Play for Inclusion

A handbook for non-formal services supporting young refugee children and families

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International Child Development Initiatives

Škola Dokorán

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Acknowledgments

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For more information about the TOY for Inclusion Play Hubs and how they are supporting refugee children and families, please visit: www.toy4inclusion.eu

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Table of contents

Part 1 - Introduction

Overview _____ page 4
Purpose and scope of the Handboo k _____ page 6
Target audience _____ page 7
How to use the handbook _____ page 8

Part 2 - Psychosocial Wellbeing

Children's needs are universal _____page 9
The Social Ecological Model _____ page 10
Response to stress _____page 11
Adversity _____ page 12
Threats to healthy development _____page 13
Children need safety, stability and nurturance _____ page 14
Nurturing a child’s resilience _____ page 15
Creating a sense of belonging _____page 16
Importance of routine _____page 18
Supporting caregivers _____ page 21
Caring for the helpers _____page 24
Additional Resources _____page 25

Table of contents

Part 3 - Non-formal ECD Services

How NFE supports social inclusion of refugee and displaced children _____ page 26
Three approaches to education _____page 27
A bridge from home to formal schooling _____page 28
Intersectoral, flexible and contextual _____page 29
Quality of NFE _____page 30
Arts, music and culture in NFE _____page 31
NFE, intercultural dialogue and social inclusion _____page 32
Play Hubs for refugee and displaced children and their benefits _____ page 33
Additional resources _____page 35

Part 4 - Play Across Generations and Culture

Intergenerational learning _____page 36
Path to social inclusion _____page 37
Who is involved in organizing Intergenerational Learning activities?_____page 38
Skills and knowledge of intergenerational learning's facilitator _____page 39
Benefits of intergenerational learning _____page 40
Additional resources _____page 41

References _____page 42

Part 1 - Introduction

Play for Inclusion - A handbook for non-formal services supporting young refugee children and families

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INTRODUCTION

Overview

To date (August 2022) more than 13 million people have fled their homes since Russia's invasion of Ukraine (UNHCR, 2022). More than 5 million have left for neighboring countries, while 8 million people are thought to be displaced inside Ukraine itself. Children make up half of all refugees from the war in Ukraine, and have arrived mostly in Poland, Romania, Moldova, Hungary, Slovakia and the Czech Republic.

Worldwide, over 1 billion children live in areas affected by conflict and high levels of violence.

Children and women are bearing the most adverse consequences of the war. According to UNICEF (2022), refugee children need enhanced protection, as they run a bigger risk of falling victim to trafficking and exploitation. Emergency settings pose a multitude of risks to young children and their families and can have adverse effects on young children's development.

A growing body of evidence (ISSA 2020) is showing that combination of poor health, adverse childhood experiences, toxic stress, parental depression, and the lack of a stimulating early learning environment essentially contribute to lifelong poorer outcomes for physical and mental health and achievement of children, while a safe, nurturing, responsive, stimulating, and predictable environment can contribute significantly to resiliency and better outcomes for every child.

INTRODUCTION

Numerous reports are stating that one of the promising practices and policies to support young refugee children and their families is providing support for Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) programmes and services (Ereki-Stevens et al, 2022). The best way to do it is to build their capacity to meet the needs of children from refugee and asylum seekers families by expanding service slot, language support and tailored workforce training.

In both regular and emergency settings, quality early childhood foundations can help ensure a smooth transition to primary school, a better chance of completing basic education, and a route out of poverty and disadvantage. Through positive influences on learning achievement, skills acquisition, and health outcomes, Early Childhood Development (ECD) interventions provide a pathway to the eradication of extreme poverty—a primary goal of the Sustainable Development Goals. It is also widely acknowledged that investing in early childhood interventions is more effective and less costly than investing in remedial interventions at later points in time (Lynch et al, 2015).

PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THE HANDBOOK

This handbook has been developed by International Child Development Initiatives - ICDI in the context of supporting refugee children affected by Russia's military invasion in Ukraine (2022). It is comprised of original material produced by ICDI as well as the adaptation of existing materials produced by other organizations. The handbook was developed in partnership with Slovak based NGO Škola dokorán – Wide Open School n. o. with financial support from UNICEF (Slovakia) and the European Programme for Integration and Migration - EPIM, in the context of the programme 'TOY for Inclusion' and its Play Hubs.

The TOY for Inclusion Play Hubs are community-based inclusive non formal educational spaces for children and families. They especially make sure to include and engage young children (0-10 years old) from vulnerable, minority groups and growing up in difficult circumstances. Play Hubs are a great asset for children to heal from trauma and for families to settle in the the hosting country.

There are currently 23 Play Hubs and 3 mobile Play Hubs in 7 EU countries.

6 Play Hubs and one Mobile Play Hubs have been opened in Slovakia in 2022 in cooperation with UNICEF as a response to the refugee crisis.

Play Hubs are designed, run and monitored by a Local Action Team (LAT). This is a group composed by representatives of education, social and health services together with local authorities, cultural organisations, associations representing minority groups or parents. The LAT is a concrete form of local integration of services and makes sure that the Play Hub becomes a front-line one-stop-shop for children and families.

PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THE HANDBOOK

The main purpose of the Handbook is to support and inform the work of as well as provide practical tools and materials to ECD practitioners working in the Play Hubs, and more in general to any ECD practitioner engaged in play-based learning activities with war affected young children in formal, non-formal and informal education settings. The information and materials provided in this Handbook focus on play, learning and development in the first 10 years of a child's life. Attention is also given to their social integration and psychosocial well-being in the context of forced displacement in a foreign country.

TARGET AUDIENCE

This Handbook intends to provide the right amount of theoretical background, practical tips and activities to civil society organisations, educators, community development workers, mediators, ECEC and preschool practitioners, school teachers, teaching assistants, play workers and volunteers, members of the Local Action Team (LAT) and the Play Hub staff. The Handbook can be independently used by the target audience.

The contents of this Handbook are applicable to any non-formal ECEC setting which is interested in supporting play-based learning, strengthening intersectoral cooperation between services and building stronger connections between services and families. The focus is on providing engaging, inclusive, and safe spaces, and early interventions with special attention to refugee and migrant children. However, all activities proposed are designed to include children of all backgrounds and needs. Even if the Play Hub is a non-formal education space, it plays an important role in inspiring formal education and encouraging children in their learning pathways. For this reason, the Handbook also provides easy-to-use and easy-to-adapt activities that teachers and assistants can use in their classrooms.

HOW TO USE THE HANDBOOK?

The handbook is organised in five parts:

1 **Part One:**
Overview and introduction.

2 **Part Two:**
Psychosocial well-being of refugee children and families.

3 **Part Three:**
Non-formal ECD services.

4 **Part Four:**
Play across generations and cultures.

5 **Part Five:**
Activity Cards.

- Part One through Three of the Handbook are intended for civil society organisations, trainers, mentors and ECD practitioners. These sections provide important background theory on the effects of war, displacement and trauma on child development and well-being, the concept of community-based child-friendly spaces - Play Hubs, as well as an overview of non-formal ECD services in emergencies.
- Part Four presents the benefits of intergenerational learning for young and old, with particular attention to social inclusion.
- Part Five provides an easy-to-use selection of simple activities that can be organised in Play Hubs and other non-formal and informal education settings involving children, parents and other family members.

Part 2 - Psychosocial wellbeing

Psychosocial wellbeing of children and their families in times of adversity

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CHILDREN NEEDS ARE UNIVERSAL

All children have the same cognitive needs (such as learning relevant knowledge, skills, and values), emotional needs (such as nurturing, trusting, and protective relationships), physical needs (such as protective physical environments, and good nutrition), moral needs (such as ethical and moral behaviours, that are socially and culturally appropriate), and social needs (such as developing a cultural identity and feeling part of a community).

A holistic approach to child development pays attention to this range of needs and their interconnectedness (mind, body, and spirit of a child), independently of a child's culture, gender, age, or socioeconomic background.

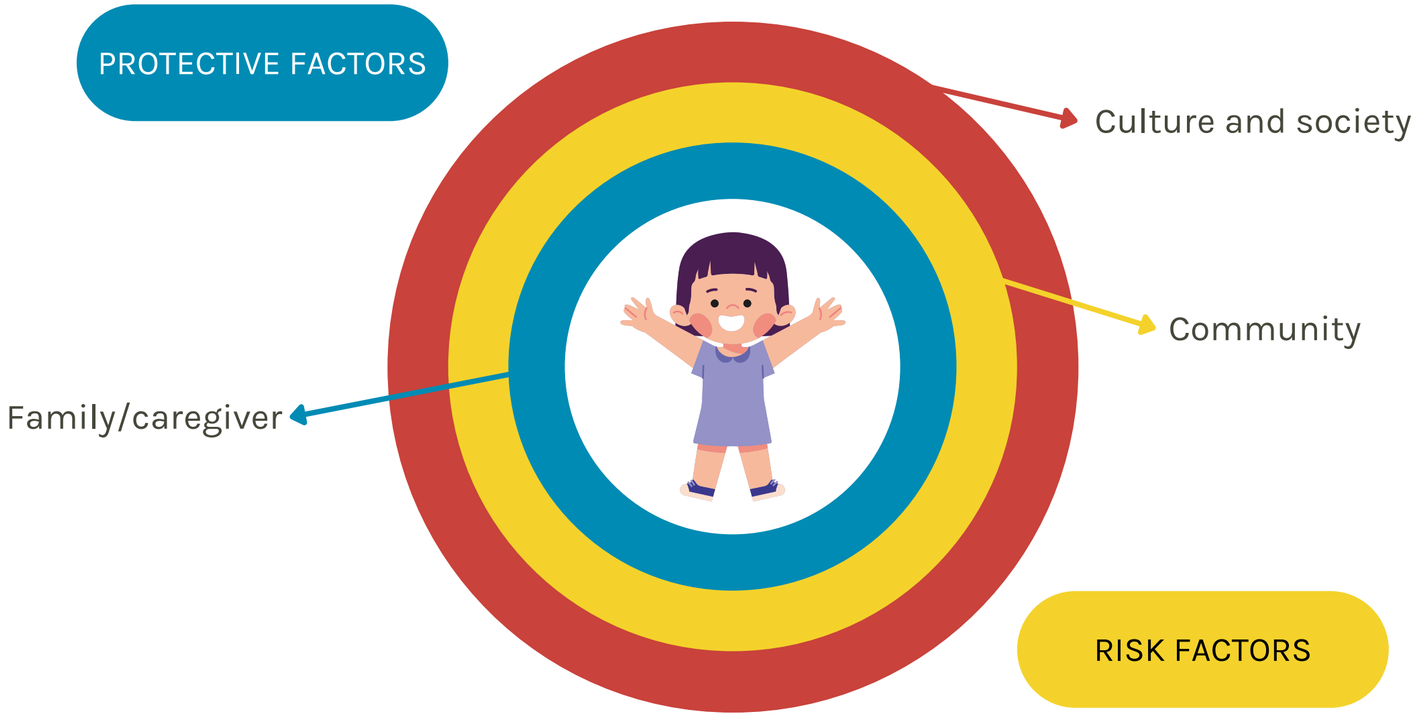
The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) states that the basic human rights of children are the right to survival, the right to develop to the fullest, the right to protection from harmful influences, abuse and exploitation and the right to participate fully in family, cultural and social life.

