

# **ECD Guidelines for Emergencies**

## ***The Balkans***

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## Abbreviations and Acronyms

<b>ECD</b>	early childhood development
<b>ECCD</b>	early childhood care and development
<b>ICRC</b>	International Committee of the Red Cross
<b>IFRC</b>	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
<b>INGO</b>	international non-governmental organisation
<b>ISCA</b>	International Save the Children Alliance
<b>MCH</b>	mother and child health
<b>NATO</b>	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
<b>NGO</b>	non-governmental organisation
<b>PLA</b>	participatory learning and action
<b>SC</b>	Save the Children
<b>STOP</b>	space and structure; trust, time and talking; opportunities to play; partnership with parents (and other carers)
<b>TOPS</b>	trust, time and talking; opportunities to play; partnership with parents (and other carers); space and structure
<b>UNCRC</b>	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)
<b>UNHCR</b>	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children's Fund

## Introduction

### What is an emergency?

An emergency, as defined by the Emergency Liaison Team, of Save the Children (SC) Alliance, in 1999 is: 'An acute crisis threatening the lives and well-being of groups, which is beyond the local and national coping mechanisms, thereby requiring external assistance.' This definition obviously covers all kinds of emergencies, natural as well as man-induced. The Balkans Emergency Plan, however (see below), was written in the context of emergencies brought about by conflict. And the guidelines which follow are based specifically on our experiences of conflict in the Balkans. While they do not cover natural disasters, many of the same important points would be relevant in these instances too.

### Rationale for the guide

This guide has been written to support SC's 'Emergency Preparedness Plan for the Balkans'<sup>1</sup>, which covers Early Childhood Development (ECD) activities in emergency situations.

ECD is used to mean any time from birth to when – in any society – children may be expected to go to school<sup>2</sup>. More specifically here, we are talking about services for children between the ages of two and seven, where carers do not have to be present. Although we have not included ECD for babies from birth to two years, services for these children, and their carers, can be accommodated in the provision described. And, while reference is made to multi-sectoral approaches – including combining health and early childhood services – there is *no* reference to clinical practice, which is crucial for mothers and babies.

We believe the guide is relevant to anyone wishing to set up ECD programmes for families currently, or recently, involved in armed conflict and emergency situations. This includes international agencies, peacekeeping forces and practitioners and students of ECD.

### Save the Children's perspective

SC's perspective is informed, above all, by its endeavours to make a reality of children's rights. In times of war, as Graca Machel<sup>3</sup> has pointed out, children's interests are almost totally disregarded.

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<sup>1</sup> SC UK, London, 2000.

<sup>2</sup> Adapted from: Molteno, M (1996), *Starting Young: Principles and practice in early childhood development*, (p.6), Save the Children, London, UK.

<sup>3</sup> Machel, Graca (1996): *The UN Study on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Children*, Department of Information, United Nations, New York, USA.

A child-rights approach means analysing policy (ie, where, when and how to set up refugee camps in times of war or natural disaster) from the point of view of the effect on children. The benchmark for such analysis is the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child [1989] (UNCRC), which details children's rights to protection, provision and participation.

Like all displaced persons, children have basic physical needs – shelter, food, water and medicine – essential for their survival. But, informed by the UNCRC, literature on children's rights also stresses social, developmental and emotional rights to be as fundamental as physical ones.

## **Building on the resilience of young children**

In this guide, we focus on young children and ECD programmes. Just as every effort should be made to maintain schooling as part of development and protection during armed conflict and displacement, we believe ECD programmes to be essential in helping young children maintain a sense of normality and control in their lives. Children are not necessarily passive victims. Much can be done by working with them in constructive ways, drawing on their own resilience and on the strengths and assets of their communities.

## **Using the guide**

The guide is intended for quick reference. Our experience is that agency staff (whether international or national) often see a need for informal, stimulating, community-based ECD programmes. And, though there may be a strong wish to (re)instate them as soon as possible in conflict and other emergency situations, too often there is no material immediately to hand. This booklet is intended to remedy that gap by listing important points to keep in mind. Where relevant, we have printed items – such as the checklist of minimum standards, details of each standard, emergency kit lists, etc – on individual pages (or double-page spreads) so that you can photocopy and distribute them as appropriate.

Whilst we have shown the minimum standards needed to set up effective ECD programmes before, during and after conflict, every issue which might arise in a specific situation cannot be addressed in detail. When using these guidelines, therefore, you must rely on your own skills, knowledge of the local situation and – above all – common sense.

### **Note:**

Save the Children consists of a number of members who make up the SC Alliance. Amongst these are SC UK, SC US, SC Norway (Redd Barna), SC Sweden (Radda Barnen), and SC Denmark (Red Barnet). Where we mention SC this does not refer to any one Alliance member as several are working in ECD in the Balkans. Otherwise individual countries are specified.

## Section 1: Minimum Standards

The minimum standards below are intended as a simple checklist to help quickly set up an effective early childhood programme in emergency or conflict situations. Stress is placed on pre-emergency planning – absolutely vital for effective operation. **Always start to plan before an emergency is declared.**

### Checklist of minimum standards for an ECD emergency response

#### Pre-emergency planning stages

##### *Before the emergency:*

1. An in-country, emergency plan must be drawn up which includes ECD. All in-country staff, and line management/advisory staff elsewhere, must be fully aware of the plan.
2. There must be staff in-country/region, especially national staff, with sufficient prior knowledge and understanding of ECD issues.
3. ECD components of the plan must be regularly reviewed and updated, making full use of the knowledge and experience of national staff.
4. Co-ordination of the plan with other local and international agencies must be built into programme planning and implementation.

#### Operational stages

##### *Once the emergency is declared:*

5. The decision must be taken, by Save the Children (SC) management (in-country) with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and other relevant agencies, to make the ECD plan operational.
6. A *safe* space must be provided in-camp. Within that space, you must include all children aged two to seven, boys and girls, including those with disabilities and from minority groups, and their carers.
7. Assessment must be made of, and support given to, local ECD activities taking place outside camps, or begin new activities.
8. In developing a programme, all ECD activities must be holistic and inclusive.
9. Provision must be available for the small minority of children seriously affected by stress and/or trauma. This can mean referral to agencies qualified to work in this area.
10. There must be regular reviews of activities, including assessment of opportunities for long-term development beyond camps and other confined places where ECD emergency activities are run.

## **Minimum standards: The details**

### **Pre-emergency planning stages (Minimum standards 1- 4)**

#### ***Before the emergency:***

- 1. An in-country, emergency plan must be drawn up which includes ECD. All in-country staff, and line management/advisory staff elsewhere, must be fully aware of the plan.**

Agencies working in an area of potential conflict must have an emergency plan for the specific situation (country/area), and the plan must be regularly reviewed and updated. If SC plans to work on ECD in an emergency, it must include details of what will be done in ECD within the overall plan. If ECD is not included, SC should not work on ECD in an emergency.

All staff must be aware that ECD is included in the plan to ensure best working arrangements in preparing for, and during, any possible emergency. This also avoids any confusion as to what the agency will (or will not) do, and who will do it. All local staff (national and international) will need to have more detailed knowledge about the ECD elements of the plan, but all staff within the agency must have sufficient knowledge of the ECD elements so they can respond effectively and appropriately should the need arise.

#### **Points to remember:**

- Ensure that ECD is included within your country/regional plan.
- Ensure that all SC staff with both country and regional responsibilities know that ECD is part of your emergency response.
- Ensure that all relevant staff understand their operational roles in ECD.
- The plan must take into account all potential refugees, including those internally and externally displaced, those inside and outside camps (eg, under siege, in hiding), and excluded groups (eg, Roma).
- The plan must cover all relevant issues. We suggest you create a file with these headings:

Staffing/management structures Local partners Local/community knowledge Government policy International agencies Operational plan ECD curricula Volunteer training Logistics, materials and kit Monitoring and evaluation
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## **2. There must be staff in-country/region, especially national staff, with sufficient prior knowledge and understanding of ECD issues.**

The best understanding of ECD issues will always be gained in the local context where the activities are taking, or are going to take, place. Local knowledge should not only be obtained but cultivated within SC. The knowledge and experience of national staff is especially relevant in promoting this understanding and there are advantages if the lead person on ECD in-country is a national staff member.

