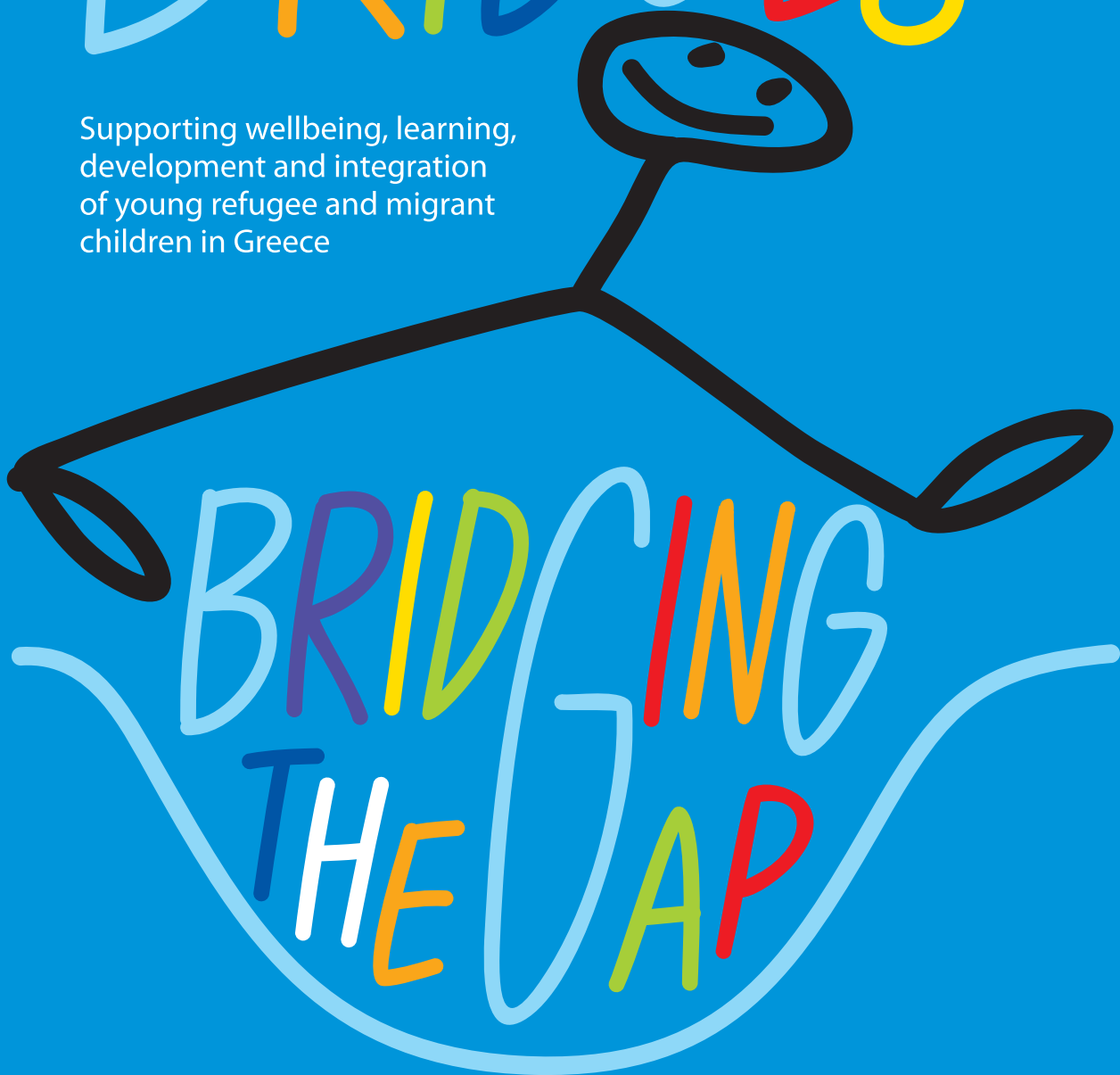


# BUILDING BRIDGES

Supporting wellbeing, learning,  
development and integration  
of young refugee and migrant  
children in Greece





INTERNATIONAL  
**STEP by STEP**  
ASSOCIATION

## **Building bridges – Bridging the gap**

Supporting wellbeing, learning, development and integration of  
young refugee and migrant children in Greece

*Guidebook for kindergarten teachers  
working in refugee camps*



refugees  
trauma  
initiative

**Editors:**

Zorica Trikić – Senior Program Manager, ISSA, The Netherlands

Nektarios Stellakis – Assistant Professor, University of Patras, Greece

**Design and layout:** Branko Djukanovic

**Language Editor:** Ruzica Rosandic

© ISSA – International Step by Step Association, University of Patras, Refugee Trauma Initiative, 2020. All rights reserved

Published by ISSA – International Step by Step Association, Leiden – The Netherlands

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This guidebook is a result of the joint efforts of the of International Step by Step Association (ISSA), University of Patras, Department of Educational Sciences and Early Childhood Education, and Refugee Trauma Initiative (RTI). Special thanks go to Prof. Dr. Nektarios Stellakis, University of Patras, Zarlisht Halaimzai, Rojena Tatour, RTI, and Zorica Trikić, ISSA.

Thank you also to Dr. Maria Vasiliadou, Associate Professor of Art Education, Frederick University Cyprus, and Dr. Sevasti Paidá, who used to be Coordinator for Education of Refugee Children in the island of Chios.

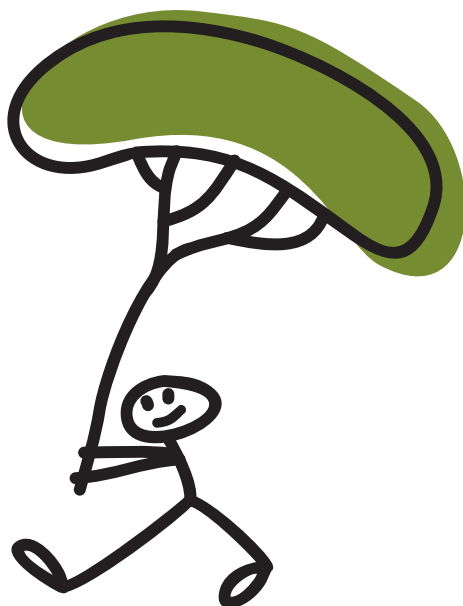
We are grateful for support from the Greek Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, especially to Ms. Gelly Aroni and Ms. Ifigeneia Kokkali, Dr. Paraskevi Trouki, Coordinator of Scientific Team and Dr. Gerasimos Kouzelis, President of the Institute for Education Policy.

This guidebook also greatly benefited from the work of students from the Department of Educational Sciences and Early Childhood Education, University of Patras who participated in the summer programs and worked in kindergartens in refugee camps on Aegean Islands, and all the dedicated program staff from RTI.

And last but not least, we are grateful to the Early Childhood Program at the Open Society Foundations for their generous support.

This publication has been developed with financial support from the Early Childhood Program at the Open Society Foundations, under the project Children on the Margins: Building Bridges – Bridging the Gap. Supporting wellbeing, learning, development and integration of young refugee and migrant children in Greece.

The Early Childhood Program at the Open Society Foundations support of the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents, which reflects the views only of the authors.



# Contents

## Introduction 6

### I. Creating safe, stimulating well-structured and child friendly environment in refugee camps/reception centers 9

#### 1. Structure and organization of the program/intervention 9

Access to kindergarten 9

Getting to know children before they start attending the kindergarten 9

The Physical Environment 11

Tips for creating welcoming and inclusive environment in the kindergarten 12

Staffing 13

Code of Conduct 14

Record Keeping 15

Duration of the program and daily schedule 15

#### 2. Providing psychosocial support to refugee children and families 18

Building relationships 19

Supporting child's holistic development – all aspects of child development 21

Dealing with Childhood adversity 22

Activities and games for relaxation, reducing stress and aggression in children and for community and team building 24

Nurturing Children's Resilience 28

Activities for building self-esteem and respect for diversity 29

Tips for dealing with conflicts and discriminatory incidents 37

Reducing Stress in and on families 38

#### 3. Supporting children who do not speak Greek language 41

Activities that support language acquisition 47

### II. Preparing and supporting kindergarten teachers 68

Needs Assessment 69

Training 70

Continuous professional development and support 73

Closing remarks 74

## References 75



## Introduction

This Guidebook was developed by the International Step by Step Association (ISSA), University of Patras, Department of Educational Sciences and Early Childhood Education, and Refugee Trauma Initiative (RTI) who in partnership with Greek Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs implemented the project: *Children on the Margins: Building Bridges – Bridging the Gap. Supporting wellbeing, learning, development and integration of young refugee and migrant children in Greece.*

The main purpose of the Guidebook is to support and inform the work of kindergarten teachers engaged in kindergartens in refugee camps on the Aegean islands, but can also be of help in different kindergarten settings. The Guidebook can be independently used by teachers as well as their mentors and supervisors and other providers of in-service training.

Materials in the guidebook comprise numerous approaches, lessons learned and examples from different refugee responses implemented by partners such as: ISSA's engagement in Germany refugee response in partnership with UNICEF Europe and Central Asia Regional Office (ECARO), and UNICEF One Response Office Germany under *A Flying Start* project; RTI's *Baytna* program and projects implemented in Thessaloniki; and the program implemented by the students from the Department of Educational Sciences and Early Childhood Education of the University of Patras in the East Aegean Reception and Identification Centers, during the summer months of 2018 & 2019.

Activities and approaches suggested in the guidebook can be implemented as described but should also serve as an inspiration for the kindergarten teachers and those supporting their work and as an invitation for reflection on existing practices and as opportunities for improvements.

According to the UN Refugee Agency<sup>1</sup>, roughly 860 000 refugees and migrants without travel documents have entered Greece by sea since 2015 and the number is growing, with the Greek islands becoming the main gateway to the European Union.

More than half of the refugees on the islands are children, and women and majority of them were exposed to different adverse experiences, stress, fear and suffering not only during the flight, but also upon the arrival to European countries, with inconceivable consequences for child's development, physical and mental health.

A growing body of evidence is showing that combination of poor health, adverse childhood experiences, toxic stress, parental depression and the lack of a stimulating early learning environment essentially contribute to lifelong poorer outcomes for physical and mental health and achievement of children, while a **safe, nurturing**,

<sup>1</sup> UN Refugee Agency. Greece data snapshot 06 January 2016. <http://data.unhcr.org/mediterranean/download.php?id=376>

**responsive, stimulating, and predictable** environment can contribute significantly to resiliency and better outcomes for every child.

Numerous reports are stating that one of the promising practices and policies to support young refugee children and their families is providing support for ECEC programs and services. The best way to do it is “to build their capacity to meet the needs of children from refugee and asylum seekers families by expanding service slot, language support and tailored workforce training”.<sup>2</sup>

The Government of Greece, the relevant Ministries and Municipalities in cooperation with the international agencies, national agencies, Foundations, and NGOs are devoting significant efforts to improve the situation of young refugee and migrant children and their families. However, situation was and still is very difficult and challenging partly because the influx of migrants coincides with the Greek economic recession where the welfare and education sector are affected by austerity measures.

Recommendation from the “Scientific Committee” to Greek Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs resulted in opening the “kindergartens in hosting places” including the refugee camps/reception centers. In these kindergartens preschool education is delivered by Greek preschool teachers and it is following the Greek curriculum. Unfortunately, due to challenging and changing conditions in camps kindergartens are working only when conditions permit.

According to the Greek Law (and also laws in many other countries), preschool aged children (3-6 years) in the camps/reception/identification centers should have access to enriching early childhood opportunities in a stimulating, safe and structured setting where they can learn and play, overcome potential trauma, continue their developmental path (which in many cases has been interrupted by an extended period of displacement, adverse experiences and uncertainty), socialize with their peers, and begin to acquire Greek language.

In kindergarten, children who faced and are still facing extensive toxic stress, should find comfort and support from caring staff as a regular routine, and should engage in interesting and exciting art, creative and learning activities in a peer group. While they are learning a new language (in this case the Greek language) their first language needs to be respected and preserved and their identities celebrated.

Interventions undertaken under the *Building Bridges – Bridging the Gap* project aimed to support the efforts of the Ministry of Education by focusing on two streams of action:

---

<sup>2</sup> Park, Maki, Caitlin Katsiaficas, and Margie Mc Hugh, 2018. *Responding to the ECEC Needs of Children of Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Europe and North America*, Washington DC: Migration Policy Institute, pg. 3, retrieved from:



Creating safe, stimulating well- structured and childfriendly environment in refugee camps/reception centers	Preparing and supporting kindergarten teachers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Structure and organisation of program/intervention</li> <li>• Physical environment and welcoming children and families</li> <li>• Providing psychosocial support to children</li> <li>• Addressing the issue of language</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Empowering teachers to work in challenging environment</li> <li>• Welcoming and working with families</li> <li>• Providing teachers with support in dealing with the burn out to prevent drop out</li> </ul>

A great emphasis was also given to enabling teachers to provide support to parents since in given circumstances parental capacities for being emotionally available, providing responsive and nurturing care to their children can be particularly affected. Due to the stress level, parents and caregivers are usually incapable to compensate for environmental threats and to build resilience and social-emotional wellbeing of their children.

We would like to stress that we strongly believe that families and children should be allocated from camps/reception and identification centers and included in a wider society. However, the reality of so many young children is that they are still living in overcrowded, scarce, dangerous, and depressing camps without opportunities to play and learn with their peers. And our obligation is to react. We strongly recommend that kindergartens in camps should be a TRANSITION solution and an opportunity created for children to feel safe, appreciated and stimulated while waiting to leave the camps. Despite their temporary nature, the kindergarten experiences offered to children have to be of high quality.

# I. Creating safe, stimulating well-structured and child friendly environment in refugee camps/reception centers

The main impact of crisis events, such as leaving the hometown and homeland, and becoming a refugee is often a devastating feeling of *'loss of place'* – grief, displacement, disorientation, anger and alienation.<sup>3</sup> These feelings are experienced within the conditions in camps, which are hard and challenging and for sure never child- friendly.

Organizing early childhood /kindergarten programs in camps/reception centers, which are structured, well thought-out, and with meaningful activities delivered by prepared kindergarten teachers in a child friendly space can ease the pain, tranquil the stress and contribute to re-establishing the *'sense of place'* in children, and their caregivers and families.<sup>4</sup>

In this chapter we will address the key ingredients that can contribute to the reestablishment of a *'sense of place'* and consequently to the increased psychosocial wellbeing of children and key adults in their life.

## 1. Structure and organization of the program/intervention

### Access to kindergarten

It is foreseen that all children, age 3-6 from respective camp should have access to the kindergarten. The number of children per group, the number of available kindergarten teachers, and duration of the program should be aligned with Greek official normative and curriculum. However, since children and teachers do not share the same language, and children are already living in overpopulated camps, the number of children should not exceed 15.

It is recommended that siblings should not be separated; leaving them together increases the psychosocial comfort and stability for a child and is also convenient and soothing for the parents.

As for providing the young children with a level of stability that has been lacking in their environment and everyday lives, as well as of supporting formation of peer relationships and relationships with kindergarten teachers, children should attend kindergarten on regular basis as often as possible.

### Getting to know children before they start attending the kindergarten

Before children start attending the kindergarten, teacher should talk with parents (in some cases also with the manager of the camp/center) and collect basic information

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.massey.ac.nz/~trauma/issues/2008-1/prewitt\\_diaz.htm](https://www.massey.ac.nz/~trauma/issues/2008-1/prewitt_diaz.htm)

<sup>4</sup> Adapted from: [https://www.massey.ac.nz/~trauma/issues/2008-1/prewitt\\_diaz.htm](https://www.massey.ac.nz/~trauma/issues/2008-1/prewitt_diaz.htm)

about each child, including information on health status of a child, special needs, most important likes and dislikes, ways to calm a child etc. This information has to be confidential and used only to help staff to understand and serve the child better.

During first contacts with parents it is important to explain to them how you are going to work and also to inform them that children will not be allowed to come and leave kindergarten on their own, for safety reasons, and that parents and family members will be asked to bring and pick up children.

**REGISTRATION FORM:** A brief registration form should be completed for each child within a week of their enrolment. The answers to these questions will help teachers to better understand the child and her/his needs and act in a way to improve child's wellbeing. It should serve only for these purposes. It is important to explain to the parents why you are asking these questions. Refugee families are exposed to so many people asking different questions and thus might become more scared and worried if they do not understand what the purpose of this process is.

***Sample of questions for parents:***

- *Name of your child*
- *Age of your child*
- *How does the child like to be called?*
- *What are activities that your child likes the most?*
- *What makes your child scared/angry/sad? What is the best way to calm your child?*
- *Does child have a good friend in the camp?*
- *Does child have a toy that is important to her/him?*
- *Is child independent? Does he/she need any support when he/she goes to toilet and to take care of personal hygiene?*
- *Is there something related to the health of your child you would like to share with us?*
- *Is there something related to the behavior of your child that you would like to share with us?*
- *What would you like your child to do in the kindergarten?*
- *Would you like to help us? What would you like to do?*

## The Physical Environment

Despite challenging and adverse conditions in the camps/reception centers, kindergartens have to adhere to minimum standards of space, safety, security, ventilation and hygiene defined by the laws.

