

A Psychosocial Support training for ECD teachers and staff in Child Friendly Spaces

**Working with
young children
who are
vulnerable**

Acknowledgements

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1 Adapted from: R. D. Macy, D. J. Macy, S. Gross. & P. Brighton. MENA-UNICEF Manual - V1.01 Prepared by Center for Crisis Psychology, Norway. (p. 11 &12) 2002.

2 Adapted from: Baytana Activities, my feelings, my emotions. Refugee Trauma Initiative. www.refugeetrauma.org

3 Walker, B & De'oliviera, E, (2019) eds. Mwangaza Mama. African Centre for Migration and Society. p 58



Introduction

Who is this training for?

This training is for anyone working with young children affected by displacement. Most young children experience some stress in their lives but usually this stress is manageable and something they learn from. There are, however, many young children who have been through or who are going through traumatic experiences that can cause stress that they find difficult to cope with. Children who have experienced war, or who have been displaced by war or a natural disaster or children who are living in deep poverty or in the midst of family conflict or the loss and grief of changed family circumstances can all feel deep stress. Research has shown that even very young children and babies can feel this stress.

Why is this training needed?

Having stable, responsive and nurturing care from adults can protect children when they experience stress. When this care is not there, stress can have lasting impacts on the development of a young child's brain and their emotional and social development. This effect carries on into adulthood if it is not dealt with early. Those of us who work with and care for young children have an important responsibility to support them now, when they are young. Even though children are vulnerable they are also resilient and adults can help build this resilience through the way they work with them. Teachers and carers of young children can give them the stable, responsive and nurturing care that sometimes their parents struggle to give them (even though they wish they could) because they are also in the middle of deeply stressful events such as running away from a war or disaster or the loss of home and loved ones or the desperation of deep poverty. This training will help you learn about the effect of stress on young children and how you can play an important part in helping them cope.

Where and how should the training be run?

The style of the workshop is informal. It role models how REPSSI suggest participants work with young children through games, storytelling, gentle group management, calming down exercises and learning through play. At the same time it helps participants gain knowledge about how life stress can impact on child development and the role that stable, responsive and nurturing adults can play in helping children cope with stress. It also includes lots of games that

illustrate how young children learn through play and how important play is in helping them cope with overwhelming emotions and learn to socialise with other children.

Apart from activities that role model best practice the training is built around a set of flip charts that are developed by the facilitator or participants and then placed up around the room. By the end of the workshop everything learned will be up on the walls of the room for everyone to look at before they leave the training.

The best place to run this training is an open space with place to stick up or hang the flip charts. It would be best not to have desks but chairs in a circle or mats on the floor so you can play games easily.

What materials will be needed?

REPSSI has purposefully kept materials simple and made sure you can run this training in contexts where there are few resources and even where there is no electricity. This means a little more preparation for the facilitator (see the next section) but it will allow you to work in low resource settings such as a refugee camp or displacement centre.

You will need:

- **Flip charts and pens**
- **Paper and drawing materials for participants**
- **A few small soft balls or bean bags.**



What do I need to know as a facilitator before undertaking this training?

This training manual assumes that you have experience as a facilitator and that you understand participatory and interactive educational methodologies. You also need to have a good grasp of English and be able to translate and/or explain some technical words so that everyone can understand them. You can of course also work with a translator – if you do, make sure key important words are translated correctly.

Here are some resources that you may find useful if you want to make sure you have an understanding of the needs of young children in adversity.

- Regional Psychosocial Support Initiative (2007) Psychosocial care and support for young children and infants in the time of HIV and AIDS: a resource for programming. Johannesburg: REPSSI.
- Moving Minds Alliance, (2019). ECD and Early Learning for Children in Crisis and Conflict: Brief adapted from a background paper commissioned for the 2019 Global Education Monitoring Report

<https://www.ecdan.org/assets/ecd-and-early-learning-for-children-in-crisis-and-conflict.pdf>

What should I do as a facilitator to prepare for the training?

You will need to prepare some flip charts before the workshop. Look at the following activities before you start and write up the flip charts needed for these activities:

- The aim of the workshop
- Activity 1
- Activity 2
- Activity 3
- Activity 6

You will also need to print out some pages before the workshop. Look at the following activities before you start and get the print outs ready:

- Activity 4
- Activity 7
- Handout 1 and 2

DAY

1

What happens when life makes children vulnerable?

Morning session: 3 hours and 30 minutes

(including 20 minute tea break)

Lunch 60 minutes

Afternoon session: 1 hour

Session 1

Introductory game

Note to facilitator: We chose this game to begin the session for a particular reason – we will use it later to illustrate how children can learn through playing and also how important play is to help children feel better and to socialise with each other. This game uses all five different needs of children as demonstrated in Activity 1.

We're going dancing

You need a clear open space for this game. You as leader call out:

“We're going dancing”. The group dances around all over the room, calling in response “Dance, dance, dance!”. You can translate the words into the local language e.g. “Tunakwenda kucheza densi, densi, kucheza densi, densi!” Repeat a few times then call out a number. The participants must get themselves into groups of that number, so “two” or “four” or “six”. If someone is left alone you as leader should just run to them and stand by them (so they don't feel left out) then begin again with the chant. You can also call “one” or “everyone”.

Reflection after the game

SAY:

- *If you played this game with young children would they learn something? What would they learn? (number concept)*
- *How did you feel when you arrived at the workshop?*
- *How do you feel now?*
- *Did the game change the way you felt?*
- *Remember this feeling – we will talk about it later in the workshop.*

(10 MINUTES)

Workshop norms

Put up a flip chart with a few ground rules (don't spend a lot of time discussing this)

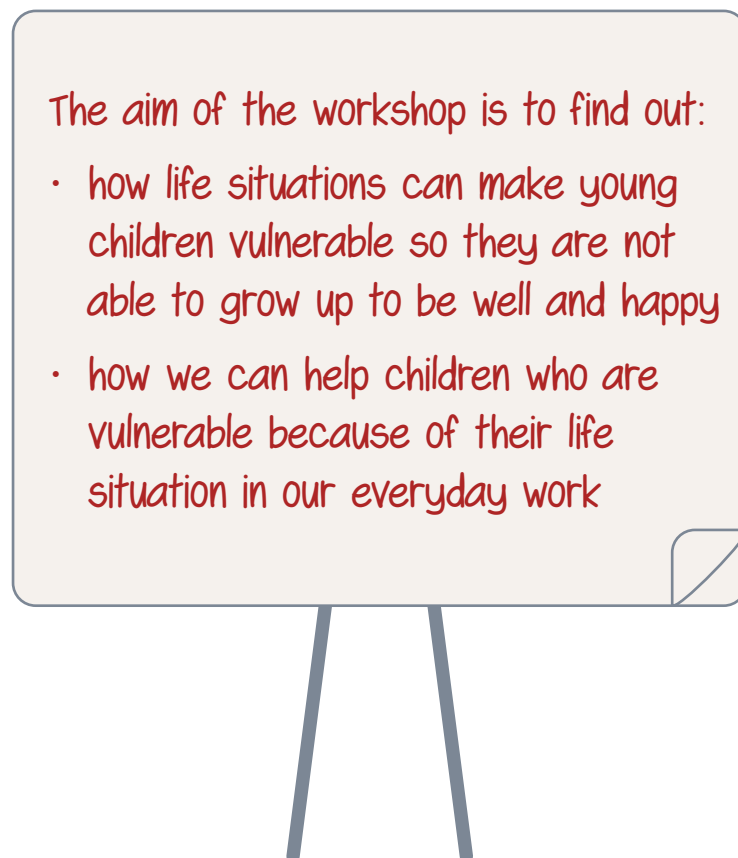
- Cell phones only at tea and lunch break
- Respect and support each other
- Be aware of confidentiality – we are not going to ask you to share personal stories but you need to think about what you do share – we should keep any personal stories we hear here confidential.