A chief responsibility of the lead person (beyond developing her/his own understanding of the issues) is to ensure that all other in-country staff are sufficiently briefed on ECD so they may operate most effectively in an emergency. Only one or two other in-country staff may have specific ECD responsibilities, but the roles of others (eg, managers, logisticians, drivers) must also be planned for. Appropriate preparation for other staff would include regular information-giving and planning meetings, with occasional workshops. Child-rights and participatory approaches should feature. Information exchange, networking, and shared training should be encouraged across regional programmes, as staff from different programmes may have to work co-operatively in an emergency.

### **Points to remember:**

- There must be at least one member of staff in-country with sufficient awareness of the issues to be able to lead on ECD.
- The lead member of staff in-country must fully understand the implications of other aspects of the country emergency plan for ECD.
- All other staff concerned with ECD in-country must be clearly briefed by the lead person on their specific responsibilities.
- The lead person must provide regular training on the implementation of ECD components of the plan, emphasising children's rights and community participation.
- Staff in-country should have developed the plan in consultation with local agencies and communities, including children, using appropriate participatory research techniques such as those used in participatory learning and action (PLA).<sup>4</sup>
- Opportunities for regional sharing of information and awareness about ECD, and combined training activities, must be developed across programmes.

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<sup>4</sup> For a description of PLA see page 38.

**3. ECD components of the plan must be regularly reviewed and updated, making full use of the knowledge and experience of national staff.**

The lead person must have accurate and up-to-date knowledge about ECD. In some instances – for example, international activity or new research – the best information may come from outside the local area. Wherever and however the knowledge is gained, its main purpose is to increase the ability of staff (in-country and elsewhere) effectively to support ECD emergency activity. Time and personnel should always be allocated for this information-gathering when drawing up annual programme plans.

With an active information strategy, and regular awareness-raising and training activities in ECD, the programme will readily support personnel changes, and hand-over of responsibilities and information. But it is vital to ensure there *is* constant information-updating. And materially, the planned contents of ECD emergency kits (and any other relevant equipment) should be explained to, and understood by, staff. Any materials must also be regularly checked, and replaced or modified where necessary.

**Points to remember:**

- Build into annual programme plans regular reviews of ECD readiness, covering each main component of the ECD plan.
- Ensure that the identified lead person has opportunities to update ECD knowledge and understanding – both locally and internationally.
- As staff move on elsewhere, ensure their ECD responsibilities are passed on within the country/regional programme.
- The ECD kits should be regularly checked for damage, wear and tear, and appropriateness.

#### **4. Co-ordination of the plan with other local and international agencies must be built into programme planning and implementation.**

SC must keep the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) informed of its ECD emergency plans to help ensure co-ordination at the early planning stages, and on the ground in the event of an emergency. A basic requirement of pre-emergency planning is to co-ordinate effectively ECD resources between agencies. This is done by sharing local knowledge, by co-ordinating contents of emergency kits, etc, and, perhaps, by agreeing to share staff (such as translators) or divide specific responsibilities, eg, by area of work (such as health education), or geography.

This process must be seen as reciprocal: SC must be as informed about other agencies' plans, especially on ECD, as they are informed about SC's. This applies equally to international and local agencies (consider translation, local workshops). Their knowledge and experience should be included in awareness-raising and training and, where appropriate, staff of other agencies could take part in planning and training activities. Agencies which SC should identify early on include those with the capacity to provide mother and child health (MCH) services, and those able to support the minority of children who may be severely affected (*Minimum standard 9*).

Good pre-emergency planning with other agencies will help to improve the flow of relevant (and reduce unnecessary) information at the onset of the emergency. For ECD activities, much information will be the same as for other interventions (eg, people affected, where they are likely to go, probable locations of camps/populations under siege), but some will be more specific (eg, numbers of younger children affected). At this point, besides making sure that a good information flow continues, and keeping up with any changes to others' plans (eg, because of new staff), SC must be certain that joint agency ECD agreements (eg, areas of responsibility, shared space) are fully understood by all concerned.

#### **Points to remember:**

- Identify other agencies working on ECD locally and in the region, and how to work with them.
- Share plans with UNHCR and other agencies specifically concerned with ECD in emergencies, and ensure that this process is reciprocal.
- Ensure that SC's plan is known to all relevant (including local) agencies.
- Immediately before a likely emergency, obtain from other agencies information as specific as possible which is likely to affect your ECD response.
- Ensure that other agencies fully understand co-operative agreements entered into on ECD, including reservation of appropriate space in camps.

## **Operational stages (Minimum standards 5-10)**

### ***Once the emergency is declared*** <sup>5</sup>

#### **5. The decision must be taken, by SC management with the UNHCR and other relevant agencies, to make the ECD plan operational.**

Once an emergency has been declared, and the decision made to put the ECD plan into operation, SC staff (with ECD kits and initial programme activities) should be 'ready to go'. This may sometimes mean starting ECD activities (in or outside camps) a few days after some of the other SC emergency responses (material assistance, family tracing and protection) have begun. Where staff from different SC programmes are to work together on ECD (or joint agency activities), re-check all arrangements and agreements.

#### **Points to remember:**

- Ensure that SC staff, with ECD kits and initial programme activities, are 'ready to go'.
- During first few days of emergency, make final decision on camps (or other locations) where ECD activities are to be held. Base the decision on specific information from first-line SC responses, and advice from UNHCR/other relevant agencies.
- Re-check all arrangements/agreements where staff from different SC programmes are to work together on ECD or joint agency activities.

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<sup>5</sup> For definition of 'an emergency' see Introduction, page 5.

**6. A safe space must be provided in-camp. Within that space, you must include all children aged two to seven, boys and girls, including those with disabilities and from minority groups, and their carers.**

An essential requirement of ECD activities is that all children affected by an emergency must be included. What this may mean in a particular situation needs to have been determined through appropriate information-sharing during pre-emergency planning. And this should, of course, be checked against the situation on the ground. Camp space must have been reserved for ECD (again, through prior agreements with UNHCR, etc). There should be space for at least a 50-square-metre tent (enough room for 20 children and a few adult staff at a time) with, preferably, additional space for future playground activities.

A positive attitude towards children with disabilities must be fostered. There are, for instance, many activities that encourage interaction between all children. Often, too, there are many things a disabled child can do better than the others. And all children learn and develop through play. Also, bear in mind to try to have a wide range of different activities without stereotyping for boys and girls, ie, boys can do cookery, and girls can play football.

Safety and risk are relative concepts, and their meanings become more uncertain in many emergencies. Common sense, however, suggests basic rules for preferred location of ECD activities in-camp. For example, the tent should be situated away from armed areas and, preferably, not on main camp roads. Sufficient ventilation and natural light are also very important health and safety factors, particularly when providing for younger children, (and should be considered in relation to the tent design too). But, above all, it will be staff attitudes and the activities developed within the ECD programme which will make the space – overall – safer for both children and carers.

Before any ECD sessions can successfully begin, several things must be done. Identify all children in-camp within the age range. Select and train sufficient staff (suggested minimum: two adults per twenty children). Agree reward policies, and draw up activity rotas.<sup>6</sup> Systems, to begin monitoring activities and referrals to service co-providers (ie, MCH services or cases of rarely encountered severe trauma, *Minimum Standard 9*) must be in place from the outset – as must be those for reviewing SC activities (*Minimum Standard 10*).

**Points to remember:**

- The reserved space must be relatively safe, but accessible for children and families.
- The space should be near to MCH services, enabling these two closely related activities to complement each other.
- All children aged two to seven years must have access each day, using rota systems, and dividing the children into age groups if necessary.

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<sup>6</sup> For a description of staff recruitment and training in emergencies see page 27.

- Volunteer child-care staff within camp must be identified, and receive basic training. There should also be provision for on-going training and training reviews, and there must be an agreed reward policy.
- Numbers of adults per group must be agreed (minimum: two adults to twenty children).
- The purpose of safe spaces is to 'offer more than security; they offer "time out" from the stresses of a crisis situation and enable children to participate in routine activities'. (*Save the Children Three-month Operational Plan*, Albania, Kosovo, Macedonia and Montenegro field offices, July 1999).