It is well known that the quality of the physical environment is closely linked to wellbeing and proper development in the early years.

Minimum that kindergartens need to have is the following:

- Easy access to hand washing and toilet facilities. Teachers cannot leave children unattended and they cannot let children go alone to the toilet. If this is not possible, then all the responsible bodies in the camp need to provide support to teachers.
- Space must be safe, protected and visibly labeled as a kindergarten. It can be used for parents meetings if necessary, but should not be used for any other purposes in order to protect integrity of space, hygiene, equipment, toys, children's work etc.



- Space has to be big enough to accommodate the planned number of children and to allow play and activity centers, the more the better. Some of the most relevant centers are the ones with picture books, center with building blocks, art, drama and pretend play, and music and movement. The number, type and organization of activity centers will vary depending on the size of the space. If the space is small some centers can be mobile or in boxes and used when they are needed.

This is a space in one of the reception centers equipped during the project

## Tips for creating welcoming and inclusive environment in the kindergarten

The learning environment<sup>5</sup> is more than a classroom equipment and facility quality. It also includes the **culture and the climate in the working room**. The learning environment also greatly influences children's cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development.

By creating a **physically and psychologically safe** and stimulating environment, preschool teachers encourage children's learning through independent and group exploration, play, access to diverse resources, and interactions with other children and adults.

The room needs to be organized in such a way that **all children feel welcome, all children feel that they belong to the space, and all children feel accepted and respected**.

**It is important that the environment promotes:**

- *cooperation* among children (children work together as team and learning community);
- *respectful communication* (children and adults carefully listen to each other, socialize with each other outside of kindergarten, and take care of each other);
- *an empathic adult style* (taking into account children's feelings and needs, intervening in a stimulating way and at the same time offering room for initiative)
- *mutual respect* (children accept each other no matter how they look, their background, their skills, or social class);
- *diversity of ideas* (children are not afraid of different opinions, they are not angry or aggressive when they cannot agree, and they deal with conflict in a constructive way);
- *sharing* (children trust each other and speak freely about themselves, their feelings, and experiences); and
- *plenty of relevant, appropriate, and structured and unstructured materials* (such as boxes, wires, plastic bottles, papers, and additional materials) so that children can explore and create.

### **When greeting new children and families you can<sup>6</sup>:**

- Create welcoming cards for children and families – simple cards with a drawing and a few welcoming words in Greek and other languages.
- Prepare a daily schedule in photos or drawing – include time and the structure of the day.

<sup>5</sup> Trikic, 2012, pg. 51-52

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.naeyc.org/resources/pubs/tyc/aug2017/welcoming-refugee-children-into-classrooms>

- At the beginning, in the first few days or a week prepare play activities which do not require knowledge of the Greek language such as:
  - Let children draw themselves and play a matching game. Write the children's names at the bottom of their self-portrait to help them recognize their own and each other's names.
  - Children can create their own musical instruments and form bands. Make maracas by filling plastic bottles with beans, create string instruments by wrapping large rubber bands around open shoe boxes, and use a comb and tissue paper to make a kazoo. Children can compose music together and invite their families to a gig.
- Let parents and children explore the kindergarten room (or the whole kindergarten if you are not working in the camp) and get familiar with the space.
- Create one to one time with children – the paramount in the work with refugee children is that they feel safe and trustful. Allocate time to do something with each child, be warm and caring. If you do not speak child's language do not bother, do something that do not require language. Just be there for a child.

## Staffing

It is recommended that each group has **at least one professional kindergarten teacher**. (In Greece, teachers were selected by the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs). To support quality of relationships and interactions between children, families and teachers it is recommended, If possible, (in cooperation with the respective Ministries and camp's/reception center's management) to engage:

- **Volunteers** (whenever possible, parents from the camp, with adequate education and language knowledge should be involved or University students or other professionals with relevant professions such as pediatricians, artists, etc.)

We learned during the project implementation, as well as from other initiatives implemented by partners, that the constant turnover of teachers and or volunteers, who become part of children's lives, develop close ties with them, and then leave, do bring additional stress in children and contributes to growing mistrust and feelings of abandonment.

Before engaging volunteers and/or cultural mediators and translator attention should be paid to the following:

- Age – they should be over 18
- Can they serve as a role model? Their attitudes, respectfulness, quality of interactions
- Motivation – are they motivated to support children and families and if yes what is their motivation
- Adequate knowledge and skills
- Request police records and criminal checks when appropriate
- If volunteers are coming from the camp asses their status and reputation in the community and with camp leadership and management

***Kindergarten teachers should always be around. Safeguarding and protecting children from any kind of abuse is the main concern.***

- At least 1 **cultural Mediator** and/or **translator** (with fluency in respective language(s) and with at least very basic knowledge of Greek and English if the preschool teachers speak English). Whenever possible, parents from the camp can serve as translators and they can also help teachers understand some cultural norms and expectations.) It is of great importance to keep the turnover of the staff as low as possible (that preschool teachers do not change often), to ensure a sense of stability, trust and continuity for the group of children and parents. If teachers, or other relevant staff need to leave, this process needs to be well thought and planned to avoid “attachment issues” and reinforcement of separation and abandonment issues which are common in refugee children. Teachers should have a period of few months (up to 3 months) to “say” goodbye to children and families. If this is not done in a proper way it may cause drop out of children or additional stress in them. It is also important to organize a hand over from one teacher to the next one, so that a smooth transition is provided e.g. the new teacher knows what children like to play, sing, dance...

## Code of Conduct

Safeguarding is the action taken to promote the welfare of children and to protect them from any kind of harm, including physical, sexual and emotional abuse and different types of neglect.<sup>7</sup>

Refugee children face far greater dangers to their safety and wellbeing than the average child. In most of the cases they were exposed to high levels of risk and of toxic stress in their countries of origin, and continue to suffer during the flight and in camps. It is a sad fact that refugee infants and young children are often the earliest and most frequent victims of violence, and are at risk of various severe fundamental rights violations. Based on the information from the European Network of Ombudspersons for Children (ENOC) report (2016), children on the move in Europe are at risk of unacceptable safety risks, including trafficking, violence, illness, becoming stateless, separation from their parents and even death.

Kindergartens in camps have to be safe places, where children feel protected and respected. To secure that people working in the kindergartens are working in the best interest of the child it is recommended that all staff, volunteers, and Cultural Mediators sign the Code of Conduct, or any other document that Ministry already have or should develop for these purposes. It is important to keep in mind that exceptional conditions (places where so many vulnerable individuals live) require exceptional measures, and that safety of children is a paramount.

---

<sup>7</sup><https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/safeguarding-child-protection#:~:text=Safeguarding%20is%20the%20action%20that,children%20from%20abuse%20and%20maltreatment>

## Record Keeping

Besides the documentation and the record keeping defined by the (in our case Greek) Law, and based on the previous positive experiences, we suggest the additional documents such as:

- **CHILD RECORD:** As a part of documentation, kindergarten teacher should make brief comments of child's progress and illustrate it with child's work. In kindergarten in the camp it would be recommended to do it to illustrate the biggest changes and progress that child makes, to mark the highlights of the time that child is spending in the kindergarten. These records can be used to show to a child how he/she is changing, to inform parents and also when needed to inform a new teacher. The information in the Child Record will also provide the substance for the Exit Form.
- **EXIT FORM:** This form should follow the child. Since kindergartens in refugee camps are temporary solution, when a child moves from the camp, she/he should have some kind of a document which will help teachers in a new kindergarten or primary school to prepare for his/her reception. **This form should be written in descriptive language stressing the child's strengths, and by no means should negative judgments about the child and the family be included.**

In Germany, during the ISSA-UNICEF ECARO and UNICEF One Response Office Germany intervention, the idea of "I-Book" was introduced. It was envisaged that upon enrolling into kindergarten, each child will receive an empty notebook for drawings, memorable items, etc. The kindergarten teacher, parents and other significant individuals were invited to write in the book at the child's request. Peers were invited to draw or write too. This book stayed with the child during his/her transition to a new kindergarten, school setting or to another camp/reception center or even country.

## Duration of the program and daily schedule

Duration of the program and its frequency should be aligned with the official normative and curriculum, and the conditions in the camps. However, the program should not last less than 3 hours per day. Structure, clarity and daily routines are important for all children because they send them the message of predictable order and consistency and give them a sense of stability, and security. For young children in refugee camps this is even more important, because their daily life can be very chaotic due to the high level of uncertainty and lack of clarity what will happen to them and their families.

We suggest the following structure of the day which is very much in tune with the Greek curriculum too:

- **Opening of the day** - Routines focusing on community building
  - Morning/Opening Circle time – welcome and sharing
  - Group singing or playing a game





- **Body of the day** – Different type and number of activities (depending on child's interests, duration, level of the knowledge of Greek language etc.). In some cases, e.g. art and creativity activities can last for a week if children are interested and involved.
  - Child initiated activities – these can be large group play, play in different activity corners/centers, free play in room or outdoor play (outdoor play only if it is safe!) etc.
  - Group activities initiated by teacher– e.g. the whole group activity on reading the book or storytelling if translation is available. If not, it is recommended to use art activities, activities based on movement etc.
  - Small groups' activities – children playing in small groups with different materials. Teachers can prepare different materials and invite children to choose.
- 1. **Closing of the day** – Departure routines
  - Closing circle time - Calming down, resume of the day – asking children what the day for them was like. If they do not speak the language props like similes can serve the purpose.
  - Asking children what they would like to do tomorrow (if they cannot speak the language they can pick from photos of activities or drawings).

Opening and closing of the day are very important, because children can express themselves, they are seen and heard, so they feel that they belong to the group and that they have a say.

### **Activity: Circle time**

Circle time provides teachers the opportunity to create whole group team building experiences that will promote respect and kindness among children. Teachers are role models. Circle time is meant to be the time of the day the teacher is showing children what is expected of them. With children we must assume nothing.

During morning meeting the teacher models how to speak to one another using kind words, how to look at each other in the eye, how to listen when others are talking, how to read messages (for older children), how to share the ideas and how to respond appropriately and respectfully. Coming together as a group for the morning meeting is an effective way for educators to show children that they make up a community and that as a part of that community they are a team. Circle time can also serve for problem solving, assessment and evaluation of the day and activities etc.

**Morning meetings/circle** last about twenty or thirty-minute and have the following components:

**Greeting:** Children and teachers greet one other by name. If children do not speak language, greeting can be done in different ways such as gesticulating etc. However, teacher should use children names.

**Sharing Group news:** Children share information about important events in their lives. Listeners offer empathetic comments or ask clarifying questions. If children do not speak language this part should be skipped.

**Group Activity:** Everyone participates in a brief, lively activity that fosters group cohesion (for example, dancing, singing, or playing a game that reinforces social skills).

**Closing circle should also last twenty minutes and should serve to calm down children and prepare them for transition to the camp environment. Evaluation of the day can be done by using smileys. As a closing activity we recommend anti stress or mindfulness activities. You will find description of activities later in the text.**

Greeting each child individually is very important. In that way teachers acknowledge that each child is an important and essential part of the class as a whole and would be greatly missed if not a part of the circle. It is essential that the teacher models all new activities and asks for responses from the children on how they think they should greet one another. Forming a circle enables better management for the teacher as she can see each child clearly. Allowing for each child to greet one another builds communication skills and teaches children to respect one another. The greeting is the first component of the Morning meeting and should be done as soon as the children have formed a circle. Children naturally want to be well liked and to feel part of a group. Gathering for meeting time and greeting one another reinforces community and respect among the children of the class/group.

Adapted from Coughlin et al.: Step by Step: A Program for Children and Families. Creating Child-Centered Classrooms: 3-5 Years Old. ISSA

## 2. Providing psychosocial support to refugee children and families<sup>8</sup>

Families on the move face enormous challenges and long periods of stress and uncertainty, which can cause chronic anxiety and toxic stress. The stress becomes toxic when a child is exposed to intense, frequent, and prolonged adversity, and when adults are emotionally unavailable or unable to provide a child with adequate support. The lengthy, continuous stress triggered by multiple factors (e.g., living conditions in camps, poverty, poor health, fear, etc.) can seriously endanger a child's healthy development in ways that can last a lifetime. In many cases, the development of brain architecture is affected, cognitive impairment may occur; mental health can be in jeopardy, as well as physical health and general well-being.<sup>9 10</sup>

The "Baytna" ('our home' in Arabic), is a unique early years program that has been designed by Refugee Trauma Initiative (RTI) to provide the critical emotional support that refugee families require alongside high-quality early years education. It is a flexible model, meaning that *Baytna* can be applied in any environment, be it a children's center, a kindergarten, or a refugee camp. The "Baytna" spaces are safe and positive, so children feel relaxed, happy, and confident, and caregivers get essential respite and space to process trauma and painful experiences.

<https://www.refugeetrauma.org/baytna-jan19>

The provision for mental health care among most humanitarian organizations includes Psychological First Aid (PFA), which seeks to provide immediate, necessary help to people experiencing acute trauma. While PFA serves a valid purpose, it cannot address the issues faced by refugees who have undergone prolonged periods of stress caused by war, violence, and displacement. It is estimated that around 50% of refugees leaving war zones exhibit symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. Furthermore, effective PFA relies on the possibility of referring patients with chronic problems to the mental health care infrastructure in the country where they are living. In reality, such support is either non-existent or does not have the resources to provide for refugees.

Meaningful and useful psychosocial care builds on a continuing relationship of trust and understanding between those who need care and those who provide it. In cases of severe mental health issues, both in children and adults, educators should ask for professional help and support without trying to solve the problems that they encounter.

Relationships we build with refugee children and families are sensitive, fragile, and delicate, so practitioners must be mindful of their values and preconceptions. The

<sup>8</sup> This section is mostly based on the "Baytna" model developed by Refugee Trauma Initiative (RTI)

<sup>9</sup> <https://developingchild.harvard.edu/science/key-concepts/toxic-stress/>

<sup>10</sup> <https://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/stress-and-resilience-how-toxic-stress-affects-us-and-what-we-can-do-about-it/>

"Baytna" program sets out the principles of how to work and the strategies that need to be used to create culturally sensitive and responsive practices. By following this guidance, kindergarten teachers can create safe and culturally responsive environments for the children and families they are working with.

While the insight presented in the text can prove extremely useful when personalizing early years practice, it is essential also to recognize limitations and the dangers of assuming the experience of the children and families that you work with. This document sheds light on some lived experiences of refugees. However, not everything that we mention will apply to the children and families you work with. As you consider the guidance presented, be mindful that you do not start labeling or stereotyping children and families and building negative or low expectations. As practitioners, we should never make a diagnosis. We should leave it to the experts and specialists!

**As practitioners, we must strive to appreciate each child and caregiver's uniqueness and work with taking the time to build relationships and understand their unique needs.**

So how this looks in practice – what can you do in your kindergarten?

**Building relationships**

<b>With children</b>	
<b>Build relationships from the beginning</b>	Invest in building relationships with children. When meeting a new child, introduce yourself, saying your name slowly. Ask the child to share his/her name, and if s/he is not responding, respect that s/he might need time. Remember the name of the child; make sure you pronounce the name correctly. Observe the child if s/he is having difficulty separating from his/her mother, support him/her, and encourage the mother/father/caregiver to stay till s/he feels safe. Pay attention to your body language. Make sure you speak calmly at the level of the child e.g., kneel. Use play and games to build a relationship and get to know the child's interests and personality.
<b>Let children feel safe and secure</b>	Create spaces that give the impression of being safe e.g., are calm, tidy, with clear rules. Having a schedule can create a safe and predictable space (e.g., closing rituals help children feel relaxed and help them to say goodbye to you and each other). Using puppets or toys can help children speak if they are not feeling secure e.g., ask them what a toy's name is. If a child withdraws, sometimes just sitting close to him/her helps him/her to feel that you are there for them, and whenever s/he is ready, s/he can come to you. Children will understand that they have a safe base.

<b>Establish the rules</b>	Make sure the rules are simple and clear and communicated clearly to children and families e.g., on the wall, at the start of the day, through a fun song. Make sure that children understand the consequences of not following the rules. Do not use punishment. Provide time out and breaks for children and show them that you believe in them. Explain the rule and why it is essential. Let the child return to the group when s/he is ready and after the time out.
<b>Provide consistency</b>	Ensure that there are clear rules and responsibilities that educators adhere to and follow. Work together to reflect on practice to see what could be done to create a more consistent team. Talk to parents about the importance of consistency and support them to create a predictable and consistent routines.
<b>With infants' caregivers</b>	
Encourage caregivers to recognise and interpret child's cues and respond to them calmly.	
Praise caregivers on their efforts to be responsive.	
Help parents understand the importance of providing emotional warmth and affection and its impact on their child's development.	
Model different ways of holding and handling infants that nurture positive attachment.	
Coach caregivers on activities that are fun and will help them bond with their children e.g. massage, mirroring.	
Engage caregivers by asking them about a child's interests and favourite ways to play.	
If caregivers are present encourage them to take part and play with their child.	
Provide caregivers with advice and strategies to build strong relationships with their child e.g. to talk to their children during their household chores/ bathing/ clothing them.	



