Learning through Play

Sport and Play-based Early Childhood Development

Toolkit for Facilitators

Swiss Academy for Development

The Swiss Academy for Development (SAD) is a practice-oriented research institute that promotes development opportunities for children and young people who experience rapid and often conflictual change, and encourages their participation in society.

At the interface between science and practice, SAD develops and tests new approaches and methods. It generates practice-oriented knowledge through applied studies, monitoring and evaluation projects as well as through its own operational pilot projects. SAD passes on this practical knowledge to other organisations, who generate a multiplier effect both in Switzerland and abroad.

SAD is both a leader and think tank in "Sport & Development" and has made cutting-edge contributions to this innovative field. Our extensive expertise in researching and promoting psychosocial well-being, resilience, social integration and improved learning outcomes for disadvantaged children and youth through sport & play-based interventions has led to the successful implementation of many field projects. These projects are supporting psychosocial rehabilitation in post-disaster contexts (Iran, Lebanon, South Sudan), facilitating conflict transformation (Sri Lanka), promoting social integration (Switzerland, Hungary), improving access to basic education for disadvantaged children (Nepal) and creating opportunities for youth employment (Nepal, Egypt).

Through many years of research and continuous monitoring and evaluation of operational pilot projects we have tailored our UNICEF awarded, integrated teaching approach to meet the specific needs of children and youth at all stages of the educational continuum (early childhood development, non-formal education, vocational training). The unique approach provides young people with a holistic learning experience that supports their motor, cognitive, emotional and social development.

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Impressum

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Preface

Move 4 New Horizons – An educational continuum for disadvantaged children and young people

Move 4 New Horizons (M4NH) is a holistic educational programme for disadvantaged children and young people in Nepal, to ensure that they can successfully access and complete basic education and access the job market, irrespective of their gender, socioeconomic status, caste or ethnicity. The programme is implemented by the Swiss Academy for Development (SAD) in collaboration with the Nepalese grassroots organisation Dalit Welfare Organization (DWO) in Dang district, situated in the mid-western region of Nepal.

M4NH was realised in 2008. The first phase of the programme included a non-formal education (NFE) component. This NFE component was conceptualised with the aim of getting out-of-school children from disadvantaged families (back) into the public school system. Between 2008 and 2011, 900 children completed SAD's nine month NFE programme, allowing them to (re-)enter the formal education system. In the second phase, the M4NH programme was expanded to include pre-school children (Early Childhood Development) and young people (vocational training) to ensure an educational continuum for disadvantaged Nepalese children, from their early- to their adolescent-years.

PART 1

Programme design

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1. Programme design

1. 1   Move 4 New Horizons' Early Childhood Development component

1.1.1 Securing a good start in life for disadvantaged boys and girls

Early childhood is a critical stage of development that forms the foundation of a child's future well-being and learning. Experiences and learning opportunities in early childhood have a major impact on the brain structure and literally shape the way the child interacts with others, how they behave, learn and think for the rest of their life (UNICEF 2002).

To support disadvantaged children in their early development, and to facilitate their regular entry into the government school system, M4NH has been offering access to Early Childhood Development (ECD) services to 760 children in 15 different centres throughout the Dang district from June 2012 to May 2015. The key objectives of the M4NH ECD component are to promote a sport and play-based learning approach in pre-school classes to make teaching methods and the learning environment more responsive to the specific needs of disadvantaged children and to foster an eagerness for education in early childhood. Songs, dances, games, stories, craft, free play and sport activities have been used to familiarise children with a semi-structured environment, to decrease the gap between home and school and to prepare children mentally, emotionally, socially and physically for entrance into the government school system at the prescribed age.

M4NH's ECD centres are set up in areas that have a high proportion of marginalised families. Priority was given to villages with limited access to services such as government, health and/or education, markets, public transport and employment, as well as villages that are geographically disadvantaged through remoteness and/or share of unfertile lands, i.e. fields lacking irrigation facilities or water supply. Children aged three to five were eligible for admission into the programme, whether from families marginalised due to caste or ethnic background, from ultra-poor families such as day labourers and landless households as well as orphans and children from single-headed households.

1.1.2 About the 'Learning through Play' Toolkit

The toolkit primarily addresses practitioners in the field but programme designers may also find it a helpful resource. The aim is to encourage the use of sport in ECD, give step-by-step instructions that are easy to follow and provide tools that can be adapted easily. The toolkit was developed to be used by M4NH project staff. It is based upon field-experience and draws on SAD's experience in using sport and play as educational tools. For a better understanding of the programme, **Part 1 "Programme design"** provides background information on the ECD component and points out the guiding principles that informed its conceptualisation. The sport and play-based approach of M4NH is introduced and it is explained how the different curriculum areas contribute to the holistic development of a young child and their school readiness. **Part 2 "Principles and practical guidance"** is intended to provide field-level staff working at the ECD centres with practical guidance and recommendations on how to create an optimal learning environment in order to give every child the best possible start in their education. **Part 3 "Playful activities and games"** and **Part 4 "Learning aids and toys"** consist of a compilation of activities related to the curriculum areas and instructions on how to prepare low-cost learning aids with locally available materials.

1. 2 Why Early Childhood Development?

1.2.1 Importance of the first years of life

The first years of life are the most crucial phase for the cognitive, emotional, social and physical development of a child. During these critical years, the brain is most able to respond to and grow from exposure to environmental stimulation (Thompson & Nelson 2001; Dunn 2005; Shelov & Hannemann 2006). As a child has new experiences, new synaptic connections (connections between brain cells) are made and existing connections are maintained (Richter 2004; Sherr 2005). The development of a child takes place rapidly, but it is easily disrupted when fundamental needs are not met. These needs include nutrition, health care and protection, as well as human interactions (Thompson & Nelson 2001; Dunn 2005; Shelov & Hannemann 2006). The events which occur in early life have an impact on the development of a child over the rest of their lifespan and determine health and education as well as social and economic participation in adult life. Everyday challenges such as overcoming fear of unknown people or animals, dealing with frustration or getting an immunisation are

potentially stressful for children; even more so are experiences of persistent discrimination, the death of a family member or abuse. Such experiences activate the stress response systems in the body and the brain. If not buffered by safe, supportive relationships with caregivers, these systems will be activated for a prolonged period of time. Damaging, long-lasting effects on bodily systems and the brain architecture with behavioural and physiological disorders (for example impairments in learning and memory) can be a consequence (National Scientific Council on the Developing Child 2005/2014). Early experiences can also have an influence on whether the child will play an active role in their community and society in general once they have grown up, whether they will know their rights and raise their voice as an adult (Grantham-McGregor et al. 2007; WHO 2007).

In spite of some progress in poverty reduction in recent years, Nepal remains one of the poorest countries in the world with more than four million children still living in poverty (UNICEF 2010). These children do not have adequate access to health, social and educational systems or appropriate nutrition. For example, one out of two children in Nepal under the age of five suffers from stunted growth, which is the result of chronic undernourishment. Deprivation of this sort can have significant consequences on the intellectual potential of a child, in extreme cases even leading to permanent cognitive problems (UNICEF 2010). Moreover, the quality of care that a disadvantaged child is likely to receive is also affected. For example, stressors occasioned by poverty make it difficult for parents to provide their child with sensitive, responsive and stimulating care (Grantham-McGregor et al. 2007).

In conclusion, whether disadvantage is caused by caste, ethnicity, gender, poverty or rural isolation, these children are at developmental risk in their early years. A lack of appropriate experiences and stimulation in early childhood results in damage to the brain and delays in development. The cognitive, emotional, social and physical development is likely to be affected negatively. As a consequence, a disadvantaged child does not have the opportunity to develop to their full potential.

1.2.2 Supporting a child in their development

Early Childhood Development (ECD) lays a foundation for future development and lifelong learning. ECD programmes give a child a chance to reach their full cognitive, emotional, social and physical potential by creating an environment that provides healthcare and nutrition, that is caring and responsive, that protects the child and stimulates them (UNICEF 2002).

Studies from around the world show clear evidence of significant differences between a child who has participated in ECD and one who has not, regardless of whether the child was observed for only a few years or throughout adolescence (Arnold et al. 2006). ECD programmes are, for example, associated with improved school attendance, higher levels of academic achievement, better adjustment, reduced repetition of classes and increased chances of finding employment later in life (for information on Nepal see, for example, UNICEF 2003).

Countering disadvantage with the help of ECD services

ECD has an even wider impact on the development of disadvantaged children because those who need it most will get the most out of it. Whatever the factors underlying exclusion or marginalisation – gender, poverty, ethnicity, caste, or religion – ECD programmes manage to effectively redirect disadvantaged children towards a more positive life trajectory. According to the World Health Organization (WHO 2007), early opportunities for learning, in combination with improved nutrition, increase the likelihood that a marginalised child will attend school and become an adult with higher income, better health, lower crime rates and lower levels of welfare dependence than those who do not receive early development support. ECD programmes also have a positive effect on a child's ability to cope with adverse conditions such as violence, bullying, alcohol or substance abuse in the family, poverty and disease, as they support the child in building resilience. Hence, ECD services have shown to have the potential to break the intergenerational transmission of disadvantage. They serve as a powerful equaliser by providing equality of opportunities (WHO 2007). ECD services can also counterbalance gender inequity by compensating for gender biases in nutrition, healthcare or stimulation. They provide equal education opportunities to girls and boys and help to challenge biased gender norms and stereotypes (UNICEF 2008; WHO 2007).

Thus, ECD services not only respond to the direct needs of a child and their family in the short term but also contribute to society as a whole by positively influencing the child's life in the long term. Implementing such programmes prevents social and economic disparity as well as the waste of social and human potential.

Benefits of ECD programmes for parents and caregivers

ECD services also benefit parents and caregivers. Parental education classes improve access to information regarding child rearing, child development and to local service provision offered by different institutions. They equip parents with context-specific practices on how to support their child's development and improve their capacity to safeguard them from physical and psychological harm.

Good practices in hygiene and behaviour management that are modelled at the ECD centre provide parents and caregivers with good education practices that inform their parenting style. This further benefits the children that they look after, including those who are not enrolled in the ECD centre. In general, early childhood services have shown to result in stronger engagement by both parents and communities in children's education. This should not to be underestimated, as involvement by parents has shown to be an important predictor for the school success of a child. Parenting programmes can also increase parents' general feeling of control over their lives by establishing a sense of agency regarding what they can do to support their child in their school career, and where to turn to in case of difficulties (Arnold et al. 2006).

1.2.3 School readiness

Besides creating a caring, safe and stimulating environment where a child can explore, play and learn, ECD programmes also have a positive influence on the likelihood of a child being able to succeed in school by increasing school readiness.

A child who enters school 'ready to learn' is more likely to succeed at school, to attain higher levels of academic achievement and is more likely to be employed in adulthood. Whether disadvantage is caused by poverty, ethnicity, gender, rural isolation or disability, a disadvantaged child often lack the skills essential for school entry and is therefore more likely to fall behind and/or drop out of school early (UNICEF 2008).

School readiness consists of the following three dimensions:

1. The child's readiness for school
2. The school's readiness for the child
3. Families' readiness for school

The child's readiness for school focuses on the child's learning and developmental outcomes. A child who is ready to start their education fulfils certain requirements (i.e. knowledge and skills) in various fields that are needed to succeed in school (UNICEF 2012). The domains determining school readiness can be categorised as follows (Arnold et al. 2006):

1. Physical well-being and motor development
2. Social and emotional development
3. Approaches to learning
4. Language development
5. Cognition and general knowledge

It is not surprising that, a child who enters school with lower levels of cognitive skills (e.g. early numeracy and literacy) than their peers is less likely to do well in school and more likely to be unemployed in adulthood. But social and emotional skills are also linked to poor performance. A child who is not able sit still, to understand or follow directions, to engage with peers because they are aggressive and hit other children, and a child with a low self-

confidence or who has a poor ability to control their impulses is likely to have difficulties throughout their schooling, and is more likely to drop out of school (UNICEF 2008).

The definition of what school readiness entails can vary considerably between parents and teachers. Educators tend to focus more on social abilities; they emphasise the importance of being attentive, self-confident, communicative, open and curious when confronted with new activities. Many parents, in contrast, prioritise academic readiness and consequently demand 'school learning' (i.e. learning to read and write, to count and calculate). Parents' perception often changes once they see how their child benefits from early education programmes and praise their changes in attitude and social behaviour (Arnold et al. 2006).

M4NH's daily ECD programme offers a variety of activities for the child that train their pre-mathematical skills, listening comprehension, language abilities and gross as well as fine motor development. The child thus acquires a fundamental readiness in maths, reading and writing, which helps them in school later. In the pressure-free environment of the ECD centre, initiative, motivation, curiosity, imagination and task persistence are encouraged and the child develops a positive approach towards learning. Research has shown this to be linked with academic success in school. The child also becomes accustomed to being away from their parents for a certain amount of time, which eases the transition to primary school.

Schools' readiness for the child focuses on school-level outcomes and practices that foster and support the smooth transition of a child into primary school, and advance and promote the learning of all children (UNICEF 2013). It encompasses child-friendly learning environments in schools that are adapted to the diverse needs of the children. To ensure that the learning environment in state primary schools meets a young child's needs (especially those of disadvantaged children), M4NH developed the capacity of teaching staff from government schools throughout the project target area. In workshops, teachers from primary schools were introduced to playful teaching methods that foster development in a holistic way. In addition, lobbying for M4NH's sport and play-based approach with representatives from the District Education Office (DEO) and other institutions took place with the aim of encouraging the mainstreaming of the playful teaching methodology.

Families' readiness for school emphasises the importance of attitude and the involvement of parents and caregivers in their child's learning processes and transition to school (UNICEF 2012). A child's home environment has a huge influence on their development and learning progress both pre-school and during their school years.

Most disadvantaged families feel like they do not have the resources to promote their child's interests since they already struggle to sustain a basic standard of living and to feed the family. However, they often underestimate their ability to further support their child's development. It has been shown that despite the effects of poverty (focus on day-to-day survival, heavy workloads, etc.), parents can increase their child's eagerness for learning, and support the development of their personal abilities through everyday activities and conversations that can considerably help the child to succeed at school. In the long run, this can even contribute to escaping the cycle of poverty. Home learning practices such as storytelling, singing songs and reciting nursery rhymes together with the child, or encouraging them to draw, have been shown to be linked more closely with a child's intellectual and social abilities than their parents' educational background and profession

(Arnold et al. 2006). Marginalised parents with few formal qualifications can therefore improve their child's progress to a great extent and give them a better start at school by engaging in activities at home that foster learning, like sorting objects according to size, shape and colour, practicing counting, recognising numbers and engaging them in conversation (UNICEF 2008).

M4NH intends to establish a partnership with parents or other primary caregivers. Before enrolling their child, parents are informed about their role and responsibilities within the ECD programme. A poster detailing their responsibilities is on display in each ECD centre to reiterate this role. This also helps to clarify that instead of the facilitator resuming parental duties, the ECD programme is meant to be a complementary service. Through the parental education programme, parents or other primary caregivers are informed about local health and education services. They are advised on hygiene, adequate nutrition and child well-being in general, and receive an introduction to child rights and child protection. If required, basic literacy and numeracy assistance is provided to equip them with the necessary skills for supporting their child throughout their education. Once the child has completed the ECD course, their families are assisted in the transition to the formal education system. M4NH staff monitor the child's performance at school and hold case management meetings with teachers and parents whenever necessary. By establishing a Management Committee for each ECD centre; parents, primary caregivers and community members are encouraged to assume ownership of the ECD service offered in their village. They take on responsibility and make suggestions for improvement. This not only builds their capacity in planning and guiding education services but also ensures that the needs of local communities are being met.

1. 3 How do you create an optimal learning environment?

1.3.1 Learning through play

By adapting a sport and play-based approach, the ECD programme supports the development of a child in a holistic way. Holistic development means that the teaching supports four dimensions of child development: the mental, physical, emotional and social (see Part 2 "Principles and practical guidance" for a detailed explanation).

The role of play is central in child development. A child discovers the world around them and learns through play. Guided play in ECD classes provides a child with opportunities to try new things, solve problems, invent, create, test ideas, explore and develop an understanding of the world around them. As things are seen, heard, felt or tasted, messages are sent from one brain cell to another, making connections with the brain cells around them and thereby developing the brain.

One of the greatest benefits of play is the development of social competence. A child can build relationships with their peers, learn to resolve conflicts, negotiate, express and manage emotions. Play also fosters trusting and meaningful relationships with adult caregivers and thus fulfils an important socialising function. Furthermore, a playful learning approach helps a child to develop self-confidence (WHO 2007).

1.3.2 Role of sport in enhancing holistic child development and school readiness

Using sport to achieve educational objectives

A young child learns through observation, modelling and interaction – they learn by doing. Active involvement is the driving force behind a child's development and was therefore set as the guiding educational principle of M4NH's early childhood programme. The sport and play-based approach uses age-appropriate sport/physical activities as an educational tool to foster the child's physical, mental, emotional and social development. A child learns to relate to others, to cooperate with their peers, share materials, take turns and cope with emotions such as frustration. With regards to the development of physical abilities, they acquire and train basic locomotor, non-locomotor and manipulative movement patterns (i.e. stationary movements, movements of the body across space and to control objects). Movement has also shown to be conducive to the development of general learning readiness in a child as it activates the neural wiring of the brain, which helps to improve brain functions and enables the sensory system to develop further. Academic readiness requires, for example, spatial orientation (e.g. to distinguish letters such as b and p), the ability to focus on a specific point (e.g. a word on the blackboard) or understand the way text is tracked during reading and writing (i.e. directionality). Delays in these areas have shown to jeopardise academic success (Krog 2010; Krog & Kruger 2011). Learning objectives related to physical development as well as social and emotional development can thus be attained with well-guided movement exercises.

Principles guiding the M4NH sport activities

The activities on the M4NH curriculum are conceived to promote feelings of success and to ensure a high degree of participation. Elimination games, with their underlying message that the most skilled children are allowed to play longest, are therefore not favoured. To promote the development of a positive attitude towards practising and learning, every child – regardless of their individual skill level – is complimented on their efforts and improvements. Hence, participation, inclusion and enjoyment are emphasised rather than competition, rivalry and victory (for background reading see e.g. Rampmeyer 2000; Belka 2004; Hynes-Dusel 2002; Marston 2004).