## **7. Assessment must be made of, and support given to, local ECD activities taking place outside camps, or begin new activities.**

Equal emphasis must be given to determining the need for emergency support to ECD activities outside camps. This can mean both supporting communities already running ECD activities in an affected area, and developing new community-based activities where there is a clear need. It may be much less safe outside the camps than inside, and a calculation must be made about when to begin such a needs assessment – and any subsequent ECD activities – based on the potential risks to the community and agency staff.

Grounds for the assessment, and the assessment itself, will initially rely on information about communities and their ECD activities gathered during pre-emergency planning. Circumstances of the emergency which might cause the picture to change significantly (eg, many in the community fleeing) must be recognised. The readiness, or otherwise, of a community to accept outside intervention in the midst of a crisis is a prime consideration. It must be negotiated carefully and participatory learning and action (PLA) techniques<sup>7</sup> can be effectively used. The underlying principles of an ECD intervention must be the same as elsewhere – that is, inclusive and holistic. The ECD plan should ensure that interventions are responsive to local ECD approaches.

### **Points to remember:**

- The assessment should be made as soon as it is secure to do so.
- The overall operating principles, and purpose of identified safe spaces, will follow those for camps.
- Specific assessment must be made of the physical environment and appropriate remedial action taken as necessary.
- Children's activities and staff training must be carefully integrated with any on-going local ECD activity.

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<sup>7</sup> For a description of PLA see page 38.

**8. In developing a programme all ECD activities must be holistic and inclusive.**

TOPS<sup>8</sup> provides easy to remember programme principles:

- T** - trust, time and talking
- O** - opportunities to play
- P** - partnership with parents (and other carers)
- S** - space and structure.

**Trust** is a primary casualty of war from the perspective of the young child. The primary carer, often the mother, can be so affected by the material impact that she is unable to meet the child's basic needs – including those of food, shelter and protection. It is vital to try to rebuild a child's belief that she/he can trust, and rely on, others to provide love, food and shelter.

**Time** is needed to re-establish trusting relationships through **talk**, play and other means of communication (ie, drawing, acting, role play). These are vitally important elements of any ECD programme. Children often think they have enormous power – because their feelings can be so strong and overwhelming. This may in turn make them feel guilty or responsible for the enormous changes that have befallen them and their families. By creating a place of safety, and allocating time for talk and play, it is possible to build relationships, to explore a child's feelings, to begin to explain and give meaning to events – thus helping to remove any feelings of guilt.

**Points to remember:**

- Trust is an early casualty of war.
- Time is needed to re-establish trust.
- Trusting relationships are established through talk, playing and other means of communication.
- Allow time for children to talk – to other children, to staff and to other adults. This is a vitally important element of an ECD programme.

**Opportunities** to play are also essential to any ECD programme. Play is one of the defining features of childhood, and is holistic. It can be anything from organised group activities (eg, games, dancing, singing) to a child on her own reading/drawing/ playing. Children are keen to learn and increase their repertoire of physical, emotional and cognitive skills from their earliest moments.

**Points to remember:**

- Providing opportunity to play is essential to any ECD programme.

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<sup>8</sup> The STOP approach was originally developed by SC Norway in the 1980s (LH Gustaffson, *The STOP Sign: A model for intervention to assist children in war*, pp.20-26, Action for Children: NGO Forum on Children in Emergencies, New York, Radda Barnen, 1986.). We have changed the order of the original components – and therefore the acronym, from STOP to TOPS - to prioritise trust and time.

- There should be opportunities for children to take part (individually or in groups) in a range of activities which enable them to use their imagination, spontaneity and social skills, eg, role-play.
- Play should include organised activities allowing for physical expression eg, football, dancing, and also 'quiet time', eg, drawing, reading, playing with individual toys.

**Parents** and other carers will themselves need support and opportunities to talk, or just sit and feel safe, in the ECD programme. It is essential they are welcomed into the programme and are able to participate as little, or as much, as they choose. One of the primary aims of an ECD programme must be to support carers' ability to care. Where families' capacities to realise rights (especially in developing relationships with each other) are damaged or destroyed, opportunities must be given for them to do things together.

**Points to remember:**

- Parents and carers must be made to feel welcome in the ECD programme, and be allowed to take part as much – or as little – as they want.
- Give families the chance to do everyday/family activities together, such as preparing a snack/meal, going for a walk, singing songs.
- Give opportunities for elder and younger siblings to play and do other things together.
- Give time and space for carers and children to re-establish their relationships in a safe place, such as an informal play setting.
- Provide opportunities for parents/carers to talk about their hopes, fears and concerns for their children.

**Space** and structure are vital to any ECD programme. Space must be a safe place with enough room for carers and children to carry out their activities. It does not have to be exclusive to the ECD programme but it must be available for at least an hour, preferably more, each day.

**Structure** is a psychological as well as practical consideration. Practically, it means being able to prioritise young children's needs and organise resources accordingly. In terms of rebuilding routine and predictability, structure is the antidote to chaos. It is vital that programme staff are reliable, thereby creating a feeling of safety. Being reliable includes being on time and doing what you said you would do. This is especially important when talking to children.

**Points to remember:**

- Space must be provided which is safe, with enough room to be used by young children and their families for at least an hour or more a day.
- Reliability of staff is absolutely essential to build a steady routine, thus helping psychologically to create feelings of safety.

- Always do what you have said you were going to do and never make promises you know cannot be kept: this is particularly vital when talking to children.

**9. Provision must be available for the small minority of children seriously affected by stress and/or trauma. This can mean referral to agencies qualified to work appropriately with these children.**

While ECD emergency programmes need not have a capacity directly to care for the small minority of children possibly severely affected by trauma, it is essential to co-operate in these cases with appropriately competent agencies. The relevant agency (far easier to co-ordinate with just one) should have been identified and involved in pre-emergency planning. Then, the key role of SC during the emergency (besides any day-to-day contact) will be to monitor what happens to those children. Generally, this means a 'light touch', to be sure that the children are looked after sensitively and appropriately, and that their contact with other carers and friends is maintained as much as possible.

In other words, a referral agency should have the same standards in relation to children's rights and protection as SC demands in its own programmes. Again, this should be determined well before an emergency is declared. In the event of concern about a referral agency's standards of care, more active steps should be taken. First, try to remedy the situation; if that proves impossible, find another agency.

More generally, ECD programme staff must be alert to feelings of distress (and their manifestations) which any child may show. It is important to recognise these feelings are normal, and will vary from child to child and in different situations. Amongst the most valuable contributions staff can bring are a readiness to support the child's feelings and expressions, and a clear understanding of the local community's beliefs on death, suffering and conflict (Richman, 2000).<sup>9</sup>

**Points to remember:**

- Before the emergency, identify and set up a referral system with agencies appropriately staffed to work with traumatised children.
- Be aware that children experience and react to major life events, whether positive or negative, very differently. Children may respond to input very quickly, or may manifest distress some time after the event.
- Manifestations of distress will vary from child to child, family to family and between communities.
- Assessing appropriate steps to support distressed children needs knowledge and understanding of local beliefs and meanings (within families and communities) attached to conflict, suffering and death.

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<sup>9</sup> Richman, Naomi: *Communicating with Children: Helping children in distress*, SC UK, London, UK, 2000.

**10. There must be regular reviews of activities, and assessment of opportunities for long-term development beyond camps (and other confined places where emergency ECD projects are run).**

Key aspects for review include children's activities; toys and materials (quality and quantity); training of volunteer staff; relationships with carers and the wider community; the scope and direction of the ECD programme as a whole. Notions of children's rights may need to be introduced in culturally appropriate ways and not imposed. And be aware that international aid workers' thoughts on what is good for children are not necessarily shared by the local community.

Unsustainable interventions waste precious resources, above all emotional and other human commitment. ECD approaches are intrinsically sustainable where they:

- invest in the future of the community (because they work with young children);
- develop links with the wider educational, health and other systems;
- encourage children to express themselves;
- create partnerships between agencies, among and across communities, and within families.

Evidence suggests that when adults are mobilised with a focus on children they become more active and more hopeful.