The photo presents the way how students and teachers introduced the rules in one of the kindergartens in camps .

(Stellakis N. and Spiliopoulou G., Department of Educational Sciences and Early Childhood Education, University of Patras)

## Supporting child's holistic development – all aspects of child development

During this young age, children develop immensely and in a variety of different ways.

In our approach, we followed the “Baytna” guidelines focusing on four different ways a child develops: cognitive, social, emotional, and physical domains. As practitioners, you should understand and assess these different domains of development and the complexity of their interconnectedness. It means that you are skilful in assessing separately children’s problem-solving skills, motor skills, and the ability to manage emotions while observing how these domains interact and complement. Observing a child’s development gives you also information on how s/he may or may not be progressing. In some cases, a lack of progress may indicate the need for targeted or specialized support.

To support child development, you can:

Asses - consider what activities are the best for advancing different developmental areas and holistic development. Make a combination of activities and pick those that are useful for different developmental areas at the same time.

Use experiential learning and foster the child’s curiosity and tendency to actively explore.

Use positive language with children during the activities and avoid reprimanding them when they cannot do something as you expect.

Keep in mind that children develop at their own pace and avoid comparing children to one another.

Employ strength-based approach - Teach children something new by building on their knowledge and things they can do, scaffolding their development. If you have children in regular attendance, develop a personalized learning plan which includes interest and activities and personalized goals across the different domain areas.

Provide children with opportunities to move. You can also use mindfulness activities such as yoga.

Create inviting and stimulating learning environment that includes different materials to support cognitive development, e.g., pictures, words, metal, fabric. Using flashcards with names or a simple dictionary to help children communicate with you and learn new words can help you understand their needs, interact, and respond to them.

Observe if the children interact with each other in different situations e.g., during snack time, free play, art, movement. If children are isolated and less social, use stories, games, and activities to enhance their social skills.

Asking open and ended questions helps children express their emotions and develop their imagination. Use different activities such as crafts, puppets, art, stories to help children develop their emotional literacy. Start by assisting them in identifying basic emotions: angry, sad, happy, and afraid. Encourage children to describe what they feel; if they cannot do it, you can reflect on their feelings and offer ways to name and manage these emotions.

## Dealing with Childhood adversity

Indeed, not all refugees have had the same experiences, and it is important not to stereotype or assume that children or families you work with have had particular experiences. Families and children can quickly understand your biases, which can prevent you from building trust and positive relationships. However, it can still be useful to appreciate some refugees' experiences by being sensitive and empathetic.

Early years can be a critical time when specialist support can make a difference in childhood adversity that has had severe impacts on development. **Do not diagnose children, but be mindful and observe children.** In rare cases, you may want to seek specialist advice, so it is recommended that your ECD provision has referral procedures for children that show a continued high level of distress. You and/or your management need to be familiar with the proceedings.

As mentioned before, emergencies pose many challenges and risks to young children, such as separation from family members, injuries, food shortages, and psychosocial distress. Additionally, families concentrate on basic needs such as food and shelter, with their attention diverted away from their child's developmental needs. These experiences can create stress in adults and children with biological and emotional impacts. For example, research has shown that experienced traumatic events at an early age of a child can affect brain cells' connections, and sometimes these alterations can lead to lifelong learning and behavioral problems.

Stress is a normal and natural thing that we all experience. In ordinary life situations something as simple as positive physical contact e.g. a hug, can reduce stress and calm the child.

If children remain in stressful situations without support from adults, this can affect them more deeply. Psychologists can describe children who face significant adversity levels as experiencing toxic stress (We have already explained what "toxic stress" is).

Children may continue to feel unsafe or stuck in a fight/flight/freeze response. Again, the relationship between you and the child and the caregiver and the child are vital for managing this. In more acute cases, a specialist, e.g., a child psychologist, can provide additional and targeted support.

To address and manage effects of childhood adversity you can:

### Positive perspective

Use positive language when describing children and avoid negative labels such as "stubborn." Translate a label into the language of strengths e.g., instead of saying "he is stubborn," you may say "he is confident and insists on his ideas." Try to understand why a child behaves in a certain way and give the child options to release the tension, anger, or stress. E.g., if a child is angry or stressed, you can play a game with him to push the wall while breathing or use play dough.

<b>Assess</b>	Notice what triggers each child and makes him/her stressed. E.g., if a child leaves a game, notice what happened the moment before and then take an action that will help the child deal with the stress constructively. If the child cannot wait for his/her turn, sit next to him/her and take turns together.
<b>Present moment</b>	Avoid asking detailed questions about their personal journey and life and difficult experiences. This can bring back bad memories and reminds the child of difficult experiences.
<b>Activities</b>	Introduce different ways to manage stress, such as walking, breathing, colouring, moving, and singing. Help children be present, show an interest in their play and their imagination. E.g., when a child pretends to be a doctor helping the "sick" doll, ask for the doll's name and how she feels. Help children to pause and think before acting, use signals that help them take a break, e.g., a hand sign, puppet, song, etc. Provide opportunities for children to take the lead. It allows them to have a sense of control and stop stress responses.
<b>Mindfulness and relaxation</b>	Encourage children to take a break when they are stressed. Using mindfulness practices of breathing helps children pause, regulate their emotions, and come out of fight and flight response. Introduce movement activities for relaxation, such as a lemon squeeze exercise. Ask children to pretend that they are squeezing lemon hard with their left hand. Tell them to try to squeeze it dry. While doing that, you can invite them to feel the tension in their arms and hands. Then ask them to drop the imaginary lemon and relax and explore how their arms and hands feel when they are relaxed. Repeat it with the other hand. Use these techniques also to manage unacceptable behaviours.
<b>Laughter</b>	Laughter is useful when children are stressed; it helps them release stress. E.g., use funny voices, jokes, or songs to make children laugh, try, and plan fun activities.
<b>Managing negative behaviour</b>	If a child is hitting, destroying toys, or crying, giving him/her an option to go to the calming area with the support of an adult can help regulate emotions. In that area, a child can do breathing exercises, do some movement exercises, and join the group when ready. You can also distract children by offering alternative activities instead of pressuring them to participate in a specific learning activity. e.g., if a child is stressed, focus on releasing the stress and supporting him/her calm down, and then when they are ready, they can go back to the learning activity.



## Activities and games for relaxation, reducing stress and aggression in children and for community and team building<sup>11</sup>

For children experiencing difficult and challenging situations, it is of great importance to have the opportunity to play and enjoy with their peers. The following activities aim to reduce stress and anxiety in children, make them feel more relaxed, and motivate them to build trust in others. You can use them even if children do not speak Greek (if teachers and children do not speak the same language). You can use them when children are upset, agitated, tensed, or aggressive, but also as a part of circle time.

**ICE FIGURES:** All children stand in a circle with their eyes closed, slowly breathing. Demonstrate to children how to breathe. Tell them: Listen to the air as it enters and leaves your body. Ask children to keep their eyes closed and to express how they feel in the way that suits them the best: they can use movements, sounds, whatever they like. When you clap your hands, they should “freeze” (stay in the position they are) and open their eyes. You can ask them to look at their peers, guess different feelings, and go to those who feel the same way.

**MIRRORING FEELINGS:** Everyone stands in a circle. One child, or a teacher, starts showing his/her feelings nonverbally by using movements, sounds, etc. Others mirror. Then, the next child shows his/her feelings, and others imitate it. The game ends when everyone gets their chance to show how he/she feels. They can also try to recognize and name their feelings and feelings of others. You can also use this activity by asking children to show funny or strange movements.

**SCULPTORS:** Divide children into pairs. Child "A" is a sculptor, and the child "B" is clay. Tell the child "A" to "shape" the child "B," showing his current feelings. When the game ends, child "B" needs to name the child "A"'s emotions and how s/he recognized it. After, they should change roles.

**JOY:** All children sit in a circle. The teacher asks the children to close their eyes and remember when they were happy and joyful, and encourage them to revive in their memory what they were doing and how they felt. At the end of the activity, children stand up and move through space, expressing joy and happiness.

**TICKLING:** Children tickle in pairs as long as it is pleasant for them. You can also do this activity with the whole group. Gather children in the middle of the room and ask them to tickle each other until they get tired. Children who do not feel comfortable can leave the game whenever they want.

---

<sup>11</sup> Adapted from the material developed by CIP – Center for Interactive Pedagogy, ISSA's member from Serbia

**LAUGHING:** Children sit or lie down on the floor with their eyes closed and breathe deeply. When they relax, tell them to start laughing loudly, the best they can. That laughter quickly becomes spontaneous. Teachers should join children.

**CIRCULAR BREATHING:** Children lie down on their backs, in a circle, with their heads toward the center, with their eyes closed and hold hands. They breathe slowly, trying to harmonize their breath with their neighbors. Gradually, they start breathing deeper, inhaling through the nose and loudly exhaling through the mouth. The teacher tells them that all their unpleasant feelings leave their body when they loudly exhale.

**SNOWMAN:** Start with asking children if they know what a snowman is. Show them a picture. Tell children: Imagine you are a snowman. Like a snowman, you have a head, a body, two hands, and a rigid leg on which you stand. The morning is lovely, and the sun shines. As the sun's time passes, the sun gets hotter, and you start to dissolve. First, your head is melting, then one hand, and then the other one. Gradually the body begins to melt. Now, your feet are just reliable, but they're starting to melt. Soon you become just a lump that lies in the snow. (Children have to act like they are melting; in the end, they should be on the floor. The teacher can model the process while speaking).

**IMPORTANT:** Some of these activities require body contact and touch. Always check if the touch is culturally appropriate, and how children individually feel about touching the others and being touched. If children don't want to be touched, respect their preference.

**CANDLES ON THE CAKE:** Tell the kids to imagine that they are candles on a cake. Tell them: First, we stand high and straight. There is a hot sun. We start to melt. In the beginning, the head is melting (make a brake), and then the shoulders (give children time), then the hands. The wax melts slowly. Legs bend slowly, slowly until we entirely soften like a lump of wax on the floor. Now the cold wind starts to blow (make a sound), and we rise and stand again.

**GROUP SCREAM:** All children line up and slowly, quietly mumbling, start to walk from one end of the room to another. Then gradually accelerate the walk and become louder, until they reach the end of the room, when they stop running and stop screaming/shouting.

**GROUP MUMBLING:** The children are curling, close to each other as much as possible. They start to mumble quietly. Slowly, they begin to stretch, and accordingly, the mumble is gradually increasing. The strongest is when children stand upright with their arms raised above their heads. The process can also be reversed, slowly folding, shrinking, and mumbling quietly to return to the starting position.

**GET OFF MY BACK:** Children stand with the legs apart, relaxed knees, and feet parallel. Their hands are loosely hanging near the body. Their jaw should be relaxed and breathing regularly. Then they should raise the elbows to the shoulder level with spread arms. Whenever they feel like they should powerfully push their elbows back while yelling, "Get off my back." You can repeat this game many times in a row.

**UGLY, BEAUTIFUL, SCARY, and FUNNY:** Every child should draw something that he or she considers ugly — something they do not like or what makes them scared. Then they draw all together and turn that into something nice/funny.

**GROUP DRAWING:** With closed eyes, children draw something individually on a large paper. Then they open eyes and link all those individual drawings into one.

**CIRCLE OF TRUST:** Children stand in a circle, as narrow as possible. A volunteer stands in the center, with both legs on the ground and upright body. The others stretch their hands to the center of the circle, with open palms. A person in the middle, with closed eyes, begins to swing, while others hold him. Slowly circle can be expanded, and the amplitude of swinging can grow.

**HUMAN LAVIRINT:** One child should walk blindfolded, through a labyrinth made of the bodies of his or her friends. The child should try to find the way by touching, while all the others nonverbally help.

**BUTTERFLY HUGS:** Cross your arms across your chest as if you were holding yourself, so your left hand is on your right shoulder and right hand on your left shoulder. Ask the children to imitate you. Keep your arms crossed and alternately tap your shoulders. With your left hand, touch the right shoulder and then tap the left shoulder with your right hand. Continue to repeat this pattern. Tapping one shoulder at a time is an essential part of this exercise. Compare tapping with the movements of the butterfly wings. One "wing" moves up and comes down, and then the other "wing" moves up and comes down. Ask the children to tap for one minute, then stop, take a breath, and notice how they feel. Ask the children: How do you feel? Continue tapping. You can do this exercise for as much as children want, and as many times a day as needed.

**HUMAN KNOT:** Divide children in small groups of 4 to six members. They all stand in the circle. Ask them to put their right hand in the middle of the circle and grab (lightly!) a hand across from them. Then ask them to do the same with their left hand. At that moment each child should hold hands of two other children. Now all children are connected in a big knot which they have to untangle without letting go of their partners' hands. Tell children to play this game slowly and gingerly, so that no one gets hurt. In some cases, it might be better to allow kids to release a wrist in order to properly untangle themselves. This is a great team building game for kids because it forces kids to work together toward a solution that everyone is aiming toward. To make this kids game even more of a team building activity, you can instruct the kids that they cannot speak – thereby forcing them to strategize with body language, which likely increases the team chemistry that the game sets out to teach.

**TEETER:** In pairs, children should hold each other wrists. Then ask them to duck together and stand up together. Repeat this activity several times.

**DRAGON:** This activity is optimal with seven children if there are more kids than make several dragons more. Everyone is standing in line, one behind the other and their hands on the waist of the person in front. Then the "head" of the dragon, the first child in a row, is trying to catch the "tail," i.e., the child in the end, while the "body" (everyone else) is trying to obstruct the "head". In doing so, the "body" must stay connected, and children should not lose contact.

**SARDINES:** It plays like "hide and seek." One child is hiding. After a while, others start to look for him or her. When someone finds the hidden child, they hide together in the same place. The game ends when everyone hides in the same place.

**KANGAROO JUMP:** A child imitates a kangaroo and jumps up, trying to catch others running away from him. When s/he seizes somebody, they jump together like kangaroos and hunt the others. At the end of the game, everyone jumps like a kangaroo.

**SHOWERING:** Split children into pairs. One child closes his/her eyes. The other one is "showering" him/her with his fingertips, passing over his head and body like drops of water. When the "shower" ends, s/he "dries" a "wet" child, rubbing him/her with its palms. Then they change their roles. Children can do it for themselves, or teachers can do it with individual children. This exercise makes children energized and relaxed. HOWEVER, BEFORE YOU DO IT CHECK WITH THE CHILD HOW HE/SHE FEELS ABOUT BEING TOUCHED. CHILD NEEDS TO TRUST YOU. DO NOT LET OTHER ADULTS IN THE GROUP DO THIS EXERCISE WITH CHILDREN!

**GROUP MASSAGE:** Children stand in the circle, one behind the other. They massage the one in front, and they get a massage from the child behind. After a while, the children turn and stand the other way and repeat the exercise.

**JUGGLING BALLONS:** Challenge children to keep all balloons (1+ per child) in the air. Motivate children to cooperate and help each other. Make this game more exciting and funny by adding in more balloons or placing restrictions, e.g., no hands to keep balloons up, etc.

### Nurturing Children’s Resilience

Resilience is the ability to overcome and bounce back after facing severe hardship and adversity by recovering and healing. It is an important capability that we support in refugee children through a combination of strategies. Some of our strategies focus on internal capabilities, such as developing self-esteem, self-regulation, and coping skills. Others refer to external factors such as **supporting stable and positive attachments and healthy relationships between the child and caregivers** or supporting families to create a **supportive social network** with secure and reliable connections with other adults, e.g., from school, the wider community.

<b>Assess</b>	Notice when a child you are working with faces a challenge and refuses to continue with the activity. Ask the child to share with you what has happened and how they feel. Challenge them to keep trying with your support and slowly praise them on their efforts. Reassure them that they were able to continue despite how challenging it was.
<b>Self-esteem</b>	Support children to believe they can face any challenges through determination. You can include stories that involve characters who have achieved things through persistence. Use praise and encouragement to develop their confidence and enable them to see their own strengths.
<b>Activities</b>	Have days or weeks with activities focusing on themes that relate to resilience such as empathy, persistence, patience, determination, aspiration, supporting others and kindness.
<b>Strategies</b>	Remind the children of different ways of dealing with challenges e.g., asking for support from a friend or adult or a group. Model how you also get support from the group e.g., ask them to take role and help you in organizing the activities and share with them your gratitude and that you feel supported by them.

## Activities for building self-esteem and respect for diversity<sup>12</sup>

As mentioned above, the foundations of lifelong confidence and self-esteem are established early in a child's life. Put-downs and negative experiences can easily harm a child's self-esteem. Due to their own adverse experiences and jeopardized well-being of their parents and caregivers, young refugee children may suffer from a lack of trust in themselves and very low self-respect. The task of preschool teachers is to support children and provide them with positive experiences as much as possible to rebuild their self-esteem.

### Activity: I am special

Through this activity children can understand that each child in the classroom is special. They also develop self-respect.

For this activity you need the following materials: paper, glue, scissors, string, photographs, coloured pencils, pencils.

#### *Description of activity:*

1. Make a book for each child. Take three large papers (size A3) and one thicker paper or carton of the same size and fold them in half. Make little holes in the middle, string and bind with thread. Older children can do it by themselves.