Ask the group if they want to add any other rules.

Make sure everyone knows what time you start and will end the workshop on the two days.

Introduction

Write up the aim of the workshop on a flip chart.



Read through the aims.

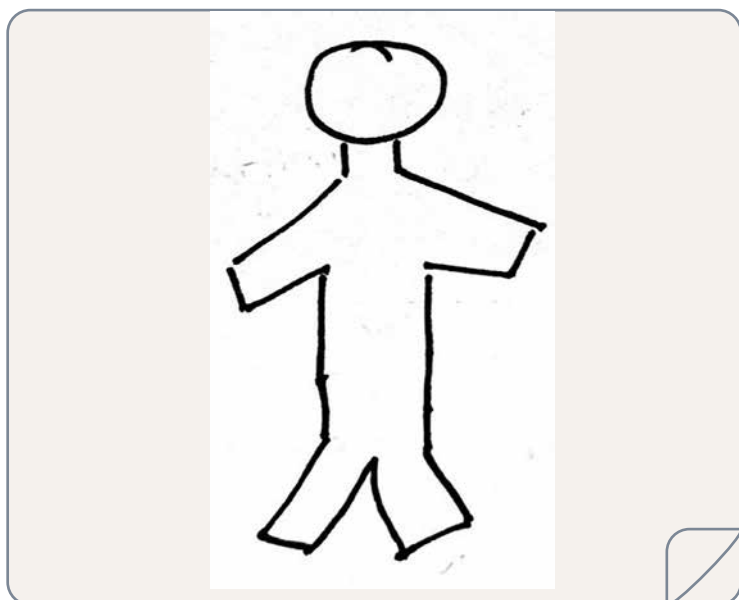
ACTIVITY 1: WHAT DO YOUNG CHILDREN NEED TO GROW WELL AND HAPPY?

You will need:

- Flip chart with drawing of child on it for each group
- Marker pens

Divide the large group into small groups of 4 to 5. Do this randomly so that the group is mixed up.

Give each group a flip chart with this drawing on it.



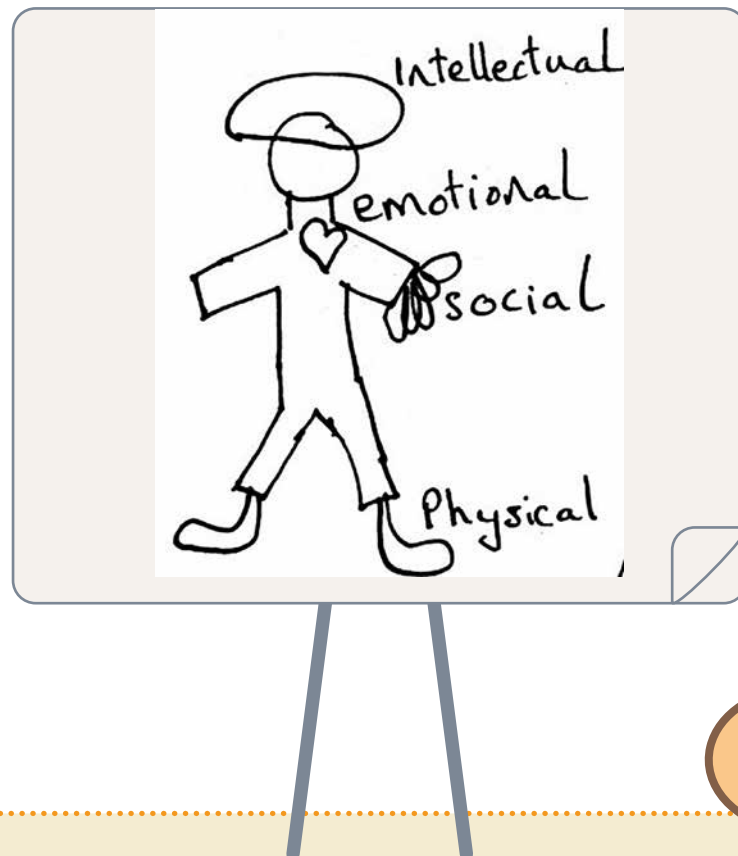
SAY:

You will see a drawing of a child of 4 years old on the flip chart paper. I want you to talk together and write down around the child the different things you think this child needs to grow strong and happy and clever and friendly.

Once each group has finished ask them to put their flip chart up on the wall. Everyone is to walk around and look at them.

(30 MINUTES)

Put up this flip chart now.



SAY:

Your flip charts show different things that children need. One way we can describe what you have all shown is like this (point to flip chart). What you have shown is that young children have

FIVE different kinds of needs:

*Physical,
Emotional,
Social and
Intellectual.*

We can remember this easily by remembering this drawing. The intellectual needs are about a child's brain, thinking and learning. The emotional we can represent as the child's heart, feelings. The social as their hand - ready to hold a friend's hand. The physical as their feet (for running and jumping) or their strong and healthy body.

Think back on the dance game. Did it include all those needs? Yes it did!

Make sure this flip chart is also stuck on the wall.

(40 MINUTES)



TEA BREAK
(20 MINUTES)

ACTIVITY 2: WHAT DO THE BOOKS SAY



SAY:

The researchers and scientists who write books about child development tell us:

(Read this pre-prepared flip chart)

In general, children and families are doing “well” when:

- Basic survival needs are met
- Age-appropriate physical, intellectual, emotional, and developmental needs are addressed
- Social relationships are positive and supportive
- People have access to economic and environmental resources

ChildFund International (2015). *Psychosocial support and child-centered spaces: community-Based Response for Child Protection in Emergencies*. P. 8

Make sure everyone understands what is written here, give examples and translate it or simplify it by explaining the different words.