**Points to remember:**

- Whilst emergency ECD activities continue, all aspects should be regularly monitored and evaluated.
- Children should be at the heart of programme planning, and involved in planning and evaluation.
- For ECD interventions to be effective they must be sustainable.
- Programmes should be culturally relevant, support adults and carers, and be designed to reintegrate children into healthy communities and families.
- Evaluation is a powerful and positive tool for ECD programmes where it is set up with the involvement of local communities according to what *they* want to find out, and it thus leads to reflection (and modification where necessary) on everyone's part.

## Section 2: Rationale for ECD in Emergencies

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) states that every child has the right to live in 'an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding'. The violence of war destroys not only that atmosphere but also the ability of adults – on whom children depend – to make their world safe, loving and predictable.

Children's development cannot be put on hold – yet war brutally interrupts it. Governments, and humanitarian agencies asked to intervene in times of conflict, have a responsibility to ensure that war does not destroy children's life chances. And life chances are not just about survival: they are also about quality of life.

Save the Children (SC) believes in using a framework of children's rights rather than mere needs when intervening in emergency situations. These rights include freedom of expression, freedom from discrimination, and the right to education and to play – the last being especially important for young children.

If physical and social reintegration of children is to be effected at all successfully post-war, they must be able to continue their development, and to realise their rights within families and communities, during the conflict. Hence the importance of ECD programmes in emergencies.

The restoration of routine, and opportunities for play, help to alleviate the immediate stresses of displacement and loss, both for children and their carers.<sup>10</sup> As well as supporting and sustaining children's emotional and spiritual well-being, the very creation of a resource for the children of an affected community can, in itself, be a restorative act in terms of community and, potentially, aid economic regeneration.

Be aware, though, that the weight of international agency resources at your disposal may sometimes detract from local practice, while perpetuating inequality – eg, in some areas, Roma communities have been systematically excluded from mainstream services.

There is no ready-made programme for ECD. Understandings about childhood differ radically in different parts of the world. Typically, in the industrialised world, the picture is one of children (their childish playfulness carefully nurtured) having lives very separate from those of adults.

This view of childhood typifies young children as vulnerable, essentially incapable, and in need of protection and guidance by adults, especially their mothers. Children are seen mainly as separate, and egocentric, individuals who have to learn to share and co-operate.

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<sup>10</sup> Tolfree, David: *Restoring Playfulness: Different approaches to assisting children who are psychologically affected by war or displacement*, published by Radda Barnen (SC Sweden), 1996.

In other parts of the world, however, children are seen as much more capable and resilient. They are more integrated into adult life, share in adult tasks and, in turn, relate to various adults and other children. In such societies, children (and adults) are viewed as being born to co-operate and live collectively, and notions of individual space, privacy, preferences, wants and/or choices appear strange or antisocial.

Vulnerability, individuality, and the nature of relationships are just some of many possible ways in which understandings about childhood differ. So, any successful ECD programme must be drawn up on the basis of shared understanding between those planning and developing it, and those using it.

## **2.1 During emergencies in the Balkans**

- ECD activities are closely linked to the underlying values which SC wishes, above all else, to promote through the framework of the UNCRC (1989) – the best interests of children.
- ECD is holistic and puts community participation and involvement – especially that of children – high up the agenda.
- ECD approaches recognise, and build on, the resilience shown by the large majority of children who experience very difficult situations.
- ECD approaches provide a focus for whole communities to rebuild their lives, especially through their wishes to provide a better future for their children.
- ECD complements the first-line emergency responses of water/sanitation, shelter, food/nutrition and health, eg, in its emphasis on community participation and development.
- ECD has clear links with MCH services and family tracing (both from an overall community-development perspective, and in terms of some discrete activities, eg, establishing good links with families). SC has considerable experience in these two fields.
- ECD activities in camps can give children and families invaluable opportunities, less available in other, primarily emergency, responses: eg, a safe space for children and families in which to have fun/express themselves within an environment of some normality and positive routine.

- In emergencies, communities often invest significant resources maintaining ECD activities outside camps and, if an external agency such as SC can make a positive contribution to these, it is obliged to (ie, in terms of its adherence to humanitarian principles within the SPHERE<sup>11</sup> charter and the IFRC/ICRC code of conduct).
- SC in the Balkans is developing a programme base that should definitely enable it to respond effectively to emergency (as well as long-term) ECD responses.
- ECD approaches in general within the Balkans are well known (eg, through kindergartens) so there is a good foundation of technical/professional/academic experience within the wider community.
- ECD approaches demand that opportunities be found to link immediate response to long-term development (which is best practice).

## **2.2 Rationale for ECD in emergencies in general**

**For children**, good ECD programmes:

- Can replace, on a temporary basis, familiar routines and child-rearing activities that have been interrupted by conflict.
- (Re)build relationships.
- Enable children to express their views and be listened to.
- Create loving, secure and safe environments where children can flourish.
- Enable children to be together in groups, and to develop negotiation and problem-solving skills.
- Enable children to adapt to rapid change.
- Are fun, and are a child's right.
- Can prepare children socially, emotionally and intellectually for later education.
- Can support and reinforce the development of children's individual, and group, identities.
- Have long-term benefits by enabling children to play and find out about the world safely.

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<sup>11</sup> A programme of the Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response and Interaction and others. The project was launched in 1997 to develop a set of universal minimum standards in core areas of humanitarian assistance. See References, page 52.

- Provide opportunities for children to develop to their fullest potential.

**For families and communities**, good ECD programmes:

- Build on what is already there, by strengthening existing skills and practices evolved over generations.
- Activate people and communities.
- Support families and carers by focusing on children, thus offering hope for the future.
- Act as a catalyst for communities to create and build upon social, political and economic networks.
- Support women as the main carers by providing time for work, other responsibilities, or a short break from domestic tasks.
- Provide a sense of continuity in times of change, and an opportunity to reflect and transmit community beliefs and values.
- Provide opportunities for adults to work as volunteers or assistants, thus acquiring valuable child-caring experience.
- Involve all sections of the community.

**For agencies**, good ECD programmes:

- Enhance effectiveness, by enabling agencies to combine sectoral initiatives (such as immunisation or nutrition) with early educational experiences, thus making it easier for carers to access essential services.
- Provide the basis for sustainable initiatives able to promote community rehabilitation post-emergency.
- Support and benefit whole communities.
- Are sustainable.

## Section 3: The Importance of Pre-emergency Planning

Within an ECD emergency programme it is as vital to gather information and to prepare beforehand as for any other emergency response. Pre-emergency planning is simply an organised, efficient and appropriate way of looking ahead.

### Early warning

Civil and international conflicts do not erupt without warning. International non-governmental organizations (INGOs) will have advance warning and be in a state of alert if internal or cross-border conflict seems likely. It is vital to use this time and information to make plans and preparations to ensure that the mobilisation of any emergency response is swift and targeted.

Some elements of ECD pre-emergency planning are the same as any pre-emergency planning. A minimum supply of material resources to maintain an ECD programme during an emergency, such as tents, flooring, furniture, toys, etc, should be on hand (*see Section 6*). The same logistical criteria apply as would apply to ensure adequate medicine, medical materials and equipment for an emergency health response.

This means that programme logisticians (or whoever is responsible for acquiring, maintaining and co-ordinating supplies) must make sure that the materials necessary for ECD programmes are available at the right places and times.

### What makes ECD planning different?

How does an ECD emergency programme differ from other emergency responses? The priorities in any emergency are the provision of shelter, water/sanitation, food and health services. The priority of the ECD programme, on the other hand, is to provide a safe place or space where a group of young children can come together to stay or play on a regular basis, supported by sympathetic and/or knowledgeable adults.

Thus, the provision of adequate material supplies is only one part of the ECD response and, while important, is neither the goal nor the starting point. Agency staff need to know what has happened before the emergency. And, when programme planning, you also need to think about what issues might arise before, during and after the conflict as well as what might happen (in the short-, medium- and long-term) after the *immediate* emergency has ended.

It also means recognising that the results of pre-emergency ECD planning may be different each time (even though the steps taken may be similar), and immediate emergency programmes may have common elements. In a good

ECD emergency response, finding out about ECD-related issues is as important a part of planning as ensuring that the physical components are in place.