A child entering pre-school programmes at age three is still in the developmental stage of parallel (i.e. independent) play and will gradually change their playing pattern to more interactive play (first, around age 3.5 to associative, then around age 4.5 to cooperative play). Age-appropriate activities for the former are therefore activities that focus on controlling the body and manipulating objects rather than games in which a child is required to cooperate in groups (Belka 2004; Gordon Biddle 2013).

The activities proposed to the children enrolled in ECD can be classified into eight curricular categories, one of them being sport/physical activities. However, most of the activities proposed in the other categories also stimulate physical movements by deliberately integrating active, physical elements.

1.3.3 Supportive relationship through positive discipline

A child grows and learns the most when they receive affection, attention and stimulation. Research shows that the interaction between the facilitator and the child plays a more important role in the child's well-being than structural characteristics such as class size, staff-child ratio and staff training. It is very important that a child feels safe, secure and appreciated by their teachers (Arnold et al. 2006).

One way to ensure an optimal relationship between the facilitator and the child is through positive discipline (Save the Children 2010). Positive discipline was chosen as an overarching reference for classroom and behaviour management in the ECD centres as it is an approach that teaches the child and guides their behaviour, while respecting their rights. It is non-violent and allows the child to develop self-confidence, self-respect and self-discipline. Positive discipline builds on four components:

1. Identifying long-term child rearing goals
2. Providing warmth and structure
3. Understanding how a child thinks and feels
4. Problem-solving

For information on how to put this into practice, see Part 2 "Principles and practical guidance".

1. 4   How are M4NH field-staff selected?
What are their roles and responsibilities?

1.4.1 Staff selection process

The selection process to find suitable staff for the ECD project component was organised and conducted by the local implementation organisation DWO. Available positions were advertised on the radio and in local newspapers. For the fifty positions in ECD, NFE and VT, a total of over two hundred applications with CVs were received.

DWO senior management and project staff conducted interviews with selected candidates and assessed their suitability, as well as their motivation to work with children in an early education setting. To prevent turnover of trained staff and ensure staff stability, candidates were also asked about their commitment to be engaged with the project throughout its three-year duration. For ECD, 35 field-level staff were hired: 15 facilitators, 15 support staff and 5 social mobilisers.

1.4.2 Required qualifications and skills

To be eligible for working in ECD, field-level staff must be at least eighteen years old. Social mobilisers must have successfully completed higher secondary education with the 'Higher Secondary Certificate' (i.e. grade twelve or '+2 education'). Facilitators are required to have successfully completed grade ten with the 'School Leaving Certificate' that is awarded nation-wide. Support staff have to be literate. Applicants' experience in working with children and the kind of capacity building training they have followed in the past was also evaluated. To facilitate a close relationship with parents/primary caregivers and community members, facilitators and support staff are required to live in the community where the ECD centre is located. Priority was given to married candidates to prevent loss of trained employees as women will most likely move to their husband's place of residence once they are married.

1.4.3 Role and responsibilities

All staff are required to comply with the Child Protection Policy that forms an integral part of their work contract. Under no circumstances must they use physical punishment or verbal abuse to discipline a child but instead adopt non-violent forms of behaviour management. They are also expected to attend the capacity building workshops that are regularly provided by SAD staff to build their knowledge and skills in child development. They must have good social skills and interact well with both the child and their parents. They must be aware of the developmental needs of children aged 3–5 and how to fulfil them. They are expected to appreciate the cultural, social and ethnic diversity of the children in the centre and to promote tolerance and unity.

Social mobilisers The role of the social mobilisers is to establish and sustain a good relationship with stakeholders; i.e. community members, local authorities and leaders from community-based organisations such as forestry committees, water and sanitation committees or farmers' groups. They are responsible for keeping the project coordinator updated about attendance rates of children, material requirements, lessons learnt, best practices and challenges encountered by facilitators or support staff. To ensure continuous learning, social mobilisers conduct classroom observation visits on a regular basis, provide feedback to facilitators and support staff and assist whenever necessary. They also conduct the monthly parental education sessions for caregivers of ECD children and supervise the ECD Management Committee.

Facilitators The facilitators are responsible for managing and running the ECD centre. They prepare a daily programme for the children with activities appropriate to their stage of development that encourage exploration and experimentation using all their senses and a variety of materials that will help them to learn and discover. Together with the support staff, they prepare interesting and relevant teaching aids and play materials from locally available, low-cost materials. They sustain a close relationship with parents or caregivers and discuss any issues related to the well-being of their child.

Support staff The support staff assist the facilitators in their daily duties. Their primary responsibility is to prepare lunch and to keep the sanitation facilities and indoor and outdoor spaces clean and tidy. They also assist children with hygienic practices such as visits to the toilet.

1. 5 What does the daily ECD programme look like?

1.5.1 Encouraging age-appropriate sensory exploration

M4NH's ECD centres follow a daily programme that structures the day in a child-friendly way (for the detailed programme, see Part 2 "Principles and practical guidance"). The daily programme is meant to guide the facilitators in setting up a varied programme that offers multi-faceted learning experiences in different fields and stimulates a child's natural curiosity and desire to learn and explore. The programme allots time for several categories of activities throughout the day. It includes time for routines (e.g. hygiene routines, nap time, welcome and good-bye rituals), guided play activities (inside and/or outside depending on weather conditions) and free play. The recurrent schedule and consistent routines make a child feel at ease and create a sense of security for them.

The daily programme also takes into account different ways of learning: verbal, visual, tactile/ kinaesthetic learning. By exposing a child to a variety of different activities that involve all their senses, they are more likely to enjoy the activities. Multi-sensory learning in different settings will result in better learning outcomes and make it easier for a child to memorise what they have learnt (Hynes-Dusel 2002).

When playing with children, caregivers must always be attentive to their signals and take cues from them. A child will easily feel overwhelmed and frustrated if an activity is too complicated. Likewise, if a game is too easy, they will lose interest and get distracted, potentially disturbing the whole group. A positive attitude towards learning can only be developed if the child experiences feelings of success when performing activities. Facilitators are therefore strongly encouraged to modify activities according to the interests of the children, their abilities and development stages by adopting differentiated instruction and adapting the activities to the specific needs of each child.

The activities that are introduced in Part 3 "Playful activities and games" of this toolkit should not be seen as one-fits-all solutions. They are designed to be adapted by facilitators.

The same holds true for the daily programme which is conceptualised to provide a model that can be amended by the facilitators if need be.

1.5.2 The eight curriculum areas

The M4NH ECD programme is built around eight curriculum areas that are relevant for the holistic development of a child. Each curriculum area has its own specific purposes and all together contribute to the holistic development of a child. The eight categories of activities of the ECD programme are:

1. Morning and afternoon ritual
2. Story time
3. Singing, dancing and making music
4. Sport activities
5. Painting, drawing and colouring
6. Interacting with the physical world
7. Free play
8. Craft

1. Morning and afternoon ritual A child needs rituals and the resulting routine. This creates a stable and predictable environment for them. Welcoming the child to the ECD centre every morning in a similar fashion makes the child feel safe and secure. It is also a way to show appreciation for the child and it allows all of them to bond as a group. With the closing ritual, the facilitator, support staff and the children conclude the day together. Starting and ending the day with a regular ritual also eases the transition from the home environment to the ECD centre and vice versa.

2. Story time Story time gives the child the opportunity to improve their language skills by exposing them to a stylistically and lexically rich language. The child learns to listen carefully and to concentrate. Furthermore, they learn how to express thoughts and feelings verbally. Their listening comprehension as well as speaking abilities improve and their vocabulary gradually expands. They thereby develop a fundamental reading readiness and a basis for their literacy development is established. Story time also provides opportunities to develop a child's imagination.

3. Singing, dancing and making music In addition to fostering communication and uniting the children, music and rhythm support self-expression from an early age onwards. Incorporating music, movement and dancing into early childhood education can help a young child to increase coordination as well as fine and gross motor skills. While playing different instruments, their hand-eye coordination improves. The child also learns to work with others and to focus their attention. When a child memorises rhythms, their capacity to remember increases and through singing, they learn to use their voices and improve their language skills at the same time.

4. Sport activities Integrating sport and physical activities into a young child's life is essential for building strength, self-confidence, concentration and coordination. It also helps foster a child's fine and gross motor skills development. An understanding of spatial orientation and of concepts related to position and direction is developed. In addition, sport

activities support the child in the development of their social capacities such as learning to cooperate with their peers, to take turns, share materials and to manage conflicts.

5. Painting, drawing and colouring A child discovers their creativity and develops dexterity in handling crayons and paper while drawing. They improve their hand-eye coordination, develop a proper pencil grip and practice fine motor skills. A child also learns to distinguish colours and shapes which enhances their capacities for letter and symbol recognition. This enhances their reading and writing readiness. Being able to create something on their own also increases their self-esteem and self-confidence.

6. Interacting with the physical world Activities in this category support a child in developing an understanding of categorisation, i.e. to recognise objects according to their features (shapes, colours and sizes). By sorting objects, a child observes similarities and differences in attributes. They come to understand basic concepts such as 'big' and 'little', 'long' and 'short', 'empty' and 'full', 'more' and 'less'. Furthermore, they get to know the names of numbers, discover that numbers are representations of quantities and learn to count. All of that contributes to the acquisition of a fundamental math readiness. Handling small objects will also foster the development of a mature tripod grip.

7. Free play Free play is unstructured, it is child-driven play which is not controlled by adults. It encourages the child to interact with the world around them, to explore materials and their properties. As such it provides them with an opportunity to practise decision-making skills: they can decide on their own what and how to play and discover areas of interest by themselves. They learn to focus and concentrate on one activity, and to develop initiative. Thereby, free play also contributes to building fundamental learning habits, such as perseverance, independence and self-reliance. When playing together with or alongside their peers, social skills expand: a child learns to work collaboratively and to negotiate and resolve conflicts. Free play also allows them to express their emotions. This helps them to come to terms with their inner feelings. They use their creativity and imagination. The facilitators encourage, and if necessary, guide exploration.

8. Craft During craft sessions, a child's curiosity is stimulated and they practice a capacity for creative expression. Creating something with their own hands fosters a child's sense of self-worth and self-confidence. Furthermore, they learn to distinguish colours, sizes and shapes. By handling different materials they develop dexterity and improve fine motor skills. The child learns to follow instructions and acquires a basic ability for task analysis.

PART 2

Principles and practical guidance

2

2. Principles and practical guidance

Part 2 of the 'Learning through Play' Toolkit was conceptualised to provide practical guidance for Move 4 New Horizons (M4NH) field-level staff working at the Early Childhood Development (ECD) centres. It provides an introduction to what holistic child development entails and why it is important. It also contains practical guidelines, good practices and tips for establishing a trusting relationship with the children, creating a favourable learning environment and succeeding in classroom and behaviour management. The daily programme that structures the day at the ECD centres is introduced and recommendations for inclusion of all children as well as for differentiated instruction are provided. This part of the toolkit also features a step-by-step guide on how to plan, prepare, conduct and evaluate an ECD session.

2.1 Holistic development through play

Children need well-guided support to develop into healthy adults who are able to establish supporting and fulfilling relationships, to cope with life's challenges, to successfully complete their education and to take care of themselves and their family. Physical, mental, emotional and social stimulation and guidance must all be provided by adult caregivers. A holistic educational approach encompasses all aspects of personal learning and growth and focuses on the fullest possible development of a child.

physical

mental

emotional

social

4 dimensions of child development

Dimensions of child development	Related abilities and skills

The sport and play-based approach stimulates movements and helps the children to develop physical abilities:

The body is moving.

- ➢ Flexibility, strength, endurance, resistance, speed
- ➢ Coordination, orientation, reaction, rhythm, balance, body awareness

The sport and play-based approach supports the development of intellectual capacities:

The head is thinking.

- ➢ Ability to concentrate, to observe, to reflect, to anticipate
- ➢ Ability to think logically, to put strategies in place, to make decisions, to solve problems

The sport and play-based approach improves the awareness and management of emotions:

The heart is feeling emotions.

- ➢ Ability to cope with negative feelings (for example fear and frustration)
- ➢ Ability to manage aggression
- ➢ Development of self-awareness and self-confidence

The sport and play-based approach helps to strengthen social relations and to improve social skills:

The child acts within a social environment.

- ➢ Ability to make friends
- ➢ Ability to gain trust, empathy, respect and tolerance for others
- ➢ Abandon stereotypes and prejudices
- ➢ Ability to cooperate, to manage conflicts, to obey rules and to act within a team

The use of games and playful activities is well-suited to the needs of young children. Not only will they enjoy such activities; playful activities also address all four dimensions of child development.

For information on how the different playful activities of the daily ECD programme contribute to a holistic child development and prepare children for school, see the introductory paragraph – "What do the children learn?" – to each of the eight activity categories in Part 3 "Playful activities and games" of this toolkit.

2.2   Role-modelling

Children learn by imitation. They mimic the behaviour of their peers, parents and other adult caregivers. Young children in particular observe how adults act or react to a particular situation or emotion and imitate their behaviour. As facilitator, you will be working with the children on a daily basis and will have a considerable influence on them. It is essential that you act as a role model so the children copy the right kinds of behaviour.

In order to do so, you need to reflect on your own values, attitudes and comportment. Behaving in a respectful and non-discriminatory way and being tolerant help set a good example for the children. If you appreciate the cultural, social and ethnic diversity of the children in the ECD centre and promote tolerance and unity, the children are likely to follow your example. To facilitate the development of all children, regardless of their gender, you have to encourage girls and boys equally and fairly.

2.3   Positive discipline

It is very important that children feel safe, secure and appreciated by adult caregivers. Children grow and learn the most when they receive affection, attention and stimulation. The relationship between you as facilitator and the children is very important for their development and wellbeing. Positive discipline helps you to establish a good relationship with them. It educates children and guides them as they grow up and mature, while respecting their rights at all times. It is non-violent and fosters children's self-confidence, feeling of self-worth and self-discipline (Save the Children 2010). Positive discipline has four components:

Problem
solving

Understanding
how children
think and feel

Providing
warmth and
structure

Identifying
long-term
goals
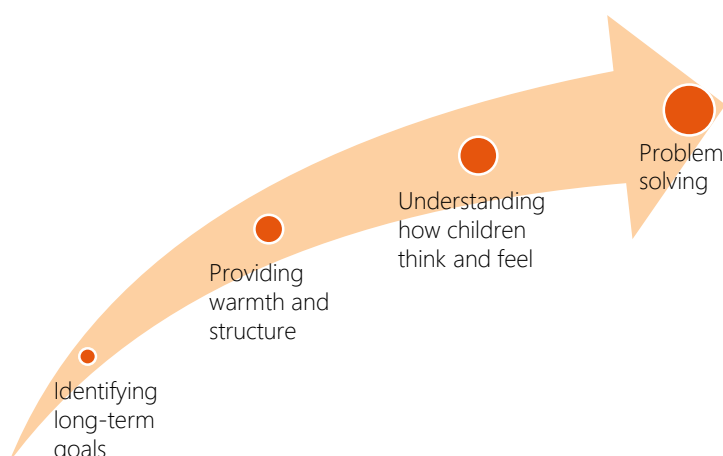
Identifying your long-term childrearing goals As a facilitator you are often confronted with situations where children are not behaving the way you want them to, for example when they are yelling at each other. No doubt you want the children to stop yelling as quickly as possible. Such situations can cause frustration or stress and the feeling of urgency can result in responding with scolding, yelling or even in hitting a child. However, these short-term solutions do not teach the children what we want them to learn in the long run. We want the children to become confident, kind, motivated, responsible, empathic, non-violent people and we want to have a strong and positive relationship with them. Hitting children or yelling at them counteracts these goals.

Warmth Children learn best when they feel respected, understood, trusted, safe and loved. If children are afraid of those they rely on, they become less motivated to try, less honest and less confident. Some become resentful and aggressive. Others become anxious and depressed. But in an atmosphere of warmth and emotional security, children feel safe, even when they make mistakes. They become motivated to try new things and to learn from the things they did wrong. They will trust their caregivers and feel supported.

Structure Children develop best when they know what to expect, when they are helped to find constructive ways of meeting their goals and if they understand the reasons for rules and guidelines set by facilitators or parents. If we set rules for our children and we do not follow them ourselves, or expect them to figure things out and punish them when they make mistakes, they will feel confused and anxious. If we hurt them when they make mistakes, they will become afraid to try. But if we act as role models by demonstrating what we want children to do and providing the information they need to make good decisions, they will become more confident, competent and independent. Children need to know that their teachers are there for them, providing clear and honest information, clear expectations and, through this, structure.

Understanding how children think and feel Sometimes we expect children to behave in ways that are beyond their abilities, such as expecting a 3-year-old to sit still and concentrate on an activity for a long time. We think that children are being stubborn when they have tantrums. It is only when we see the world through the eyes of a 3-year-old that we begin to understand the real reasons for their behaviour. We can then become much more effective educators. We need to see the situation from their point of view in order to respond constructively. We need to understand what they are trying to tell us when they cry, say "No!" or stamp their feet. Our task is

to show them how to express their feelings and to demonstrate how to resolve conflict without resorting to physical force.

Problem-solving As they grow, children want to learn more and more. We can motivate them by encouraging their exploration. We can teach them self-respect by answering their questions respectfully. We show them that they are competent when we give them opportunities to find solutions to problems. When children believe that they are capable, they are much better prepared to master the challenges they will face in the years ahead not only in school but also later in their professional life.

How to put this into practice To maintain an optimal learning environment, it is important to go through the following steps when confronted with a challenging situation:

1. Think about your long-term goals.

2. Remember that children need to feel respected, understood, safe and loved.

3. Ask yourself what the child needs to understand and to be explained for the situation to be resolved. What can you do in this situation to help you reach your long-term goals?

4. Consider how the child thinks and feels at his/her stage of development. See the situation through the child's eyes and think about it through the child's mind. Ask yourself: "How would the child describe the situation?"

5. Respond in a way that shows respect for the child, provides useful information and leads you towards your long-term goals. It is not always easy to respond constructively in challenging situations. It is wise to think ahead and plan your response.