Tips to engage with children following a holistic approach:

- Create an engaging and inviting environment.
- Identify the child's interests.
- Build strong and trusting relationships.
- Ask open-ended questions.

THE SOCIAL ECOLOGICAL MODEL

The development and well-being of children depends on multiple and inter-related factors, including family, community, sociocultural and political influences, as well as the structures and services surrounding them. The social ecological model (Bronfenbrenner, 1974) illustrates this interconnectedness and its importance for fostering and safeguarding children's wellbeing and optimal development, being it children's learning, protection, social and practical needs, belonging and identity, or their recovery from critical events.



RESPONSE TO STRESS

In response to their adverse situation, refugee children and their families might experience many different feelings. They might feel strong emotions, such as grief, anger, and sadness. They might experience fear and many worries and have nightmares and other sleep difficulties. Confusion, distress, and feelings of being overwhelmed are also common responses. There are no rules to the range of psychological responses and how these can impact their functioning.

IT IS IMPORTANT TO KEEP IN MIND THESE ARE ALL NATURAL REACTIONS TO ABNORMAL SITUATIONS.

Examples of Children's Behaviour in Response to Stress

Children from birth to 3 years	Children from 3 to 6 years	Children from 6 to 8 years
• child becomes irritable and restless • child becomes unresponsive or withdraws from external stimuli • child clings excessively to the caregiver	• child becomes aggressive and fearful • child regresses to past behaviors (e.g., bed wetting) • child plays out events of violence	• child experiences self-guilt • child plays out distressing events • child socially withdraws

from Early Childhood Development in Emergencies. Integrated programme guide (UNICEF, 2014)

For a refugee child and their family, their well-being is affected by several interconnected and overlapping internal and external stressors. While an internal stressor (e.g., anger, fear of failing as a parent, shame, uncertainty) is related to our own feelings and expectations, an external factor (e.g., lack of income, no access to services, homelessness) comes from the environment and the events around us. The capacity to respond to and deal with external stressors is affected by the capacity to deal with internal stressors and vice-versa.

ADVERSITY

Challenges faced by refugee families:

1. Reconnecting with their strengths and capacities.
2. Relaxing and enjoying parenting even under challenging circumstances.
3. Care for children and self-care (physical and psychological).
4. Confusing experience of being a parent in a new challenging environment.
5. Loss and stress – difficulties in dealing with them.

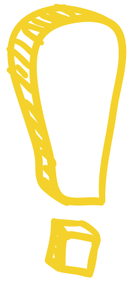
from Building bridges – Bridging the gap: Guidebook for kindergarten teachers working in refugee camps (ISSA, 2020)

Adversity, such as disasters and conflicts, have an influence in a child's wellbeing and can promote feelings of helplessness and hopelessness, hindering a child's ability to understand the world around them. One important part of healthy development includes building adequate coping strategies for dealing with adversity. A child can develop this capacity with the support of the adults in their lives, who play an important role in buffering the child's stress responses.

A child's capacity to deal with adversity is, therefore, dependent on their developed coping mechanisms and the degree of resilience they have fostered within, which is influenced by several factors, such as their attachment with caregivers, and the quality of the services and structures surrounding them.

THREATS TO HEALTHY DEVELOPMENT

The healthy development of a child can be affected by excessive or prolonged activation of stress responses, such as those brought on as consequence of their refugee status. This toxic stress can have detrimental effects on a child's learning, health, and behaviour.



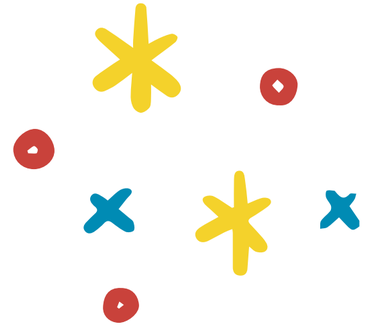
Attention should be given to the fact that caregivers are also affected by adversity, which impacts their ability to offer safety and stability to their children. Promoting the wellbeing of caregivers should be part of the focus when working with refugee children and families, so that caregivers can provide safety, stability, and normalcy to children, which is essential to ensure optimal development following adversity.

> **"In emergency situations, the presence of a stable adult caregiver aids children's feeling of wellbeing, and re-establishing routines boosts their coping ability and recovery."**

Guidelines on MHPS in humanitarian settings (WHO, 2018)

To help a child build their resilience and to foster their development even in the face of adversity, all young children should be provided with:

- secure, stable, and nurturing care,
- a secure and supportive social system,
- opportunities to play and explore their environments.



CHILDREN NEED SAFETY, STABILITY, AND NURTURANCE

According to the Guidelines on MHPS in humanitarian settings (WHO, 2018), effective intervention strategies with children and their families work to reduce risks and strengthen protective factors, providing them with safety, stability, and nurturance.

SAFETY
The extent to which a child is secure and free from fear and harm (both physical and psychological) in their relationships and their physical environment.

STABILITY
The degree of predictability and consistency in their social, emotional and physical environments.

NURTURING
The extent to which parents and caregivers are available and able to meet the needs of children and adolescents sensitively and consistently.

ECD services, such as Play Hubs, can give children a sense of routine and participation. These services should focus on fostering basic skills through joyful and creative activities while making enough room for free play, which can be a powerful tool in enabling the child to feel a sense of normalcy and order. This approach encourages children's agency and fosters resilience.

"As practitioners, we must strive to appreciate each child and caregiver's uniqueness and work with taking the time to build relationships and understand their unique needs."

from Building bridges – Bridging the gap: Guidebook for kindergarten teachers working in refugee camps (ISSA, 2020)

NURTURING A CHILD'S RESILIENCE

One essential way to foster a child's resilience is to offer the child activities that promote a stable and positive attachment between the child and the child's caregiver(s), and activities that develop a child's self-esteem, self-regulation, and coping skills.

ASSESS	SELF-ESTEEM	ACTIVITIES	STRATEGIES
Pay attention: is the child feeling challenged and/or not participating in an activity? Connect with the child and check what has happened and how they are feeling. Challenge the child to keep trying, while praising their efforts.	Work with the child in their self-esteem. Use praise and encouragement to boost their confidence while enabling them to see their own strenghts. Remind the child that determination is important; you can include stories that involve characters who have achieved things through determination.	You can pick daily or weekly themes related to resilience and incorporate these subjects within the activities developed during that time. Suggested subjects: empathy, persistence, patience, determination, aspiration, supporting others, and kindness.	Remind the child of the different strategies he/she can use to deal with challenges (e.g., asking for support from a friend). Remember to model how you use the strategy (e.g., ask the child to help you in organizing activities and share with them your gratitude on how supported you felt by her/him).

from Building bridges – Bridging the gap: Guidebook for kindergarten teachers working in refugee camps (ISSA, 2020)

CREATING A SENSE OF BELONGING

One of the main struggles of becoming a refugee is the feeling of “loss of place”. Every day traditional support structures such as extended family and community networks are lost, and there is a need to engage with stable environments and to belong within a community.
The loss of structure may impact children’s self-efficacy, their feelings of connectedness, as well as their sense of safety and hope. Additionally, loss or separation bring about feelings of uncertainty and powerlessness.

BELONGING IS AN INDISPENSABLE FEATURE OF A CHILD’S WELLBEING.
IT SUPPORTS RESILIENCE BUILDING AND PROMOTES SOCIAL INTEGRATION AND PARTICIPATION.

> CHILDREN WHO FACED AND ARE STILL FACING EXTENSIVE TOXIC STRESS, SHOULD FIND COMFORT AND SUPPORT FROM CARING STAFF AS A REGULAR ROUTINE, AND SHOULD ENGAGE IN INTERESTING AND EXCITING ART, CREATIVE AND LEARNING ACTIVITIES IN A PEER GROUP.

from Building bridges – Bridging the gap: Guidebook for kindergarten teachers working in refugee camps (ISSA, 2020)

Participating in meaningful activities and interacting with others in a child friendly space can reduce stress and contribute to a sense of belonging.

Create spaces where all children feel:

- welcome.
- they belong to the space.
- accepted and respected.

PROMOTING A SENSE OF BELONGING DOESN'T JUST HAPPEN. IT TAKES TIME AND EFFORT TO GROW.

When we talk about inclusive spaces, often what we mean is creating a space where more people can feel like they belong. Fitting in takes a lot of energy from an individual. Belonging, in contrast, may take special effort from the community, but it requires less energy from the individual.

TIPS ON HOW YOU CAN PROMOTE A SENSE OF BELONGING

- Introduce yourself and make it personal.
- Be positive, supportive, and communicative.
- Get to know the families and greet children and caregivers by their name.
- Make the spaces feel homely.
- Foster interactions: involve the whole family, offer group work, encourage exchanges between families.
- Let the environment and activities reflect the work and ideas of children.

from Building bridges – Bridging the gap: Guidebook for kindergarten teachers working in refugee camps (ISSA, 2020)

Sports, cultural and other activities can engage children, their families and the larger community, restoring a sense of belonging and promoting healing and recovery.

IMPORTANCE OF ROUTINE

For refugee children, there can be a high level of uncertainty and lack of clarity of what will happen to them and their families. Routine becomes vital. Children feel more confident and secure when following predictable and familiar daily activities. Schedules and routines help children feel in control of their environment. A consistent daily routine, with regular times for eating, sleeping, playing and participating in activities gives children a sense of stability and security.

TO INCREASE CHILDREN'S RESILIENCE AND TO FOSTER BETTER OUTCOMES, IT IS IMPORTANT TO PROMOTE A NURTURING, SAFE, STIMULATING, PREDICTABLE AND RESPONSIVE ENVIRONMENT.

It is essential for children to:

- Feel in control of their environment;
- Feel safe, secure, and comfortable;
- Know what is happening now and what comes next;
- Being familiar with an activity or task.

TIPS ON HOW TO MAKE AN ACCESSIBLE WEEKLY SCHEDULE

- Make it with children;
- Use drawings and icons;
- Do it multilingual;
- Make the schedule on a magnetic board or a felt sheet;
- Hang it on the wall;
- Create movable activity cards and use velcro to be able to move activities on the schedule;
- Update schedule weekly;
- Create a box where children can post ideas for new activities, etc.