### **Learning from experience: *Working in an emergency in Kosovo***

*I had only just escaped from Kosovo to Macedonia when Save the Children asked me to come and help in the camps. They would collect me from the apartment where I was staying and we would drive 40km to the border camp.*

*In co-ordination with other NGOs, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), we were registering unaccompanied minors. Around 85% of the families in the camps were split or separated from other members of their family. We decided to split the camps between us - at that time there were 5 camps. We started up a register in Stankovec 2 and Bojana camps.*

*When the full SC team arrived, they had to orient themselves very quickly. We planned to open a pre-school playroom, just a safe place to come. We made the mistake of trying to start a programme in Stankovec 1, where we thought the need was greater, rather than in Stankovec 2 or in Bojana where we already had contacts and where people knew us.*

*The camp had been set up by NATO, in a uniform fashion like an army camp. There was no tent large enough to house a playroom, and, in any case, in such a cramped camp there was nowhere to put it. Macedonia did not grant more land to the camp. We tried to share space with other agencies like Oxfam, but then more refugees arrived and even that was lost.*

*In the beginning we were like headless chickens. We managed to get a tent of 5m by 15m but there were 30,000 people in the camp, and between 2 and 3000 young children. We ran it on a shift system, an hour at a time, for seven sessions a day. Then it got too hot, and we were afraid the children would dehydrate, so we introduced a noon break.*

*Once that was established, we started with ECD tents in five other camps. However, requisitioning was difficult. The logistics officer had to fill in request forms, and there were other priorities, so we had to go off and find and purchase the equipment ourselves.*

*We tried to make it a really nice environment for the children, so they would feel good about being there. The camp was very muddy, so we put in a cheap wooden floor rather than plastic sheeting. There were other organizations providing playrooms in other camps, but sometimes inappropriately – for instance, one organization had bikes, plastic toys and other big, expensive equipment.*

*We went to the camp a week before starting to try to recruit volunteers. At first there were a lot of volunteers, because people had time to kill; but also they wanted to do something for their people. We registered teachers and educators and held regular daily meetings with them.*

*Their task was first of all to register small children in the camps and prepare schedules for the shifts (which children could come when). We ran a small training programme for volunteers; we had no concrete information to give them, we followed our instincts. There was a big dilemma - should we train the teachers to identify the traumatized children? We decided that if we did that we would end up with the teachers spending all the time with the children who were most traumatized.*

*Then the volunteers themselves started being evacuated to third countries at short notice, and we never knew if someone was going to stay. We had difficulties over payment. When people volunteered they felt they were being noble, but once payment started then either they felt they weren't getting paid enough in comparison with others, or there were problems about getting the money to pay them, especially if they decided to leave at short notice.*

*So we employed Albanian teachers from outside the camp. There was no shortage since unemployment was so high. We just had one volunteer in each camp to be an overnight guard. Fortunately there were no problems with crime or theft.*

*We ran the programme from April to July, and then we waited until all the refugees left. Now we have returned to Kosovo we have many problems about the post-conflict situation. We have had a sort of apartheid in Kosovo since 1990, and we have to cope not only with the aftermath of war but also with reconstituting our society.*

Before you read on, you might like to try a pre-emergency planning exercise with your colleagues. Read and analyse the above carefully, then make a list of the things that you think 'went wrong', and say what you would have done differently, and how.

Among the problems illustrated in the above experience are:

- Difficulty of securing any adequate space.
- Lack of large enough tent.
- Lack of materials and equipment.
- Some agencies providing unsuitable materials and equipment.
- Started programme where the staff had no contacts and people in the camp did not know the team.
- Lack of prepared, informed training programmes.
- Lack of co-ordination with other agencies affecting all aspects of the programme.
- SC team had very little preparation time.
- No agency identified beforehand to look after severely traumatized children.
- Lack of policy regarding volunteers/paid workers.
- Lack of forethought about post-conflict situation.

The gathering of information and drawing up of plans before the conflict erupted might have helped to eliminate most of these problems. And, it must be borne in mind that attempting to develop ECD activities in camps where the provision is inadequate or unsafe may have a profoundly negative and unsettling effect on the whole camp, and its other activities.

It can be seen, therefore, how important it is to think about and plan your ECD programme before the emergency arises. And try to plan around the likely main stages of conflict – looking ahead and identifying the possible issues, which could arise before, during and after the conflict.

## **Recruiting and training voluntary and paid staff**

*It is best if those who work with refugee children are from the children's own culture and share the same language. With the help of interpreters it is usually possible to find para-professionals or professionals in the refugee community to do the work. Other members of the refugee community can be trained to take over the work in due course. Look first to the refugee community for workers.*

*Mental health of refugees.*

WHO in collaboration with UNHCR, 1996, p.66

Since there will be limited time for extensive training, it is important to search for people in the local camp or community who have had some experience with younger children. The appropriate person could be a teacher or a pedagogue. However, a parent, a young man or woman with younger siblings, or a grandparent who is willing to be involved in ECD provision could be equally suitable.

It is important that carers should be warm, nurturing and loving to young children and be able to communicate with children and adults. This can be assessed at a short interview during which INGO staff take volunteers' details. Be consistent about the criteria for volunteers, and be aware of child protection issues noting SC's policy<sup>12</sup>.

Run short training sessions (materials will have been collected in the pre-emergency planning period) on the following topics. Each session could be run in 45 minutes to one hour. Longer would be preferable. Suggested priorities are:

- The importance of play
- Children's rights
- Strategies for working with groups of children (positive behaviour management)
- Health and safety

Other topics to include are: Child development: social-emotional, intellectual, physical and creative development; Communication with children and carers; Working with young children affected by conflict; Problem-solving and peace-making activities with children; Including all children: working with children with special needs; Organising the environment; Planning activities with and for children; Working in a team; Child protection. There may be other areas that you think the training sessions should cover.

Be consistent about your reward policy. You may need to consult with other organisations. Once a decision has been reached be clear with all concerned about your policy. Review the policy regularly.

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<sup>12</sup> Save the Children UK : *Child Protection Policy*, Save the Children, London, UK, 2000.

## Section 4: Gathering Information

Information for pre-emergency planning can (and should) come from a variety of sources. Some of these are suggested below. Broadly, information divides into two kinds, although it should be understood that the separation is by no means absolute:

1. Information, useful for developing ECD programmes, which can be acquired over a longer period of time, ie, well before an emergency happens.
2. Information, in terms of ECD and other emergency programmes, which may only be readily accessible shortly before the emergency happens.

Two important points follow from this:

- If an agency appears to have no relevant longer-term information from which to develop an emergency ECD response, the most urgent question is why it is attempting to develop a response in this area just as the emergency is declared.
- Agencies should seek relevant emergency information from other key agencies (eg, UNHCR and donors) as early as possible, even if detailed answers cannot be given until later. In essence, you want to know about:
  - UNHCR support to, and expectations of, you,
  - donors' expectations of you,
  - other agencies' emergency programmes.

**Over the following few pages are some checklists for the gathering of the two types of information. We have printed them with enough spacing for answers to be filled in. So, photocopy them, distribute them, and have all your staff use them as current, ongoing checklists.**

***For information No. 1. – useful for developing ECD programmes, gathered over a period of time***

**Questions to be asked about ECD in-country**

- Has the agency a history of ECD in the region/country?
  - What are/were its aims?
  
- Is information available about ECD in-country before the emergency occurred?
  - What government policies are there?
  
  - What local knowledge exists in relation to child development?
  
  - What are accepted care practices for young children?
  
  - What community ECD initiatives have begun?
  
  - What do adults think of them?
  
  - What do children think?
  
  - What resources do community initiatives use?