Once the long-term goals are identified, keeping in mind that both warmth and structure are important for reaching these goals and understanding how children think and feel at different ages, we are able to respond in an appropriate manner to situations where children break the rules. Responding with positive discipline means providing warmth and structure that meets children's developmental needs and teaches them what they need to know in the long term. It is not about punishment; it is about problem-solving. It takes thought and it takes practice (Save the Children 2010).

For practical tips on classroom and behaviour management, see section 2.6 "Classroom and behaviour management" in this part of the toolkit.

2.4   Inclusion of all children

To provide all children with enjoyable and fruitful learning experiences, it is very important that all of them are actively involved (girls as well as boys, younger children as well as older ones). If you see any children not engaged during a session, try to adapt the activity to their needs, interests and characteristics, to offer 'differentiated' learning experiences.

Differentiated instruction means accommodating children's needs and accounting for their personal abilities and interests. Differentiated instruction requires flexibility, effort and planning but allows every child to participate in the daily ECD programme despite their different backgrounds and personal abilities.

How to practice differentiation?

Knowing the children in your group Every child is unique. Children enrolled in the ECD centre are of different ages, abilities and levels of understanding. They have different interests and differ in character. The better you know the children in your group, the better you can fulfil their personal needs. It is necessary to pay attention to the differences that exist between children to adapt your daily programme.

Adapting the difficulty level to the children Try to identify the activities that best match the abilities and the interests of the children. Rather than doing one activity with the whole group of children, it can be beneficial to favour small group activities in order to take into account every child's needs. Separate the children into groups of similar skill levels and share group management between facilitator and support staff. Get every group engaged in the same subject but with slightly different learning objectives and/or teaching methods according to their abilities. It is also possible to set one learning objective for the whole group with individual tasks to allow the children to deepen their knowledge according to their needs and interests. You can also ask older or more 'advanced' children to help younger ones.

Varying teaching methods and teaching aids Variety is key to keeping the children focused. Since children have different learning preferences, diversifying teaching methods is more likely to meet their particular needs than always proceeding in the same way. To teach the names of colours, you can for example vary from a) colouring activities to b) reading a picture book and asking children to name the colours you show them in images to c) playing a group game with coloured soft balls. In doing so, children practice individual as well as group learning and make use of different senses.

2.5   Creating a favourable learning environment

A comfortable environment is necessary for the children to feel secure and to be invested in the learning process. The way children perceive their learning environment will significantly affect their impression of the ECD class and can either encourage or discourage them. The nature of the relationship you have with the children is extremely important. Children learn better when they share a good relationship with their teachers. If this relationship is characterised by mutual consideration and trust, children are more likely to respect your authority.

Besides establishing a trusting atmosphere, encouragement is very important for children; instead of admonishing them by pointing out what they still need to learn, encourage them by emphasising what they already do well and how their abilities have improved. Feelings of success encourage the children to maximise their efforts, so children with different abilities or learning

capacities should never be made to feel inferior to their peers. Always praise their efforts and encourage the children to appreciate each other's work.

A good physical setting is also beneficial to a fruitful learning environment. If the classroom is nicely decorated, clean and tidy, the children will feel more comfortable and motivated. They will also show more respect to toys and teaching aids and take better care of them.

> **Important safety note**
> You always have to make sure that the activities proposed do not put the children at risk of hurting themselves. In order to do so, it is necessary to keep the indoor and outdoor space safe, clean and tidy. Materials that are used during activities must be checked for safety issues (e.g. sharp edges). Be aware of the fact that young children tend to choke on small objects and are at risk of suffocation.

2.6 Classroom and behaviour management

Classroom management can be tricky for ECD classes. The diversity of the students, their ages and different abilities are factors that need to be taken into consideration. The more common challenges usually lie in group control, individual children's behaviour or lack of attention.

Set clear rules and define consequences

If you would like the children to respect certain rules in the ECD centre, they have to understand what these rules are and what kind of behaviour is expected of them. Set clear and simple rules that are well understood, even by younger children. For example "In our ECD class, we treat each other kindly". Explain to the children why these rules are important, in this example "If we hit a child, he/she will feel hurt, be very sad and cry". Also point out what will happen if children break a rule. Help them to understand the consequences of their actions and to make wise choices.

Reinforce positive behaviour

Instead of emphasising what children should not do, point out how the children should behave and demonstrate appropriate behaviour. Acknowledge good behaviour and praise the children for it. This will help the children learn how to behave appropriately.

Guide children to understanding feelings

Children often have difficulties controlling their temper. For small children it is still quite difficult to express their own feelings and needs. For example, when they are tired they will most likely become crabby. Help them by identifying potential causes for their behaviour, articulating them and proposing a solution (in this case: taking a nap). Never dismiss a child's emotion. Moreover, young children are not yet able to identify the feelings of their peers and adults around them.

Providing them with words for feelings will also help them to express, recognise and distinguish emotions and (eventually) to better manage them.

5 steps

1. Set and explain the rules (what is expected and why)
2. Demonstrate and model appropriate behaviour
3. Observe the children and provide guidance if necessary
4. Reinforce positive behaviour
5. Review rules or appropriate behaviour if necessary (not all children learn at the same rate, individual differences in applying rules exist)

Source: Meridian International Center (2008): Building the Foundation. Peace and Conflict Education in Early Childhood Development Programs

React to arguments

Bullying and aggressive behaviour should never be tolerated or ignored. If arguments break out, you should respond to them immediately by stopping the children in a firm voice. Try to understand what has caused the dispute and verbalise it. For instance, if children quarrel over toys, you can explain: "I see you both want to play with the same toy." If the children do not manage to

share the toy, bring in another object in order to redirect their play and change the focus of their attention. Explain to them that first one child can play with the toy, then in a while, the other one. If they are very upset, removing the children from the setting can also help them to calm down. To appease the situation, always stay calm and try to keep your voice low and steady.

Attention management tips

Children require a lot of stimuli in order to remain focused. It is very important to grab their attention and to keep them busy in order to control them. If children are losing interest, getting distracted or starting to quarrel, vary the activities you are currently doing to keep them interested (see also section 2.4 "Inclusion of all children" in this part of the toolkit).

Safeguard children from harm

As facilitator and support staff you have to respect M4NH's child protection policy at all times. You must thus never respond physically or with abusive language to any kind of (mis-)behaviour. You should never act in any way intended to humiliate, or to discriminate against a child, nor should you be in any way abusive (physically or emotionally). If you feel you would like to have support regarding non-abusive classroom management, do not hesitate to consult a social mobiliser or other member of the project staff.

2.7   Daily programme

Every child is different. Children have different interests and like different activities. The daily programme at the ECD centres is conceptualised to provide varied and interesting activities for all those children with their different preferences. The activities in the eight curriculum areas do not only prepare the children for school but also ensure their holistic development. The daily programme offers learning opportunities that appeal to all senses: listening and speaking (verbal learning), observation and pictures (visual learning), touching and feeling (bodily/ tactile learning). The programme is meant to guide your work at the ECD centres. Of course, depending on the children's mood, weather conditions or activities chosen, time indications can be adapted and/or activities switched.

Daily Programme at Move 4 New Horizons' ECD Centres	
Before 10:00 *Before the children arrive*	Preparation
	Think about what you want to do with the children today
	Prepare materials needed for the different sessions
10:00 to 10:15 *After the children arrive*	☽☀ Morning ritual
	Morning health and hygiene check
	Identification and treatment of sick children. If necessary:
10:15 to 10:30	➢ take note to inform parents about their child's wellbeing, and to remind them of their parental duties regarding health/ hygiene (as set forth in the ECD centre policy); offer counselling
	➢ refer children to local government health services
10:30 to 10:45	📖 Story time
10:45 to 11:00	🎵 Singing, dancing and making music
11:00 to 11:15	⚽ Sport
11:15 to 11:35	🖌 Painting, drawing and colouring
11:35 to 11:50	🧱 Interacting with the physical world
11:50 to 12:15	✂ Craft
12:15 to 12:30	Prepare children for lunch
	➢ Supervise hand washing (make this into a daily ritual)
12:30 to 13:00	Lunch
13:00 to 13:30	Rest period/ nap time
	To calm children down and make them sleepy you can
	➢ read or tell a story (with a quiet voice)
	➢ sing a lullaby
	For those children who are not tired: 🛏 (Quiet) free play
13:30 to 13:45	🎵 Singing, dancing and making music
13:45 to 14:15	🧸 Free play

	At the same time:
	➢ document children's attendance
	➢ monitor children's development (observe them: How do they play? Which objects do they use in their play? Do they play alone or with their peers?)
14:15 to 14:30	⚽ Sport
14:30 to 14:45	Tidying up – Together with the children
14:45 to 15:00	☾☀ Afternoon ritual
After 15:00 *When the children have left*	Cleaning ECD centre and playground

2.8   Session planning: 'Cooking a session'

Conducting a session in the ECD centre with the children can be compared to cooking a meal. The actual 'cooking' is only one part of the work. Before you start to cook, it is necessary to prepare: decide what to cook, choose a recipe, and get the ingredients ready. Every good cook knows that good preparation is the key to cooking a tasty meal. The same is true for carrying out an enjoyable and entertaining session. The basic steps that have to be undertaken when preparing a meal in the kitchen can act as a reference for an ECD session:

	KITCHEN	SESSION
Step 1	Decide on what you want to cook	Set a learning objective ➤ Ask yourself: What do I want the children to learn?
Step 2	Choose how to cook the meal	Choose suitable teaching methods ➤ Ask yourself: What activities should I do with the children so that they progress towards the learning objectives?
Step 3	Preparation of kitchen materials and ingredients	Preparation of classroom/ playground and playing materials
Step 4	Cooking the meal	Carrying out the activity 1. Group organisation 2. Explanation & demonstration 3. Practice & play
Step 5	Taste the meal	Evaluate the session ➤ Ask yourself: *Did the children enjoy the session? What did the children learn?* For more aspects to consider see section 2.10 "Evaluating a session"

When planning a session, it is helpful to proceed according to the 'Cooking a session' approach outlined above – a guideline easy to put into practice. Planning, conducting and evaluating a session using the five steps approach could look like this if, for example, you want the children to further develop their motor skills and coordination:

1 Step 1: **Learning objective** *What do I want the children to learn?*

IMPROVE COORDINATION

2 Step 2: **Teaching method** *What activities are suited to teach the children?*

Make the children walk on a line

Let the children pass balls

3 Step 3: **Preparation**

Draw a line on the ground (using chalk)

Select some balls and take them out of the toy box

4 Step 4: **Carrying out activity**

Group organisation: Let the children form a queue
Explanation & demonstration: Walk on the line by carefully placing one foot in front of the other. Ask one child to copy your movements
Practice & play: Ask the other children to follow the lead of the first child. Supervise them

Group organisation: Make the children stand in a circle
Explanation & demonstration: Pass a ball to one child and ask him/her to give it to the next one in the circle
Practice & play: Tell the children to continue passing the ball (in one direction). Take a second and third ball and give it to other children
After a while you can ask the children to slowly roll the balls to the next child in the circle

5 Step 5: **Evaluation**

Facilitator and support staff (together with social mobiliser, if present) according to the grid of questions used for evaluation (see section 2.10 "Evaluating a session" in this part of the toolkit)

If you would like to allow the children to learn the names of colours, you could come up with the following plan for your session:

Step 1:
1 Learning objective
What do I want the children to learn?

Step 2:
2 Teaching method
What activities are suited to teach the children?

Step 3:
3 Preparation

Step 4:
4 Carrying out activity

Step 5:
5 Evaluation

THE NAMES OF COLOURS

Hand out a colour card to each child, make them come to the front whenever their colour is called

Read a picture book to the children and ask them to name the colours that you point to in the images

Variation 1:
Make the children come together in groups with the same colour once you name a colour

Variation 1:
Point to a colour on a picture and ask the children to look for something in the room with the same colour and to go there and touch it

Variation 2:
...

Variation 2:
...

Prepare colour cards: cut up pieces of coloured paper

Choose a picture book with colourful images

Group organisation: Sit the children in a circle
Explanation & demonstration: Call out the name of a colour and point at the children who have the colour so they come to the front. Repeat that 2-3 times to make sure the children understand the rules
Practice & play: Call out the name of a colour. Correct those children who come up to the front at the wrong time. Let the children swap cards from time to time

Group organisation: Sit the children in a semi-circle around you
Explanation & demonstration: No explanation is needed, start the activity right away.
Practice & play: Start reading the story and point to a colour in an image. Ask the children what colour it is

Reflect on the session together with the support staff and social mobiliser (if present). Use the grid of questions to guide your review

Role of facilitator and support staff Think about the division of tasks when you plan a session: not only the facilitator but also the support staff can play an active role in the preparation of a session as well as in its facilitation. For example, as support staff you can prepare the next session, while the facilitator leads the current one. Similarly, the support staff could guide an activity while the facilitator closely observes the behaviour of the children to monitor their developmental progress and identify domains in which special support is needed.

Keep it interesting and enjoyable Both learning objectives and teaching methods have to be adapted to the physical, mental, emotional and social developmental level of the children in your class. Since young children cannot concentrate over a long period of time, try to minimise explanations. Go straight into demonstrating and starting the activity instead in order to make sure that they do not lose interest: 'Demonstrate more, explain less'. Activities that are suitable for the children's abilities are preferred: If an activity is too difficult for them, it should be adapted according to their competencies (see section 2.4 about differentiation). You are advised to always choose games and activities which the children can master as they are more likely to enjoy these activities (see also section 2.5 of this toolkit on how to create a favourable leaning environment).

Tidying up together with the children After a session, it is a good idea to make a ritual of tidying up the playing area jointly with the children. This helps them to understand that toys and learning aids have to be handled with care. In general, children like to assist adults in daily tasks and taking over some responsibility will help them to become more independent. If children are unwilling to help, the chores can be integrated into a game or a song to motivate them.

2.9   Planning and conducting sport activities

Think about safeguarding measures that you need to take during an activity. Is there a risk of children getting hurt or emotionally stressed? Don't ask the children to perform movements that ask too much of them such as running very fast, carrying each other or jumping over or from (high) objects. Weather conditions should be taken into consideration, too. During the hot season, activities with a low level of intensity are recommended and the hot midday sun should always be avoided during sport sessions. Always make sure that the children do not get dehydrated – provide enough water to drink. Sessions should be held in the shade if possible (or early in the morning). During the cold season, children might be at risk of catching a chill if they sit down for a long time (e.g. in a craft session). In this case, adapting the daily programme by introducing a (short) sport session to allow the children to warm up can be a solution.

Be aware of the difficulty level of activities. If you are not sure whether an activity is too challenging for the children, try it out and simplify the rules if necessary – you might be surprised by what they are able to do! Introduce new activities gradually. Start with very few, basic rules to allow some time for practice and make sure that children have understood and mastered the old ones before you add a new rule. In this manner, the activities evolve from easy to more complex and you prevent children from losing interest because they do not understand what they are expected to do during a game. Alternate between new and well known activities, balance slower and faster games, so that children do not get over-excited, distracted or bored.

Depending on their age, children differ in playing patterns. Young children around 3 years of age are not yet able to engage in cooperative play but prefer to play side-by-side alongside their peers. When they grow older, they will gradually become more interested in interacting with other children in their play. Individual playing (e.g. each having one ball) should be favoured for the youngest children in your group, to avoid overstraining them emotionally.

To keep it fun for the children and to offer them varied learning experiences, you can alter the sport activities proposed in Part 3 "Playful activities and games" according to a grid of seven variations that relate to modifying materials, roles, time, movements, group organisation, setting and rules.
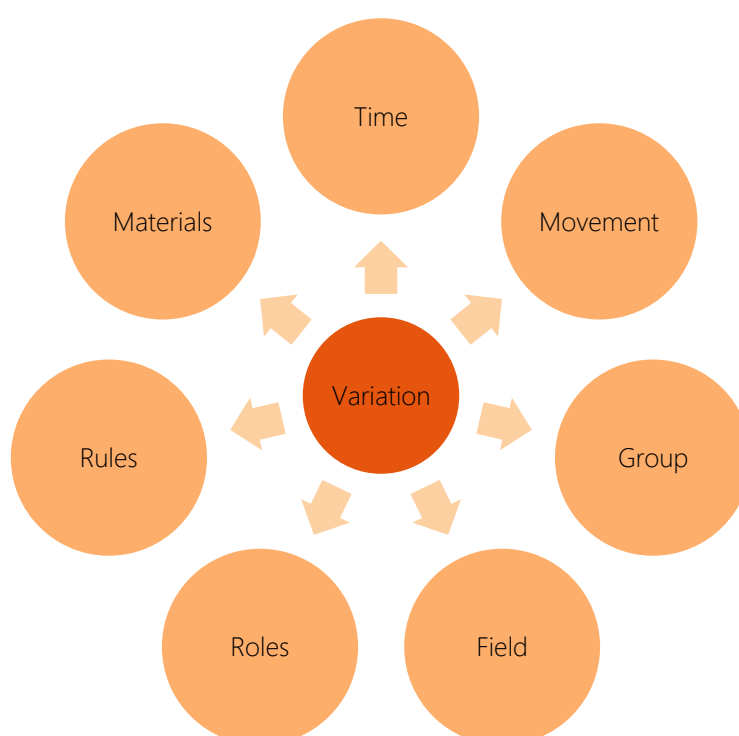
Movement	•Refer to Part 3 "Playful activities and games" of this toolkit (p. 59) for ideas regarding different stationary and free movements
Group	•Let the children play together in 1 group or divide them into 2 or more smaller units. For example, the group can be divided into subgroups according to children's ages
Material	•Modify activities by making use of different objects, for example for "Let's play ball!" (Part 3 of this toolkit, p. 56): balls (soft balls, plastic balls), rings, small sticks

Setting	• Most of the activities can be played both in the ECD centre and outside on the playing field • Depending on what you want the children to practice, you can increase or decrease the size of the playing field. For example for "Fish!" (Part 3 of this toolkit, p. 62), you can give the children more or less space to move around, depending on how well they manage not to 'bump their fins'. You could also mark an obstacle on the floor (with chalk) that the children have to 'swim' around
Rules	• Set new rules for games the children already know. For example for "Empty the box!" (Part 3 of this toolkit, page 57), tell the children they are only allowed to use one hand when picking up the balls
Roles	• Assign different roles to the children during an activity, for example ask the older ones to assist younger children
Time	• Propose a competition against the clock. For example for the game "Empty the box!" you can tell the children that they have 5 minutes to empty the box. This can act as incentive for them to try hard • Reduce or prolong an activity depending on the children's energy level and on how much they like an activity

2.10   Evaluating a session

Recapitulating a session helps to reflect on what went well and to identify areas for improvement. It also provides a good starting point for coming up with ideas about what could be changed to provide children with a better learning experience. Even facilitators who have many years of experience can gain valuable insights from evaluating ECD sessions. Having someone observing one of your sessions is an opportunity to get an outside perspective. Together, you can discuss challenges and problems and think about possible solutions and strategies. A classroom observation is not an exam which you have to fear. The observer's role is that of a mentor which supports you in your work.