WEEKLY SCHEDULE - EXAMPLE

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
9:30 welcome song	9:30 welcome song	9:30 welcome song	9:30 welcome song	9:30 welcome song	
	9:45 moving exercise		9:45 moving exercise		
14:00 walk outside		14:00 walk outside		14:30 dance friday	
	15:30 Language puppet		15:30 Language puppet		
17:00 see you soon song	17:00 see you soon song	17:00 see you soon song	17:00 see you soon song	17:00 see you soon song	

WEEKLY SCHEDULE - TEMPLATE

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday

SUPPORTING CAREGIVERS

EMPATHY

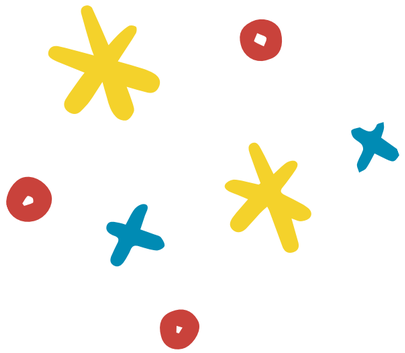
Remember that caregivers are dealing with their own stress and might have difficulty being there for their child. Being a caregiver is stressful even in normal circumstances. Help them understand they are not alone and that their difficulties are a natural response to the challenges they are facing.

PATIENCE

Acknowledge that some caregivers need time to build trust. Take the initiative to talk with them and show interest in the children and them. Give advice, but do not force your opinion.

TRANSPARENCY

Create a space where families can meet and feel accepted and welcomed. Introduce rules which include confidentiality, a non-biased approach, and mutual respect. Make sure your language and communication style is appropriate. Ensure you have clear and equal boundaries with all families. Avoid comparing families and focus equally on all caregivers.



POSITIVE

Use positive language that encourages families and does not make them feel guilty. Praise their efforts and what they are doing for their children. Share the child's progress and celebrate it because it might make make the caregivers feel proud.

COMMUNITY BUILDING

Create fun activities and events to help parents meet other parents and feel supported

from Building bridges – Bridging the gap: Guidebook for kindergarten teachers working in refugee camps (ISSA, 2020)

SUPPORTING CAREGIVERS

MINDFULNESS

Share with the families mindfulness practices used with children.

INVOLVE

Some families might feel empowered when you give them a chance to do things and contribute to your work with children. Talk with caregivers about their strenghts and interests and try to use this to inform them of activities, e.g., as them to come to the Play Hub and teach children some skills, tell them stories, or do some crafts.

from Building bridges – Bridging the gap: Guidebook for kindergarten teachers working in refugee camps (ISSA, 2020)

You can help refugee parents manage their stress levels and feel supported in their parenting role by being there for them and by offering a supportive and friendly environment where they feel listened to and comfortable to express their concerns, while having the opportunity to play and be present with their children.

from Building bridges – Bridging the gap: Guidebook for kindergarten teachers working in refugee camps (ISSA, 2020)

IN SUMMARY

- Support parents and caregivers in their critical role for children. Provide information, discuss and resolve problems along with them and their children. Do not make decisions for them.
- Listen, have patience and avoid getting upset with children. Remember their particularly vulnerable emotional state.
- Be careful about what you promise. Only say what you know with certainty to be true.
- Hugs and touch can be comforting for children. However, be careful how you use them. The most loving and best-intentioned touch may be experienced as intimidating, intrusive, or invasive.
- Do not in any way imply that, just because other children went through similar experiences, this should/would lessen the difficult emotions on this child.
- Maintain a non-judgmental attitude in the face of neglect or abuse.
- Do not forget to take care of yourself as a helper.

from MHPS for Families at the US-Mexico Border (UNICEF, 2020).

CARING FOR THE HELPERS

Effectively helping others requires a genuine desire to help, as well as empathy and openness. Your contribution will be most effective when you take the time to consider the psychosocial impact of your actions.

10 SIGNS OF STRESS

1. Headaches, muscle tension, exhaustion;
2. Changes in eating or sleeping habits;
3. Lack of concentration;
4. Tendency to isolate yourself;
5. Difficulty relaxing;
6. Anger and other mood swings;
7. Alcohol or drug abuse;
8. Relationship problems;
9. Feelings of shame, failure, guilt, or helplessness;
10. Heart palpitations, chest pains, grinding or clenching teeth.

from MHPS for Families at the US-Mexico Border (UNICEF, 2020).

Being aware of possible stress signs and taking care of yourself is not selfish; it is a responsible thing that will ensure you remain effective in helping others.

BASIC COMPETENCES FOR YOUR WORK WITH REFUGEE CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES

- willingness to accept diversity in society and to respect other ways of being
- being non-judgmental
- having an open mind
- having empathy and understanding
- showing flexibility and adaptability
- being sensitive (aware of children's and parents' needs) and responsive (act on this awareness)
- supporting a sense of belonging
- having enthusiasm: being engaged and motivated
- being creative in order to find alternative solutions and approaches
- showing warmth and being loving

from Building bridges – Bridging the gap: Guidebook for kindergarten teachers working in refugee camps (ISSA, 2020)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

On the following documents and websites you will find more information and additional inspiration regarding the psychosocial wellbeing of refugee children and their parents and how you can help them.

- Building Bridges: Bridging the Gap - Supporting wellbeing, learning, development and integration of young refugee and migrant children. ISSA, 2020. Available here
- Toxic Stress, Harvard University content guide. Available here
- Guiding tips for refugee parents. KPZ, 2022. Available here in English, and here in Ukrainian
- Mental Health and Psychosocial Support for Refugees, Asylum Seekers and Migrants on the Move in Europe (guidance note). WHO, 2020. Available here

Part 3 - Non-formal ECD services

The role and benefits of non-formal education services in the social inclusion of refugee children and their families

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HOW NFE SUPPORTS SOCIAL INCLUSION OF REFUGEE AND DISPLACED CHILDREN

Non-formal Education (NFE) programmes can play an important role in connecting people, integrating newcomers and building a sense of community together. The ethos of this Handbook embraces the role of non-formal and informal Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) in children's lives, as well as formal ECEC settings. Although it is necessary to recognise the value of all three forms of ECEC, and how they support the well-being of refugee children, their families and communities, the focus of this Handbook is on community learning, and community-based ECEC for refugee and displaced children.

THREE APPROACHES TO EDUCATION

FORMAL EDUCATION

the hierarchically structured, chronologically graded 'education system', running from primary school through the university and including, in addition to general academic studies, a variety of specialised programmes and institutions for full-time technical and professional training.

INFORMAL EDUCATION

the truly lifelong process whereby every individual acquires attitudes, values, skills and knowledge from daily experience and the educative influences and resources in his or her environment – from family and neighbours, from work and play, from the market place, the library and the mass media.

NON-FORMAL EDUCATION

any organised educational activity outside the established formal system – whether operating separately or as an important feature of some broader activity – that is intended to serve identifiable learning clienteles and learning objectives.

Smith, M. K. (2002)

THREE APPROACHES TO EDUCATION

The distinction between these three approaches to education is largely administrative. Formal education is linked with schools and training institutions; non-formal with community groups and other organisations; and informal covers what is left, e.g. interactions with friends, family and work colleagues.

Formal ECEC settings such as day care centres, preschools and kindergartens, whilst being an important part of children's development, are often closely connected with 'schoolification' of early childhood, with a focus on academic skills, and with predetermined and normative outcomes. They are often age and culture segregated.

Non-formal and informal ECEC settings are therefore important parts of any community, providing a safe space for play, learning, interaction and communication between all members of a community.

Non-formal education institutions, such as NGOs, community hubs or sports clubs, can allow people from different layers of society to participate in a more interactive and casual setting compared to formal education, better integrating the element of socialisation. Non-formal education has the ability to function as a catalyst and a bridge for people from different socio-economic and cultural backgrounds.

A BRIDGE FROM HOME TO FORMAL SCHOOLING

Young children in general and those from vulnerable background especially, are particularly exposed to marginalisation and exclusion from formal education as in many countries education becomes compulsory only at the age of 3, or even later at the age of 6.
This results in the fact that children under 6 are often spending all of their time at home with the parents, and when their parents are migrants, refugees, with little social connection, unstable living circumstances and limited knowledge of the local language, these young children will not have a fair start compared to other children in the community. In this context, the availability and quality of non-formal ECEC services, such as the Play Hubs, is an important bridge from home to formal schooling and a key support to the integration of all children.

Play-based activities are organised to support creativity, increase confidence, develop social, emotional and verbal skills and unlock each child's potential. This helps children in their transition to formal education. This is particularly relevant for families from a Roma, migrant, refugee or socially disadvantaged background, to whom the Play Hubs give extra attention.

Play Hubs are a flexible solution that offers educational opportunities for all those children who are often excluded from formal educational services.

Additionally, non-formal ECEC services (and services more in general) are more flexible and adaptable than formal ones. They can spring into action to adjust activities to address challenges, often ways formal services aren't able to.

INTERSECTORAL, FLEXIBLE AND CONTEXTUAL

Due to their unique and well-established position within communities, non-formal services are a trusted resource and support system for families that are facing any number of challenges and can be particularly beneficial for refugee and displaced children facilitating their integration in mainstream education.
The essential elements of the Play Hubs, for instance – intersectoral work as a way to address complex issues, innovative and flexible solutions tailored to communities and the development of inclusive and easy to reach services - can be inspirational for many other non-formal services.

Functions of non-formal education in promoting refugee/displaced children's inclusion:

- Bridge to formal education
- Combatting social segregation
- Academic and emotional support
- Linguistic support
- Overcoming trauma and building resilience
- Introducing to different cultural norms and enhancing different cultural understanding
- Preventing radicalisation and violence

QUALITY OF NFE

As children spend 85% of their active time outside of school and kindergartens, the impact of non-formal education on their development can be huge. However, this impact cannot be generalised, as it depends strongly on the type, quality and design of activity children are involved in.

Non formal education activities for children and youth should follow these basic quality criteria:

- meet identified needs in the community
- be child friendly
- foster children's agency
- be consciously conceptualised and framed to meet an identified objective
- be well designed, planned and carried out, in both educational and organisational terms
- be carried out by a competent team of facilitators
- be inclusive and intercultural
- respect basic health and safety rules
- include (participatory) monitoring and evaluation

ARTS, MUSIC AND CULTURE IN NFE

Arts and culture are a useful tool for the integration of migrants and refugees, allowing them to express feelings and emotions related to the experiences.

Children's expression of trauma through artwork may help practitioners to better understand the needs of the children and prepare an adequate response.

A different setting for education and development, such as Play Hub, can allow for the child to develop more creative approaches to learning and problem solving compared to the classroom environment.