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- What other training programmes are available (eg, through universities)?</li> <li>- Do local people think there are major gaps in ECD provision and training?</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Has a local or regional office been established?</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Has an emergency plan which includes ECD been drafted for the country?</li> <li>- Have local staff been trained and been able to comment on and contribute to the viability of ECD in the plan (is it culturally appropriate)?</li> <li>- Are international and local staff in place and able to co-ordinate ECD in the emergency plan?</li> <li>- Are management structures and lines of accountability in place?</li> <li>- Are international emergency staff fully briefed and on stand-by?</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Have mechanisms to ensure efficient requisitioning and logistics been established?</li></ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Have local/regional outlets for supplies been identified?</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Who else is working on ECD in local areas of the country:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- In terms of local staff and agencies?</li> <li>- In terms of other INGO's local activity?</li> <li>- What are their approaches and what are they doing?</li> <li>- What are their views on what your agency is doing?</li></ul></li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Who else is working nationally on ECD:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- In terms of national staff and agencies?</li> <li>- In terms of other INGO policies?</li> <li>- What are their approaches and what are they doing?</li> <li>- What are their views on what your agency is doing?</li></ul></li></ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Who else is working regionally on ECD and what are they doing?</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ What understanding do the individual workers have of local ECD policy and practice?</li> <li>- What relevant ECD experience do they have elsewhere?</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ What relevant experience do they have in the region?</li></ul>

***For information No. 2. – only available shortly before the emergency occurs***

**Questions to be asked about conflict**

**Pre-conflict**

- Populations are in a state of tension but SC UK or other agency is in-country before conflict has erupted. Infrastructure is weak.
- Is an ECD programme in place?
- What are its aims?
- How can it be adapted to provide an emergency response?

**Early stages of conflict**

- An emergency has occurred and populations are fleeing.
- Are different ethnic groups involved?
- How are services targeted?
- Are particular groups at risk?

**During conflict**

- Populations are crossing borders into camps, or are dispersing.
- Has space been established for an ECD programme?

- Is it fully co-ordinated with health and other responses?
- And, with internally displaced populations under siege, in hiding, or being used as leverage:
- How do you provide and direct a response?
- What is already being provided by the affected population?

- After conflict**
- The issues for ECD programmes arising within the earlier phases need to be reappraised after conflict. Connections with the post-emergency ECD programme will almost certainly be different a few months, as compared to a few days or weeks, after the end of conflict.
  - What does the local population want?
  - What needs to be done for material reconstruction and/or training and strengthening the capacities of local people?
  - How has the emergency ECD programme laid the foundations for the reconstruction of ECD services?
  - What still exists of the pre-emergency provision for ECD?
  - Which populations of families with young children are particularly at risk?
  - What is the most effective use of resources?

## Questions about possible ECD activities outside camps

Emergency ECD provision, in many instances, is not just limited to in-camp. In Bosnia, SC has supported ECD activities in the community during conflicts. In this context further questions arise, particularly regarding what is meant by 'safe spaces'. These must be accounted for in the emergency plan and, therefore, thought about in the pre-emergency planning processes.

- What are the different conflict situations in which ECD work in communities might take place:
  - In the immediate conflict area?
  
  - Outside the immediate area but affected?
  
  - Displaced internally but in communities?
  
  - Displaced externally and living with other communities?
  
- What is the access to any of these groups:
  - Who and where are they?
  
  
  - Do you have access to any of them?
  
  
  - Who else has access to them?

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- What do you know about them already?</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ What is the current situation:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- What risks do the different groups face?</li> <li>- What risks do you face in working with them?</li> <li>- What kind of community structures (still) exist?</li> <li>- What signs are there of ECD activity taking place?</li></ul></li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ What are the safety implications in developing ECD activities during conflict:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Is the site where ECD is based safe?</li>  <li>- Is the journey to the site very hazardous for children, parents and staff?</li></ul></li></ul>

**Questions to be asked if ECD community-based work can begin to be developed**

- What needs to be done:
  - To ensure the safety of both the activity space and routes to get there?
  
  - To have an early warning system in place to monitor changes in safety?
  
  - Are other agencies following the same safety standards?
  
  - Are you regularly reviewing safety?
  
- What aspects of the wider environment can continue to be improved for greater and long-term safety:
  - Within communities?
  
  
  - Amongst agencies (international and national; government and non-government)?
  
- What opportunities are there to continue to develop ECD activities post-conflict?

## Participatory learning and action (PLA)

Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) was previously referred to as Participatory Research and Action (PRA) and before that Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) or was known by other names. PLA is about researching *with* communities, rather than on their behalf, and thus moves away from more traditional extractive methods of information collection.

Although the concept of PLA is constantly evolving, it can be thought of as a set of approaches, methods and behaviours to help community members, including children, explore and analyse their own life experiences and then identify and facilitate potential solutions and actions.

PLA approaches have been developed over the past 15 years and are now beginning to be used more widely in Europe. Traditionally, PLA has been used to explore issues such as health, natural resource management, and food security. It is increasingly being used to explore other issues such as ECD or poverty, and has been used in emergency planning.

Research within the PLA tradition uses a wide range of methods, many of which are visual. Some of these methods, with a few examples specific to ECD, follow:

- Focus groups: you could find out from a number of different community groups, including children, what they understand by ECD.
- Mapping: community groups might map where community activities already take place, or where families with young children are.
- Seasonal calendars: you may want to find out how other community activities already taking place may affect plans for ECD provision.
- Role playing: local partners might role play how local power relations influence their own wishes for particular services and support, or older children might show how they think ECD provision benefits younger siblings.
- Ranking: which kinds of service provision, including ECD, do community members think are most important?

Such methods are intended to empower people to express and analyse the realities of their lives. They aim to encourage the involvement of people who might normally be left out, such as those who cannot read or write, or who have learning difficulties.

Ultimately, PLA is about behaviour and attitude change, that is, development workers stepping out of the 'expert' role and letting community members take control of the process. For further information on PLA read:

- *Listening to smaller voices: children in an environment of change*, Victoria Johnson, Joanna Hill and Edda Ivan-Smith, Action Aid (1995).

## Section 5: Play and Activities

Play, either organised or spontaneous, offers children ways of making sense of their experiences. The physical and emotional impact of conflict, violence and oppression will vary from child to child. Nevertheless, evidence suggests that children who have been subjected to great stress may benefit from the routine, relationships, environment and materials of the early childhood group (Tolfree, 1996).

The activities described below are suggestions only, and must be changed and adapted to fit the interests of the children with whom you work. The main point is that children should have opportunities to express themselves verbally and non-verbally. Some activities may cause children to recall, and express, distressing memories (perhaps through drawings or make-believe play). This should be neither encouraged nor discouraged, but allowed and supported if initiated by the child.

Stories, drawing, music, dance and theatre, using puppets and masks, are all elements of a good early childhood programme.

*Creative activities give children the chance to be happy, to communicate their feelings and ideas through games, drawings, theatre, dances, songs and model making. Through creative activities they develop relationships among themselves, increase their learning, and free their initiative. Through them, children may regain their love of life and pleasure in learning, and feel free to express themselves and develop a sense of hope in the future.*

‘Children in Conflict’,  
*Bernard van Leer Foundation Newsletter*,  
Number 67, p.10, July 1992.

## ACTIVITIES

Activities that give children the chance to make choices, and express opinions, will promote children's self-confidence. Whenever possible, give the children the opportunity to choose activities, tidy up, decide when and what to eat, etc. Children can also evaluate the activities on offer: very simply but effectively – asking them to vote will quickly tell you whether children enjoyed an activity.

### General

<b>Activity</b>	<b>We Wind Up The Thread</b>
<b>Activity description</b>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Ask children to do an arm movement as if they are winding up thread.</li><li>2. Suddenly the adult says 'The thread breaks!' The children spread their arms.</li><li>3. The adult asks the children to wind up the thread again. S/he again says, 'The thread breaks!' This is repeated several times so long as the children are interested.</li></ol>	
<b>Extension</b>	
Ask the children to suggest other arm movements to go with various activities.	

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Jump Up</b>
<b>Activity description</b>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. The children form a circle.</li><li>2. Say a child's name.</li><li>3. As their names are called, they quickly jump up and sit down again.</li></ol>	
<b>Extension</b>	
Each child says the name of the person next to them, who then jumps up, sits down and names the next person. This continues around the circle until everyone has had a turn to jump up.	

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Small and Large Bodies</b>
<b>Activity description</b>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Ask children to lie on a mat and make themselves as big as they can.</li><li>2. Then ask them to make themselves as small as they can.</li></ol>	
<b>Extension</b>	
If large pieces of paper are available, trace around each child's big and small shapes so the child can compare the two outlines.	

**Activity****Let's Chop Wood****Activity description**

Ask children to stand with their legs apart and their hands clasped over their heads.

1. They then pretend to be chopping wood by bending back and then forward and down. Their arms fall between their legs as if they are holding a heavy axe. The action is repeated.