2. Have each child glue their photograph (or a drawing) on the book cover or draw themselves if you do not have photos. They will write (or you can write for them, or parents) information about themselves in the book and glue their photographs or draw. For example, the books can contain information about their height, weight, colour of their eyes, colour of their hair, family members, pets, languages they speak, nick-name, date of birth, what they like to eat, etc.

3. These books can be placed in the reading corner so that every child can get to know better their classmates.

### Activity: Something about me – The story of my name

By doing this activity you will provide children with opportunities to learn about each other in an uncommon way and to reflect on the similarities which connect them. It will also help you learn names and something about children and their culture.

---

<sup>12</sup> Activities are from Education for Diversity – Program for adults working with and for children –Toolkit, 2018, ISSA

*Description of activity:*

- While sitting in the circle each child tells his/her name in a different way: fast - slow, quiet-loud, sitting – standing, in combination with the movement (others can repeat the movement) etc.
- Each child makes a drawing of own name and you write their names down
- When they are finished, they either send the drawing in the circle so everybody can see it, or they make an exhibition.
- Children form the groups based on their names (criteria can vary based on the age of children, they can group by same names, similar ones, number of the letters in the name, the same first or last letter, how they rhyme etc.)
- Each group gets a large paper with their name written on it (older children can write their names)
- In small groups they discuss the following topics (you can adjust topics according to the age): the meaning of their name, how did they get it, do they like it, how do they call him/her at home and how they want to be called in kindergarten/school)
- Write down conclusions
- Ask each group to tell the others what they have discussed and help them come up with lessons learned. (E.g. who gave them names, how many of them like their names etc.)

NOTE: This is more appropriate for older children and those who share the language. For younger you can just do the first part of the activity without the group discussion.

### Activity: We all fit together – Building community

By doing this activity you will help children understand that in spite of differences they can fit together, work and learn together.

#### Description of activity

- Ask children to draw their self-portraits and cut them in the shape of a jigsaw (each self-portrait is one piece of a jigsaw (see the photo)).
- Together with children make a poster and find a place in the classroom where you are going to put it. (Ask children to write their names, if they cannot you write for them.)
- Discuss with children what do they think, do they all fit together in their class? If not, why? What they should change.



NOTE: do not allow children to blame individual children – ask them to think about friendship, what they do for each other etc.

- Finish activity by asking each child to say what he or she will do to make their class a community.

NOTE: You can also do this activity by taking photographs of the children's faces, enlarging, laminating and cutting them in the format of the jigsaw (like in the previous activity) and use them to discuss similarities and differences among children and to build a jigsaw with photographs.

NOTE: This activity can be done with younger children as well as with the older ones. What makes a difference is the level of discussion during the activity. Shared language also plays an important role.



### Activity: My strengths – our strength

Through this activity conditions are created for children to celebrate their strengths and qualities and based on them to connect with the others

#### *Description of activity*

- Give each child a square piece of paper (A5 – half of A4 paper) and ask children to draw something that represent them, their strength, something they are proud of, what makes them special, important and respectful.
- When they are finished, ask each child to stand up and say what they love about themselves and what are they proud of.
- Use a big piece of paper, and ask children to glue all their papers on the big one. Be sure that they have written their names and what they are proud of. If they cannot do it, you do it for them.
- On the top of the paper write: "Our strengths" and together with children decide where you want to place it.
- Discuss with children that now they know what their friends are good at and how they can rely on them when it is needed.
- For the end organize a group hug



NOTE: This activity looks very simple, but can be very difficult for many children, especially those coming from vulnerable groups. If you know that you have children in the group with the problem of talking nicely about themselves, before you start this activity use every opportunity to praise children for what they have done and ask them to talk about what people like about them etc. **Do not let children compete who is better etc. Stress that we all have our qualities.**

### Activity: Family wall

By doing this activity you will help children feel more comfortable in the classroom and learn about their families. You will also learn about families of the children. **Be careful with this activity if you know that some children lost their family members or are separated from them.**

Just put on the wall family photos, or if you do not have them, drawings of families and write children's names.

**Family walls** and the presence of books that are written and made by family members are just some ways to bring children's families into the classroom. Photographs of children doing things in their learning community or books that document



their days, projects worked on, also help children see themselves and show that they belong to that community. Children's art work, words, and creations should be showcased instead of commercially produced materials. Always post their work at the level of their eyes so they can see it.

### Activity: My family comes from...

This activity can help children learn about characteristics of the culture their ancestors are coming from. You need material for making books.

#### *Description of activity:*

- Ask each child to make a book about the history of his/her family. Have them draw in the book (it can also be with photographs if possible) their grandparents and other relatives. The book can contain such information as for what the family likes to eat, what language they speak, what games they play, what customs they follow.
- You can also include parents in this activity at the parent-teacher meetings. Ask them to talk to children about the history of their own family or to fill out a form that you prepare for them in advance.

You can also use a poster or map of the country, and ask parents to work together with children to mark places where they come from (towns, villages), and where they have family and friends. You can use a map of the world too, and do a similar activity. This activity is very important for migrant and refugee children because they can keep connections with the place they came from and demonstrate the social network to which they belong. In spite of the difficulties families are facing it is a healing process to nurture memories and maintain continuity with positive memories of people and places.

- Make an exhibition on the wall. Play games such as 'memory' and 'lotto', as well as 'link a photograph to a name'!
- Make labels with names of children, their families and friends. Play the game of linking photographs to names.
- Children can compare photographs in a way that would acknowledge and support our similarities and differences.

### **My home and my family<sup>13</sup>**

**By doing this activity you will:** provide children with opportunities to learn about each other's families, strengthen their feeling of belonging and create opportunities for children to talk among themselves about their families, important people in their lives and the way how they live or used to live.

#### **Materials:**

- shoe boxes or other cardboard boxes of smaller size
- paper
- scissors
- colors
- Glue
- Other unstructured materials like: wool in different colors, strings etc. old catalogs, advertising leaflets



#### *Description of activity*

- My family and important people in my life. Children sit in the circle and talk about their families, places where they live and who are important people in their lives. (this can last for a week).
- Making apartment. Each child brings or gets a cardboard or shoe box and they make their apartments (places they live in) out of the boxes – painting, making furniture etc.
- Introducing important people. They draw important people in their lives and cut them out of the paper. They can glue them in the house, or just put them in. (remind them not to forget themselves).

<sup>13</sup> From: Creativity Activity Cards developed in cooperation between Kinderkunst Zentrum Berlin, UNICEF and ISSA in 2016/17

- Creating a space where all the boxes can be placed so that children can visit them and show them to peers while talking about their lives, families and important people
- The same activity can be used for children to create their dream house or apartment and to put in everybody they love.
- You can also use the similar activity to build with children a dream school and community and discuss how people will live there etc.

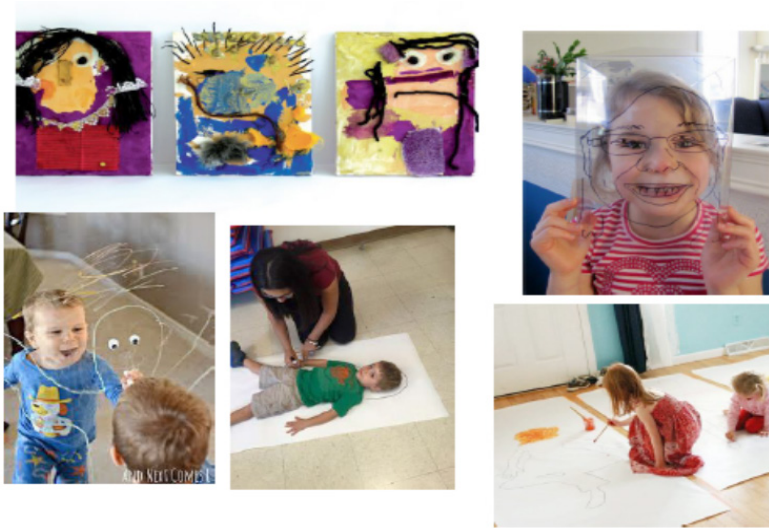
**Important tips for educators:**

- This activity can be organized with children ages 4 to 9 and you can adapt it for different ages by making tasks more or less difficult or by letting children do it independently or by helping them.
- This activity can last for weeks and months and can easily be incorporated in the thematic plans (How people live) or in a small-scale projects focusing on ways how people live.
- Discussions connected with this activity can be very sensitive. You have to be sure that each child will feel proud and happy with their homes, family and important people.
- It is OK to discuss with children that there are differences among places we live in, **but all our families are valuable, and we all love our homes.**

## Self - portraits

Making self-portraits is a very inspiring activity. Use different ways and means to do it. Look at the photos.

You should write children’s names and put their drawings on the walls.



We recommend you collect children’s works, especially those that celebrate their strengths and who they are and where they come from—for example, self-portraits and shoeboxes from the activity *My home and my family*. When children are leaving a camp and the kindergarten, they can take these products with them. This can serve as a comfort for them.

## Tips for dealing with conflicts and discriminatory Incidents <sup>14</sup>

We tend to see refugees as a homogeneous group and deny that among them, like among other individuals and different groups, discriminatory incidents can occur.

We suggest practitioners do the following when they see children, excluding others, teasing, name-calling, bullying, etc.

- If you want children to learn to behave in respectful and unbiased way, immediate reaction is needed. Never ignore this kind of incidents and do not rely on belief that behaviours will change on their own.
- Address the child who offended the other child directly by saying in a calm but firm voice: "This kind of behaviour is not acceptable in our classroom. You cannot tell your friend Asha that she is an ugly Afghan girl. This is making her feel hurt, sad or angry."
- If you have agreed upon the classroom rules, refer to them and make a point that certain behaviours and responses are not appropriate. Do it in a way that you do not blame the child but address hers or his behaviour (e.g. Instead of saying "You are rude" you may say "The way you treated your friend was rude")
- Comfort the child who was a target of discrimination and offence, and help him/her verbalise their feelings. E.g. "I believe that when Mira told you that you are an ugly Afghan girl you felt angry and sad. It's okay to feel angry and sad about that. We all want to be treated in a respectful way. "
- Foster empathy by motivating the child who offended the other child to try to relate to the feelings of the offended child. E.g. "How would you feel if somebody tells you something that you do not like"?
- Reaffirm the value of both children. "Her skin is different from yours, and she is coming from different country; she is Afghan. That makes her special and unique. You are also special. Everyone is different. Some people are from Syria, some are from Afghanistan. Some people have blue eyes and some have brown eyes. Some people speak Arabic and some Pashto or Dari. Everyone is different. For me you are both important and I care about you both."
- Offer the appropriate words and model respectful behaviour. Use also this opportunity as a teachable moment to provide additional information. "Asha is Afghan and you should address her in this way«.
- Involve the whole group and use the opportunity to start the conversation/discussion. The topic and the way how the conversation will evolve depend

---

<sup>14</sup> Adapted from: Office of the Minister of Children Ireland.2006. Diversity and equity guidelines for childcare providers. [https://www.dcy.gov.ie/documents/childcare/diversity\\_and\\_equality.pdf](https://www.dcy.gov.ie/documents/childcare/diversity_and_equality.pdf) and Insensitivity to Physical, Racial, or Ethnic Differences by Lesia Oesterreich, M.S., National Network for Child Care - NNCC. Part of CYFERNET, the National Extension Service Children Youth and Family Educational Research Network (1995)

on the age of children. "Nobody wants to be called stupid and mocked for their nationality, this is hurting them. Do you have similar experiences? Were you hurt when somebody was talking about you in a rude way? What did you do then? What did you want them to do?" If you are working with younger children you can use puppets or dolls to demonstrate a situation of name-calling or exclusion and ask the children about the feelings involved.

When conflict among children happens, you can use the following six-step approach (Epstein, 2007)<sup>15</sup>

1. Approach the situation calmly; stop any hurtful actions.
2. Acknowledge children's feelings without judgment.
3. Gather information by letting all children involved express their points of view.
4. Restate the problem.
5. Ask for ideas about solutions and together choose one among them. If children cannot come up with good ideas, give them some examples, offer alternative proposals, suggest compromises, and apply rules.
6. Give a follow-up help or support as needed for reconciliation. Help children overcome the conflict.

If you and children do not share the language, use nonverbal communication, and different props that you can prepare in advance. You can have a box with images of different solutions, or emoticons (more than one emoticon for a feeling, because children in conflict can feel the same). Children can use emoticons to show how they feel. They can also explore images of different solutions and pick the ones that they like.

Always stop the conflict and separate children.

## Reducing Stress in and on families

Both in Greece and Germany in reception centers/refugee camps parents were mentioning similar challenges:

- Reconnecting with their strengths and capacities.
- Relaxing and enjoying parenting even under challenging circumstances.
- Care for children and self-care (physical and psychological).
- Confusing experience of being a parent in a reception center/refugee camp.
- Loss and stress – difficulties in dealing with them.

As we already mentioned, refugee families may experience stress for many different reasons. Many refugee families will be recovering from the experiences that led them to leave their home country. Many refugees may also be experiencing adversity, such as poverty, having left many resources behind, and joblessness. Refugees tend to live in a state of instability and precariousness, which places additional stress on a family. Uncertainty makes them feel helpless and hopeless because of the lack of control over their future.

<sup>15</sup> Tankersley, D., S. Brajkovic, S. Handzar, R. Rimkiene, R. Sabaliauskiene, Z. Trikić, and T. Vonta. (2010). Putting knowledge into practice: A guidebook for educators on ISSA's Principles of Quality Pedagogy. Netherlands: International Step by Step Association.

Internal or external stressors can cause stress. Internal stressors include our feelings and expectations, while external stressors arise from the environment and events taking place around us. Internal stressors influence one's ability to respond to and deal with external stressors.

For a refugee family the most common stressors are the following:

Internal stressors	External stressors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anger</li> <li>• Shame</li> <li>• Fear</li> <li>• Disappointment</li> <li>• Failing as a parent</li> <li>• Humiliation</li> <li>• Disgrace</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physical environment, overcrowded camps and reception centres</li> <li>• Homelessness</li> <li>• Lack of income</li> <li>• Injuries and poor health</li> <li>• No access to services e.g. children unable to go to kindergarten, school, doctor</li> </ul>

It is crucial to keep in mind that refugee parents and caregivers face double stress connected with:

- Their current situation and
- Being a parent in a challenging situation

Our role is to help parents manage stress and confront it by building a resilient attitude towards it and strengthening their ability to face it. We also need to support them in their parenting role by providing them with opportunities to play with their children, advice, and listen to them and be there for them.

According to UNHCR, most refugee fathers provide strength and stability for their children during the most dangerous and trying times in their lives. They protect their young ones as they flee violence and persecution and build new lives when they have been forced to leave everything behind. However, in many cases, when they fail to fulfil their role, they can be very stressed and depressed. In our work, we should pay attention also to fathers and involve them in the classroom activities with children.

<https://www.unrefugees.org/news/celebrate-the-strength-of-refugee-fathers/>

To reduce stress in parents you can:

<b>Empathy</b>	Understand that some parents are still dealing with their stress and might not be able to spend time with their children or support them in their learning. Keep in mind that being a parent might be stressful, even in normal circumstances. Help refugee parents understand that they are not alone and that stress is natural.
<b>Patience</b>	Acknowledge that some families need time to build trust. Start by taking an initiative to talk to the parents and show an interest in their children and them. Give advice but never force your opinion.



<b>Transparency</b>	Create a safe space where families can meet and feel accepted and welcomed. Introduce rules which include confidentiality, a non-biased approach, and mutual respect. Make sure your language and communication style is appropriate. Ensure you have clear and equal boundaries with all the families, avoid comparing families, and focus equally on all caregivers.
<b>Positive</b>	Use positive language that encourages the families and doesn't let them feel guilty. Praise families for their efforts and for what they are doing for their children. Share with the families the child's progress, because it might make them feel proud of their children and celebrate success.
<b>Community building</b>	Create fun activities and events to help parents meet other parents and feel supported.
<b>Mindfulness</b>	Share with the families mindfulness practices used with children.
<b>Involve</b>	Some families might feel empowered when you give them a chance to do things and contribute to your work with children. Talk to parents about their strengths and interests and try to use this to inform them of activities e.g., ask them to come to the kindergarten and teach children some skills, tell them stories, cook with the children traditional food, etc.

**We best serve families by collaborating with them.  
Improving the wellbeing of parents is crucial for a child's wellbeing.**

### 3. Supporting children who do not speak Greek language

One of the critical challenges in providing refugee children with learning and development opportunities is the language barrier. For kindergarten teachers, it is challenging and frustrating not to be able to communicate with children and families. On the other hand, the language barrier adds to their stress and a general feeling of loss and incompetence.

For many children who arrived in Greece, the prospects of moving on to the countries they see as a final destination are poor. The majority of them will have to stay in Greece and become part of the Greek educational system. Thus, supporting children to learn the new language of instruction is essential for further learning, and general wellbeing.

Ideally, teachers would have assistants who speak the language(s) that children speak or parents who can help so that children can learn the new language while preserving their first language. Unfortunately, this is hardly possible.