NFE, INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

The participation of migrant and refugee children in inclusive and intercultural non-formal education can help to promote better social inclusion, because it provides children with opportunities to create networks in the wider community.

Failing to understand the global interconnectedness, the more complex cultural, social and political context in which we live, can lead to intercultural misunderstandings and conflicts.
Non-formal learning activities create safe but challenging spaces in which learning can happen, in order for participants to develop their intercultural competence and more specifically, develop certain attitudes, skills and knowledge related to it.

UNESCO Guidelines on Intercultural Education (2006):

- Principle I: Intercultural Education respects the cultural identity of the learner through the provision of culturally appropriate and responsive quality education for all.
- Principle II: Intercultural Education provides every learner with the cultural knowledge, attitudes and skills necessary to achieve active and full participation in society.
- Principle III: Intercultural Education provides all learners with cultural knowledge, attitudes and skills that enable them to contribute to respect, understanding and solidarity among individuals, ethnic, social, cultural and religious groups and nations.

PLAY HUBS FOR REFUGEE AND DISPLACED CHILDREN AND THEIR BENEFITS

The profound physical and emotional traumas experienced by refugee and migrant children require a multitude of traditional and non-traditional educational services and a broad spectrum of professionals to help them endure and survive their current situation.

We acknowledge that this immense crisis demands a cooperative humanitarian response for the provision of education in emergencies with accompanying psycho-social support to meet the challenges facing today's refugee and migrant children.

Non-formal education is based on the fact that inclusion is a process that involves participation from those who are new to a society and those who already belong to one. Newly arrived immigrants, like those who have lived in a country for a long time, must become co-creators, both of their own lives and of their new country. This is a prerequisite for the sustainability of inclusion.

Non-formal education in Play Hubs provides the conditions required to create this new reality together.

PLAY HUBS FOR REFUGEE AND DISPLACED CHILDREN AND THEIR BENEFITS

Engaging children in creative activities that are centered around play and fun, but still engage children's creativity and cognitive abilities, is an important aspect of the Play Hubs.

The safe space of the Play Hub provides children with the ability to relax and enjoy themselves, this can mean that children become more confident and willing to participate in activities.

Furthermore, many children are accompanied by an older sibling or parent at the Play Hub, thus making it a great space for multigenerational playful learning.

EXAMPLES OF SERVICES AND ACTIVITIES OFFERED IN A PLAY HUB

- Toy library (borrowing service)
- Stay and play sessions
- Parents-child reading sessions
- Intergenerational activities
- Hand-craft and toy making activities
- Parent clubs
- Workshops or info-sessions for parents in cooperation with other services in the community

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

On the following documents and websites you will find more information and additional inspiration regarding the benefits of non-formal education and how it can support social inclusion of refugee children and their families.

- The role of non-formal education in migrant children inclusion. By SIRIUS Watch (2018). Available here.
- Early Childhood Development in Emergencies, Integrated Programme Guide, By UNICEF (2018). Available here.
- The TOY for Inclusion – Voices of Children booklet shares the stories told by the children attending Play Hubs. Hear why the Play Hubs are so important from the perspective of children. Available here.
- What Works Guide - gives recommendations to practitioners and to local authorities on how to implement Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) Play Hubs at best. Available here,

Part 4 - Play across generations and cultures

Intergenerational learning for young and old, with particular attention to social inclusion

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INTERGENERATIONAL LEARNING

"INTERGENERATIONAL LEARNING INVOLVES DIFFERENT AGE GROUPS LEARNING TOGETHER, LEARNING FROM EACH OTHER AND LEARNING ABOUT EACH OTHER IN A RANGE OF SETTINGS"

TOY Project

Intergenerational learning responds to 3 key societal concerns

- The first is age segregation, in societies that often isolates age groups into same age institutions (such as preschools and care homes).
- The second is the need for better age integration, in response to a global aging population.
- The third is the need for social cohesion and solidarity in culturally diverse societies.

PATH TO SOCIAL INCLUSION

Intergenerational learning can help decrease the marginalisation of young children and older people, especially those living in difficult circumstances, such as migrants, refugees and Roma, making important contributions to bridging the existent gap between different social groups in society.
Previous research demonstrates that such activities challenge stereotypes, and all involved experience the values of solidarity, respect, and acceptance of the 'other'.

BY CREATING OPPORTUNITIES FOR INTERGENERATIONAL LEARNING BETWEEN CHILDREN AND OLDER ADULTS FROM DIVERSE SOCIAL-CULTURAL BACKGROUNDS, NEW UNDERSTANDINGS AND KNOWLEDGE OF THE 'OTHER' WILL BE CREATED, WHICH WILL BENEFIT BOTH YOUNG AND OLD, CONTRIBUTING TO SOCIAL INCLUSION AND THEIR PARTICIPATION AS ACTIVE CITIZENS IN THEIR COMMUNITIES.

A wide range of activities can be organised as IGL activities. Some examples are:

- Older adults reading aloud for children
- Exploring games from different cultures and traditions, and revisiting them together
- Making music together, using instruments from different traditions
- Free play
- Art activities (painting, drawing, theatre, etc.) where children and older adults work together towards a final product
- Gardening and cooking together
- Discovering how play has changed over time (children playing old games and older adults playing more modern games)

WHO IS INVOLVED IN ORGANISING INTERGENERATIONAL LEARNING ACTIVITIES?

Organising intergenerational learning (IGL) activities can take different forms and requires a range of resources. In the framework of the TOY Programme, these activities involve three generations:

- the young children,
- the older adults,
- and the middle generation who is responsible for facilitating the relationship between the first two.

The middle generation is often represented by practitioners working or volunteering either in ECEC (day care centres, kindergartens, preschools, toy librarians, etc.) or in social care for older adults. In some cases, community development workers responsible for the wellbeing and participation of all citizens in a certain area can take on the role of IGL facilitators. It is not always necessary to involve institutional settings such as preschools, schools or care homes for older adults in order to organise a successful IGL activity.

IGL CAN ALSO TAKE PLACE IN NON-FORMAL AND INFORMAL SETTINGS, SUCH AS TOY LIBRARIES, PLAYGROUNDS, COMMUNITY CENTRES, ARTS CENTRES, OR PARKS.

SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE OF INTERGENERATIONAL LEARNING'S FACILITATORS

To be able to organise a sustainable and meaningful IGL activity, facilitators need specific skills and knowledge, which they don't necessarily have without training.
The competences requested to design and run an IGL activity include:

BENEFITS OF INTERGENERATIONAL LEARNING

YOUNG CHILDREN

- learn about traditions, food production, local history, develop new competences (e.g. cooking skills and gardening);
- build significant relationships with elderly people, experience calm and structure, receive more attention especially in ‘time poor families’;
- learn citizenship values and norms such as having respect, being polite, being helpful;
- become aware of ageing and of other cultures.

OLDER ADULTS

- feel valued and useful for society, which enhances their self-esteem;
- experience new energy;
- their physical and mental health and well-being is improved;
- learn new skills such as how to read books to young children;
- learn from children with a migrant (family) background how they live.

COMMUNITIES

Not only does the individual wellbeing of citizens grow, the community as a whole benefits.

- Citizens learn to build social relationships without fear;
- learn to value and respect each other;
- learn to negotiate how to do things and how to disagree;
- and stereotypes about age, gender and culture are challenged.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

On the following documents and websites you will find more information and additional inspiration regarding play over generations and how it can improve social inclusion.

- TOY Project website.
- TOY in Action activities.
- TOY Blog.
- Book ‘Intergenerational Learning in Practice: Together Old & Young’., edited by Margaret Kernan and Giulia Cortellesi and published by Routledge.
- Free TOY Online Course.
- ‘Tried and True: a Guide to Successful Intergenerational Activities’ by Generations United and Neighbors Growing Together.
- ‘Intergenerational Activities: Programming Guide’ by Families Canada.

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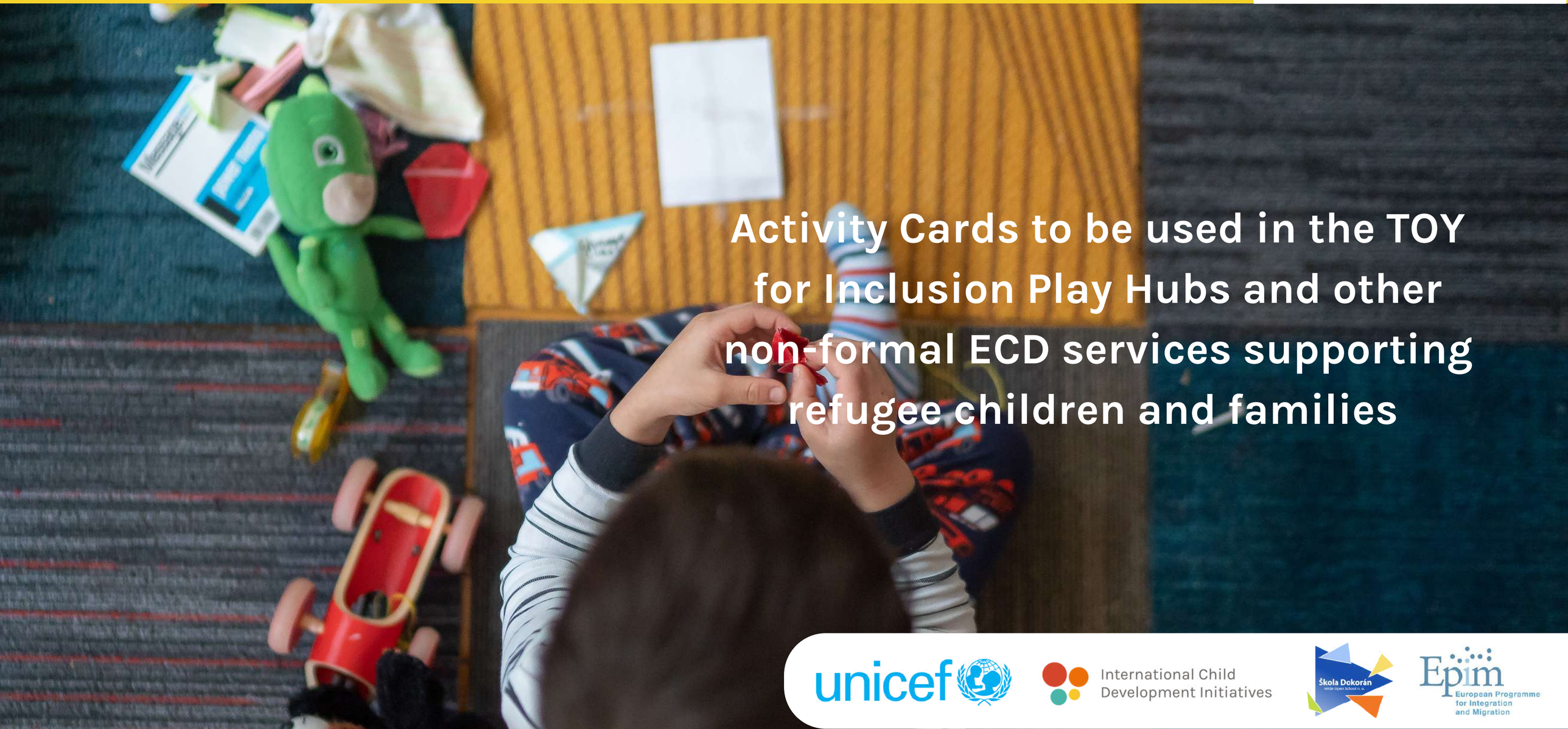
Activity Cards