**Extension**

After the children become familiar with the actions, ask them to breathe in as they raise their arms over their heads and to breathe out as they chop the wood.

**Activity****Light or Heavy**

**Materials needed:** Toys and other objects

**Activity description**

1. Name an object and ask children to discuss whether it is light or heavy. Then they pretend they are carrying the object. Some suggestions for objects to show or name are: a flower, a box of toys, firewood, jug of water, empty plate, or banana.
2. New children can join the game as others leave it.

**Extension**

The children can organise this game by themselves after it has been introduced.

**Activity****Watch the Word****Activity description**

1. Give verbal directions to the children about what to do with their hands. Examples are: raise your hands, put your hands down, hold out your hands, put your hands behind you, cross your hands, clap your hands.
2. While giving the oral directions to the children, do the opposite movements so your movements do not match your words.
3. The children listen carefully and try to follow the spoken directions, not the movements.

**Extension**

Children will enjoy leading this game.

**Activity****Sound Walk****Activity description**

1. Take the children to an area away from traffic and other man-made noises. Stop and stand still. Ask the children to be very quiet, close their eyes and listen.
2. After a few minutes, ask them what they have heard.
3. Then ask them to be very quiet again and listen with their eyes open. Suggest that they raise their hand when they hear a noise.

**Extension**

When the children have returned to the play area, ask them to imitate the noises they heard and write on a chart the sources of the different noises such as birds, wind, animals, rustling leaves.

**Activity****Nature Models**

**Materials needed:** Clay or mud, nature items such as leaves, berries, feathers, nuts

**Activity description**

1. Encourage children to experiment with combining nature items and clay. Emphasise the process not the product.
2. At the end of the session ask children about their work and offer an opportunity for them to show their creations if they want to.

**Extension**

Clay to be available to children several times a week.

**Activity****Creating with Clay**

**Materials needed:** Clay or mud

**Activity description**

1. Children will enjoy playing with clay several times a week.
2. Offer different accessories at the clay centre such as toothpicks, matchsticks, plastic knives, empty tin cans, small plastic dishes and cylinders.

**Extension**

Suggest that children create something with clay by working with a partner.

**Activity****Today We Play Music****Activity description**

1. In introducing the activity, tell the children that they are going to play their body instruments – arms and hands.
2. Show them some possible ways of producing sounds with their bodies: clapping their hands, snapping their fingers, clapping upper leg with their hands, knocking on the table or on the floor with their fists.
3. The children sing a song and in pauses they 'play' their body instruments.

**Extension**

Children will be able to think of other ways to create sound with their bodies.

**Activity****Introduce Myself****Activity description**

1. For several days, give a few children an opportunity to stand up in the group to introduce themselves and describe their appearance, wishes and things they enjoy doing.
2. Ask questions such as: What do you like to do the most? Who do you usually play with at home? What is your favourite colour?
3. The activity continues each day until all the children have had a turn.

**Extension**

If possible put up a picture of each child, or their names written on colourful, decorated strips of paper.

**Activity****Recognise the Hand**

**Materials needed:** Room divider

**Activity description**

1. Discuss the different ways we can recognise our friends. Divide the children into five groups.
2. One group hides behind a room divider, and one child from the group stretches out her hand so the children on the other side can see it.
3. The members of the other groups try to guess whose hand it is. The activity continues until all the groups have taken their part in the game.

**Extension**

This game presents an opportunity to talk about the uniqueness of each child and how friends are alike and different.

**Activity****An Obstacle Course**

**Materials needed:** Chairs, boxes, table

**Activity description**

1. Arrange a course where children climb over chairs, crawl under tables, crawl through boxes, etc.
2. When a child finishes the course, other children cheer and applaud.

**Extension**

Encourage the children's suggestions for other safe obstacles and challenges.

**Activity****If I Were...****Activity description**

1. Tell the children a story about a boy who fell and hurt himself while riding his bicycle.
2. The children continue and finish the story by explaining what they would do if they were the boy.

**Extension**

Children enjoy role-playing stories in which they need to solve problems.

**Co-operative play and building trust****Activity****Follow the Leader****Activity description**

1. The object of this activity is to give each child a chance to express himself, to have a feeling of being important and to have an opportunity to lead other children in an activity.
2. Choose one child to be a leader. The leader gets up and the other children follow him, imitating him as he walks around the room making movements such as hopping, clapping hands, nodding head, waving, jumping, etc.
3. Choose a new leader and the game continues. This game should be played over several days until every child has had a turn to be leader.

**Extension**

Select children to be leaders in other activities, such as helper, to pass out, or collect, materials, when greeting guests, etc.

**Activity****Chain Movement****Activity description**

1. The children form a line standing shoulder to shoulder. The first child makes a movement and the other children imitate that movement. It can be a movement of an arm, a leg or any other part of the body.
2. As soon as the previous child has moved, the next must quickly copy the movement.
3. Once that movement has gone down the line, another child is selected to start one.

**Extension**

When children are familiar with this game, combine a movement with a sound to imitate.

**Activity****Mirror Game****Activity description**

1. Select two children and ask one child to imitate the other as if seeing herself in a mirror. The two children go to the centre of the circle and face each other. One child does some movements with arms, head, legs or shoulders. The other child tries to imitate the first as quickly possible so it seems there is a reflection in the mirror.
2. Other children sit in the circle and observe. Then all children get a partner and take turns being the mirror.

**Extension**

Bring a mirror into the group.

**Activity****Meet My Friend****Activity description**

1. While sitting in a circle on the floor, the first player takes the hand of the child next to him, holds it up and says, 'This is my friend', and tells the child's name. Then that child repeats this with the child sitting on her other side.
2. When the action has gone all the way around the circle, the children all give a cheer and fall backward still holding hands.

**Extension**

This game might lead to a short discussion about how friends treat each other.

**Activity****Friends Together****Activity description**

Ask children to choose a friend to be their partner.

1. Suggest that the children hold hands and take turns selecting and then doing a physical activity together such as running, jumping, hopping or walking backwards.

**Extension**

Ask the children to sit closely together in a circle so that their shoulders touch. Begin swaying back and forth to a song. Talk about how much fun it is to play together.

**Activity****The Talking Stick**

**Materials needed:** A stick which the children have decorated with ribbons

**Activity description**

1. When children are having a conversation in a group, only the child holding The Talking Stick can speak.
2. When another child wants to say something, The Talking Stick is passed to him.
3. Other children are given positive feedback on their good listening.

**Extension**

Use The Talking Stick any time that children need a friendly reminder not to interrupt.

**Activity****Safe Island**

**Materials needed:** Small mat or piece of fabric

**Activity description**

1. Tell the children that the rug is an island and they are swimmers who need to reach the island safely. They will have to work together to fit everyone on the island and may have to hold on to each other so they don't fall back in the water.
2. Ask the children to move to one end of the area and begin swimming to the island. Count them as they safely reach the island. Emphasise how they are helping each other.

**Extension**

Fold the mat to a smaller size and repeat the activity.

**Activity****Friendship Swing**

**Materials needed:** Large blanket

**Activity description**

1. Talk for a few minutes about showing kindness and gentleness to friends and about co-operation. Put the blanket on the floor and ask one child to lie on it.
2. The other children lift the edges of the blanket, slightly raising the child off the ground.
3. The child on the blanket is asked if he would like to close his eyes and have a very gentle swing. If he agrees, the children gently swing the blanket.
4. Then the blanket is gently lowered to the floor and another child has a turn.
5. Offer positive feedback on how well the children co-operated.

**Extension**

It is a good idea to have an adult on each side of the blanket. As all children may want a turn, keep track of who does it and offer the activity for several days.

**Conflict resolution****Activity****One Toy, Two Children****Activity description**

1. Tell the children a story about a quarrel between two children who hit each other because they both wanted the same toy. The children are asked to help solve the problem of the quarrel. Ask questions. What would you do if you were one of those children? What would you tell her? How could you help these two children?
2. Two children are chosen to act out the situation of the quarrelling children.
3. You and the other children encourage them to try to solve the problem through conversation and agreement. The children applaud a positive solution of the quarrel.

