

# Chapter 2.10

## EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

### MAIN OBJECTIVES

- **To ensure that the social, emotional and developmental rights of young children are fulfilled during emergency situations.**
- **To ensure that young children have access to safe places where their developmental needs can be met through play and early learning activities.**
- **To enable families and caregivers to participate in integrated activities with young children.**

### CONTEXT AND CHALLENGES

“Learning begins at birth. Systematic development of basic learning tools and concepts therefore requires that due attention be paid to the care of young children and their initial education, which can be delivered via arrangements that involve parents, the community or institutions, depending on requirements.”

Source: [World Conference on Education for All \(1990, Art. 5\)](#)

Developmental activities in the early childhood years are crucial in preparing children for basic education, helping them acquire skills and increasing performance and retention in school later on. Even in emergency situations, and with limited resources,

education interventions should begin with investment in early childhood development activities to ensure that basic rights of children to survival, protection, care and participation are fully protected from birth to school age and onwards.

Early education activities help prepare children to enter and succeed in school, ensure caregivers are equipped to support their children's learning and transition to school, and make sure schools are ready and more inclusive for all children. Play is the medium of learning in early childhood and has a central importance as an educational strategy that can promote the psychosocial and physical well-being of learners. Creating a stimulating and holistic environment to play and learn increases significantly both cognitive and social-emotional competence of children ([INEE/CGECCD, 2009](#)).

Critical brain development depends on adequate protection, stimulation and effective care ([IASC, 2007](#)).

Early Childhood Development (ECD: [www.ecdgroup.com](http://www.ecdgroup.com)) programmes yield both short- and long-term benefits. The greatest impact comes from providing intensive, high-quality services for the most vulnerable children and families. To maximize results for children, ECD programmes should begin before pregnancy and continue until children are eight years old. In a life-cycle approach, children and youth are prepared for positive parenting, parents receive continuous parent education and support, and infants and young children are provided with loving, nurturing stimulation, early education, preventive and basic health and nutrition care, and effective protection and sanitation services.

## **BENEFITS OF EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT (ECD) PROGRAMMES FOR CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES**

- Establish greater normalcy in children's lives, giving children the routines and care needed for healthy development within and beyond the emergencies.
- Support and enhance parent(caregiver)–child relationship.
- Enable children to express their views and be listened to.
- Create a secure and safe environment where children can flourish right from the beginning.
- Enable children to interact and be together in groups, and to develop conflict resolution, trust building and problem-solving skills.
- Enable children to adapt to a changing environment.
- Enhance their development.
- Enhance school readiness for children and parents' readiness during the transition from home to school.
- Support mothers and fathers as the main caregivers by providing time for work, other responsibilities or a short break from domestic tasks.
- Build on what is already there, by strengthening existing skills and practices evolved over generations, melding with modern knowledge.
- Provide a sense of continuity in times of change, and an opportunity to reflect and transmit community beliefs and values.
- Provide opportunities for volunteers and para-professionals to acquire valuable child-caring experience.





- Address children’s holistic needs. Young children grow holistically, across multiple domains of development that interact and scaffold on one another. Those interacting domains are, among others: Physical Well-Being and Motor Development; Self-help, Social and Emotional Development; Cognition and General Knowledge; and Language Development).
- Can replace, on a temporary basis, familiar routines and child-rearing activities interrupted by conflict, and aid healthy development both within and beyond the emergency.
- Protect children from potential immediate physical dangers
- Provide an entry point or facility for other emergency services and basic health care.
- Act as a catalyst for communities to recover and develop forums of caregivers.
- Equalizing factor for at-risk or disadvantaged children to improve their holistic development.
- Assist in the psychosocial recovery of children and their families.

Source: Adapted from [Save the Children UK \(2001\)](#) and [INEE/CGECCD \(2009\)](#)

Emergencies pose a set of challenges – visible and invisible – for young children in already difficult situations. Early losses (e.g. the death of a parent), witnessing physical or sexual violence, and other distressing events can disrupt bonding and undermine healthy long-term social and emotional development, communication and cognition. However, most children appear to be remarkably resilient and recover to a great extent from such experiences, especially when they are given appropriate care and support. Facilitated play and social activities that build

on the resilience children have and help mitigate the negative psychosocial impact of crisis situations (IASC, 2007).