TOY FOR INCLUSION



Activity Cards to be used in the TOY for Inclusion Play Hubs and other non-formal ECD services supporting refugee children and families

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For more information about the TOY for Inclusion Play Hubs and how they are supporting refugee children and families, please visit: www.toy4inclusion.eu
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Table of contents

Activity cards overview _____ page 4
Activity Card 1.1 - The tunnel _____ page 5
Activity card 1.2 - Move in a circle _____page 6
Activity card 1.3 - Test out sounds and smells _____ page 7
Activity card 1.4 - Create stories _____page 8
Activity card 1.5 - Naming body part _____ page 9
Activity card 1.6 - Music Activity _____ page 10
Activity card 1.7 - Clap with child _____ page 11
Activity card 1.8 - Rhyme with child _____ page 12
Activity card 1.9 - Float or sink _____page 13
Activity card 1.10 - Toddler beading _____ page 14
Activity card 1.11 - Body puzzles _____ page 15
Activity card 1.12 - Sort buttons _____ page 16
Activity card 2.1 - From my hear to your heart _____page 17
Activity card 2.2 – Deep breaths _____ page 18
Activity card 2.3 – The puppet or toy _____page 19
Activity card 2.4 – Butterfly hugs _____ page 20
Activity card 2.5 – Belly breathing _____ page 21
Activity card 2.6 – Playing with (handmaid) dominoes _____ page 22

Table of contents

Activity card 2.7 – Fishing _____ page 23
Activity card 2.8 – Modelling with clay _____page 24
Activity card 2.9 – Web of connections _____page 25
Activity card 2.10 – The secret bag _____ page 26
Activity card 2.11 – Pretend play _____ page 27
Activity card 2.12 – I spy with my little eye _____ page 28
Activity card 2.13 – Bubble fun _____page 29
Activity card 2.14 – Little helpers _____page 30
Activity card 3.1 – Nature art _____page 31
Activity card 3.2 – Drawing using reference pictures _____page 32
Activity card 3.3 – Hour circle of hands _____ page 33
Activity card 3.4 – Container of worries _____ page 34
Activity card 3.5 – Mystery drawing _____ page 35
Activity card 3.6 – Chain of strengths _____page 36
Activity card 3.7 – Kind friends _____ page 37
Activity card 3.8 – Free drawing _____ page 38
Activity card 3.9 – Fold a story _____ page 39
Activity card 3.10 – Collective drawing _____ page 40
Activity card 3.11 – Treasure hunt _____ page 41
Additional resources _____ page 42

Activity Cards

Overview

The following Activity Cards are an integral part of the "Play for Inclusion - A handbook for non-formal services supporting young refugee children and families".

The Activity Cards were created to be used in the TOY for Inclusion Play Hubs and other non-formal community-based ECD services, where young refugee children and their families can:

- Socialise and make new friends,
- Learn the local language,
- Express emotions, and process traumatic experiences,
- Get to know their new community,
- Be introduced to education and other services,
- Get specialised support in different areas through direct referral: education, health, housing, employment, etc.

The Activity Cards are organised in three groups (color coded as shown below), per age of the child:

AGE GROUP 1 (0-3 years old)

AGE GROUP 2 (4-5 years old)

AGE GROUP 3 (6-8 years old)

Each card also identifies the developmental domains that benefit from the activity:

- Socio-emotional domain.
- Physical domain.
- Language domain.
- Cognitive domain.

1.1

The Tunnel

AGE GROUP 1 (0-3)

This activity is aimed at improving the ability of children to balance, sit, kneel, and crawl by using different body parts, as well as coordinate their movements and respond to commands.

DEVELOPMENTAL DOMAIN	DURATION
Physical and socio-emotional	10 - 15 min

Activity Guidelines

- Have pairs of children holding hands to make a tunnel in different parts of the playing area.
- Encourage children to crawl through the tunnels.
- Sing a catchy song or turn on music while playing.
- You can also adapt this activity for outdoors if there are suitable conditions

Materials:

Open area indoors or outdoors, either sing a song during the activity or turn on happy music.

Source: The UNICEF Education in Emergencies (EiE) Handbook, UNICEF Early Childhood Development Kit Guidance (2013)

1.2

Move in a Circle

AGE GROUP 1 (0-3)

This activity is aimed at improving the ability of children to balance, sit, kneel, and crawl by using different body parts, as well as coordinate their movements and respond to commands.

DEVELOPMENTAL DOMAIN	DURATION
Physical and socio-emotional	10 - 15 min

Activity Guidelines

- Ask the children to hold hands with you in a closed circle.
- Sing a song while you and the children walk together in the circle holding hands.
- In the song, use words that tell the children to sit down, stand up, jump forward, jump backward, turn on the spot, etc., according to their abilities.

Materials:

Open area indoors or outdoors, either sing a song during the activity or turn on happy music.

Source: The UNICEF Education in Emergencies (EiE) Handbook, UNICEF Early Childhood Development Kit Guidance (2013)

1.3

Test Out Sounds and Smells

AGE GROUP 1 (0-3)

This activity helps children to develop senses like touch, hearing and smell, as well as motor development.

DEVELOPMENTAL DOMAIN	DURATION
Socio-emotional, cognitive and language	20 - 30 min

Activity Guidelines

- Hold items with different and pleasant smells gently to a child's nose.
  - "Smell this. We smell with our nose."
- Gather different objects that make distinct noises. Jingle. Tap or shake each for the child. Let him/her explore it with her hands.

Materials:

Different objects that smell, such as food, flowers, as well as objects that produce distinct sounds (e.g. you can fill up the bottles with beans, sand, water)

Source: ICDI 'Making the first 1000 days count! Home visiting toolkit. Resources to support parents to provide rich, safe and nurturing environment for children under 4' (2020)

1.4

Create Stories

AGE GROUP 1 (0-3)

This activity is focused on improving children's ability to become emotionally, physically, and mentally relaxed, as well as build trustful and meaningful relationships with each other and adults.

DEVELOPMENTAL DOMAIN	DURATION
Socio-emotional, cognitive and language	15 - 30 min

Activity Guidelines

- Encourage children to turn pages while you talk about the pictures in the book.
- Talk to babies as much as you can.
  - From 3 months on, babies develop a better range of vision.
- Repeat slowly the words of the pictures and allow the children to look at the movement of your lips and the words that you use.
- Encourage the children to repeat words and sounds.
- Point to a picture and say the associated word together with the child.
  - Ask simple questions about pictures to support their understanding of words.
- Make up stories using the different pictures of the board book. Talk about the colours, count the objects pictured in the book, and encourage the children to help you.

Materials:
Book with pictures

Source: The UNICEF Education in Emergencies (EiE) Handbook, UNICEF Early Childhood Development Kit Guidance (2013)

1.5

Naming Body Parts

AGE GROUP 1 (0-3)

This activity helps children develop body awareness and linguistic skills.

DEVELOPMENTAL DOMAIN	DURATION
Socio-emotional and language	20 min

Activity Guidelines

You can do this exercise in different ways, increasing difficulty according to the child's skills. Take the steps described below as a complete activity on itself. You can pick whatever step best fits the child's skills at the moment.

- Simply point to a body part of the child and name it. You can point to a body part of the child, name it, and point to the same body part in yourself.
- You can point to a body part of the child, name it, and point to the same body part in yourself and wait to see if the child can sound the body part's name. If not, repeat it.
- Point to a body part of the child and name it. Point to a different body part and ask the child to name it. Repeat, taking turns.
- Name a body part and ask the child to find it in themselves or on you.

Tip:

You can add an additional layer to this activity by using the opportunity to teach the child the host country's language. Furthermore, you can pair parent and child and let them go into the activity together.

Materials:

This activity can be done in front of a mirror, but not necessarily.

Source: ICDI 'Making the first 1000 days count! Home visiting toolkit. Resources to support parents to provide rich, safe and nurturing environment for children under 4' (2020)

1.6

Music activity

AGE GROUP 1 (0-3)

This music activity helps children to manage their emotions and feelings, improve their language and social skills.

DEVELOPMENTAL DOMAIN	DURATION
Socio-emotional and physical	30 min

Preparation:

- In each of 2 identical containers, place the same number of same-sized buttons.
- In each of 2 identical containers, place the same number of same-sized paper clips. Put lids on all the containers.

Activity Guidelines

- In a small group of three, have the children experiment with shaking each of the 6 sound cans.
- Ask, "Do all the cans sound alike?" They may find that some do and some don't.
- Then ask them to try to find those that sound alike. When children match a pair, ask them to describe the sounds. Also ask what they think is making the sounds. Sound cans can be used to create rhythmic patterns or shake out a song.

Materials:

Buttons, paper clips, seeds, small plastic containers with lids (empty film canisters or vitamin containers)

Source: ISSA "Building bridges – bridging the gap: supporting wellbeing, learning, development and integration of young refugee and migrant children in Greece" Guidebook for kindergarten teachers working in refugee camps (2020)

1.7

Clap with Child

AGE GROUP 1 (0-3)

This kind of activity helps children develop motor skills, emotional expression, as well as boost their connection with adults/caregivers and their feeling of safety/security.

DEVELOPMENTAL DOMAIN	DURATION
Socio-emotional and language	15 - 20 min

Activity Guidelines

- Step 1: Show your baby how to clap. You can sing a song or laugh to help them relate clapping with positivity.
- Step 2: Take their hands in your hand and show them how to clap slowly and quickly.
- Step 3: Mix clapping with other activities, while playing, singing. Hold your hands near your face and talk to your baby while clapping – this maintains a single point of focus for them, helping them to see your hands clapping easily.

Activity variation:

You'll need at least two objects, if it's possible use object with different colours.

- You can start the activity by singing a song and tell the children the game. Explain: 'when I see a plate, it makes me want to clap' and then clap; 'when I see a spoon, I feel like clapping two times' and then clap two times. And then let the children do it, to see they understood, show them the plate and clap and show them the spoon and clap two times.
- Vary between the spoon and the plate and let the children clap and have fun.