Self-evaluation You can also review your work between observation visits. Did a session go as planned? Was a particular activity suited to the needs of the children? If not, how could you adapt it? Even by reflecting on your own, you can gain new insights that will help you grow as facilitator. It is therefore very much recommended that facilitators and support staff sit together at the end of each day and do a short self-evaluation session to reflect on what went well and what could be improved. Use the topics and questions listed in the box "Evaluation of a session: What aspects should be considered?" on page 40.

2.11 Guidance for classroom observations

Word for the observer

When conducting an observation visit to an ECD centre, you have to be aware of the fact that facilitators and support staff may feel uncomfortable because they feel they are being 'tested'. This is why it is important to make them feel at ease by creating a relaxed atmosphere that fosters open and positive discussions. Tell them that your role is to assist them with challenges and that you are not there to rate their performance.

Feedback rules Be respectful in your feedback and compassionate regarding the challenges facilitators and support staff face. Always keep in mind that daily work at the ECD centre can be quite demanding. As observer, you are the 'extra pair of eyes', not a 'specialist' or an 'examiner' that has to correct the facilitators. You have a supporting role and are there to assist whenever necessary. This should also be reflected by your choice of wording, for example by referring to "our problem" not "your problem". Always start with positive feedback by complimenting staff on what went well. Listen carefully to what they have to say and take their views into consideration. Suggestions for improvement should be as concise as possible. The more specific they are, the more helpful they will be.

Step-by-step guide The following grid can be used to guide a feedback session with facilitators and support staff:

Step 1: Reflect

➢ Ask the facilitator and support staff about their experience: "Did the session go as planned?"

➢ Point out what went well during the session and emphasise how the facilitator and support staff contributed to that

Step 2: Identify problems and challenges

➢ Ask the facilitator and support staff for their opinions: "Did problems or challenges arise during the session?" "What do you think the problem was?" "In your opinion, why did the problem occur?" Discuss their answers

➢ Mention additional problems or challenges that you observed. Refer to specific situations

Step 3: Discuss solutions

➢ Ask the facilitator and support staff: "What could be done to avoid the problems or challenges mentioned in the future?" Discuss their answers

➢ Provide additional, constructive recommendations; they should be as useful, feasible and specific to the challenges mentioned as possible. Demonstrate if possible

Evaluation of a session: What aspects should be considered?

Learning environment

- ➤ Is the ECD centre well decorated, clean and tidy?
- ➤ Do facilitator and support staff ensure safety during all play activities?
- ➤ Are the objects from the 'Six learning corners' accessible to the children during free play?

Classroom management

- ➤ Does the facilitator respect the child protection policy, i.e. refrain from using physical punishment and abusive language?
- ➤ Does the facilitator treat the children with respect?
- ➤ Does the facilitator help the children to resolve quarrels in a constructive way?
- ➤ Can the facilitator be considered a good role model for the children (i.e. does he/she set a good example)?

Facilitation of sessions

- ➤ Does the facilitator manage to provide the children with opportunities for fun play; did they enjoy the session?
- ➤ Encouragement

    Does the facilitator provide encouragement to the children?

    Are the children complimented on their successes?
- ➤ Does the facilitator understand children's emotions and signals?
- ➤ Is the facilitator responsive to signals from children (e.g. if they are bored)?

> Could the division of tasks be improved between facilitator and support staff (e.g. could the support staff assume a more active role)?

> Is time for explaining an activity kept to a minimum ('demonstrate more, explain less')?

> Does the facilitator use variety in the facilitation of the session, for example:

> > Different learning aids/ toys?

> > Activities that allow for learning in the physical, mental, social and emotional dimensions of child development?

> > Activities that appeal to different learning styles (verbal, visual, bodily/ tactile learning)?

Inclusion of all children and differentiated instruction

> Does the facilitator take steps to engage all children in the activities?

> Does the facilitator adapt the activities to the different age groups and abilities of the children?

Daily programme/ session planning

> Does the facilitator follow the daily programme?

> Does the facilitator use the 5 steps approach to plan and conduct sessions ('Cooking a session')?

> Does the facilitator set learning objectives for sessions?

> Are the teaching methods chosen suited to the learning objectives?

Hygiene and health

> Does the facilitator encourage the children to follow basic hygiene rules (washing hands, etc.)?

> Are all children clean, tidy and healthy or should the facilitator take action (approach their parents or refer them to government health services)?

Observation tool Making use of the observation tool on the next page is encouraged since it provides a simple way of keeping track of time management and noting down your observations (e.g. whether the children were having fun). It works as follows:

> The observation tool is based on a clock model. The activity starts at 12 o'clock and continues until the end (12 o'clock again).

> Total time: To be able to use the tool effectively, the person facilitating the session has to indicate to the observer the learning objective and the scheduled duration of the session beforehand. For example, if the facilitator indicates that the activity will last 15 minutes, the outer circle should be divided into five equal parts (each representing three minutes).

> Division of time: When the activity changes from participation to non-participation (preparation of activity i.e. explanation/ demonstration) a line is drawn from the centre of the clock outwards to the minute in which the change happens.

> Activity: The inner circle can be used to note down the activity that the facilitator engages the children in.

> Experience of participants: Smileys can be used to indicate whether the children enjoyed the activity (☺ did enjoy, ☻ neutral, ☹ did enjoy less/ were bored).
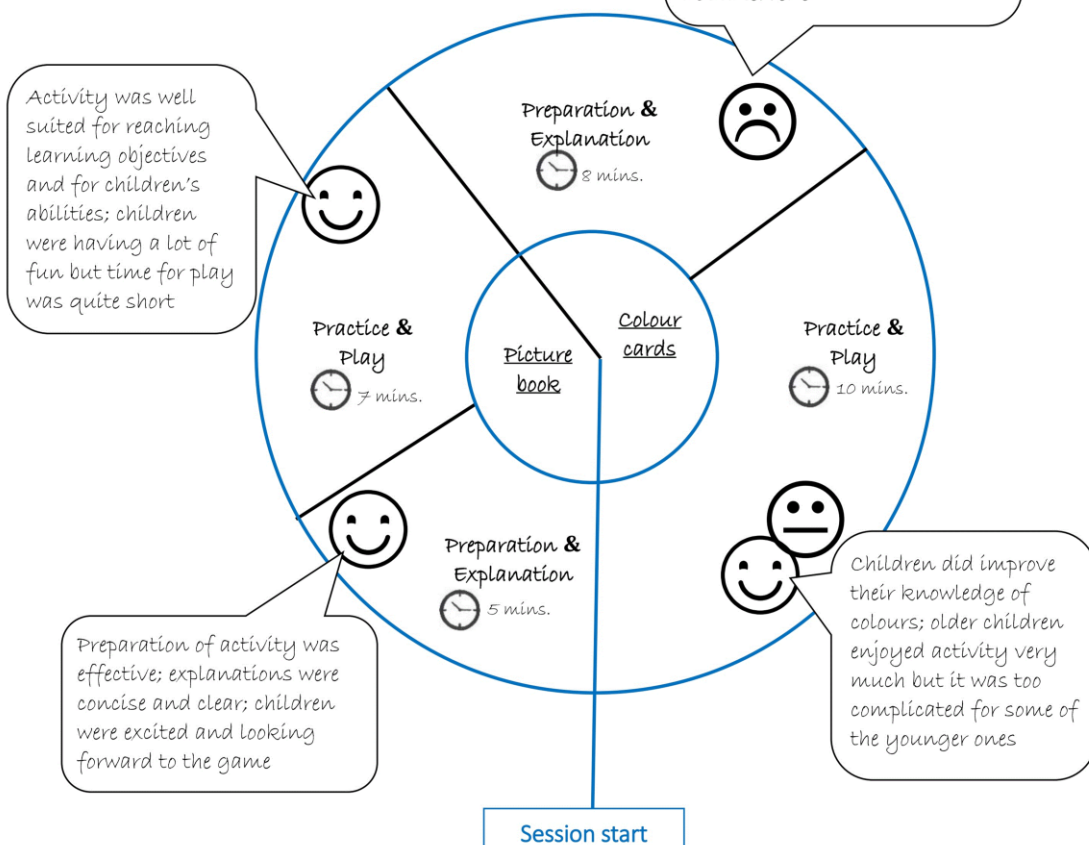
Classroom observation

Date: _August 24, 2014_

Facilitator: _Gita B.K._

Support staff: _Amrita Nepali_

Learning objective: _Names of colours_

Duration: _30 minutes_

Preparations and explanation of game took rather long; children got bored and distracted; two kids were bickering over a toy, one hit the other, facilitator did not intervene

Activity was well suited for reaching learning objectives and for children's abilities; children were having a lot of fun but time for play was quite short

Preparation & Explanation
8 mins.

Practice & Play
7 mins.

Picture book

Colour cards

Practice & Play
10 mins.

Preparation & Explanation
5 mins.

Preparation of activity was effective; explanations were concise and clear; children were excited and looking forward to the game

Children did improve their knowledge of colours; older children enjoyed activity very much but it was too complicated for some of the younger ones

Session start

Additional notes

Strong points

➢ Very good task division between facilitator and support staff who helps with preparing activities

➢ Very caring and respectful attitude towards children; facilitator and support staff have succeeded in developing an atmosphere in which children feel safe

➢ ECD centre and the surroundings are kept tidy and childproof, and the activities do not put children at risk of getting hurt

Areas for improvement and recommendations

➢ Classroom management is not very effective; classroom rules should be emphasised and children guided on how to solve an issue without resorting to physical force

➢ Facilitator tends to over-explain activity, demonstration could be used instead

➢ More emphasis should to be put on younger children's needs (differentiated instruction; e.g. asking older children to assist them)

PART 3

Playful activities and games

3

3. Playful activities and games

This part of the toolkit was developed to provide field-level staff working in the Early Childhood (ECD) component of Move 4 New Horizons (M4NH) with model activities for the eight main curriculum areas outlined in Part 1 "Programme design". The activities and games are designed to suit the specific cultural and social context of the region that M4NH is implemented in. The activities are introduced to field-level staff not as strict instructions but rather as models that they should adapt whenever necessary in their daily work. Variation in activities keeps learning interesting and fun for the children. Creativity and variability are therefore highly encouraged. To give an idea of how to put this into practice, many activities include ideas for possible variations. In an effort to increase sustainability, the playful activities are conceptualised to solely rely on low-cost, locally available materials.

3.1 Morning and afternoon ritual

Why is it important?
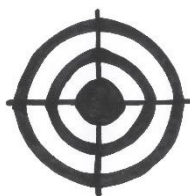
The purpose of the morning ritual is to make the children feel welcome and appreciated and to mark the beginning of ECD class. Establishing a routine like that contributes to the creation of a stable and predictable environment so that children know what to expect. This allows them to enter the classroom and start the day with confidence. Group rituals also create a sense of belonging and make the children bond as a group. With the afternoon ritual, you and the children conclude the day jointly. This closing ritual will make them feel more secure: they understand that they will go home now but that they will see each other again the next day.

3.1.1   Where is … ? – *Morning*

Time

10 minutes

What do you need?

➢   No materials are needed

"Namaste" is the Hindu way of greeting each other

What to do?

➢   Ask the children to walk around the classroom (or the playground outside)

➢   When you say, "Namaste child's name," all the children have to find the child and face her/him and say, "Namaste child's name."

➢ Make the children walk around the classroom again and repeat the steps above by naming another child and asking the children to greet her/him

➢ Continue until all children have been welcomed. Then greet the whole group, "Namaste everybody," and prompt the children to welcome you: "Namaste *your name.*"

Variations

Instead of walking, ask the children to skip around the playing area

3.1.2   Wake up your body! – *Morning*

Time

5-10 minutes

What do you need?

➢ No materials are needed

What to do?

➢ Let the children stand in a circle and ask them if they are all awake

➢ Start singing or rhyming with them and perform the movements you are singing/ rhyming: clap your hands at the word 'clap', stamp your feet at the word 'feet' and so on

> *Wake up and get going*
> *Wake up and sing a song*
> *Wake up and stretch your body*
> *And get ready to move along*
> *Clap, say my hands, my hands say clap, clap, clap!*
> *Stamp, say my feet, my feet say stamp, stamp, stamp!*
> *Tap, say my fingers, my fingers say tap, tap, tap!*
> *Shake, goes my head, my head shakes, shakes, shakes!*
> *Wave, go my hands, my hands wave, wave, wave!*
> *Now we are awake and ready for the day!*

Variations

To avoid the children losing interest, sing about the knees that bend, the arms that swing, the neck that bends, etc.
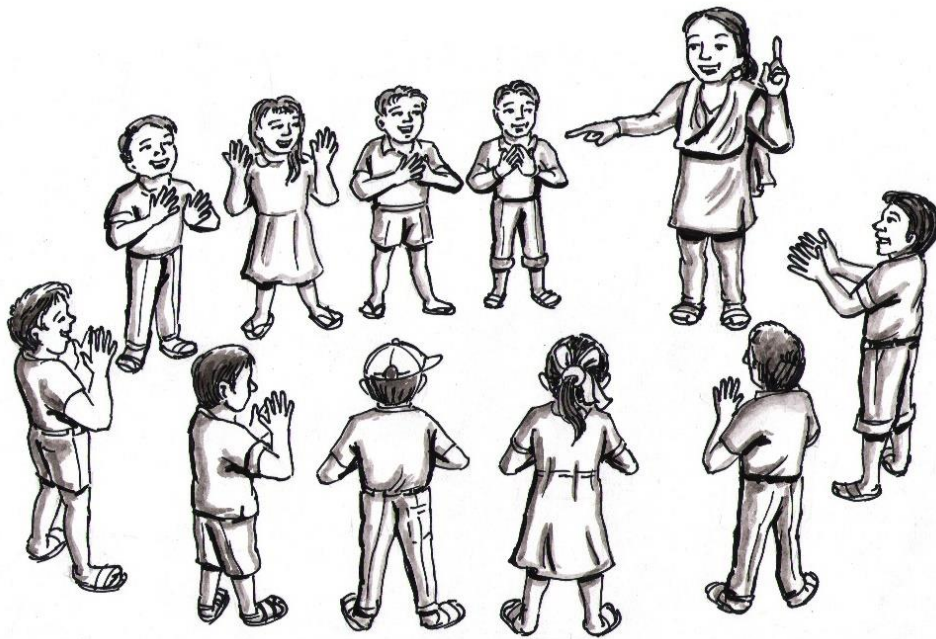
3.1.3 Namaste – Let's say it like animals! – *Morning & Afternoon*

Time

5-10 minutes

What do you need?

➢ No materials are needed

What to do?

➢ Ask the children to stand in a circle

➢ Start singing or rhyming with them

> *Namaste, Namaste… How are you today?*
> *Say Namaste, Namaste… In a special way.*
> *Let's say it like a duck… Quack, quack, quack!*
> *Let's say it like a dog… Woof, woof, woof!*
> *Let's say it like a cat… Meow, meow, meow!*
> *Let's say it all together*
> *Namaste, Namaste… How are you today?*
> *Say Namaste, Namaste… In a special way.*
> *Namaste everyone!*

Variations

Vary the lyrics and/or animals to keep it fun for the children

Once the children have memorised the sounds of the animals mentioned in the song, add typical movements of the animals and ask the children to copy them

3.1.4   Recap of the day! – *Afternoon*

Time

🕐 5-10 minutes

What do you need?

➢ No materials are needed

What to do?

➢ Let the children hold hands and form a circle

➢ Ask them questions related to the different activities that were carried out throughout the day. Incorporate their answers into the song

> *What were we eating today? Today we were eating …*
> *Were we playing outside today? Yes, we were (No, we weren't) playing outside.*
> *What were we playing today? We were playing …*
> *Did we hear a story today? What was the story about? The story was about …*
> *What were we eating today? Today we were eating …*
> *How was the weather today? Today it was …*
>
> *…*
> *Conclusion: Tomorrow we will see each other again and we will do many more great things!*

Tips

✓ Provide clues if the children don't remember what the daily programme was during ECD class. You can use mime to remind them of the activities you were doing

3.2 Story time

What do children learn?
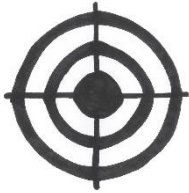
When listening to stories, children learn to focus and to pay close attention. They improve their listening comprehension and learn new words. The children acquire an understanding of classification and basic concepts that they will need to succeed in school. If you involve them actively in storytelling by asking them to contribute, they also improve their speaking abilities (for example when they describe an action, experience or idea) and practice speaking in front of others. All of this will help them to learn to read more easily once they have entered school. Story time also allows children to describe activities and express feelings using verbal expressions, movements and sounds. When they can't wait to find out how a story ends and come up with possible endings, their imagination is stimulated.

Basic concepts (examples)	
Time-related	first & last
	before & after
	in the beginning, in the middle & in the end
Different times of the day	morning, noon, afternoon, evening & night
Temporal absolutes	never & always
Affective feelings	happy, sad, excited...
Health	healthy, sick
Gender	woman & man

Age of persons	old & young girl & women boy & man
Temporal periods	days, weeks, months & years
Family relationships	mother, father, grandmother, grandfather, sister, brother...
Mores	right & wrong, good & bad

3.2.1   Let's listen to stories! General guidance and activities
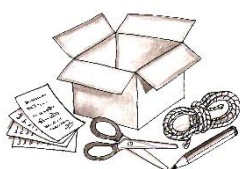
What do you need?

- Story or picture book
- Dolls, hand and finger puppets, drawings of animals or objects, instruments, costumes

What to do?