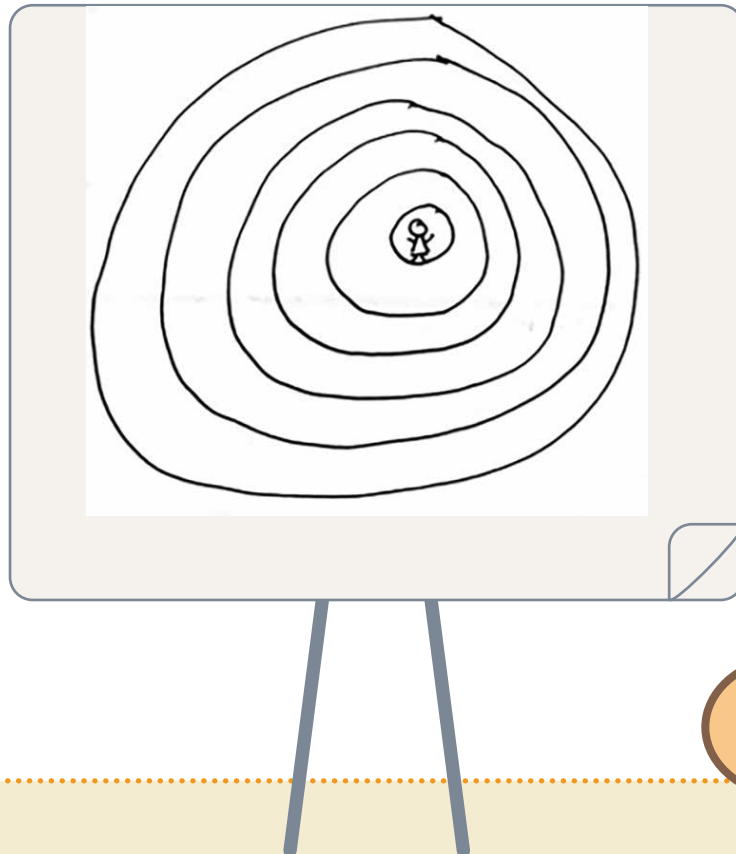
Stick the flip chart up on the wall.

(5 MINUTES)

ACTIVITY 3:

LIFE CAN AFFECT HOW CHILDREN GROW

Put up this flip chart now.



SAY:

Can you see the child in the middle of the circle. Scientists are telling us that if children are to grow up well and happy then all the different things around them need to help them. These things are:

(write these in the circles as you say them:

- 1. In child's circle: Age, sex, gender, health status*
- 2. Circle 2: Family*
- 3. 3. Peers and neighbours*
- 4. Community – people, jobs, services such as clinics, faith organisations, support for families and attitudes, beliefs, social values,*
- 5. Country – politics, conflict, policy, services,*
- 6. World systems – regional and global politics*

Stick the flip chart up on the wall.



SAY:

All of these impact on the child's growth. Some of them may not affect the child directly but they will affect them indirectly. For example, if a country has a child social grant policy that will affect a child positively. If there is war in a country that will affect a child. If there is a global recession or a pandemic like COVID-19, then companies may close and people will lose jobs and this may affect a child's father or mother and create poverty in the home. If there is no clinic nearby or there is a shortage of ARV medicines at the clinic this could affect a child's parent and make them sick, or the child. If there is a drought, this could cause crops to fail etc.

Talk to the person sitting next to you. I am going to give each pair a different circle to think of. You must come up with an example of how that circle can affect children's happiness and well-being.

Go around the room and point at a pair pointing to a pair and giving each one a different circle:

- Family
- Peers and neighbours
- Community
- Country
- World systems

If your group is large you will have more than one pair with each circle.

Give them a few minutes to come up with an example.



SAY:

Call out your example as I point to you – say the circle then your example.

(30 MINUTES)

ACTIVITY 4: LIFE CAN MAKE CHILDREN VULNERABLE

Print out copies of the stories that you will find at the end of this manual and place them up around the room on the walls. If you can, print them in colour but if not then black and white will be fine. If your group is large you may need to make a few copies of each story. Let the group walk around and read the stories.



SAY:

You will find a number of stories that are all written by children themselves or about very young children who could not write. As you read the stories I want you to do two things with each one:

- 1. Decide which circles around the child have affected them.*
- 2. Discuss what the impact of the life experience could be on the child – think about the flip chart drawing of the different areas of need children have (point to it as it will be up on the wall). How will each one be affected? The story may give you some ideas about how the child feels emotionally and possibly also the physical and social impact on them.*

The flip charts are up on the wall so you can refer to them.

Write down your answers in quick notes on a piece of paper as we will talk about them later.

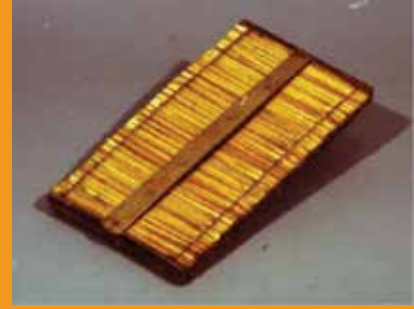
(30 MINUTES)

Once the group has read the stories bring them back together. See the box below and use a gentle managing tool to bring them back together.

Note to facilitator

Managing a group with gentleness⁴

You will role model how to manage a group of children without using a loud authoritative voice. One important way of making vulnerable children feel better is to create a safe and relaxed environment. Find a beautiful sound that you can use to attract the group's attention when you want to bring the group together. A soft shaker instrument, a simple clapping rhythm with your fingers (not your full hands), rubbing your hands together, a gentle song. Don't use it too often or it will lose its power. It can be soft because one or two people will notice then a few more and slowly the group will quieten and stand still and even join in. You will find a discussion of this for the participants in Activity x. But for now you are role modelling it.



ACTIVITY 5: A GAME TO CONTAIN FEELINGS

SAY:

*How are you feeling after reading those stories? Some of you may be feeling sad.
We are going to play a game that will make us feel supported and safe.*

Play: Ipi Ballo

You will need a small soft bean bag or ball or a headscarf tied into a knot that can be hidden in the hand.

Everyone stand in a circle with the facilitator in the middle. Start singing a soft song in your own language:

Where, where where is the baaaalll?

Ipi Ipi Ipi balo?

Wapi, wapi, wapi impira?

4 Adapted from: R. D. Macy, D. J. Macy, S. Gross. & P. Brighton. MENA-UNICEF Manual - V1.01 Prepared by Center for Crisis Psychology, Norway. (p. 11 &12) 2002.

As you sing make everyone close the circle up till everyone is standing shoulder to shoulder. Then give the ball to someone. They must pass it behind their back to the next person without letting the person in the middle see where it is. The person in the middle can point to anyone in the circle – if pointed at they must hold out their hands in front of them to show the middle person that they do not have the ball. If they do have the ball they go into the centre.

(20 MINUTES)

After the game sit everyone down on the mat and quietly call them in to come closer to you.

Time to reflect

Playing games for learning and managing feelings

SAY:

What did you notice about that game?

Why do you think we played it when I thought you may be sad because of the stories? Do you remember the game we played at the beginning of the workshop?

Why did we play that game at the beginning of the workshop?

Games are very, very important when you are working with young children who are vulnerable. You can use a game to help them contain feelings of sadness and feel safe. That is what I did with the ball game, you all stood close together so you felt safe and the game was fun but not too loud and exciting so feelings were calmed down. The game at the beginning was noisier and more physical because I wanted you to relax and know that this workshop would be FUN!

But games can also teach.

Do you think the dance game would teach children anything?

Let them come up with a list but you can add:

- Listening and concentration
- Physical movement
- Number concept
- Social interaction

Do you think the hiding ball game taught anything?

Let them come up with a list but add:

- Hand coordination
- Observation
- Concentration
- Confidence as the person in the middle
- Empathy
- Communication
- Co-operation with others



SAY:

In fact both games met all the needs we talked about here – point to the flip chart showing the child with head, heart, hands and feet. This handout will give you more information about how children learn through play.