The main issues that you have to pay attention to while working with children who do not speak the language you are speaking are the following:

Provide children with opportunities to learn and reinforce their first language too. The learning of the new language builds on proficiency in the first language. Use the first language of every child in your classroom/group; learn some words or phrases in children's language(s); create together with children and parents a glossary of the most important words; label materials in different languages etc.

The best way to learn a new language is through interactions – talk with children in Greek (or other languages of instruction) as much as you can. Ask other personnel in the kindergarten or in the camp to do the same. Be aware that language is best learned in a functional/ meaningful environment and not in isolation, where the only goal is language learning.

Invite parents and children who do not speak Greek to speak in their language in the classroom. They can tell a story, teach children a song, a nursery rhyme, some words, etc.

Prevent making fun of children who do not speak Greek well. Be firm. No shaming allowed.

## Recommended strategies <sup>16</sup>

- **Speak slowly and make pauses** – you should use your natural speech rhythm, but make longer pauses between sentences.
- **Be patient and wait** – actively listen to a child when talking and do not dominate the conversation.
- **Speak clearly** – limit the use of informal speech and jargon. Emphasize the words crucial for the understanding of the concept you are explaining.
- **Pay attention to intonation** – pay attention to intonation, which often influences the meaning of the word. When necessary, emphasize the pauses between words and sentences, but not in an unnatural way.
- **Confirm that you understand child** – When child is making efforts to speak in a new language respond to all child utterances by confirming understanding of the child's intentions and do not ignore the child's communicative initiative.
- **Move from simple to more complex sentence structures** – begin with the simplest sentence structures, and when you see that the child is making progress start using the more complex forms. For example: start with 'Children are learning songs' instead of saying: 'Learning rhymes and songs is one of the things children learn in preschool.'
- **Expand and extend what child is saying** – Repeat what the child says and add a small amount of new information. For example, if a child says "Ball", you answer "Yes, a ball. A red ball."
- **Model desired response** – demonstrate children a sound, a word or language form that they do not yet produce on their own in the conversation. Modeling can also be used to demonstrate to children what it is they are expected to say or do.
- **Do the narrating** – Talk about everything that the child is doing as if you were describing it to someone who is not in the classroom to see it. The goal of narration is to pair the child's play, work and actions with the appropriate language.
- **Give children enough time to process what they've heard** – do not move on too quickly to new questions or examples.
- **Pay attention to vocabulary** – use the words that are used more commonly. Explain unfamiliar terms. Use synonyms, but not too many, as that may confuse the child.

Children might need to hear a new word 40 times or more before they are ready to use it correctly and independently.

---

<sup>16</sup> Adapted from <https://www.reyn.eu/app/uploads/2017/04/Korak-po-korak-Reyn-brosura-Cujes-li-me-ENG-preview-small1.pdf> and from materials developed by Dawn Tankersley for online course on Multilingual Language Development in Young Children and ISSA's Education for Diversity – Program for Children

- **Use short, less complex sentences** – leave out prepositional phrases that are not crucial for the meaning of the message and use names instead of pronouns.
- **Use new words in their natural context** – use new words and sentence structures in the context/content familiar to children.
- **Repeat important words** – by saying the same thing more than once, you are giving the child more than one opportunity to ‘catch’ the meaning of the word you are repeating. A word can also be emphasized by placing it more frequently at the beginning or the end of the sentence.
- **Listen** – make an effort to listen to children more and encourage them to talk instead of dominating the conversation yourself.
- **Use concrete materials** – use objects, photographs, graphic notes and video material. Provide a visual for all new vocabulary to trigger children’s memory:
- **Use non-verbal expressions** – use gestures, movements, body language and role-play.
- **Bilingual/multilingual labeling** – mark objects and parts of the classroom bilingually. Always use two different colors for the bilingual signs and use one color to mark one language and another for the other one (or more if you have more languages).
- **Learning materials** – the classroom should be filled with materials motivating children to develop their language skills: books, picture books, theatre puppets, sound recorders, pens, papers, comic books...
- **Encourage children to talk to each other.**
- **Create a feeling of proud** – start with what children already know and encourage them to talk about their previous experiences.
- **Demonstrate enthusiasm, trust, but also patience** – this will allow the children to experiment with language instead of giving up.
- **Give open and direct praise and encouragement** to children.





These are the props developed by students during the summer program of the University of Patras – the first prop serves to help children express emotions, the second to talk about the weather and the third to talk about seasons.

(Stellakis N. and Spiliopoulou G.,  
Department of Educational Sciences  
and Early Childhood Education of the  
University of Patras

**The environment supportive for language acquisition and development of literacy** plays an important role<sup>17</sup>. Use all the means you have to bring language(s) into you classroom. For that purpose the following tips might be useful:

- **The daily schedule** is posted, as well as other lists all around the room in the high of children’s eyes; teachers combine drawings, pictures and written languages, both in printed and cursive letters.
- **Children have opportunities to read, write and talk in every center;** whatever children create, write, produce, scrabble is posted in the high of children’s eyes, so that they can be proud; children are supported to “play” with language in many different ways (invent words, make stories where words are in the wrong place in the text, write in the way they want, write on different surfaces, sing silly songs, etc.)
- **There is a library in the classroom** or at least one center or shelf with books, magazines, periodicals, cartoons, etc.; there are materials needed for storytelling and dramatizations; variety of books is present; there is big number of books (5 to 8 per child if possible); books are accessible for children to take them when they want; books are posted in the way that children can see cover page; there is a balance of what might be seen as “boy’s” and “girl’s” books as well as books that show genders in unexpected roles, and books on different topics related to diversity, equity, fairness; this part of the room should contain pillows, mattresses etc.

**Nourish the traditions of the communities and families** that the children come from. Collect music, traditional songs, lullabies, traditional games, customs, stories, and sayings. Ask parents to help you. They can sing for you so that you can record the music and use it in everyday activities. If parents cannot read and write, try to find someone to help. Integrate this content into everyday work. For example use traditional games as warm-up activities. If you have children of different cultural and language background make a plan to represent diversity you have in the classroom.

<sup>17</sup> Adapted from Trikić, Z, Ionescu, M (Ed.)(2012). Building Opportunities in early Childhood from the Start, the Teachers’ Guide to Good Practices in Inclusive early Childhood Services, Roma Education Fund - <http://ftp.issa.nl/sites/default/files/AGS%20Good%20Practice%20Guide.pdf> and from Blashka, J.K.( 1998.), VIEWS (Spring, 12- 13, 23)

- **Labeling:** the function of reading and writing is demonstrated in many different ways (e.g. labels on materials, objects, centers in different languages) – this is the best way for children to develop “perceptive dictionary”
- There is a lot of opportunities for **dramatizations, role play and symbolic play.**
- **Children can use computers** – there are a lot of programs which are supporting early literacy and language acquisition
- **Educators read to children or tell stories** at least once a day; when possible, more than once. Anytime can be reading time.
- **Children’s drawings and paintings are usually sent to or shared with parents** – that triggers very meaningful conversations with parents and also help parents see the progress their children are making. They can also learn about the work you are doing with children.
- **Children take books from kindergarten to the place they live** – parents then can read more often to children. If parents are illiterate, books can still be sent to them and they can look at the pictures in the books and talk about them with their children. This can be challenging in the settings of the camp, so make the decision based on the existing conditions.
- **The educator** on regular and continuous basis **models how literacy materials can be used.**
- **Centers for play and learning have clearly defined space** – research has shown that properly designed and equipped spaces motivate children to frequently make individual choices of materials related to literacy. Books and writing materials can be included in all centers.
- **Wall dictionaries** which include picture and words in different languages (spoken by children in the group/classroom)

### **The colors – The wall dictionary<sup>18</sup>**

The teacher prints or draws circles of different colors on A3 paper and posts the paper on the wall so that children can access it daily. With the help of children and family members, s/he adds the name of the colors in all the languages children in the kindergarten speak (on the photo the teacher used English, French, Arabic, and Farsi). The children learn to name the colors in Greek, and their language.

---

<sup>18</sup> This activity was introduced by by Stellakis N. and G. Spiliopoulou, Department of Educational Sciences and Early Childhood Education of the University of Patras and was implemented in kindergartens during the Summer Programs

	<b>Ελληνικά</b>	<b>Αγγλικά</b>	<b>Γαλλικά</b>	<b>Αραβικά</b>	<b>Φαρσί</b>
	Κόκκινο	Red	Rouge	أحمر (Ahmar)	قرمز (Ghermez)
	Μωβ	Purple	Pourpre	ارجواني (Urjuwaani)	ارغوانی (Arghavâni)
	Μπλε	Blue	Bleu	أزرق (Azraq)	آبی (Âbi)
	Πράσινο	Green	Vert	أخضر (Akhdar)	سبز (Sabz)
	Κίτρινο	Yellow	Jaune	أصفر (Asfar)	زرد (Zard)
	Πορτοκαλί	Orange	Orange	البرتقالي (Burtuqali)	نارنجی (Nârenji)

	<b>Ελληνικά</b>	<b>Αγγλικά</b>	<b>Γαλλικά</b>	<b>Αραβικά</b>	<b>Φαρσί</b>
	Γκρι	Grey	Gris	رمادي (Rmadi)	خاکستری (Khâkestari)
	Άσπρο	White	Blanc	أبيض (Abyad)	سفید (Sefid)
	Ροζ	Pink	Rose	زهري (Zahri)	صورتی (Surati)
	Καφέ	Brown	Marron	بني (Bunni)	قهوه‌ای (Ghahveyi)
	Μαύρο	Black	Noir	أسود (Aswad)	سیاه (Siyâh)

## Activities that support language acquisition

You can also use some of the following activities. Most of them do not require knowledge of the language, but help learn the language and enhance holistic child development.

### Activities with movement - Creative movement <sup>19</sup>

Providing daily opportunities for creative movement can have a powerful impact on children's daily lives because it is both physical activity and a vehicle for self-expression. It offers the rich experience of exploring and creating, with the added benefits of lively movement.

The creative movement gives children opportunities to control their bodies and develop an awareness of moving in space with other children. It is enjoyable, relieves stress, builds muscle strength, stamina, and improves agility and coordination. It helps children become familiar with following instructions, listening for cues, respecting others as they move, and occupy the same space. What is less acknowledged and explored in the preschool years, is how creative movement contributes even to children's problem-solving development, critical thinking, language development, and working memory. Research shows that movement and exercise can spark the growth of new brain cells and facilitate learning.<sup>20</sup> Creative movement allows young children to ask questions, and to find answers and innovative solutions to problems through using their bodies.

There are four elements associated with creative movement and the activities which can be organized around them<sup>21</sup>:

- **Body part movement variations:** For example, marching with arms up in the air, bending one knee and keep the other knee straight, on tiptoes, etc.
- **Spatial variations:** Moving backwards, sideways, turning, in a square pattern, etc.
- **Time variations:** Moving slow, fast; march seven steps and stop, etc.
- **Energy variations:** Moving as if in water, moving as if in quicksand, moving as if with bare feet on hot sand, moving without making sound, etc.

Adding props such as a scarf or silky cloth, streamers on short sticks to move with or hula hoops, adds another dimension and challenge to freeform movement activities. Small musical instruments, small flashlights or fiber optic lights, stuffed animals, or even hats can spark children's imagination in finding new ways to move.

---

<sup>19</sup> Excerpt from: Child-centered, democratic preschool classrooms: The Step by Step Approach, 2018

<sup>20</sup> Ratey 2008, Ratey, J. (2008). SPARK: The revolutionary new science of exercise and the brain. New York: Little, Brown.

<sup>21</sup> Dow, C. (2010). Young children and movement: the power of creative dance. *Young Children*. National Association of Education for Young Children. <https://www.naeyc.org/tyc/files/tyc/file/V6N1/Dow2010.pdf>),

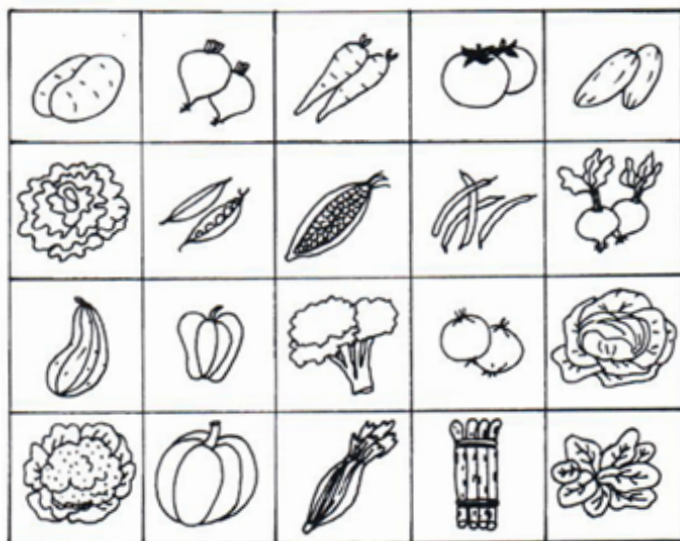


Creative movement can also become a strategy for when children get fidgety when standing in line to wait for their turn to wash their hands or even during circle time. We can offer them different ways to fidget (such as with elbows or knees), we can have them fidget to a count and then freeze, or ask them to fidget fast or slow. We can ask them to fidget in a triangle shape.

The creative movement can lead to learning traditional dances from different countries. Children can teach the teacher and peers traditional dances from their country, and teachers can teach them Greek dances. Parents can also participate.

### Lotto Boards<sup>22</sup>

Lotto boards are boards with pictures or numerals affixed; they are the basis for a variety of matching games. They come in a variety of types, yet they all require observation, comparison of likenesses, and recognition of differences. These matching skills are paramount in learning science, math, and reading readiness concepts. Lotto boards



can involve identification of colors, numerals, fruits, and pictures of people and can be created to supplement social studies themes. For example, if types of foods are being studied, a teacher can create fruit, vegetable, and protein lotto boards. By asking open-ended questions, the teacher helps the children to expand their vocabularies.

You can write down the names of the objects in Greek and languages that children speak.

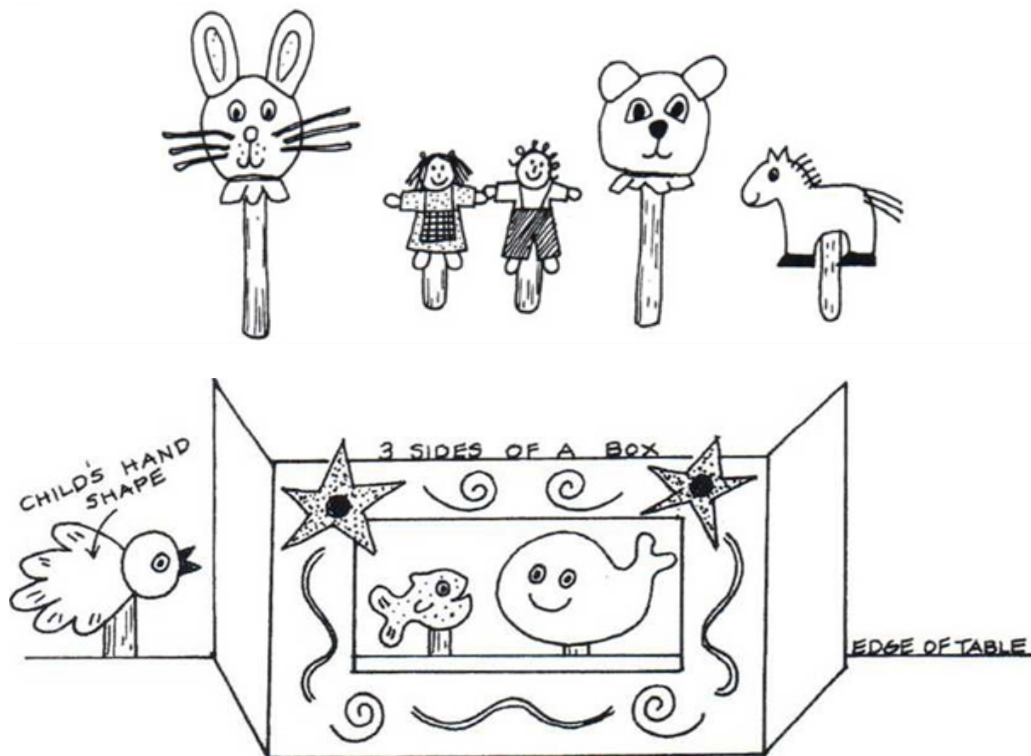
Make matching cards to correspond to the pictures on the boards.



Use as any lotto, but with the focus on repeating words in different languages. You can use this opportunity to develop a group wall dictionary.