In emergencies, very young children are often an invisible group since an assumption is frequently made that they are being adequately cared for by their parents or other relatives. Yet, emergencies have a significant impact on the care and development of young children because traditional support structures are disrupted and families are experiencing extraordinary stress. In most emergencies, existing EDC programmes are likely to be disrupted, along with other educational programmes, denying young children a chance to learn and grow in a supportive environment during one of the most critical stages of their development (Sinclair, 2001: 33).

Because Articles 18 and 19 of the [Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) stipulate that States have an obligation to support parents in raising children and in protecting them from abuse and neglect and other potential threats, support for early childhood development activities during emergencies is a policy requirement. However, in any given emergency situation, there may be no agency responsible for the implementation and running of these activities, and the success of such programmes requires the direct involvement of parents. Their ownership and sense of responsibility for children's development is critical.

The success of ECD programmes depends on caregiver involvement and commitment. This includes mothers, fathers, grandparents, older siblings, education staff, health staff, volunteers and the community. It is necessary to organize meetings of parents and caregivers of young children where they can discuss their past, present and future and support each other in caring effectively for their children (IASC, 2007).

As ECD is holistic, establishing integrated, holistic community-based services with links cutting across with health, nutrition, education, water/sanitation and psychosocial support is important during all stages of emergencies.

A holistic approach to policy and programming requires coordination and communication between national authority departments or ministries responsible for water, sanitation, hygiene, nutrition, health, education, social welfare and protection, as well as UN and non-government groups working together with families and communities. This is why the Core Group Polio Project (CGPP: [www.care.org/careswork/projects/NPL038.asp](http://www.care.org/careswork/projects/NPL038.asp)) suggests that coordinated action among a range of sectors is vital to effectively care for young children in emergencies.

Humanitarian actors developed a cluster approach (HPG, 2007) intended to increase response capacity and effectiveness by providing predictable leadership, strengthened inter-agency partnerships, greater accountability, and improved field-level coordination and prioritization. This cluster approach provides various entry points into which early childhood principles can and should be mainstreamed. (See also the *Guidebook, Chapter 5.11, 'Coordination and communication'*.)

## **SUGGESTED STRATEGIES**

Educational activities in the early childhood years are crucial in preparing children for basic education, helping them acquire skills and increasing performance and retention in school later on. Even in situations of emergencies, and with limited resources, education interventions should begin with investment in early childhood development activities to ensure that basic rights of

children to survival, protection, care and participation are fully protected from birth to school age and onwards.


Some of the key strategies and issues are noted below. A checklist of points and ideas for developing and implementing each strategy is provided under the 'Guidance notes' that follow.



## **Summary of suggested strategies**

### **Early childhood development**

- 1. Integrate ECD dimensions into emergency humanitarian relief efforts.**
- 2. Establish integrated, holistic community-based services with cross-cutting links with health, nutrition, education, water/sanitation and protection, including psychosocial support.**
- 3. Conduct a review of pre-primary education programmes being carried out under government auspices, through civil-society organizations and external agencies and NGOs, and establish a coordination mechanism.**
- 4. Take steps to strengthen the capacity of the education ministry's Department for Pre-primary Education when such a department exists.**

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- 5. Prepare a framework for pre-primary education, according to the phase of emergency. At the early reconstruction phase, prepare a national plan of action, if there is sufficient interest. Ensure that pre-primary education is included in plans for educational reconstruction.**
  - 6. Provide guidance to civil-society organizations on the conduct of pre-primary education programmes, including elements such as those listed in points 7-9 below.**
  - 7. Ensure the participation of emergency-affected populations and local communities when assessing, planning, implementing and monitoring/evaluating early childhood development activities.**
  - 8. Consider establishing training programmes for parents and community members.**
  - 9. Develop strategies that ensure the sustainability of the early childhood activities.**



