Play for Inclusion

+ TOY FOR INCLUSION

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

unicef

International Child Development Initiatives

Škola Dokorán
Wide open School n. o.

Epim
European Programme for Integration and Migration

Acknowledgments

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INTRODUCTION

Overview

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

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

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

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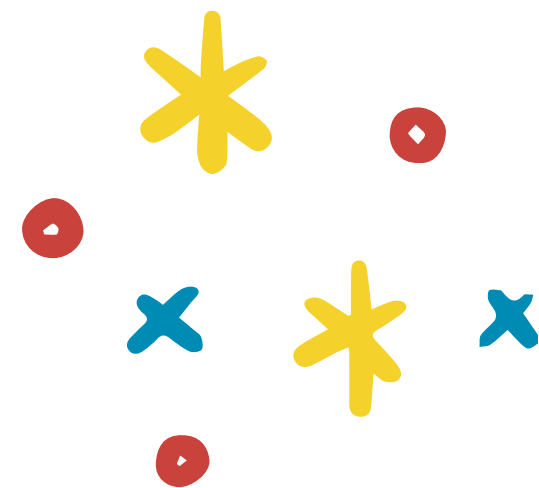
INTRODUCTION

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

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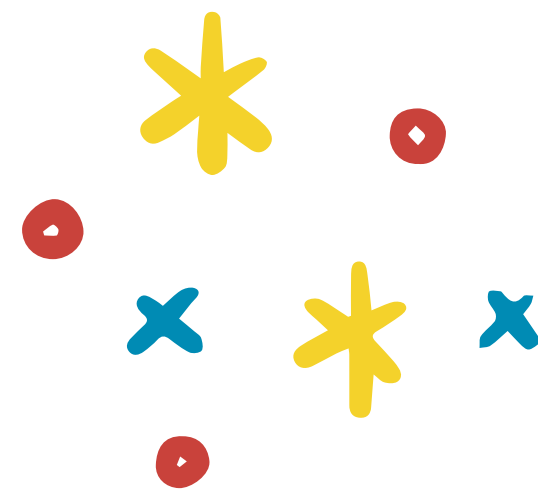
PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THE HANDBOOK

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

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

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

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

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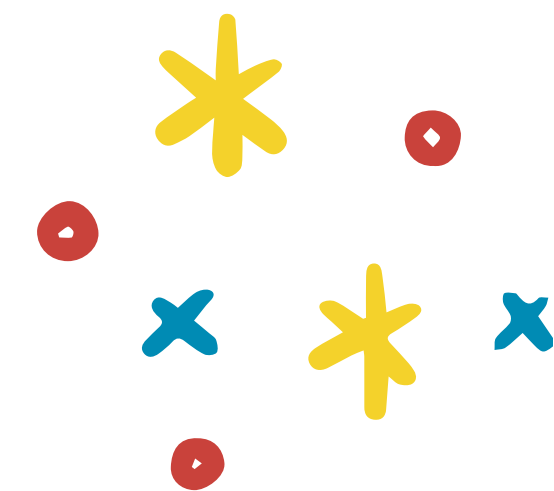
PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THE HANDBOOK

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

TARGET AUDIENCE

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

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

HOW TO USE THE HANDBOOK?

The handbook is organised in five parts:

1 Part One:
Overview and introduction.

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

3 Part Three:
Non-formal ECD services.

4 Part Four:
Play across generations and cultures.

5 Part Five:
Activity Cards.

- Part One through Three of the Handbook are intended for civil society organisations, trainers, mentors and ECD practitioners. These sections provide important background theory on the effects of war, displacement and trauma on child development and well-being, the concept of community-based child-friendly spaces - Play Hubs, as well as an overview of non-formal ECD services in emergencies.
- Part Four presents the benefits of intergenerational learning for young and old, with particular attention to social inclusion.
- Part Five provides an easy-to-use selection of simple activities that can be organised in Play Hubs and other non-formal and informal education settings involving children, parents and other family members.
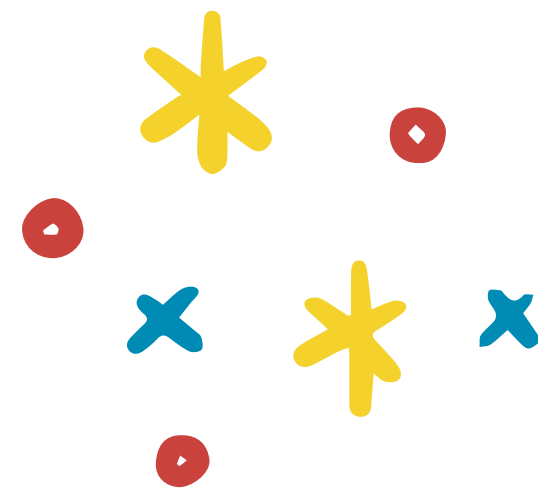
Part 2 - Psychosocial wellbeing