<sup>22</sup> Coughlin A.P., Hansen K. A., Heller D., Kaufmann R.K., Rothschild Stolberg J., Burk Walsh K.: Step by Step: A Program for Children and Families. Creating Child-Centered Classrooms: 3-5 Years Old. ISSA

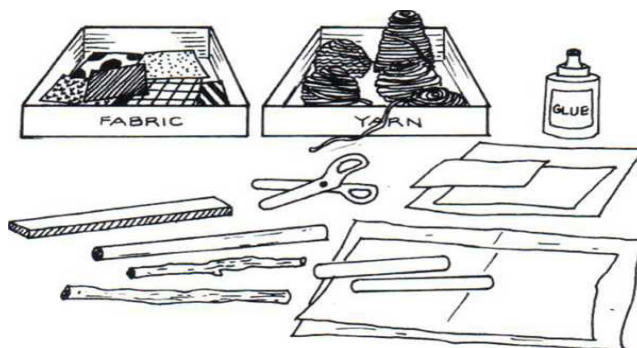
## Puppet show<sup>23</sup>



Puppets are used for many dramatic play experiences. Whether acting out a scene from a story, reliving a life situation, or role-playing a dream, children use puppets to say out loud the things that are on their minds. Puppets stimulate a child's natural use of language. Beside the numerous language, social, and emotional benefits of using puppets in dramatic play, making puppets lets children express their creativity and imaginations. Using a variety of puppets (stick puppets, finger puppets, and bag puppets) allows for choice, encourages new situations, and adds interest.

### Materials:

- sticks, large twigs
- small paper bags
- fabric scraps, paper scraps
- glue
- newspaper or cotton
- wooden tongue depressors or wooden ice cream sticks
- yarn, string, buttons, scissors



<sup>23</sup> *ibid*

### Preparation:

- A younger child can put a bag over the stick and stuff the bag with newspaper or cotton.
- The teacher helps tie the top of the bag to the stick, making a head.
- The child can paint or glue decorations to the head or face.
- The child dresses the puppet by selecting scraps of paper or fabric.
- Older children enjoy painting story characters onto durable paper. After they cut out their characters, they glue them onto the cardboard and attach them to the wooden sticks.

### Activity:

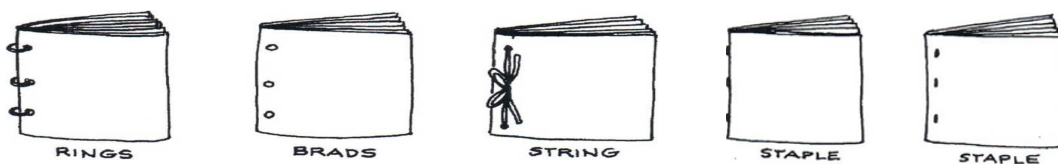
Some children are reluctant to talk during group times or story times. Almost magically, when these children are holding puppets, they will pretend that the puppet is doing the talking, and they become part of the dialogue. Here are some examples of teacher questions and comments to facilitate language: "This baby will not sleep without a story. Can your puppet tell a story to the baby?" "Which does your puppet like best for dessert—fruit, ice cream, or cake?"

Extensions and variations:

With older children, create a stage set (a large cardboard box works well) or back drop (with a flat sheet). The children paint the scene for puppet play.

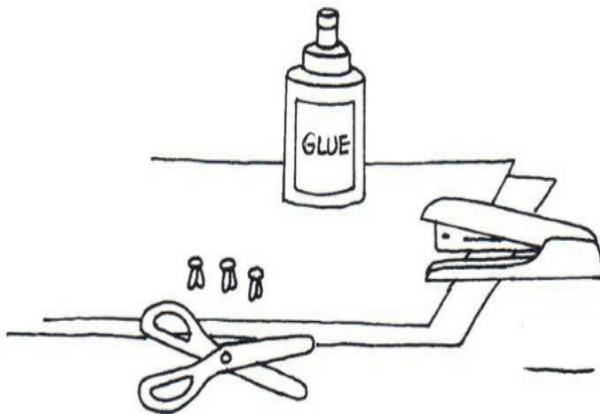
### A Book about Me<sup>24</sup>

Literature offers new insights and understanding to children. It stimulates thinking and language development. To encourage a love of books, read to children every day and plan opportunities for children to make their own books. This activity provides a chance for choices as children select their own topics and build on their own interests. The activity also invites children to think about different ways of assembling books. Making books with children allows teachers to customize content for any learning domain. It also provides opportunities for teachers to populate the classroom library with books in different languages and from different cultures.



---

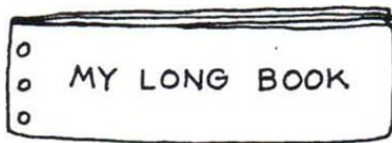
<sup>24</sup> *ibid*



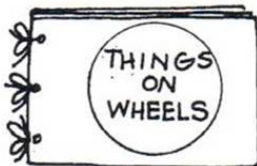
**Materials:**

- thick colored paper
- scissors
- stapler
- rubber bands
- cardboard
- cord or yam glue
- hole puncher
- paper fasteners
- old magazines, catalogs, greeting cards, etc.

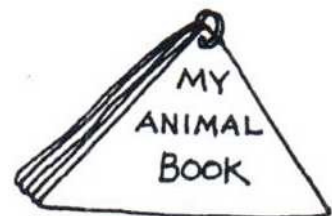
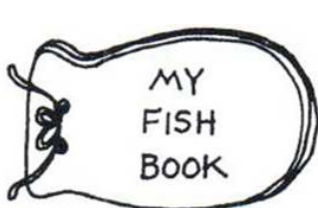
During circle time or morning meeting, explain to the children that they will be making "A Book about me." Each book will be a little different because each person is unique, but all people are alike in many ways too.



"In what ways we are all alike?" Over time, some of the activities that might be included in the book are my hand prints, footprints, finger prints; how many members in my family; color of my eyes; my favorite color; a story about me when I was a baby; my favorite thing to do, my favorite words in my language etc... The children can dictate to the teacher and draw pictures to accompany the narrative.



When the books are completed, the teacher should place them in the literacy area for the children to look at. They will love seeing themselves and other children. The activity helps children build a positive approach to differences as they gain greater awareness and understanding of their own characteristics and those of their classmates.



Prepare several samples of differently shaped books. Children choose the shape and topic for the books.

*Use all the languages that are spoken in your group. Make dictionaries – names of the body parts, important words etc. You can always ask parents or somebody from the camp to assist you. This activity can help you connect with families and also to learn some words of the languages children and families speak.*

### Sound of language<sup>25</sup>

During this activity children will talk about the language they speak in their family. They will recognize differences among these languages. A sense of pride will be developed in children because of their belonging to their own culture and a sense of respect towards other cultures.

You can use your phone or computer to record children.

### Description of activities:

Talk to children about the languages/dialects they speak at home. Try to record these different languages/dialects on your phone (for example, ask the parents or children). Play several different languages/dialects to children and ask them to guess which language/dialect this is.

Offer to translate one famous poem in Rockwell, R et al. (1999) to their first language and cite it on the wall or in front of the classroom.

### Additional activities for new language acquisition<sup>26</sup>

Young children - kindergarten	
<p><b>The secret bag<sup>27</sup></b></p> <p>The purpose of this activity is to support the children to recognize and identify new words and terms. Then the children will memorize the correct names and integrate them in their vocabulary.</p> <p><b>Materials:</b> set of pictures, set of similar objects. Ideally the items could be familiar from nursery rhymes and songs that you used in the rhyming games or with other games listed below.</p>	<p><b>Fishing<sup>28</sup></b></p> <p>The idea of this activity is to get the children to name familiar words and expressions. As you look at the pictures and talk about them, the children have an opportunity to identify details and describe the pictures.</p> <p><b>Materials:</b> a fishing rod (stick, string, magnet); pictures of animals, food and/or everyday objects and corresponding items; fish made from cardboard in different colors; paper clips</p>

<sup>25</sup> Education for Diversity – Program for adults working with and for children –Toolkit, 2018, ISSA

<sup>26</sup> *ibid*

<sup>27</sup> Sallinen, et al (2011)

<sup>28</sup> *ibid*

**Procedure:**

1. Place the pictures in a bag and hand out one object to each child. Take one picture out of the bag and state its name: I've got a horse. Who's got the horse?
2. The child who has a similar object holds it up and repeats with you I've got the horse: Put the picture and the object on the floor where everyone can see it. The children can sing a song about a horse. Once you have looked at all of the pictures and objects, and sang the songs linked with the picture, the children can help to put them back into the bag and name each item as it is put into the bag.
3. If the children are familiar with the words, then you can ask them to put the objects in the bag as following: Anna may take the ball, Osian can take the horse...During the activity you should talk about the items, pay attention to children's interests, fill out the children's sentences, repeat the words and use them in your conversation. Do not say "this is wrong" do not correct them, just repeat the correct word.

*Assessing Receptive Language – Can the children follow directions?*

*Assessing Expressive Language – Can they name the object?*

**Procedure:**

1. Make a fishing rod from a stick and glue a small magnet onto one end of a string and fasten the other end of the string onto the end of the stick. Paint pictures or use ready-made cards which can be found on Internet. Cut the fish, glue the pictures on them and attach a paper clip on each fish.
2. Spread out the fish on the floor, with the picture sides facing down. Have the children take turns to 'fish' for a fish with your help and name the picture. Then look at the pictures together with the children, describe the pictures and discuss them. You can also name the colors.
3. When you have finished the game, you can sing songs or recite nursery rhymes related to the pictures. You can also use songs and nursery rhymes from previous sessions.
4. You can vary the game by hiding the items in the room and let the kids find them by using your clues.

*Assessing Expressive Language*

- Can the children name the pictures?
- Can the children sing the songs or say the rhymes that go with the pictures?

### Important Words from Families

Everyone has words that are special to them. Asking family members to send in words that represent something important in their lives can not only build children's vocabularies but can also give them insight into their family members' lives? Researching words is wonderful activity for children and gets them to talk as they ask people they know to tell them their favorite words. Words can be in any language.

**Activities to do with children:** Ask families to tell you up to 5 important words for them and to write them also in the languages their family members speak. Have the children draw a picture with their families for each of those words.

1. Create a word wall with pictures they draw attached.
2. Children can they do graphs about the words (how many are the same or start with the same sound). These words can also be referred to and reinforced during thematic units where they apply.

This activity can be done also with older children in the first grade of school.

### Parts of the body

The purpose of this game is to learn the words and integrate them into the children's vocabulary. The children will both learn new words and start to use familiar words. Start with some nursery rhymes and songs about the body.

Materials: a medium-sized doll, a suitcase or box, and a doll's blanket or pillow, sticking plasters (as many as there are children in the group).

#### Procedure:

1. Take the doll out of the suitcase or box and tell the children a bit about it: what the doll's name is, what she likes, where she lives, etc. Then tell the children that the doll needs a bit of help from them, because she has hurt herself. The doll says, "Owie, owie" and whispers to you "where it hurts". You tell the children which body part the doll told you is hurting, and the children come up one at a time to put a plaster on the doll with you. Then you can kiss the body part better and name the body part again. Repeat this with all of the children. When all of the children have helped to put a plaster on the doll, she is happy and says that she doesn't hurt anymore.
2. If the use of plasters isn't allowed, you can play the game by just asking the doll where it hurts and blow on that place. Another possibility is to cut strips of gauze and tie them on the body where the doll is in pain.

*Assessing Receptive Language – Can the children point to the different body parts as you say them?*

*Assessing Expressive Language – Can the children suggest body parts that might hurt?*

## Both younger and older children

### I am <sup>29</sup>

This activity develops dramatic play skills, expressive language, sequencing skills, and memory skills — and the children have a good time too!

**Materials:** Props related to one of the sample activities listed below.

**Words you can use:** getting dressed, setting the table, getting ready for bed, eating supper/lunch, making a sandwich, coloring a picture, putting on your shoes, brushing your teeth, taking the dog for a walk, playing house, playing school, any pretend activity.

### Procedure:

1. Pick out daily activities that are fun and familiar to the children. Simple routines are best.
2. Tell one child, “Show me how to...”
3. Have one child act out the activity first, saying the steps he is showing. For example, for making a sandwich: get the bread, get the butter, etc.

### Activity variations:

- Ask one child to describe what another child is doing as she does it.
- Have one child tell another the steps he must do to pretend an activity. For example, for going to sleep: put your head down, close your eyes, etc.

### *Assessing Expressive Language*

- Can children say what they are doing as they act out a daily activity?

### *Assessing Receptive Language*

- If one child is acting out while another child describes the activity, can the child who is acting out the activity understand what s/he needs to do?

Can children describe the activity in a “correct” sequence?

### What does my face say?<sup>30</sup>

Facial expression is one way to send a message to others. This activity lets children practice this “social use” of nonverbal language with a mirror. Reading the facial expression of others is as important as knowing what your face may be “saying”

**Materials:** Mirror, list of facial expressions

**Words you can use:** happy, sad, brave, excited, mad, angry, scared, surprised, shy, face, mirror

<sup>29</sup> Rockwell, R et al. (1999)

<sup>30</sup> *ibid*



### Procedure:

1. Ask the children to sit before a long mirror.
2. Encourage all the children to make a “happy” face. Each child looks at his own face and all the other children’s versions of “happy” faces.
3. Ask them to make another kind of “happy” face. Again, each child looks at her face and all the other children’s faces.
4. Encourage them to make various “readable” faces, such as scared, surprised, excited, or sad.

### Activity variations:

1. Children can pair up and read each other’s facial expressions.
2. Draw various “readable” faces expressing different feelings and emotions.
3. Name an event or occasion, such as riding a roller coaster or attending a birthday party, and ask the children make the “face” that goes with the event.
4. Make opposite faces such as happy/sad, excited/bored, and scared/brave.

### Assessing Expressive Language

- Can children name (label) the various feelings that their face and others’ faces are showing?

### Assessing Receptive Language

- Can children understand the meaning of the various “face” words, such as happy, sad, or angry?

Can children match an expression word to the face they are seeing?

## Animal Farm<sup>31</sup>

This activity helps children learn to name farm animals in Greek. They will also have an opportunity to name the animals in their first language too.

### Description

Teacher presents children the online images depicting farm animals. Teacher names the animal and children learn to say the names of the animals in Greek. Teacher also encourages them to name



<sup>31</sup> This activity was created by Stellakis N. and Spiliopoulou G., Department of Educational Sciences and Early Childhood Education of the University of Patras. The photo represents the work of the children from reception center.

the animals in their own language. The children, then, create with the teacher different farm animals by folding paper (origami if possible), or by making animals and animal masks from plastic plates and color or dress some of them if they want. Children are also invited to imitate animals, making sounds, walking like different animals etc.

### Sensory activities with water and finger painting

#### "Messy" materials<sup>32</sup>

"Messy" materials, materials which allow children to get dirty and messy, are essential for programs for the pre-school children. Basic materials, such as water, sand, soil, and mud, attract majority of children. It is a pleasure for them to play with them.

Playing with water and other "dirty" materials:

- Has a relaxing and calming effect on children,
- Allows a child's creative expression and helps develop a positive concept of self,
- Children's speech develops, the vocabulary enriches and communication skills improve,
- Fine motoric develops.

#### Games with water

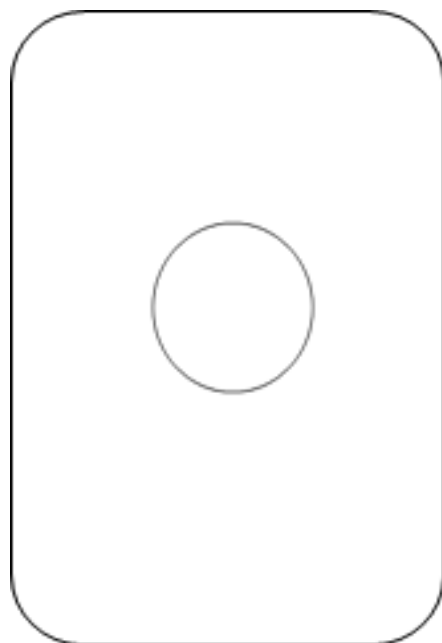
Without soap	With soap
Children can use a sponge or cloth to wipe the water that is spilled on the table.	Children can use the sponge or towels to wash the dolls and dry them with a towel.
Pouring water into different containers and bottles, with or without the funnel.	They can also wash the doll's clothes; use two plastic containers - one for washing, another for rinsing. Hang up clothes on the rope and pin it with clips. This is an opportunity to talk to children about how they do it at home. Is it warmer there, is it drying faster?
Paint with water" using paint brushes; let the water be in a bowl or a paint bin.	Let them wash the chairs in the room.
They can make "drawings" with water using a sprinkler, and they can spray on the concrete floor or wall.	Play "car wash" games and let them wash trucks, wagons, and cars.
They can watch objects which float or sink in the water.	Let them make soap bubbles. Use cup of polystyrene or paper and plastic straws. Insert the straw in the cup and blow on!

<sup>32</sup> Adapted material from CIP Center for Interactive Pedagogy, ISSA's member from Serbia

They can observe how water changes colors of submerged objects, such as stones, wood, concrete or canvas.	Make soap balloons in plastic containers or different types of shakers. Children enjoy playing with soapy water, especially if the drops of color are added to the water.
They can fill a few bottles with water over drops of different colors. Mix colored water from different bottles.	<p><b>Recipe for long - lasting soap balloons:</b></p> <p>3/4 of a cup of dish detergent;</p> <p>1/4 of a cup of glycerin or sugar;</p> <p>1 liter of water.</p>
They can discover what's happening when the oil and water mix. Mix bottles with oil and water, add different colors, and shake them. What's happening?	
What's happening when the bowl with ice in a warm room?	
They can fill bottles of different shapes with different amount of water and produce diverse sounds by thumping. them.	