Give everyone the handout on learning through play.

Read through it together.

(30 MINUTES)



**LUNCH BREAK
(60 MINUTES)**

Handout 1:

Learning through play

*Children learn and practice many skills through play.
Play meets children's needs.*

THINKING NEEDS

Encourages imagination

Develops language skills

Teaches concepts such as numbers

Encourages imagination

PHYSICAL NEEDS

Helps improve co-ordination

Exercises the body

Develops movement skills

Develops senses

EMOTIONAL NEEDS

Develops confidence

Is fun and makes children feel happy

Lets children express feelings

Allows them to experience new things

SOCIAL NEEDS

Encourages them to share

Teaches what rules are

Teaches co-operation

Develops social skills

Session 2

Call the group back with your gentle shaker or song after lunch.

ACTIVITY 6: REPORTING BACK ON THE STORIES

Once everyone is sitting down call them closer to you and speak softly and gently.



SAY:

Scientists and researchers who study children tell us that young children learn best from play. We are going to learn more about this later. For now we are going to discuss the stories we read.

Ask three or four people to volunteer to report back on their reading of the stories:

- Which circles did you identify in one of the stories?
- What did you think was the impact of the life experience is on the child?

They will probably say that the children would be affected emotionally – they will be stressed by their life experiences. The next flip chart discusses this.

Put up this pre-prepared flip chart

Scientists tell us:

- In early childhood, research on the biology of stress shows how major adversity, such as extreme poverty, abuse, or neglect, (or war or disaster) can weaken developing brain architecture and permanently set the body's stress response system on high alert.
- Science also shows that providing stable, responsive, nurturing relationships in the earliest years of life can prevent or even reverse the damaging effects of early life stress, with lifelong benefits for learning, behaviour, and health".

Center on the Developing Child (2007). The Impact of Early Adversity on Child Development (InBrief). Retrieved from www.developingchild.harvard.edu.

Look at the meanings of the underlined words – make sure everyone understands them.

Stable: Steady, not changing

Responsive: Sensitive, can see when children need something and respond quickly

Nurturing: Caring and loving, protecting, encouraging

(10 MINUTES)

ACTIVITY 7: RESPONSIVE, NURTURING RELATIONSHIPS

Materials

You will need to photocopy and print the story below as large as you can so the participants can see the pictures from far away.



SAY:

I am going to read you a story. Are you ready for the story? Are you sitting comfortably? This is a very small story, written by a very small girl – so don't be surprised if it is short!

Note to facilitator

You are role modelling storytelling here. Make a ritual out of getting the group ready for the story. If you know of a tradition from your own culture that introduces stories then use this. Use a storytelling style for the introduction to the story.

Once upon a time in a big city called Johannesburg there lived a small girl called Mary. She was 7 years old. She escaped war in DRC strapped to her mother's back when she was only 2 years old. She is now 7 years old and lives with her mother as a refugee in South Africa. Her life is difficult, she and her mother rent a room that is shared with another family with only a curtain between them, sometimes there is not enough food to eat as her mother has not been able to sell any of the second-hand clothes she sells on the street. This little girl goes to school though, her mother has made sure of that. She attended a holiday support group for young children who had been displaced by war and she wrote this story when we asked her to tell us something about her life.



Everyday my mother comes to fetch me after school.



I feel happy when mummy comes.



My mother says, "Look right, look left, look right again."



We cross the street with many cars.

SAY:

Say: So that was the story. It was very short, wasn't it?

How does Mary feel about her life?

What helps her to feel this way?

Yes her mother.

Let's look again at what scientists tell us – point to the flip chart.

Stable, responsive, nurturing relationships in the earliest years of life can prevent or even reverse the damaging effects of early life stress, with lifelong benefits for learning, behaviour, and health".

You as an ECD teacher can be a stable, responsive and nurturing adult in children's lives alongside their parents. We will talk some more later about parents and how you as an ECD teacher can help them if they are struggling with stress too.

(20 MINUTES)

ACTIVITY 8: HOW CHILDREN EXPERIENCE STRESS

Point to the stories on the wall.



SAY:

Call out how the difficult events the children have experienced could make them feel and behave?

Show this flip chart



Extreme stress can affect children's

- Thoughts*
- Emotions or feelings*
- Body*
- Behaviours*

As you read each one out you can give these examples:

Thoughts (e.g. “My parents/teachers cannot keep me safe”, “I did something wrong that made this happen-this is my fault”, “This terrible thing could happen again” “I am vulnerable – I am not safe”.)

Emotions or Feelings (e.g. “I am angry”, “I am frightened”, “I am anxious and nervous”, “I am sad and hopeless, “I am guilty”.)

Physiological changes in the body (e.g. blood rushing to the face, increased frequency of heartbeats, restricted breathing, increased muscle tension, extreme sweating, chills, disturbances in appetite and digestion and sleep.)

Behaviours (e.g. The child is angry and hits out at other children. The child acts out is 'naughty behaviour'. The child does not play with other children and isolates or appears very numb. The child clings to its caretakers when strangers come visiting. The child engages in high risk or destructive play.)



SAY:

All of these can be there immediately after children have experienced a single traumatic event or, for a long time, especially if they are still living in a stressful situation.

Young children cannot verbalise their feelings and thoughts so we see their stress in their behaviour.

We all as humans have this kind of response to a frightening event (do you recall a time when you were very afraid – what happened to your thoughts and body and emotions?). It is a natural response that protects us – we need this response to help us run away when we are in danger but if we experience it for a looong time it can affect our mental and physical and social well-being.

Head and shoulders game

This game teaches children body parts. You can translate it into the local language and if you don't know the traditional tune just make up your own. As you sing you put both hands on to the body part, bending down to knees and toes and pointing to eyes and ears and mouth and nose.

Head and shoulders, knees and toes, knees and toes. X2

And eyes and ears and mouth and nose.

Head and shoulders, knees and toes, knees and toes.

(5 MINUTES)

ACTIVITY 9: HOW YOU CAN BE STABLE AND RESPONSIVE AND REDUCE STRESS

Use the gentle shaker to call them back after the game.



Time to reflect

SAY:

Have you noticed how I call you back after an activity? Why do I call you back like this?

When we are working with children who are stressed it is very important to work quietly and gently. When children are experiencing chaos or lack of control within themselves or within the environment then we as teachers can ground them. We can help their natural body response to stress to slow down. We need to be doing this all the time they are with us. Unless they are playing a fun and noisy game (which they need to do) we need to be still and calm. This is why we need to find a way to call them together with a song or a gentle shaker. This is why we sit on the floor close together and why I talk softly and slowly. If you do this you will bring calm and give the children a sense of being in control.

Slowing breath

The important thing to do is to slow down their thoughts, behaviours and feelings of stress. We can do this by teaching them to slow down their breath. I am going to teach you this now.

1. Sit quietly with your eyes closed.
2. Breath in deeply through your nose.
3. Breath out of your mouth making a small hiiiiissssssssssssing sound like a balloon slowly losing air. Do this veeeeery slowly trying to make the breathing out last 10-15 seconds or more.
4. SAY: Slowly let the breath out, let your thoughts and feelings slow down too.

