relationship with themselves and with the world. To help them think about their own experience and "understand their reality", the team of facilitators strived to prevent the discussion from becoming abstract or general. Rocío explains how:

> *You ask a child for their opinion, but you limit the scope of their answer. [If they start giving an opinion about things they haven't experienced], you say: 'No, wait. What are we talking about here? What would your friends, your family, or your classmates say? We have to get used to talking about what we know, because*

6 To learn more about the Merging of Knowledge methodology and the practices developed by the ATD Fourth World: https://www.atd-quartmonde.org/nos-actions/penser-agir-ensemble/croisement-des-savoirs/.

7 For more information (only available in Spanish): https://atdcuartomundo.es/2024/03/14/romper-con-la-herencia-de-la-extrema-pobreza/

> *that's where we can make a difference. If it's far away, you can't do anything about it.' In other words, you guide them to think, beginning with their own surroundings or places they know. And that makes them reflect on what they are experiencing.*

This guided collective reflection gradually introduced the children to the nature of ATD Fourth World's work against extreme poverty and helped them become aware of how society views them.

Rocío explains, *If we believe that children can be the builders of our movement, then we must prepare them for it. They need to understand ATD's research, recognise injustice, and learn to understand their own reality. And they need to learn that this reality is not isolated—it belongs to a society that holds its own views of them. In Tapori, we work on being with others, on identity, on listening, and on expression: having an opinion, voicing disagreement, expressing emotions, and anger. But all of it is done in conjunction with families: ATD's invitation is collective; we never isolate children and their parents from their problems. We open things up to the collective.*

The team aims to help both the children and the young people realise that they are responsible for one another and are already capable of living in a community. As a new creation, the collective is more than the sum of its members; for as long as it exists, each person is partly freed from what weighs on them.

It is the crucible of empowerment and emancipation. The conscious solidarity fostered among young people is the result of the patient construction of this collective. It becomes a source from which to draw momentum and strength to build their lives freely, as Marta explains: "We are a group that we have built ourselves, and we love one another. We trust each other. We are a family."