- You can either tell a story from memory (e.g. your childhood stories) or read one from a book
- Use a doll or hand/ finger puppet to represent the story character(s)
- Actively involve the children by inviting them
  - to imitate the sounds and/or movements that are described in the story

- o to point to wall posters hanging in the ECD centre if the objects mentioned in the story are displayed on them
- o to dress up as characters that are mentioned in the story (provide costumes, objects or masks)
- o to take a hand puppet and to continue telling a story

➢ You can also invent a story together with the children: ask them to name characters, places, animals, activities or objects and incorporate them into your story

➢ Make the story time sessions into a guessing game: when (easy) activities like walking, eating, drinking or sleeping are mentioned in the story, mime them. Then ask the children to guess which activity you are depicting

➢ Give a picture of an object or an animal to each child. Ask the children to stand up if their animal or object is mentioned in the story you tell them.
Make sure that all items are mentioned at least once!

> What are basic concetps and why are they important?

Basic concepts play a central role in everyday language. They are used to classify and characterise objects, events or people. They are relational and mostly come in pairs and opposites, for example 'cold & warm', 'more & less' or 'old & young'. Basic concepts are related to colours, letters, numbers and counting, size and comparison, shapes, direction and position, self and social awareness, texture and material, quantity, time and sequence, or weight. For detailed examples, see the boxes on p. 48, p. 55, p. 65. Understanding these concepts, is important for the development of language and cognitive abilities.

Basic concepts are used across all areas of school learning and are fundamental to following directions and classroom routines. If children who enter school do not understand the most important concepts, they will not be able to follow the class and will fall behind their peers. Many children from a poorer family background lag behind in their concept development in comparison with their economically more advanced peers. The same applies to children with vision, speech or hearing impairments. These children thus need special attention.

There are a few things you can do to support the children in their concept development. Intentionally use a concept-rich language in your daily interactions with the children. Teach concepts in a natural setting, for example during story time by describing the characteristics of people mentioned in a story. In addition, use descriptive words when speaking about actions, events or places. Children will learn better when basic concepts are taught in a naturalistic setting and generalisation of what they learn is more probable. Children will grasp a concept more easily if they learn the concepts in pairs (for example 'happy – sad'). Start with the polar positive ('happy'), and complete the pair, first by using 'not happy', then introduce the polar negative term 'sad'. Finally, put the two in relation to each other: 'The girl was happy, not sad'.

Tips

- ✓ Use a different voice for each character in the story, make sounds where appropriate

- ✓ To prevent children from becoming bored, choose a story that is age-appropriate, a story that is not too long or too complicated

- ✓ To get ideas for new stories, invite parents to share stories with you that their children like

- ✓ Prompt children to retell a story and help them with the correct sequence of events

3.2.2   Gita is going to school!

Time

🕐 10-15 minutes

What do you need?

➢ No materials are needed

What to do?

➢ Let the children stand in a circle. There should be enough space between each child for them to move their arms safely

➢ Start telling the story. Mime the movements you talk about and ask the children to copy you, for example:

> *There was a sweet little girl and her name was Gita*
> *Gita was 1, 2, 3, 4 (count with your fingers) years old*
> *How old was Gita? (let the children repeat the age)*
> *Every day Gita went to school (imitate walking)*
> *On her way to school Gita had to jump over water puddles*
> *(jump on the spot)*
> *Then Gita said "hello" to all the animals on the way to school*
> *Which animals did she see? (let the children say which animals she saw)*
> *...*
> *Continue the story by adding more verses about people Gita met on her*
> *way, things she saw, etc.*
> *...*
> *Conclusion: And then Gita arrived at school and greeted all her friends!*
> *Namaste all!*

Variations

Kolpana and Deepak visit their grandparents! Think about different settings for the story, for example the journey of two siblings who go to the nearby village to visit family members. On their way they use and experience different:

➢ means of transportation such as a bike, motorcycle, bus

➢ weather (heavy rain, wind, sunshine and moon)

➢ road or path features (big road with vehicles, small path, rocky road, steep slope uphill or downhill, muddy path)

3.3 Singing, dancing and making music

What do children learn?

Singing, dancing and making music provide children with opportunities to learn to use their voice, to express themselves and to cooperate with others. When they sing, their ability to retain information increases and their memory is trained. Children learn to pay attention and to concentrate, to memorise and to play rhythms. When they are dancing, they learn to move according to different rhythms and to imitate movements. When moving their hands and feet, they practice their hand-eye coordination and improve their fine motor skills; when moving their body, they practice their gross motor skills.

3.3.1   Let's sing, make sounds and move our bodies! General guidance and activities
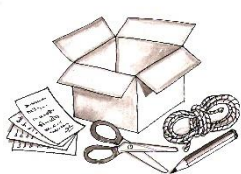
What do you need?

➢ Instruments, for example a drum

➢ Handmade instruments and everyday objects that can be used to produce sounds, for ideas see Part 4 "Learning aids and toys"

What to do?

➢ *Let's sing together and move our bodies!*

• Sing a song and show the children some dance moves and/or hand movements and ask them to sing along and copy your movements

- You can also encourage the children to sing their favourite song to their peers

- Instead of providing a rhythm yourself, let a child start with a rhythm and make the others copy her/him

- Provide four paper hats and give each of them to a child. Ask the children wearing them to dance in the middle of the circle for a short while, and to then pass them on to one of their peers. Make sure that all children get to dance at least once

➤ *Let's make sounds!*

- Show the children that different objects (e.g. different-sized drums or rattles) produce different sounds. Let them experiment with everyday objects found in the ECD centre: What kind of objects produce sounds? Can you use soft balls to make noise? Etc.
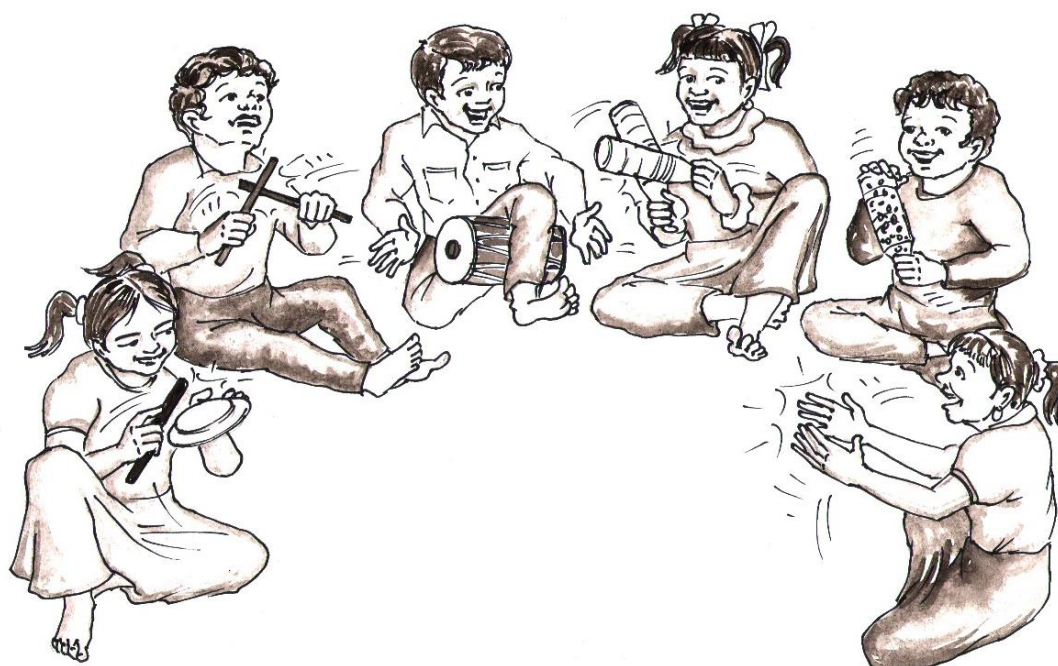
- Play a simple rhythm with a drum, by clapping your hands or tapping on the floor and encourage the children to copy it with the help of different instruments or other objects

➢ Teach the children how to make sounds by clicking their tongue, snapping their fingers or whistling a tune

Tips

✓ If you feel you would like to get to know more songs that you can sing with the children, ask other facilitators to share their tunes with you

3.4 Sport activities

What do children learn?

Sport activities give children the opportunity to practice and master basic movements such as walking, running, jumping, balancing and turning. This helps them to develop their fine and gross motor skills. The children also gain spatial orientation and learn about concepts related to position, direction and movement (see box in the following section). Acquiring new skills in a playful manner and overcoming child-friendly challenges also enhance their self-esteem. Furthermore, sport activities stimulate the children's social development by teaching them to cooperate with their peers, take turns, share equipment and manage conflicts.

3.4.1   Let's move! General guidance

Note: An orientation on what to keep in mind when preparing and facilitating a sport session can be found in Part 2 "Principles and practical guidance", section 2.9 "Planning and conducting sport activities"

Basic concepts related to position, direction and movement	
Position	**Direction and movement**
• on top, in the middle & at the bottom • in front of, next to & behind • over & under • high, in the middle & low • near, far & beside • inside & outside • here & there	• in & out • up & down • forwards, sideways & backwards • fast & slow • straight & curved • right & left

3.4.2   Fun with a rope!

Time

10-15 minutes
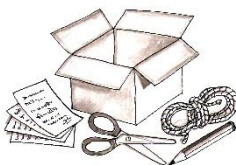
What do you need?

➢   Chalk or a rope

What to do?

➢   Place the rope on the ground in a straight (or slightly curved line) or draw a chalk line on the ground

➢   Ask the children to form a line, one standing after the other. Let them walk on the rope/ line on the ground:

- forwards (see picture #1 below)

- backwards

- with the body turned sideways so shoulders are aligned with the rope/ line on the ground, i.e. sliding on the rope/ line (see picture #2 below)

➢   Let the children stand in a line, all facing the rope/ line. Ask them to jump over it:

- with one foot after the other

- with both feet together (see picture #3 below)

- with one leg (for older children)

- backwards (for older children)

Tips

✓ If you use a rope, younger children might get tangled up in it. If this happens, use chalk to draw a line on the ground instead

3.4.3   Let's play ball!

Time

🕐 10 minutes

What do you need?

➢ Balls

What to do?

➢ Ask the children to stand in a circle

➢ Give one ball to the child next to you and ask her/him to pass it along

➢ Take a second ball and let it hand around as well. Depending on the number of children in your group, take a third ball and proceed likewise

➢ *Note*: If you only pass around one ball, children will be inactive most of the time. As a result, they will most likely become distracted and lose interest

Variations

Throw it! Make the children get in pairs. Provide each pair with a ball and tell them to throw it back and forth between the two of them

Kick it! Ask the children to kick balls in pairs

Hit the target! Prepare a target by stacking different objects into a pile, for example empty soft drink bottles, cans or cardboard containers. Provide the children with balls and ask them to kick, roll or throw them towards the target to make the pile fall

Balance it! Hand out small balls. Ask the children to balance them on the palm of their hands. If they manage, let them walk across playing field whilst trying to balance the ball

Roll the ball! Make the children sit in two rows facing each other. Hand out a ball to each child in one row and ask them to roll the ball back and forth with the peer sitting opposite to them in the other row. If they succeed well, tell them to only use their left hands

3.4.4   Empty the box!

Time

10 minutes
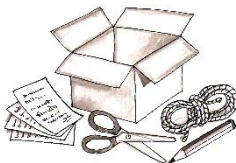
What do you need?

➢ Small balls

➢ Box: cardboard box or basket

What to do?

➢ Put several small balls in a box

➢ Sit near to the box and ask the children to come close. Tell them to empty the box by taking the balls out of the box. While they are doing this, put all the balls back into the box

➢ Make it a competition: Will they be faster than you and manage to empty the box?

➢ You can also propose a competition against time by giving them for example one minute to empty the box

Variations

Only the blue! Tell the children to only put balls of a certain colour back into the box (e.g. the blue ones). If they have finished, ask them to now bring all the green balls, and so on

Shoot it through! Take a cardboard box and remove its top and bottom to create a square tube with two openings. Place it on the floor and ask the children to roll balls through it. To increase difficulty, let the children throw or kick the balls through the openings
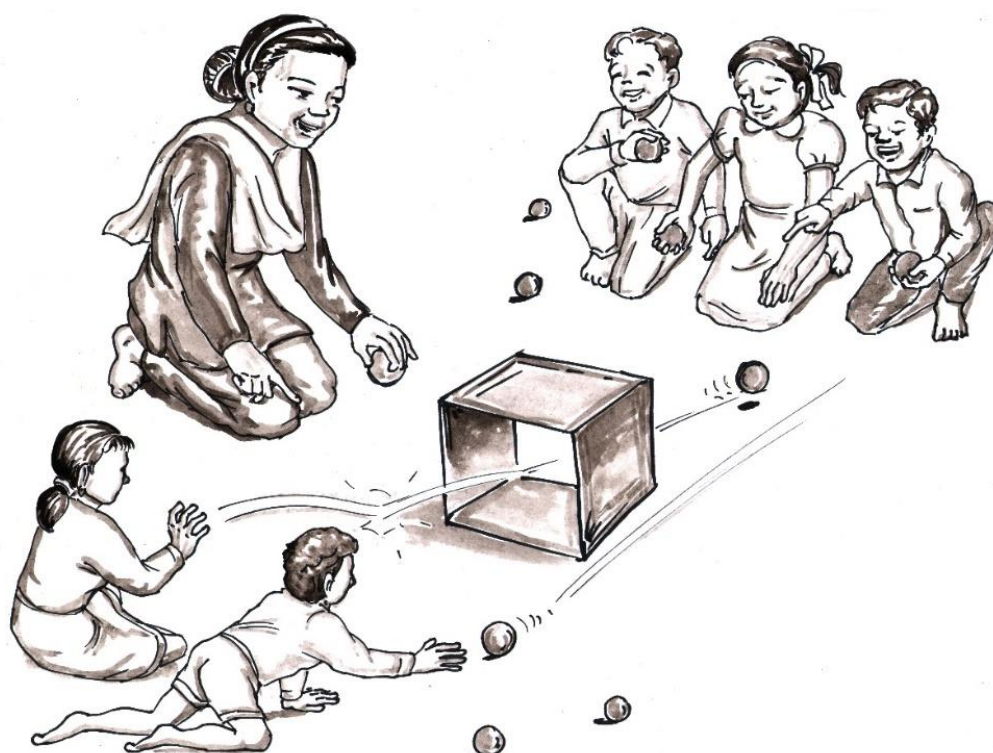
3.4.5   Can you do what I do?

Time

🕐 10-15 minutes
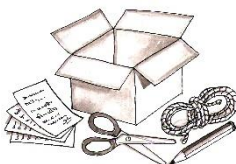
What do you need?

➢ No materials are needed

What do you do?

➢ Ask the children to form a line behind you

➢ Perform different movements while you walk around the playing field (see box below for different stationary and free movements). Tell the children to copy what you are doing

Stationary movements	*Free movements*
Move your body while staying on one spot: for example marching, stomping, clapping hands, swinging arms, turning around, nodding your head, standing on one leg, kneeling down, bending down, stretching or swinging	Move around the playing field by, for example, jumping, walking, galloping, skipping, walking on tip-toes, crab walking, hopping on one leg, crawling, walking while squatted down, or walking backwards

Variations

Animals move! Move like an animal (for example a dog, cat, mouse, bird, monkey, goat, bull, elephant, tiger or spider) and prompt the children to follow your lead

I am feeling ...! Express different feelings such as being tired, sad, happy, angry, sick or hungry using facial expressions and body language. Ask the children to copy you

Find your nose! Name different body parts (for example arm, leg, foot, nose, chest, finger, head, toe, etc.) and tell the children to point to the respective part of their body. Correct them if necessary

Freeze! Ask the children to move around the playing area freely. Tell them to freeze immediately in their position once you give a signal (e.g. whistle or shout "Stop!"). When you re-do the signal, they are allowed to start moving again until you signal again

3.4.6 Let's go on an imaginary journey!

Time

15-20 minutes
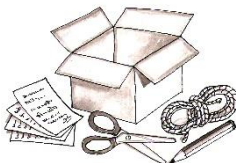
What do you need?

➢ Depending on the 'journey', different objects such as sticks, a rope, stones, chalk or plastic bottles

What do you do?

➢ Tell the children a story that revolves around a theme such as 'going to the forest', 'going fishing' or 'visiting a relative in the nearby village'

➢ Start guiding them along a circuit, from site to site, explaining what to do:

- A 'river' that children have to jump over: mark it with a rope, sticks or chalk

- A 'sleeping monkey' that children have to step over very carefully so as not to wake it up, because it would probably bite them: a plastic bottle on the ground

- Safe places to step on in a 'swamp' to avoid getting stuck: pieces of paper or cloth

- A 'bridge' that the children have to balance on to avoid falling in a river which is full of nasty 'crocodiles': mark it with a rope (or chalk) and ask children to slide on it

- Jumping over a 'snake': place a rope on the ground and tell the children it is important not to touch it when they step over it to avoid being bitten by the snake. To add difficulty, you can move the rope gently

- 'Windy' area: no preparation needed, simply tell the children that they have to lean against the wind (show them how to lean their bodies slightly forward)

Variations

To inspire the children's imagination even more, add sounds as well. These could be sounds related to (1) weather conditions (e.g. rain or wind) (2) animals (3) conditions of the ground they walk on (e.g. gravel road, squeaky bridge)

3.4.7   Jump in! Jump out!

Time

5-10 minutes

What do you need?

➢   Chalk

What do you do?

➢   Mark a circle on the floor with chalk and make the children stand alongside the circle

➢   Ask the children to, "Jump in!" and, "Jump out!" of the circle by slowing down or quickening the pace

➢   Suggest different ways of jumping such as: with both feet alternating, with both feet together, with one leg, or backwards

Variations

Jump up in the air! Instead of jumping in and out of the circle, tell the children to, "Crouch down!" and "Jump up in the air!" at your signal

Jump to the other side! Draw a line at one end of the playing field. Ask the children to come to the opposite side of the field and to, "Jump to the other side!". *Note:* Do not draw the line too far away. Younger children in particular will find it difficult and tiring to jump over a long distance

3.4.8   Growing!

Time

🕐 5 minutes

What do you need?

➢ No materials are needed

What do you do?