Repeat it at least five times

(10 MINUTES)

ACTIVITY 10: THE USE OF RITUAL



SAY:

We are going to close for the day. We will close with a closing ritual or repeated routine. A repeated ritual to start and close the group is really important as ritual brings a feeling that all is normal – the child knows that in this group the same things happen every day or week. The world is not just chaotic there is something normal. A ritual is a little like a prayer it gives meaning and harmony to us and to the children.

We are going to have a group hug or other culturally appropriate way of showing affection but before that I have some homework for you I want you to come tomorrow with an opening ritual – it can be a fun one.

(10 MINUTES)



END OF DAY

DAY

2

Supporting vulnerable children to cope

Morning session: 3 hours 30 minutes

(including tea break)

Lunch: 1 hour

Afternoon session: 1 hour and 30 minutes

Morning Session

Introduction

Ask three or four people to share their idea for an opening ritual with the group.

(30 MINUTES)



SAY:

Today we are going to try out activities that all children can learn from but they are especially helpful for children who are living with stress such as forcibly displaced children.

ACTIVITY 11: A LEARNING GAME TO BUILD STRENGTH AND RESILIENCE

Step one

Draw circles with chalk on the floor – one for each person in the group – big enough for them to stand in. If the floor is a mud floor then spread out pieces of newspaper out for everyone to stand on.

Step two

Everyone is to stand in their circle and then shout ‘I am (their name)’. e.g.

Participant: I am (pause then their name) ...

Practice this a few times and once they have it.

Step three

Shout out “I am (they shout their names then add “and I am strong!” at the same time do the action. Start with big active words and actions and then move on to smaller, gentler actions.

The illustrations here show you what actions to make.

I am [name] and I am strong.

I am [name] and I am tall.

I am [name] and I am big.

I am [name] and I am loud.

I am [name] and I am fast.

I am [name] and I am wriggly.

I am [name] and I am kind.

I am [name] and I am safe.

I am [name] and I am warm.

I am [name] and I am soft.

I am [name] and I am gentle.

I am [name] and I am.

Play the game with the participants then call them back to the main circle. Once the group is sitting down have a discussion about the game.



SAY:

What do you think that game would teach children?

New words – list the words

Linking words and actions

Listening

Co-ordination

How do you think that game would make children feel?

In control and having power

Calmed down and safe.

Using their name is important as this makes them own the words and feelings.

This activity allows them to feel power and control in their bodies which is how young children can begin to cope with the stress of the chaos around them.

You can also play the same game with 'I can ...' This time call out new skills that children have recently learned like: I am (name), and I can brush my teeth

Wash my hands, ride a bike, fetch the water, write my name, colour in my picture.

With older children you can ask them to suggest words and actions. What about 'I have.....'?

(30 MINUTES)

ACTIVITY 12: AN ACTIVITY TO REINFORCE NORMALITY AND AFFIRM PRESENT REALITY

This activity takes place outside. You do not need a forest or a special natural area to do this activity, some soil and grass and sticks and stones – even a city pavement can have these.



SAY:

We are going to go outside and make a model of the house we live in and the people we live with.

Go outside with the group to a patch of earth where they can build a small model of their house using sticks, mud, stone and leaves and any other natural objects they find. They should also use objects to show the people they live with. Explain to the group that this is free play and they must use the time they need and build the way they want. Give the group time to build with care and pride.

As facilitator go outside and talk one by one to each person to ask about their house. Show interest in their houses and the people who live there. Role model one on one social interaction and encourage discussion from the children.

Time to reflect

What do you think that activity would teach children?

Listen to their ideas but you can add.

- Co-ordination
- Planning
- Language skills when they were talking to the facilitator/teacher
- Spatial awareness which is part of literacy and numeracy

How did it contribute to psychosocial well being? Was it a PSS activity?

SAY:

Often children who have been displaced or gone through chaotic and stressful circumstances are confused about where they live and who they live with, especially if they have moved around as some of the children had in the stories we read yesterday.

This is a simple activity that affirms for children their present living situation and helps give them a sense of normality. It is also helpful because it allows children to experience and connect with natural things like water and earth and sticks and stones. This bodily experience of natural things can calm children down. They will also build something that will make them proud.

Have a short discussion about this question at this point in the workshop.

Can you begin to see that all kinds of playful activities can teach children and be PSS activities?

You can do a similar activity around 'cooking' with nature. Let the children make a 'meal'. Create an imaginary 'pot' outside and tell each child to go and find a different ingredient to put into the pot. It can be just anything but it could also be vegetables or fruit - if that is what you want them to learn about. They can bring you things and name them as they place them in the pot - you should repeat the word.

(40 MINUTES)

ACTIVITY 13: WHAT ARE YOU FEELING?⁵



SAY:

Feelings are emotional states we all experience daily. Sometimes we know what we are feeling and why. Sometimes our feelings can be less clear, or overlapping, and hard to identify. It is important to help children to identify and express their feelings in their own ways. Expressing feelings helps prevent them from becoming overwhelming. One way to connect to and express our feelings is through our body and movement. This is sometimes easier than expressing feelings through words.

Stand in a circle.

Tell everyone that in this activity we will be using our bodies to express our feelings.

Explain that feelings are things we feel inside – like ‘happy’.

Ask them to show you what their body feels like when they are ‘happy’.

Now ask them to show you ‘angry’.

Now ask if someone else wants to name a feeling – with children under three you will have to name the feelings and give them time to respond, they may have to copy you.

Encourage them to express each feeling whichever way they want. There is no right or wrong.

Here are some feelings you can use:

Happy, sad, angry, afraid, excited, relaxed, worried, disappointed.

(30 MINUTES)

Note to facilitator

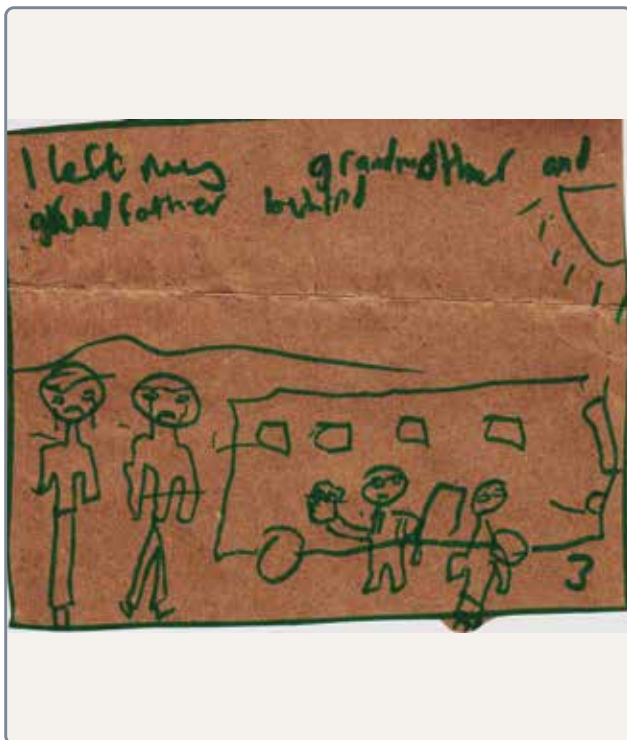
In many languages naming feelings can be difficult as there may not be as many names as in English. If this is the case then just use your body and face – you can also use your voice and let the children copy you. It does not really matter if the feeling has a name. What is important is the idea that we have different feelings and it is ok to have feelings.