## Guidance notes

### 1. Integrate ECD dimensions into emergency humanitarian relief efforts.

- Conduct a review of existing ECD programmes and determine how young children are looked after in affected communities, starting with the most vulnerable groups.
- Ensure that young children have access to safe spaces.
- Ensure that ECD is included in Rapid Education Assessments as well as in Joint-Needs Assessments tools.
- Ensure that emergency plans which are drawn up with other humanitarian sectors accommodate the youngest.
- Encourage government ministries' participation in the design, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of ECD programmes.
- Have psychosocial components been incorporated into programme areas?
- Has gender-sensitive food distribution been organized for pregnant and lactating mothers?

### 2. Establish integrated, holistic community-based services with cross-cutting links with health, nutrition, education, water/sanitation and protection, including psychosocial support.

- Is the education sector coordinating with other sectors so that all sectors together contribute to meeting the holistic needs of young children?
- Are interventions built on family support systems and community social, cultural and physical infrastructure and resources?

- Is psychosocial assistance to distressed caregivers and children incorporated into interventions? Are they built upon local beliefs and meanings ?

### **3. Conduct a review of pre-primary education programmes being carried out under government auspices, through civil-society organizations and external agencies and NGOs, and establish a coordination mechanism.**

Organizations with a particular focus on the welfare of young children may have developed high-quality programmes in specific locations. Other governmental and civil-society organizations may benefit from this expertise. (See also the [Guidebook, Chapter 5.1, 'Assessment of needs and resources'](#).)

- What types of early childhood activities existed in the affected population before the crisis?
  - What activities were offered to each age group? Were there activities for parents and children together?
  - What was the caregiver/child ratio per age group?
  - Were early learning and play materials available?
  - What ages were the children who participated in the activities?
  - Was food provided?
  - Was the service half day or full day?
- In what areas did early childhood education exist? Regions? Communities? Or impacted areas?
- Which children participated?
  - Only children whose parents could pay?
  - Only children whose parents worked for a certain company or the government?

- Were children from minorities or children with disabilities able to access the early childhood education activities?
- Did the government support the early childhood programme?
  - If so, what kind of support did the government provide for the ECD programmes?
- Were there any community-supported ECD programmes?



### FLUCTUATIONS IN THE PROVISION OF EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES IN TIMOR-LESTE

“During the years of Indonesian rule, there were 64 kindergartens in East Timor, the vast majority operated by the Catholic Church. Some 5,000 pupils attended these pre-schools, approximately 10 per cent of those between age 5 and 6. During the transitional period this rate of enrolment fell, according to UNICEF ... partially due to the fact that early childhood was ignored in national priorities – and thus in budgets. In November 2001, the Joint Donor Education Sector Mission found that 4,500 children were attending a total of 41 kindergartens. However, other types of early childhood education have also developed. All eight of UNICEF’s Child Friendly Spaces include a component of early childhood development and Christian Children’s Fund has worked with a number of communities in providing their own early childhood care. Regardless of type, the government does not pay pre-school teacher salaries, which instead must come out of parent contributions and fees. An Early Childhood Forum was brought together beginning in 2000; through UNICEF and Ministry of Education, Culture, Youth and Sports, it counts a draft national policy on Early Childhood Education as one of its achievements.”

Source: Nicolai (2004: 85–86)

- Who were the early childhood teachers/volunteers?
  - Did they receive special training or any incentives?
  - Were young people or the elderly trained to provide early childhood activities?
- Were parent education and support programmes available?
  - If so, which parents attended the programmes?
  - What topics were covered?
- What formal and non-formal early childhood activities are currently taking place? Conduct a review of those activities to determine whether additional support is needed. For each site:
  - Is the available space sufficient for both indoor and outdoor play?
  - Is it nearby or within a school?
  - Is the space safe?
  - If the space is insufficient, can the activities be held in the morning and afternoon in order to accommodate all children?
  - Are the teachers/facilitators/volunteers trained? Where were they trained? Could young people or the elderly be involved in organizing and helping with the activities for children?
  - Is there a system of referral in place for children that are psychologically challenged or other marginalized children? Where are they referred? What cases have been referred?
- Are the early childhood development activities registered with the government? If so, what is the relationship between the existing activities and the government?