Psychosocial wellbeing of children and their families in times of adversity

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CHILDREN NEEDS ARE UNIVERSAL

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

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

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

Tips to engage with children following a holistic approach:
- Create an engaging and inviting environment.
- Identify the child's interests.
- Build strong and trusting relationships.
- Ask open-ended questions.
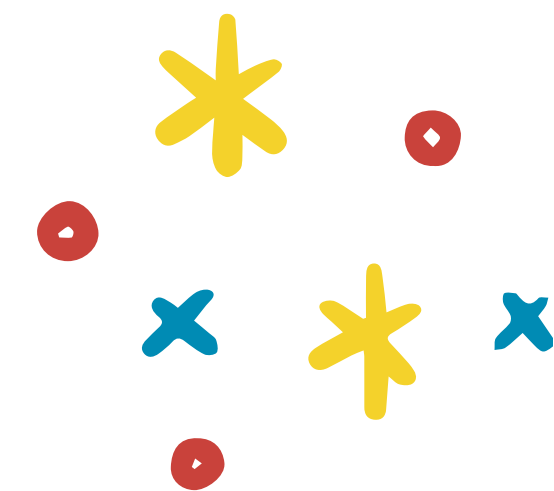
THE SOCIAL ECOLOGICAL MODEL

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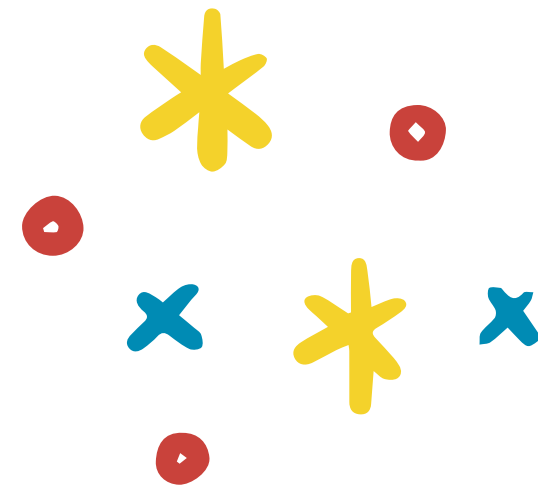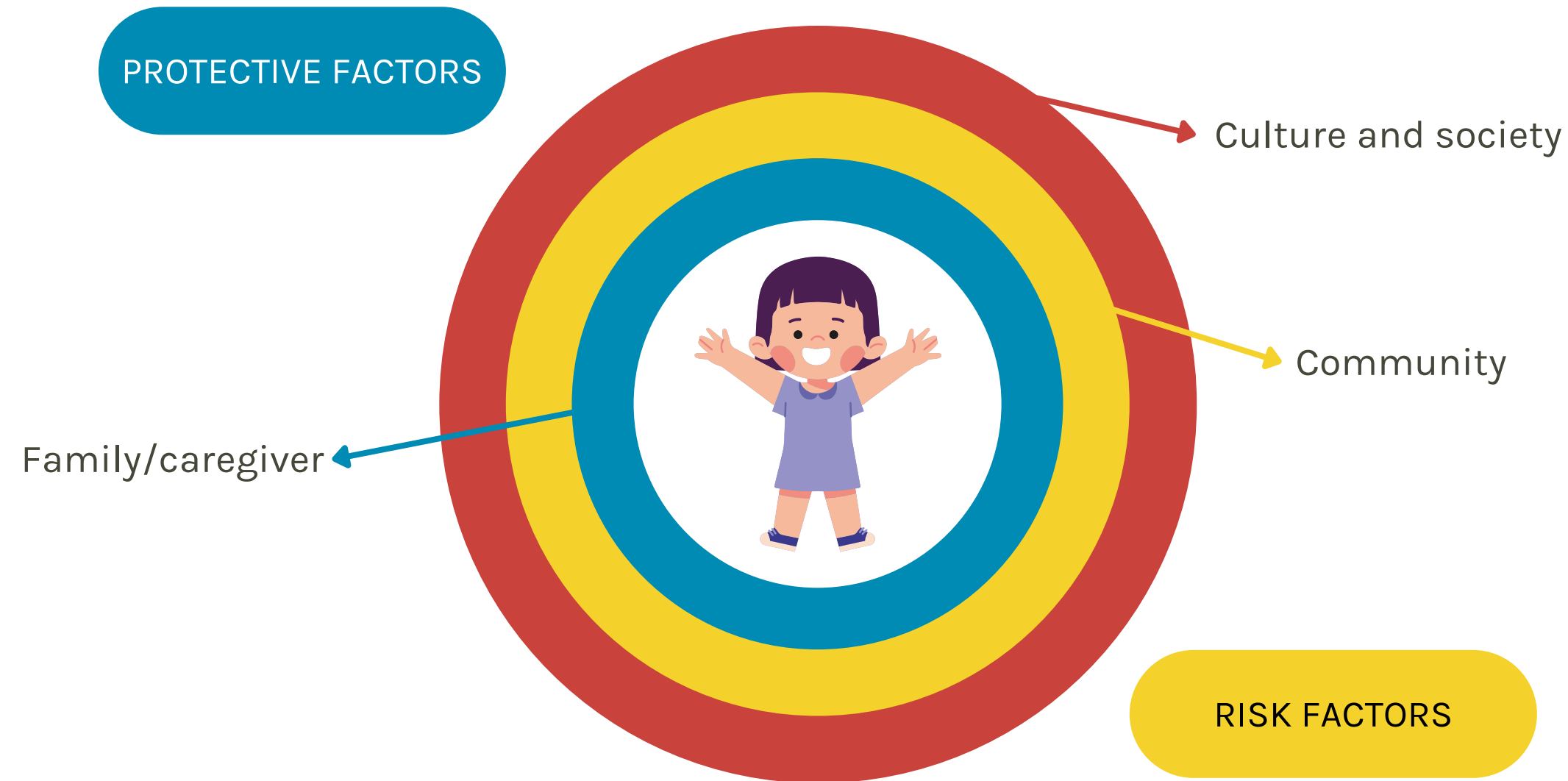
RESPONSE TO STRESS