⁵ Adapted from: Baytana Activities, my feelings, my emotions. Refugee Trauma Initiative. www.refugeetrauma.org.

ACTIVITY 14: BEING A FEELING CONTROLLER

One of the key skills to help children who are emotionally stressed to learn is how to control overwhelming feelings like anger, sadness, fear. One of the best ways to teach this skill is with a story. Then to copy what the child in the story did.

I want you to work in pairs and make up a short story about a girl or a boy who was very, very angry or afraid – they should be in a normal everyday situation not in a traumatic situation. For example, if you choose afraid, the boy can see a building that looks like one at home where the bad things happened and suddenly feel afraid or a girl can see a little girl with her mother and suddenly feel very, very sad because her mother died some years ago. In the story you need to show how the child recognized the feeling and changed it. Here is a story that will help you. It is written by an 11 year old. Your story will need to be suitable for 3-6 year olds.



I'm Ally.⁶ I am 11 years old. I was born in DRC but now I live in Jo'burg. I left my home when I was 5 years old.

I left my grandmother and grandfather behind.

Some days I am sad when I think about my grandfather who passed away. You can be sad about people you don't even know. Some days I feel so sad because I think about my grandfather. I never knew him and I feel so sad because I never knew him. I have a picture of my grandmother and grandfather and me when I was small.

6 from Sophiatown Community Counselling Services holiday book-making project.



When I am always sad I lie down on the grass and I look at the stars in the night. The grass is in the garden at my step-grandmother's house. I feel better when I go and do that. I just lie there and feel better.

When Pedro is sad he asks his dad for money and goes to the cinema and watches funny movies. Ephraim dances, Lillian goes on her own far from other people, Grace reads and goes to another world. Helena sings church songs, Michel sings gospel ...

... but I lie on the grass and look at the stars.

(40 MINUTES)

ACTIVITY 15: STORY READING AND TELLING

Tell the story you made as a pair to another pair.

SAY:

Stories are a wonderful way to teach and storytelling or reading is a calming activity.

Put the following website address on a flip chart.

www.africanstorybook.org



SAY:

This website has over 1880 storybooks in 221 languages from all over Africa. You can download and print or save the stories on to your phone and read them to the children.

(30 MINUTES)



LUNCH BREAK

Afternoon Session

Bring everyone back with the gentle shaker and sit in a circle ready for a story.

ACTIVITY 16: BEING IN A FOREIGN COUNTRY WITHOUT FAMILY⁷

Read the story below to the group.

Hello! My name is Agape. I am a 25 year old single mother of a small handsome boy who is five years old. I am the last born in a family of five kids.

I am starting my story from my childhood.

My family was so beautiful. All of us lived together, loving and caring for one another.

⁷ Walker, B & De'oliviera, E, (2019) eds. *Mwangaza Mama*. African Centre for Migration and Society. p 58

I am missing those days a lot, every single day of my life. Truly, I am saying this from the bottom of my heart. I never thought that one day I would live far from my family, or be separated from them. I also never thought I would live in another country or that I would be called a foreigner, and not treated as a human being.

My life has never been the same since I had to leave my country.

My first time in Johannesburg I didn't know anyone. I had no place to go and I was carrying an unborn baby in my womb. It was so hard. I had no food to eat, nowhere to sleep, no water to drink, and nobody to talk to. When I tried to speak with someone we couldn't understand each other because of our language differences. It was hard. It felt like there was nowhere to go.

I have learned to live on my own and to "forget" the past. But not always. It's not possible to forget the past, and it's not easy to be far from family and living in a different country.

I was so highly depressed when I arrived in South Africa because of such a hard life: shelter to shelter, jobless, and struggling. And an unfinished education that I wished to have completed.

Being undocumented also made (and makes) my life harder in Johannesburg. Especially, as a single mother far from my family. It really makes finding and keeping work difficult.

My first job in Johannesburg was selling clothes in a shop at China City. I worked everyday, including Saturday's and Sunday's for R250 a week. I worked under depression because I could not find anyone to help take care of my son. This eventually caused me to lose my job.

After a long time of being desperate, without work or money, I found another job. But my family circumstances were still the same. I worked the weekends and couldn't find someone to help care for my child. I lost this job too.

If only I had family that lived near me, I would never have lost these jobs.

Luckily, I found a way to work for myself and send my child to crèche. I can even work with him by my side because he does not bother anyone. Nevertheless, it would be much easier if I lived near my family. This is not possible though, for so many reasons.

Family is important. They are the ones who raise you and know you

better than anyone else in the world. Even when you live far away, they are still loving and missing you. And wishing to spend time with you.

My child often asks me, "Where is my granny?" He says, "Who is my uncle?" He wants to know his family. He also asks "Who do I belong to?" "Who is going to be my brother?"

When he asks me these kinds of questions I feel so much pain.

I miss my family. I wish I could be with them each and every day. I also wish that my son could be with them.

The point of my story: I would like everyone to know the importance of being able to live in the same country as your family, and not taking them for granted. I have a family and they give me strength, but they live very, very far away.

If we lived closer to one another my life would be different. I know many people who live near their families but they fight and don't care about one another. I wish they could know what it feels like not to be able to see them.



SAY:

Say: *Imagine Agape's little boy was in your group. Talk to the person sitting next to you:*

What is Agape doing to make sure she provides a stable, nurturing family for her little boy?

What support may she need to help her be more stable, nurturing and responsive.

Point to the flip chart which should be up on the wall from the day before to remind them.

Science also shows that providing stable, responsive, nurturing relationships in the earliest years of life can prevent or even reverse the damaging effects of early life stress, with lifelong benefits for learning, behaviour, and health”.

(10 MINUTES)

ACTIVITY 17: A PARENTING SUPPORT PROGRAMME?

You will need to print out Handout 2.

SAY:

Stay in your pairs and read handout 2. Discuss if you could do something like this. Who could help you run such a programme?

(40 MINUTES)

Handout 2:

A story about a parenting programme in Afghanistan

Strong Families supports families (piloted in Afghanistan) to recognise their strengths and skills and to make them stronger by sharing their challenges as well as the things that work for them. The programme is a short group intervention attended by children and their primary caregivers over 3 weeks. Together with children and caregivers it explores parents' challenges and develops ways to better deal with stress; the means of showing love, while at the same time having and enforcing limits and listening to children, and teaching children how to deal with stress. During the family session they practice positive communication and are encouraged to practice stress relief techniques together. Parents learn to encourage good behaviour and discourage misbehaviour, while children explore rules and responsibilities and think about future goals in addition to the important roles their caregivers play in their lives. In the final family session, caregivers and children learn about family values and practice sharing appreciation to each other.

Source: Strong families: a new family skills training programme for challenged and humanitarian settings: a single-arm intervention tested in Afghanistan, Karin Haar et al



ACTIVITY 18: A GOODBYE RITUAL



SAY:

One last thing to say – vulnerable children need to feel they are special. We all need that, don't we. I think you have all been committed and special so I am going to end with a recognition ritual. In many traditional cultures there is a special object that is used to acknowledge that a person is special, for example in some churches the bishop carries a symbolic crook or stick. In some traditions the chief carries a carved stick, in others it is a special book. We are going to use a stick/shaker. I am going to go around the circle and recognise each of you one by one.