Materials:

No materials needed, two objects (with different colours, if possible)

Source: ICDI 'Making the first 1000 days count! Home visiting toolkit. Resources to support parents to provide rich, safe and nurturing environment for children under 4' (2020)

1.8

Rhyme with Child

AGE GROUP 1 (0-3)

This activity helps with bonding with children, and also with their language development.

DEVELOPMENTAL DOMAIN	DURATION
Socio-emotional and language	20 - 30 min

Activity Guidelines

- Sing songs with a child or group of children. You can try singing thematic songs that name body parts or animals.
- When you say an animal you can make the noise the animal would make or if you name a body part, you can point to it. If the song has rhymes, you can use the opportunity to highlight the rhyme and discuss with the child what else rhymes with what you just sounded out.
- Rhymes are easy to memorize and help children to increase their vocabulary.
- You can also listen to songs together while you sing to the child or group of children and invite the child/group of children to sing together.
- Remember to look them in the eyes and smile while singing. Make it fun and interactive.

Materials:
No materials needed.

Source: ICDI 'Making the first 1000 days count! Home visiting toolkit. Resources to support parents to provide rich, safe and nurturing environment for children under 4' (2020)

1.9

Float or Sink

AGE GROUP 1 (0-3)

This activity is aimed at stimulation of positive interactions stimulation of language development, creativity, as well as gross motor skills.

DEVELOPMENTAL DOMAIN	DURATION
Socio-emotional, language and cognitive	30 min

Activity Guidelines

- Have adults and children take turns putting different items in bowl and see what floats or sinks.
- Talk about why the items may sink or float.

Key considerations/facilitation questions:

- What do you think will happen?
- Why do you think that item floated?
- Why do you think that item sunk?

Materials:

Warm water, bog bowl, plastic items and items from outside, such as sticks, rocks, leaves.

Generations United (GU) 'Tried and True: A guide to Successful Intergenerational Activities at Shared Site Programs' (2006)

Toddler Beading

This kind of activity helps children develop fine motor skills, as well as cognitive development.

DEVELOPMENTAL DOMAIN	DURATION
Physical and cognitive development	20 - 30 min

Activity Guidelines

- Find some objects with holes through them (tubular pasta, big wooden beads, empty spools, empty paper rolls etc.) and some shoelaces (or a string).
- This helps the child work on physical and motor skills while doing something fun.

Materials:

Objects with holes through them.

Source: ICDI 'Making the first 1000 days count! Home visiting toolkit. Resources to support parents to provide rich, safe and nurturing environment for children under 4' (2020)

1.11

Body Puzzles

AGE GROUP 1 (0-3)

This activity is aimed at creating a sense of belonging, team and cooperation, stimulation of positive interactions, as well as boosting creativity of children.

DEVELOPMENTAL DOMAIN	DURATION
Socio-emotional, language, and cognitive	30 min

Preparation

- Provide picture pieces (e.g. animals, human body), construction paper, and glue stick for each pair.
- Cut the pictures into three strips, separating head, torso and legs; may want multiple sets of pictures.

Activity Guidelines

- Have pairs take cut up pictures and arrange a body out of the pieces provided.
- Offer pictures of animals (for example, give the child the legs of a duck).
- Ask the pair, how they like the picture.
- Have the pair glue their picture to the construction paper.
- Have pairs put together both pictures of child and adult separately.

Conversation/facilitation questions:

Who is that picture of? What part of the body is that? Does that body part go with that person? What's that body part for?

Materials:

picture pieces (e.g. animals, human body), construction paper, and glue stick.

Generations United (GU) 'Tried and True: A guide to Successful Intergenerational Activities at Shared Site Programs' (2006)

1.12

Sort buttons

AGE GROUP 1 (0-3)

This is a fun activity that helps with visual skills and self-confidence of the child.

DEVELOPMENTAL DOMAIN	DURATION
Cognitive and physical	20 min

Activity Guidelines

- Provide the child with buttons (or other safe and small objects) with various sizes and colours and ask the child to sort them by color and/or by size. If the child has some numeracy skills, you can also ask the child to pile the buttons in amounts.

- You can have a little box or piece of paper to group things together, to add an extra layer to the activity.

Materials:

Buttons, containers to sort the buttons.

Source: ICDI 'Making the first 1000 days count! Home visiting toolkit. Resources to support parents to provide rich, safe and nurturing environment for children under 4' (2020)

2.1

From My Heart to Your Heart

AGE GROUP 2 (4-5)

This activity focuses on connecting children, building peer relationships, and promoting a sense of community, belonging, kindness and positive support.

DEVELOPMENTAL DOMAIN	DURATION
Socio-emotional	30 min

Activity Guidelines

- Invite the children to divide into pairs. Include yourself in a pair.
- Using your partner, demonstrate to the children how they should act out the words as they speak to each other. Begin by saying, “From my heart to your heart, I wish you well”, while pointing to your own heart and then pointing to the heart of your partner. Take turns saying it to each other. Give the children time to begin with their partners.
- Then lead the children through other body part connections. For example, “From my shoulder to your shoulder, I wish you well”, while pointing or connecting your shoulder to your partner’s shoulder. Let the children follow what you do with their own partners. Other connections: “From my toes to your toes, I wish you well”; “From my hand to your hand, I wish you well”; “From my knee to your knee, I wish you well”.
- Once 5 to 15 body connections have been made, ask the children how it feels to have someone wish them well.

Materials:
Space to stand and play

Source: The UNICEF Education in Emergencies (EiE) Handbook, UNICEF Early Childhood Development Kit Guidance (2013)

2.2

Deep Breaths

AGE GROUP 2 (4-5)

This activity can be used to facilitate and encourage children to feel present in their bodies and learn activities that will help them to feel relaxed, calm and comforted.

DEVELOPMENTAL DOMAIN	DURATION
Socio-emotional, physical and language	15 - 20 min

Activity Guidelines

- Step 1: Teach children how to become aware of their breath and to breathe deeply while also using their imaginations. Use this quick deep breathing exercise daily with the children.
- Step 2: While sitting or standing, ask each child to make a fist with his/ her right hand and imagine it is holding a sweet smelling flower, fruit, or favourite food.
- Step 3: Next ask each child to make a fist with his/her left hand and pretend it is holding a candle or fire.
- Step 4: Direct the children to inhale deeply the smell of the flower/fruit/ food in their left hands and then blow out the candle and fire in their right hands. Continue deeply breathing in the sweet smell through the nose and breathing out the fire from the mouth. Repeat the cycle of breathing in and out at least 3 times.

Activity also suitable for parents/guardians. Children and adults of any age can benefit from these relaxation activities.

Materials:

Open space within which to lie down or stand as a group. It can be done indoors or outdoors.

Source: The UNICEF Education in Emergencies (EiE) Handbook, UNICEF Early Childhood Development Kit Guidance (2013)

The Puppet or Toy

This activity can be used to facilitate and encourage children to feel present in their bodies and learn activities that will help them to feel relaxed, calm and comforted.

DEVELOPMENTAL DOMAIN	DURATION
Socio-emotional, physical and language	15 - 20 min

Activity Guidelines

- Step 1: Use the puppets or toys as examples when teaching this exercise. Explain to the children that sometimes it feels good to pretend to be a doll or puppet and have loose arms, legs, hands and feet.
- Step 2: Start by shaking your legs together, then your arms, your neck, your shoulders, and your torso. Encourage the children to be as silly as needed as they relax their bodies to move like a puppet.
- Step 3: Ask the children to notice if any part of their bodies feels more tight or stiff than other parts. Invite them to pay extra attention and care to shaking and releasing that part of their bodies.

Activity also suitable for parents/guardians. Children and adults of any age can benefit from these relaxation activities.

Materials:

Open space within which to lie down or stand as a group. It can be done indoors or outdoors.

Source: The UNICEF Education in Emergencies (EiE) Handbook, UNICEF Early Childhood Development Kit Guidance (2013)

2.4

Butterfly Hugs

AGE GROUP 2 (4-5)

This activity can be used to facilitate and encourage children to feel present in their bodies and learn activities that will help them to feel relaxed, calm and comforted.

DEVELOPMENTAL DOMAIN	DURATION
Socio-emotional, physical and language	15 - 20 min

Activity Guidelines

- Step 1: Cross your arms across your chest as if you were holding yourself, so your left hand is on your right shoulder and right hand on your left shoulder. Ask the children to imitate you.
- Step 2: Keep your arms crossed and alternately tap each of your hands on the shoulder it is touching: tap the left hand on the right shoulder; then tap the right hand on the left shoulder; then continue to repeat this pattern. Tapping 1 side at a time is the most important part of this exercise.
- Step 3: You can tell the children that the tapping of their hands is like the wings of a butterfly or bird moving up and down. One wing moves up and comes down, and then the other wing moves up and comes down. Ask the children to tap for 1 minute, and then stop, take a breath, and notice how they are feeling. Ask children: How do you feel?
- Step 4: Continue tapping. You can do this exercise for as much or as little time as you and the children find comfortable, and as many times a day as needed.

Materials:

Open space within which to lie down or stand as a group. It can be done indoors or outdoors.

Source: The UNICEF Education in Emergencies (EiE) Handbook, UNICEF Early Childhood Development Kit Guidance (2013)

Belly Breathing

This activity can be used to facilitate and encourage children to feel present in their bodies and learn activities that will help them to feel relaxed, calm and comforted.

DEVELOPMENTAL DOMAIN	DURATION
Socio-emotional, physical and language	15 - 20 min

Activity Guidelines

- Step 1: Have the children lie on their backs and put their hands on their stomachs.
- Step 2: Direct them to take a slow deep breath in through the nose and let it out through the mouth with a gentle “a-h-h-h-h-h-h” sound. Tell them they should feel and see the hand on the stomach move up and down as they breathe in and out. Direct them to breathe in slowly through the nose and out through the mouth like they are trying to move a feather up in the air.
- Step 3: Breathe in slowly to the count of 2, 3, 4, and out 2, 3, and 4. Repeat several times.
- Step 4: Ask the children how the exercise makes them feel. Practice the technique with them regularly. Talk to them about when to use it—for example, when they feel worried, angry or frightened. Encourage them to use the technique at home when going to sleep.

Materials:

Open space within which to lie down or stand as a group. It can be done indoors or outdoors.

Source: The UNICEF Education in Emergencies (EiE) Handbook, UNICEF Early Childhood Development Kit Guidance (2013)

2.6

Playing with (handmade) dominoes

AGE GROUP 2 (4-5)

This activity is aimed at helping children to develop number sense and simple math skills, as well as to start matching, sorting and classifying objects.