**4. Take steps to strengthen the capacity of the education ministry's Department for Pre-primary Education when such a department exists.**

There is a wide range of international experience of education at the pre-primary stage, both in emergencies and in non-emergency situations. External donors may be interested in supporting the strengthening of ministry capacity in this area. (See also the [Guidebook, Chapter 1.4, 'Capacity building'](#).)

**5. Prepare a framework for pre-primary education, according to the phase of emergency. At the early reconstruction phase, prepare a national plan of action, if there is sufficient interest. Ensure that pre-primary education is included in plans for educational reconstruction.**

(See the ['Tools and resources'](#) section of this chapter for possible needs and responses involved in developing early childhood development programmes.)

**6. Provide guidance to civil-society organizations on the conduct of pre-primary education programmes, including elements such as those listed in points 7-9 below.**

- Is there sufficient information available on learners' needs and appropriate responses?
- Are organizations invited to coordinate their activities within a national/regional action plan?
- Are training events/information campaigns followed by appropriate follow-up and monitoring?
- Are the ministries of health and social welfare involved?



## EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES IN KOSOVO

In 1999, as part of UNICEF's Child Friendly Spaces programme, Save the Children UK assisted in setting up ECD programmes for children of Kosovo refugees in Albania. ECD programmes were considered a priority, and included infant care, pre- and primary school education, recreational activities, psychosocial support for infants and toddlers and counselling for children and their families. The account of the organization's effort to establish an ECD programme in the camp Stankovec 1 provides useful lessons on some of the obstacles to such programmes:

Stankovec 1 had been set up by NATO, and in some respects bore resemblance to an army camp. There was no tent large enough to house a playroom, and no free space to set up a new one. There was an initial attempt to share spaces with other agencies, such as Oxfam, but this fell through with the arrival of new refugees. A tent 5 × 15 metres thus had to serve up to 3,000 young children. As a response, the playroom was run by a shift system, where children could attend an hour at a time, in seven different sessions a day.

Similar ECD tents were later established in five other camps, but requisitioning proved difficult, and the need to fill out request forms and lack of equipment caused much delay.

Among the many problems illustrated in this experience were:

- Difficulty of securing any adequate space.
- Lack of materials and equipment.
- Some agencies providing unsuitable materials and equipment.
- Programme was started where the staff had no contacts and people in the camp did not know the team.
- Lack of prepared, informed training programmes.
- Lack of coordination with other agencies affecting all aspects of the programme.





- Save the Children 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.

Amongst the solutions and achievements were:

- The creation of a play space with a clean and home-like atmosphere, replacing the usual plastic sheeting on the floor with a cheap wooden one, to protect from camp mud.
- Avoidance of expensive or inappropriate toys.
- Registration of teachers and other educators, and regular meetings with these.
- Registration of small children and preparation of shift schedules.
- The recruitment and training of volunteers.
- The recruitment of unemployed Albanian caretakers outside the camp for paid positions, so as not to create financial expectations within the camp for reward that were not sustainable.

Source: [Save the Children UK \(2001\)](#)

## **7. Ensure the participation of emergency-affected populations and local communities when assessing, planning, implementing and monitoring/evaluating early childhood development activities.**

(See also the '[Tools and resources](#)' section for suggested principles to consider when developing early childhood development programmes and for examples of early childhood activities.)

For each site, consider the following.