Note to facilitator

This last activity is designed to recognise each participant as an ECD teacher and celebrate the work they have done during the last two days. You will need to find a large stick or if you have used a shaker for gathering everyone together you can use this too. This ritual may seem strange to you but if you try it you will find it is very meaningful to everyone who attended the training.

Go around the circle, stand in front of each participant, hold out the stick or shaker and say:

I see you (name). You will be a stable, responsive and nurturing (and if you are using the gentle shaker say 'gentle') teacher to your children.

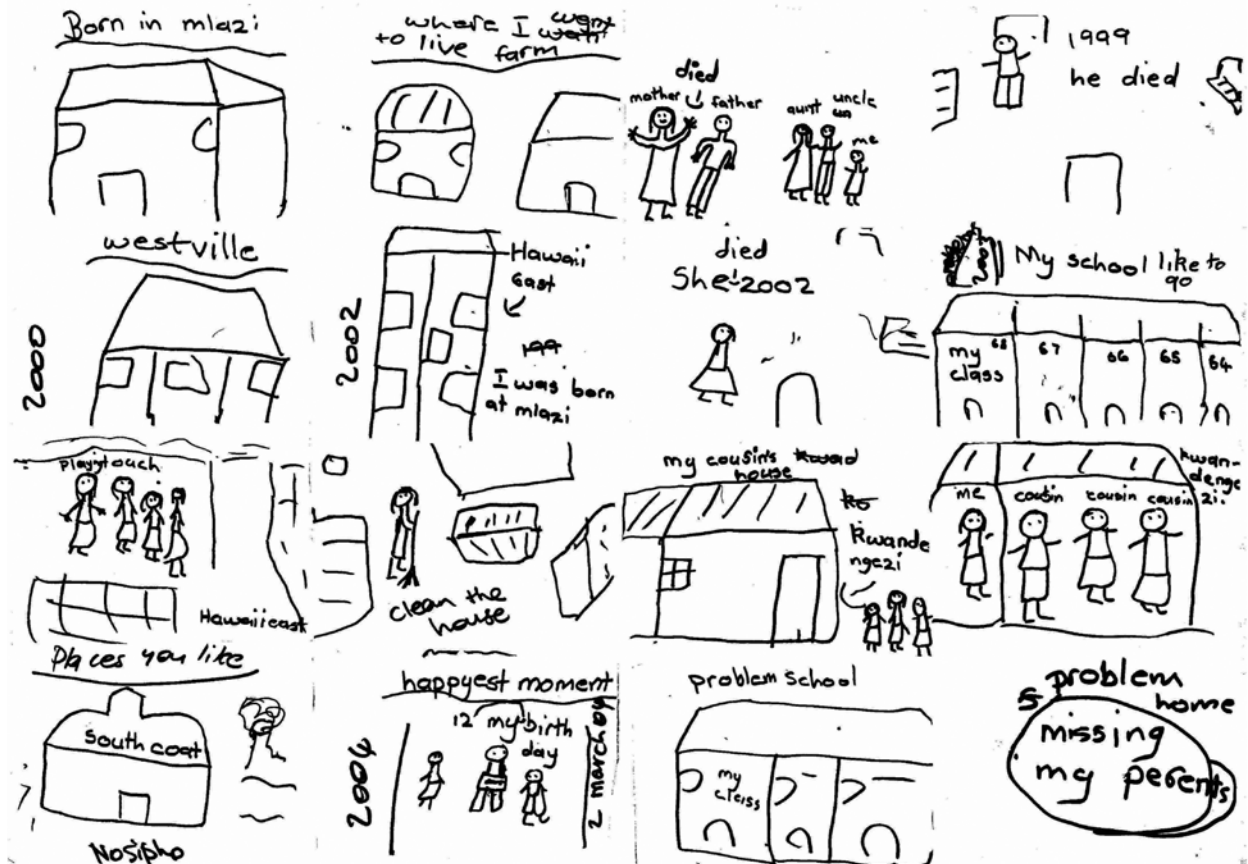
I see you etc.

(20 MINUTES)

Stories for Activity 4

Story 1

This is a picture story made by a girl of 9 who lives in Durban South Africa. In the story she tells about her life. Can you see how many times she has moved from one place to another and how she is grieving the loss of her parents?



(Clacherty, G., Kgomongoe, J. and Makgamathe, M., (2004). *Stories of lost childhoods. Participatory research to identify needs of children affected by HIV/AIDS living in inner city Durban.* OXFAM HIV/AIDS Programme.)

Story 2

Jeannette is 18 and Rene is 9. They attend a regular support group at a Community Counselling Service centre in Johannesburg.⁸ One of the activities they did in the group was to draw their 'river of life' which is a story of their lives and to tell the others in the group their story. This is a piece of their story.

Jeannette: My family lived in the area in Congo where there was a war. My father was killed when he was cutting wood and bringing it to our village to sell. He used to bring the wood on a small boat on the river. My mother went to look for him and she did not come back.

There were some people in our village who knew my grandmother, who was in South Africa. They said we must go to her. So we sold the things in our house and they helped us to use the money to get a bus and then a truck that brought us to South Africa. I think I was fourteen then, Rene was six. No one said about papers and Rene and I were too young so we did not know, we did not bring birth certificates or anything.

Rene: We came in a big truck, in the back and covered by canvas. There were many of us and it was so cold and I was crying.

Rene: I got on the floor and tried to stay warm by curling under the other people. The truck driver was kind. He made sure we had food and water.

Jeannette: Yes, he was, when we had to cross the border into Zambia he told me to make it look like I was carrying a baby on my back so the border officials would let me just walk across. Rene hid in the truck. The truck driver found out where my grandmother lived – we had her phone number from the people in Congo and he took us to her house when we got to Johannesburg.

Rene: I do not like to live here because I cannot go to school. For two years I sit and feel sad. I have no papers.



Rene covered her drawing of the truck that brought her from DRC in black crayon as she told us how horrible the journey had been

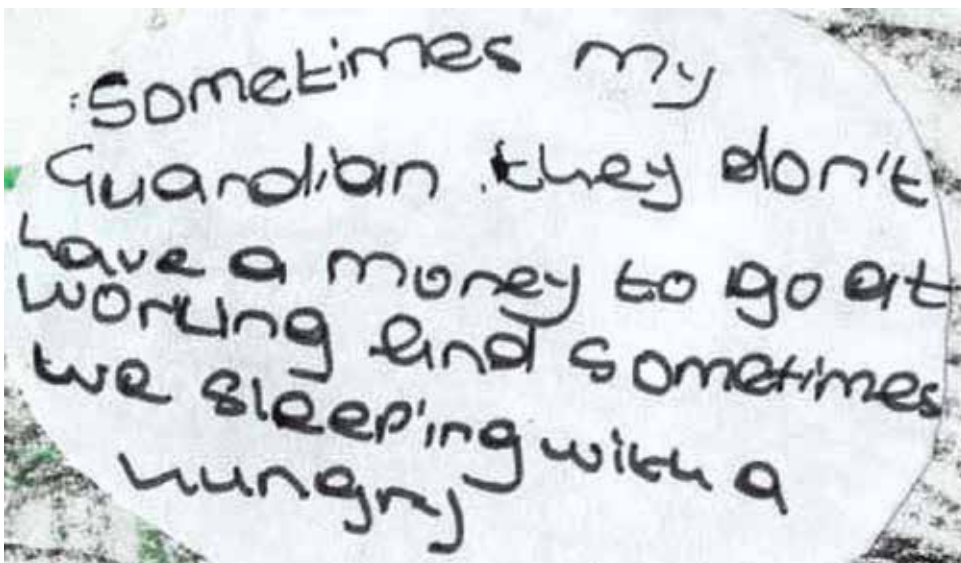
⁸ Jeanette and Rene (names changed) took part in research at the Sophiatown Community Counselling Service in Johannesburg, South Africa. The research can be found in Save the Children (2020) Girls on the Move in southern Africa. Save the Children Sweden.