**A good apron** is absolutely the most important thing for any type of activity with “dirty” materials. Whether the aprons are made by educators or parents, the following instructions should be followed.

- They must be waterproof.
- The aprons should be made in the way so that children can put them on them without the help of the educator.
- The aprons should be made of durable materials. For this purpose, you can use different plastic materials in cheerful colors, and the garbage bags can be used as well.
- Just cut a hole in the middle for child’s head



**Accessories for water games should be made of plastic and wooden material, or aluminum.** Glass, of course, should not be used. Here are some suggestions:

- sponge
- cloths
- washing brushes
- bottles of different sizes
- gauges
- Sprayers (usually for laundry)
- bowls
- objects floating / sink
- smaller boats
- plastic straws
- plastic glasses (from yogurt)
- different types of containers
- cups with detergent
- plastic tubs and water sinks
- large spoons
- ladle
- droppers
- larger brushes
- plugs of different sizes
- buckets
- shakers
- small brooms
- plastic tubs
- rope
- clips

### **Finger painting and other similar activities**

Finger painting is an artistic expression. It is essential to keep the focus on freedom of movement and pleasure in spreading colors by the hand directly to the paper. Although the result of the activity can be lovely and attractive, this is not the primary purpose of this activity.

For refugee children, the opportunity to play and creatively express themselves is of great importance.



Finger painting can be organized in the classroom, as well as in the yard. Paper as the



surface is not obligatory; a painting can be taken directly on the table. If necessary, use a piece of waterproof or plastic material to protect the surface of the table.

Children should paint with their fingers as they stand, to allow freedom of movement. Besides fingers, children can use their palms, joints, hands, even elbows. Finger painting

materials may be prearranged or made during the activity.

## Here are some useful recipes and ideas:

- 1 cup of starch
- 1 cup of cold water
- 3 cups were boiling water
- 1/2 cup of grated soap
- 1 spoon of glycerin (provides glossy color, it is not necessary)
- Color, tempera powder, or color for food

In a bowl, stir the starch in cold-water, slowly adding boiling water. Mix well, cook until it is thickened. Add soap and color.

If you do not have a starch, this recipe with flour will be good for you:

2 cups of flour

5 cups of cold water

1/4 cup salt

The color

Gradually pour cold water into the flour. Mix energetically and evenly, boiling at moderate heat until it thickens. If the lumps appear, crush them with a mixer.

Instead of adding color to finger-paint recipes, the tempera powder can be poured into the salt shaker so that the children can sprinkle on their work, hands, or paper.

Here's another simple recipe, especially useful if you are planning a finger-painting activity **directly on the table**:

Spill the bottle of the liquid starch on the surface, and then spill the tempera powder. Let the children draw on the table. And do not worry, it is easy to clean the table.

**Soap painting** is another "dirty" material activity. Usually, it is performed directly on the surface of the table.

Recipe for painting with soap:

1 cup of grated soap

1/2 cup of water (a little more if there is a need more liquid)

Add color if you want. Whisk the mixture until it gets thick.

Here are some additional materials that make a painting on the table a real pleasure and provide a variety of opportunities for the child to develop creativity. Try with:

a) Shaving foam - Apply directly to the table. It has a slightly different structure than color and has a pleasant smell. Add color if you want (the tempera powder).

b) Painting with pudding.

c) Starch and hot water - It is a real fun of activity on the table or a box. Let the kids make balls of this mixture.

### Tips:

1. Always check if children want to play with these materials. Some children do not like it. Do not push them to do it if they do not like it.
2. Include in this type of activity a smaller number of children which can freely move around the table. Space is very important.
3. Make sure all of you wear an apron.
4. Make sure all sleeves are properly twisted.
5. If you use paper, provide a space for drying children's work. If you do not have a rope to hang the children's drawings, spread the papers on the floor. It takes a few hours for drying.
6. Always keep nearby: a bucket with water, paper napkins, and empty bucket so that the hands can be washed immediately if needed.

### “Boxes for children's senses”<sup>33</sup>

Children use the sense of touch to explore and evaluate experiences. The touch-and-tell mystery box is an instructive addition to the literacy area because children expand their vocabularies as they describe what they feel. This mystery box activity involves nature items; the variety of objects that can be contained in the box is endless. This experience focuses on the children's ability to feel, observe, and communicate their observations. They discuss number, texture, shape, and size. They develop the ability to discriminate tactilely between various items.



They develop the ability to discriminate tactilely between various items.

- flour
- corn flour
- popcorn
- salt
- small pieces of Styrofoam
- dried leaves
- tear up newspaper
- collection of rocks
- acorns



<sup>33</sup> Coughlin A.P., Hansen K. A., Heller D., Kaufmann R.K., Rothschild Stolberg J., Burk Walsh K.: Step by Step: A Program for Children and Families. Creating Child-Centered Classrooms: 3-5 Years Old. ISSA

- branches
- leaves
- shells
- feathers

**Preparation:**

1. Cut a hand-sized hole in a medium-sized box.
2. Collect 2 of a variety of items: rocks, feathers, acorns, tree branches, leaves, shells, etc.

**Activity:** Put 1 item into the mystery box. Place between 2 and 5 items on the table in the sight of the child. One item must be the same as the item that is in the mystery box. Ask a child to put his hand inside the box and guess which of the items on the table is also in the box. Encourage the child to look at that item on the table and use texture words to describe the item in the box.

**Extensions and variations:**

- Rather than placing one set of items within the child's view, place 2-5 items in the mystery box. Then place one object from the other collection in front of the box. Ask the child to search the mystery box for one purpose.
- In a small group of 2 or 3 children, each child reaches into the box and describes one of the items. In teaching descriptive attributes, a teacher may ask the child if it is hard or soft, rough or smooth, cold, or warm. The children take turns guessing what the item is, based on the description given. Encourage the use of descriptive language to build vocabulary.

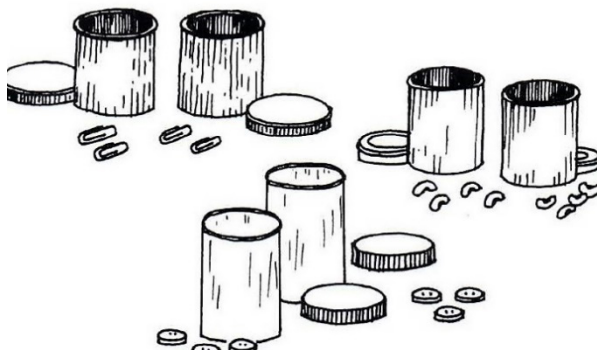
## Music activities

### Music instruments<sup>34</sup>

#### Sound cans

##### Materials:

- buttons
- paper clips
- seeds
- small plastic containers with lids (empty film canisters or vitamin containers)



##### Preparation

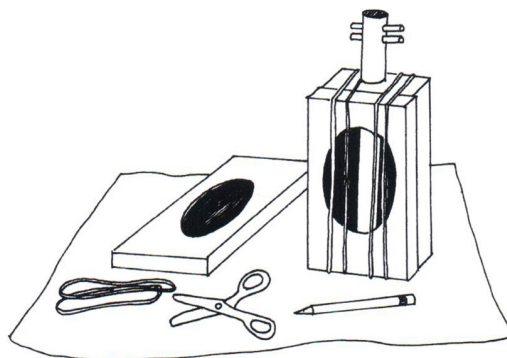
- In each of 2 identical containers, place the same number of same-sized buttons.
- In each of 2 identical containers, place the same number of same-sized paper clips.
- Put lids on all the containers.

**Activity:** In a small group of three, have the children experiment with shaking each of the 6 sound cans. Ask, "Do all the cans sound alike?" They may find that some do and some don't. Then ask them to try to find those that sound alike. When children match a pair, ask them to describe the sounds. Also ask what they think is making the sounds.

- Sound cans can be used to create rhythmic patterns or shake out a song.

#### Box Banjo<sup>35</sup>

Young children are natural music makers. Children can make and play banjos using boxes and rubber bands. Making and playing instruments fosters a child's basic understanding of vibration, pitch, and tone. The teacher elicits critical thinking skills by asking children to notice higher and lower pitches. Through a process of questioning, discussing, and comparing sounds children discover that shorter rubber bands produce a higher pitch, whereas longer rubber bands produce a lower pitch.



<sup>34</sup> *ibid*

<sup>35</sup> *ibid*



**Materials:**

- shoe box with lid
- cardboard tube — optional
- large rubber bands
- sticks or pencils — optional
- scissors

**Preparation:**

1. Make with parents box banjos for the class. Cut with scissors the oval opening in the center of the lid of the box.
2. Place the lid on the box and stretch rubber bands across the opening of the box. The rubber bands should be about an inch apart.
3. A long cardboard tube and pencils or sticks can be optionally added.
4. Activity: In a small group, let each child explore the box banjos, gently plucking the rubber bands over the hole. Ask the children what they notice about the sound as they play the banjo. Do all rubber bands make the same sounds? Can any conclusions be drawn regarding the different tones? How can the sound be changed?

**Extensions and variations:**

- Ask each child to work with a partner to find tones that sound alike and different on their box banjos.
- Establish various rhythms for children to follow. For example, plunk, plunk, rest, plunk, plunk, rest. Suggest that rhythms are patterns of sounds. Have the children make up their own patterns and play for each other.
- Sing a song and accompany it on the box banjo.

**Art activities****See – trough Strips<sup>36</sup>**

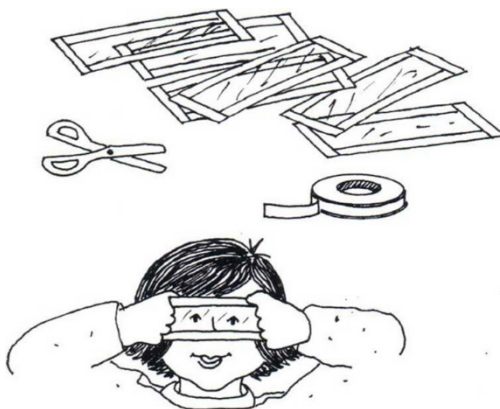
This activity fosters creativity in children and makes them feel nice.

1. Collect red, blue, and yellow cellophane or acetate strips. Cut 2 of each color into 12 cm. x 5 cm. strips.
2. If using acetate strips, cover the sharp edges with masking tape.

---

<sup>36</sup> Adapted from Coughlin et al.: Step by Step: A Program for Children and Families. Creating Child-Centred Classrooms: 3-5 Years Old. ISSA

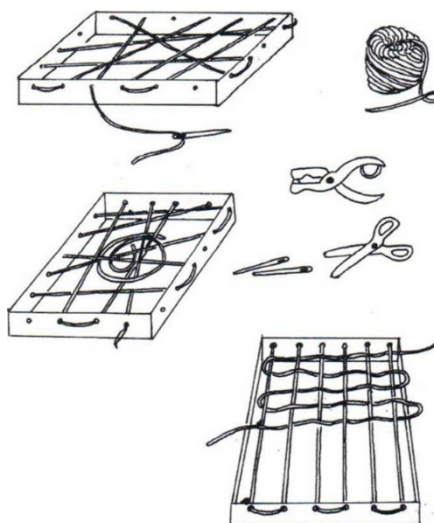
**Activity:** Gather 4 children together. Give each child a color strip. Have them first look through their individual color strips by holding them up to the light. Each child names something that is of the same color as the strip—for example, blue is the color of water or the sky. Each child should have a turn.



Put children with different color strips into pairs. Each child in a pair looks through the two overlapped strips to see what new colors are made. The teacher now gives each pair another strip, making sure that each pair has a set of red, blue, and yellow. Allow children to explore and exchange color strips. When the teacher notices that the interest is waning, call the children together. Let each pair name the colors produced, and name something that is that color.

**Extensions and variations:**

- Allow children to cut up pieces of cellophane or acetate and make their own color combinations. They could tape the acetate pieces together to make stained glass windows.
- Encourage the expression of emotional and impressionistic responses of the children caused by colors. For example, yellow is the color of sunshine and it makes me feel happy. Blue is the color of the ocean and I like the waves in the ocean. Orange is the color of fire and it makes me feel hot.



**Box weaving<sup>37</sup>**

**Materials:**

- lid of a box (preferably cardboard)
- hole punch
- variety of colorful yarn plastic needle
- scissors

---

<sup>37</sup> *ibid*

### Preparation:

To prepare the lid for weaving, punch holes around the entire edge of the box lid approximately 1-2 cm. apart.

**Activity:** With 2 or 3 children watching, demonstrate how to put the end of the yarn through a hole and tie it securely (make the knot on the inside of the box lid). Put the yarn through a needle and let the children thread the yarn across the box lid, going back and forth into different holes. Patterns may begin to appear. Demonstrate how a second colored yarn will add more pattern and color to the weavings. A third colored yarn can be added in the middle by doing finger weaving. Let the children make their own patterns.

For more artistic expression, beads and feathers can be incorporated into the weaving.

Children like knowing about weaving. **Encourage them to ask their family members about traditions in their family and country. Do people weave in their countries? Which colors they use? Patterns? Ask parents and other people in the center to demonstrate what they are able to do and tell the stories of weaving in their country.**

### Shadow puppets and shadow play<sup>38</sup>

You only need a white fabric for a shadow theater hanging from the cord, and one to two light sources (possibly LED lamps) – and you have an improvised shadow theater finished! The imagination and the play have no limits!

Create figures yourself: From cardboard, paper, wool, scraps of fabric and recycled materials. Make them to remind to existing objects, animals, or people or make funny and imaginary characters.

You can use a stick or a branch and glue a character on it.

### Materials:

- fabric (white)
- cord
- LED lamps
- cardboard
- wool
- scraps
- packaging materials
- branches
- wood glue
- scissors



<sup>38</sup> From: Creativity Activity Cards developed in cooperation between Kinderkunst Zentrum Berlin, UNICEF and ISSA in 2016/17

**Tips:**

Enjoy the following game and at the same time improve your language skills. Tell stories verbally but also non-verbally.

Motivate children to use various other everyday objects such as a wooden spoon, whisk, and pots and to play with "The shadow Theater." Tell them how the wooden spoon suddenly appears as a giant monster! The other kids sitting in front of the »Shadow Theater« should try to guess which objects are hidden behind the screen. You can also ask children and families to create characters from the stories, fairytales, and mythology from their countries.

## II. Preparing and supporting kindergarten teachers

Working as a kindergarten teacher in a refugee camp can be challenging and stressful; as a result, possible are significant problems with recruiting and retaining them.

In 2011, ISSA and DECET (Diversity in Early Care and Education Training network) developed a document *Diversity and Social Inclusion: Exploring Competencies for Professional Practice for Early Childhood Education and Care*. Practitioners from different countries suggested a set of general competences that individual kindergarten teachers need to cultivate to be able to work more effectively in the highly complex, unpredictable, and diverse contexts that describe our world today. This document can help guide our thinking when preparing training and continuous professional development<sup>39</sup>.

When asked about base-line competences and preconditions for high-quality practice and professional engagement, practitioners from different countries listed the following:

- willingness to accept diversity in society and to respect other ways of being
- being non-judgmental
- having an open mind
- having empathy and understanding
- showing flexibility and adaptability
- being sensitive (aware of children's and parents' needs) and responsive (act on this awareness)
- supporting a sense of belonging
- having enthusiasm: being engaged and motivated
- being creative in order to find alternative solutions and approaches
- showing warmth and being loving.

That is why it is so important that teachers are well selected, trained, and supported. According to the UNHCR, for a successful approach to this issue, the policymakers should focus on the following key elements:

1. Good assessment of the needs for teachers and needs of teachers
2. Defining clear recruitment policies, including standards that teachers need to meet
3. Training and ongoing professional support
4. Motivation – different ways to motivate teachers to stay

Unfortunately, in many countries, the teachers' selection is not a priority, and that can have unwanted effects on children and teachers.

This chapter will focus on the teacher's needs assessment, training, and continuous professional development. We invite policymakers to reflect upon the other points mentioned above.

<sup>39</sup> For a complete version of *Diversity and Social Inclusion: Exploring Competencies for Professional Practice for Early Childhood Education and Care* see [http://www.issa.nl/sites/default/files/Diversity-and-Social-Inclusion\\_0.pdf](http://www.issa.nl/sites/default/files/Diversity-and-Social-Inclusion_0.pdf)

## Needs Assessment

During their initial training and even in in-service training, the kindergarten teachers are not adequately prepared to work in the context of diversity and to cater to vulnerable children and families. When they are in a position to do that, they feel anxious, afraid, and do not trust enough their competencies. They often feel abandoned and alone as if there is nobody to provide support to them and answer to their questions.

Under this project, we surveyed approximately twenty kindergarten teachers working with refugee children in mainland camps and camps on Aegean islands (or different types of camps including reception and identification centers). You can see the results below.