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

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

Examples of Children's Behaviour in Response to Stress

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

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

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

ADVERSITY

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

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

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

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

THREATS TO HEALTHY DEVELOPMENT

The healthy development of a child can be affected by excessive or prolonged activation of stress responses, such as those brought on as consequence of their refugee status. This toxic stress can have detrimental effects on a child's learning, health, and behaviour.
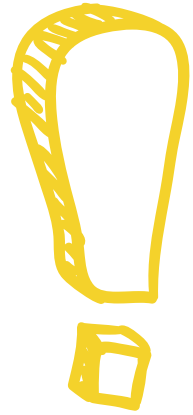
Attention should be given to the fact that caregivers are also affected by adversity, which impacts their ability to offer safety and stability to their children. Promoting the wellbeing of caregivers should be part of the focus when working with refugee children and families, so that caregivers can provide safety, stability, and normalcy to children, which is essential to ensure optimal development following adversity.

To help a child build their resilience and to foster their development even in the face of adversity, all young children should be provided with:
- secure, stable, and nurturing care,
- a secure and supportive social system,
- opportunities to play and explore their environments.

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

Guidelines on MHPS in humanitarian settings (WHO, 2018)
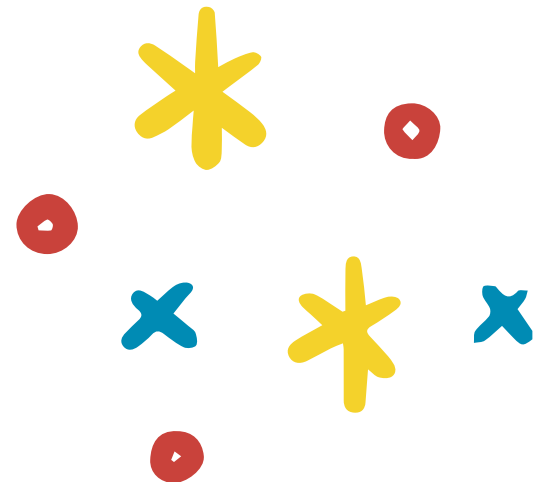
CHILDREN NEED SAFETY, STABILITY, AND NURTURANCE