- Review existing assessment data to determine which young children are the most vulnerable. (See also the [Guidebook, Chapter 5.1, 'Assessment of needs and resources'](#).)
  - How many young children (aged 0–8) are present?
  - Are there young children who are separated from their parents?
  - How many child-headed households exist? How many of these contain very young children?
- What age groups will be targeted?
- What groups of the community will be targeted? Are minority and other vulnerable children – children with a disability, children of adolescent mothers, children separated from their parents – targeted for inclusion?
- What activities are most needed for these children (e.g. nursery care while parents are working/siblings are studying or attending educational activities or pre-school activities that focus on children's development and/or school readiness)?
- How can local culture and child-care customs be used to enhance the acceptance and effectiveness of early childhood development programmes?
  - Can early childhood development activities be built into indigenous education structures such as religious schools, or traditional songs and story telling by elders?
  - What are the local child-rearing customs? How do these affect the planned programme? For example, in some parts of the world, older siblings take care of their young siblings rather than the parents, grandparents or relatives. With this in mind, early childhood development activities should target not only adults but also older children.
- Where and when will early childhood activities take place?



- In homes?
- In clearly identified safe spaces?
- Is there a need for multiple shifts?
- Who will implement the activities and what training/materials/supplies are needed?
  - What is the impact of the emergency on caregivers?
  - What is the impact of the emergency on teachers/facilitators?
  - What are the priority needs of local communities?
- How can early childhood programmes be integrated with other humanitarian services such as feeding, health or immunization programmes (INEE, 2003)?
  - Ideally, early childhood activities should be conducted close to maternal child health (MCH) clinics to ensure that children's health concerns and immunization needs are addressed or arrangements are made for those services to come to the ECD site.
  - Early childhood development activities for children and training for parents should also be included in therapeutic feeding programmes, basic health care settings, etc.

## **8. Consider establishing training programmes for parents and community members.**

- Who will conduct the training of trainers, and trainings of parents and community members?
  - Government education officers (training of trainers)?
  - International organizations? (training of trainers)?
  - Non-governmental organizations? (training of trainers)?
- What will the training consist of?
  - The importance of parents and caregivers regularly discussing their experiences and the challenges of raising children in a difficult environment. This can be an effective way for parents to reduce the stress of child-rearing.

- The importance of early childhood development activities.
- Child rights.
- Activities that parents can do with their children at home.
- Peace building, conflict resolution, social skills.
- Hygiene, nutrition, health, mine awareness, etc.
- Who will participate in the training?
  - Parents?
  - Older siblings?
  - Grandparents?
- How has the community been sensitized to the importance of early childhood development?  
(See the [‘Tools and resources’](#) section of this chapter for information on how to link home to pre-school and primary school.)

## **9. Develop strategies that ensure the sustainability of the early childhood activities.**

- Do parents and community members serve as volunteers?
- Do they have sufficient training to conduct the early childhood activities without outside support?
- Have educational authorities at all levels been trained to set up and monitor ongoing early childhood development programmes?
  - Are the local community and the local government mobilized and participating? How are they contributing?
  - Is there a transition plan?
- What type of ongoing monetary and material support will be needed?

## TOOLS AND RESOURCES

### 1. Early childhood development programmes: needs and responses

PROGRAMME APPROACH	PARTICIPANTS AND BENEFICIARIES	OBJECTIVES	MODELS/EXAMPLES
<b>DELIVERING SERVICES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children aged 0–2, 3–6 and 6–8 years old</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Survival</li> <li>• Overall development</li> <li>• Socialization</li> <li>• Caregiver child care?</li> <li>• Care for caregiver</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Home day care</li> <li>• Home visiting</li> <li>• Formal and non-formal pre-schools</li> <li>• Safe spaces?</li> <li>• Early childhood centres (may not be preschools)</li> </ul>
<b>EDUCATING AND SUPPORTING CAREGIVERS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parents</li> <li>• Family</li> <li>• Siblings</li> <li>• Preschool teachers</li> <li>• Community volunteers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create awareness and change attitudes of the importance of ECD</li> <li>• Improve practice</li> <li>• Support primary caregivers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Home visiting</li> <li>• Parental education and support</li> <li>• Child-to-child programmes</li> <li>• Training of trainers (TOT)</li> <li>• Training of caregivers</li> </ul>
<b>PROMOTING COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promoters (local and international NGOs?)</li> <li>• Leaders</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase awareness</li> <li>• Mobilize for action</li> <li>• Change conditions</li> <li>• Recovery and healing through participation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Technical mobilization</li> <li>• Social mobilization</li> <li>• Volunteering</li> <li>• Contributing</li> <li>• Participation in governance of services</li> </ul>