Better understanding of the structures they are working in

- Understanding how the Reception and identification center (RIC) operates and its position, and opportunities and possibilities to create more child-friendly environments inside of it
- Issues concerning children's safety and protection

Better understanding of the background of children and families

- Information about the cultural background of the families
- Specificness of different cultures and religion related to child's rearing
- Topics that teachers should avoid or treat with special care because of the cultural differences
- How to introduce the first language of diverse children

Psychosocial support to children, families and teachers

- Recognizing children that are traumatized and taking actions
- Different ways of providing children and families with activities that will reduce their stress level and help them overcome challenges
- How to create nurturing environment in the kindergarten in a very non-child-friendly environment
- Supporting teachers in dealing with stress and difficult working conditions

Hands on activities

- Conflict management and dealing with the challenges in the classroom
- Activities that promote interaction and communication with children and parents and using different languages: Greek, English, and Arabic
- Being flexible while following the kindergarten program
- Introducing educational materials relevant to refugee children and activities meaningful for them
- More fun and relaxing activities

Peer support

- Creating a platform for mutual support
- Creating a space for exchanging ideas and learning from each other
- Access to examples of good practice from different countries - access to innovative programs and original ideas that have already been applied in a successful way

In this guidebook and in the suggested training and continuous professional development activities we tried to address expressed needs.

## **Training**

### ***Duration and number of participants***

The initial training for kindergarten teachers should last two and a half day, preferably three days. Maximum number of participants should not be higher than thirty.

### ***Training approach***

The training should be a balanced combination of theoretical explanations and practical/hand on activities. During the interactive sessions, participants have to be involved in peer learning, critical thinking and reflection exercises and work in pairs, small and large groups. They also need to have the opportunity to participate in different types of activities which they can later use in their work with children.

Additionally, during the training the participants should be engaged in self-reflection process, exploring their values, beliefs, expectations and attitudes towards refugee children and their families. The training should represent a safe space where kindergarten teachers can express freely their feelings and needs, and improve their wellbeing.

The training we recommend is based on the ISSA's and partner's expertise and experience in working with vulnerable children including refugee children, and on different resources developed by UNICEF, ISSA, and German and Greek ECD partners.

### ***Training objectives:***

1. To support kindergarten teachers to provide refugee children in kindergartens with activities and experiences that promote their wellbeing, development and learning.
2. To increase awareness among kindergarten teachers that young refugee children need a welcoming and supportive environment, which can buffer the effects of the toxic stress and potentially traumatic experiences.
3. To increase capacity for empathy and cultural sensitivity in kindergarten teachers.
4. To provide kindergarten teachers with basic knowledge and skills related to psychosocial support.
5. To provide practitioners with knowledge and basic skills to work with children who do not speak language of instruction.

**Expected outcomes:**

After the training, kindergarten teachers will gain skills and knowledge to be able to:

1. Better understand needs of young refugee children and their families.
2. Improve their work with young children, by providing them with stimulating and enriching learning experiences in the welcoming, safe and comforting child friendly spaces.
3. Create developmentally balanced daily and weekly plans of activities in order to stimulate child’s progress and development.
4. Provide basic psychosocial support to children and families.
5. Provide children with opportunities to acquire new language (Greek) while supporting families preserving their first language; and
6. Empower children, enhance their resilience and self-esteem

**Draft Agenda**

Training for kindergarten teachers

<b>Day I</b>	
<b>Focusing on WHY</b>	
Session I (90 min)	Opening <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Presenting the program (goals and objectives)</li><li>– Principles and values of the suggested approach</li><li>– Objectives of the training and expected outcomes</li></ul> Getting to know each other <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Introduction of participants and sharing expectations/ Including Story of my name and making books and wall posters with names</li><li>– Establishing a buddy system</li></ul>
Session II (90 min)	Creating welcoming and inclusive environment Creating a sense of community Importance of child- adult interactions
Session III (90 min)	Providing psychosocial support to children and families
Session IV (90 min)	Play <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Importance of play</li><li>– Learning trough play</li><li>– Healing trough play</li></ul>



<b>Day II</b>	
<b>Focusing on WHAT and HOW</b>	
Session I (90 min)	Working with children and families who do not speak Greek language
Session II (90 min)	Using art and creativity to support new language learning and holistic development
Session III (90 min)	Using art and creativity to foster identity, self-esteem and self-respect in children
Session IV (90 min)	Importance of clarity, routines and planning Circle time Managing the group

<b>DAY III</b>	
<b>Focusing on CHALLENGES and potential SOLUTIONS</b>	
Session I (100 min)	Specific challenges and situation of refugee and migrant children and their family e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Language barriers</li> <li>- Dealing with the stress in children and families</li> <li>- Cultural expectations associated with early learning</li> <li>- Loosing motivation and fear of separation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Motivating parents to include children in kindergarten</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Proactively addressing stigma and discrimination</li> </ul>
Session II (90 min)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Involving and supporting families</li> <li>- Communicating with parents</li> <li>- Activities for involving and engaging parents</li> </ul>
Session III (60 min)	Closing session <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Circle of worries/ preventing burnout in teachers</li> <li>- Planning the next steps</li> <li>- Evaluation of the training</li> </ul>

## Continuous professional development and support

- a. Creating a **knowledge hub** on the **website of the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs with materials for kindergarten teachers in Greek and other relevant languages** – this should include materials in Greek language in printable format, books, examples of good practice from different countries, links to different websites etc.

Useful websites with different materials (including different languages such as Arabic, Farsi, Dari etc.)

- ISSA – Knowledge Hub – <https://www.issa.nl/knowledge-hub>
- Refugee Trauma Initiative – <https://www.refugeetrauma.org/resources-1>
- EADAP – <https://www.eadap.gr/el/%ce%b1%cf%81%cf%87%ce%b9%ce%ba%ce%ae-%cf%83%ce%b5%ce%bb%ce%af%ce%b4%ce%b1/>
- Raising children Australia – <https://raisingchildren.net.au/> and parenting resources in different languages – <https://raisingchildren.net.au/for-professionals/other-languages>
- Moving Minds – <https://movingmindsalliance.org/>

### b. Mentoring support

It is well known from research that training is not sufficient to create a sustainable change in the teacher's practice. Due to the lack of funds and geographical placement of the camps it is almost impossible to provide face to face mentoring. However, online meetings with trainers or designated mentors should be organized. You can organize individual or group meetings and different online platforms can be used (Zoom, GoToMeeting etc.). Skype calls are also an option.

### c. On- going collegial/peer support

Educators learn more when they can ask each other for advice, ideas and help. Having educators work together on teams is seen as a way to improve teaching. It is never good to feel alone, especially when taking on new challenges or trying new things. Feeling supported by others can bring forth new ideas, motivation, energy and commitment to everyone. It helps reduce stress, feelings of isolation and despair. Through sharing individual experiences, knowledge, practices and professional values with others, educators can become more confident in their work. By asking others for their opinions, views and experiences—and actively listening to their comments—not only is learning taking place, but educators become closer as a community; one that is working together to best support the development and learning of the children with whom they work.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>40</sup> ROADS TO QUALITY | Strengthening Professionalism in Early Childhood Education and Care Systems, pg.14

The activity **Establishing peer support/ buddy system** might help - During the training, the pairs of teachers who are working in similar conditions and with similar groups can be established. Teachers can support each other via Skype or phone calls, Facebook or What's up groups. This will result in creating strong teams of teachers who will continue to work together and learn together in a collaborative way. This will also reduce the risk of burn out among teachers.

#### **d. Knowledge creation**

It is necessary to develop different materials with guidelines and ideas to support teacher's work and inspire it. The materials can be developed by teachers and other experts. The most important is to provide professionals in the field with different options which will help them enrich their work and contribute to the wellbeing of children.

### **Closing remarks**

During the process of finishing this guidebook, many unpleasant events occurred: the number of refugee children arriving in Greece, Spain, Malta, Italy, and Cyprus increased by 7% in 2019<sup>41</sup>; camps on the islands continued to be overcrowded, and kindergartens were closed. The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in even more adverse living conditions for refugee families and their young children, leaving them isolated, stressed, and overwhelmed with worries and sadness. In early March, group activities, including education and social projects, were stopped across Greece, with increasing restrictions as the month went on. In camps, any NGOs not delivering essential services, such as food or medical supplies, had to suddenly halt operations, with many of their international volunteers returning home<sup>42</sup>.

We hope that this guidebook will help and support work with refugee children and their families in camps and kindergartens and every available space by providing kindergarten teachers and NGO members with inspiration and new ideas and by stressing how vital is the work they are doing. Supporting vulnerable children is our obligation, and we should not be stopped by challenging circumstances. We have to use our imagination and all tools that we have to reach children and provide them with opportunities to play and learn.

We want to express our appreciation to all the kindergarten teachers, managers, coordinators, and other adults caring for children and their well-being, for everything they are doing to create safe, inspiring, and supportive conditions for every child to develop and thrive.

---

<sup>41</sup> <https://www.unicef.org/eca/emergencies/latest-statistics-and-graphics-refugee-and-migrant-children>

<sup>42</sup> [https://static1.squarespace.com/static/577646af893fc0b5001fbf21/t/5ef0bb675598594c56fcad771592835023114/2020-06\\_RTI\\_COVID19\\_REFUGEEESGR.pdf](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/577646af893fc0b5001fbf21/t/5ef0bb675598594c56fcad771592835023114/2020-06_RTI_COVID19_REFUGEEESGR.pdf)

## References

Center on the Developing Child, Harvard University. *Toxic Stress*. <https://developingchild.harvard.edu/science/key-concepts/toxic-stress/>

Center on the Developing Child, Harvard University. *Resilience*  
<https://developingchild.harvard.edu/science/key-concepts/resilience/>

Coughlin et al.: Step by Step: A Program for Children and Families. Creating Child-Centered Classrooms: 3-5 Years Old. ISSA

Coughlin A.P., Hansen K. A., Heller D., Kaufmann R.K., Rothschild Stolberg J., Burk Walsh K.: Step by Step: A Program for Children and Families. Creating Child-Centered Classrooms: 3-5 Years Old. ISSA

*Child – Centered Democratic Classroom*. 2019. Publication supported by Open Society Foundations and distributed by the International Step by Step Association (ISSA)

Dow, C. (2010). *Young children and movement: the power of creative dance*. Young Children. National Association of Education for Young Children. <https://www.naeyc.org/tyc/files/tyc/file/V6N1/Dow2010.pdf> ),

Diaz, J. O. Prewitt and Dayal, A. *A Sense of Place: A Model for Community-Based Psychosocial Support Programs*. The Australasian Journal of Disaster and Trauma studies. Vol. 2008-1. [https://www.massey.ac.nz/~trauma/issues/2008-1/prewitt\\_diaz.htm](https://www.massey.ac.nz/~trauma/issues/2008-1/prewitt_diaz.htm)

Fagerholm, K. and Verheul R. 2016. *Safety and Fundamental Rights at Stake for Children on the Move: Call for the EU and European countries to implement a child rights perspective in the reception of migrating children*. ENOC Taskforce Children on the move. <https://www.dekinderombudsman.nl/system/files/inline/2016KOM.00%20Safetyandfundamentalrightsatstakeforchildrenonthemove%20%28%29.pdf>

ISSA/DECET, 2011. *Diversity and Social Inclusion: Exploring Competences for Professional Practice for Early Childhood Education and Care*  
[http://www.issa.nl/sites/default/files/Diversity-and-Social-Inclusion\\_0.pdf](http://www.issa.nl/sites/default/files/Diversity-and-Social-Inclusion_0.pdf)

Park, M., and C. Katsiaficas. 2019. *Mitigating the Effects of Trauma among Young Children of Immigrants and Refugees: The Role of Early Childhood Programs*. Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute. <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/mitigating-effects-trauma-youngchildren-immigrants-refugees>.

Park, M., C. Katsiaficas, and M. McHugh. 2018. *Responding to the ECEC Needs of Children of Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Europe and North America*. Washington,

DC: Migration Policy Institute. <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/responding-ecec-needs-childrenrefugees-asylum-seekers-europe-north-america>

Ratey 2008, Ratey, J. (2008). SPARK: The revolutionary new science of exercise and the brain. New York: Little, Brown.

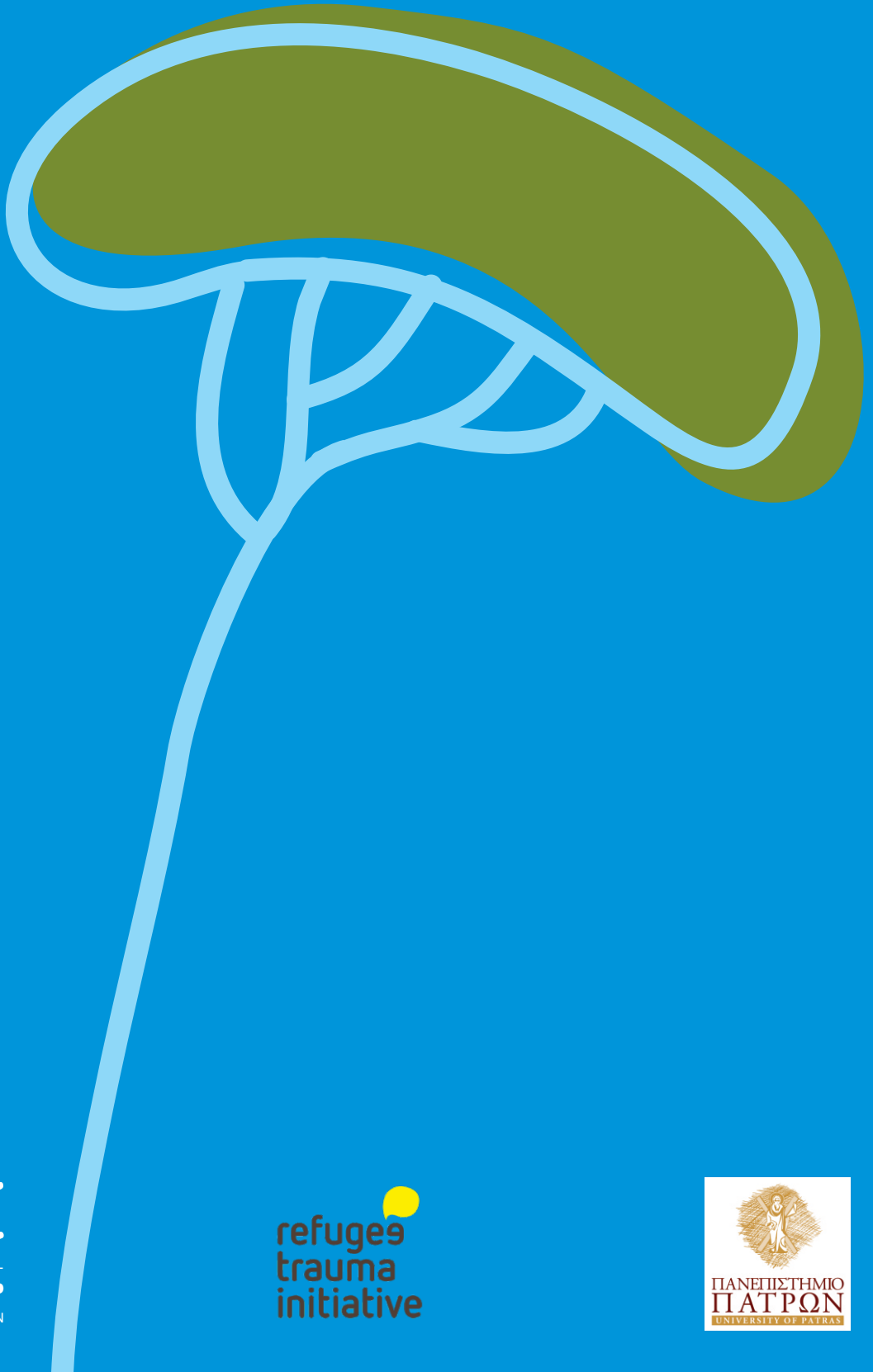
Refugee Trauma Initiative (2020). THE IMPACT OF COVID- 19 ON REFUGEES IN GREECE  
The meanings of spaces in ECEC centres: a literature review, EDUCAS project, 2019  
<https://www.issa.nl/content/meanings-spaces-ecec-centres-literature-review>

Tankersley, D., S. Brajkovic, S. Handzar, R. Rimkiene, R. Sabaliauskiene, Z. Trikić, and T. Vonta. (2010). Putting knowledge into practice: A guidebook for educators on ISSA's Principles of Quality Pedagogy. Netherlands: International Step by Step Association.

Tankersley, D., Ionescu M. (coordinator). (2015). ROADS TO QUALITY I Strengthening Professionalism in Early Childhood Education and Care Systems. Netherlands: International Step by Step Association. [https://www.issa.nl/sites/default/files/pdf/Publications/quality/ISSA-Roads\\_to\\_Quality.pdf](https://www.issa.nl/sites/default/files/pdf/Publications/quality/ISSA-Roads_to_Quality.pdf)

Trikić, Z, Ionescu, M (Ed.)(2012). Building Opportunities in early Childhood from the Start, the Teachers' Guide to Good Practices in Inclusive early Childhood Services, Roma Education Fund – <http://ftp.issa.nl/sites/default/files/AGS%20Good%20Practice%20Guide.pdf>

Dow, C. (2010). Young children and movement: the power of creative dance. *Young Children*. National Association of Education for Young Children. <https://www.naeyc.org/tyc/files/tyc/file/V6N1/Dow2010.pdf> )



INTERNATIONAL  
**STEP by STEP**  
ASSOCIATION

refugees  
trauma  
initiative