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

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

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

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

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

"As practitioners, we must strive to appreciate each child and caregiver's uniqueness and work with taking the time to build relationships and understand their unique needs."
from Building bridges – Bridging the gap: Guidebook for kindergarten teachers working in refugee camps (ISSA, 2020)
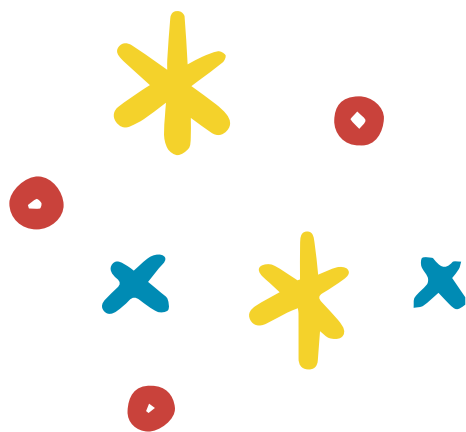
NURTURING A CHILD'S RESILIENCE

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

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

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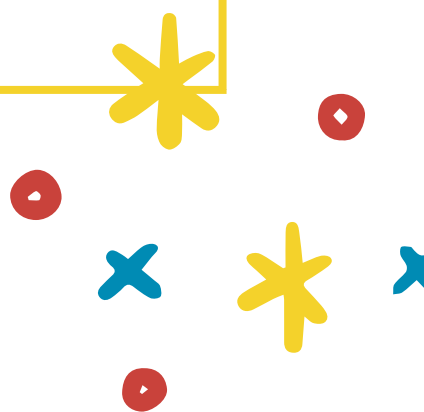
CREATING A SENSE OF BELONGING

One of the main struggles of becoming a refugee is the feeling of "loss of place". Every day traditional support structures such as extended family and community networks are lost, and there is a need to engage with stable environments and to belong within a community.

The loss of structure may impact children's self-efficacy, their feelings of connectedness, as well as their sense of safety and hope. Additionally, loss or separation bring about feelings of uncertainty and powerlessness.

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

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

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

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

Create spaces where all children feel:
- welcome.
- they belong to the space.
- accepted and respected.
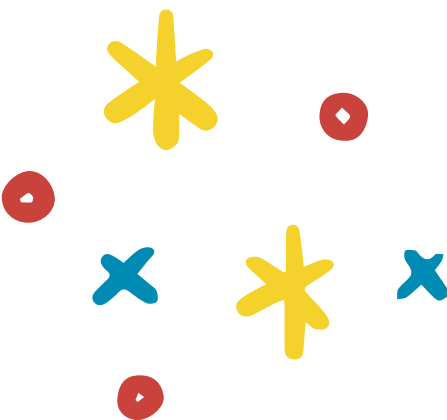
PROMOTING A SENSE OF BELONGING DOESN'T JUST HAPPEN. IT TAKES TIME AND EFFORT TO GROW.

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

TIPS ON HOW YOU CAN PROMOTE A SENSE OF BELONGING

* Introduce yourself and make it personal.

* Be positive, supportive, and communicative.

* Get to know the families and greet children and caregivers by their name.

* Make the spaces feel homely.

* Foster interactions: involve the whole family, offer group work, encourage exchanges between families.

* Let the environment and activities reflect the work and ideas of children.

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

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

IMPORTANCE OF ROUTINE

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

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

It is essential for children to:

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

TIPS ON HOW TO MAKE AN ACCESSIBLE WEEKLY SCHEDULE

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

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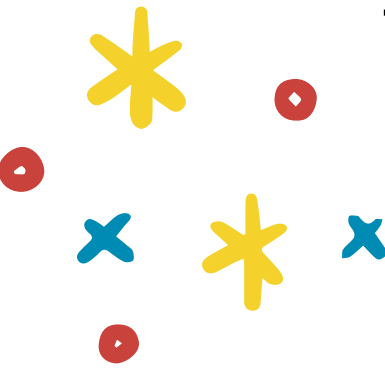
Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
9:30 welcome song	9:30 welcome song	9:30 welcome song	9:30 welcome song	9:30 welcome song	
	9:45 moving exercise		9:45 moving exercise		
14:00 walk outside		14:00 walk outside		14:30 dance friday	
	15:30 Language puppet		15:30 Language puppet		
17:00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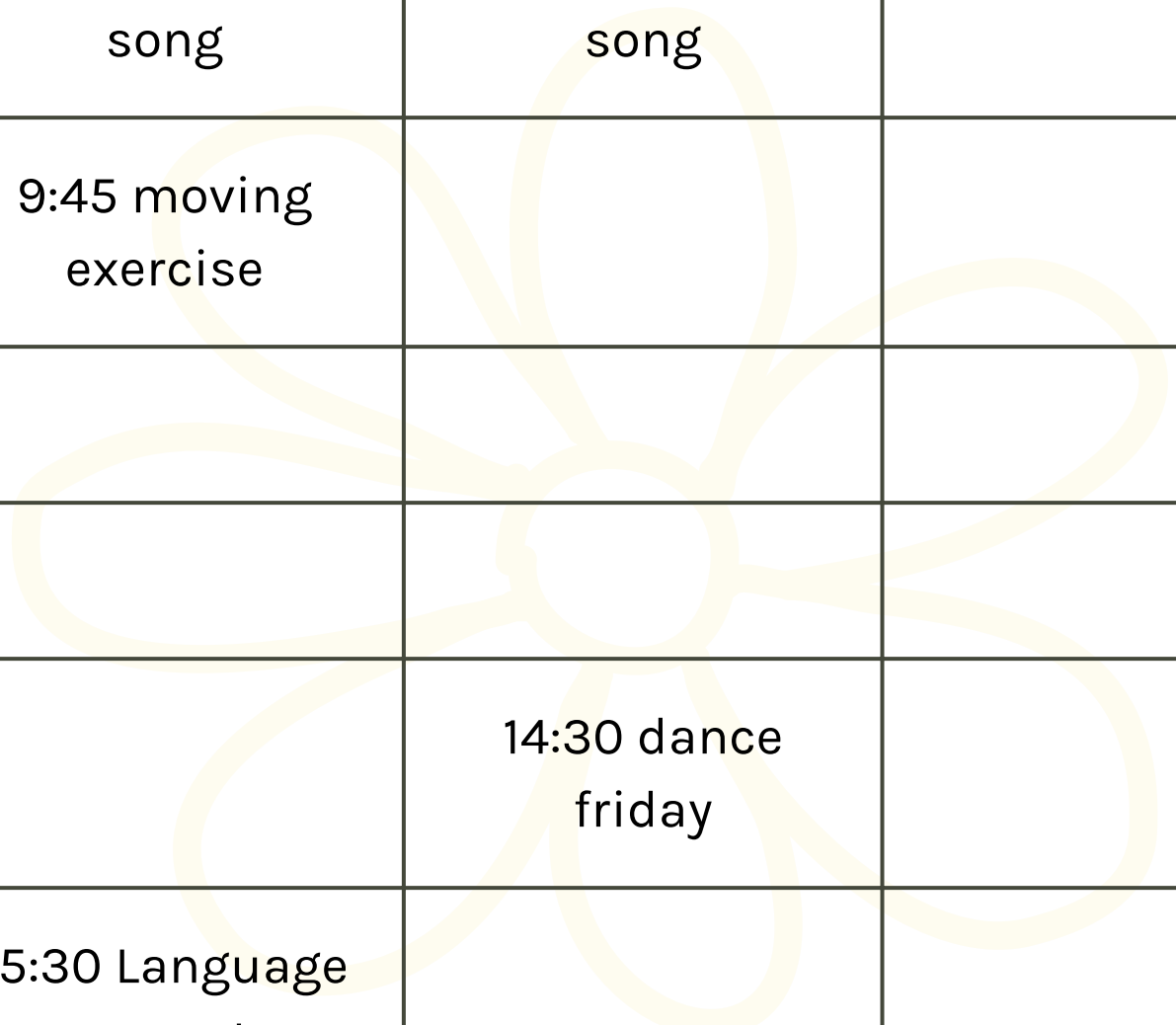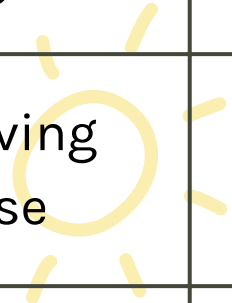
WEEKLY SCHEDULE - TEMPLATE
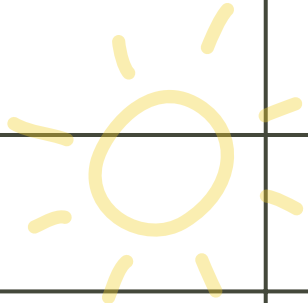
Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday

SUPPORTING CAREGIVERS

EMPATHY

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

PATIENCE

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

TRANSPARENCY

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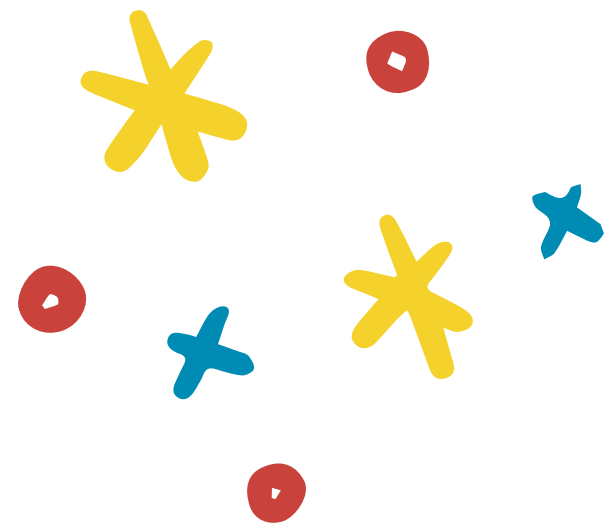
POSITIVE

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

COMMUNITY BUILDING

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

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

SUPPORTING CAREGIVERS

MINDFULNESS

Share with the families mindfulness practices used with children.