**Extension**

The teacher needs to be alert to children's disagreements in the group and encourage them to use problem-solving skills. The teacher needs to avoid solving their problems for them.

**Activity****Helping Partners****Activity description**

1. The children form pairs and sit back to back with their arms interlocked with their partner's. In this position they work together to stand up.
2. Next, ask the children to face each other with their legs slightly bent and their feet touching. They hold hands and work together to stand up from this position.

**Extension**

The same type of activity sometimes works with groups of three or four children. Talk with the children about the importance of working together.

**Activity****Gentle Painting**

**Materials needed:** Soft fabric or cotton balls or clean feathers

**Activity description**

1. Children pair up and sit facing each other.
2. Children pretend to paint each other by stroking the soft object gently on the partner's face and arms. Ask them not to paint close to their partner's eyes.
3. Reinforce the gentle touches by speaking slowly and softly.

**Extension**

When both children have had a turn, talk about what it felt like to be treated gently and what it felt like to do the painting. Remind children about gentle touches any time that rough play is observed.

**The following activities may provoke strong feelings and should be introduced sensitively**

**Activity****The Small Magic Rocks**

**Materials needed:** Small rocks in basket

**Activity description**

1. In a small group ask children to imagine that the rocks are magic and can fulfil the children's wishes.
2. One by one, the children take a small rock, holding it in their hands while explaining their wish. The other children are encouraged to listen and ask questions about the wish.
3. When all the children have told their wishes, they place the magic rocks back in the basket.

**Extension**

Important information about a child and his family may be revealed in this activity. The adult needs to be a sensitive listener.

**Activity****Magic Wand**

**Materials needed:** Stick

**Activity description**

1. Encourage the children to move freely around the space. While they are moving, touch them with the magic wand.
2. When you touch a child, the child has to stop and smile broadly. The children who are not touched with a magic wand continue to move freely until they are touched.
3. The activity is over when all the children are stopped and smiling.

**Extension**

Ask children how it feels to look around and see everyone smiling.

**Activity****The Sound of Feelings****Activity description**

1. Ask the children to close their eyes and to listen carefully to your voice.
2. Say a short sentence such as, 'It is sunny today'. Through the inflection and tone of your voice say it sadly, happily, fearfully or angrily.
3. The children guess the feeling you are trying to communicate.

**Extension**

Encourage the children to make various sounds or say words to convey emotions which the other children then try to guess.

**Activity****When You are Happy****Activity description**

1. Read a story about happiness or sadness to a small group of children.
2. Ask the questions: 'What makes you happy?' 'What makes you sad?'
3. Children are encouraged to talk freely and spontaneously.

**Extension**

At the same time, other children will enjoy drawing a happy and/or sad face on oval-shaped paper.

## Section 6: The lists

### Toys

Below are some suggested toys, which can help stimulate young children as they play. (Taken from *Mental Health of Refugees*, pp. 75-76, WHO in collaboration with UNHCR, 1996.)

**TOYS:** Pebbles, clay shapes, beads or sticks.

- **Activity:** Children sort them by size, colour and shape.
- **Purpose:** Develops a systematic way of classifying things. This early concept of groups and categories is the first step to organizing and counting.

**TOYS:** Play objects or implements for things that adults do, such as sweeping, gardening or writing. An activity may not require a toy but just an adult with the time to lead an imaginary game.

- **Activity:** Let children 'help' with your work in simple tasks, such as carrying water or food and cleaning at home. Join in when the child wants to imitate what you do. Explain what you do each day and why.
- **Purpose:** This is the age of imitative play. By such play, children learn what adults do and start to establish their own identity. More importantly, it is a first step in learning more serious concepts of right and wrong, moral and social obligations and how adults treat one another.

**TOYS:** Objects for small hand skills: paper for tearing into shapes or cutting; pencils and crayons for drawing and colouring; sticks for drawing in the earth; beads (of paper or clay) for stringing together; cups for pouring back and forth water, sand, gravel or mud; simple sewing materials. Objects for large skills: hoops and sticks for rolling; balls for kicking and throwing (can be cloth, wooden or woven) or even tin cans for kicking; swings (from cloth hammocks or carrying slings); climbing frames or sliding boards (from wood, tin or bamboo).

- **Activity:** For small skills, practise with the toys, draw pictures or make things. For large motor skills, play games that involve running, skipping, throwing and kicking.
- **Purpose:** Improves co-ordination between eye and hand, and overall body co-ordination. As with speech, there is a long period of development during which all these skills are practised and repeated. Self-esteem and self-confidence improve when skills are mastered. The learning of skills encourages independence, giving children the courage to try new things.

## ECD emergency kit list for 20 children

This list is for the Balkans only. Elsewhere, different equipment will be more appropriate. But do note that you can run a perfectly good ECD programme without factory-made toys and with the minimum of basic equipment.

### Assumptions are that:

- cleaning materials (eg, broom, duster-cloth and sponge) and first aid kits for children will be provided in emergency kits elsewhere;
- provision of toilet facilities and food will be negotiated with other agencies.

### Emergency kit

Tent x 1                    10m x 5m<sup>13</sup>  
Wooden floor            10m x 5m<sup>14</sup>  
Carpet x 1                5m x 5m  
Lino x 1                  5m x 5m<sup>15</sup>  
Generator x 1  
Lighting kit x 1  
Fan x 1  
Heater x 1<sup>16</sup>  
Plastic tables x 4, child-sized  
Plastic chairs x 20, child-sized  
Adult chairs x 2  
Mattresses x 20  
Toys for 20 children: to include: building bricks, Lego, modelling clay, soft toys,  
toy animals, musical instruments, masks,  
scooters, prams  
  
Hoops x 4  
Balls x 4  
Small beanbags x 4  
Skipping ropes x 4  
Reading books x 20-40  
Picture books x 20-40  
Pencils x 100  
Erasers x 10-20  
Sharpening knives x 2  
Washable ink colouring pens x 10-20 sets  
Reams of paper x 10  
Scissors x 2  
Glue x 4 large pots  
String x 1 large ball  
Register x 1  
Tape recorder x 1  
Cassette tapes x 10

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<sup>13</sup> Consists actually of two tents zipped together to make one; 50 square metres is sufficient space for approximately 20 children and 2 adults

<sup>14</sup> Carpentry tools included in logistics kit

<sup>15</sup> Lino to be used for 'dirty area' (for shoes, etc) at tent opening and elsewhere as required

<sup>16</sup> Fan and heater depending on time of year

## References

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## Further reading

### ECD general

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**Myers**, R: *The Twelve who Survive: Strengthening programmes of ECD in the Third World*. Routledge, 1992.

**Save the Children/UNICEF**: *Bringing up Children in a Changing World: Who's right? whose rights?* Save the Children, 2000.

### Adult training

**Carter**, Margie and Curtis, Deb: *Training Teachers: A harvest of theory and practice*, Redleaf Press, St. Paul, Minnesota, USA, 1994.

**Dodge**, Diana Trister: *A Guide for Supervisors and Trainers on Implementing the Creative Curriculum for Early Childhood*, Teaching Strategies, Washington, D.C., USA, 1998.

**Jones**, Elizabeth: *Teaching Adults: An active learning approach*, National Association for the Education of Young Children, Washington, D.C., USA, 1986.

**Torkington**, Kate and Landers, Cassie: *Enhancing the Skills of Early Childhood Trainers*, Bernard van Leer Foundation, The Netherlands and UNESCO, Paris, France, 1995.

## Web sites

**[www.worldbank.org/children](http://www.worldbank.org/children)** – this site contains 'ABC for ECD' with four sections dealing with:

- What ECD is and the theory underlying its techniques and programmes;
- Which benefits are gained from ECD interventions;
- How to design and use an ECD programme and evaluate its efficacy;
- How to do a cost-benefit analysis of an ECD programme.

**[www.ecdgroup.com](http://www.ecdgroup.com)** – website of Consultative Group on Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD). This site links to:

- **[www.ecdgroup.com/cnonline.html](http://www.ecdgroup.com/cnonline.html)** – which covers many other companion topics, including Protecting Children from the Scourge of War and Children Affected by Organized Violence.

**[www.bernardvanleer.org](http://www.bernardvanleer.org)** – website of Bernard van Leer Foundation.

**For your own notes**