DEVELOPMENTAL DOMAIN	DURATION
Cognitive	30 min

Activity Guidelines

- Importantly, dominoes do not have to be about numbers. You can make dominoes to match colours, shapes, animal pictures, emotion faces etc. Think of your own ideas and make different sets of dominoes that all children will enjoy using.
- It can also be an excellent game to develop tactile skills (exploring through touch) in young children. Make the dominoes divided into two but without dots – use different tactile materials on each half of the dominoes so instead of matching the dots, the children match what they feel; smooth to smooth, rough to rough etc.

Example of a group activity:

- Sit in a circle and give each child 5 domino pieces and put the rest in a pile in the middle of the circle. The first player puts down 1 of his 5 dominoes pieces. The next player must attach a domino to the 1 in the middle that matches the number of dots/fruits/animals etc. If the player can't make a match, s/he takes a new domino piece from the pile in the middle.
- Repeat the process and continue playing until 1 player is out of dominoes.

Materials:
Dominoes (which can be handmade by using think cards and printed pictures glued on them)

Source: The UNICEF Education in Emergencies (EiE) Handbook, UNICEF Early Childhood Development Kit Guidance (2013)

Fishing

This activity also helps children to develop their language skills through playful learning.

DEVELOPMENTAL DOMAIN	DURATION
Cognitive, physical and socio-emotional	30 - 40 min

The idea of this activity is to get the children to name familiar words and expressions. As you look at the pictures and talk about them, the children have an opportunity to identify details and describe the pictures.

Activity Guidelines

- Make a fishing rod from a stick and glue a small magnet onto one end of a string and fasten the other end of the string onto the end of the stick. Paint pictures or use ready- made cards which can be found on Internet. Cut the fish, glue the pictures on them and attach a paper clip on each fish.
- Spread out the fish on the floor, with the picture sides facing down. Have the children take turns to 'fish' for a fish with your help and name the picture. Then look at the pictures together with the children, describe the pictures and discuss them. You can also name the colours.
- When you have finished the game, you can sing songs or recite nursery rhymes related to the pictures. You can also use songs and nursery rhymes.
- You can vary the game by hiding the items in the room and let the kids find them by using your clues.

Materials:

a fishing rod (stick, string, magnet); pictures of animals, food and/or everyday objects and corresponding items; fish made from cardboard in different colours; paper clips

Source: ISSA "Building bridges – bridging the gap: supporting wellbeing, learning, development and integration of young refugee and migrant children in Greece" Guidebook for kindergarten teachers working in refugee camps (2020)

2.8

Modelling with Clay

AGE GROUP 2 (4-5)

This activity is aimed at fostering creativity of children, manipulation (touching) of materials, and the ability to create figures and shapes.

DEVELOPMENTAL DOMAIN	DURATION
Physical and socio-emotional	40 - 50 min

Activity Guidelines

- Put a box of colourful modelling clay out for the children and let them create shapes and figures and play freely. Encourage children to explore the new material.
- Encourage children to experiment by combining the clay with natural items, such as shells, leaves and small twigs. You can use recycled materials like bottle taps, plastic bottles and containers to reproduce shapes.
- Stage a story. Invite the children to use the clay to reproduce the characters of their favourite story, and use them to create dialogues engaging the clay-made characters. The clay can also be used to model cars, trees, and houses, to support the narration of the story.

Important:

Children of any age can benefit from this activity, if you are working with babies remember:

- Activities for babies aim at stimulating the touching (manipulation) of materials.
- Simply allow babies to feel the clay with their hands. Make sure that they do not put it in their mouths.

Materials:
Modelling clay, as well as natural materials, such as leaves, nuts, seeds, shells and twigs.

Source: The UNICEF Education in Emergencies (EiE) Handbook, UNICEF Early Childhood Development Kit Guidance (2013)

2.9

Web of Connections

AGE GROUP 2 (4-5)

This activity promotes the connection and positive interactions between children, as well as improve their interactions with adults or their caregivers.

DEVELOPMENTAL DOMAIN	DURATION
Socio-emotional	40 min

Activity Guidelines

- Sit together in a circle. Include yourself and any other caregivers present.
- Toss or roll a ball/puppet to any child in the circle while saying his/her name out loud
- That child will then toss or roll the ball to another child while saying the other child's name out loud. Repeat this until every child has caught the ball—with each child only receiving the ball once—until the ball has been returned to you.
- Do the exercise again—in the same order. Ask the children to try to repeat the pattern; to try to move the ball from child to child in the same order, while saying the names out loud.
- Repeat the exercise a few more times, staying with the pattern.
- You can also add emotions or feelings to the ball, like it is a slow, fast, hot, cold, sad, or happy ball.

Important:

Distressing experiences can cause children to feel uncomfortable or trapped in their bodies. They may also find it difficult to interact with people and their environment.

Materials:

A ball or a soft puppet from the kit, and space to sit as a group

Source: The UNICEF Education in Emergencies (EiE) Handbook, UNICEF Early Childhood Development Kit Guidance (2013)

2.10

The Secret Bag

AGE GROUP 2 (4-5)

This activity helps children to recognise and identify new words and terms, as well as memorize them and integrate them in their active vocabulary.

DEVELOPMENTAL DOMAIN	DURATION
Language and socio-emotional	30 - 40 min

Activity Guidelines

- Place the pictures in a bag and hand out one object to each child. Take one picture out of the bag and state its name: I've got a horse. Who's got the horse?
- The child who has a similar object holds it up and repeats with you I've got the horse: Put the picture and the object on the floor where everyone can see it. The children can sing a song about a horse. Once you have looked at all of the pictures and objects, and sang the songs linked with the picture, the children can help to put them back into the bag and name each item as it is put into the bag.
- If the children are familiar with the words, then you can ask them to put the objects in the bag as following: Anna may take the ball, Osian can take the horse...
- During the activity you should talk about the items, pay attention to children's interests, fill out the children's sentences, repeat the words and use them in your conversation. Do not say "this is wrong" do not correct them, just repeat the correct word.

Materials:

Set of pictures, set of similar objects. Ideally the items could be familiar from nursery rhymes and songs.

Source: ISSA "Building bridges – bridging the gap: supporting wellbeing, learning, development and integration of young refugee and migrant children in Greece" Guidebook for kindergarten teachers working in refugee camps (2020)

2.11

Pretend Play

AGE GROUP 2 (4-5)

Pretend play helps with children's creativity, language skills, self confidence, as well as emotional and social skills.

DEVELOPMENTAL DOMAIN	DURATION
Socio-emotional and language	30 - 40 min

Play is vital to a child's development, it gives the children the skills they need for the future like emotional intelligence, creativity and problem solving.

To play is to learn.

For a child to learn through play, their play needs to:

1. Be experienced as joyful.
2. Help children find meaning in what they are doing.
3. Promote that they are involved deeply in the activity.
4. Involve trying out possibilities, experimentation, hypothesis testing,
5. Involve social interaction, promote understanding of others and communication.

Activity Guidelines

- Examples can be pretend grocery store, pretend veterinary, pretend school teacher etc.
- Encourage your child by providing with materials that might help with the pretend play. Play with them.

Materials:

No materials needed.

Source: ICDI 'Making the first 1000 days count! Home visiting toolkit. Resources to support parents to provide rich, safe and nurturing environment for children under 4' (2020)

2.12

I Spy with my Little Eye

AGE GROUP 2 (4-5)

This activity helps with bonding with children, and also with their language development.

DEVELOPMENTAL DOMAIN	DURATION
Socio-emotional and language	20 min

Activity Guidelines

- Tell the children you are going to play “I spy with my little eye”. The person who is the spy has to select an object and the other players need to guess it. The spy can give a clue.
- Pick an object in the house and think of a few features about it. Pick your first hint to give to the children, colour, height, texture, first letter, material, etc.
- Provide the hint to the children and let them guess what you spy. You can start by saying ‘I spy with my little eye… and then the clue’.
- Provide another hint if it’s necessary.
- After the children guessed, let them be the spy.

Materials:

No materials needed

Source: ICDI ‘Making the first 1000 days count! Home visiting toolkit. Resources to support parents to provide rich, safe and nurturing environment for children under 4’ (2020)

2.13

Bubble Fun

AGE GROUP 2 (4-5)

This activity is aimed at stimulation of positive interactions, cooperation and teamwork, motor skills.

DEVELOPMENTAL DOMAIN	DURATION
Socio-emotional, language and physical	15 min

Preparation

Select a large enough space that children can move freely to pop bubbles; this is a great outside activity

Activity Guidelines

- Adults and children pair up.
- Encourage adults to blow bubbles while children try to catch them.
- Have adult and child pairs switch roles, allowing children to blow the bubbles while the adult participants watch and try popping bubbles.

Key considerations/facilitation questions:

Can you help _____ catch bubbles?

Can you show _____ how you blow bubbles?

Materials:

Bottle of bubbles

Generations United (GU) 'Tried and True: A guide to Successful Intergenerational Activities at Shared Site Programs' (2006)

2.14

Little Helpers

AGE GROUP 2 (4-5)

This activity is aimed to create a sense of belonging, enhance children's self-confidence and autonomy, and help develop common responsibility of the Play Hub.

DEVELOPMENTAL DOMAIN	DURATION
Socio-emotional and language	20 min

Activity Guidelines

- Define different tasks that can be done in the Play Hub. For example: tidy up toes, water the plants, welcome participants who are arriving in the Play Hub, empty the bin, etc.
- On a wooden stick or a paper sheet, write down these tasks.
- Put them together in a jar
- At the beginning of the day, ask children in the Play Hub to withdraw a stick from the jar.
- During they stay in the Play Hub they will be in charge of this task and activity.
- Make sure to celebrate every child and make this an opportunity for them to contribute to the Play Hubs.

Note:
Tasks should never be used as a punishment. The opposite, the responsibility of this task is given as a fun activity that should make them feel important.

Materials:
Wooden sticks or pieces of paper, a glass jar

3.1

Nature art

AGE GROUP 3 (6-8)

This kind of activity helps children develop fine motor skills, creativity, and emotional expression, as well as connect with the nature.

DEVELOPMENTAL DOMAIN	DURATION
Socio-emotional and physical	30 - 40 min

Activity Guidelines

- Go outside with children and look together for different objects you can forage. It can be twigs, leaves, dry flowers. Encourage them to find unusual things to make art, like small stones or a long branch.

- When you are finished collecting all items, place them in front of the children and ask what they want to make with it. If it is a group of children, they can share what they have foraged and make something together as a group or an individual project each. For instance, children could stack the foraged objects together to build a sculpture or do a collage of leaves. Offer them ideas, but let the children decide.

- This activity can follow the seasons and be used as an opportunity to discuss the changes that come with the seasons, the different events of each season, what can be found outside in different times of the year, etc.