INVOLVE

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

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

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

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

IN SUMMARY

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

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

CARING FOR THE HELPERS

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

10 SIGNS OF STRESS

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

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

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

BASIC COMPETENCES FOR YOUR WORK WITH REFUGEE CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES

• willingness to accept diversity in society and to respect other ways of being
• being non-judgmental
• having an open mind
• having empathy and understanding
• showing flexibility and adaptability
• being sensitive (aware of children's and parents' needs) and responsive (act on this awareness)
• supporting a sense of belonging
• having enthusiasm: being engaged and motivated
• being creative in order to find alternative solutions and approaches
• showing warmth and being loving
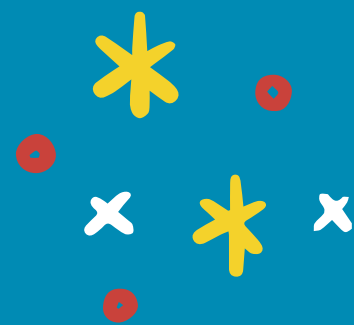
from Building bridges – Bridging the gap: Guidebook for kindergarten teachers working in refugee camps (ISSA, 2020)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

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

○ Building Bridges: Bridging the Gap - Supporting wellbeing, learning, development and integration of young refugee and migrant children. ISSA, 2020. Available here

○ Toxic Stress, Harvard University content guide. Available here

○ Guiding tips for refugee parents. KPZ, 2022. Available here in English, and here in Ukrainian

○

Mental Health and Psychosocial Support for Refugees, Asylum Seekers and Migrants on the Move in Europe (guidance note). WHO, 2020. Available here

Part 3 - Non-formal ECD services

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

HOW NFE SUPPORTS SOCIAL INCLUSION OF REFUGEE AND DISPLACED CHILDREN

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

THREE APPROACHES TO EDUCATION

FORMAL EDUCATION

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

INFORMAL EDUCATION

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

NON-FORMAL EDUCATION

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

Smith, M. K. (2002)

THREE APPROACHES TO EDUCATION

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

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

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

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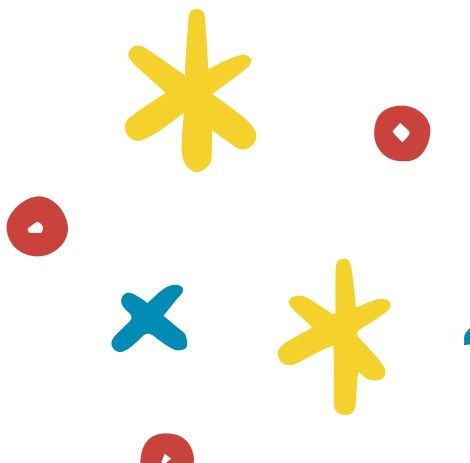
A BRIDGE FROM HOME TO FORMAL SCHOOLING

Young children in general and those from vulnerable background especially, are particularly exposed to marginalisation and exclusion from formal education as in many countries education becomes compulsory only at the age of 3, or even later at the age of 6.

This results in the fact that children under 6 are often spending all of their time at home with the parents, and when their parents are migrants, refugees, with little social connection, unstable living circumstances and limited knowledge of the local language, these young children will not have a fair start compared to other children in the community. In this context, the availability and quality of non-formal ECEC services, such as the Play Hubs, is an important bridge from home to formal schooling and a key support to the integration of all children.

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

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

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

INTERSECTORAL, FLEXIBLE AND CONTEXTUAL

Due to their unique and well-established position within communities, non-formal services are a trusted resource and support system for families that are facing any number of challenges and can be particularly beneficial for refugee and displaced children facilitating their integration in mainstream education.

The essential elements of the Play Hubs, for instance – intersectoral work as a way to address complex issues, innovative and flexible solutions tailored to communities and the development of inclusive and easy to reach services - can be inspirational for many other non-formal services.