➢ Ask the children to crouch down. Tell them that they are small seeds

➢ Prompt the children to:

1. slowly 'grow a sprout' (rise slowly)
2. 'grow leaves' (raise arms slowly)
3. develop into a 'flower' (join arms over head)
4. 'move in the wind' (gently lean their bodies forward, backwards and sideways)
5. 'grow bigger and bigger' (stand on tip-toes)
6. and finally 'open up to the sun' (jump together as high as possible)

Variations

Cubs growing up! As an alternative, tell the children that they are small animals growing up, for example lion cubs, baby goats or baby monkeys. Start crouched down, grow from cubs into adult animals (grow bigger 'paws', 'fangs', etc.)

3.4.9   Fish!

Time

🕐 5-10 minutes

What do you need?

➢ Rope or chalk

What do you do?

➢ Trace three circles with chalk or a rope. These will be the 'fish homes'

➢ Explain to the children that they are little 'fish'. Divide them into three groups and assign each one of them a 'fish home'

➢ Tell the children to 'swim in the ocean' (move around the playground). They should move freely but be careful 'not to bump their fins' (touch each other)

➢ Tell them to 'swim' in different ways, for example slow, fast or in circles

➢ Whenever you announce a storm, the children have to 'swim' back to their home as fast as they can

Variations

Birds! Adapt the game by choosing a different animal: tell the children that they are small birds 'flying around' and that they need to be careful to not get tangled up in their peers' 'wings'

3.5 Painting, drawing and colouring

What do children learn?

Children enjoy creating something on their own, it makes them feel proud and boosts their self-confidence. When children are painting, drawing or colouring, their creativity is stimulated. They develop fine motor skills as well as hand-eye coordination and get used to controlling a pencil. This is good preparation for learning to write properly in the first grade at school. Furthermore, they learn to distinguish colours, sizes and shapes which will help them to recognise letters and numbers at a later age in school.
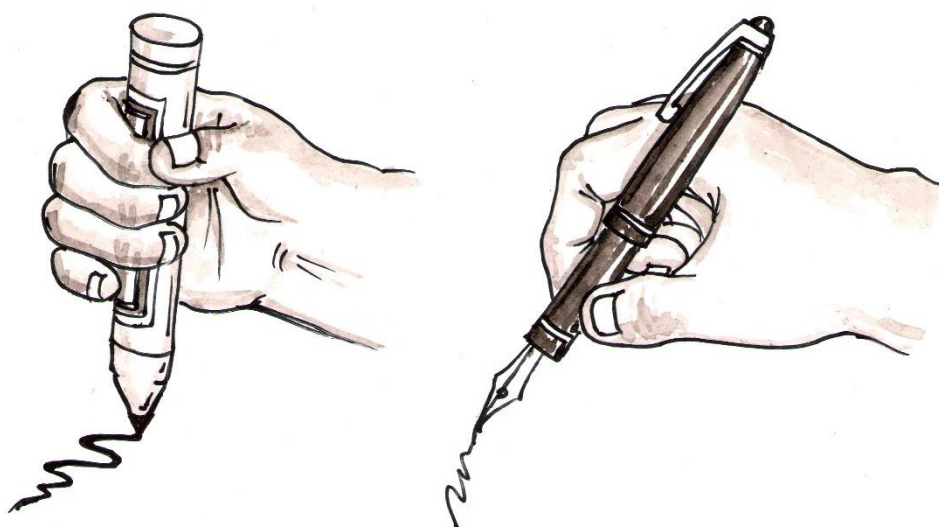
3.5.1 Let's be creative! General guidance and activities

What do you need?

➢ White and coloured sheets of paper

➢ (Colouring) pencils, wax crayons, paint, felt pens

What do you do?

➢ *Free drawing!* Provide children with paper and crayons. Let them draw whatever they want

➢ *Theme drawing!* Ask the children to draw pictures showing things or activities they like. Alternatively, you can ask them to paint a picture of their family, their favourite animal or food, etc.

➢ *Story painting!* Tell the children a short story and let them paint something to do with it

➢ *Complete it!* Prepare sheets of paper with an object depicted on them, for example the sun, a house or an animal. Let the children complete the drawings

➢ *Colouring outlines!* Provide the children with sheets of paper on which you have drawn the detailed outline of a picture (for example an animal, a house). Let the children colour it
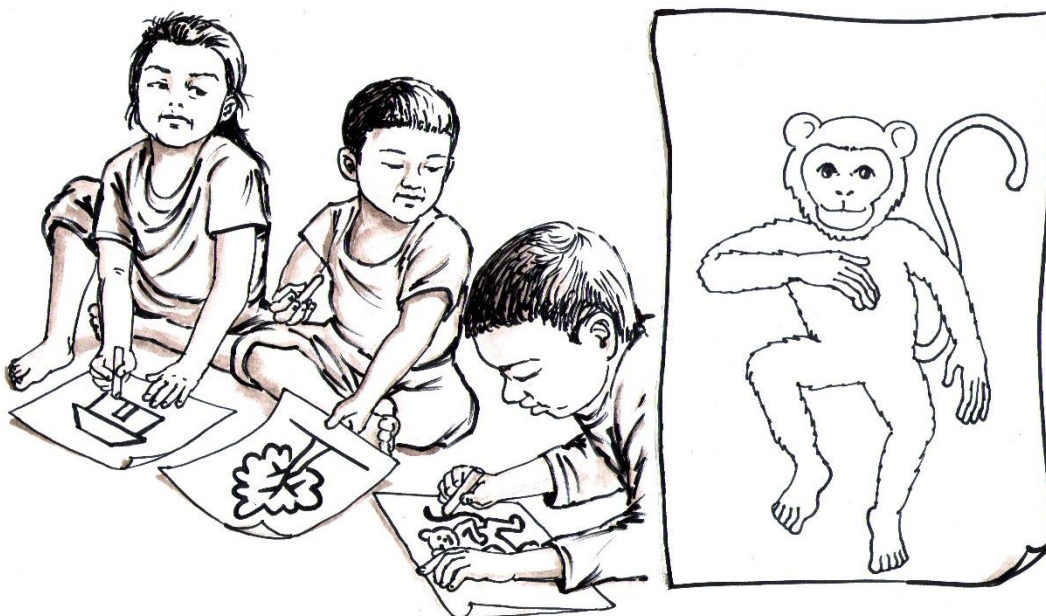
➢ *Tracing shapes!* Prepare a sheet of paper for each child with different shapes drawn on it such as lines, crosses, cubes or circles. Prompt the children to retrace the shapes

➢ *Draw a ...!* Let the children sit in a circle. Place an object, for example a ball, banana, flower or fruit in the middle of the circle and ask the children to paint it

Tips

- ✅ To show appreciation of the children's paint work, ask them to explain their picture to you and the group at the end of the session

- ✅ If you have enough space, display the children's art on the wall of your ECD centre. This will enhance their self-esteem. Change the pictures regularly. Allow the children to take their pictures home to show them to their parents

- ✅ Don't expect the children to produce realistic pictures. They are still in the process of developing their abilities (even by 'scribbling' they practice their fine motor skills!)

3.6 Interacting with the physical world
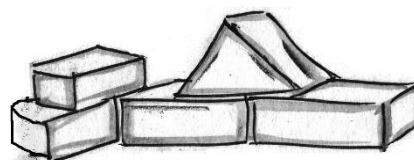
What do children learn?
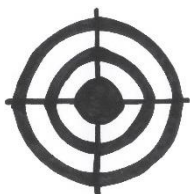
Children learn to recognise sizes, shapes and colours and to organise objects according to these features. They develop an understanding of basic concepts related to size, length, quantity and amount (see box below for details). They learn to describe objects by their physical characteristics. The children also practice the names of numbers and start to count. All of this equips children with a basic mathematical understanding and prepares them for maths class later in school. By picking up small objects, they also practice their fine motor skills which will help them to hold a pencil properly when they learn to write in the first grade at school.

Basic concepts – characteristics of objects	
Shape	line: straight & curved
	two-dimensional: circle, square, star & triangle
	three-dimensional: sphere, cube & pyramid
Size	big/ large & small/ little
	tall & short
Length	long & short
Volume	empty & full
Weight	heavy & light
Texture	soft & hard
	smooth, sharp & rough
Comparison	similar, the same & different
	more & less

Temperature	cold, warm & hot
Multiples	pair, double, triple
Relative quantity	some & none
	many & few
	part/ piece & whole
	all & nothing
	more & less
Materials	plastic, wood, fabric, ...
Material characteristics	wet & dry
	shiny & dull

3.6.1   Sorting!

Time

5-10 minutes
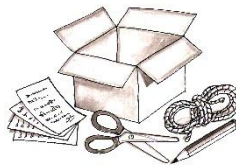
What do you need?

➢ Different objects such as leaves, stones, twigs, seeds, beans or pencils

➢ Several small containers

What do you do?

➢ Ask the children to sort the objects in different containers according to their features (i.e. colour, size, shape) or to pile them up in designated areas

➢ To increase difficulty, you can ask the children to organise the objects by more than one attribute, for example "Put all the stones that are yellow *and* big in this container!"

Tips

✓ Encourage the children to pick up the objects with their thumb and index finger only. This will make it easier for them to learn how to hold a pencil properly. Ultimately, it will help them to learn to write
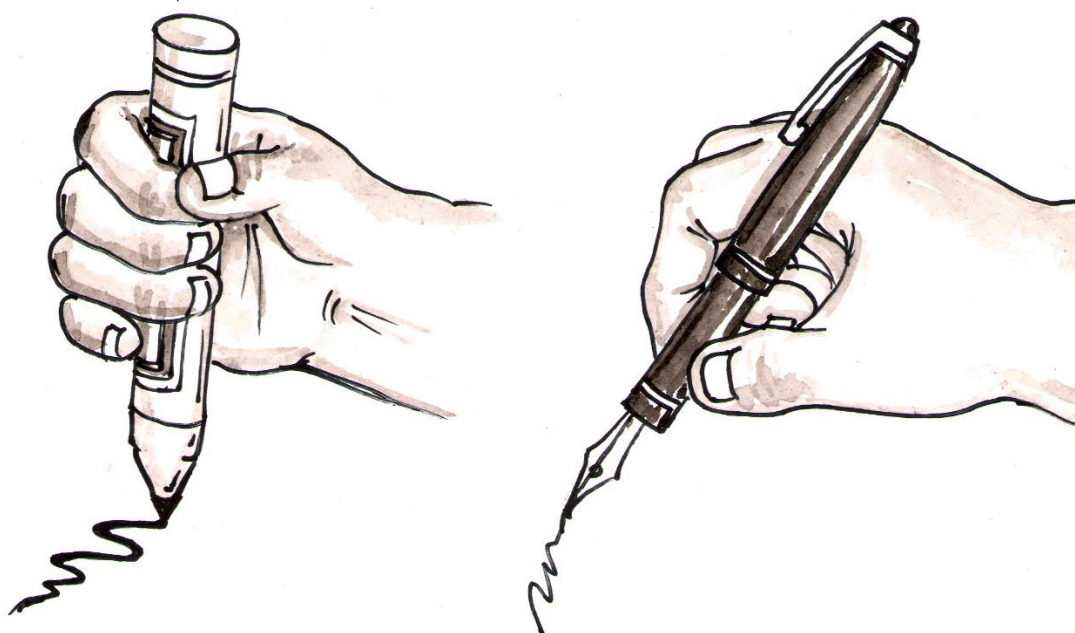
Variations

So many sizes & shapes! Cut paper in different shapes and sizes (circles, triangles, squares or rings). Let the children compare and arrange them according to their size and shape

Numbers & stones! Use stones to introduce numbers (1 to 5 for younger and 1 to 10 for older children). Make them understand the concept of 'more' and 'less' by adding and taking away stones. Give some stones to every child. Ask them how many they have. Take away one stone and ask them again

Colours! Prepare sets of stones painted in different colours. Ask the children to sort the stones according to their colour

3.6.2 Touch & feel!

Time

10-15 minutes

What do you need?

➢ Different objects such as a ball, plate, orange, leave, beans, spoon or a cup

➢ A cloth large enough to cover the objects with

What do you do?

➢ Cover different objects with a cloth so that the children cannot see them

➢ Let the children touch the objects under the cloth and ask them to describe what the object feels like; then let them guess what it is

Tips

✓ If it is too difficult for the children to guess what objects are hidden beneath the cloth, show them the objects first, then cover them and ask the children to touch one object and guess which one it is

✓ After the children have removed an object from beneath the cloth, help them describe its features (see box "Basic concepts - characteristics of objects" on p. 65)

Variations

Different or similar? Cover several objects that are neither the same shape (e.g. round and square) nor the same size or texture (e.g. oranges and small stones) with the cloth. Let the children describe how the objects differ. *Note:* This activity can be too difficult for younger children

How many are there? Hide a few objects under the cloth and ask the children to count them

3.6.3   Forming groups!

Time

5-10 minutes

What do you need?

➢ No materials are needed

What do you do?

➢ Let the children move around the playing area freely. Ask them to find a peer and form groups of two at your signal (e.g. clap your hands or whistle). Once all of them have found somebody, tell them to split and to move individually around the playing field again

➢ To increase difficulty, ask them to come together in groups of three

Variation

Instead of walking around the playing area, ask the children to hop or walk backwards

3.6.4   Let's collect!

Time

10-15 minutes
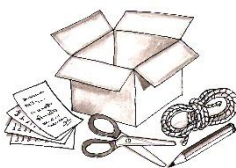
What do you need?

➢ No materials are needed

What do you do?

➢ *Note:* This is an activity that should be played outside

➢ Ask the children to collect two examples of a particular object and to bring them to you (for example two stones, sticks, or leaves)

➢ Invite the children to show to their peers what they have collected. Encourage them to describe the attributes of the objects (see box "Characteristics of objects" on p. 65)

Tips

✅ If this activity is too difficult for the younger children, ask older children to assist them

> More activities for 'Interacting with the physical world can be found in Part 4 "Learning aids and toys"

3.7 Free play
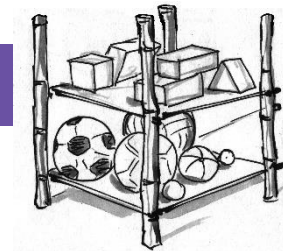
What do children learn?

During free play time, children are given the opportunity to explore different objects and materials at their own will. When they are free to play what and how they want, they can discover areas of interest by themselves, develop initiative and use their creativity and imagination. They invent stories, disguise as different characters and experiment with role playing. This so called 'pretend play' helps the children to make sense of experiences they have had and work out life issues that confuse or scare them, for example the absence of a parent or a fatality in the family. While playing with their peers, children learn to work collaboratively, to negotiate and to resolve conflicts. Free play therefore provides children with the opportunity to interact not only with the physical world around them but also with their peers and adult caregivers. The children also learn to concentrate on one activity and focus their attention. This contributes to the development of perseverance which is needed to successfully complete assignments later in school.

3.7.1   Children play what they want! General guidance

What do you need?

➢ Provide different toys, objects and learning aids (rings for tossing, dolls, balls, blocks, jigsaw puzzles etc.) and costumes for dressing up (different cloth, clothes, hats, etc.). See 3.7.2 "Six learning corners" for suggestions

What do you do?

➢ Free play is unstructured, child-driven play which is not controlled by adults. Nonetheless, you as facilitator have a crucial role in providing a suitable environment and appropriate toys, in supervising the children and in observing them play. This not only gives you an insight into their interests but also gives you the opportunity to learn about their social, emotional, physical and cognitive abilities

➢ Premature intervention in children's play can deprive them from the opportunity to make mistakes and learn from them. However, you should always interfere if children are about to hurt each other, both emotionally and physically, or themselves. You should also intervene if a child tries to perform an activity but does not succeed and will most likely give up through frustration

➢ If you see children sitting around not knowing what to play, show them what they can do with the different objects of the 'Six learning corners'

Tips

✓ If the ECD centre is too small to put objects from all the six categories on the floor at once, alternate by providing only two or three categories per day

✓ New items should be added from time to time to keep children interested. If you lack ideas, ask the children's parents to bring something, for example objects or materials related to their profession (carpenter – wooden objects, tailors – clothes, cloth and accessories, etc.)

3.7.2   Six learning corners

Choose different items that arouse the children's interest and that can be used in a variety of ways. Organise them thematically into six learning categories and place them in different areas of the ECD centre. Here are some examples for objects (for more ideas, see Part 4 "Learning aids and toys" of this toolkit):

Language corner: picture books, alphabet book, letter cards

Mathematics corner: objects that can be used to count, to compare size, colour and shape (painted stones, (bamboo) sticks, lids of soft drink bottles, etc.), jigsaw puzzles (see Part 4 "Learning aids and toys" for instructions on how to prepare a puzzle yourself), measuring cups

Science corner: grains, cotton, lace, string, fasteners, hooks, leaves, dried beans, colours, water with sinking/ floating objects

Creative expression corner: different coloured paper, (colouring) pencils, different sorts of paper (newspaper, etc.), cloth, strings

Acting/ role-play corner: dolls, puppets, paper-cut figures, masks, clothes, phone set, equipment to cook/ eat
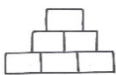
Building/ construction corner: clay, bricks, leaves, buttons, wooden blocks of different sizes and shapes for the children to pile up, empty cardboard containers

3.8 Craft

What do children learn?
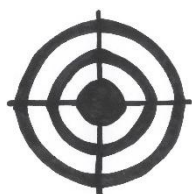
In a craft session, children are encouraged to make use of their creativity. Creating something with their own hands makes them feel proud and increases their self-confidence. While crafting, children get to know and handle different materials and learn about texture and other attributes (for examples see p. 65 "Characteristics of objects"). They improve their hand-eye coordination as well as their fine motor skills and practice distinguishing different colours and shapes.

3.8.1   Paper chains!

Time

10-15 minutes

What do you need?

➢ Paper

➢ Glue

➢ Marker

What do you do?