Source: Adapted from INEE (2003)

### 2. Creating links between home, preschool and primary school

The first days and months of schooling are traumatic for many young children, and are stressful for most. Upon entering primary school, 6- or 7-year-old children are thrown into situations quite

different from what they are used to, and they are expected to adapt quickly. The following are some of the transitions children must make upon entering school:

- They make a shift from learning informally through observation and practice in the home, or through play in a preschool, to more formal modes of learning.
- They are expected to move quickly from an oral culture, in which they are only beginning to gain comfort and competency, to an oral and written culture.
- Most children are expected to sit still and follow a whole range of new rules when they are used to more activity and freedom of movement.
- Many children have to make an adjustment from the practices and behaviour patterns of a minority or popular culture in their home or early childhood centre, to the practices and expectations of a majority or dominant culture adhered to by the school.
- They are sometimes required to learn and use a new language, with little or no adjustment time or direct language instruction.
- For some, the shift involves a change from being an only child or part of a small group of children in the family, to being part of a larger group. This requires them to develop new social skills quickly, and to take on new roles, including the role of 'student', which requires greater independence of children who may or may not be developmentally ready for it. They are expected to pay attention in a large group.

Even one of these challenges can block a child's healthy growth and success in the new setting. When several of these changes are encountered by a child at the same time, the stress of moving into the new learning environment of the school can be overwhelming. The result is often that the child fails to perform well, ends up

repeating grades, becomes disaffected with learning, develops a sense of failure and low self-esteem, and ultimately drops out. Thus, the way in which the transition from home or preschool to school is handled can have important effects on children's future success and happiness, as well as on their ability to enjoy and take advantage of schooling in the present.

However, concern with transitions goes well beyond concern for individual children and their futures; it encompasses the entire school system and its ability to educate students successfully, for the greater good of society. Because the disjunction among diverse 'worlds' or 'learning environments' is usually greater for children from poor and disadvantaged or minority backgrounds, the failure to anticipate potential difficulties related to differences between home and school can perpetuate and even create inequities among the 'haves' and the 'have nots' and among different cultural groups in school and beyond. A society that aspires to equity cannot afford to ignore problems that arise in the transition from home to school.

Source: Myers (1997: 2–3)

### **3. Creating links between education, health and child protection interventions**

It is vital to recognize that complementary interventions in the areas of sanitation and hygiene, education, health, nutrition and protection are important for the balanced and holistic development of young children. This integrated approach in support of early child development is particularly applicable in emergency situations when children are especially vulnerable.

The implementation of the Integrated Early Childhood Development scheme as part of the Support to War Affected Children and Youth project by UNICEF Liberia provides an excellent example of this approach:

The Support to War-Affected Youth networks (SWAY) is a consortium of six community-based non-governmental agencies that combines education, health and child protection advocacy to children in situations of crisis and instability. In Liberia, the SWAY project facilitates the implementation of youth clubs, focusing on HIV/AIDS prevention, several girls' resource centres, life skills education for teenage mothers, six transit homes for vulnerable youth, early childhood development programmes, vocational skills training and sports and recreation activities. Early childhood development care classes are offered, which contain advice on hygiene, nutrition and the importance of play for the development of the young child. In the IDP camps in which SWAY operates, the integrated approach for early childhood development is applied in the management of the camps, and various services related to health, nutrition, early stimulation and learning, water, hygiene, sanitation and protection of young children are available.

The Consultative Group on Early Childhood Care and Development (CGECCD), a global inter-agency consortium with strong links to regional networks, works actively to identify gaps, critical issues and emerging areas of need and interest related to ECD for its work in awareness-raising, advocacy, and dissemination.

Successful projects such as this that coordinate and integrate various aspects of childcare provide useful lessons for the future implementation of early childhood development schemes.