Play Hubs

- Need assessment and early detection
- Group and individual action plans
- Home visits
- Support and training for parents and carers
- Playful learning activities for children
- Connection among various sectors (social, health and education)
- A meeting place for carers and children (refugees and not)
- Multidisciplinary group of professionals (LAT)

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

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

QUALITY OF NFE

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

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

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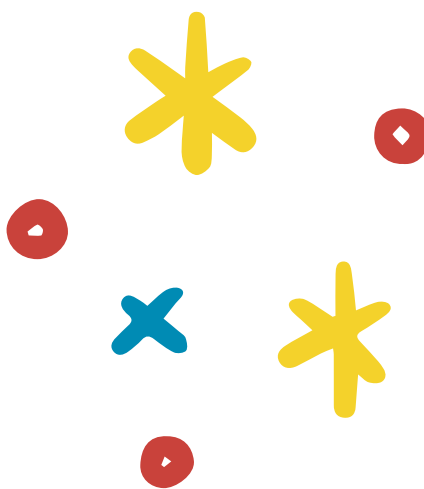
ARTS, MUSIC AND CULTURE IN NFE

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

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

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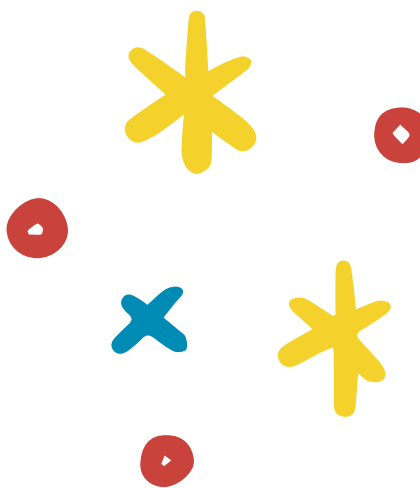
NFE, INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

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

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

UNESCO Guidelines on Intercultural Education (2006):
- Principle I: Intercultural Education respects the cultural identity of the learner through the provision of culturally appropriate and responsive quality education for all.
- Principle II: Intercultural Education provides every learner with the cultural knowledge, attitudes and skills necessary to achieve active and full participation in society.
- Principle III: Intercultural Education provides all learners with cultural knowledge, attitudes and skills that enable them to contribute to respect, understanding and solidarity among individuals, ethnic, social, cultural and religious groups and nations.

PLAY HUBS FOR REFUGEE AND DISPLACED CHILDREN AND THEIR BENEFITS

The profound physical and emotional traumas experienced by refugee and migrant children require a multitude of traditional and non-traditional educational services and a broad spectrum of professionals to help them endure and survive their current situation.
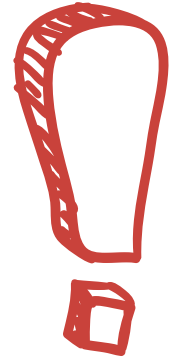
We acknowledge that this immense crisis demands a cooperative humanitarian response for the provision of education in emergencies with accompanying psycho-social support to meet the challenges facing today's refugee and migrant children.

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

Non-formal education in Play Hubs provides the conditions required to create this new reality together.
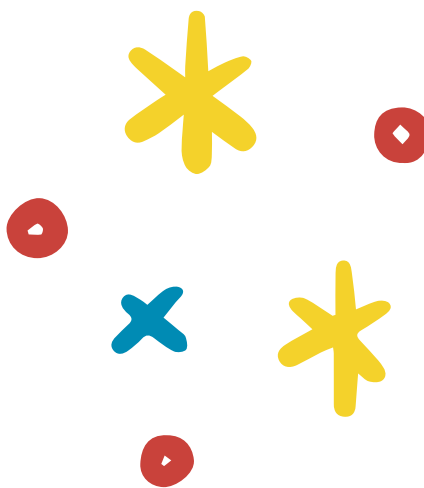
PLAY HUBS FOR REFUGEE AND DISPLACED CHILDREN AND THEIR BENEFITS

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

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

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

EXAMPLES OF SERVICES AND ACTIVITIES OFFERED IN A PLAY HUB

- Toy library (borrowing service)
- Stay and play sessions
- Parents-child reading sessions
- Intergenerational activities
- Hand-craft and toy making activities

- Parent clubs
- Workshops or info-sessions for parents in cooperation with other services in the community

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

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

- The role of non-formal education in migrant children inclusion. By SIRIUS Watch (2018). Available here.

- Early Childhood Development in Emergencies, Integrated Programme Guide, By UNICEF (2018). Available here.

- The TOY for Inclusion – Voices of Children booklet shares the stories told by the children attending Play Hubs. Hear why the Play Hubs are so important from the perspective of children. Available here.