➢ Prepare paper strips by cutting them off a larger piece of paper. *Note:* You can ask older children in your group to assist you with that. Help when necessary and make sure that they do not hurt themselves

➢ Form small groups of children, make sure that in each group you have younger and older children

➢ Show the children how to make chains and prompt each group to copy what you are doing:

- Take one strip and make a ring by gluing the ends together

- Take another strip, loop it through the first ring and paste both ends together

- Continue to make a chain

- By adding a head, the paper chain develops into a funny snake
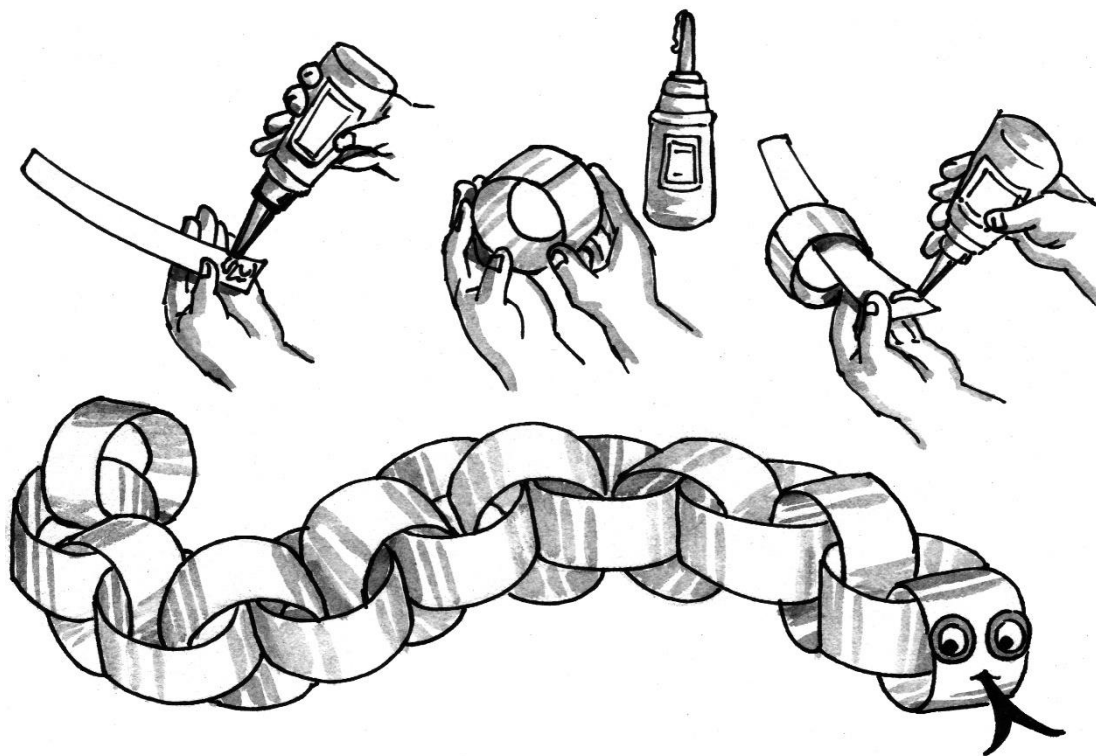
Tips

✓ The younger children in your group might find it difficult to loop the paper strip through the ring. As an alternative, you can ask them to only make rings (that you will then join together with paper strips). Supervise them closely and assist if necessary

Variations

Let's help the lonely snake! To make it more exciting for the children, start the craft session by telling a story about a small snake that is very lonely and wants to have some friends. Show them the snake (that you have crafted in preparation for the session) and ask the children: "How can we help the sad, lonely snake?" Then start the craft session by explaining that you will now all help the animal to find (craft) new friends

Worms! Think about other animals that can be crafted using paper garlands, for example worms, and create them together with the children

Let's decorate our centre! Long paper chains can also be used as garlands, to decorate the ECD centre

3.8.2   Clay work!

Time

15-20 minutes
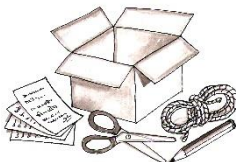
What do you need?

➢ Clay

What do you do?

➢ Give every child some clay and let them mould it

➢ Show the children how they can decorate their models by designing a pattern on it with the help of a small stick

Tips

✓ During the craft session, encourage the children to speak about what they want to build with the clay and how they want to proceed: What should they do first if they want to mould a candle holder or a cup?

✓ Younger children might not be able yet to mould an object. Nonetheless, encourage them to knead the clay in different forms such as spheres, cylinders or cuboids. While they engage in this, speak with them about the shape:

  ✓ What is the easiest way to make the shape?

  ✓ What does the shape look like; what is special about it?

  ✓ Are there any objects they know that look similar?

Variations

Beans and more! To encourage children to experiment, provide additional materials that children can use for decoration purposes, for example leaves, beans, corn, feathers or nuts

3.8.3   Birds!

Time

10-15 minutes
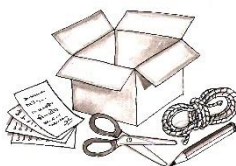
What do you need?

➢ Paper in different colours

➢ Glue

What do you do?

➢ Prepare sheets of paper with the outline of a bird drawn on them. Prepare fringes (thin strips) of paper in different colours

➢ Divide the children into groups of three to four children. Ask them to glue the paper fringes on the outline of the bird to make 'the most beautiful bird there is'

Tips

✅ If it is too challenging for the children to handle the fringes, cut the paper into small rectangles instead

✅ Once the children have finished their bird pictures, use them for storytelling. For example, tell a story about a little bird that flew for the first time in its life and discovered the world around the nest where it had been born

Variations

Hairy animals! Draw a lion or a horse and provide pieces of (thick) string that the children can glue on the animal's outline to imitate its felt. If the children find it too difficult to work with string, provide small pieces of cloth (in different colours) that they can use

Let's go fishing! Draw fish and cut coloured paper in the form of fish scales. Make the children glue them onto the fish's outline

Making a collage! Provide sheets of paper to the children and colouring pencils as well as different items that can be glued on it (for example, seeds, leaves, corn, string, cloth, feathers). Ask the children to create a collage by assembling the items on the sheet of paper and painting on it what they like. Ask them to explain the collage to their peers

PART 4

Learning aids and toys

4

4. Learning aids and toys

This part of the toolkit features some of the learning aids and toys that are used in Move 4 New Horizons (M4NH) ECD centres to support children's holistic development. The instructions aim to enable facilitators and support staff working with the children to prepare educational toys appropriate to the ECD age group. The selected toys possess an educational value, appeal to the children, encourage exploration and are child-proof. They are versatile and can be used for different activities. To encourage local self-sufficiency, care was taken to ensure that the learning aids and toys proposed are made from materials that can be obtained at low cost on local markets and are (whenever possible) durable. This has proven helpful when advocating with caregivers and community members for handcrafted toys as effective means to foster child development. The toys used at the ECD centres provide them with concrete, easy-to-replicate samples.

4.1   General guidance

Children learn by interacting with their environment: with adult caregivers, their peers and the physical world around them. While playing, they develop their abilities, thoughts and creativity. Toys attract their attention, encouraging them to experiment and to try out new things. That is why it is important to provide children with toys. Toys are especially appealing when they are colourful or produce sounds, and when they can be used for playing in many different ways. Toys with an educational value ('learning aids') do not have to be expensive or very technical; they can easily be made by yourself. All you

Tips for parental education class

Parents might find it difficult to understand how playing increases their children's school readiness when first learning about the sport and play-based approach used in the ECD programme. As a consequence, they might ask you to teach their children to read and write in the same way that it is done in school. You can address this through running a joint craft session. During the session, introduce different toys and learning aids that are available to the children in the ECD centre. While demonstrating how children play with these objects, explain how their social abilities, pre-mathematical skills, language competencies and motor skills develop and why this is needed to succeed in school (for more information see the introductory paragraph – "What do the children learn?" – to each of the eight activity categories in Part 3 "Playful activities and games"). Encourage the parents to play with their children at home and show them how.

In addition, inviting the parents to actively take part in a craft session and allowing them to take some crafted toys home makes the parental education programme more attractive and can work as an incentive to participate. Crafting toys and learning aids with the children's parents is also an opportunity to involve them more closely in the ECD programme. Contributing to the functioning of the ECD centre with their craft work can also increase ownership and make them feel proud. Encourage those feeling less comfortable with sewing, colouring and painting to build racks or playground equipment using wood or bamboo.

need are some basic tools such as scissors or sewing needles and materials like cloth, cardboard boxes or coloured pens!
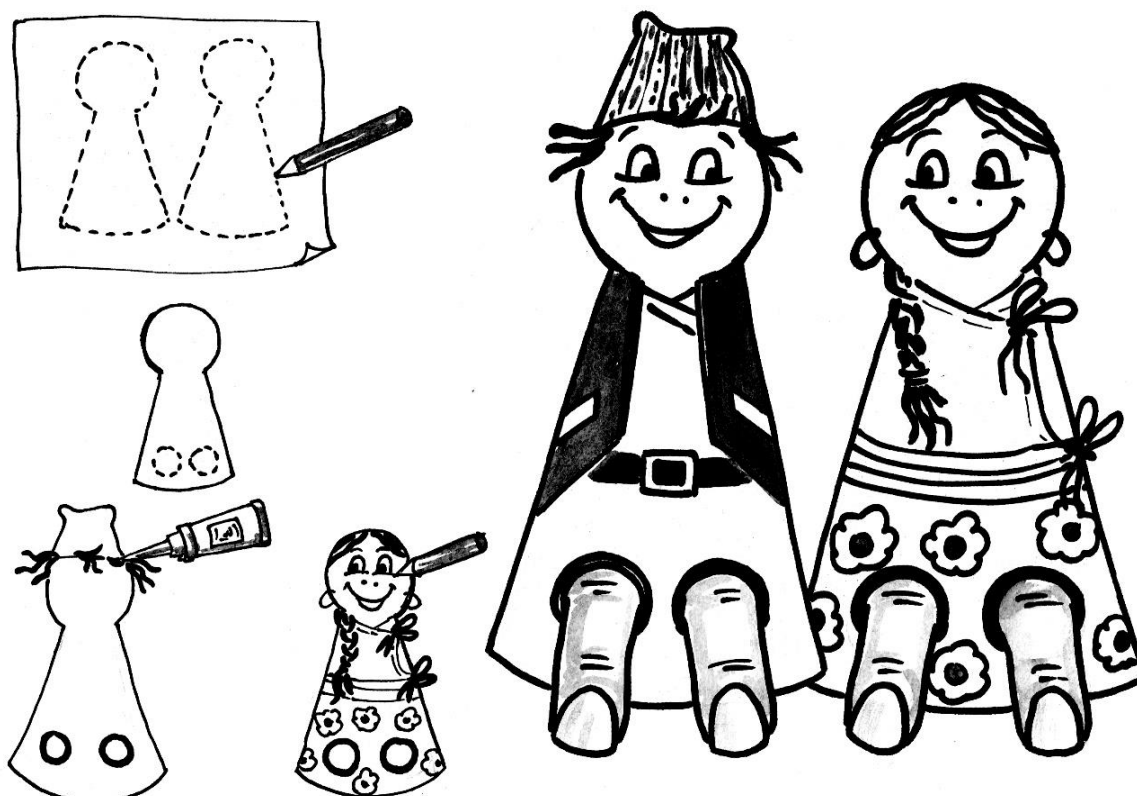
4.2   Finger puppets

What do you need?

- ➢ Glue
- ➢ Scissors
- ➢ Cardboard
- ➢ Thread
- ➢ Felt pens in different colours or coloured pencils

What do you do?

- ➢ Draw the outline of the finger puppets on a piece of cardboard and cut the puppets out (see instructions below)

- ➢ Design facial features, clothes and legs (two openings for your fingers) on the puppet with felt pens or coloured pencils

- ➢ For the puppet's hair, take some (thick) thread, cut it into small pieces and glue it on its head

- ➢ Cut out the two holes for your fingers and stick your fingers through them – the puppet is now ready for use!

For which activities can you use it?

☑ *Free play ('Six learning corners')* During free play, make the puppets available to the children in the acting/ role-play corner

☑ *Story time* While telling a story, use the finger puppet to illustrate the storyline. The puppets are particularly suited for stories in which a lot of walking, dancing or running takes place. You can introduce the finger puppets as for example, Ms. and Mr. 'Walk-so-fast' or 'Dance-a-lot'

It is a good idea to place all toys and learning aids that you make at the disposal of the children in the 'Six learning corners'during free play.

Variations

You can also make finger puppets of animals, for example birds. Draw the outline of a chicken on the cardboard, cut it out and cut out two openings for your fingers

4.3   Hand puppets

What do you need?

➤ Pieces of fabric/ cloth
➤ Sewing thread
➤ Needle

What do you do?

➤ With a marker, trace the form of a puppet (see drawing below) on a fabric that you have doubled

➤ Cut the forms out. On one piece, stitch a face and clothing (or draw them with a marker)

➤ Reverse the fabric (the face should be inside now) and sew the two pieces together, leaving the bottom open, so that you can insert your hand
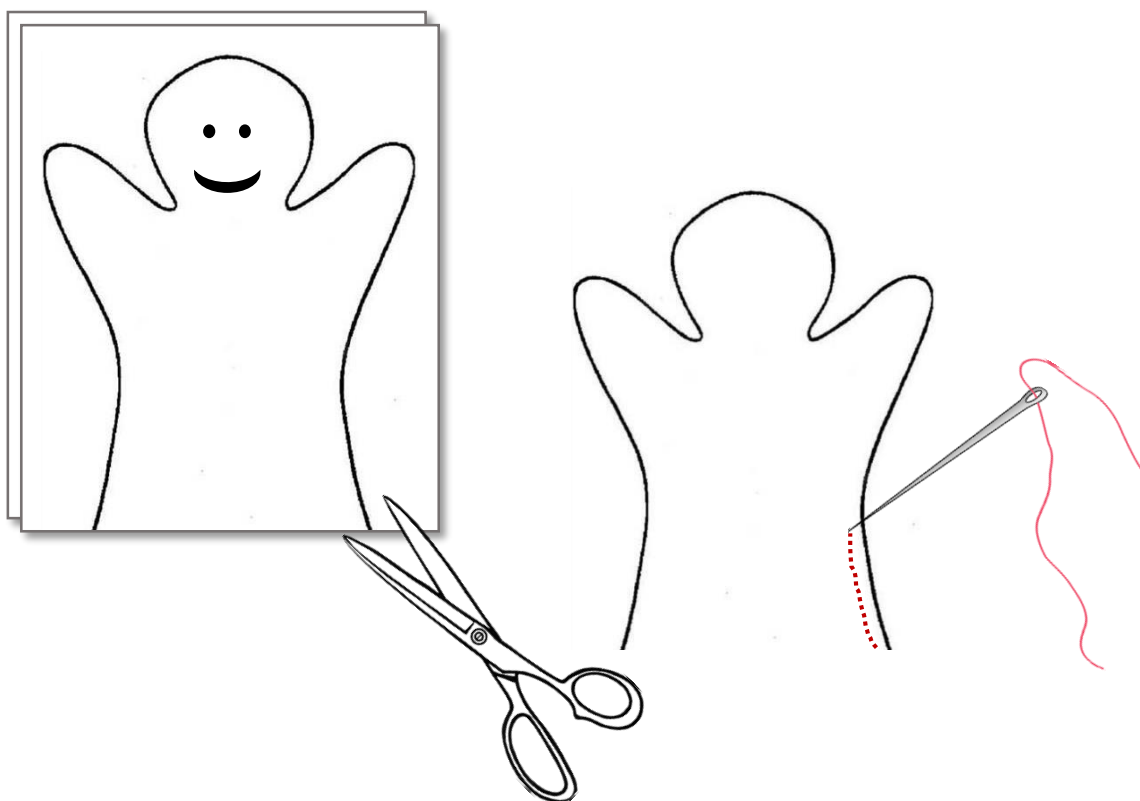
For which activities can you use it?

- *Story time* Use the hand puppets to mime the storyline
- *Story time* Give the puppets to different children and ask them to make them move according to what happens in a story, for example waving their arms or covering their eyes with their hands
- *Sport activities* Ask the children to reproduce movements that you mime with the hand puppet, for example clapping hands or bowing down

Variations

To dress the puppets, you can sew different clothes (for example a shirt, a scarf or a hat)

You can convert the hand puppet into a stuffed doll by filling it with rice, then stitching up the bottom part

4.4   Cardboard animals

What do you need?

➢ Pieces of (thick) cardboard
➢ Scissors
➢ Felt pens or coloured pencils

What do you do?

➢ With a marker, trace the shapes of different animals onto the cardboard

➢ Draw their features, colour them in and cut out the outlines

For which activities can you use it?

✍ *Story time* Use the cardboard animals to make storytelling more attractive. For example, speak about the different animals, where they live, what they eat and what sounds they make

✍ *Interacting with the physical world* Cardboard animals can also be used for sorting purposes: Which animal is the biggest; which one the smallest? Which animal is red; which one is yellow?

✍ *Painting, drawing and colouring* Ask the children to colour the outlines of the animals

Variations

Cut out different objects (such as a house, a car or flowers) or people to play with

4.5   Instruments

4.5.1   Rattles
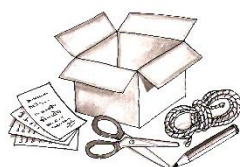
What do you need?

➢ Plastic bottles (in different sizes)
➢ Dry beans, rice or small stones

What do you do?

➢ Put some beans, rice or small stones in an empty plastic bottle and close the lid tightly. So that the small objects have space to move and make sounds, don't fill up the bottle completely

For which activities can you use it?

✍ *Singing, dancing and making music* Rattles, drums and rhythm sticks are percussion instruments that can be used to play different rhythms and can accompany songs and dances

✍ *Interacting with the physical world* Use rattles filled with different objects to speak about different sounds: Which rattle is louder, the one filled with little stones or the one with lids from plastic bottles? Encourage the children to experiment: Will a rattle filled with cloth make a sound? Take the opportunity to speak about the different objects and their properties

Variations

You can also take a small cardboard container, fill it with different objects (for example lids from plastic bottles) and seal it with tape. Be sure to take objects that are not too small, to avoid smaller children choking on them!

Decorate the rattle with cloth and threads to make it more appealing to the children. You can also colour the stones

4.5.2   Rhythm sticks

What do you need?

➢ A wooden stick, for example bamboo or some other firm wood that does not split easily

What do you do?