Materials:
Twigs, leaves, dry flowers, etc.

Source: ICDI 'Making the first 1000 days count! Home visiting toolkit. Resources to support parents to provide rich, safe and nurturing environment for children under 4' (2020)

3.2

Drawing using Reference Pictures

AGE GROUP 3 (6-8)

This activity is aimed at improving imagination of children and their ability to draw and colour.

DEVELOPMENTAL DOMAIN	DURATION
Physical, socio- emotional and cognitive	40 - 50 min

Activity Guidelines

- Sit in a group and display the board book, or the pictures of the puzzle blocks or jigsaw puzzle in front of the children. Ask the children what they see in the cardboard book or in the images of the puzzle blocks or jigsaw puzzle.
- Invite the children to describe the picture in detail.
- Ask the children to tell a story about the pictures.
- Ask the children to draw about the story using the crayons and paper.

Materials:

Cardboard book, puzzle blocks or a jigsaw puzzle, paper, crayons.

Source:The UNICEF Education in Emergencies (EiE) Handbook, UNICEF Early Childhood Development Kit Guidance (2013)

3.3

Our Circle of Hands

AGE GROUP 3 (6-8)

This activity focuses on boosting and fostering children's feelings of safety and belonging to the community.

DEVELOPMENTAL DOMAIN	DURATION
Socio-emotional and physical	30 - 50 min

Preparation

Draw the outline of your hand on a piece of paper and cut the drawing of the handout of the paper so you have a life-sized paper hand. Cut enough hands for every participant.

Activity Guidelines

- Invite the children to sit in a circle and sit with them. Acknowledge that you know they have been through a difficult, frightening and confusing event(s) and that there are changes in their lives. Explain that this is a safe space.
- Give each child and caregiver (including you) a paper hand. Invite them to decorate their hands, give the group 30 minutes to finish.
- Once finished, sit back in a circle. Say your name out loud while placing your decorated hand on the floor in front of you towards the centre of the circle. Ask the child next to you to introduce his/her name by saying out loud, "My name is:", while placing his/her paper hand next to yours. Go around the circle with every child and caregiver saying their names while connecting their paper hands to the circle of hands that is forming. Once everyone has introduced their names, there should be a circle of connected paper hands.

Materials:
Drawing paper, crayons, coloured pencils, scissors, glue, tape.

Source: The UNICEF Education in Emergencies (EiE) Handbook, UNICEF Early Childhood Development Kit Guidance (2013)

3.4

Container of Worries

AGE GROUP 3 (6-8)

This activity is focused on helping children identify things that are troubling them, while also encouraging and providing them a way to remember what to do to feel better.

DEVELOPMENTAL DOMAIN	DURATION
Socio-emotional	40 min

Preparation

- Cut the coloured paper into smaller pieces.
- Do not force participants to tell their worries to the rest of the children. If they prefer, they can simply draw their worries and solutions and put them in the container.

Activity Guidelines

- Begin a discussion with the children about sharing things that they are worried about. You can start the conversation by giving an example of a less severe worry, like being late for school. Ask the group to think of solutions for the simple problem. Ask the children to draw the problem on 1 side of the paper, and the solution on the other side. Before each child puts their worry inside the container, discuss their worry and solution as a group.
- Explain: Some worries are bigger than others and not easily solved, but the container can take the worry away from you and do the worrying for you. Take the container you have, and as you put the paper with the worry inside the container, explain to the group that the worry and solution is now going to be kept safe inside the Worry Container.

Materials:
A4 paper, scissors, pens, pencils, a container that can be closed.

Source: The UNICEF Education in Emergencies (EiE) Handbook, UNICEF Early Childhood Development Kit Guidance (2013)

3.5

Mystery Drawing

AGE GROUP 3 (6-8)

This activity is aimed to enhance children's self-confidence and autonomy, as well as develop children's empathy towards each other.

DEVELOPMENTAL DOMAIN	DURATION
Socio-emotional and physical	15 min

Activity Guidelines

- Hand children a piece of paper
- Secretly assign to each child another child in the room
- Tell children that they have to secretly draw this child. Give them time to draw and hand out as much materials as possible to create their drawing.
- 4After they are finished, let them present their drawings and let children guess which child is represented in the drawing. Ask questions such as: What things stood out for you from that person? What did you learn about this person? And to the person being drawn, asked them how they felt about the drawing. Did they feel represented?

Ask questions such as:

- What things stood out for you from that person?
- What did you learn about this person?
- And to the person being drawn, asked them how they felt about the drawing. Did they feel represented?

Materials:

Colorful paper, pens, decorations for paper, glue

3.6

Chain of Strengths

AGE GROUP 3 (6-8)

This activity is aimed to create a sense of belonging and develop children and family's self-confidence.

DEVELOPMENTAL DOMAIN	DURATION
Socio-emotional, cognitive and language	20 min

Activity Guidelines

- First, take a piece of paper, divide it in 6 parts and cut 6 strings of paper from each sheet.
- Tell participants that we all have strengths.
- Ask them to think of one strength they have (for example: curiosity, artistic skills, resilience, sports skills, etc.)
- Tell participants to write it down in a sheet of paper and decorate it as they want. Offer as many materials as possible.
- Tell participants that, even though we all have individual strengths, we are all stronger together. Therefore, we will create a chain from our papers and hang it on the wall of the Play Hub.
- Ask participants to create a ring with their paper sheet.
- Combine the rings in a big chain with glue
- Let participants share the strengths they wrote down while they are added to the chain

Materials:
Colorful paper, pens, decorations for paper, glue

Kind Friend

This activity is aimed at creating a sense of belonging, enhancing children's self-confidence and autonomy, as well as develop children's empathy towards each other.

DEVELOPMENTAL DOMAIN	DURATION
Socio-emotional and physical	15 min

Activity Guidelines

- The game of the kind friend consists of giving a present to a randomly chosen person and, in turn, receiving a gift from someone we do not know who it will be. The important thing is to keep the secret to make it more exciting!
- Write down on a piece of paper the list of every child who will participate in the dynamic and then cut them out.
- Fold the papers or form balls to place them in a container, glass, bag, box, etc.
- Take a piece of paper (each participant), where the name of the person to whom you must give a gift will appear. In case your own name comes out, you need to return the paper and take another one.
- Let children create a gift for their kind friend. It can be made out of anything. Think of materials that children can find in the Play Hub or outdoors. Let their imagination run
- At the end of the activity (or the day) let children exchange their presents for their secret friends.

Materials:
Colorful paper, pens, container or bag/box

3.8

Free Drawing

AGE GROUP 3 (6-8)

This activity is focused on giving children space and time where they can freely and spontaneously express their thoughts, emotions, ideas, stories, worries, experiences, fears and dreams.

DEVELOPMENTAL DOMAIN	DURATION
Socio-emotional, physical and cognitive	40 min

Activity Guidelines

- Distribute paper and drawing materials to each child. The children can sit in a circle on the floor, sit at desks, or find their own space in the room or learning environment to sit and draw.
- Explain to the children that they can draw anything they want. Encourage them to spend 20-40 minutes drawing anything that comes to their minds.
- Explain that there is no right or wrong thing or way to draw, and that this is a time for them to enjoy drawing freely.
- When the children are finished, place the drawings in a circle on the floor, or hang them on the wall and ask the children to walk around and look at their classmates' drawings.
- Begin by asking the children if anyone would like to share a story about their drawing.
- If children draw images from the emergency or conflict situation, use it as an opportunity to explore any fears, confusion or questions the class might have about the distressing events.
- Always end discussions by refocusing on positive strengths (e.g., that they are safe now, that they have overcome difficulties, that they are making new friends).

Materials:

A3 or A4 white or coloured drawing paper, coloured crayons, coloured pencils

Source: The UNICEF Education in Emergencies (EiE) Handbook, UNICEF Early Childhood Development Kit Guidance (2013)

3.9

Fold a Story

AGE GROUP 3 (6-8)

This activity is aimed at creating a sense of belonging, develop imagination, work together and foster positive interactions among children.

DEVELOPMENTAL DOMAIN	DURATION
Socio-emotional, language and cognitive	15 min

Activity Guidelines

- Let children sit in a circle
- Give them a sheet of paper
- Explain to the children that we are going to write a collective story using the same sheet of paper.
- Let children write one sentence.
- Fold the paper so only the last word of your sentence shows
- Pass the paper to someone next to you to continue the de story
- Continue until the sheet is full
- Unfold the sheet of paper and read the story.

Materials:

Pen and paper.

3.10

Collective Drawing

AGE GROUP 3 (6-8)

This activity is aimed at creating a sense of belonging, work cooperatively to build on the ideas of others and develop children's empathy towards each other.

DEVELOPMENTAL DOMAIN	DURATION
Socio-emotional, language and physical	30 min

Activity Guidelines

- Ask children to sit in a circle. Give them a sheet of paper.
- Explain to the children that we are going to draw someone collectively. It can be a person or an animal for example.
- Let children draw the head. Fold the paper so only the neck is visible.
- Let children pass the paper to the person right and receive the drawing from the person left to them.
- Let children draw the chest.
- Fold the paper so only the waist is visible.
- Let children pass the paper to the person right and receive the drawing from the person left to them.
- Let children draw the legs. Fold the paper so only the ankles are visible.
- Let children pass the paper to the person right and receive the drawing from the person left to them.
- Let children draw the feet. Unfold the sheet of paper and reveal the collective drawing.

Materials:

Paper, pens, and pencils.

3.11

Treasure Hunt

AGE GROUP 3 (6-8)

This activity is aimed at stimulation of positive interactions and communication, stimulation of language development, creativity and reflection.

DEVELOPMENTAL DOMAIN	DURATION
Socio-emotional, language development and cognitive	30 min

Activity Guidelines

- Select a large enough space that children can move freely to pop bubbles; this is a great outside activity.
- Give each pair (of children or a child-adult pair) a map of space.
- Talk about how they need to work together to find hidden objects.

Materials:

Hidden objects around the room, map of the space with some hints on a path to the 'treasure'

Generations United (GU) 'Tried and True: A guide to Successful Intergenerational Activities at Shared Site Programs' (2006)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

On the following documents and websites you will find more activities and resources that can further support social inclusion of refugee children and their families.

- Lets Play! activity cards developed by ISSA (2022). Available in English and in Slovak

- Toolkit for Day care centers "Young refugee children in Greek Early Childhood Day Care Centers" developed by ISSA (2020). The full toolkit available here. The activity cards are available here.

- In the article "What you can do to support refugee children in early education" you will find practical tips on how to welcome refugee children and families and offer them the best possible care and education. Available here.

- The Early Years Clip Library helps practitioners understand theory in practice with short video clips on different types of play, environments and materials, teaching and support, and other topics. Available here.