- What Works Guide - gives recommendations to practitioners and to local authorities on how to implement Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) Play Hubs at best. Available here,

Part 4 - Play across generations and cultures

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

unicef

International Child
Development Initiatives

Škola Dokorán
Wide open school n. o.

Epim
European Programme
for Integration
and Migration

INTERGENERATIONAL LEARNING

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

TOY Project

**Intergenerational learning responds to
3 key societal concerns**

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

PATH TO SOCIAL INCLUSION

Intergenerational learning can help decrease the marginalisation of young children and older people, especially those living in difficult circumstances, such as migrants, refugees and Roma, making important contributions to bridging the existent gap between different social groups in society.

Previous research demonstrates that such activities challenge stereotypes, and all involved experience the values of solidarity, respect, and acceptance of the 'other'.

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

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

Older adults reading aloud for children

Exploring games from different cultures and traditions, and revisiting them together

Making music together, using instruments from different traditions

Free play

Art activities (painting, drawing, theatre, etc.) where children and older adults work together towards a final product

Gardening and cooking together

Discovering how play has changed over time (children playing old games and older adults playing more modern games)

WHO IS INVOLVED IN ORGANISING INTERGENERATIONAL LEARNING ACTIVITIES?

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

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

The middle generation is often represented by practitioners working or volunteering either in ECEC (day care centres, kindergartens, preschools, toy librarians, etc.) or in social care for older adults. In some cases, community development workers responsible for the wellbeing and participation of all citizens in a certain area can take on the role of IGL facilitators. It is not always necessary to involve institutional settings such as preschools, schools or care homes for older adults in order to organise a successful IGL activity.
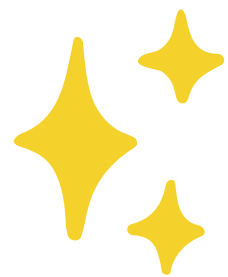
IGL CAN ALSO TAKE PLACE IN NON-FORMAL AND INFORMAL SETTINGS, SUCH AS TOY LIBRARIES, PLAYGROUNDS, COMMUNITY CENTRES, ARTS CENTRES, OR PARKS.

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

Understanding the concept of IGL and the benefits of bringing different generations together.

Recognizing and detecting negative stereotypes against young children and older people, and having the skills and knowledge to counteract them.

Knowledge and skills to promote diversity, inclusion and equity when working with people from different backgrounds.

Understanding the concept of communities for all ages.

Knowledge about how children and older people learn and develop, and which activities are more suitable for them.

Knowledge and skills to communicate with children, older adults, their families and other practitioners working in the community;

Knowledge and skills to design, implement and evaluate an IGL activity in a participatory way.

Knowledge and skills to provide and maintain quality and sustainability in IGL.

BENEFITS OF INTERGENERATIONAL LEARNING

YOUNG CHILDREN

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

OLDER ADULTS

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

COMMUNITIES

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

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

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

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

○ TOY Project website.

○ TOY in Action activities.

○ TOY Blog.

○ Book 'Intergenerational Learning in Practice: Together Old & Young', edited by Margaret Kernan and Giulia Cortellesi and published by Routledge.

○ Free TOY Online Course.

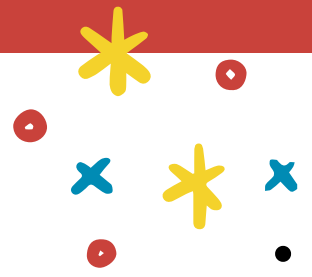○ 'Tried and True: a Guide to Successful Intergenerational Activities' by Generations United and Neighbors Growing Together.

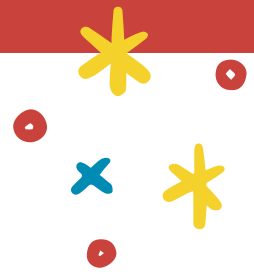○ 'Intergenerational Activities: Programming Guide' by Families Canada.
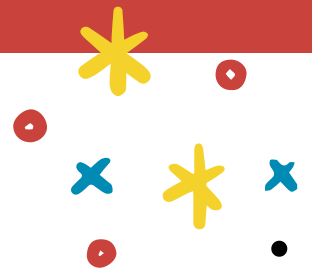
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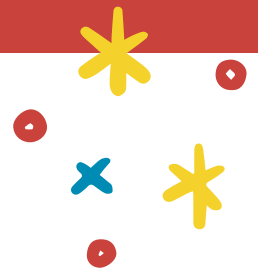
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