Jeannette: I want to get refugee status because we had to run away because my mother and father died in the war and my grandmother here in South Africa is the only family we have who is alive. People said you must get asylum papers first. We went to Home Affairs to get asylum seeker papers but they would not give them to us. My sister could go on to my grandmother's asylum paper but she has no birth certificate to prove she is her granddaughter so they told her to go away. We are too afraid to walk around as we have no papers and the police may arrest us. When Rene was sick I was too scared to go to the clinic. We didn't go. I just say, God is always protective.

Rene: It was funny when we first got here as we knew no English. You can't talk because you don't know - so you show ... even if you go to buy food you show with your hands (she laughs as she shows us her sign language for different kinds of vegetables). Then I learned to speak English. Now I just want to go to school.

Story 3

This is a copy of a sentence written by a boy of 11 who lived with his small brother of four years old and his guardian, a kindly neighbour who took him and his brother in after their mother died. This story was told during research with children in northern South Africa in 2005.



Sometimes my guardian they don't have a money to go to work and sometimes we sleeping with a hungry.

Story 4

A conversation between a researcher and a girl of 14 who we will call Kudzi living in Zimbabwe. She is caring for old grandmother and grandfather and younger brothers and sister, the youngest is 3 years old.



Kudzi: This is our house where we sleep in. This is my great grandmother. This is my grandfather and grandmother. This is my mother and myself. These are my brothers G and S. This is my father. This is my sister. This is my little sister and brother and my aunt's child. My aunt has died.

Researcher: Okay. Are you the eldest child?

Kudzi: It is my sister. R: How old is your sister? She is 30 years.

Researcher: Where is she now?

Kudzi: She passed away.

Researcher: Who else is late among these?

Kudzi: My mother and my father passed away.

R: Were they sick?

Kudzi: Yes, I looked after my father with my mother and then my mother and then my sister came home and she was sick too.

Researcher: Your mother, your father and your sister.

Kudzi: Yes.

Researcher: So are you the eldest in the house?

Kudzi: No, its G and S, my brothers.

Researcher: Are they staying with you now or are they are somewhere else.

Kudzi: G and S are staying in the rural areas.

Researcher: So it's you with lots of little children and the three elders?

Kudzi: Yes.

Researcher: How old is your grandmother?

Kudzi: She is very old and my grandfather.

Story 5

A story about four-year-old, Bilal told by an ECD worker who is helping with him and his family.

Bilal was born in Syria five months before his family had to flee the war in Syria to Jordan. He lives with his father, mother, three brothers and two sisters in Za'atari camp. "We ran from a village to another because of the heavy bombing everywhere we went in Syria, from Dara'a to Sewana city where I was seriously injured" his father told us.

After his father's injury, the family had no option but to migrate to Jordan. His father added: "The road to Jordan in the middle of the desert was one of the worst experiences me and my family ever had; my fresh injury, the heat of days, the cold of the nights and my mother's death on the way". The family seems to be still in big shock of their migration to Jordan, the grandmother of Bilal fled with them but did not make it to Jordan and died on the way.

Bilal and his family now are neighbours of War Child's site in the Za'atari camp, and they look really happy about that. Bilal is part of War Child's ECCD programme.

Mahmoud, War Child's ECCD facilitator explained that Bilal in his first weeks of the programme looked confused, not willing to participate in the class, he didn't know where his books were, and sometimes he was aggressive with other children.

(War Child, (2016). Time to be a child: Play, learning and child-centred development for children affected by the Syrian crisis. WarChild UK. p. 13)

Story 6

This is a story written by a girl of ten during a holiday workshop for vulnerable children, including forcibly displaced children and children who had experienced grief and loss.⁹



Nothing must
happen
Suzette T



My mother was taking on
the phone.
She heard that my
grandmother was dead.
She was crying so much.



I was feeling so, so, so, sad.
We all started crying.
Grandmother was good to
us, when no one else was
good to us.

Book made by Suzette at a Sopotown
Community Psychological Services
holiday workshop. Published as
part of the African Storybook series.
[www.africanstorybook.org/reader.
php?id=33742&d=0&a=1](http://www.africanstorybook.org/reader.php?id=33742&d=0&a=1)



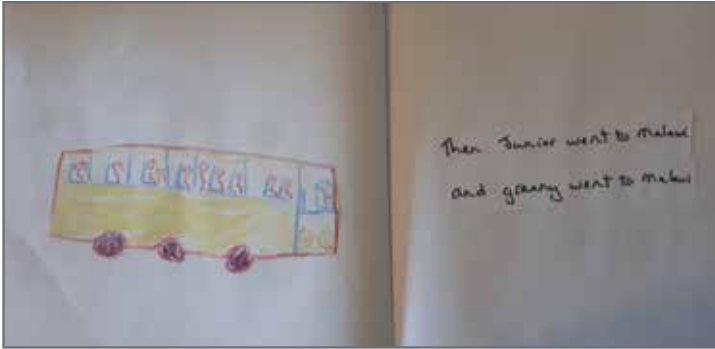
All her children came to put
her under the sand.
We started to pray.
Nothing must happen to
the rest of our family



Story 7

This is another story from the same workshop, written by Jacqueline





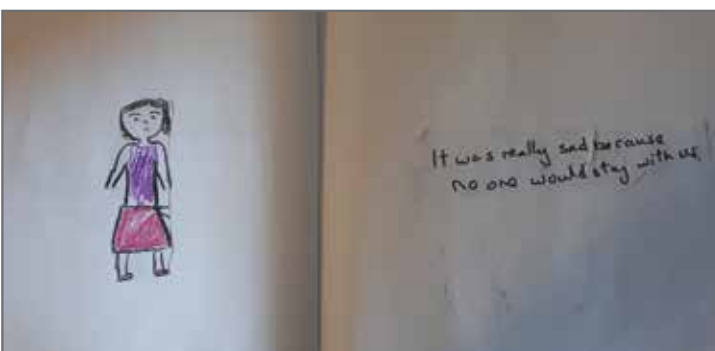
Then Junior went to school
and George went to school



And Auntie and Christina went
to school



Then Thandi went to school



It was really sad because
no one would stay with us



it was not so bad
because my mother is still
there with me



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