➢ Cut the stick into several pieces of approximately 12 cm each with a small saw. Use rasps and sandpaper to smooth out sharp edges and to avoid splinters

➢ If you don't own these wood processing tools or if you feel uncomfortable handling them, ask the parents of the children or a local carpenter for help
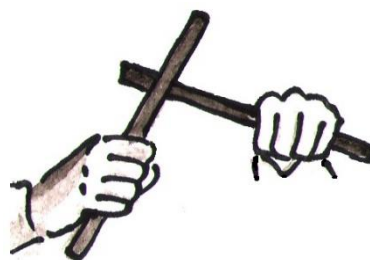
For which activities can you use it?

✍ *Singing, dancing and making music* Use the rhythm sticks to let the children copy rhythms as described in Part 3 "Playful activities and games". Speak about the different sounds that can be produced: soft & loud by striking gently or more firmly; high & deep by using sticks made of different types of wood

Variations

By carving lines in the rhythm sticks, they produce interesting sounds when rubbed together

Other objects, such as two empty plastic bottles, can also be used as rhythm sticks when struck together

Tips

✍ Make sure that the children strike the two sticks together gently, preventing the sticks from bursting. Check the sticks for safety concerns on a regular basis

4.5.3 Drums
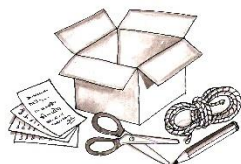
What do you need?

- ➢ An empty cardboard container (the thicker the cardboard, the better)
- ➢ Tape
- ➢ Wooden sticks
- ➢ Coloured pens, coloured paper and glue

What do you do?

- ➢ Seal an empty cardboard box with tape. Decorate the box by painting it or use coloured paper. Your drum is ready to use!

- ➢ Use your hands or two wooden sticks to beat the drum

For which activities can you use it?

- ✓ *Story time* Adding sounds with different instruments can make story time even more enjoyable for children!

Variations

Use empty food or soda cans instead of cardboard to vary the sounds – be sure to use cans that have no sharp edges! Also, you can ask a local carpenter to construct a wooden box to be used as drum

Many everyday objects can be used to produce sounds, for example a spoon together with a metal plate, bells, pots or pans

4.6 Rings, balls and cubes

What do you need?

- ➢ Pieces of fabric
- ➢ Sewing thread, a needle and scissors
- ➢ Wool, beans or plastic wrappings as filling material

What do you do?

- ➢ Start with an easy shape, preferably a ring

➢ Trace two identical rectangles on the fabric (see model below) and cut them out

➢ Sew the long sides of the rectangles together (leaving the short sides open) and reverse the fabric

➢ Stuff the shape with wool, beans or scrunched plastic wrappings

➢ Bend the two ends of the shape towards each other and stitch them together
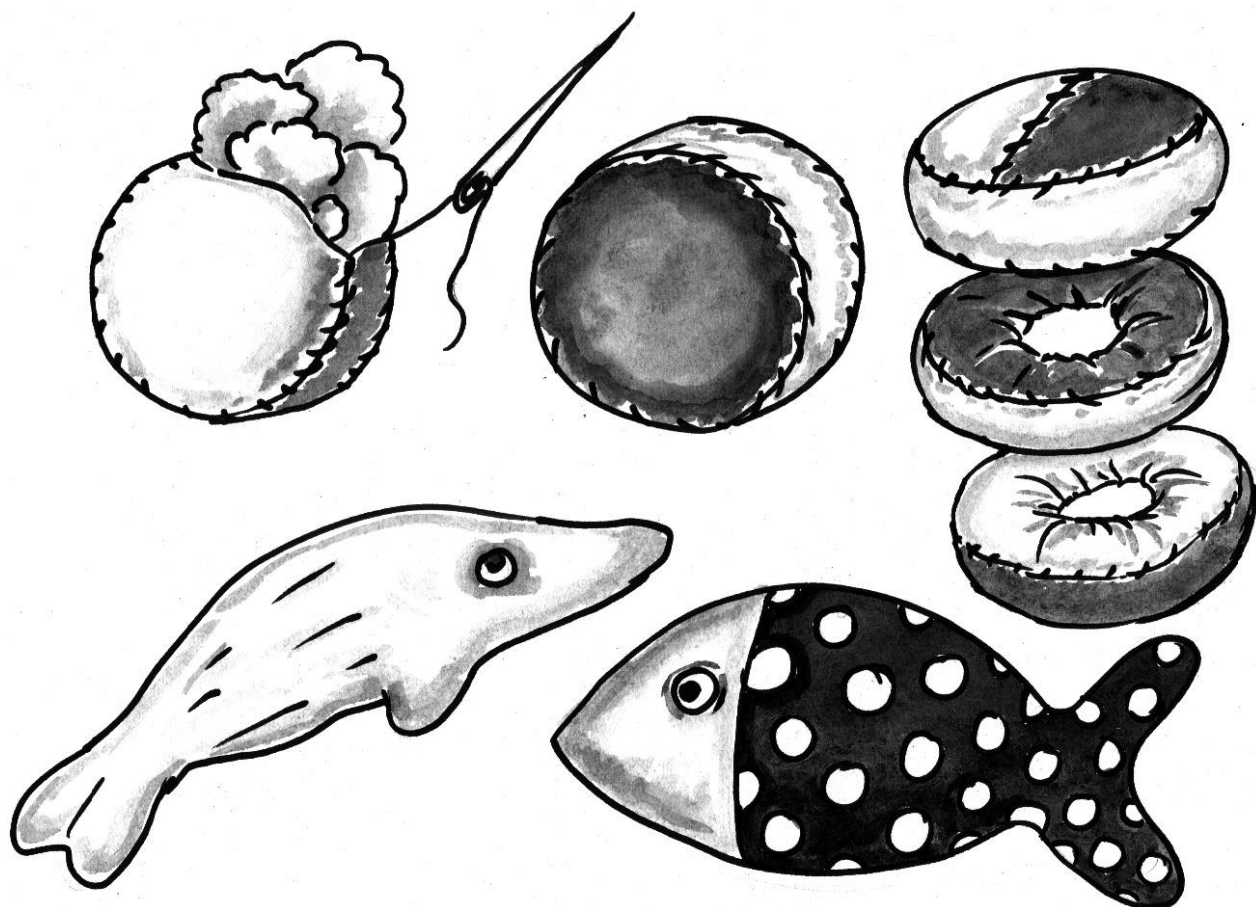
For which activities can you use it?

✓ *Sport activities* Use the handmade rings, balls and cubes for throw and catch exercises. Rings can also be used for a threading game: will the children manage to put the rings on a stick? This activity is especially suited for smaller children

✓ *Story time* Captivate children by illustrating your story time sessions

Variations

Copy the patterns below on fabric to create fish, cubes, balls or dolls. Cut them out, join them together (always leaving an opening). Reverse the shapes, fill them with filling material and stitch the opening

Ring: 2x

Cube: 6x
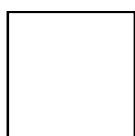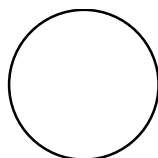
Ball: 2x   1x
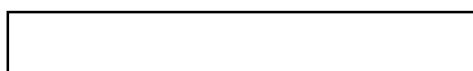
Doll: 2x
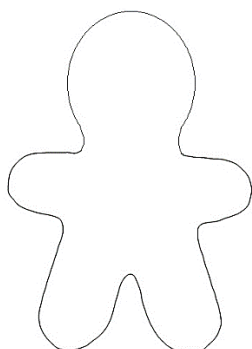
Fish: 2x
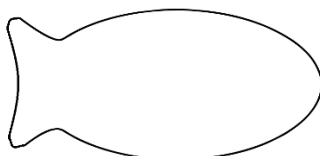
4.7 Jigsaw puzzle
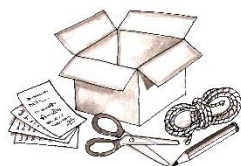
What do you need?

➤ A piece of cardboard
➤ Coloured pencils, pens or felt pens
➤ Scissors

What do you do?

➤ Draw a picture on the cardboard and colour it

➤ Cut the picture into pieces of different sizes and shapes (see example below). The more pieces you cut, the more difficult it will be for the children to complete the jigsaw puzzle
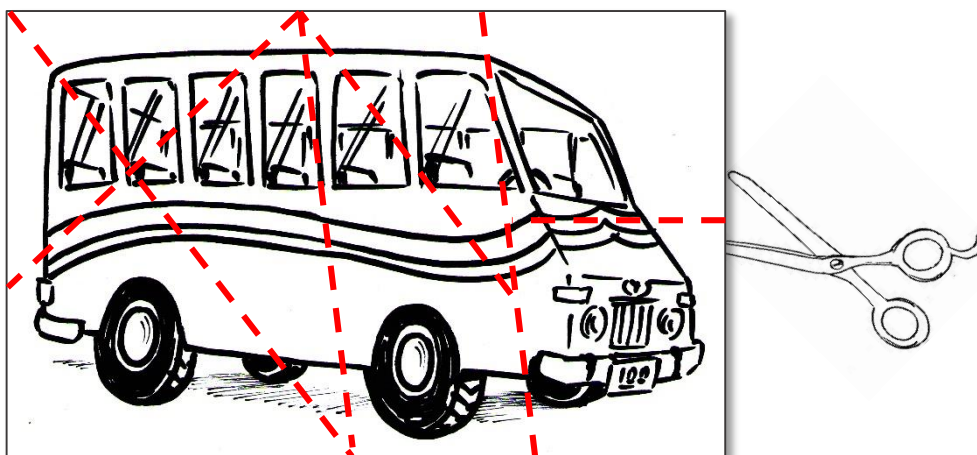
For which activities can you use it?

✓ *Interacting with the physical world* Jigsaw puzzles are a good way for children to practice colour and shape recognition in a playful way. While the children complete the puzzle, talk about the colours that are found in the picture and the different shapes that the puzzle is cut into

Tips

✓ Depending on the age and ability of the children, they will be able to complete puzzles with smaller or larger pieces. It is a good idea therefore to prepare puzzles with different difficulty levels

4.8   Building blocks
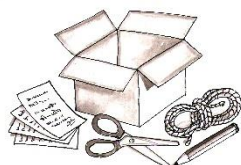
What do you need?

➢ Different small cardboard boxes
➢ Paper (for example newspapers)
➢ Tape
➢ For decoration: cloth, coloured pens, glue

What do you do?

➢ Fill the cardboard boxes with crumpled paper to make them more stable, close the boxes and seal them with tape

➢ Colour the building blocks or decorate them with pieces of cloth
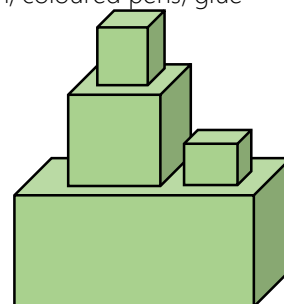
For which activities can you use it?

✓ *Interacting with the physical world* Building blocks can be used to stack on top of each other and also to talk about and experience quantities, numbers and shapes

Variations

Ask a local carpenter to make some more durable building blocks from wood. Many different shapes are possible: cubes, cuboids, prisms, cylinders…
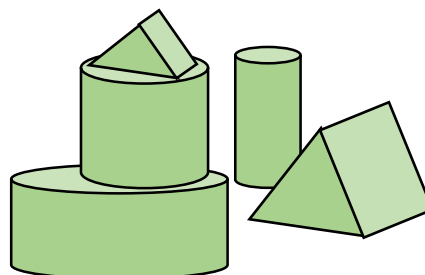
Tips

✓ If you cannot find small cardboard boxes, use a big one instead. Flatten the box, draw a template of a building block on it (see below) and cut the shape out. Seal it with tape – the building block is ready for stacking!
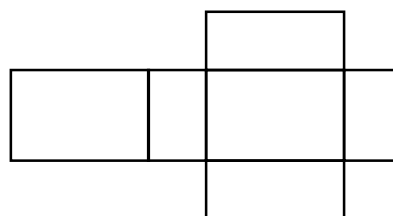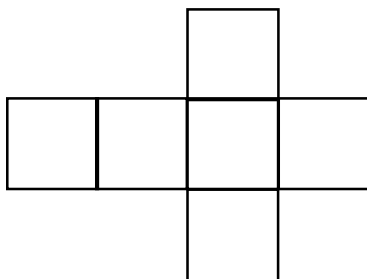
4.9   Memory game
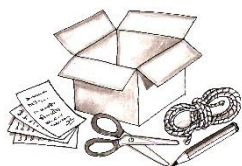
What do you need?

➢ Pieces of cardboard
➢ Scissors
➢ Pens

What do you do?

➢ Cut an even number of squares out of the cardboard

➢ Take two squares and draw the same picture, for example animals, plants, objects or people, on each of them. Prepare several sets accordingly

For which activities can you use it?

✅ *Interacting with the physical world* Shuffle the memory cards and place them on the floor face up. Ask the children to find the pairs that belong together. While playing, the children practice recognising objects according to their characteristics (size, shape, colour)

Variations

To increase difficulty, place the cards face down on the floor in neat rows. Ask one child at a time to flip two cards face up. The aim is to turn over two matching cards. If the cards do not match, the child has to flip them face down again. This is a good game for children to train their memory

Instead of drawing two exact same pictures on one set of cards, you can choose two similar items, for example a car and a truck, two bottles of different shapes, a girl and a boy, a village and a house, a hen and a cock or rice and beans. Spread the cards on the floor and ask the children to sort the cards into pairs that belong together.
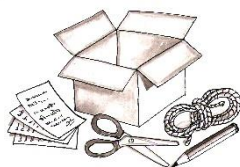During the activity, explain to the children that even though the objects on a set of cards are not identical, they belong to the same category, for example 'means of transportation/ cars', 'bottles', 'children', 'animals/ chickens', 'food' or that they show one compared to several objects ('one house', several houses – 'a village')
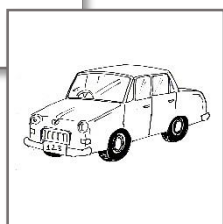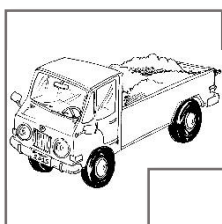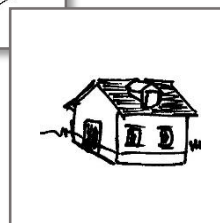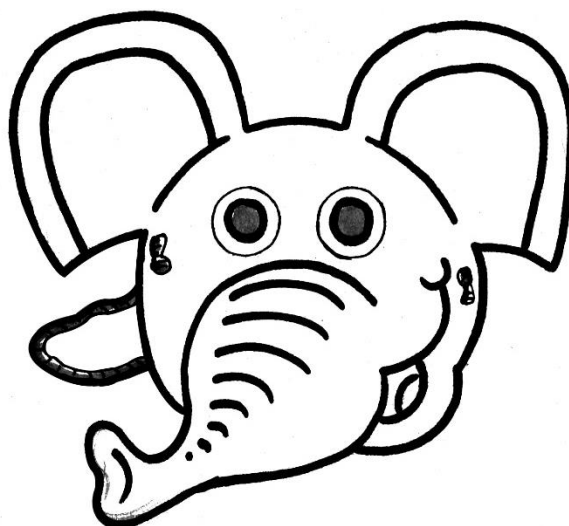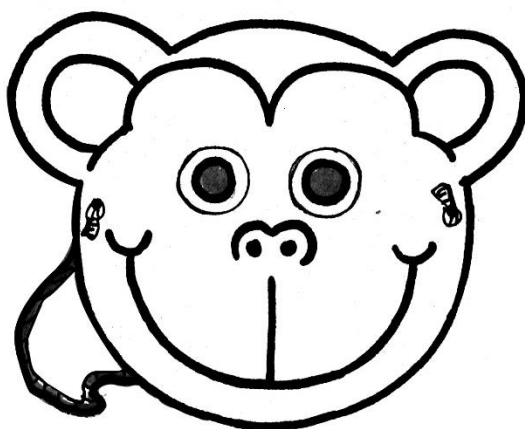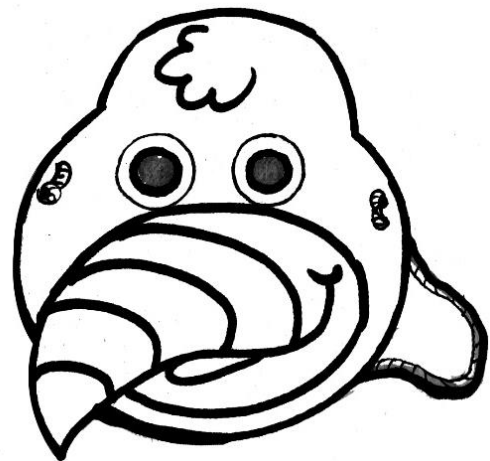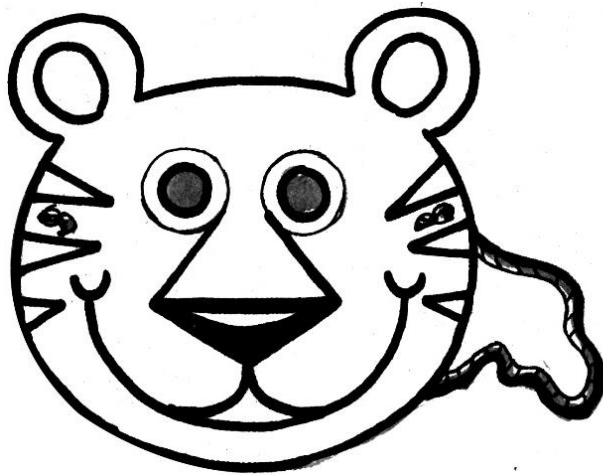
4.10 Animal masks

What do you need?

- ➤ Pieces of cardboard
- ➤ A string or elastic
- ➤ Scissors
- ➤ Pens, pencils or crayons
- ➤ For decoration: small pieces of coloured paper or cloth, woollen threads

For which activities can you use it?

✔ *Craft* Provide small scraps of coloured paper (or cloth) to the children and ask them to decorate the mask by gluing them onto it. You can also provide threads of wool that the children can use to imitate the animal's fur (the thicker the threads, the better)

✔ *Story time* Put on the mask and tell a story about the animal that you are dressed up as. Enact the story with movements and sounds

✅ *Sport activities* Prepare several animal masks. Ask the children to move around the room and to imitate the characteristic movement patterns and sounds of the animal whose mask they are wearing

Variations

You can also draw the face of a person (for example a boy or a girl) on the cardboard and make a mask

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