Source: [UNICEF \(2004\)](#)

## **4. Theoretical principles of child development and learning**

These principles should be viewed in conjunction with the 'Teaching and learning standard 3: Instruction' in the INEE *Minimum standards* ([INEE, 2004: 61](#)), which outlines the concept of learner-centred, participatory and inclusive instruction.

PRINCIPLE	PRACTICE
Children learn best when their physical needs are met and they feel psychologically safe and secure.	This approach respects children’s biological needs. For example, children are not made to sit and attend to paperwork or listen to adult lectures for long periods of time. The concept calls for active play and periods of quiet, restful, activity. The environment is safe and secure where everyone is accepted.
Children construct knowledge.	Knowledge is constructed as a result of dynamic interactions between the individual and the physical and social environments. In a sense, the child discovers knowledge through active experimentation. Central to experimentation is making ‘constructive errors’ that are necessary to mental development. Children need to form their own hypotheses and keep trying them out through mental actions and physical manipulations – observing what happens, comparing their findings, asking questions, and discovering answers – and adjust the model or alter the mental structures to account for the new information.
Children learn through social interaction with other adults and other children.	A prime example is the parent-child relationship. The teacher encourages and fosters this relationship as well as relationships with peers and other adults by supporting the child in his or her efforts and later allowing the child to function independently. The teacher’s role is one of supporting, guiding, and facilitating development and learning.
Children learn through play.	Play provides opportunities for exploration, experimentation, and manipulation that are essential for constructing knowledge and contributes to the development of representational thought. During play, children examine and refine their learning in light of the feedback they receive from the environment and other people. It is through play that children develop their imaginations and creativity. During the primary grades, children’s play becomes more rule-oriented and promotes the development of autonomy and cooperation that contributes to social, emotional and intellectual development.
Children’s interests and ‘need to know’ motivate learning.	Children have a need to make sense of their experiences. In a developmentally appropriate classroom, teachers identify what intrigues their children and then allow the students to solve problems together. Activities that are based on children’s interests provide motivation for learning. This fosters a love of learning, curiosity, attention, and self-direction.
Human development and learning are characterized by individual variation.	A wide range of individual variation is normal and to be expected. Each human being has an individual pattern and timing of growth development as well as individual styles of learning. Personal family experiences and cultural backgrounds also vary.

Source: Adapted from [Bredenkamp et al. \(1992\)](#)

## 5. Suggested principles for early childhood development programmes

Early Childhood activities should be designed to strengthen children's resilience and help them begin to work through their emotions and foster positive, healthy interactions with their caregivers and peers following a disaster. Where possible, activities/games promote health, hygiene, safety, environmental education, landmine awareness, social skills, emotional language, and cognitive and motor development. The curriculum is oriented towards non-violent conflict resolution and should incorporate local practices/culture utilizing traditional sources of parenting support in conjunction with state-of-the-art knowledge.

**TOPS – An easy way to remember the principles of early childhood development programmes:**

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

### **T - trust, time and talking**

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.
- 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



- 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.

## **O - opportunities to play**

Points to remember:

- Providing opportunity to play is essential to any ECD programme.
- There should be opportunities for children to take part (individually or in groups) in a range of age-adapted activities that enable them to use their imagination, spontaneity and social skills (e.g. role-play) and develop in all areas.
- Play should include organized activities allowing for physical expression (e.g. football, dancing), and also ‘quiet time’, rest and leisure, recreation, early learning, and creativity (e.g. drawing, reading, playing with individual toys).

## **P - partnership with parents (and other caregivers)**

Points to remember:

- Make parents and caregivers feel welcome in the ECD programme, and encourage them 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 caregivers and children to re-establish their relationships in a safe place, such as an informal play setting.
- Provide opportunities for parents/caregivers to talk about their hopes, fears and concerns for their children.

## **S - space and structure**

Points to remember:

- Space must be provided, which is safe and secure, with access to sanitary and hygiene facilities and enough room to be used by young children and their families; this could be outdoors or indoors, or both.
- Acceptable caregivers/children ratios and reliability of staff is absolutely essential to build a steady routine, thus helping psychologically to create feelings of safety.

Source: Adapted from [INEE \(2003\)](#)

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